

*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

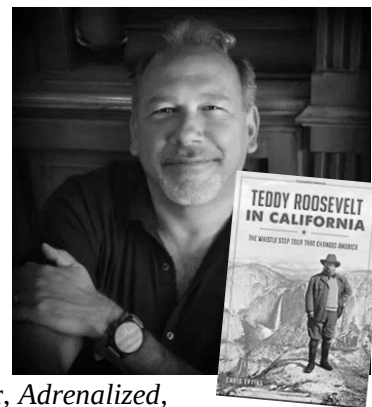
East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

April 2025

CHRIS EPTING RETURNS TO RIDGE WRITERS APRIL 3

Award-winning travel writer, popular culture landmark expert, and a Ridge Writers favorite, Chris Epting will speak at our Thursday, April 3 meeting that starts at 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Public welcome and admission free.

The evening marks Chris' fourth visit to our club and he always fascinates with his wealth of information and inside stories. Author of 40 travel/history books, including *James Dean Died Here* (Santa Monica Press), *Roadside Baseball* (McGraw Hill), *Hello It's Me*, *Dispatches From a Pop Culture Junkie* (Santa Monica Press) and many others, he has contributed articles for such publications as the *Los Angeles Times*, *Westways*, and *Travel + Leisure* magazine. As a memoirist, he has co-written Def Leppard's Phil Collen's memoir, *Adrenalized*, the John Oates memoir *Change of Seasons*, and *Long Train Runnin'* with the Doobie Brothers.



Photos from chrisepting.com

On Thursday at 2 pm in the party room of the Pizza Factory, for a separate event, he will talk about his book *Teddy Roosevelt in California: The Whistle Stop Tour That Changed America*. During President Theodore Roosevelt's whirlwind 1903 tour of the western states, Roosevelt paid his first visit to California. In between appearances and pageantry, he embarked on three days of epic adventure in the wilderness of Yosemite with the famous and influential naturalist John Muir. Through firsthand accounts, speeches and rare photographs, Chris chronicles a great and profound journey that had a lasting effect on conservation history and the National Park System. For this Pizza Factory event, 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, 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. But we repeat, no charge for the evening meeting. We hope to see you Thursday evening and perhaps Thursday afternoon as well.

"WHAT DO YOU NEED A POEM ABOUT?": BRIAN SONIA-WALLACE PERFORMS **Report on the March Meeting written by Daniel Stallings (and Davis Kunz)**



The Read the Book, Meet the Author group on Thursday, March 6, 2025. Brian Sonia-Wallace pictured in the center back.

Everybody deserves a poem. That is the belief and the manifesto of our March 6 speaker, Brian Sonia-Wallace, for both Read the Book, Meet the Author and the Ridge Writers general meeting. At the afternoon program discussing his book, *The Poetry of Strangers: What I Learned Traveling America with a Typewriter*, Brian opened with the slightly nervous: "I just met

you, and you know about 200 pages of my thoughts." Indeed, we had. His book is an emotional and introspective journey into his life as RENT Poet, a poet-for-hire who offers poems to people in a process at once "part confession, part therapy."

That afternoon was filled with laughter and stories as everyone found a connection to the stories captured in Brian's book. Whether it was the experience of reading his story on a political campaign aloud, reminisces of his travels as a poet on Amtrack, or giggling at his stint as Farting Chair 2.0 in his Mall of America residency (read the book to learn more), all of us found humor and heart in his work. These connections between poet and audience are sacred to Brian and his message.

Mark Your Calendar...

April 3 – Chris Epting, award winning historian and author of 30+ books, including *Teddy Roosevelt in California: The Whistle Stop Tour That Changed America*

May 1 – Retired Deputy Director for Research and Engineering at the NASA Armstrong Flight Research Center **Glenn Bever**, novelist and author of the memoir *Russian Encounters*.

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Giving Yourself Grace

I attended last month's Sunrise Scribblers meeting for the first time, and it was a joy, as always with Ridge Writers, to surround yourself with other writers and creatives and talk shop. Listening to the triumphs, the joys, and the concerns about making new work is fun as you get to connect across common feelings. However, one trend I noticed among the aspiring writers gathered around our breakfast plates was a general feeling of discontent at their writerly work ethics. They didn't hit their word counts or other self-ascribed goalposts. They felt they didn't live up to what they imagined in their heads. I felt insecurity and doubt around the table, and I felt that I had to help lift everyone—they and you—up again.



Give yourself grace. Life can be challenging, and making any accomplishment is worth celebrating. You wanted to write 3,000 words today, but you only found time to write 1,000? That's awesome! That's 1,000 more words than you had before. You meant to write new sections of your work, but you re-read older portions and did some spot editing? Great! What you've written is now stronger. You wanted to write something new, but you worked on an old piece again? Fantastic! It's now a stronger piece. Look at all your work as progress. As a list of lots of little, growing victories. Collect them. Cherish them. Each one builds upon the last.

"But," you say with a furrowed brow, "what if I am too busy to write? What if I pull up my work...and nothing flows? What if I just stare at a blank page all day and my muse is silent?" Give yourself grace. Life is being lived. Writing doesn't occur in a vacuum. We absorb the world around us. You could be in an absorption phase in your writing. Taking in the world around you. And, shocker, it's okay to focus on living. Surviving. Don't be hard on yourself for doing what it takes to stay alive, sane, and centered. For prioritizing life. Give yourself grace. Your writing will always be there for you.

