

# The INKSLINGER

Sail On



High Desert Branch CWC  
INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS

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## Ignite High Desert



Ignite the High Desert is a series of five-minute speeches given by people who want to promote and improve our communities. Our club president, Mike Apodaca, will be speaking this year at Ignite, representing the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club.

The 8th Annual Ignite High Desert is scheduled for Thursday, April 11th from 5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at Victor Valley Christian Church in Hesperia. Early bird pricing of \$25 is available through March 20th and \$35 at the door. To register for this event, copy and paste the following address into your URL: <https://members.ghdcc.com/events/details/ignite-high-desert-4334?calendarMonth=2024-04-01>



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# You Could Be Our Next Speaker

*By Mike Apodaca -President*



I can imagine that when some of you read the title of my article, you said, “NO WAY!” You don’t really see yourself as an instructor, a person with expertise who can teach our excellent writers anything.

But, please, allow me to share with you some ideas.

Firstly, it should be the goal of every one of our members to become a speaker. This is why we launched the On-Topic Speakers bureau ([ontopicspeakers.com](http://ontopicspeakers.com)). In the modern age of writing, it is authors who do public appearances who sell their books. They are building their platforms. Just look at the writers we have visiting our club, talking about their writing process, gathering emails, and selling their books.

That could be you.

It is also important to understand that no one has had the exact same writer’s journey that you have. Each writer is unique, each has their own perspective, and each comes to writing differently. Some writers actually resisted writing until they could fight it no longer. Each writer has their own motivations and ways of accomplishing the writing task. We want to hear how you do it your way.

Thirdly, you need to become an expert. Here’s my recommendation. Choose something you are bad at—plotting, character development, the hero’s journey, dialogue, description, pacing—anything. Then make it your goal to become an expert at this. Read articles on the topic (you can find many of these online). Observe your own writing and how it improves as you try out the things you are learning. Talk with other writers to get their process. Take notes. Build your knowledge until you feel that you are ready to share what you’ve learned.

At this point, it will be time to roll up your sleeves. You can develop your presentation using a PowerPoint, Prezi, or any other presentation platform—it is really up to you. One great benefit to having a slide show is that you can Zoom your presentation anywhere. This opens up more opportunities for you to share. You can also bring in real-world objects to make your point. We recently had Rene De La Cruz speak to us. He showed us various platforms used to produce music—records, tapes, CDs, etc. By using actual items (teachers call this *realia*), he was able to bring a level of reality that made his presentation come to life. Stuart Horwitz began his conference with us by showing us a John Lennon song played by John with a guitar after first being written (I think it was “Lovely Rita”). It was good, but rough. Next Mr. Horwitz played the same song post-production. It was amazing—symphonic and full. Stuart’s point was that there is a lot of polishing and improving between a rough draft and a final product. The point was made perfectly. You can also use metaphors like this in your presentation.

Finally, our club is the perfect place for you to try out your presentation before taking it on the road. We’re currently meeting once a month at the Apple Valley Library for the purpose of having our authors test-run their presentations. We have had wonderful presentations from Michael Raff, Dwight Norris, Bill Lopez, Ann Miner, Jim Grayson, Joan Rudder-Ward and others.

I recently explained to a new member that most of the life in our club comes from the members teaching each other. We have so many amazing people who have much to offer. You are one of those people. So roll up your sleeves and imagine yourself as one of our speakers. You couldn’t ask for a more supportive receptive audience.

You can do this. Remember—every author, no matter how famous, had to start their journey just like you.



# Let Your Dreams Be Bigger Than Your Fears

*By Joan Rudder-Ward - Vice President*



On July 9, 1948, he became the oldest rookie ever to debut in major league baseball. Leroy “Satchel” Paige was 42 years old. Well, at least somewhere around that age. Throughout his minor league career, the year of his birth would vary between 1900 and 1908. When asked how old he was, he always said he just wasn’t sure because he didn’t know the actual year he was born. He would then ask “How old would you be if you didn’t know how old you were?”

What about you? How old would you be if you didn’t know how old you were? Are you letting age or other perceived limitations stop you from pursuing something you’d like to do?

In 2015 I began producing a cable television show, *Silver Sage*. The show is designed to encourage those 50+ that, no matter what stage or age in life, to let their dreams be bigger than their fears. On the show, I feature individuals 50 and over who are pursuing their dreams and writing new chapters in life—proving that the second half of life can rival and even be better than the first.

(The show went on hiatus when the shut-down happened, and we’re now in the process of restarting production.)

In one of my upcoming books, I share principles that I’ve learned on how to pursue dreams when you’re in that second half of life. I’ll share one here.

Focus on what you can do, and not on what you can’t.

Anna Mary Robertson Moses spent her life in upstate New York as a farmer’s wife. She had 10 children, of which only 5 lived to adulthood. One of her favorite pastimes was needlepoint, and she created many beautiful pieces of work.

When she was in her 70s, her arthritis worsened to where she couldn’t hold a needle anymore.

But. She could hold a

paintbrush. Thus, she refreshed her childhood love of painting and began painting scenes of rural life from memory. At 76 years old she did her first show, subsequently becoming the famed folk artist Grandma Moses. During the next 25 years of her life, she created over 1,600 paintings. She didn’t focus on what she couldn’t do ... she found out what she could do and pursued it.

Is there a dream you’ve had that you’d like to revisit? Have you let age or fear stop you from doing something you’d like to do? How can you let your dream be bigger than whatever is stopping you?



**Satchel Paige**

*How old would you be if you didn’t know how old you were?*

# Mooning City Hall

By J. P. Garner



Ever had an embarrassing moment? Something you'd hardly brag about but something you might share with your friends and have a good laugh? Well, I had that "something" happen to me a few weeks ago, I hope you too can have a good laugh at how life can, sometimes, literally trip us up and make a fool of us.

Like some other club members, I write for *The Pulse*. I even get paid, which is nice. And I have a press pass, which I'm told to wear when I'm out and about because you never know when a story will occur. On the morning of the "something," I was doing a story about our city government in Barstow and had gone to City Hall to interview the City Clerk. She was nice and helpful and I left with the information I needed.

As I was descending the steps leading to the building's entrance, gravity seemed to grip me and propel me forward and, because I accelerated, I lost my balance. The few seconds I was airborne was a delight but then I crashed into the pavement. In an attempt to catch myself, I released my grip on my phone and 3-ring binder and they flew into the parking lot.

It didn't help.

When I hit, I did so on three points of contact: my forehead, my hands, and my knees . . . and I slid. That's what caused the "something." The sliding. Strangely, the concrete gripped the warm-up pants I was wearing and pulled them to my knees. Suddenly, I was lying on the sidewalk, in front of City Hall, in broad daylight, with my butt hanging out, and a car had just pulled into a parking spot. Ignoring my pain, I hastily grabbed my pants and pulled them up, just in time to not be seen by the



woman exiting the car.

Feeling stupid, I checked my wounds and saw them to be superficial. I then glanced back at the steps, trying to figure out what had just happened. I know I'm old but not so much that I can't descend steps without taking flight. Collecting my phone and binder, I went to my next interview at Billie's Kitchen.

Later that day, I told a friend about my mishap and we had a good laugh. And then he said, "You know John, they have video cameras at the front door." Videos? Really? I couldn't help but laugh even harder, and he did too when I said, "Geezus, I just mooned City Hall."



# From an Editors Desk

By Jenny Margotta - Treasurer



## MORE THIS AND THAT

**ONE SPACE OR TWO:** Any of us old enough to remember typing classes in high school—on actual typewriters—will remember it was pounded into our heads that you always put two spaces after every sentence. And most were also taught to put two spaces after a colon. Not so anymore. Why, you might ask.

Typewriters used a non-proportional font. That is, every character took up the same horizontal space on the paper, regardless of the actual width of the letter itself. (Think of putting a letter into each separate square on graph paper.) Two spaces after each sentence or colon helped us visually see the breaks.

With the advent of computers, most fonts became proportional—that is, the horizontal space they occupy depends on the letter's actual width. Today, references almost universally agree that one space after a period or punctuation mark is correct. Microsoft was one of the last holdouts, but in 2020, even they formally settled the space debate and updated Microsoft Word to indicate that two spaces between sentences would be considered an error.

Nearly every major style guide now recommends using a single space between sentences, including:

- The Chicago Manual of Style (CMOS)
- The American Psychological Association (often referred to as APA)
- Microsoft Manual of Style
- The Gregg Reference Manual
- The Associated Press Stylebook

MLA Guide (It instructs students to follow their teacher's guidelines, but uses a single space between sentences in its examples.)

CMOS Section 2.9 (17<sup>th</sup> Edition) states:

Space between sentences or after colons: One space or two? Like most publishers, Chicago advises leaving a single character space, not two spaces, between sentences and after colons used within a sentence, and this recommendation applies to both the manuscript and the published work. In fact, a well-structured electronic document will never include more than one consecutive character space.

Another discussion I often have concerns the use of the Oxford (or serial) comma. In today's seeming de-emphasis on the use of commas, some question whether this comma should also be eliminated. My personal preference is to use it. But then, I stick to the formal rules for all comma usage. Rules for their usage are changing, and there is a move toward using fewer of them, but to suggest—as some do—that commas should be eliminated altogether is folly and will lead toward issues of confusion and ambiguity in our writing. And, no, they should not be inserted simply because a reader pauses to take a breath, unless, of course, that's where they would be inserted based on current punctuation rules.

