



The INKSLINGER

HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC
Inspiring a Community of Writers

Sail On
December 2021



December 11th Meeting Speed Pitching, Gift Exchange, and Lunch

I could not tell you what every member of our club is writing. And I would imagine I am not the only one. During this special meeting we will be learning about each other and our work. We will be networking.



At this Saturday meeting **you will be the star**. We want to give you an opportunity to give a pitch for one of your books or stories and to hear the pitches of others. You can even pitch a book you have read. Remember, the point is to get better at pitching.

You'll get five minutes to pitch your book and to answer questions.

The best part of this is the timing—**right before Christmas!** Make sure you bring business cards and extra copies of your books in case a member wants to take one home to give as a gift. Also, be sure you bring some cash, especially if your Christmas shopping is not complete (like mine).

We will have a **gift exchange**. You can bring a copy of your book or, if you haven't written a book, bring a book you've read or any small gift (about \$10) to share. This is a festive time and we are ready to celebrate.

We're aware that we are not completely out of the pandemic, although our area seems to be doing pretty well. Wearing masks will not be frowned upon. The county does require those who have not been vaccinated to wear a mask (<https://sbccovid19.com/faq/>).

We ask that anyone who feels at all sick not attend this meeting. Please stay at home and feel better.

As usual, this will be a hybrid meeting and the pitches will be on Zoom.

After the meeting we will be eating **lunch** together at the W Spoon buffet at 14689 Valley Center Drive, just north of Costco.



December 21st Zoom with Chris Vogler

HDCWC is proud to present “The Hero’s Journey” with famed author Christopher Vogler on Tuesday, December 21, 2021 at 6:00 pm via Zoom.

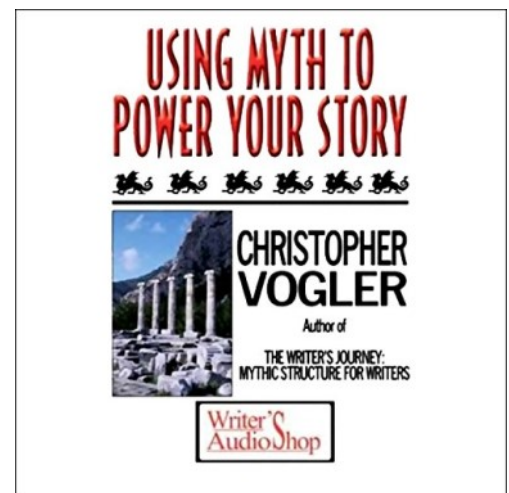
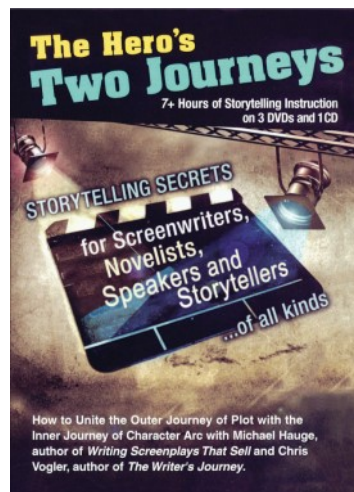
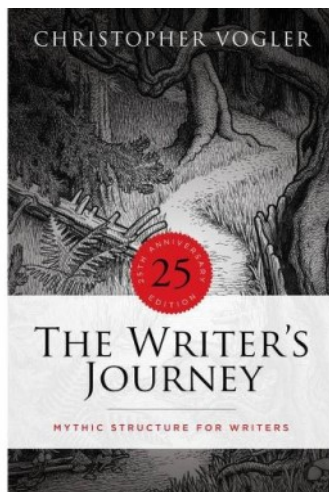
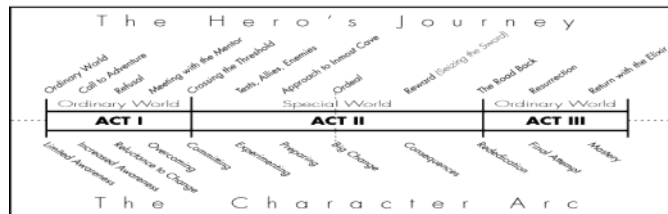
Most writers have heard of the hero’s journey and perhaps even read Chris’s book.

Christopher Vogler is a veteran Hollywood story consultant known the world over for his landmark book *THE WRITER’S JOURNEY: Mythic Structure for Storytellers*, now in its 25th Anniversary Edition. Vogler grew up in the St. Louis area, studied journalism at the University of Missouri, and began his career as a documentary filmmaker for the U.S. Air Force’s space program. After graduate studies at the USC film school, he entered the Hollywood studio system as a story analyst at 20th Century Fox. While working in the Disney story department he wrote an influential memo on the mythological Hero’s Journey pattern that became part of Hollywood story legend, influenced Disney’s *The Lion King*, and formed the foundation of his book, *The Writer’s Journey*. As a consultant he has influenced productions including Disney’s *Aladdin*, *Hercules*, *Fantasia 2000*; Fox’s *Fight Club*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Courage Under Fire*, and many others. He consults with major corporations on storytelling and branding and presents workshops globally on the power of stories to change minds and lives.

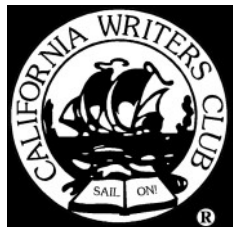


This will be a very popular presentation and space is limited. Best to join early to secure a spot.

Christopher Vogler “The Hero’s Journey”



High Desert branch
of
California Writers
Club
Board of Directors



*The following officers
and appointed positions are current for
the fiscal year of July 2021.*

President

Dwight Norris
hdcwcpresidentdnorris@gmail.com

Vice President

Mike Apodaca
Mrdaca.ma@gmail.com

Secretary

Joan Rudder-Ward
imaker@msn.com

Treasurer

Jenny Margotta
jennymargotta@mail.com

Member-at-Large

Linda Boruff
lindajeannerboruff@msn.com

Programs / Publicity Chair

Bob Isbill
Risbill@aol.com

Membership

Michael Raff
mprseven@aol.com

Newsletter Editor (Temporary)

Mike Apodaca
Mrdaca.ma@gmail.com

Webmaster

Roberta Smith
hdcwc_web@aol.com



Quote of the Month

By
Michael Raff

"Life is like a library owned by an author. In
it are a few books which he wrote himself,
but most of them were written for him."

Harry Emerson Fosdick, preacher and author.



For what it's worth

Writing is Communication

Richard Peck

Our Address

HDCWC
17645 Fisher Street
Victorville, CA 92395



Dwight Norris
from the
President

How to select a Topic When Writing

So, you want to go out and write something just to stay active. You have no particular topic or theme in mind. You just want to see if you can be clever and assemble some letters.

I did this one day years ago—went out with a writing pad and pen, sat under a tree and waited for inspiration to land on my head. Well, I saw some bugs and some birds, but since one species was not eating the other, no story line or conflict occurred to me. I waited.

Sometimes you're working on a novel or even a series. Now *that* requires some research and forethought. You want to make intelligent selections so you don't waste your time and talent. You want your effort to make a statement and create a difference in the lives of those who read it. That's a big project and will take some time. But today, we just want a little practice.

We could be stimulated by a distinguished character we can't get out of our heads, like the character-driven stories and poems we wrote for our latest anthology, *Unforgettable*. There's a lot of information to deal with in a notable character, but again, today it's a lighter effort, just to keep warm.

A writer could develop a unique perspective, maybe personify an inanimate object like a shoe or a house and inject some life into it. That didn't occur to me this day, but I was determined to not return home with an empty pad. Some expression of my creativity must be produced. At this point, I didn't know how this little writing session would turn out.

Hmmm! Turn out? How will it turn out? What will it turn out to be? I sat down and opened my writing pad, leaning back on the stout trunk of the tree, and etched out a little poem that I have kept in my files nigh on fifty years. Poetry is good for brief sketches and preserves even a modicum of creativity on one very long-ago afternoon.

Turn Out to Be?

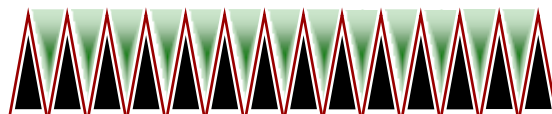
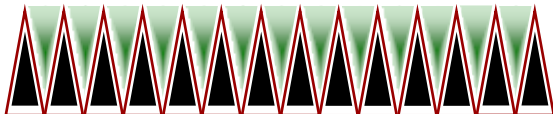
What kind of a phrase is *turn out to be*?

'Tis one of those things means nothing to me,
When thought out with care I still cannot solve,
But I guess there's a chance it could always
evolve,

We'll just have to see what it turns out to be.



**WHO'S BEEN
NAUGHTY
OR NICE...**





Mike Apodaca

**from the
Vice President**

Trust Is So Hard

I face the languid faces of those seated in the circle and say, "Hi. My name is Mike, and I'm a writer."

"Hi, Mike," voices ring out.

"This has been a tough week for me. I'm beginning to see that I don't really trust my readers."

The rest of the writers nod in agreement.

I write to be heard. My heart sinks when I'm listening to the writers in my critique group evaluate one of my pieces and they totally miss a subtle (probably too subtle) element that I had thought might wow them.

This happened with my story "A Second Jolt." The point of the story, the big "ta-da" at the end, is that the person getting the second jolt is really the Frankenstein monster. Something completely missed by my fellow editors. OUCH!

