



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

May 2024

Mystery and Behind-the-Scenes Hollywood on Thursday, May 2



Mystery writer, actor, and film historian Tony Piazza will present two events on Thursday, May 2, first for “Read the Book, Meet the Author” at 2 p.m. in the party room of Pizza Factory, and then for the Ridge Writers general meeting, starting 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Public welcome. No admission charge for the general meeting.

For “Read the Book, Meet the Author,” participants buy the book *A Murder, Well-Scripted* 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, copy of the book that the author will autograph, entry in a gift basket drawing, and convivial conversation with the author and group. The free general meeting at 6:30 at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church does not require a reservation.



Tony Piazza. Photo credit:
Sandpiper Media

Expect fascinating stories, Q&A, and a book signing at the conclusion of the program..

Tony has written seven mystery novels, *Anything Short of Murder*, *A Murder Amongst Angels*, *Murder is Such Sweet Revenge*, *The Curse of the Crimson Dragon*, *Murder Will Out*, *Murder in the Cards*, and *A Murder, Well-Scripted* and his memoir, *Bullitt Points*, provides a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the classic Steve McQueen movie *Bullitt* and the involvement of the Piazza family in the production.

He regularly worked as an extra and stand-in on multiple Hollywood movies and television shows shot in San Francisco during the 1970s, including *Towering Inferno*, *High Anxiety*, *Magnum Force*, and *Streets of San Francisco*. He now blogs regularly about his Hollywood experiences at authorTonyPiazza.com.

His inventory of stories reads like a Who’s Who of Hollywood from that era: Clint Eastwood, Steve McQueen, Darren McGavin, Paul Newman, Karl Malden, Michael Douglas, Raymond Burr, Walter Matthau, Fred Astaire, Robert Vaughn, and Leslie Nielsen.

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

MUSIC AND VERSE: KEN WALDMAN FOR NATIONAL POETRY MONTH **Report on the April Meeting written by Daniel Stallings**



**Ken Waldman performs a
banjo number for guests at
Read the Book, Meet the
Author**

For April 4, music and verse converged in a delightful program given by Ken Waldman, “an Alaskan resident rarely in Alaska,” wandering poet, musician, and novelist for his recently published book, *Now Entering Alaska Time*. Bringing his fiddle, banjo, and mandolin, a pocket full of postcard poems, and many a story and tune, Ken spoke and perform for Ridge Writers in his kickoff program for National Poetry Month 2024.

Yet, the party started early for us. Ken was the second author for our annual Read the Book, Meet the Author as we discussed *Now Entering Alaska Time*, his novel about relationships—platonic or romantic—formed in our northernmost state. In his writing of the novel, Alaska becomes a true main character in its own right.

First begun in 1989 and written through to 1997, where Ken

tangled with health issues and even surviving a plane crash, the book first hit shelves in 2021.

His talk, like at the general meeting later that evening, was punctuated with poetry and music. Ever modest about his talents, Ken would say, “I can play, and I’m grateful.”

Mark Your Calendar...

May 2 – Mystery writer, actor, and film historian **Tony Piazza**, author of *A Murder, Well-Scripted*.

June 6 – **Andrew Battat and Christina Hilliard**, “Making an Indie 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.

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Yes, and...

Before we all break out singing karaoke to Ariana Grande's song, I bring up the Golden Rule of Improv, because I want to relate it to the art of submitting work. Now I will stand up and be the first to proclaim that I still get stage fright with submitting any of my writing for others to read. The act is very personal; It's allowing unfamiliar eyes to judge the words so painstakingly shaped onto paper. I get that. Truly. Sometimes, I can agonize about work for days and days before I finally feel ready to submit.



But there is a universal truth all writers obey, no matter their levels of experience: You will not publish 100% of the work you never submit.

Submitting, workshopping, and editing pieces for publication or review can feel like an intimidating process for so many writers. Sometimes, it can resemble holding your beating heart in your open palms for someone to inspect it. Will they respect it or slash it to ribbons? The prospect can be terrifying. However, I'd like to propose an alternative image. Submission and editing is akin to a theatrical performance. An exchange of ideas and energies. Before any further stage fright sets in, allow me to explain.