CMOS 6.19 (17<sup>th</sup> Edition) states:

Items in a series are normally separated by commas. When a conjunction joins the last two elements in a series of three or more, a comma—known as the serial or series comma or the Oxford comma—should appear before the conjunction. Chicago strongly recommends this widely practiced usage . . . since it prevents ambiguity. If the last element consists of a pair joined by “and,” the pair should still be preceded by a serial comma and the first “and” (as in the last two examples below).

1. She posted pictures of her parents, the president, and the vice president.
2. Before heading out the door, he took note of the typical outlines of sweet gum, ginkgo, and elm leaves.
3. Their wartime rations included cabbage, turnips, and bread and butter.
4. Ahmed was configuring updates, Jean was installing new hardware, and Alan was running errands and furnishing food.

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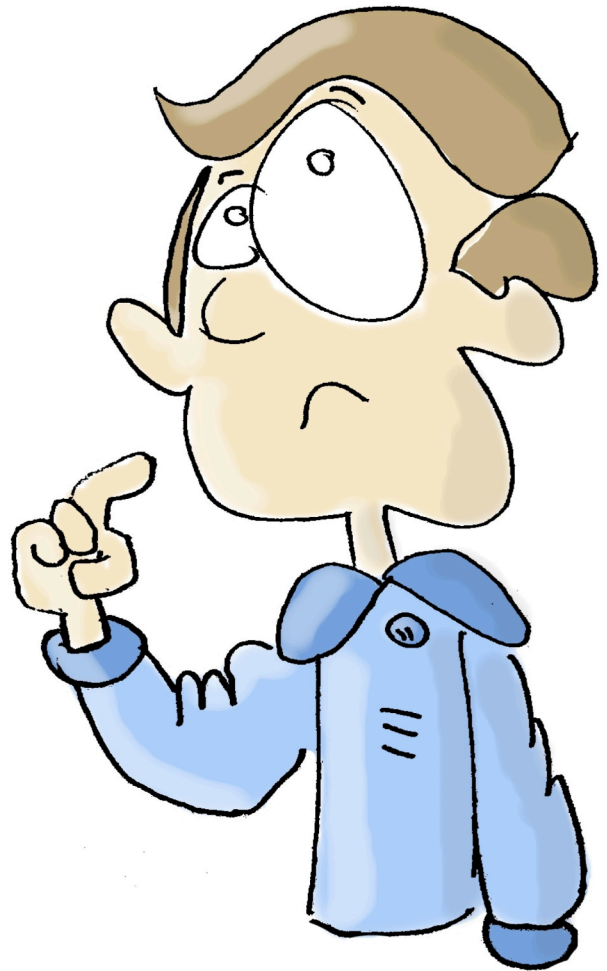
## Did You Know?

Did you know that the first US President with a middle name was John Quincy Adams?

The use of middle names dates back to the Roman Empire, if not earlier, but it wasn't until the start of the Renaissance in Italy that middle names as we know them now came into use. By the late fifteenth century, it was common for children of wealthy or influential Italian families to be given the name of a Catholic saint as their middle name in the hopes that the saint would protect them. Gradually, this practice spread to the lower classes and then into nearby countries.

The practice spread to Great Britain and the United States during the nineteenth century. Before then, it was exceedingly rare for anyone to have a middle name in either country. By then, middle names were no longer specifically religious, as it became common practice to use them to honor a relative or track the matriarchal lineage.

While the use of middle names became widespread, most people generally continued to be known by their first name. At least three US presidents, however, went by their middle names: Ulysses S. Grant (first name Hiram; the S doesn't stand for anything), Grover Cleveland (first name Stephen), and Woodrow Wilson (first name Thomas).



*Typos are very important in writing. Often it gives the reader something to focus on so they are unable to discern the absolute lack of content in the text.*

*-Author Unknown*



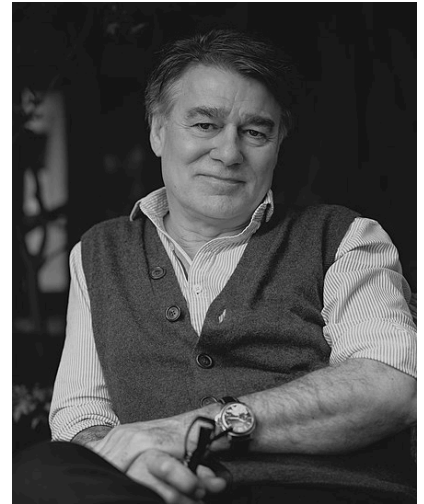
# Writers Are Readers - Book Reviews

By Mary Langer Thompson



## Consolations by David Whyte

*Consolations: The Solace, Nourishment and Underlying Meaning of Everyday Words* is a book for word lovers, and writers are word lovers. We know words "are living organisms, elastic and porous, feral with meaning, ever-evolving (Maria Popova, Introduction)." Even our most common words convey principles and truths. Words, however, are being misused and misunderstood, and Whyte wants to restore and mend their use and meaning. Elizabeth Gilbert of *Eat, Pray, Love*, calls this a book of "elegant tiny essays," and describes



Whyte as a "living poet."

Each chapter poetically discusses one word, beginning with *Alone*. We are afraid of it, Whyte says. If we choose a solitary life, then we need to make friends with silence. We don't want to be left with ourselves, yet we need to be to gain self-compassion. Being alone can surprise us, change us, and begin to give us an inner life. See why Whyte believes we don't have to be alone or in the desert to cultivate a sense of aloneness. Seeking to be alone is "a radical act," he says.

Another word Whyte contemplates is *Ambition*. It can be essential for the young, he writes, but becomes an obstacle for a mature life. Discover what Whyte believes is "the greatest legacy we can leave from our work."

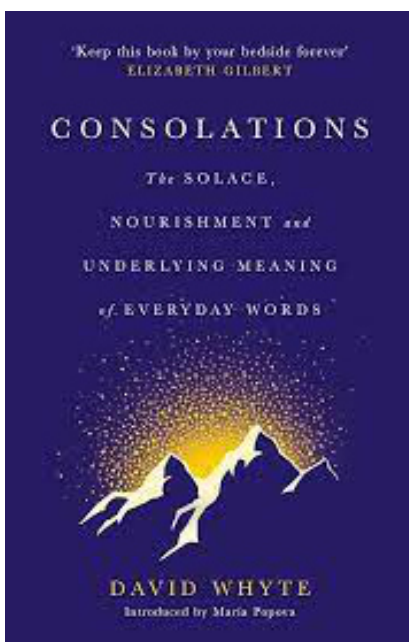
Poetic one-liners fill this book: "*Beauty* is an inner and an outer complexion living in one face." "The ability to make a good *beginning* is also an art form." "Being *besieged* asks us to begin the day not with a to-do list but a not-to-do list . . ." "To *confess* is to declare oneself ready for a more courageous road." "*Courage* is what love looks like when tested by the simple everyday necessities of being alive." "*Friendship*" is a mirror to presence and a testament to forgiveness."

What about seemingly negative words? "*Crisis* is unavoidable." We need to refuse "to *despair* about *despair* itself." "*Disappointment* is a friend to transformation . . ." "*Heartbreak* is unpreventable."

Further words pondered in alphabetical order for a total of 52 words are *honesty, joy, loneliness, longing, maturity, memory, naming, nostalgia, pain, pilgrim, procrastination*. I would have liked to have seen more words, maybe some humorous ones included, or even *humor* itself.

Maybe the reader who is a writer might want to write his or her own "tiny essay" on a word to see what it really means to them. What word or words would you choose? This is a book that doesn't have to be read in order. Open it anywhere and you are likely to be inspired. It's a terrific book to keep in your library to be re-read or a book to gift.

Please note that if you have read a book you love, you are invited to be a guest columnist for *Writers are Readers*. Thank you, Bob Isbill, for being a guest writer last month and for calling attention to *Power Up Your Fiction: 125 Tips and Techniques for Next-Level Writing* by James Scott Bell.



# The Most Famous Authors of All Time

By Michael Raff



## William Somerset Maugham (Part II)

Maugham had grown bored with writing plays and vowed never to write another. He wanted to start a new novel but lacked ideas. In 1936, his friend Rudyard Kipling suggested he travel to the West Indies, but none of the region inspired Maugham. When he traveled to India in 1938, he became fascinated with the Indian philosophers. “As soon as the Maharajas realized that I didn’t want to go on tiger hunts but that I was interested in seeing poets and philosophers they were very helpful.” It was during this trip that he found inspiration for one of his most famous novels, *The Razor’s Edge*.

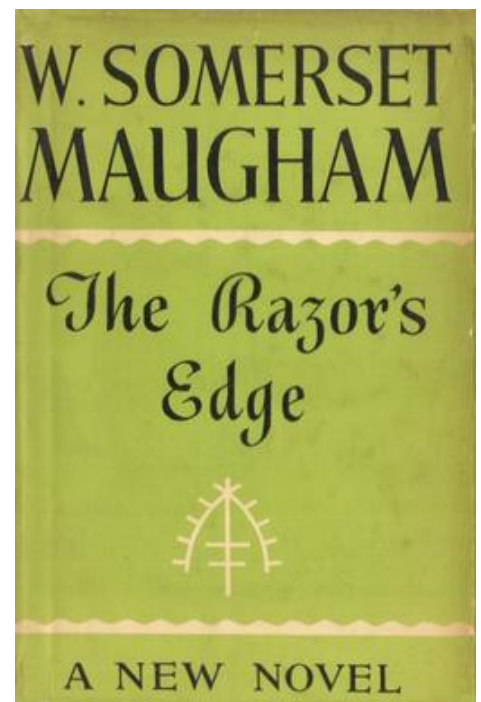
Maugham was living at his house in France when World War II broke out. He moved to the US, where he spent most of the war. He began working on *The Razor’s Edge*, which was published in 1944. He found writing it exhausting and was reluctant to write another novel. Shortly later, Haxton, his significant other, died of tuberculosis. Maugham stated, “You’ll never know how great a grief this has been to me . . . all I’ve written during the last twenty years has something to do with him.”