It's the fear of not being understood that causes me to write poorly. I restate things, writing them in two or (ugh!) even three sentences, just to make sure you, the reader, know what I am trying to say. I'm embarrassed to admit, I don't trust you.

In my book *INCA!* I have a line: "The vast canopy above—crammed with star clusters and dotted with blazing light points—spanned his entire field of vision."

Not great, but it gets the point across. But, because I'm insecure and want to make sure the reader completely understands, I added: "It was as if God had dumped an infinitely large bag of flour all around him. It made every night sky he'd ever seen dim and unpopulated by comparison."

Now that is truly bad writing.

I had stopped the story to over-explain, to drown the reader in needless description.

This week I've been going through *INCA!*, pruning away the bad writing.

Other writers, far better than I, also work this way. Stephen King gives this equation: 2nd Draft = 1st draft – 10%.

It's important that writers experiment and try new ways of looking at our work. Otherwise, we'll miss our common errors.

This week I started a new process (new to me). Each day I printed 50 pages of my manuscript and set myself the goal to edit those pages that day. I sat on the patio, with no distractions, and got to work. And, you know, it was great. I found so many mistakes, overstatements, weak verbs, repeated words (like "look," ugh!), and other grammatical mistakes.

When I approached the end of the book, I only had 72 pages to finish, so I decided to edit them all at once.

I went over to the Mojave River Walk (I sometimes edit while I walk), but it was so windy the pages wouldn't stay straight.

I drove to McDonalds, bought a soda, and took a table, editing pencil in hand.

The story swallowed me. Page after page led me through the events with great excitement.

My wife texted me saying, "Where are you?"

As I was texting her back, I glanced at my watch. It was 5:30. I'd been editing for five hours!

Approaching my writing with printed sheets rather than on the computer had allowed me to work in a far more productive way than ever before.

If you're finding yourself in a rut, losing your writing momentum, try something new. Work in a different way or in a different place. But, by all means, no matter what, keep on writing.

I am trying to learn to trust my readers, to give them far more of the benefit of the doubt. If they don't get what I am saying, the answer is not to say it again. It is to say it better the first time.





Jenny Margotta

from an

EDITOR'S DESK

Why I Write

I have often been asked what drives me to write. And I've spent some very enjoyable evenings sipping adult beverages and discussing the craft with friends. Most recently, I was asked (by a non-writer), "Why do you waste your time writing? You're certainly not making any money at it." I gave a vague reply, knowing the person would not understand what drives me to capture life's moments on paper.

There is something deep with the human psyche that drives us to leave a record of our existence. Cavemen painted on the walls of their caves and scratched petroglyphs into rocks to tell stories of their culture and the challenges they faced. The ancient Egyptians carried this a step forward, being among the first humans to develop a standard form of communication that developed into our modern alphabet.

Even before the idea of making a permanent record came into our heads, mankind, since he first developed speech, has, I believe, always told stories. I can conjure up images in my fertile brain of cavemen sitting around the fire, telling their womenfolk all about the saber tooth tiger they hunted that day. You know—the one that got away! Probably included lots of chest beating and bragging, too! But seriously, stories were the only form of retaining history before we developed a written language.

Druids studied for decades until they could perfectly recite hours and hours of detail about their history. In many cultures, the storyteller played as important a role as the leader of the clan. Even something as basic as knowing when to plant crops, or the best time to hunt or gather food, or how to tell when the seasons would change—all that information was passed down by word of mouth for thousands of years. Without the storytellers, that hard-earned knowledge would have had to be relearned with each generation. And stories were, I'm sure, also invented, told and re-told, simply for pleasure. So man is, by nature and by necessity, a storyteller.

With the advent of a written language, stories began to be written down, which made passing them from one generation to another much easier. But still, the storyteller was in great demand. Typewriters, computers, and the internet have only made a writer's efforts, if not easier, at least more available to wider audiences.

Most writers these days use a word processing program on a computer. Like them, the majority of my work is computer generated, although I sometimes jot down an idea or a partial storyline with pen on paper. But just because we use modern technology to produce the efforts of our imaginations does not make us less than the storytellers of time immemorial.

We just have a new medium. The human race cannot afford to lose our storytellers. They interpret and document current events for future generations. They stretch the imaginations of their audiences. Man walked on the moon and explored the depths of the oceans on paper—and from the lips of storytellers—long before such exploits were actually accomplished.

We can visit any continent on earth, any time, day or night, whenever we choose to do so, with the aid of stories. We gain insight and widen our knowledge and understanding of people and the world around us by reading what others have written. I explore publications in order to add to my store of knowledge about my favorite periods of history. I discover places and cultures I know I will never personally experience. I learn, I grow, I stretch my imagination by reading the works of old and new authors.

In a roundabout way, then, I guess that's my answer to why I write. I write because it's been in my blood for eons. I am my family's storyteller, at least for this generation. I write because I must.

I do not write for money, although it's nice when a small amount comes my way. I do not write for an audience—although I wouldn't reject "Bestseller" status should it come one day. No, I write for *me*. Because I am driven to leave a record of my world, my thoughts, my imaginings on paper. They are my own personal cave paintings.



The Most Famous Authors of All Time

BY
Michael Raff

Ernest Hemingway

Part 2

With his health declining during the late forties and early fifties, Hemingway kept writing, but his publications did not fare well with most literary critics. Upset with the negative reviews, he wrote *The Old Man and the Sea* in only eight weeks. He had been quoted as saying this was his finest work. The novella became a book-of-the-month selection, won the Pulitzer Prize in 1952, and made him an international celebrity.

While in Africa in 1954, Hemingway suffered burns and another concussion from two successive plane crashes. While recuperating, he had the rare and unsettling experience of reading his own obituaries, a startling lapse of reality. He was burned again in a brushfire, and later, his wife revealed some more injuries he suffered from the plane crashes, such as kidney and liver ruptures, two cracked discs, a dislocated shoulder, and a fractured skull. During this time, he drank more than usual in an effort to relieve the pain from his abundant injuries.

Hemingway received the Nobel Prize in Literature in October 1954. True to form he told the press that other authors deserved the prize more. It has been said that he believed the false obituary articles played a crucial part in his receiving the award.

Hemingway found himself bedridden toward the end of 1955 and early 1956. He worked on several projects including *Islands in the Stream*, and *The Garden of Eden*. His health issues made traveling and writing nearly impossible. He grew more depressed and became paranoid. While in Ketchum Idaho, his depression escalated. He was hospitalized and underwent up to ten electroshock treatments. On July 2, 1961, he killed himself with his favorite shotgun. It has been reported that he suffered from *hemochromatosis*, a condition that causes excessive iron to build which deteriorate the victim's mental and physical capacity. This is a hereditary condition, and his father, a sister, a brother, and his granddaughter—supermodel and actress Margaux—killed themselves as well. Also, because of his multiple head concussions, he may have suffered from Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, (CTE), a progressive condition that deteriorates brain tissue.

Hemingway compared his style of writing to an iceberg: the facts above the water and the structure and symbolism under the surface. His writing

themes featured war, travel, wilderness, love, loss and were for the most part, autobiographical. Jeffery Herlihy wrote, "In six of the seven novels published during his lifetime, the protagonist is abroad, bilingual and bicultural." The themes of death and those who faced death with courage and dignity and lived an authentic life dominated his work. Susan Beegel wrote, "Throughout his remarkable body of fiction, he told the truth about human fear, guilt, betrayal, violence, cruelty, drunkenness, hunger, greed, apathy, ecstasy, tenderness, love and lust."

I read *The Old Man and the Sea* while in high school. The theme of an old man against nature has had a profound influence on me, especially when the odds are stacked so heavily. The novella's style is quite simplistic and understated. After reviewing it for this article, I wrote "The Black Rock," a short story sharing a similar theme.

Fun Facts About Ernest Hemingway:

After his death, his wife, Mary, established the Hemingway Foundation and donated his papers to the John F. Kennedy Library.

In 2012 he was inducted into the Chicago Literary Hall of Fame.

Montblanc created a Hemingway fountain pen.

The movie *Wrestling Ernest Hemingway* is based on the friendship of two retired men, played by actors Robert Duval and Richard Harris, taking place at a seaside Florida town.

Hemingway's present-day estate in Key West is the home of many feral cats, the direct descendants of those who lived on the estate during Hemingway's lifetime.

Until next time, keep reading and writing!





A WRITER'S LIFE

RUSTY LAGRANGE



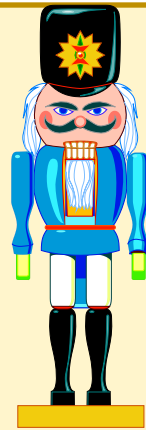
The Remington Syndrome

One of the earliest authors to have his manuscript typed in a conventional style we use today was Mark Twain. He claimed in his autobiography that he was the first important writer to present a publisher with a typewritten manuscript: *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876). Research shows that Twain's memory was incorrect and that the first book submitted in typed form was *Life on the Mississippi* in 1883, also by Twain.

But I'm splitting hairs. What makes up good social writers in a community of growing and learning "creatives" is the ability to adapt and adopt, moving along with advancements. Twain and others faced the new inventions of their era as pioneers in crafting stories.