In theatre, a scene involves a dialogue between actors' energies, not just words printed in a script. When directing, I'll often tell actors that they need their energy to "answer" the others. An actor puts his heart into a scene, and any actor onstage with him must put their heart into it in equal measure to keep the scene alive and active. Everyone is present in the moment. Actors pull energy from the audience and from each other to reach those vulnerable yet powerful parts of the soul that makes great acting happen. Theatre is active communication. We say "yes, and..." in improv because that keeps the communication going. "No" is too dangerous; It stops the scene. This is how I would like us to view submitting work to editors and agents and anthologies and more. It's joining a dialogue. As I step into the shoes of an editor for *Planet Mojave* this year, my goal is to keep it a conversation. "Yes, and..." in full effect. I'm there to help nourish and guide works into the best version the author deserves. But naturally, the author has to take that first step, has to push the send button on the email. Because I can't give them my energy, can't hold up my part of this tandem performance, until they give me my cue. And once you hit send, that's when the work blossoms into a new life. The scene becomes active, alive. Yes, and...

2024 Allison Aubin Scholarship

"I am happy to announce that the winner of the 2024 Allison Aubin Scholarship for Young Writers is: Mariana Ogilvie! Judges thought that Mariana's essay "shows an innate ability/desire to write," that it "came to life" when it captured what it's like for a young, beginning writer, and that Mariana should be encouraged to keep on journaling and writing. Mariana will be presented the scholarship at the Senior Awards Ceremony at Burroughs High School on May 20 by East Sierra President, Daniel Stallings." — Janis Kunz

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:

- 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.



At the meeting that evening, Ken opened with a verse about the fiddle which segued into music. Interspersed with his playing came stories of his life as a nomadic writer, his life and work in Alaska, memories of life-changing moments, and poems capturing the breadth of those experiences, experiences as wide as the open Alaskan sky. He frequently volunteers his time and talents to school programs, including Alaskan Yup'ik villages. Often, he creates acrostic poems—poems where the first letter of each line spells out thematic words—for the kids based on where he's performing. He passed out free poems on postcards and bookmarks for guests, including the one, “She Asked Where Poems Come From” seen at right. He read works with evocative titles like “Village Fiddle” and “The Road circa 1978.”

Ken's candor could be found when he shared with us the story of the days that changed his life. Leap Year 1996. A remote Alaskan school. Rowdy children who wouldn't sit and listen. The adults weren't interested as he was merely the opening act for a raffle they were holding later. He began to play a kind of playful square dance that asked the kids to become different animals. And soon, he had them under his spell as a performer. In that moment, he realized the realm of possibility for his art. Two days later, he survived a plane crash. Such moving contradictions of life and its fragility echoed through many of his pieces. These works can be found in his many poetry collections.

She Asked
Where Poems
Come From

Night,
a syllable

lifts
the roof.

Stars
pour in,

followed
by that

marvelous
and witchy

snitch
of moon.

-Ken Waldman

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Anchorage AK 99503

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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

Ken is a current member of 49 Writers and has published an essay titled “Residency?” on their blog recently. As for the future, he teased many possibilities for longer works with catchy and intriguing titles like *Nine Month Winter*, *Now Leaving Alaska Time*, and *Main Street Alaska*.

When a guest asked Ken, “Why Alaska?”, his openness continues with a story of a failing relationship and the opportunity to enroll in a writing program in the 49th state. And he fell in love with it. Having lived in Fairbanks, Juneau, and Nome, he still describes Fairbanks as “the most home-like place in my heart.” And reading his work, you truly do feel that Alaska, despite Ken's itinerant life, has become a home for his heart with its untouched landscapes and acres of open sky perfect for poetry.

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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 at 2 p.m. on that Thursday, 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, May 2, 2024 - Tony Piazza, author of *A Murder, Well-Scripted*.

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Art + Poetry Workshop

Saturday, April 27, 2024 at the Ridgecrest Branch Library (131 E. Las Flores Ave.)
1 to 3 p.m.—Grades K through 5: 1 to 2 p.m. & 6 through 12: 2 to 3 p.m.

Everyone is welcome to attend! Admission is totally free!

Ridge Writers is presenting a workshop for all ages, under the care and direction of Vice President and Youth Coordinator Janis Kunz, on combining visual art and poetry in honor of National Poetry Month. Activities will center on using ekphrasis (describing a piece of visual art with words), drawing your own pictures and writing about them, and making shape poems where the words form the shape of the object you're writing about. Although we are aiming this event for our junior writers, the workshop is open to all.

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.



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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.**

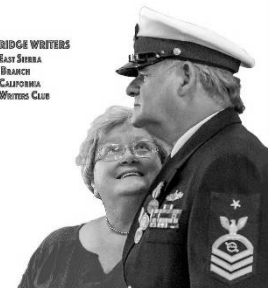
*If you are new to Planet Mojave, we will need your author bio for the back of the book. No longer than 150 words each, please.

*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
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.).