

The INKSLINGER

Speed Rounds: 6 tables, 6 moves

HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC
Inspiring a Community of Writers

Sail On

June 2019

Frank Girardot

Meet True Crime Author, Journalist, Murder Investigator



Frank Girardot, born 1961 in Detroit, Michigan is an American author, journalist, victim advocate, and radio host. He is CEO of Pegasus Communications, LLC and a former editor and columnist for the Los Angeles News Group.

Girardot got his start in journalism as a copy boy at the *Los Angeles Herald-Examiner*. Subsequent to the newspaper's closing, he worked for the *Ontario Daily Report*, the *San Gabriel Valley Tribune* and the *Pasadena Star-News*. His 1994 story on the unsolved murder of Geneva Hilliker Ellroy, the mother of novelist James Ellroy resulted in Ellroy's book, *My Dark Places*. He has won several writing awards including the Southern California Press Association's



Continued next page

Cast Your Vote in Next Meeting, June 8th

The election of officers will be determined at that time by those members present and voting. The members standing for election are as follows:

President — Dwight Norris
Vice President — Lorelei Kay
Secretary — Joan Rudder Ward
Treasurer — Jenny Margotta

Member-at-Large and other positions are co-terminus with the expiration of the term of the current president, and will be appointed by the president after the June 8 election.

If you would like to stand for election, please notify Bob Isbill or Jenny Margotta of the Nominating Committee.

Other eligible members in good standing are able to be nominated at the June 8 meeting with or without notice to the Nominating Committee, but anyone nominated must be present to declare willingness to serve out the term, or have that willingness in writing in order to run for election.



High Desert Chapter
of
California Writers
Club
Board of Directors



*The following officers
and appointed positions are current to
the fiscal year of July 2019.*

President

Rebecca Kosko
RKosko@icloud.com

Vice President

Lorelei Kay
LoralieKay7@gmail.com

Secretary

Roberta Smith
hdcwc_web@aol.com

Treasurer

Jenny Margotta
jennymargotta@mail.com

Member-at-Large

Linda Boruff
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Programs Chair

Bob Isbill
Risbill@aol.com

Public Relations

Sheryl Lynne Thomas-Perkins
Solsis1@bellsouth.net

Membership

Michael Raff
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Newsletter Editor

Rusty LaGrange
Rusty@RustyLaGrange.com

Webmaster

Roberta Smith
hdcwc_web@aol.com

Brothers in Crime

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Frank Girardot and Burl Barer

California Press Association's award for Investigative Journalism 1995, the Los Angeles Press Club's First Place Award for sports writing in 1998 and was a finalist for the 2015 University of Florida Award for Investigative Data Journalism in 2015.

Girardot headed a project for the Los Angeles Newspaper Group titled "Getting Away with Murder." The effort chronicled 11,242 homicides that occurred in Los Angeles County between 2000 and 2010. Relying on data

supplied by the Los Angeles County Department of Coroner, the project found that less than 50 percent of all homicides that occurred countywide were ever solved.

Girardot is the author of true crime non-fiction books, including *Name Dropper*, which was cited by author Walter Kirn in his book *Blood Will Out*. He is co-author with Burl Barer of *A Taste For Murder* and *Betrayal in Blue*, the latter also co-written with Ken Eurell and both published by WildBlue Press.

Girardot has appeared on several true crime shows on various cable networks including Investigation Discovery. He has been a frequent guest on Crime Time with Allison Hope Weiner on LipTV. He has also appeared on Fox News and Dateline NBC. His topics of expertise include murder investigation, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, Richard Ramirez, Clark Rockefeller and Los Angeles area true crime.

For further information, please visit www.hdcwc.com.



SIX SPEED TOPICS

Photos don't really capture the essence of a "speed dating" -type of event we held last month, but if you consider six tables in musical chairs scenario, well then, it got pretty noisy, bustling, and loads of fun.

Members and guests traveled from table to table in 12-minute sessions as they



Jenny Margotta is talking about self-editing tips.

Roberta is going to talk on turning a physical book manuscript into an ebook.



learned about each topic hosted by a stationary spokesperson for each subject.