Upon returning to France, Maugham finished one of his last full-length works, the historical novel *Catalina*. He embraced American television and introduced the series *Somerset Maugham TV Theatre*. His participation skyrocketed his popularity. He continued his travels and kept himself physically fit but, by 1959, started to decline mentally. His memoir, *Looking Back*, was published in 1962.

Maugham died in December 1965 at 91. He was cremated and his ashes interred at The King’s School, Canterbury, beside the wall of the Maugham Library.

While I was a sophomore in high school, my class was assigned to read both *Of Human Bondage* and *The Razor’s Edge*. I was awestruck by the books, both of which introduced me to the frailty of the human condition. I felt untold empathy for the main character Philip Carey in *Of Human Bondage*, who, like Maugham, lost his parents at an early age and, instead of a stammer, suffered with a club foot. The book unfolds nearly all of Philip’s life, his insecurities, his poverty, his medical school, his relationships—including the devious Mildred—and his search for happiness. The book is brilliant on all levels and is considered Maugham’s masterpiece.

*The Razor’s Edge*, however, left a deeper impact on me. The main character, Larry Darell, a disillusioned WW I pilot, returns home after experiencing the horrors of war, his personality transformed from carefree and ambitious—to solemn and introspective. Obsessed with discovering the meaning of life, he rejects a materialistic lifestyle—and his pending marriage to Isabel—for a quest to achieve



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spiritual fulfillment. As a teenager, I was preoccupied with the meaning of life and a desire to see the world. I learned a lot through the eyes of Larry Darell. What is the meaning of life according to Maugham? I believe he professed it was the rejection of a materialistic lifestyle, the embracement of humanity, and the acceptance of oneself and others.

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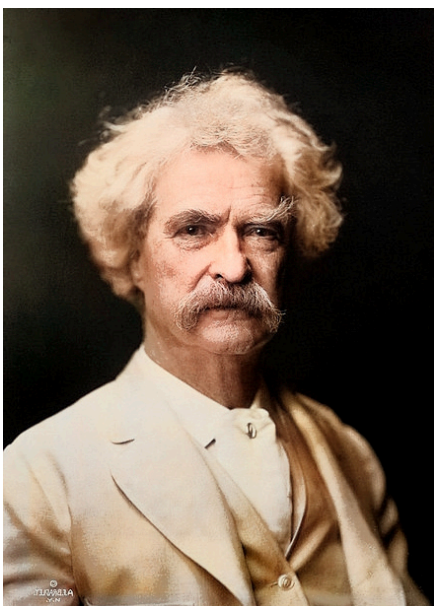
### Fun facts about William Somerset Maugham:

Believe it or not, many readers and critics agree that Maugham's best works are his short stories.

- In 1954, Maugham was appointed Member of the Order of the Companions of Honor, recommended for that award by Winston Churchill.
- Maugham never liked his middle name.
- He said he made very little money from his theatrical endeavors, but it gave him considerable recognition.
- Maugham's most acclaimed novels scrutinize the main characters' moral dilemmas and their struggles through turmoil.
- It was rumored that Maugham refused knighthood, hoping to achieve the British Order of Merit, which he never won, possibly due to his homosexuality.
- Maugham acknowledged that *Of Human Bondage* was his greatest work but preferred his novel *Cakes and Ale*.
- The original title for *Of Human Bondage* was *Beauty from Ashes*.
- *Of Human Bondage* was made into a movie three times. It was also made into a TV film starring Charlton Heston.
- *The Razor's Edge* was adapted into a movie twice, once in 1946, starring Tyrone Power, the version I had first watched in my classroom, and the forgettable version with Bill Murray.

Until next month, keep reading, writing, and check out *Of Human Bondage* or *The Razor's Edge*. You can't go wrong!

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“The secret of getting ahead is getting started.  
The secret of getting started is breaking your complex  
overwhelming tasks into small manageable tasks,  
and starting on the first one.”  
- Mark Twain

# Saying Goodbye

*By Mike Apodaca*



The last salon was another great one. Freddi Gold led us in exercises meant to teach us how listening blocks can affect our communication and how we can use these in writing dialogue. Our characters use the same dysfunctional communication devices that we use.

After giving prearranged couples ten minutes to practice their short skits meant to illustrate a particular communication block, Freddi and I were on. We went first because we both have a background in dramatic arts, and we also don't mind breaking the ice or making fools of ourselves. Freddi and I had the block of thinking that we were always right and always had to win the argument. Sparks flew. I have heard it was so realistic that one peace-loving member almost left. All the skits were terrific. We laughed and hung on to every word—especially when Meera Maheswaran, was trying to get Taylor Swift tickets in her skit. And who knew that Byron Ward knew so much about the highest mountain peaks in California and the rest of the country! Freddi concluded by explaining to us the importance of understanding communication blocks for enhanced communication and being more intentional in our writing.

After this excellent meeting, we had cake and celebrated the next chapter in Freddi's life. She and her husband, Bob, are moving to Arizona to be closer to family. Freddi assures me that she will not lose her connection with us. She is terrific on Zoom.

For the last two years, I have worked closely with Freddi and Richard Zone in a critique group. We always start by talking, enjoying each other's stories, and laying out our opinions. It is delightful. It has stitched our souls very closely together. Freddi is a terrific person to get close to. She's also a great writer. I look forward to her chapters. She is always full of surprises.

I know our hearts go with Freddi; she will always cherish each person she grew to love here in the High Desert. Freddi says she intends to visit. I'm going to hold her to it.

Bon Voyage, Freddi. We all wish you the very best. See you soon on Zoom.

I asked Richard Zone to say a word or two of goodbye to Freddi but I couldn't understand anything he said.

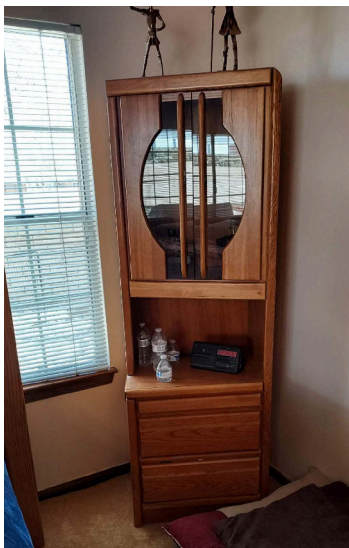
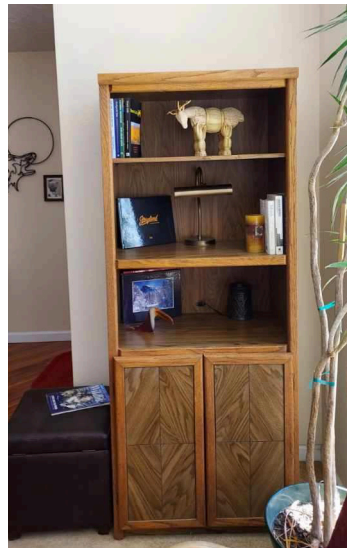
He couldn't stop weeping.



# A WORD FROM FREDDI AND BOB

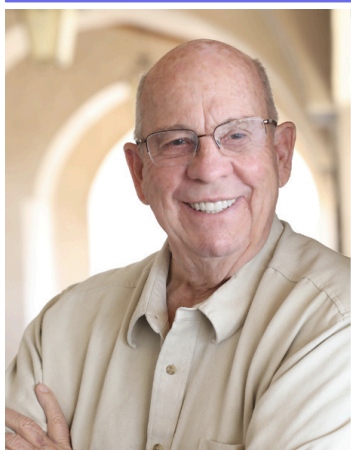


Fellow Writers: Our escrow in AZ closes in two weeks and we are rapidly downsizing. We have lots of great buys and giveaways you might want to consider. Maybe a grandson or daughter needs apartment furnishings, or someone needs hand tools. Please e-mail me at [freddigold3@gmail.com](mailto:freddigold3@gmail.com) or call me at **760 985-9164** for a list of available items.



# CWC User's Manual Now Available for Distribution

*By Bob Isbill* - CWC Publicity and Public Relations



We are proud to announce that the *CWC User's Manual*, presented to the California Writers Club central board meeting on October 22, 2023, has been revised, updated, and is now in publication.

With gratitude for their feedback to Andrea Polk, Joyce Krieg, Karen Gorback, Carole Bumpus, Tim Flood, June Gillam, Lenore Hirsch, Linda Brown, Constance Hanstedt, Roger Lubeck, Elisabeth Tuck, Mike Apodaca.

Changes to correct the publication have been made and the book, published through KDP, is available for purchase on Amazon.com. Any profits generated will be given back to the central treasury of the California Writers Club.

A free version is available on [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org) in a PDF format, available for download to anyone wanting the book. Links are as follows:

Amazon.com link for the *CWC User's Manual*

Both Kindle and Paperback versions are available

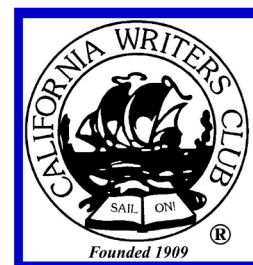
[Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com) : *CWC User's Manual*

Or get your free PDF copy by downloading it on [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org)

You will find it under the Resources banner.