Ernest Hemingway wrote his books standing up in front of a Royal typewriter suitably placed on a tall bookshelf. You can see his museum in Havana that houses it. Likewise accustomed to typing from awkward positions was J.R.R. Tolkien, saying that "balancing his typewriter on his attic bed (worked for him), because there was no room on his desk."

Once clanking mechanical typewriters like the Remington made headlong changes to soft key and then to electric, our ease of writing and communication allowed the affordable prices to reflect the sudden increase of more writers across the world. Typing in frontlines, backrooms, unconventional niches—wherever the need arose—the machine was there.



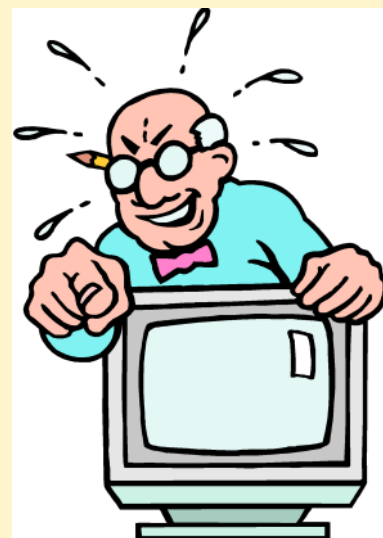
For every step forward, there were those who reacted slowly to embrace the modern changes. Pen and ink gave way to ballpoint then gel pen and email. Those with the means to own a computer also faced the reality that email and sending emails in all of its formats was now our reality.

The pandemic brought several generations of reluctant writers to the computer. And with the ease of younger minds leading their grandparents into the new age of Zoom rooms and video chat, well, all we can do is embrace the new technology and *Learn Onward*.

Keeping in touch is not user-friendly for some, and diving into Social Media platforms is downright scary. Do we really need all of them?

Years ago, I hung my shingle as a "Computer Tutor" to help seniors in my town cope with using computers gifted to them by well-meaning grandkids. A few let dust sit on them; others reluctantly asked for help to send and receive. They were the brave ones in the 1980s who, fearful of pressing the wrong button and making the computer explode, asked for help in two-hour sessions.

I even find myself asking for help when updating programs leaves me in the dust. It's better than wondering how fast technology is leaving you and your friends behind. Ask for help if you haven't figured out how to make your emails whiz, your video chats amaze, your YouTube channels swing, and your Zoom rooms zing.



Club Meetings

HDCWC CELEBRATED A NEW ANTHOLOGY

It was something like giving birth. Now, being a man, I cannot attest to what women go through in the battleground that is childbirth (I do remember yelling for my wife to breathe when she pulled my hand over and bit me during a contraction).

The birth metaphor only goes so far. How about this: it was like making Stone Soup? Many came and contributed their spicy and flavorful ingredients in the pot and, before you knew it, we had the most delicious soup!

Saturday, November 13, our club celebrated a big win—the revealing of the newest HDCWC anthology, *Unforgettable*.

The morning started with a jubilant Dwight Norris welcoming all. He gave out the awards and cash prizes (pretty nice ones) for poetry and then for prose.

The legendary Michael Raff won two well-deserved prizes for prose: third and first place.

Jenny Margotta began the readings by sharing her fourth-place story—an excerpt from a book she is writing, called, “Paisan, a Story of War.” I had read the story before but delighted in hearing it again. I told Jenny I’d be buying the book. Jenny’s weaving of research and story is first rate.

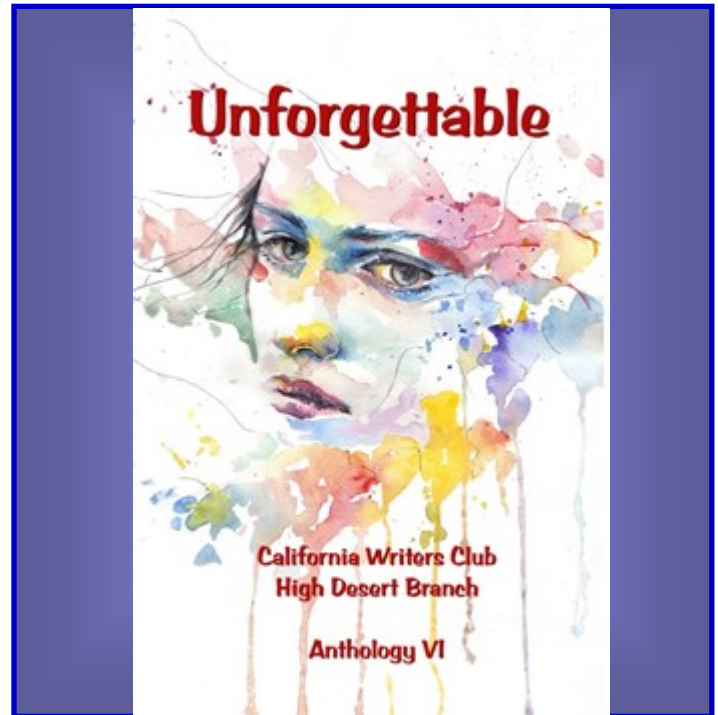
Next, Mary Thompson read her fourth-place poem, “Whatever I Wanted”, written in the voice of Salome (the girl in the Bible who kept losing her veils).

Jenny Margotta then read Michael Raff’s third place story, “The Salvation of Edward Wilson.” I wasn’t the only one fighting back tears. You’ll see when you read it. Michael Raff is a master at understatement and allowing the story to tell itself. You don’t read this story, you feel it.

Rusty LaGrange shared her third-place poem, “After the Bridge is Down.” It made me think of the new bridges I need to build with some people.

Dwight Norris followed with Perrin Pring’s second-place story, “Roxy’s Got PTSD.” This is a quirky story written by a woman who worked many years in Yosemite. I won’t ruin this fascinating story for you, but it is a must read.

Joan Rudder-Ward showed that she really can do it all by reading her second-place poem, “Unrequited Love.” The twist at the end will give you a start.



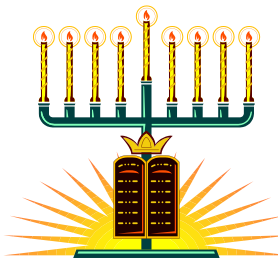
Lorelei Kay read her first-place poem, “Those Tantalizing Reds.” I was transported, rooting for her creative mom, who transformed a stale kitchen into a work of art.

Michael Raff ended our meeting by reading a small (too small) selection from his masterful story “Donny Sharp.” The first time I read this story, I had to wipe away tears. Mike shared with us that the main character in the story is patterned after a real child he knew when he was working in a psych ward. This kid made a lasting impression on Mike and now he is happy that others will know Donny’s story. He was quite a beautiful soul.

Unforgettable has many stories written by a number of our authors. It is a fine book, one we are very proud of. If you haven’t secured a copy yet, we will have them for sale at our next Saturday meeting.

Oh, and special acknowledgment should be given to Michael Raff, Steve Marin, and Jenny Margotta, who supervised the creation of this masterpiece. Jenny came up with the cover and did the editing and the layout. Another person who can do it all. Thanks also goes out to our judges. Choosing the best from this mix of excellent submissions was no easy task.

Trying to find that perfect Christmas gift? Well, look no more.



Continued on page 9



Club Meetings

HDCWC CELEBRATED A NEW ANTHOLOGY



Pictures from Bob Isbill



ACT II

Brian Gaps President, OC Branch

On Tuesday, November 23rd we were treated to a mind-blowing presentation by Brian Gaps, the president of the Orange County branch of the California Writers Club.

The focus of the presentation was marketing, both our branches and our books.

He began with a metaphor—fish. For every different kind of fish, we need a different bait.

Mr. Gaps showed us how he uses Meetup.com to announce his club meetings and to generate interest. He says he has picked up 17 new interest people in the last month because of Meetup. This website appeals to a younger demographic, one that uses technology and social media as the modern word of mouth.

Organizations need to be agile to survive a rapidly changing world. Mr. Gaps explained that positive results come as a consequence of many small choices.

We were encouraged not to be afraid to stop something if it is not working. We need to be careful, however, to differentiate between something that is not working and something that is working slowly.

We are a community of
writers.

Brian Gaps



Mr. Gaps gave us many practical suggestions of ways that we can get the word out. He shared with us several things about emails and different email platforms and their strengths and weaknesses.

The best take-away for me was how Mr. Gaps put his finger on the one thing that makes clubs great—that is providing their members with a sense of belonging. It is to create a community of writers.

During the age of COVID, this has been the main thrust of the board. We have tried to maintain our community through the newsletter, our club meetings (two a month), critique groups, the Wednesday morning check-in meetings, club parties (like the 31-year celebration we had at the Isbills' home), and projects like the On-Topic Speakers, the DCB Project, and the Scholastic Arts and Writing Project. Along with this, our president, Dwight, has made it a point to personally contact our members every so often.

There were many clubs represented in this meeting. We had 44 people in attendance. One of the club leaders said he had no one who knew anything about technology. We seem to be blessed with so many tech-savvy people that I do not have the space to name them all. One of the clubs has no newsletter. And at least one of them is just now returning to in-person meetings, and they are not planning to also have them available on Zoom.

Brian Gaps showed us many areas we can improve on. But he also showed us our club has many strengths.


Mike Apodaca



An Opportunity to Make a Difference

Last month I walked alongside the dry Mojave River bed talking with Debbie Rubio and her foreign exchange student. I was deeply impressed with Debbie's passion and her desire to help people. We have a club of members who want to make a difference. Here is an opportunity for us . . .