As they moved from table to table, they learned about Toastmasters, converting an eBook, self-editing tips, elements of thriller storytelling, what creative ideas make for great poetry, and tips in hosting your next book signing.

Photo credits: Bob Isbill



Toastmasters representative Morris Anderson came to share information about their organization.

Mike Raff agreed to speak on key elements of writing a good suspense/thriller.



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Beckie Lindsey agreed to talk about setting up author signings.



Mary Thompson agreed to talk on what constitutes poetry.



For what it's worth

Don't put all of your effort into a book, thinking that's the only thing you need to do, because books require consistent care. And while the requirements for fiction and non-fiction book marketing differ—in terms of the work you'll need to invest— it's all an investment in your book marketing.

~~ Penny C. Sansevieri, Founder and CEO @Author Marketing Experts.com

News You Can Use

Writers Club and Local Authors Hold Barnes & Noble Book Fair

The HDCWC, recently honored for its partnership with University Prep High School for educational excellence, and several local member/authors held a Book Fair at Barnes & Noble at Bear Valley Road in the Victorville Mall on Saturday, May 18.

Customers were encouraged to use a discount code at time of checkout which allowed the HDCWC to get a percentage of the sales in this fundraiser for our nonprofit organization.

Authors Mary Ruth Hughes, Jenny Margotta, EmmaLisa Hill, Mary Langer Thompson, Michael Raff, Roberta L. Smith, Marilyn King, Beckie Lindsey, Mary Mack, and Dwight Norris signed and sold their books. Anthologies published by the HDCWC including the award winning "Footprints From Around The World" were also available.



Eager book buyer (right) and author Mary Langer Thompson.

5 MINDFUL READING Exercises for Education

It's been suggested a Publication Coach.com that you need to up your reading game to become a better writer. So we attempt to introduce members of HDCWC with a variety of new genres from enthusiastic speakers.

Your assignment—if you choose to accept it—is to put yourself in new and stimulating reading situations for your best mindful focus.

5-Keep a diary of the books you read

4-Finish a book you hate; don't give up

3-Copy the work of well-established writers to gain their style imprint

2-Collect an aspect of writing that interests you, metaphors or detailed settings

1-Read *outside* your typical genres

Email: daphne@publicationcoach.com

Web: <http://www.publicationcoach.com>

Make Your Plans for Book Fair — Oct. 12

Early indications for another book fair in mid-October will include a Poetry Reading Room among other features. Davida Siwisa James is organizing the event.

Although still early, volunteers are needed to help and booths will be available for rent in the Book Fair sections. Go to www.VicArtsEd.org for details.



**TIME FOR
A LAUGH**

**BY THE TIME YOU CAN MAKE
ENDS MEET,
THEY MOVE THE ENDS.**

The Baton

by fumi-tome ohta

I was at a track and field meet watching baton relays. As I watched, something gnawed at me. What was I seeing? Then it came to me. The passing of the relay baton reminded me of an annual ceremonial milestone held around May or June all over the United States and possibly the world. Graduation!

As I watched the relays, the batons became a symbol. It represented the friends, classmates, teachers, acquaintances, family and even strangers in our life, guiding, nurturing and loving us so we'll grow to be the person we were destined to be.

The track is the road we travel throughout our lives. Passing of the baton to the next person is akin to all the individuals that we meet in our life. And the 'snap' of the baton into our hand is a signal to run with all our might to the finish line because the spirit of all those who embraced our lives will be there with us at graduation.

Good luck.

Don't look back.

Keep running into the horizon.

And if there's a fork in the road,

it's okay.

That only means you need to change directions.

Veer to the left

veer to the right

or, climb over.

Strange thing about walls,

when your sights are set

nothing will ever stop you.

Look at all those sheep that made it over the fence

they had the biggest smiles

and the most melodic bells around their necks

as they frolicked in the field of their dreams.



Congratulations Class of 2019

Photo: Wikimedia Commons; <http://clipart-library.com/graduation-hat-vector.html>

Gone to the Fair

Congratulations to those who won awards for their poetry entries!! Even though the official winners are not listed and may not be accessible this week, we had to share.

Our poems were displayed at eye-level this year—a big improvement—and HDCWC donated sponsorship money to help with the costs of ribbons and doing fair business.