[Resources for Branches | California Writers Club \(calwriters.org\)](http://Resources for Branches | California Writers Club (calwriters.org))

*CWC User's Manual*  
*How It Works*



**Bob Isbill**

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## HDC WC 2024 Elections Scheduled for June Meeting

The California Writers Club High Desert Branch will hold elections and it's June 2024 meeting. Anyone interested in running for office should contact Bob Isbill, Nominating Chairman.

The slate of officers who are willing to stand for re-election is:

Mike Apodaca for president

Jenny Margotta for treasurer

Joab Rudder Ward for VP

Ann Miner for secretary

*Any member in good standing is eligible to run for office.*

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## April Birthdays

*Therese L. Moore April 22*

# Barbara A Parish in The Phippen Art Museum



## Barbara A Parish

Artist/Teacher/Author

Women Artist of the West, Signature, Emeritus

Southern California Plein Air Painters

California Writers Club High Desert Branch Author

Nonfiction Writers Association Author

I am so pleased to tell my author friends that two of my paintings were juried into the Phippen Art Museum in Prescott, Arizona. They will hang in the museum from March to June. [www.phippenartmuseum.org](http://www.phippenartmuseum.org) To see the current exhibit, click on the WAOW Dreamweaver Catalog.

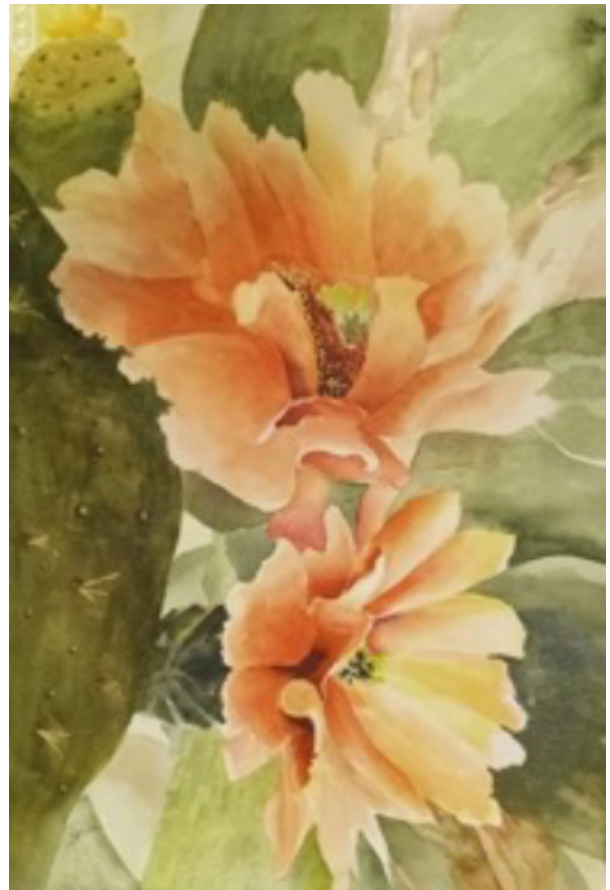
I am writing and illustrating my third watercolor instruction book, *Watercolor ~ One Point and Two Point Perspective*. I will include a short story about a funny incident that happened to me while painting on location.



**“Apple Blossom Time”**

Size 22”x15”

[www.barbaraaparish.com](http://www.barbaraaparish.com) • [barbaraparish@verizon.net](mailto:barbaraparish@verizon.net) • 760 662-3547



**“Desert Beauty”**

Size 22”X15”

# Each Step, An Unsure Grasp

*By C J Berry*



Each step, an unsure grasp

Hold your breath. Don't go too fast.

This bridge was made to last, far too long ago in the past.

Don't look down. The darkness is tempting, searching to find your weakness.

Going forward means another step. Another loose board, another broken patch. You've come so far, don't look back, you have too much to lose if you don't cross this path.

Your feet get shaky and you reach out for a helping hand.

All alone you grip the rope. Steady yourself, there is hope.

Each step, an unsure grasp. Hold your breath . . . don't forget to breathe!!!

One foot in front of the other.

Keep steady! Keep breathing! Keep climbing! Keep singing!

You're learning! You're growing! You're being! You're becoming!!!!

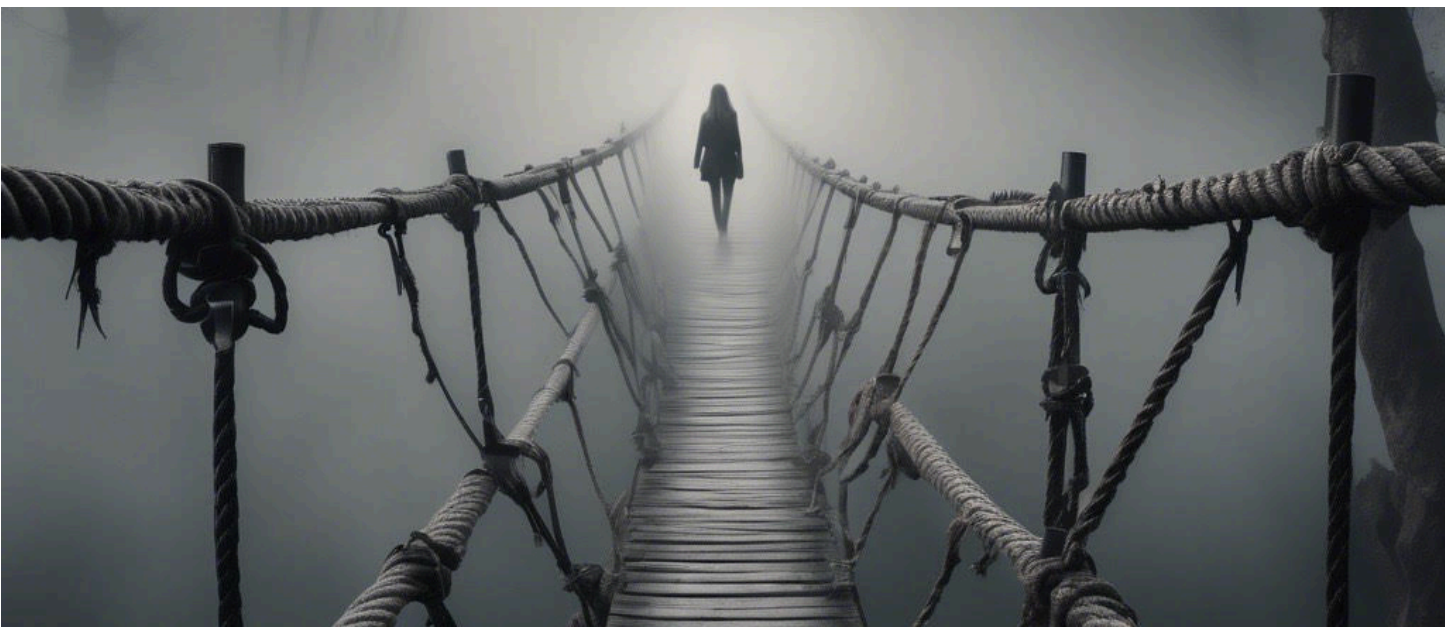
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This bridge was made to last, far too long ago in the past.

Don't look down. The darkness is tempting, searching to find your weakness.

Going forward means another step. Another loose board, another broken patch. You've come so far, don't look back, you have too much to lose if you don't cross this path.



# Dance From Your Soul

*By fumi-tome ohta*



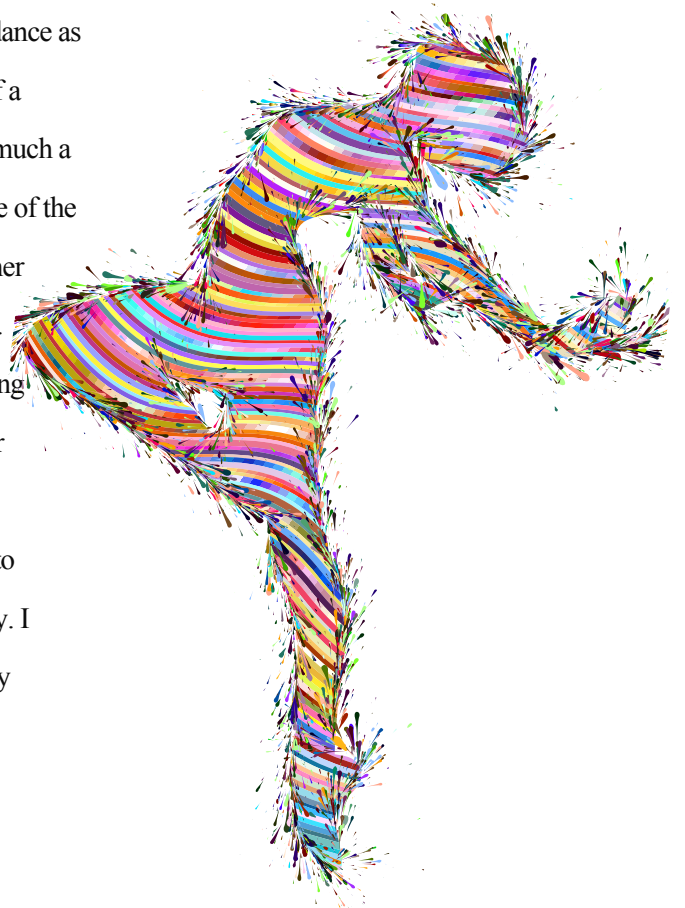
The day is over and the night is soft, gentle yet commanding. I'm in the rehearsal hall practicing Dance of a Crane at Peace over and over again. How many times have I danced this dance tonight? I'm getting dizzy and so very tired. There are no sounds except the sounds of the night such as the sound of the moon casting its silver glow, the sounds of dew forming on a leaf, the sound of my folding fan resting in my hand, the sound of hoping and wishing and thinking.