The Scholastic Art and Writing Contest

The 2022 Scholastic Awards are open! Register now to enter your work. 



STUDENTS ALUMNI EDUCATORS PARENTS



FOLLOW

GOT QUESTIONS?

LOGIN

THE AWARDS

PROGRAMS

GALLERY

SUPPORT

MY REGION

How to Enter

Recognition

Scholarships

Award Selection

History

The nation's longest-running, most prestigious recognition program for creative teens

What We Do

Our members serve as judges. We take a group of writing (called a panel) and we give it a rating according to a rubric. This will be my third year judging, and I enjoy it. I get to read some wonderful stories and know that I'm touching the lives of junior high and high school students from across the country (last year we had some from Canada!). The best of these writings will end up in an anthology put together by Scholastic.

The average judge will have to assess from ten to twenty stories over a three-week period. You can choose to judge poems, stories, or essays.

Our own Jenny Margotta has put together a terrific PowerPoint for training our judges. She'll be presenting this on December 14th at 6:00 pm on Zoom.

If you would like to be a judge this year (and believe me, you do), contact Dwight Norris at hdcwcpresidentdnorris@gmail.com

Mike Apodaca



On-Topic Speakers for You Gaining Ground

How Can I Get My Books Sold?

With a heavy investment of research and time, you have written your book(s)—a repository of your ideas and original point of view. You put your treasure on Amazon, where you are hoping people find it and buy it. What can you do to boost your sales? You can become a speaker who speaks to various groups (most of which will pay you) and sell your books. Think about how many authors our club has sponsored through the years. That could be you. Speaking is how you and your work become known.

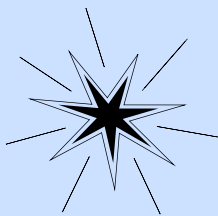
How Can I Get Involved?

Contact Bob Isbill at risbill@aol.com and let him know you are interested. Send the following information to me (Mike Apodaca) at mrdaca.ma@gmail.com.

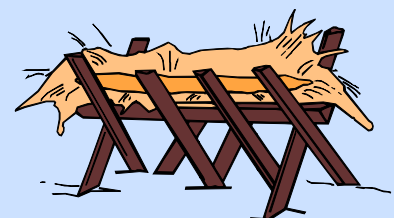
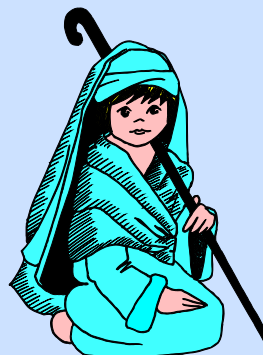
- ◆ A headshot
- ◆ A short biography (one that you would want to be introduced with)
- ◆ A list of presentations you will do with a short logline
- ◆ Pictures of your book covers and a short description of each book
- ◆ Any social media or website you want linked to your page

Put together your speech, including your audio visuals (PowerPoint, videos, artifacts, etc.). Practice your speech. Keep studying and become an expert on your topic. Contact Bob Isbill and see if you can practice your presentation for an audience.

We launch our On-Topic Speakers for You Website in January. We intend to begin the new year with new opportunities for your to introduce yourself and your passion and sell your books.



Mike Apodaca



Help Wanted: Storage Unit Manager

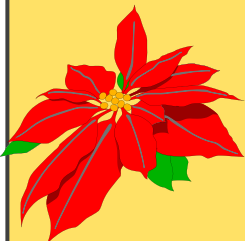
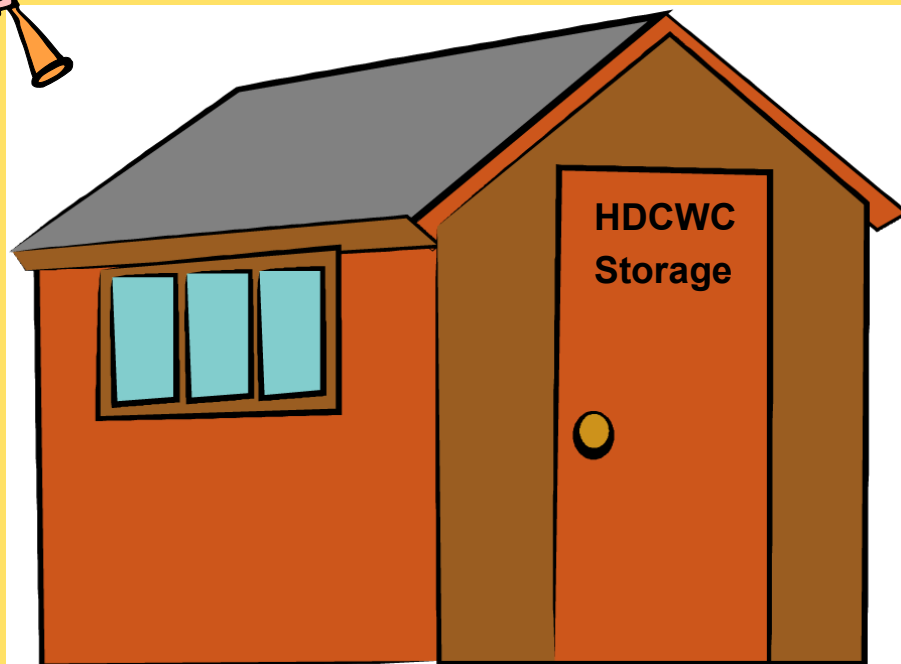
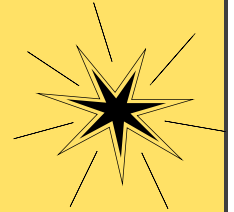
If you are that person who straightens every picture when you enter a room, we want to talk with you.

If you have ever reorganized a messy and disorganized shelf in a store and felt great satisfaction afterwards, then this might be your next venture.

If you have ever offered to clean someone else's messy room, then you might have what it takes for this job.

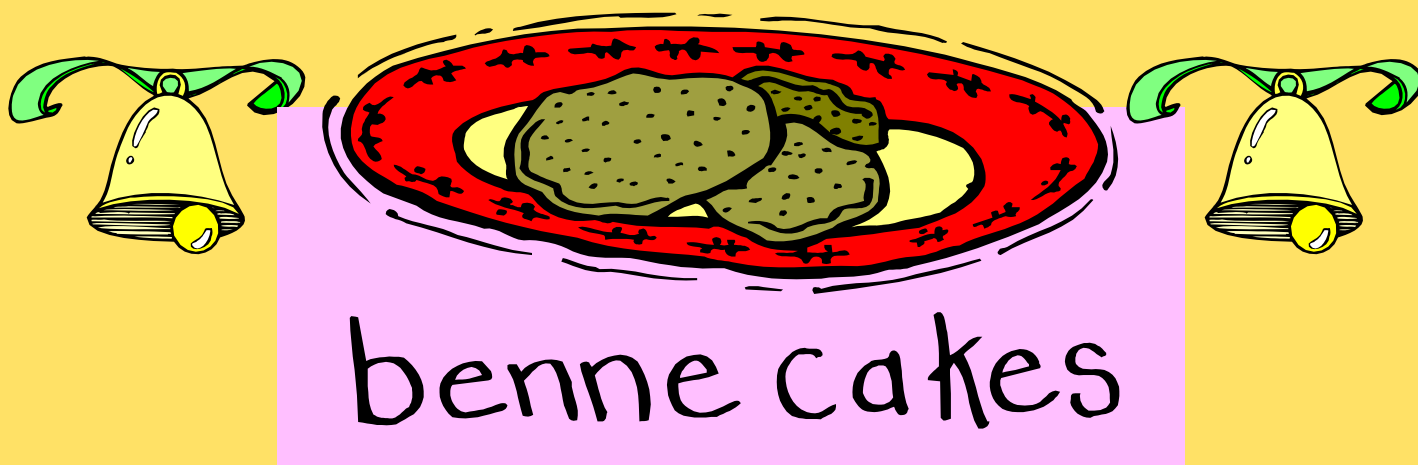
The latest **HDCWC volunteer opportunity** is for a Storage Unit Manager. We currently have a storage unit that would drive a person with OCD right up the wall. It's become the place where we "stuck" things for a while and now, to be quite honest, we aren't even sure of everything that is in there. What we need is someone who would be willing to donate some time for a few weeks to organize and clean out our current storage area, make an inventory list of what we have there, and then organize it all so that it becomes useful. Also, be available to help when we need things from storage.

The Board's hope is that we'll eventually have a fully working storage system with an inventory that is functional. In other words, we want to go from simply storing stuff to keeping things ready for use. We want this facility to change from stuff that sits to vital tools that are used. If you are interested in this opportunity, please contact Dwight Norris at:
hdcwcpresidentdnorris@gmail.com.



It's Time to Invite a Friend

I've had two friends join HDCWC in the last couple of years. These are people who are very talented writers who needed a writing community to propel them into becoming better writers and, possibly, to help them with the mechanics of publishing. When you meet someone who would like to write, or someone who is already writing, who might even have aspirations to publish, invite them to check out the club. Show them the website and the *Inkslinger*. Show them our social media (YouTube and Facebook). I was so happy to see Ann Miner with three guests at Saturday's club meeting, people she knew who were writers and who might be interested in our club. That's the spirit. Thanks, Ann. You're an inspiration.



Attention All Members

The absolute best way to hone your writing is by joining a critique group. One such group is seeking at least one other member. Contact Michael Raff at mprseven@aol.com for details.