Thank to Peg for dropping by and taking photos. More entries will be posted as we learn about them.

More entry winners may show up next issue. Please share.



Photo Credit:
Peg Pawlak



Psychology in



Your Writing Day

by Rusty
LaGrange

T

hat old adage about work-life balance is stronger as we get older, my opinion. A healthy writing life is about putting work in perspective and not letting it take up too much of my brain's real estate. Problems, especially problems with people, can often be addressed only after a certain amount of time has passed, allowing everyone to cool down.

Problems with words also need time. I find that most writers talk about "sitting on it" or letting it "work while waiting" – an incubation period. It seems that with this time the solution suddenly appears in our brains — in much the same way a crossword puzzle clue will arrive in your brain when you've stopped actively thinking about it.

Writers are particularly vulnerable to taking their stress home because they work from home and don't find it easy to let go. Here are a number of other reasons:

- *The idea of critical "thinking" time, associated with writing, needs to ferment when we're doing other tasks.* I like to walk to think about my writing and clients of mine mention other home-related jobs they like to do while thinking-about-writing such as, cooking, cleaning, gardening, and grooming their dogs.

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But if you're doing this thinking while performing household jobs, aren't you by definition taking writing home with you?

- *In your resource gathering*, you'll need to make a schedule based on the person you need to interview. Not many people ask what your schedule is. Working with someone senior is often based on when they are active to work with you.
- *Although so many of us work solo*, there are others we feel the need to please. Arranging for appointments, doctor visits, relatives, short outings with grandkids, and more. The demands of keeping other people satisfied wiggle their way into our brains and make us fret and worry, even when the outcome is almost entirely outside of our control.
- *Most writing has a deadline*; one we impose on ourselves, or at least, have a very firm idea about what's an "acceptable" amount of writing to produce each week. Failing to meet a deadline makes us feel like failures, and it's hard to forget about that when work has stopped for the day.
- *Don't become "barn sour"*: This refers to horses racing home for food and shelter. By reducing or removing socializing days with other writers, you can find yourself craving time on the keyboard as an indirect way of soothing your soul. If you feel guilty being away from your computer, work at reducing your percentage of writing time to other meaningful projects.

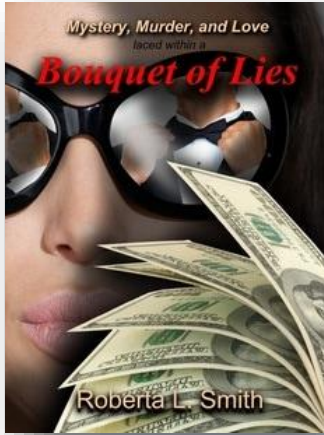
Here are 7 ways to minimize your stress at your computer:

1. *Schedule all your writing tasks every day*: leave plenty of blocks of time marked as "catch up" or "recovery" so that if I need to schedule a last-minute interview or deal with a late-breaking crisis, it can easily be slotted in. If your day is well scheduled and you've been able to accomplish at least 80 percent of the tasks you've set for yourself, you're going to feel fantastic.
2. *Monitor your breathing while you're working*: Writing apnea is a real condition, and it makes us feel lousy. Many writers forget to breathe while they're working and this causes their anxiety to skyrocket. Be sure to breathe while you're working and schedule some breathing exercises throughout the day. I use an Indian flute to refocus and breathe, and native flute instrumentals for background sounds while I type.
3. *Transition before you stop work*: Just as runners do "cool down" exercises after running, writers should send signals to their brains that work is done for the day. Design a shutdown procedure. It can be as simple as powering-down your computer. My daily shutdown involves clearing my to-do list, playing a few games on the computer, and getting something to drink or watching some TV. Finally, there is evidence that the simple job of washing your hands after work can help get rid of the day's troubles.
4. *Control your email addiction*: Email can take over our lives; don't let it do that to you, especially when your workday has ended. Logging out of your office or business email account when you leave your desk will alleviate stress during your nightly break. According to experts, you should also consider checking your email only in batches.
5. *Get support from others*: Instead of complaining, figure out potential solutions to your writing problems. Maybe you need some coaching, feedback on your writing or an accountability group. A community voice is binding in some cases.
6. *Forgive yourself*: None of us is perfect. In fact, *imperfection* is the human condition. We can't undo what's done although we can learn from it. Instead of beating yourself up, realize you did the best you could at the time and focus on turning the page.