The practice hall where I'm rehearsing is cold. I wish I had a coat, a sweater or an extra layer for clothing but by school tradition and protocol we students are only allowed this particular "uniform" to wear during lessons. The dark wooden floor knows me through the movement of my feet, sliding, gliding, walking, stomping. I am alone tonight. I wish with all my heart that the walls would come alive to speak to me.

I open and close my fan with the flick of my thumb and forefinger. The fan makes a crisp forthright sound similar to the snap of the fingers. The fan opens, then I twirl it through a simple movement of my wrist. Usually, my fan feels alive but tonight, I feel nothing. I adjust my footwear then set the music to play again. I dance to my own pleasure. I never noticed it before but I'm taking my dance for granted. I'm dancing but only going through the motion. I dance as if my heart is breaking. Why? The dance I am dancing is called Dance of a Crane at Peace. The dance is not about a heart but yet, the dance is very much a dance from the heart. Every movement of my body should draw a picture of the crane's heart beating and feeling of his total being at peace. Our late teacher instilled in us to dance from our soul and to dance with everything within. Tonight, at this moment, the quiet of the four walls, the floor and the ceiling and the spirit as well as of my late teacher speak to me. "Dance from your soul."

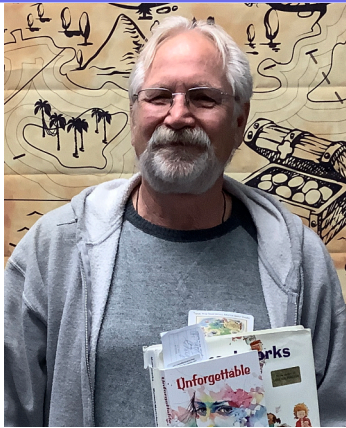
I stop. I stand there in silence. I concentrate. No distractions. I listen to the music. I begin. I am a crane in a state of total and beautiful tranquility. I will dance with my heart and soul. I feel my teacher's presence, I hear my teacher say, "Yes! Yes, that's it!"

Trust your heart! Let it guide you. "Dance from your soul."



# Reading to Kids on Dr. Seuss Day

*By Mike Apodaca*



My daughter is an elementary school teacher of children with autism at Topaz Elementary School in Hesperia. She invited me to read to her class, my grandson's kindergarten class, my granddaughter's third grade class, and another fifth/sixth combination autism class. It was a full schedule on Friday, March 4th.

I packed some of my favorite stories and my guitar and hit the road.

In the waiting area I met a woman who had just retired from being a school secretary. She wanted to explore writing. Of course, I told her about our club, gave her a card, and invited her to check us out.

I started my adventure in my daughter's class. I read, *The Paper Bag Princess* and *Pigs* both by the amazing Robert Munsch. Afterwards, I brought out my guitar and we sang, "There was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly" and "Do Your Ears Hang Low."

The kids and I had a ball.

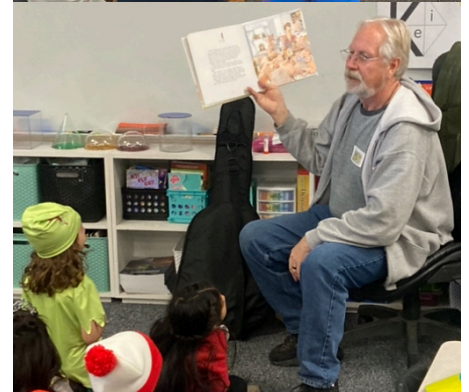
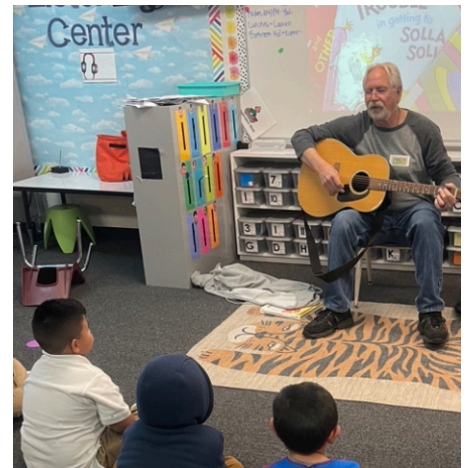
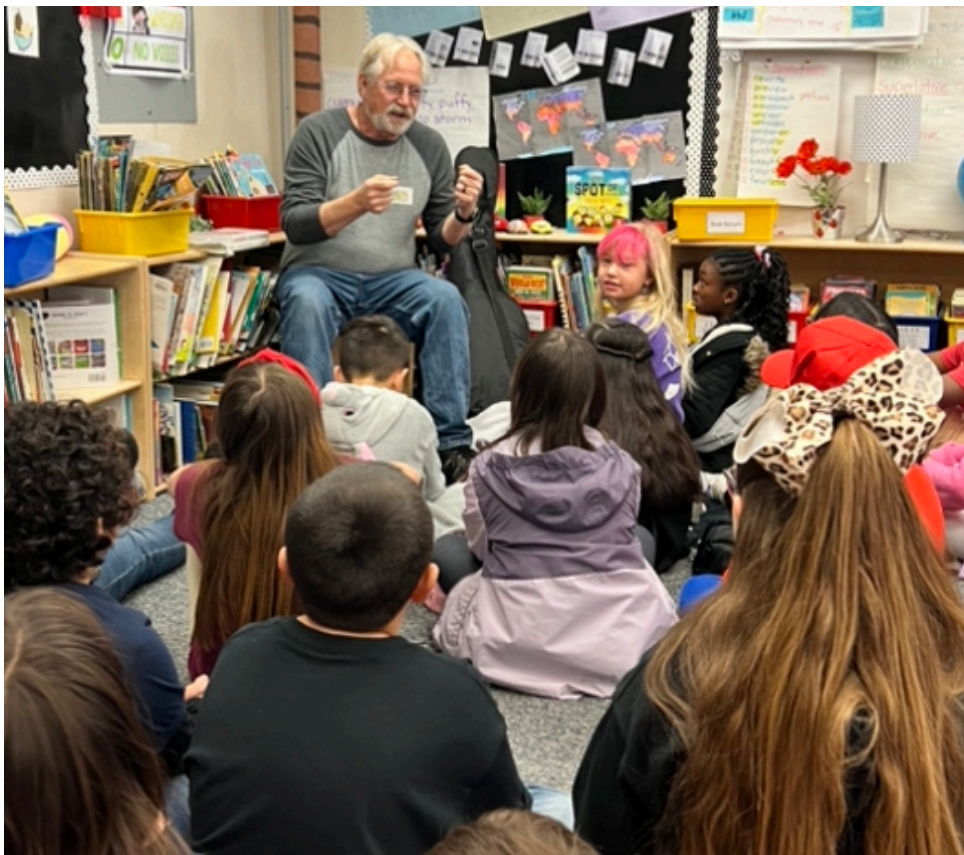
Next, I landed in my granddaughter's class. These are older kids (third grade) who have a longer attention span, so I read to them my short story "Scruffy." The teacher said it was an emotional roller coaster. My granddaughter later told me, "That was intense!"

From there I went to my grandson's class. I did the same routine I did with my daughter's class because they were the same age.

I finished my day with the other autism class and did the same routine one more time.

The following Monday, I went to Sandia Academy in Apple Valley to do more reading in classes. I had five classes, mostly upper grade. Here I shared about my Godsend series, reading the beginning and explaining the process of writing a book. They seemed very interested.

Read Across America happens every year at the beginning of March. If you like to laugh with kids and to have dozens of little ones hanging on your every word, maybe you could read for a class next year. You won't be sorry.





# Crossroads – A Memoir

*By Ann McDonald*



Yesterday, I don't remember exactly what time, but I noticed that the loss of my words was worse than the day before. I've struggled with word loss for several months now. I think it started when I took a tumble and fell down, full force, flat on my face.

I didn't realize what had happened right then, as I was just trying to get up and no one was around. I managed to roll over and raised my upper body so I could sit on the curb. I couldn't get up and there was blood everywhere.

I didn't know where it was coming from, but while waiting for someone to walk by, I touched my face and found most of the blood was coming from my top lip, which was cut through by my teeth. It's amazing how much blood flows from a lip. Then, bleeding gashes on one leg, and just a scrape on the other.

Anyway, my hands were covered with blood, so I didn't want to try and get up by leaning on a white car parked next to me. So ... I sat there and prayed. I asked God to

help me get up so I could get back to my car where my husband was inside waiting for me. He has late Alzheimer's disease and he can't think clearly about what's happening around him.

In just a few minutes, a woman showed up walking between two cars. She saw me and came right over.

"Are you okay? What happened?" she asked.

"I think I'm okay except I can't get up. Once I'm up I'll be fine. Would you mind pulling me up so I can stand up?" I asked.

"It's okay, I can get you up." The woman dropped her tote bag and walked behind me. She put her arms under my arms and just lifted me up, like I weighed nothing. I'm not fat but not skinny either. She was obviously an angel ... the answer to my prayer.

