



The INKSLINGER

Sail On

HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC
INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS



JULY 2023



FROM THE PRESIDENT - *Dwight Norris*

THE HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB

The High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club is a writers support group. Lots of writers wish they had one. In a friendly voice these people can offer tips to writers, give honest reactions, and provide feedback on clarity of the message that has been communicated.


The club is so directed and orchestrated that there is a formal design to it. It is not just a casual afterthought. Many good people who will become your friends are prepared to offer you help in this area. We are so structured as to follow a Mission Statement that lets us know if we are actually following the plan. The first part of the Mission Statement actually reads like this:

“The California Writers Club (CWC) shall foster professionalism in writing, promote networking of writers with the writing community, mentor new writers, and provide literary support for writers and the writing community as is appropriate through education and leadership.”

As we consider the craft of writing a bit, we must realize that we can all write, right? We start with the twenty-six letters of the alphabet and we take it from here. We can write. We can write about anything we can think about, so if we’re just getting started, our writing may seem simplistic and basic, but it still expresses our thoughts and feelings. It still conveys meaning.

If we are seeking to improve our writing significantly, we have come to the right place in the HDCWC. Whether we wish to write low-profile personal memoirs or high-profile worldwide messages of widespread import there is help to be found in the minds of and hearts of members of the HDCWC.

It was my privilege to serve as president for the HDCWC for eight years. I appreciated it because it gave me a voice, a presence. It gave me an opportunity to be heard on certain topics, and I appreciated that. It was not a passive position, but one that allowed me to move and to exert energy to help others to move in certain positive directions. I also got to know many of the people of the branch and many others outside the branch. Some of these years were during COVID and I was deeply aware that a membership of a small group of about seventy could easily dwindle to fifty. I was deeply concerned about this, and with the help of a lot of good people we kept busy and involved and our numbers did not decline.

We look forward to many shared writing adventures as we fulfill our Mission Statement and reach out to improve our skills. Please let the leadership know as you take on a new project or need some help on a current one. Sail on! 





FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Mike Apodaca

MY NEW ROLE

Sometimes life carries you, like a cresting wave, to places you never expected to go. Had anyone told me four years ago that I would end up being the president of the HDCWC, I would have balked at the notion. I had no plan nor ambition to become the leader of this terrific organization.

I was dumbfounded when Dwight called and asked me to be his vice president three years ago. We formed a true partnership and worked as a team, each contributing to the success of the club. Bob Isbill, Jenny Margotta, Michael Raff, Anita Holmes, Richard Zone, and too many others to name became cherished counselors and co-workers. I will always relish these times. And now Dwight has handed the responsibility of president over to me. I hope to forge the same partnership that I had with Dwight with our new vice president, Joan Rudder-Ward.

So what will this new administration look like? How will things be different? I do not intend on bringing significant changes to our club. When something isn't broken, there's no need to fix it. However, I will seek to improve what is already working, to make it function better. An example is our sign-in process. People will no longer see a sign-in sheet. Instead, visitors will be able to sign in with a QR-Code. The same is true for registering for events, like our coming Book Architecture Conference. What I am trying to say is that we will continue to do many of the same things, but we will just try to do them more efficiently.

What will not change will be the core values we all hold dear in this club. For instance, people will always come first. Our club has functioned as something like a large extended family. We usually get along pretty well, but, like with any family, we sometimes step on each other's toes. However, love covers a multitude of sins. I know there will be something I will say or will do that will offend someone. It is pretty much inevitable. I want to thank everyone in advance for your patience and forgiveness.

Of course, our club will put writing highest on the list of priorities. We exist to help all of our writers develop, grow, and ultimately achieve publishing success. This club has helped me in all these areas. We exist to help you.

To keep any organization thriving requires the efforts of all. When we come to meetings and interact with other members, we are strengthening our club. When we critique and peer-edit our friends, we are helping our writers acquire new skills. When we step up and help out, contributing our time and talents to various committees, programs, projects, or events, we are acting in harmony and producing a stronger branch. This club is not strong because of the efforts of any one person nor any one board. It is strong because of everyone's efforts.

So we proceed, thankful for those who have gone before us and for those who continue to work side-by-side with us to make the HDCWC the very special place it is.

We move forward together. 



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE WEARS WARPAINT

By *Freddi Gold*

Recently a headline caught my attention that read: Books generated by AI (artificial intelligence) are flooding Amazon's marketplace. Immediately, I thought, *Uh oh, that's alarming*. All kinds of problems are bound to emerge if steps aren't taken to clarify what is computer-generated and what is written by one of us humans. At the moment, there is no such policing and it feels like the algorithm is plotting against us.

AI books have been easily generated by ChatGPT and novel-writing software like Jasper AI. Others, like GOOGL-O and MSFT.O, were then prompted to offer new features in Google and Bing to compete. The new technology has been snatched up by consumers creating frantic activity among investors to invest in AI-focused start-ups.

So, what does this mean for "real" authors? How easy is it for the blogger or newsletter writer to get every entry written by AI? Or the ambitious entrepreneur author just looking to make money from publishing an entire novel? Let's take a look.

With the Starter plan in Jasper, you give Jasper a few points about the plot or topic and the tone of voice you want to use. Then Jasper will generate a post or a chapter title and an introduction paragraph to get you started. The other plan, called Boss Mode has you pick a template. You tell Jasper what you want to write about. This can be a short or a long description. It asks you for key words also. Jasper then generates a list of options. You choose one or write your own. Next, either choose a title or Jasper will provide one. After that, Jasper generates three options or an introduction. It helps you with ideas for paragraphs. The process is simple after that. You type questions or headers in the draft and ask Jasper to populate content of any desired length. \$29 a month for the **Starter Plan** and \$59 a month for the **Boss Mode**.