Life is too short to always be working, especially if you're a writer working from home. Make some explicit decisions about how much of your time you'll give at your keyboard and don't feel a nanosecond of guilt for doing less.



LOCAL AUTHORS LAUNCH BOOK SALE AT STARBUCKS IN HESPERIA



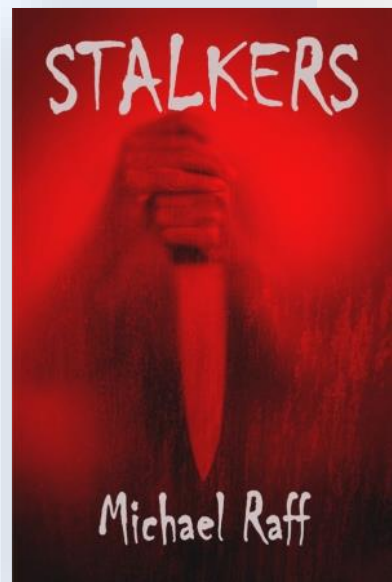
Local authors Michael Raff and Roberta L. Smith, also known as Nevermore Enterprises, will be selling and autographing their books at the new Starbucks, 17050 Main St. in Hesperia on Saturday, Jun 22, from 10 am to 2 pm.

Raff completed his sixth and latest book, *Stalkers*, in March of this year. It's unique in that it's entirely based on a nightmare he had about being attacked by four unknown cloaked figures that turn out to be Satanists.

Raff has been writing since he was thirteen-years-old. He grew up in Chicago and moved to California in 1968. In 1983, he wrote his first horror story *The Door*, and with the exception of *Special*, his memoir about his romance with a Mormon girl, he's been focused on writing horror. He is a member of the Horror Writers Association, an international organization.

Smith is the author of the Mickey McCoy Paranormal Mystery series. Her young adult paranormal romance titled *Simone's Ghosts* took first place in the Hollywood Book Festival contest beating all entries in all genres. She is also the author of a non-paranormal murder mystery romance titled *Bouquet of Lies*. In April she published her first children's book about a little ghost that loves to take care of the family he lives with.

Raff and Smith co-founded Nevermore Enterprises, a partnership to promote their books and events such as the Horror Book Festivals. Raff and Smith brought Sara Karloff, (daughter of Boris), and the actress Julie Adams, (star of *Creature from the Black Lagoon*) to the High Desert for their events. On August 3 & 4, they will be selling and autographing their books at the Mid-Summer Scream Festival at the Long Beach Convention Center. Raff's and Smith's books are available at amazon.com.





Jenny Margotta

from an

EDITOR'S DESK

SEMICOLON RULES

As a true lover of all things “word,” I often find myself participating in long, involved discussions that would make a “normal” person roll their eyes and wander off to take a nap. Such was the case the other day when I found myself debating the use of semicolons.

“You should *never* use a semicolon in fiction,” I was told. “Especially in dialogue. People never speak in semicolons. You must rewrite any sentence to avoid a semicolon.”

It is true that many shun the use of the semicolon in fiction, especially for dialogue, but why? Is there a legitimate reason why semicolons—or any other punctuation for that matter—can’t be used in fiction? Or non-fiction? Or any genre? Punctuation—all punctuation—is used for clarity, for emphasis, for rhythm. To intentionally avoid using any punctuation mark cuts you off from an option that might enhance your sentence, your scene, or your story. The semicolon can bring a rhythm to sentences that other punctuation can’t offer.

Many great writers, including James Salinger (*Catcher in the Rye*) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*) use semicolons freely throughout their writing efforts. Conversely, Kurt Vonnegut was adamantly opposed to using that particular form of punctuation. (But having read some Vonnegut in my college days, I’m not sure he should be held up as the ultimate expert of all things punctuation. Just my opinion.)