I wanted to hug her, but my face, hands, leg and clothing were bloody. While she asked what happened, three other people came out of a store behind us. After a few minutes of questions from them and offers to help getting me cleaned up, I thanked them and walked back to my car.

My husband hadn't remembered I'd been gone, as he has no sense of time. I told him I fell down but was okay. In a minute he didn't know what I told him, and he was fine. In reality I was shaky and wanted to sit in the car for a few minutes before I got out on the road.

I've always kept bottled water and paper towels in the car, and by the time I'd cleaned myself up enough to not scare anyone, my shakes had calmed and we headed for home. While I was driving home, I said a prayer of thanksgiving for the immediate answer to my prayer.

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There were several consequences of the fall. My two front teeth moved forward and to the left; headaches became much worse than my sinus headaches; dizziness frequently; soreness all over my body. It's been eight months, and I've continued to have dizzy spells and headaches.

The worse part after the teeth were fixed, and I was no longer in pain when trying to eat, I noticed I had difficulty finding words I was looking for. Over a few months it became worse and then seemed to stop. No better no worse—until yesterday.

It was an obvious change to the point of not being able to clearly state a simple sentence. I spent the evening and into the night doing research about loss of words.

I'd heard about word loss as a symptom of a type of dementia. I found ten types and read them all. One of the types of dementia's symptoms included head injury or trauma as a potential cause of word loss. It also included dizziness.

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So—here's the deal. What do I do now? I'm definitely at a crossroad in my life. It's not just me losing words. It's more about what I do if it gets worse, and I could no longer take care of my husband, and do all the things I have to do that he can no longer do. I don't sleep much, and I think it may add to the situation.

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I'm an intelligent woman, unfortunately without words, but I do understand I should go to the doctor as soon as possible. I tried to go when I fell. My friend said I may have had a concussion. I called but they wouldn't fit me in until a month later. My friend's wife suggested I call Teladoc, who happens to be through my insurance company. After giving my name and number, the doctor called me right away. He said my doctor should have had me come in within a day or two, but he told me what to do and then advised I go to Urgent Care if things got worse.

Of course—this intelligent, wordless woman—didn't go. I just didn't think it was that bad. I had already cancelled the original appointment for a month away and I went on with life as if nothing had happened. Over time I became attached to the Google page on my phone so I could find the words I needed, and it worked okay—until yesterday.

\*\*\*

The word “dementia” or Alzheimer's—a type of dementia, are frightening. It creates a picture of a man or woman losing everything and everyone they've ever known, and for the most part when it progresses, they don't know what's happening or why they are there.

However, there is that time before it gets quite that far. It's the earlier stages where memories and knowledge and daily activities are still intact. We think we're doing fine. Gradually, the happening of what appears to be normal isn't. We still do everything we need to do, but the *doing* all happens at the same time in our frenzied head. True chaos within our brain. Our mind is still functioning, but frustration, and attempts to get anything done are futile.

Until yesterday, I just thought I had too much to do because my dear husband was no longer able to do the things he's always done. Added to that, my three elderly dogs, two of which are large, need medications and specialized feeding that I cook and freeze every ten days. Our home where we've lived for thirty years is now in desperate need of getting rid of almost everything, and I don't have the time, energy or strength to clean. And ...so it goes.

Then there's the pain in my head, the dizziness, and the fear when one of my sandals almost causes me to fall when I catch it on a rug or pebble. Finally going to bed, only to lie there for three hours wide awake and then getting up to follow my husband when he wanders through the house during the night.

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Writing my memoir has become more a way of telling the truth to myself rather than a story. Are there crossroads leading in different directions for this life that I and my husband are living in? What do I do now?

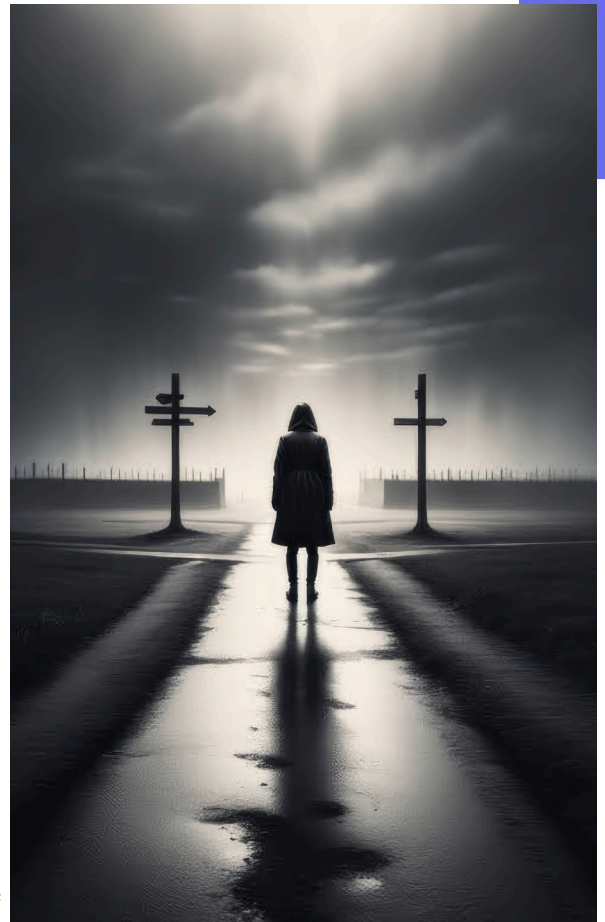
The road most traveled is by far the easiest but probably not the best. What I want is to stay where I am, do what I do, and do the best I can. Then, when something worse happens, I'll deal with it. That's what I do now, and that's what I want to keep doing.

The second direction would be the doctor, telling her everything that's happening now and before. This would create an endless list of tests, scans, and pills. The worst would be having surgery. This would end my husband's life as he knows it at that particular point.

A third direction is still in early stages of thinking it out. Possibly hiring a Home Care person who can be with my husband if I have to be away. Or maybe find a person to live with us if I already knew them. That won't happen. Moving closer to our family would be lovely—except it's a hundred miles away, too expensive to buy or even rent a house there, and all personal services we've known and used forever would not be available.

\*\*\*

After searching through all the choices I could think of last night, I went to bed. I was awake a while and slept a while. Today—my crossroad, whatever direction it turns out to be, is going to be found through my prayers and God's plan for both of us. My job in all this is to listen carefully to the whispers of God and follow the guidance given.



# Angels

*By Ann Miner*



We were looking forward to our vacation in the mountains. Reservations for a rental home had been made weeks earlier, and we had every intention of arriving there during daylight hours.

Somehow, by the time we got ready and finally got out the door of our home, it was already late afternoon. This made our arrival in Lake Arrowhead late in the evening, and it was already dark. Pitch black, in fact. With no streetlights and no idea where the rental was, we were trying to follow our GPS.

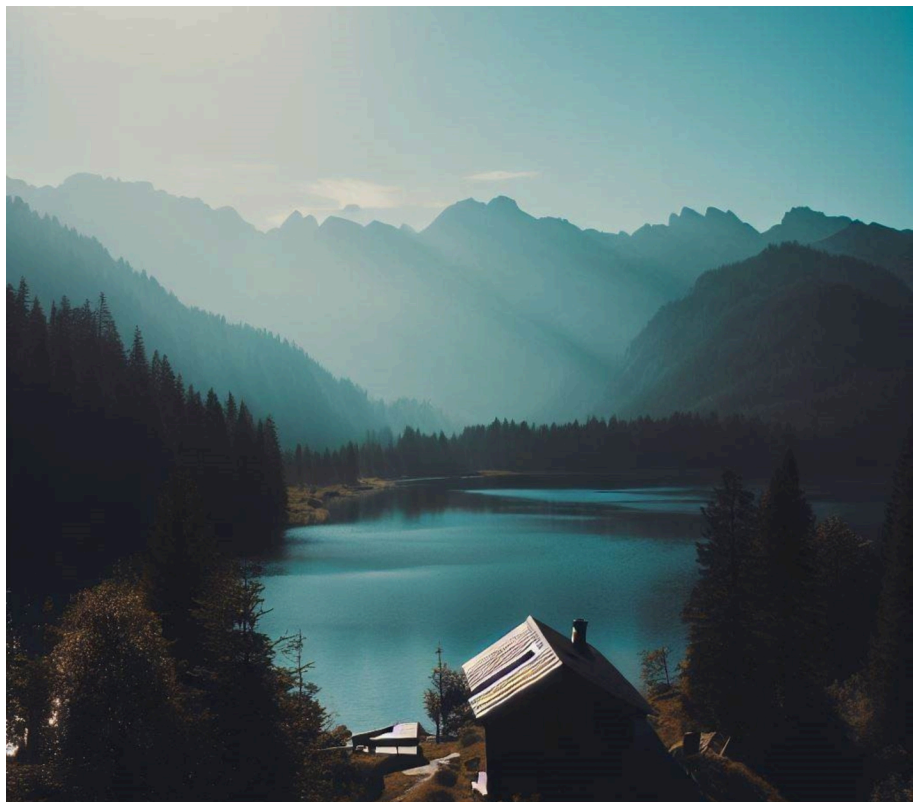
Finally, the automated voice said, "You have reached your destination." For some reason I will never know, my husband did not believe that was the place, and he kept going. But after a few yards, he decided to back up and check the address. He could not see a thing behind the car in the darkness, and as he backed the car, we were suddenly going off the side of a slope. Our back rear tire was suspended in midair, and without it, we could not move.

We were tilted seriously towards the right. I was pushed up against the passenger door, and Ron's seatbelt kept him mostly in place.

