



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

October 2024

LOVE IN TWO LANGUAGES WITH VIVIANA HALL ON OCTOBER 3

Poet, journalist, and critical social worker Viviana Hall will share her experiences at the Ridge Writers meeting on Thursday, October 3, in the meeting room of Ridgcrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. The public is welcome. No admission fee.



Viviana has done book signings from Rome to Mexico to the U.S. and will discuss aspects of her rich career and will read passages from her new bilingual poetry collection *Poems of Love* which Pacific Book Reviews has called “a heartfelt, gripping, and engaging read...a must-read collection of poetry” and Kirkus Reviews described as “a masterful volume of poems that captures the sensuality of love in two languages.”

Argentine-born poet moved to New York as a press correspondent. As a journalist, she produced, wrote, and hosted for New York Broadcast TV numerous documentaries, public service and variety programs, work that earned her several prestigious awards. She also wrote locally and abroad for

major publications. As a social worker, during the last two decades, she collaborated with New York State developing programs for disadvantaged youth.

About her work, acclaimed writer Cesar Tiempo said, “Viviana’s poetry reconciles us with hope, one of the few movements of the soul capable of battling despair.”

An avid traveler, when not attending International congresses, she spends her time between New York and the California Central Coast, where she continues her work and tirelessly advocates for social justice and world peace as a firm believer in our potential to transform ourselves and the world we live in.

A book signing and informal chat session will follow her program. We look forward to seeing you, and please bring your friends.

DISSECTING THE ANATOMY OF SUSPENSE: MICHAEL RAFF SPEAKS **Report on the September Meeting written by Daniel Stallings**



Michael Raff talks about his published books lined up behind him.

In a fitting lead-up to autumn and the spooky season, High Desert Branch member and award-winning author Michael Raff gave us a very thorough dissection on “The Anatomy of Suspense”—how to recognize and craft it for your stories—at our September 5 general meeting. As a writer predominately in the horror genre, Raff’s program came with a lot of personal experience and mined resources from media such as Stephen King novels to the films of Alfred Hitchcock.

During his PowerPoint presentation, Raff opened with a humorous anecdote of once watching scary movies as a child from behind the couch, ironic considering the genre he now authors. Why is suspense necessary? In all forms of media—literature, film, television and more—suspense is the technique to keep readers thrilled and engaged in the story. Raff compared the technical skill of crafting suspense to comedic timing, especially with the buildup before a punchline. Whether the goal is to scare readers or not, it’s this anticipation of “What will happen next?” that keep pages turning and eyes glued to the story. Then he pulled up a...

Mark Your Calendar...

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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Nesting Instincts



I want to borrow a vibe from Gerry Wisdom's Open Mic Night piece titled "My Room" (published in last month's edition of the *Purple Sage*). There's an unfair stereotypes about creative people such as writers and artists. The trope of the tortured, starving artist creating gifted masterpieces. They thrive in environments of suffering as it's considered fuel for their imagination. It's a pretty terrible trope mined as material—both satirical and serious—across the ages. And yet, I want to take my pen and poke several large holes in it.

O Writer, if you do not feel like you can write anything when life is chaos and your work environment is disorganized (or not disorganized enough. It takes all kinds.), you are not alone. We all have our own spaces, our nests of creativity filled treasures we cherish and atmospheres we love. Do you long to be surrounded by your favorite books and a hot mug of tea at your elbow? Do you need your notes in a neat stack by your laptop while your favorite playlist of songs runs in the background? Do you work best with a comfort TV show you've seen thousands of times playing behind you? Or do you need perfect silence? The calming sounds of nature? Are you a morning person up with the sun and songbirds? A night owl who prefers the starlight and the hush from a world at rest?

Creatives love rituals. We like safe spaces and routines that "get us in the mood to work." And this I encourage all writers of all levels to develop. Find your ritual. Develop your nesting instinct. Discover YOUR process and environment conducive to creating. It will be as individual as a fingerprint. Feel free to experiment to find the best process for you. Remember that old adage of "comparison is the thief of joy." Your creative nest will be different from everyone else's, and that's perfect. Build it to suit your world, your needs, and your work ethic. Because tortured artists producing work under painful conditions isn't feasible. Creativity won't survive in survival mode. How many dreams defer because life gets in the way? Paying bills. Feeding families. Maintaining shelter. And that's valid. It's also valid to build your own safe nest to be as creative as you wish. In these environments, work thrives and imaginations soar. So why don't you go out there and furnish your writer's nest with all the things you love? Then your work will truly take flight.

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.**

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.

...picture of Stephen King, an author who considers himself a suspense writer. Ah, but what is the difference between suspense and mystery? Raff defines suspense as the feelings before the crisis happens and mystery as the feelings afterward. Before the murder happens you have suspense. Afterwards, you have a mystery. He gave us further concrete examples with an analysis of an opening playground scene from Alfred Hitchcock’s *The Birds* and the story of a perfect illustration of Hitchcockian suspense: four men talking, unaware there is a bomb underneath their table counting down the seconds. We, the audience know, but the characters do not.