I think the semicolon even has its place in dialogue; however, for me it would depend on the education level of the character. If you have a character who perhaps has very little formal education or is very young, and who speaks in short, simple sentences, then you probably wouldn’t have him speaking in such a way that you would punctuate with semicolons. But if your character is, perhaps, a learned expert on archaeology and is lecturing to someone on the subject, then it’s very possible that expert would speak in such a way that semicolons

would be the perfect way to punctuate some of the dialogue.

That said, I’ve always believed you have to know the rules in order to know when you can break them. So following are three basic rules for properly using semicolons.

RULE #1: Use a semicolon to join two *independent* clauses without a conjunction. The two could be written as separate sentences; the semicolon helps to indicate a closer connection between the two sentences than if they were simply written separately.

“Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.”

~~Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*

Yes, he could have written, “Happy families are all alike. Every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” But that weakens the statement; it makes the relationship between them less clear. Using the semicolon makes it very clear that the way in which happy families are alike is that they are all unhappy in some way.

RULE #2: The use of semicolons with coordinating conjunctions (hence, however, nevertheless, etc.) The coordinating conjunction is preceded by a semicolon and followed by a comma.

“This was the man’s third felony; hence, he was looking at a long prison term.”

RULE #3: The use of semicolons with complicated lists. If you are listing a number of things and each “item” is such that it requires punctuation for clarify, then it can get very confusing as to what applies to what. The proper use of semicolons eliminates any confusion. For instance:

“Those in attendance were James Baldwin, President and CEO; Alice Keyes, Treasurer and lifetime member; Tim Dougherty, Member-at-Large and past president; and Margaret Hastings, Secretary.”

The semicolons make it clear that four people attended. The additional information only explains who the people are; it does not indicate additional people in attendance.

As with life in general, there are very few absolutes, including those that apply to writing. Except, perhaps, for the adage, “Everything in moderation.” And I can even think of a few exceptions to that one. So don’t abandon the much-maligned semicolon. As with *any* form of punctuation, it has a place in all styles of writing. Just don’t overuse it.



Managing Your Writing Career

from Richard Armstrong—with 47 years of copywriting and marketing experience

Where does the Big Idea come from?

It comes from very wide-ranging and eclectic reading ... followed by deep, dogged, unremitting research once you've found an idea worth pursuing.

I also think copywriters should read more fiction. I realize that's a bit self-serving, but reading fiction teaches us the techniques and tactics of storytelling.

Fiction helps you learn how to establish character, how to write dialogue, how to withhold information in order to create curiosity and suspense, how to use drama and conflict, how to work exposition into your copy without boring the reader, how to keep people reading from one page to the next, and so on.

Copywriters who only read non-fiction (and there are a lot of them out there) are losing the opportunity to learn very valuable copywriting skills.

Thanks to Richard Armstrong, I began looking into the factual changes in how commercials and media copy are created today.

Did you notice that the bombardment of short ads on TV are getting rather creative? Do you catch yourself stopping just long enough to see what happens at the END of the commercial? Are you one of those TV watchers who doesn't want to admit that certain ads tug at your heartstrings? Even cause a tear to form?

And after years of great and clever Super Bowl Sunday creatives digging deep to make historic and iconic advertisements, that there's a worldwide competition to be that ONE ad creator that drives sales *just* during the sport's intermission? Some folks, like me watch the ads collection *after* the big game.

I wrote radio ads for several years, and during that time it was my storyteller concepts that drove better sales for our clients.

by Rusty LaGrange



I learned that even in a 20-second or 30-second spot, it was the creative who could “whizbang” a story interwoven in a sales plug that would receive the nod from the boss.

I was able to design a personality campaign that touted the “amazing Palm King” who slept in a hammock after exhausting sales of his palm tree discounts. It ran for months.

One time I stunned myself when I wrote about the quaking and nervous young man holding the velvet box in his sweaty hand as he announced that he would ask her this Valentine's Day. It caught me off guard when I heard it airing.

So where does this Big Idea come from? It starts with a piece of fiction that twists and tugs at you until you can't sleep at night. It's a phrase that you heard a week earlier that finds its way into your dream this week. It's a hungry muse sitting on your shoulder—or stuffed in a drawer— (that's where I keep him) that taunts you, cajoles you, and nearly beats you into submission until you write it down.