What My Critique Group Has Done For Me

Last Saturday, after our HDCWC meeting, I went to my church for an apologetics conference. I had read the book of the man who was the main speaker and had just enough time to get to the church to hear his presentation.

One of the benefits of being in my critique group is that I have learned how to think more critically and to understand the problems in a manuscript. When I read this speaker's book, I found some major structural flaws. The book itself was good, but the total effect was skewed because of this inherent weakness. So I wrote the man a letter, explaining what I had found and giving him page numbers and examples.

After the presentation, the man left the stage. I had wanted to talk with him and hand him my letter, but he was gone. I checked the table in the foyer where they were selling his books—not there. I checked the parking lot—not there. Oh well, I thought, it was not meant to be. I turned around and he was walking right at me. I approached him, shook his hand, and introduced myself. With a trembling voice I explained that I really liked his book but that I felt it could be stronger. After I made a few quick points, he told me that our meeting was providential. He said he'd been getting very heated emails and that my observations helped him make sense of them. He also said he had recently been hired to write a study guide to go with his book and that, because of our conversation, he would make some needed changes.

This is what I've gained from my critique friends (Anita and Tim). The ability to see with new eyes. **Mike Apodaca**

Did You Know HDCWC Has a YouTube Channel?

Oh no! You missed a HDCWC meeting. You had another engagement that you could not get out of. We get it. Life happens. And spouses and families come first. There are times that other things take precedence over getting to a Saturday or Tuesday meeting. So what can you do if you really wanted to hear the insights and wisdom of the speaker you missed? You can go to our YouTube channel.

And what if you are at a point in your writing journey and you need some guidance? Maybe you want to write a book and don't know where to start? Maybe you are ready to publish? Maybe you need advice on publicity. Thanks to the multi-talented Joan Rudder-Ward, our meetings have been professionally edited and archived for your use. Here are links to some of our presentations:

Writing:

[2016 TE Watson Writing Books for Children](#)

[2016 Greg Fournier Writing True Crime](#)

[2017 Mary Vensel White: Tools and Techniques for Self-editing](#)

[2017 Christina Hamlett What is the Best Vehicle for your Story?](#)

[2017 Harry Cauley The Writer's Life](#)

[2018 Christina Hoag Writing Outside Your Comfort Zone](#)

[2018 Cherie Kephart Healing Through Writing](#)

[2018 Gary McPherson A Writer's Journey](#)

[2019 Coração de Cowboy film A Cowboy's Heart](#)

[2019 Dave Berg Writing Biography](#)

[2019 Tensie J. Taylor Bullying Victim](#)

[2019 Frank Girardot Murder Investigation](#)

[2019 Glen Hirshberg A Writer's Journey](#)

[2019 Panel Discussion: You are Never Too Old or Young](#)

[2021 Griz Drylie Writing History](#)

[2021 Maggie Downs How to Write a Memorable Memoir](#)

[2021 Jules Horn Method Writing and Writing for Audio Books](#)

[2021 Marilyn King Organizing for Better Storytelling](#)

Publishing and Marketing:

[2018 Anna-Marie Abell Marketing Basics for Authors](#)

[2018 Ken Rotcop Pitching Your Story Perfectly](#)

[2018 L. J. Gambone Press Releases: The Marketing Tool That Can Make or Break You](#)

[2018 Panel Discussion: Selling Your Books](#)

[2020 LeAnne Krusemark Writing Irresistible Query Letters](#)

[2020 Paul Levine Legal Aspects of Writing](#)

[2020 Paul Levine Copyright](#)

[2020 Mike O'Mary Book Promotion](#)

[2020 Fred Dodsworth Taking Control of Your Writing Success](#)

[2021 Bernadette Lockett The Key That Opens a Million Doors](#)



Mike Apodaca

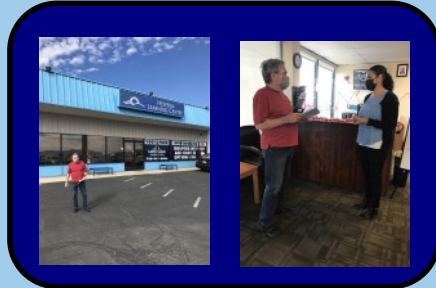


Dwight and Mike on the Road

On November 16th and 17th, Dwight Norris and Mike Apodaca, our president and vice president, hit the road, telling local high schools about the Scholastic Arts and Writing contest. Our club provides judges for this event, and we wanted to get as many schools involved as possible.



Excelsior High School



Hesperia Learning Center



Hesperia Junior High School



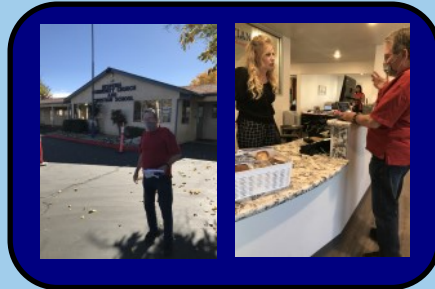
Hesperia High School



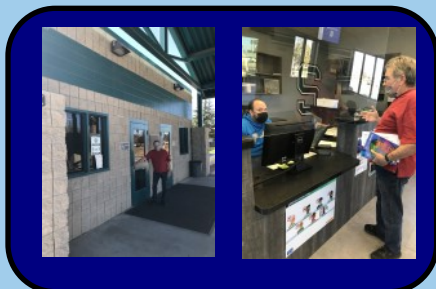
Victor Valley High School



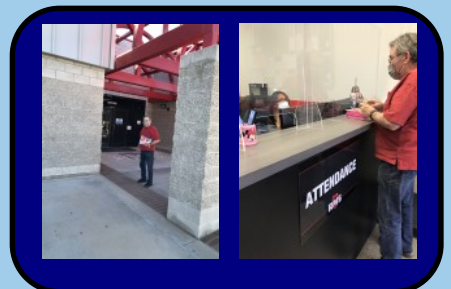
Mirus Secondary School



Hesperia Christian School



Sultana High School



Rancho Middle School



Oak Hills High School



Encore High School



Mojave High School

Mike Apodaca

Professional Photography Bargain for Headshots Set Up for February 6th

Several of you were unable to take advantage of the August 15, 2021, photo shoot. Because of this, and because many of you have now seen the quality of those photos, we have requested Joan Rudder Ward to do another photo session for CWC members and their family and friends.

Some of the comments by those who attended on August 15 were: "Beautiful work!" "Incredibly professional!" and "Outstanding value!"

Through her generosity, we are again able to offer an extraordinary value for two professional headshots for only \$30.

Joan will provide 2 jpeg files of softly retouched photos. Each photo will have one 5x7 300 dpi format and an emailable publicity jpeg file for your portfolio. The cost for each photo is \$15 when combined in this deal!

Note: This offer is for the jpeg files only. Participants may obtain prints on their own through Walgreen's or Costco for example.

This remarkable value would ordinarily cost around \$150. This is only one more example of getting your money's worth out of being a member of the CWC! Please make checks for \$30 payable to **The Image Maker**. **PayPal will not be available for this amazing offer.** Personal checks or money orders only, mailed to:

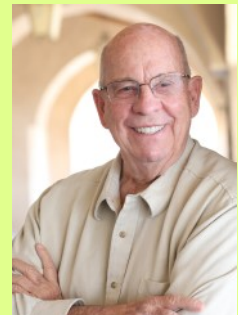
HDCWC
17645 Fisher St.
Victorville, CA 92395

This offer is also extended to the Inland Empire Branch and is anticipated to fill up fast, so don't delay. First come, first served, and once the maximum number of clients is reached, the offer will be withdrawn.



Sunset Hills Memorial Park
24000 Waalew Road
Apple Valley 92307

Sunday, February 6, 2022
9:30 am to 3:00 pm



Group photo times to be announced prior to that date

We will also be taking a group photo of our **Scholastic Judges** on that day, so be sure to attend. Another photo of our members present will be taken at that time also.

Those interested in this offer, please notify us by emailing hdcwc@aol.com. Put your name and the word Photo in the subject line.

Put the desired time of your photo appointment in your email. **Upon receipt of your check, we will make every effort to comply with your requested time slot.**

Because of this great value, there will be no refunds if appointment is cancelled by the member or in case of no-shows on the date of photography. The only refunds that will be made are if this offer is cancelled.

A New Critique Group!



Marilyn Ramirez (King) is starting up the Wordsmith's critique group again. Meetings will be held twice a month on Thursday evenings at 6:00 pm. If you've been wanting to join a critique group that is serious about getting your work published, this group is for you.

You can contact Marilyn at:

marilynking6318@gmail.com



Any member can start a critique group. You just have to let me know (as Marilyn did) at mrdaca.ma@gmail.com and I will get the word out through this newsletter. Being a member of a critique group will definitely improve your writing. It will also give you a team that will cheer you on as you venture out into publishing.

Mike Apodaca

Marketing Thoughts

Word of the Month

By Jenny Margotta

Pictograph [ˈpɪktəˌɡrɑːf] NOUN

Also: pictogram, pictogramme, picto, or, in computer usage, an icon.

A graphic symbol that conveys its meaning through its pictorial resemblance to a physical object. Pictographs are often used in writing and graphic systems in which the characters are to a considerable extent pictorial in appearance. A pictogram may also be used in subjects such as leisure, tourism, and geography.