The 2025 Allison Aubin Scholarship for Young Writers

This year, the Eastern Sierra Branch of the statewide California Writers Club, locally known as Ridge Writers, plans to award the annual Allison Aubin Scholarship for Young Writers to local students preparing to enter college to study writing. The winner will earn a \$500 cash prize on behalf of the club. Students will write a 500- word essay on the topic "Why do I write, and what do I want to do with my writing career?" We started accepting entries on March 1st, and all entries are due on March 31st. Judging will occur in April with the winner informed in May. We are also asking any Ridge Writers members to judge the contest so the prize comes from the membership itself. The entries are judged anonymously and we handle sending out comprehensive judging forms. Email us at ridgewriters@yahoo.com if you would like to judge. And please let any students you think may be interested know about this opportunity!

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.
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- 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.



Brian opens his performance in a darkened room.

Then darkness fell. A single light pierced the inky depths. At the general meeting, Brian opened his performance—a compelling cocktail of theatre, performance art, and poetry reading—with a potent image as befitting his theatre kid upbringing and instincts. Brian developed this one-man show, working title *The Infinity Show; or Dream Play*, to express his creative process, lovingly referred to as his “poetry parlor tricks” during Read the Book, Meet the Author, and foster those connections with us, his audience. His readings came from his memoir, *The Poetry of Strangers*, and his two chapbooks, *I Sold These Poems Now I Want Them Back* and *Maze Runner*. Learn more at rentpoet.com.



Brian conjures a monologue out of thin air from words provided by the guests.

Below, member Davis Kunz, inspired by the speaker’s performance, shared an impromptu review of the meeting with his March invitation to the Sunrise Scribblers. His expressive writing perfectly captured what happened during Brian’s performance, so I asked if I could use his words for this write-up. The work below is reprinted with the author’s permission. Further inspired by Brian, Davis also wrote a poem published later in this newsletter.

“I have to say I was very impressed with the program on Thursday. Brian is one of those artists who reminds us why we do art, why we cry out in a hunger for this need that only we, each other, can share. When the lights turned low, and he began to move among us slowly in the darkness of his single tiny lamp, the group began to realize why Daniel had been so impressed. While Brian circled the room, he hummed softly, as if evoking the ritual tones of calming that might precede a seance.

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

“But the ghosts we were all conjuring that night were alive. They were us. Drawing out our inner writer like Adam taking his first breath. And then the lights went up but the acts of creation and performance didn’t stop. Suddenly he was transforming into his poet laureate of the city of West Hollywood form, complete with cap and cable-knit sweater vest. His smile and energy infectious, he asked a member of the group, What do you need a poem about? Answer given, he banged on his antique typewriter, playing it like a church organ made of car parts. Transcribing the music of our thoughts. Each jabbed keystroke caught the notes and pinned them to the page in ink before they could flit away.

“He built the poem in stages. At one pause, he delivered a beat performance built from the slips of paper that held one word each he had gathered from us earlier, plucking them like the multicolored petals of a mythical wishing flower. At another break, he performed ‘bibliomancy,’ letting a few of us use his books to predict our own futures. How did we, stopping him flipping his pages randomly, seemingly find the answers we sought? Somehow he had turned on a spotlight that exposed our raw, quivering hearts. And then the poem birthed from the typewriter with the ping of a bright bell and was done, a gift that he made, that we made. I for one hope that we get to experience more of Brian’s magic someday.”

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RIDGE WRITERS Junior Writers presents...

True Nature Experiences

With special guest speaker

Kim Steinhart

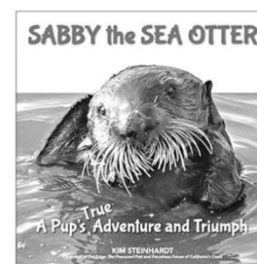
Saturday, April 12th, 2025, 10:00-11:30am
Grades K-12

Listen to author Kim Steinhart talk about writing the true adventures of *Sabby the sea otter* (via Zoom). Learn how to write about nature and true-life experiences. Write or draw about your own exciting experiences with nature!

Participants can submit writing/drawing entries during the event for inclusion in a temporary display at the Library.

Ridgecrest Branch Library
131 E. Las Flores Ave.

For more information contact Ridge Writers
youth coordinator Janis Kunz janiskunz@gmail.com



New Member

Ridge Writers wants to welcome our newest member, Sara Hise. Welcome to the East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club!

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Will I Be Brave?

By Davis Kunz

Will I be brave

Will I ever leave my cave

Will they see me in the spring

Will they hear me when I sing

Will I face the thing I love

I say I will -- but is it real --

or just a bluff

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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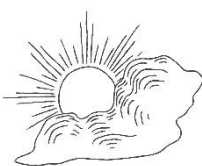
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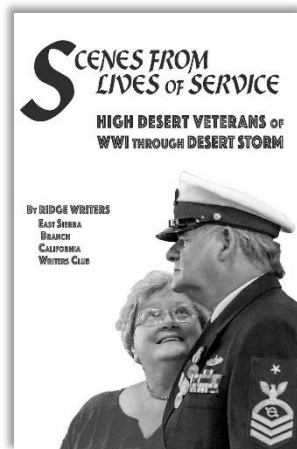


The Sunrise Scribblers

Ridge Writers is pleased to announce a new breakfast club: The Sunrise Scribblers. The breakfast club is a new perk offered for Ridge Writers membership and will meet once a month on the first Sunday after every Ridge Writers regular meeting, at 9:00 AM (venue to be determined).

The Sunrise Scribblers is a writing group for anyone crafting or revising a work of fiction or nonfiction, and who would enjoy good company with fellow authors in a productive atmosphere. Members of the club will be eager to share ideas, discuss writing problems, seek advice, and even read their work aloud. All skill levels are welcome!

Think of The Sunrise Scribblers as your jogging buddies, helping you reach the finish line of your short story, poem, play, memoir, or novel. You can ask for more information and request an invitation at any Ridge Writers regular meeting on the first Thursday of every month. Davis Kunz leads the Sunrise Scribblers, so be sure to talk to him at our general meetings about taking part.



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.).