Once written it must be worked into the full-bodied finished item that becomes your commercial, your poem, your copywriting campaign for your next book sale, your short story, your nonfiction how-to, or your next Great American Novel.

No small feat.

Every idea that pops into your head is not always the best. That's what makes the creative process so interesting and entertaining. Consider that if you raced after every great idea you had, you'd still be working the tenth one today.

Knowing that the Big Idea is just ahead makes the days shorter. Ask any one of our published authors and I bet they will share that same history. They were compelled to do it—once and for all—then they got the bug and stepped into the next one. Some even experimented in different genres. Because, face it. Writing is storytelling.

Grabbing that Big Idea and making it work into a finished product is creative writing at its best.



Events Ahead > Book Fairs & more

JUNE & JULY ACTIVITIES

VOTE DURING NEXT MEETING

Save up for your dues for July:

Recurring members in good standing pay \$45

New members pay \$65

Students pay \$25

JACK LONDON Awards presented during CWC Board meeting July 21. See website for details.

OUR OWN YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Here's the link to the channel:

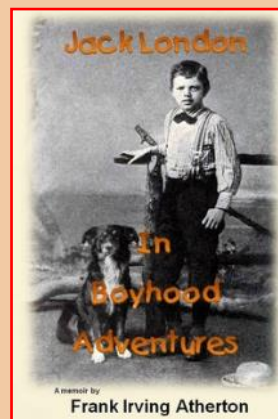
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC28XLtEK5oBNq5gW2Zy1ssg>



Order extra copies of our HDCWC anthologies for your bookshelf, your gifts, as a Senior Center donation. Titles can be found on Amazon.com. Pre-orders can be delivered at our regular meetings.

JACK LONDON IN BOYHOOD ADVENTURES — A document found stashed away in a box of mementos, recounts the downhome early years of a famous California boy and his pal. They find life full of serious & frivolous days of summer in early Oakland.

First Printing now available for only \$13.35 at Amazon. \$13.08 at Barnes & Noble.



www.JackLondonInBoyhoodAdventures.com



Remember we now offer PayPal as a payment method for dues and purchases.

Send in your upcoming events and book signings so we can share

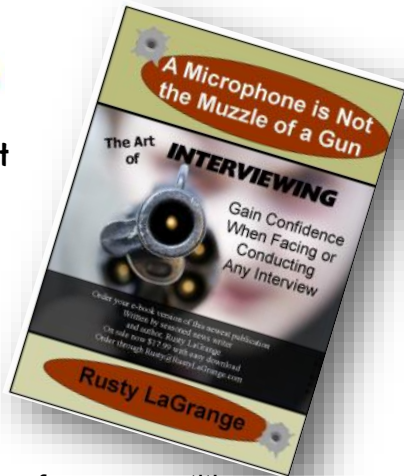
Member Services

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

Because you belong to CWC High Desert Chapter.

Contact a Board Member, our Webmaster Roberta Smith, or review your Benefits Booklet online: www.HDCWC.com

**Do you provide a service that could benefit other writers?
Send a JPEG file of your business card or ad to Rusty@RustyLaGrange.com.
We'll advertise it free of charge!**

Editor



Rusty LaGrange

Editor of the CWC's The Bulletin

next issue is mid-August

Notes From the Editor

I've been missing in action at board meetings, regular meetings, PoemSmiths, and special events for the last month. I caught a nasty virus and was hiding out for the month of May. I'm feeling much better now so you will see me in June.

The weather has keep many of us from getting out and being more active. I can truly understand that. High winds mixed with high pollen counts and driving sand don't make for a pleasant trip anywhere.

Thank to volunteers who took photos for me for The Inkslinger, we can see it here.

Submitting to *The Inkslinger* is easy. Use Microsoft Word, single-spaced, 11-point Arial font, please. The email address for submissions is Rusty@RustyLaGrange.com. Articles and stories between 300 to 700 words are accepted. Photos, poetry, and drawings are always welcome. Please avoid sending items that were embedded in other media. Call me to discuss an article or idea, 760-646-2661.

**July's submissions are due June 23
August's submissions are due July 23**