



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

August 2024

RIDGE WRITERS HOLDS OPEN MIC NIGHT ON AUGUST 1ST



Liz Babcock and Charlotte Goodson do a reading for Open Mic Night 2023.

Ridge Writers members and the general public will share and present their original works on Thursday, August 1, in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. The monthly general meeting starts at 6:30 p.m.

Open Mic Night is a chance for members, prospective members, and guests from the general public to have the spotlight to share their written work. A Ridge Writers summer tradition, it provides a forum for aspiring writers to showcase their work and get an audience's feedback. Hearing new voices and listening to the next great story from veterans is part of the fun and true joy of Open Mic Night. Many of our favorite pieces have emerged from this classic Ridge Writers, and we want to hear your voices added to the growing collection of amazing member works.

We limit each speaker to 5-7 minutes, and contents must be in good taste. We'll have light refreshments on hand, and plenty of time to socialize. Remember, the public is invited, and admission is free. Bring your friends!

RICHARD S. THOMAS ON WORLDBUILDING **Report on the July Meeting written by Andrew Sound**



Richard S. Thomas answers member questions at the general meeting.

Ridge Writers' July meeting featured new novelist Richard S. Thomas speaking on the "History of Sci-Fi and Fantasy, and World Building." His early career, 50 years' worth, was as a wood-worker, for which he won multiple awards. Along the way, he did a certain amount of non-fiction writing in conjunction with his side hustles as a safety manager and a Sunday School teacher. But when his eyesight began to fade due to macular degeneration, the lifelong reader decided to try his hand at his old dream of fiction writing. The result, so far, is his first novel, *Earther Wizard: The Rise of Colin Duncan*, which came out in June 2023. Its protagonist is a former Marine who ends up on a parallel Earth battling Wizards – and some of the eight other sentient species on this world. A sequel is due out at the end of this year.

After that introduction, he launched into the evening's presentation. Although it was billed as a history of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and World Building, it might be more properly described as a History of Science Fiction, a Categorization of the Fantasy Genre, and a Tutorial on World Building.

The history of science fiction went all the way back to Johannes Kepler, a 17th century German astronomer better known for his laws of planetary motion. In 1608, he wrote the first science fiction story called in Latin "Somnium" ("The Dream") about a trip to the moon. After passing through Mary "Frankenstein" Shelley, Jules "Captain Nemo" Verne, and H. G. "Time Machine" Wells, we get to Hugo Gernsback, called the "Father of Science Fiction", not so much for his own stories, but for the magazine he founded in 1925, "Amazing Stories." This magazine, through its checkered career, became so influential in paving the way for developments in science fiction and starting the careers of so many authors...

Mark Your Calendar...

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

September 5 – Michael Raff, mystery and horror author, "The Anatomy of Suspense"

October 3 – Viviana Hall, poet, journalist, clinical social worker, shares her bilingual poetry collection *Poems of Love*

November 7 – S. Kay Murphy, family legends and living legacies

December 5 – Member Holiday Party, members read from their own works, 5-7 minute limit, light refreshments.

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The Art of Being in the Room Together

Writing is, perhaps 90% of the time, a solitary activity. A solo project. However, that is not true of ALL writing.



Collaborations are nothing new. They can be as overt as a musical songwriting team or a credited ghostwriter to as subtle as a pseudonym for a husband-and-wife writing team (like "Cleo Coyle" for the Coffeehouse Mystery series). But not every collaboration is gold. There's an art to being in the room together, to conduct the music of brainstorming between different mental instruments, to choreograph the ballet of "You write this part, and I'll write this one."

Recently, I got involved in a writing project where I was permitted to hire a writing team to work on a script for a show. This was an exciting prospect. I've always had fun collaborating with other writers, getting their ideas, and working together to machine a show into existence. I chose two up-and-coming authors with lots of theatre experience and a passion for the genre we'd be exploring in the script. We gathered together at one writer's place for snacks and brainstorming and divided up the work equitably to give each writer space to express themselves.

While the ending of this story isn't the happiest (Outside producer infringement on authorial rights. That's a whole different President's Message in and of itself.), the actual work of collaborating with my team was a definite spark of joy. In many ways, we were blessed by the personalities blending so well. Not every partnership is a success. One key is keeping egos in check and allowing ideas to flow from everyone. Flexibility and focusing on what's best for the overall story helped too. We enjoyed the work. Even though we sadly had to withdraw from the previous show to protect our rights, my team expressed joy in the collaboration itself and actually missed it the most. So I came up with a new show and allowed them to reunite to dream up another partnership production. And I'm taking care of them. I encourage teamwork with other writers. But remember to know your rights and protect each other. Know where you stand and work as a unit to find the best solution. There's an art to being in the room together.

Membership Dues Are Due Now

Membership dues for the California Writers Club, of which Ridge Writers is the East Sierra Branch, are due now. 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* and the *Bulletin* published by the CWC, ability to publish on the SoCal Writers Showcase website (see below), and more. If your membership expires, you will have to pay an additional \$20 initiation fee to rejoin. Dues must be collected by September 30th.