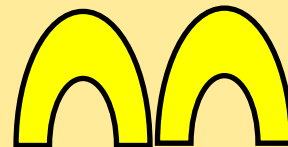
Pictographs are very powerful. We are visual creatures and relate to the world through our main sense—sight.

When our daughter was just two years old and beginning to relate to the world, we took her to the Science Museum at Exposition Park.

As we were walking into the museum, we passed a symbol on the wall—two golden arches. Our two-year-old perked up and said, “MdDonal! Hangberggur and frah frahs!”

Marketers know the power of symbols and pictographs.

Mike Apodaca



The Most Wonderful Time of the Year

This is a wonderful time of year to boost your sales. People everywhere are looking for that perfect gift for the one who has everything. What they don't have is your book.

Send out a message on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Announce it on your website.

Think about doing a special sale on Amazon to get people buying your books.

The clock is ticking. Time to get the word out.

Let's Walk and Talk: Weather Permitting

I can't be the only one who needs to exercise. A great way to get our needed daily steps is to walk the Apple Valley River Walk, a wide two-mile walkway of beautifully laid concrete. The ground is level and easy on the feet. It's one of the great features of the Victor Valley.

On December 28th at 2:00 pm, we will meet at the starting point of the trail, just east of Victor Valley College, up from the Campus Police Station.

Directions: From Bear Valley Road go north on Mojave Fish Hatchery Road then a quick right on the first street (the one next to the Campus Police Station). Take that road to the end and you'll see the covering over the tables where we'll meet at 2:00.

Suggestions:

Wear comfortable shoes

Watch the weather and dress appropriately

Use sunscreen and bring a hat and sunglasses

Bring water

Come ready to make a friend

Mike Apodaca

Put it on your calendar now before you forget



Prose

Little Robert

By Tom Foley

In 1984 I was a field service representative working for General Electric, assigned to assist Zambian Airways during the launch of their fleet of one DC-10 into service with GE jet engines installed. Zambia was a socialist country with close ties to Moscow. The country was broken down into the haves and have nots. The have nots were in the majority. The poverty was extensive and extreme. I marveled at people's ingenuity under the adverse conditions. During this trip, two individuals stand out in my memory. Samuel Tembo an engineer for the airline who befriended me and showed me parts of his country a regular tourist would never see, taking me on a fishing trip at his tribal cabin on a lake miles from anywhere. I found him to be an amazing man who introduced me to an even more remarkable little man named Robert. (This is an outtake from my memoir).

Samuel Tembo found me at work one morning with a kid in tow. He said, "Mister Foley, I'd like to introduce you to my friend Robert." The squeaky clean, skinny little guy was dressed in a spotless white t-shirt, brown shorts sporting boney knees, and sandals. With his short hair neatly groomed, it was obvious it would take a while for him to grow into those ears, and his infectious smile overflowed with an overabundance of pearly whites. The kid just bubbled with enthusiasm.

I said, "Do they call you Bobby."

Samuel rolled his eyes.

"Oh, no sir, my name is a gift from my parents. It describes me and announces to all that can hear that *Robert* has arrived. It is not to be slandered, shortened, or maligned." (He was twelve going on forty).



I thought I was talking to a miniature member of the English Parliament.

I looked at Samuel and asked, "Where did you find this precocious little guy?" (Samuel had already told me the story when we were fishin').

"Robert, please tell Mister Foley how we met."

The kid puffed up and smiled, "One day . . . a long time ago, I snuck onto the airport laborer truck, trying to find work. Everyone said the pay was the best at the airport. One of the bosses told me I was too small and should walk back to town. Discouraged, I was making the long walk back when a truck pulled up and asked if I wanted a ride. It was Mister Tembo."

Samuel picked up the story. "He was a street urchin, ragged clothes, in dire need of a wash and a haircut. He looked like a little girl." Robert smiled. "Most kids ask for money. He didn't. He asked me for a *word* and retrieved a small wad of paper and the nub of a pencil from his pocket. Robert said, 'It must be a word I do not know. I know many of the easy ones.'"

Continued on page 23

Prose

Little Robert

Continued from page 22

By Tom Foley

Samuel said, "Why do you need a word? Do you not go to school?"

"No, they say I am too stupid to learn, so I learn—my way."

"Do you know the word *admire*?"

"No, how do you spell it?"

"A-D-M-I-R-E" is someone or something you feel strongly about because of their skills or qualities."

Robert wrote like a mad person, then smiled then said, "Like a school teacher?"

Samuel said, "Yes, like a school teacher. That was four, no five years ago. I took him to a chap from university, and he diagnosed Robert as having dyslexia, the reason he was having trouble with words. Since then, I placed him with Sister Agatha at the Catholic Mission for his education. She works with him if he falls behind and keeps him out of trouble. I promised him I would ask you to show him the spare jet engine and explain how it works. If you have time."

Robert looked up at me with his huge brown eyes, too large for his head, in anticipation. I said, "Of course." I think Robert was the happiest twelve-year-old in Zambia that day. I spent the afternoon answering each of his questions on how a jet engine works in terms even my school teacher, cousins, or liberal friends could understand. (I keep telling myself I shouldn't do that . . .)

Robert was in heaven.

Samuel explained Robert had no parents. Like the hundreds of street kids in Lusaka, he had been abandoned. At first he was passed to family and then friends. As he grew, he was put to work, then passed along or traded as barter. Never knowing his parents, his last name was lost, making his first even more precious. The only thing he owned was his name, and he wanted to believe his parents presented it to him. Robert was fortunate in finding a mentor in Samuel. Most don't. The street kids are predestined to a life of illiteracy, minimal skills, low wages, and no future.

I haven't thought of this duo in years, but I smile every time I do. Samuel should be retired by now and probably regularly visits our fishin' hole, and I suspect he still mentors derelict kids. Robert is a grown man guided by Samuel's tutelage. Hopefully, he continued his search for words, and by now he knows *all* the easy ones. I wonder if he mentors disadvantaged kids with no future? I believe this to be a rhetorical question. Of course, he does. It's in his nature after Samuel's governance.



Centrifugal by fumi-tome ohta

I was at library bookstore where I found a few good reads for the night. As I was at the checkout a volunteer told me the cost of my purchase of \$1.50. As I was looking for my money, I kept forgetting the amount and so I kept asking her to repeat the amount as I searched my coin purse. When I had set out \$1.95 and was still searching for more coins, she raised her voice, "\$1.50," she said with an irritated edge. I left the library shaken at my lack of concentration and memory retention. What was the matter with me? I grew concerned that this would be an indication of my mental decline and how people would start to treat me, as an irritation to society.

Next, I went to the credit union. I stepped up to the window and presented my check to the teller. "I'd like to deposit this check into my savings account," I said. As she typed in my account number, she turned to me and asked, "Where would you like to deposit this check?"

"Into my savings," I replied.

She nodded in acknowledgement as she continued to type, "You wanted this check deposited into your checking account?" she asked.

"No, into my savings," I said.

She went back to her computer and did a little tap dancing on the keyboard then gazed up to my looking back at her; so there would be no misunderstanding, she spoke slowly and distinctly as she waved my check in the air. "Did you want to deposit this check into your checking account?" she asked.

I stepped to the side of her acrylic screen and answered, "Into my savings account, please."

On my next agenda, I went to the market. As I was at the check-out line, a young checker took hold of the front of my cart then eased my cart into his station. As he was doing so, he asked, "Would you like to purchase a shopping bag for ten cents?"

"Yes, one bag please," I answered as I held up one finger.

My checker was young, confident, and very efficient. As he scanned one item after another, he asked, "And would you like to purchase a shopping bag," he asked.

"Just one," I answered. He nodded in acknowledgement then, just as he scanned the final item, he looked up at me and asked, "Would you like to purchase a bag?"

"That's an excellent idea," I said as he smiled back, picking up one shopping bag then placing each item securely. "Oh, look at how nicely you put my things. They all fit! You must be an engineer!" I teased.

I thought back to the day's adventure and, you know, I may be declining mentally and physically, and I know it's kind of a stretch to say this, but I think I'm gonna be okay. What do you think?





I've been musing, considering what Christmas means to me. The obvious meanings always pop up—Jesus' birth in a manger, Santa Claus, carols, trees and trimmings, etc. When I was in college, and a real long-haired radical, I painted my dorm window with a picture of Santa, his bag leaking money, with the caption, Season's Greed-ings. The college was not amused.

But today I looked up at the wall in my living room and said to myself, *There it is. That's the meaning of Christmas for me.*

The wall in question is decorated with a tapestry showing a lion lying next to a lamb. They're both facing the viewer, as to say, "What? What did you expect was going to happen?"

There's a Christmas carol that touts, "Peace on Earth, good will to men." This is aspirational. It's the hope of many, from different faiths, political stripes, and opinions that mankind would experience a time of true peace and genuine good will toward his fellow man. Yes, this is what Christmas means to me.

Mike Apodaca

My Last Christmas With Mom

by
Barbra Badger

Traveling to Iowa in December, or any other month likely to produce snow, has never been my favorite type of travel. Mom had decided to go back to Iowa to be placed in the family plots next to my grama—her mom. Many branches of our family are all in the same general space at the cemetery in one of the smallest towns in Iowa. I was disappointed that she wanted to go there. I was actually looking forward to visiting her in a nice “senior residence” . . . near me.