Raff offered us a list of several elements of suspense: time pressures on the characters such as deadlines to accomplish important tasks, the threat of physical danger, letting readers form their own expectations, abrupt surprises, disasters, or reversals of fortune, stirring a reader’s curiosity, red herrings, withholding information from the reader and letting them know only as much as the hero does at any moment, and foreshadowing. Discussing foreshadowing, Raff delved into the subject of irony like dramatic irony and situational irony and how it relates to suspense.

Our speaker then gave us methods to help sharpen our suspenseful writing. Create a promise in every chapter or section of story. Create secrets, puzzles, or hidden identities. Open a chapter with a question or a contradiction. Create flawed, underdog heroes with complex histories. Use flashbacks and internal monologues to help the reader feel alongside the protagonists, especially their fears or anxieties. Compress the story’s timeline—Got a week to save the world? Make it 48 hours instead. Finish chapters on a cliffhanger. However, Raff cautioned us that if you make promises to your reader, follow through with them and tie up loose ends. Don’t betray the trust of your reader.

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

Concluding the program, Michael Raff shared his writing history, having started in 1983. He joined the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club thirteen years ago and has since published nine books independently through his own imprint, Nevermore Enterprises, including the titles *Special, Seven: Tales of Terror, Scare Tactics, Shreds, Shadowland, Skeleton Man, Stalkers, The Seventh Stranger, and Something Different*. His story, “The Surrounding Silence,” tied for first place in a High Desert Branch contest to be published in the CWC’s 2024 Literary Review. The story is about—

Ah no...I won’t spoil the suspense for you. Be sure to check out more of Michael Raff’s work on Amazon. And thank you again to our speaker for giving us the benefit of his expertise at our general meeting.

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Totally Tables for the China Lake Rotary Club

Ridge Writers had a presence at the China Lake Rotary’s 4th annual Totally Tables fundraising event on Saturday, September 14 at the Springhill Suites. Donors and groups decorated themed tables for a catered dinner, raffle, and 50/50 drawing. This year’s nonprofit receiving the fundraising was the Friends of the Library, and to show our support for that wonderful organization, the Board of Ridge Writers bought tickets and attended the event. We also donated a raffle basket. The fundraiser was a major success, a delight to the library we love so much. Thank you to Donna Rosenthal for the tickets and the raffle basket and to her, Andrew Sound, Janis Kunz, and Daniel Stallings for attending Totally Tables.

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CALIFORNIA WRITERS WEEK AT RIDGECREST BRANCH LIBRARY

From CWC website: “In 2003, the California State Assembly officially declared the third week in October each year as California Writers Week.”

Ridge Writers is planning a special event at the Ridgcrest Branch Library to celebrate both California Writers Week and the upcoming release of *Planet Mojave: New Horizons*. Celebrate the writing of local authors and learn about the new edition of the Eastern Sierra Branch’s popular anthology by listening to readings from the authors. **The event is Saturday, October 19, 2024 12 noon to 1 p.m. at the Ridgcrest Branch Library.** Admission is free. Come celebrate California writers with us!

**SONOMA COUNTY
WRITERS CONFERENCE**

“Redwood Writers invites you to the Sonoma County Writers Conference: **Saturday, Oct. 19, 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.** Finley Center, 2060 W. College Ave., Santa Rosa

Early bird price of \$125 for CWC members. Price increases Oct. 1. All the details and registration links can be found here: redwoodwriters.org/2024-conference

The Redwood Branch of CWC invites you to this packed one-day event with keynote speaker, bestselling author and workshop leader, Jeff Goins, along with 14 other industry experts who will talk and teach on subjects that focus on Craft, Genre, Publishing and Marketing.

Choose from a variety of hour-long sessions and ninety-minute interactive workshops offered throughout the morning and afternoon.”

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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Sent to the Ridge Writers email:



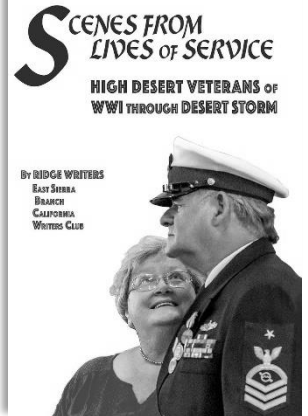
“*Thin Air Magazine* is accepting submissions for our 31st issue until October 20th, 2024!

This year’s theme is Metamorphosis! When you make anything, you change something. For issue 31, we’re interested in art that

ponders the metamorphosis we see in creation, in destruction, in reflection, in meditation, in stagnation, in art itself. As *Thin Air* transforms, we invite you to submit your pieces that engage with our theme: Metamorphosis! *Thin Air* gleefully publishes fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and writing that defies genre classification.

View submission guidelines and submit via the *Thin Air Magazine* Submittable: <https://thinair.submittable.com/submit>

We charge a \$3.00 submission fee for our print issue, while *Thin Air Online* is free. If you cannot pay this fee, please reach out to us at thinairlitmag@gmail.com”



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.).