New Member

We want to welcome our newest member, Beth Sparks-Jacques, who joined our branch at the July meeting. Welcome to Ridge Writers! We're excited to see all you will share with our branch and club in the future.

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 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.
- 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.

...that the Hugo Award, one of the premiere prizes in the genre, was named after Gernsback.

Thomas then paid tribute to “Star Trek” and made the point that both the original series and its many later incarnations, had ethnically diverse crews dealing with recurring issues of interstellar politics and diplomacy. In that way, aspects of Star Wars fit in a bit with both the New Wave movement in the genre and more modern developments. The New Wave Movement of the ‘60’s and ‘70’s is exemplified by works like Frank Herbert’s *Dune*, perennially brought to the screen, which combines traditional sci-fi themes with elements of politics, ecology, and religion. Contemporary science fiction continues down this path, exploring themes like artificial intelligence and climate change while emphasizing diversity and representation.

It may be that the most interesting or useful part of the evening to any fantasy or sci-fi writers in the audience was the section on world building. Thomas broke the process of world building into a series of elements: setting, flora and fauna, technology and magic, history and culture, politics and social structure, economy and resources, language and communication, religion and mythology, conflict and plot, and aesthetics and mood. While these are all somewhat different, they play into each other, and some threads, like “vivid, sensory descriptions” follow from setting, to flora, to magic. Thomas also emphasized consistency throughout the worldbuilding process to achieve believability, and making sure, for instance, that any twists flow naturally from the plot and characters. He said that, for his own book, one of his favorite reviews, was one reader, whose reaction was “Yeah, that could happen!”

If you missed the meeting, Thomas was kind enough to leave a handout with a link to the text of his presentation: <https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:va6c2:dffb5a8d-88ed-44a5-8d89-078c7e0fa942>

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

You still will have missed his slides, which he created by having an AI tool generate images based on various fantasy or science fiction stories.

For my own part, as a reader, listening to the worldbuilding advice made me realize how important that can be to any form of literature. At the time, I was just finishing up the Rex Stout novel *Too Many Cooks*, set in the exotic (to Nero Wolfe) setting of a West Virginia country resort stocked with an eclectic cast of characters of all classes and from all over the globe. I realized that when I finished the book, I would miss the little world I had been immersed in, and as I sat in the Ridge Writers meeting, I realized that worldbuilding isn’t just for fantasy.

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Dear Journal Writing Retreat



Thanks to the efforts of our Youth Coordinator Janis Kunz, in partnership with the Ridgecrest Branch of the Kern County Library through the work of Charissa Wagner, Ridge Writers once again worked during the library’s summer reading programs. This year on July 12 and 13, we were given the theme of Mindfulness—being intensely focused on what you feel in the moment—and we developed a writing retreat we called “Dear Journal.” Journaling is a helpful mindfulness technique as you can use it to express yourself freely and privately. The retreat was designed to allow anyone to just sit and work on their journals without needing to share. We also provided other journals as visual aids for ideas. In total, we had 12 students attend the retreat to work. Some drew. Some wrote. All got involved. Even some of the adult chaperones got in on the fun. Thank you to Janis and Charissa for organizing the event, and to Daniel and Donna for running it on those days. It was a great time being surrounded by creativity.

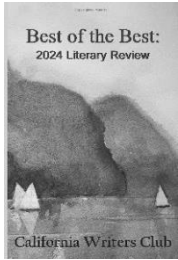


Left: Guests at “Dear Journal” peruse the journal visual aids and work on their own projects.

Right: Pages from a hand-drawn nature journal created by and donated as a visual aid by local artist Marian Murdoch.

2024 LITERARY REVIEW

From the CWC President, Roger C. Lubeck:



Original watercolor cover art: "Morro Bay" by Richard Zone, High Desert Branch

"The Best of the Best: 2024 Literary Review by the CWC members is now available on Amazon. The club is very excited about this new publication. This book is dedicated to the memory of our dear friend, Bob Isbill. Our thanks go to Mike Apodaca, Jenny Margotta, Elisabeth Tuck, Joyce Krieg, Richard Zone, and all the others in our branches who made this 2024 Literary Review possible. We

know you will enjoy reading this wonderful new book. A PDF version of the book will be available on the CWC website on July 15."

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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Vision and Verse:

A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry



Cover painting: "Welcome" by Briahn Kelly-Brennan

Vision and Verse, CWC's ekphrastic anthology edited by Les Bernstein, was officially published and available on Amazon on July 11, 2024. Be sure to check it out!

Description on Amazon: "Welcome to the inaugural issue of *Vision and Verse*, a Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry. The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word. In this celebration of imagination my wish for you is to immerse yourself in these pages and join in a journey where the boundaries of art and writing are blurred. The images and words are like rooms of memories, evoking anecdotes to be remembered, maybe even a treasure trove of inspiration for your own very unique expression. We sincerely hope you enjoy the collaborative work in *Vision and Verse* from the gifted members of California Writers Club."

Two of our East Sierra members are published in this brand new anthology!

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.

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