She could no longer keep a house, even the single-wide mobile home was impossible. Her shoulders and fingers were attacked by both ortho and rheumatoid arthritis. She also had emphysema, which is what finally took her life. My uncle, her brother, prepared a room for her in their house.

It worked out for a while, but he and his wife were still smoking at a strong pace. Mom had stopped smoking and drinking beer a few years before.

Mom found a little apartment in a senior complex that worked out really well for about five years before her shoulders and fingers were totally useless. When she couldn't wash herself or clean the small apartment at all, she went elsewhere.



My Last Christmas With Mom

by
Barbra Badger

Continued from Page 24

The last place she landed in was what we used to call a “nursing home”. But she had her own room—sometimes a roommate—her own TV, phone, and could get out and about by public transit provided specifically for the folks in that facility.

I went out twice a year. Once in summer and once during winter breaks. The last four trips I made, she was winnowing out personal items, pictures, clothes, and keepsakes, and I was getting more upset that she wasn't staying near me.

You will find that I frequently mention *Prairie Home Companion*. I lived up to my 10th year in Iowa. Everything about *PHC* speaks perfectly to my experience in my Iowa womb. My most favorite part is when Garrison Keillor asks the audience to sing. Something about that sound, those unified voices in an old auditorium, brings echoes of Christmas Eve programs at the Lutheran Church.

Mom sent me out for something at a drug store one evening and as soon as I stepped outside, the chilled air snapped a switch in my head. My anger and distress vanished. I felt as though I was floating toward the car, and tiny, well-placed snowflakes aimed right for me.

Tilting my head back, the flakes seemed to be falling from a star-filled sky. No cloud was visible. I'm sure there was one, but my eyes said there wasn't.

I got my Mom's item from the store and, driving back to the “home”, the snow got a little more intense, the clouds appeared, and as I drove the quiet streets of my long-ago hometown, the Christmas lights in rainbow colored strings around porches and eaves and posts and trees reflected in the snow landing softly all around them.

My hand reached for the radio as a “voice” or “force” gently compelled me to do. I turned it on and there was Garrison asking his audience to sing with him. “Silent Night.”

There never was a more silent night than that one. The people sang it as though they were a cathedral choir and I wept—am weeping now—at the beauty as love filled me and slipped away.



Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas

By
Diane Neil

Christie knew how old she was, as she was born on December 23rd or 24th, but she had no idea who her parents were. She had been found Christmas morning, 1957, in a cardboard box warmly lined with an old blanket in back of a Seven-Eleven.

Of course her discovery was widely publicized, and many couples clamored to adopt her. Fred and Ethel Thompson were thrilled to become her parents. Having raised five children, now nearly grown, they were old hands at parenting and welcomed the pretty little girl into their family.

Christie was raised with love and care, enjoying the benefits of a large, extended family. At college, she met a wonderful young man, Brian Murphy, a budding architect. They married after graduation and looked forward to raising a large family like her brothers and sisters had. But, sadly, no babies came to them. Nevertheless, they set about building a beautiful life, along with a unique house Brian designed and they lovingly built together. It was the scene of many festive gatherings. Over the years, they entertained their extended family.

By 2019 their elderly parents had died, but all the siblings still gathered to celebrate the holidays. Christie and Brian were preparing to host a Christmas party when Christie had an urgent call to come to the hospital. There she was ushered into a room where Brian was hooked up to tubes and machines, badly injured when a truck had hit his car head-on. She took his hand, and he squeezed it weakly before he died.

Christie was devastated. All of their families rallied around her to support her in her grief. For months someone would come to stay with her, and people were always stopping by with gifts of food or flowers, offers to clean or do her laundry, or just to provide her with loving company.

By April Christie was settling into widowhood with a clear eye to her future. She still had many years to live, and she knew she needed to make plans for herself. First of all, she admitted that as much as she loved her beautiful home, she just couldn't live in it anymore. Everywhere she looked she could see Brian, not as a ghost, but as a heartbreaking memory. She was mulling over whether to sell or lease the house when she learned that Debby, her favorite niece, was pregnant. Debby's wedding to Ray was one of the last events she and Brian had attended before he died.

Debby and Ray lived in a tiny apartment in town. It wasn't any sort of place to raise a child, but they had a year's lease they couldn't break. At Debby's baby shower, Christie invited her and Ray to come for lunch the following weekend. After dessert she said "I have a favor to ask of you. I wonder if you'd like to move into my house, and I'll take over your lease."

Ray and Debby looked at each other, shocked. "How could that be a favor to you?" Ray croaked.

Christie explained to them how unhappy she was, living alone in the big empty house and that their cozy little apartment would suit her much better. So the agreement was made, and the details of furniture, kitchenware and such were hammered out. In the end Christie took only her clothing and personal effects, and Ray and Debby did the same. Ray did warn Christie, however, that their upstairs neighbor was "a crabby old geezer" who had some sort of hobby he worked on late at night with music playing loudly.

Christie chuckled. "I'm usually up late reading. I'm sure that won't bother me."

Although she didn't really need the money, Christie got a little part-time job at a clothing store. It kept her busy, and she enjoyed interacting with people.

And she became acquainted with Harry, "the crabby old geezer," who turned out to be a widower her age and whose hobby was making lovely glass mobiles. He presented one to her when she invited him over for dinner one evening. She didn't find him crabby at all.

More and more, they found themselves having dinner together and sharing the details of their lives. Harry and his wife had had five children, all of whom had married and had families of their own. Harry had hated rattling around alone in their big house after his wife died. He still owned it but let his daughter and her big family move in. Harry and Christie had a good chuckle over the coincidence.

So now it is Christmas, 2021. And guess who is having Cornish game hens, a nice bottle of wine, and "A Merry Little Christmas"?



The Missing Christmas Tree

By Gary Layton

My wife had this cute way of strumming her fingers. She would start out with the pinky and strum all her fingers ending up with the thumb. She would do this quickly and continuously. It would make a rhythmic pattern like someone strumming a drum. She would do it on tables, door jams, doors, walls anywhere there was a flat surface. She would do it when she was contemplating something or was upset but not to the point of being angry. The kids knew they were in trouble when they walked into a room and she was standing there staring at them doing the finger roll on a door jam.

We lived on the edge of the national forest and you could walk right out of the back yard into the forest. Every December I would walk down into the forest and pick out a nice Christmas tree. I would go back late at night and cut it down and bring it back to the house and decorate it. I didn't dare tell the kids because it was illegal and they surely would have blabbed to somebody and the Feds would have shown up at the front door.

One year my business was really booming and I was too darn busy to go down and pick out a tree. It was getting late in December and our younger daughter asked me when we were going to get the Christmas tree. I could have told her "soon" and let it go, but no, not me. Being a smart aleck, I told her, "I am sorry but we don't have the money for a tree this year." I went on my way not giving it another thought.

A few days later I walked into the house after work and there was my wife sitting at the kitchen table glaring at me and strumming away. I noticed a lot of foodstuffs on the table, mostly stuff we don't use. Large cans of hominy, corn, string beans, bags of flour and sugar and sitting in the corner were this scraggly Charlie Brown Christmas tree. I said, "What's this?"

She promptly replied, "Did you tell our daughter that we weren't going to have a Christmas this year?"

I again replied, "What?"

My wife, rather sternly this time, told me that her classmates were getting up and telling what they were getting for Christmas. When she got up, she said, "Daddy told me we didn't have money for Christmas this year."

I thought, "Oh my God."

I asked her why she didn't tell them to take the stuff back. She said she did but they told her they couldn't take it back. They told her they understood her pride but some people fall on hard times and it is nothing to be ashamed of. I realized then that my wife was really embarrassed. I thought it was funny until I realized how humiliated she was.

I went downstairs, grabbed the saw, headed down into the forest and cut down a Christmas tree. I brought it back to the house and we decorated it that evening. I apologized to my daughter, telling her I was just teasing and assured the kids that we were going to have a Christmas this year.

The next morning my wife and I loaded up all the items and took them down to the Presbyterian Church and put them into the donation bin for the needy.

You really need to be careful what you say to your children as they take it literally. Being a smart aleck around your kids can get you into a lot of trouble. I'm surprised my kids aren't scarred for life living around me.

Come to think of it they are a bunch of smart a***s as well.



Poetry



Places to Publish:

<https://authorspublish.com/28-literary-markets-that-accept-poetry/>

Poetry and Short Stories The Literary Review

<https://www.theliteraryreview.org/>

Out of the Torrid Masses

By Freddi Gold

Out of the torrid masses
Of towers of life
Comes love
The indescribable, pleasurable, whirling
Swirling gait of love
That flits and dashes, lingering
Only when dazzling crystals
Become the pillared stalactites
We lean upon

Out of the torrid masses
Of towers of life
Came man
And woman, who did love him
Causing life itself to be
Still trees are blown and
Branches strewn from winds
With tropic hurricane force
Tomorrow is again ...



Rubens, Rubens,

For Peter Paul Rubens

Mary Langer Thompson

Rubens, Rubens
I've been thinking
Of that rainbow landscape scene
With the bucolic cattle standing
All the light shines down on them.

Rubens, Rubens,
I've been thinking
of the deep dark woods so close
Are they filled with camouflaged soldiers
like Macbeth's old Birnam Wood?

Rubens, Rubens,
I've been thinking
of that glittering bow of rain
promising hope to all who grab it
despite moving timberland.