Using all the strength he could muster, my husband pushed up on his door and managed to crawl out of the Lincoln to survey the situation. I was trying to crawl uphill towards him.

Once we were out of the car, we saw just how critical the situation was, and we were grateful to not have tumbled on down the slope, possibly end over end. Determining that we did, indeed, need help, I called AAA towing. They said they would be there as soon as possible, but the big towing rig we would need to pull us back onto the road was in service, and we must wait a couple of hours before it could reach us.

We walked over to the cabin and saw that it was, in fact, the one we had rented. Deciding we should get what we could into the house so we could relax, we went back and opened the trunk. I wondered how in the world either one of us would be able to get the heavy ice chest and the luggage out of the sloping trunk and then carry it the distance to the front door.



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Out of the darkness walked a young man. He was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, with a flannel unbuttoned shirt over them.

“Would you like some help?” he asked.

Gratefully, I answered, “Oh, yes. Please!”

As he unloaded things, I asked him his name.

He said simply, “Joe”.

“Where were you headed when you stopped to help us?”

“Up the road, to see a friend,” and he pointed in the direction up the hill.

“Well, Joe, we sure do appreciate this. I don’t think we could do it without you.”

Joe carried things in and asked where to put them down. The ice chest was the heaviest, and he left it on the kitchen counter.

In all the confusion, I didn’t notice when Joe left.

The next morning, I took a walk around the area. Going up the road we were on before we backed up, I noticed that there were no other houses beyond that point. None. It was a dead-end street!

I concluded that Joe was an angel. For real.



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## **An April Salon!**

### **Book Promotion 101**

In this introduction to book promotion, Richard Spencer will cut through the confusion and misinformation that surrounds the daunting task of attracting new readers to your book. In this presentation, you will discover where to start the journey and the practical steps to take that will lead to wider exposure which will produce more sales. You have spent years writing your book. With a little more time and energy spent on promotion, you can get your “baby” in front of a lot more people.

**The salon will be held on April 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. and be led by Richard Spencer.**

**To be held at Richard Zone’s home.**

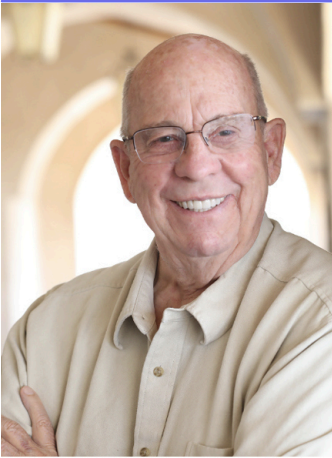
**To reserve a seat, please contact Richard Zone at: [retiredzone@gmail.com](mailto:retiredzone@gmail.com)**

**or call at 909-222-8812**

**Space is limited so don’t delay!**

# Diana Giovinazzo Featured HDCWC Speaker on March 9<sup>th</sup>

By Bob Isbill



“As an Italian girl from Central New York, there was always a stack of books by my side,” stated our March 9 guest speaker. “It wasn’t always about reading other people’s stories, I had to tell them. My first book was a compelling tale of a family making a journey along the Oregon Trail for Mrs. Dickinson’s second-grade class project. Since then, my world has revolved around books. I am a self-proclaimed history nerd with an insatiable wanderlust. However, it wasn’t until I tried to study my own family’s genealogy that I found a passion for historical fiction. Specifically, Italian and American Italian history.”

Diana Giovinazzo is the critically acclaimed author of *The Woman in Red* and *Antoinette’s Sister*. She is the co-creator of the weekly literary podcast *Wine, Women and Words*, featuring interviews with authors over a glass of wine.

Writing Historical Fiction with Strong Women Characters was her topic for our meeting, and as a part of that, she read excerpts from *Antoinette’s Sister*. However, some of the most interesting comments were made during her recap of questions and answers when she discussed a method she had of obtaining an agent. She ambitiously set the goal of contacting 100 different agents for her book. To do this she created a spreadsheet so that she could properly track the many agents she contacted. After making many efforts she finally was successful on agent number 88. Diana illustrated to us that persistence pays off. On top of a wonderful presentation, we had the pleasure of hosting her for lunch at La Casitas by the Lake. So we were able to enjoy even more of her company and writing wisdom.

Part of the goal of our HDCWC organization is to provide proximity to successful writers for our membership. This way get first-hand experience on what it is to succeed and how to go about doing so.

Diana lives in the Los Angeles area with her husband and small menagerie.



# Perfect Timing - A Note of Gratitude

By C J Berry



As I sit in the waiting room of my doctor's office I struggle as I had forgotten to bring in the book I am currently reading, *The Four Agreements* by Don Miguel Ruiz. I was contemplating heading back out to the car to grab it but worried that I would be outside when they called my name.

A quick check of my email revealed that I had just received the monthly email from the HDCWC newsletter, *The Inkslinger*.

I thought for sure I wouldn't have time to get through it all, but as I read I realized how shortsighted I had been. Doctors' offices always tend to have a very long wait! So here I am, waiting, as I have been given this beautiful opportunity to not only read all of the beautiful articles in *The Inkslinger* but now be able to write my thoughts as well.

I was excited to read everyone's poems and thought of this amazing world around us. So many beautiful perspectives from people who I am slowly learning more and more about. Not only my new community but a beautiful extension of who I am.

A short little note about me is that if you are familiar with the recent documentary "Shiny Happy People: Duggar Family Secrets," you will have a unique perspective into my life. I am grateful, as not everyone has had the unique opportunity to experience a documentary that validates your childhood in such a profound way.

After my divorce, I struggled to find my way. Although reading and writing have seemed to always be an escape during my life, now it has become my healing and my bridge to my new life.

I started the journey of sorting my way through rules, negativity, nightmares, dreams, reality, therapy, and meditation. Learning to set boundaries, love who I am, and invest in my soul!

As I take these steps, it has led me to look for a community, a group of friends who enjoy not only their own voice and thoughts but also the voices and thoughts of others. A community that believes in saying what their hearts tell them and encouraging others to do the same.

I do not know what this next part of my life holds but as I sit here in the doctor's office reading Mike Apodaca's article about mentoring, I realize that for this part of my journey, I am so very grateful for the kindness I have found in this group!

As I end this note of gratitude I am reminded of my favorite quote by Maya Angelou.

"I bring everyone who has ever been kind with me ... so I can be a Rainbow in Someone Else's Cloud."

I thank each and everyone of you for the rainbows of kindness you share every day, and I look forward to many adventures to come!



# For the Love of Ghosts

By J.P. Garner



Her book *Simone's Ghosts* won the Grand Prize at the Hollywood Book Festival in 2017. It was judged the best of the hundreds of books submitted. She not only was awarded top honors and \$1,500, but they fed her too. Her fascination with ghosts began when she was a kid. Possibly with the poem *The Highwayman* by Alfred Noyes.

A little research reveals that “. . . the poem, set in 18th-century rural England, tells the story of an unnamed highwayman who is in love with Bess, a landlord's daughter. Betrayed to the authorities by Tim, a jealous ostler, the highwayman escapes ambush when Bess sacrifices her life to warn him.” Below is an extract from Part One:

*The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees.  
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas.  
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,  
And the highwayman came riding—*

*Riding—riding—*

Notice the tale is “ghostly” and as for what an “ostler” is, I had to look that up. It is the job title of a man who cares for the horses of people staying at an inn. But it was this poem and the Georgie children’s stories by Robert Bright that sparked an interest in ghosts that deepened over the years. Later, after leaving her job with Rockwell (by then Boeing) to move to Apple Valley with her husband to care for his parents, finds her writing stories involving ghosts.

But before the novels about ghosts, there was the year after she quit her job at Farr, the company that developed the pleated air filter, that she devoted to writing screenplays. As a sixteen-year-old, she wrote a stage play for the Downey Marionette Theater. “Growing up, I auditioned for their children’s theater—no puppets involved—all the time and managed to get into their musicals,” she said of that period. “For the marionette theater, I managed to get roles, even as Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*.”

She liked theater, as well as athletics. She played basketball and volleyball in school, but her favorite game was Speedway. “It was like soccer,” she explained, “but played with a big ball and you could run with it. I was thrilled when the Marionette Theater produced my play.”



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She graduated from Redlands University with what was called a multi-subject major and eventually migrated into an office management job at Farr. Her time at the university exposed her to the many ghost stories involving a little chapel at the Redlands college that had once been a chapel at an Air Force base. It was the inspiration for her novel *Chapel Playhouse*.

Her most recent novel is *The Haunting of Peter Ashton*, which is a work of horror fiction and was a finalist in the American Fiction Awards contest ([www.americanbookfest.com](http://www.americanbookfest.com))

But her best seller is *The Accordo*, which is the third book in a series of three books built around the same main character. “The cover sells it,” she says, laughing lightly. Then she added that the book that received the most attention in England was *The Secret of Lucianne Dove*. It sold well in England for several months. In between writing about ghosts and horror stories, she has written a children’s book and a memoir.

In 2009, she joined the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club. It was here she met Michael Raff, a writer of horror novels, and together they formed Nevermore Enterprises and started attending horror conventions like Midsummer Scream and Creep IE Con. “We partnered up to save money and sell more books together.” So far they’ve attended nine conventions.

From watching movies about ghosts to writing novels about them, Roberta Smith has honed her talent over the years. Her books, recognized by her peers, are available at Amazon and are a good read if you want to be haunted on a cold, winter night, with a cup of hot chocolate, or on a warm summer day, nestled on a living room couch.