{{PD-US-expired}} -

Poetry



WHEN LOVE IS THINE

By Dwight Norris

When love makes light thy darkest
hour,

and gives brilliance to thy very being,

like the filtered sunlight of a wak-
ing forest.

When love sparkles thine eye like new
blossoms

in the greening field,

and runs down thy breast like streams

of fresh melted snow.

When love adorns thine head like a
crown

of precious jewels,

and fills thy soul like rich red wine.

Decline it not,

for thou knowest not,

when love shall once again be thine.

The Past

By Freddi Gold

High above hills

Soar the hopes

Of the day

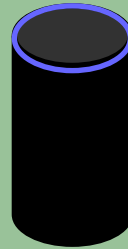
Forced by the elements

That make the past

Electronic Angst

by Mary Langer Thompson

Relational specialists are worried.
we're being too polite
to our home living devices.



"Please, Alexa,
turn off bedroom."
I thank her.

I'm humanizing her-- er *it*
and it will come back to bite me.
She'll treat me like an object, they say.

But I'm a woman.
What else is new?
"Alexa, will you join the 'Me, Too' move-
ment?"

"You bet," she says.

I love her.

A Prayer for Christmas Eve, 1941

Jesse LaVerd Dobson (Lorelei Kay's dad)

It snowed tonight, the myriad points of grey
Suspending in the air, then drifting down
To cover marks of steel and bomb.
High overhead, the moon rides by
On clouds of silver-grey and shades dark
And shunning scenes below of blood and war.

Below the pointed streak of searchlights' glare,
The snow-covered roofs of huddled barracks rise
While underneath, a frosty gleam of yellow light
Escapes the darkened window pane.
A Christmas tree adorned by mellow light
Casts softened gleams against the barrack walls
And soldiers' faces hard and grim.

God, let us know on battle fronts tonight
Where swirling flakes have settled down
On cannon grim, on warplanes sleek,
And, too, on tanks and stiffened forms within,
Let us know that Thou are still a God of Love and Right.

'Ay, let not the fear nor hatred of the foe
Becloud our minds from thoughts of love and home,
Where lonely hearts are praying, waiting our return;
That we may think of Christmas Eve, and too, of Him,

Whose birth we still remember.
God, we know that 'ere another Christmas comes—
Where two of us are now to carry on
But one will then remain. And unknown graves
And frozen shapes and blasted fragments strewn around
Will tell the endless tale of war and hate;
Ay, we know the dreary way.
But give us hope, and let us still remember happy days
And give us faith for days to come.

So let it snow tonight, and storm, and hail,
And when the storm of battle clears, help us
That we may not remember—and yet, may not forget—
This Christmas.

Events Ahead > Book Fairs & more

DECEMBER — JANUARY ACTIVITIES

December 1	Start of Hanukkah
December 1	8:00 Accountability Meeting
December 1	5-9:00 Town's End Sale
December 5	9-2:00 Town's End Sale
December 7	9:00 Board Meeting
December 8	8:00 Accountability Meeting
December 9	3:30 Poemsmiths Meeting
December 11	10:00 HDCWC Meeting
December 12	9-2:00 Town's End Sale
December 14	6:00 Scholastic Training
December 15	8:00 Accountability Meeting
December 19	9-2:00 Town's End Sale
December 21	6:00 Act II Meeting
December 22	8:00 Accountability Meeting
December 23	3:30 Poemsmiths Meeting
December 23	Inkslinger deadline
December 25	Merry Christmas
December 26	Start of Kwanzaa
December 28	2:00 Mojave River Walk
December 29	8:00 Accountability Meeting
January 1	HAPPY NEW YEAR!
January 1	Launch On Topic Speakers
January 4	Board Meeting
January 5	8:00 Accountability Meeting
January 6	3:30 Poemsmiths Meeting
January 8	10:00 Club Meeting
January 12	8:00 Accountability Meeting

January 13	3:30 Poemsmiths Meeting
January 18	6:00 Act II Meeting
January 19	8:00 Accountability Meeting
January 20	3:30 Poemsmiths Meeting
January 23	Inkslinger Deadline
January 25	2:00 Mojave River Walk
January 26	8:00 Accountability Meeting
January 27	3:30 Poemsmiths Meeting

If you have a special group meeting regularly and would like to open it up to the membership, please contact Mike Apodaca to have your group included in the calendar.



Order copies of our HDCWC anthologies for your bookshelf, gifts, or as a donation. Titles can be found on Amazon.com in hardback, softback, and ebook editions. Pre-orders can be delivered at our regular meetings.

"Writers Accountability"

Zoom call each Wednesday morning at 8:00 am

Discussions

Looking for weekly accountability to . . .

Write your book

Ideas on publicity

Website book page with links

Amazon Author Page

Join us on Wednesday mornings at 8 am

Zoom meeting ID: 985 7081 6164

Password: 216757

HAPPY BIRTHDAY HDCWC MEMBERS BORN IN DECEMBER

December 8 Carol Warren, December 9 Marilyn Ramirez, December 18 Lorelei Kay, December 19 Avalynn Morse, December 25 Patrick Nee, December 31 Sara Leach

Famous December Birthdays: 2 George Saunders; 4 Thomas Carlyle, William Diehl; 5 Joan Didion; 6 Joyce Kilmer, Garth Stein; 7 Willa Cather; 8 James Thurber; 9 John Milton; 10 Emily Dickinson, Rumor Godden; 11 Alexander Solzhenitsyn; 15 Edna O'Brien; 16 Arthur C. Clark, Jane Austen, Margaret Mead, Noel Coward; 17 John Greenleaf Whittier, William Safire; 24 Mary Higgins Clark; 25 Rod Serling; 26 Henry Miller; 30 Rudyard Kipling; 31 Nicholas Sparks.

Are You a Poemsmith?

You may be. Poets are the craftsmen of words. They love all words, from their syllabification, their beat and rhythm, to their origins and definitions. Poemsmiths love the hunt for just the right word to convey the feeling they desire.

We have a wonderful group of poemsmiths that meet every other week on Thursdays at 3:30 on Zoom. Mary Thompson, who leads the group along with some other powerful writers, graciously sent me the following information:

1. *We meet every other Thursday at 3:30, currently on Zoom. We bring one poem (must be unpublished! We expect drafts) only per session, any form or type (haiku, free verse, sonnet, rhyming). We send no later than midnight the night before, but no pre-reading (unless you want to) required. At the session, each poet reads his/her poem aloud. Then we take about 5 minutes for everyone to re-read silently and make notes on the paper (or screen if possible, to put on it). Then we go around, and each makes first positive comments (what are the strengths?) and suggestions for improving. The poet takes the suggestions or not.*
2. *If you are thinking of joining, we hope you like to read a lot of poetry (not just your own) and have goals of submitting and publishing and learning a lot from the group itself. We strive to be always kind but honest in our reactions. Poetry is probably the most personal genre there is, and therefore, we realize poets make themselves vulnerable to the reader. We all started writing poetry as amateurs; we've all grown in knowledge and understanding of what makes a poem better, stronger, and more powerful.*
3. *We have judged our anthology submissions and hope for the impending publication of our first anthology, *From Silence to Speech: Women of the Bible Speak Out*.*

Poemsmiths meet every other Thursday. Check the calendar in this newsletter.

Those who would like to visit the Poemsmiths and sit in on a meeting, please contact Mary Thompson at:

mh_thompson@hotmail.com

She'll give you the Zoom login information and answer any questions you might have.

MEMBER SERVICES



Dorothy C. Blakely



The DCB Memoir Project is alive and well. The committee met recently to discuss the guidelines being written for the

project and to plan an upcoming project with Barstow College and the Veterans' Home.

Take advantage of your membership benefits

Free advertising and free posting of your book titles, your latest project, your free PR author's webpage and other free and fantastic benefits!

**Because you belong to
CWC High Desert branch.**

Contact a board member, or our webmaster, Roberta Smith.

Or review your Benefits Booklet online at:
www.HDCWC.com

OUR OWN YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Here's the link to the channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC28XLtEK5oBNq5gW2Zy1ssg>

Do you provide a service that could benefit other writers?

**Send a JPEG file of your business card or ad to
mrdaqa.ma@gmail.com**

We'll advertise it free of charge!

Temporary Editor



Mike Apodaca

Letter to the Editor

Dear Temporary Editor, Mike Apodaca

We realize your position at *The Inkslinger* but cannot let you go, and so think of your editorship as TDY (Temporary Duty), which in the Army means you're stationed at your post till "The well runs dry." We, or at least I am, taken with your exuberance and positive spirit in wanting so much for our HDCWC and all its members. Your spirit is infectious. At first, when I first heard your name, I thought, "Who is this guy?!" (teasing).

Well, Temporary Editor, keep laying those bricks as seen in your photograph of Notes from the Editor, because that's what you're doing, helping to lay the foundation to a bigger, better, stronger, much admired HDCWC. And individuals, like snowflakes, there's only one unique you.

Arigato,

fumi-tome ohta ps. Mele Kalikimaka (Merry Christmas)

Submitting to *The Inkslinger* is easy. Use Microsoft Word, single-spaced, 11-point Arial font, please. The email address for submissions is Mrdaqa.ma@gmail.com. Articles and stories between 200 to 500 words are accepted. Photos, poetry, and drawings are always welcome. Please avoid sending items that are embedded in other media (like Word files). Call me to discuss an article or idea: 760-985-7107.

**Submit January items by December 23rd
Submit February items by January 23rd**