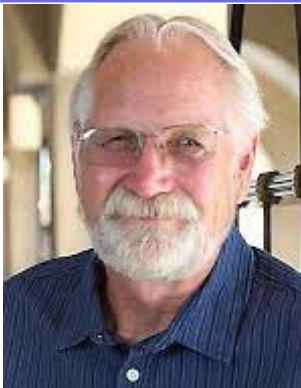
Because ghosts are everywhere.





# Women Are All That

*By Mike Apodaca*



Ronald Weasley: That's what they should teach us here, he thought, turning over onto his side, how girls' brains work . . . it'd be more useful than Divination anyway . . .

If Ronald Weasley had been at our meeting last month, he would have seen that women's brains work quite well indeed. The best way for men to understand women is to start listening to them.

On Wednesday, March 6<sup>th</sup>, we had an On-Topic meeting at the Apple Valley Library with a panel of professional women being interviewed by our own Mary Thompson. Mary asked insightful questions about the women's careers and the advice they would give to other women.

Jenny Margotta spoke about being an editor. She shared her experiences of building her business from the ground up. She told us

that her high quality is what keeps her in business.

Joan Rudder-Ward shared about her career as a photographer, film producer, and youth influencer. Joan's mission is helping teen girls find themselves and to know their worth.

Freddi Gold has had quite a career as a Marriage and Family Counselor and as a licensed Hypnotherapist. She has also been a radio host and a professor at the local college. Freddi shared how she managed to juggle all these different roles and still be a wife and a mom.



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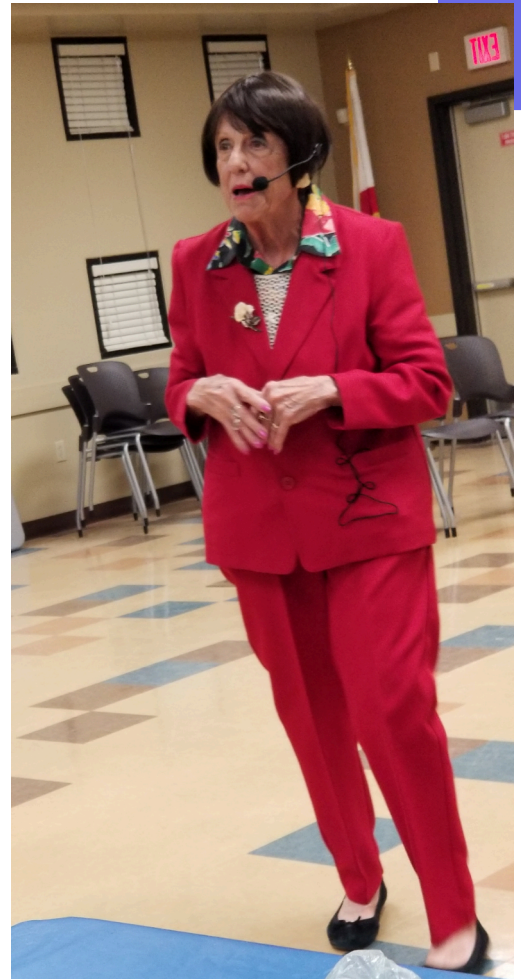
Barbara Schnier shared with us about her different early jobs (some of them quite unusual) and becoming a lawyer working in San Diego. She recently semi-retired and moved her law office to the High Desert.

Cindy Frye is a very accomplished journalist who shared with us what she learned about getting a story and getting it right. She also told us about a particular situation where she was held back simply because she was a woman. She quit that job.

Lorelei Kay ran a preschool called, Joyful Noise at her home. She talked about the responsibility of caring for very small children and keeping them safe.

After a snack break, Rosanne Smith, a friend of Mary's, did a performance impersonating Laura Bush. She told us about her childhood, her car crash that changed her life, and her relationship with George W. Bush, and being a First Lady. Her casual tone was perfect. She captivated us with her natural performance.

Thank you to all the amazing people who participated and made this an excellent evening where women were appreciated for the difference they are making in our world.



# Dwight Norris

*By Mike Apodaca*



“It’s only two hours a month,” that’s what Dwight told me when he invited me to join the HDCWC board. To be fair, this is pretty much what the bylaws say is the minimum responsibilities of the VP, this and stepping in for the president when s/he is unavailable.

When I said yes I had no idea the friend I was about to acquire.

Dwight is a character. The guy is spun from unique cloth. Dwight is one of the most caring guys I have ever met. He takes everyone seriously and believes that there is good to be found in everyone.

As far as sense of humor goes, Dwight is fast to laugh with me. We have a lot of fun looking at the crazy things of life together. But when it comes to his own jokes, well, it’s a work in progress.

And what a writer! If you haven’t read one of Dwight’s stories, poems, novels, or his biography of Sandy Armistead, you have missed out. My favorite is the novel, *Johnny McCarthy*. The first line tells it all. “The rats was never wrong.” How do you beat that? I don’t know why someone hasn’t snagged this awesome story and made a blockbuster movie out of it.

There are no pets at Dwight’s house—that is, except for the many cats in the neighborhood who have adopted him. These felines strut around the house like they own the place, and Dwight accommodates them with kind words and a smile. Oh, and cat food.

And Dwight loves this writers club. He has done so much to build it up and ensure its success. It was the four years I spent watching Dwight that prepared me to take over as president.

But Dwight has moved out of his house and is now down the hill. Over the last year or so, he has experienced some health problems. He now lives in an independent living facility in Irvine, just five minutes from his son, his daughter-in-law, and his twin granddaughters. Best of all, he is happy. He has been there for about two weeks as of this writing. He is already being noticed. People are seeking him out. He has given away several of his books. Along with these blessings, his health is heading in the right direction.

If you get a chance, give Dwight a call and chat with him or send him a card. His telephone number and mailing address can be found on MRMS. I am sure he would be very happy to hear from everyone. Fortunately, distance doesn’t mean the same thing it did in the past. I’m sure we will see Dwight on our Zoom meetings and keep in touch with him through email and our phones. I just sent him an article I wrote to give it a look over. Although he left us, his heart is still here with us.

I know we have all gained much from knowing Dwight and that we wish him well. Had he not had to move quickly (before any of us knew he was gone, actually), we would have had a big party for him. Who knows, maybe we’ll still get the chance someday.

Sail on, my friend. Sail on.



# Poetry Month

By Mary Langer Thompson



April is Poetry Month! You are invited to "A Night at the Museum: Art and Poetry" on Wednesday, April 3, 2024, from 5-7 p.m. at the Apple Valley Library in Apple Valley. This is free and open to the public.

I need art from members. If you are an artist, please submit ONE work to exhibit at our "Museum." I will accept the first 10 member artists who RSVP to me at: [mh\\_thompson@hotmail.com](mailto:mh_thompson@hotmail.com). You will need to bring your art with you to the library before the meeting for set-up. Bring an easel or something to prop up your work on a table. If you are unable to attend, have someone bring it for you who can say a few words about it.

This will be a fun evening with examples of Ekphrastic (writing in response to art) poetry and step-by-step guidance to write or start a poem to one of the pieces of art displayed around the room.

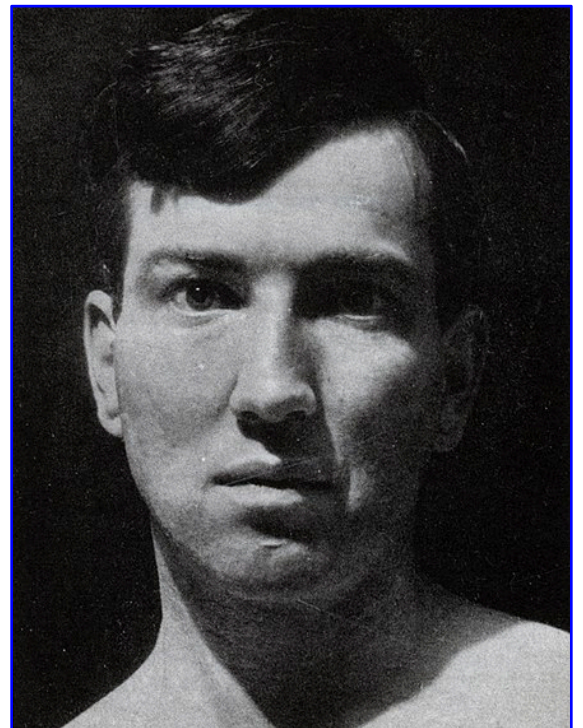
Please respond to my email by this Friday, March 29th, if you can contribute art OR if you want to read an Ekphrastic poem you have already written. Lorelei Kay, Meera Maheswaran, and I have had poems accepted for the recent CWC contest and will be published in the forthcoming *Vision and Verse* anthology, and Lillian Brown won in the art division. If anyone else was accepted in this contest, please let me know.

So let me hear from you, artists and poets! And plan to attend, April 3, 2024!

Mary Langer Thompson

“To be a poet is a  
condition, not a  
profession.”

— Robert Graves



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## Quote of the Month

*By Michael Raff*

"In the case of good books, the point is not how many of them you can get through, but rather how many can get through to you."

-Mortimer J. Adler, philosopher, educator, and author.

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## Submitting to The Inkslinger

- We seek articles and stories of between 200 to 500 words.
- Poetry submissions are welcome as are photos and illustrations accompanying submissions.

• Send submissions to  
Richard Zone  
[retiredzone@gmail.com](mailto:retiredzone@gmail.com).  
or call 909-222-8812