Where does AI get its information? Why, from the Internet, of course. And previous written materials, including published books—maybe yours, maybe, mine. It can rewrite a story already in print and synthesize it into a similar work, same theme—told a little differently, different names, characters, places, but basically a shorter, more succinct version of the same thing. Basically, it can take your copyrighted material and use it again.


If you research a bit, you'll find that one enterprising individual has created 97 books in 5 years! It takes others about three hours to write a book using AI. Companies have taken an interest in software like this and so have copywriters and bloggers, which results in more individuals utilizing AI-created novels as well as nonfiction. Reader's reviews of these books range from finding them dull, to rating them 5-stars. In a fast-paced world, where finding the shortest, fastest way to accomplish work in record time is important to many, some readers are happy to read short, to-the-point work, even novels.

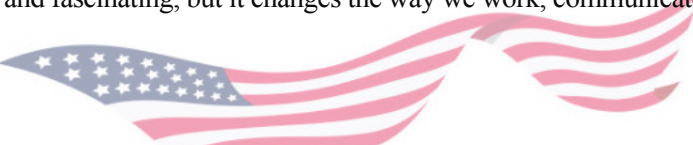
Is this the norm for the future?

ChatGPT appears to be ready to upend the book industry as it exists today. The self-help genre invites would-be authors looking to make a quick buck to utilize AI systems and publish through KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing). Illustrated children's books are a favorite for first-time authors. Go to YouTube for hundreds of tutorials that demonstrate how to make a book in a few hours. Take a look at subjects like dieting advice, get-rich-quick schemes, recipes, and tech advice, too.

Artificial Intelligence revolutionizes the way we interact with technology. It opens up a new world of possibilities. Chat bots are virtual assistants for anyone who wants to use them. Books on these topics will flood the market. What will become of authors in these categories? Will book writing become a commodity?

Amazon is aware of these issues but has not publicly addressed them yet. We don't know if they have plans to review its Kindle store policies around the use of AI-generated books. They do have a category that lists AI books acknowledged as such, but thousands are not and are simply mixed in with books written by members of the human race. Amazon does have an issued statement: "All books in the store must adhere to our content guidelines, including by complying with intellectual property rights and all other applicable laws."

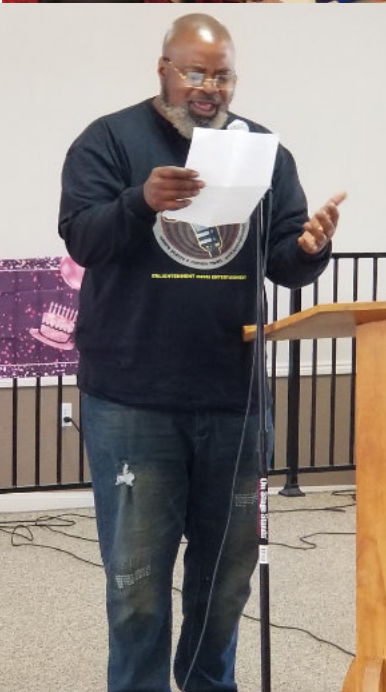
As writers, we need to be aware of these changes, discuss them and protect the future of *actual* authors. AI is exciting and fascinating, but it changes the way we work, communicate and live. It can even make us more robotic. 



JUNE LANGER CELEBRATES 100TH BIRTHDAY!

By Bob Isbill

June Langer was celebrated with over one hundred well-wishers at the Jess ranch Community Church in Apple Valley on Saturday, June 24. June turned 100 years old on June 21 of 2023. The celebration included recitations by Poetri Smith and a barbershop quartet singing songs of the '20s '30s and '60s. A luncheon of tritips and chicken was served, followed by a wonderful birthday cake! June gave an awesome thank you speech which charmed everybody in the room. 🚢



HDC WC JULY BIRTHDAYS

JULY 3 MICHAEL PATRICK BREWER

JULY 8 JEANNE NEWCOMER

JULY 23 MONICA A. KULHLMAN

JULY 24 MADELINE GORNELL

JULY 29 MARY LANGER THOMPSON 🚢






SMILING HAPPY - SMILING PROUD

By fumi-tome ohta

I was at a monthly plant gathering in Anaheim, looking at plants here and there. After I made the rounds once, twice, I paused to look around at all the activity in the parking lot. There were many more participants and visitors than usual, the largest attendance in the history of this community's organization. As I was surveying the activity, I happened to be standing next to a gentleman who was engrossed in the beauty of the morning sky. I looked up and around to the sky above. I, too, stood there captivated by the aerial canvas. We stood there looking skyward even though the sky was somewhat overcast but still, the clouds and the natural lighting were awesome.

“See that, she's teaching her fledgings to fly,” he said without averting his eyes. I looked up to the sky but did not see what he was talking about. “See that! Over there!” he said as he pointed skyward. I searched and looked about and then I saw it! A hawk or falcon, with two smaller ones flying beautifully in front of her. There we stood. Mesmerized. It was one of the most beautiful sights of nature! I had never seen a mother (or father) teaching their young to fly, and there they were, up in the sky, flying in perfect and serene unison. I could “feel” the mother's and fledgings' confidence and pride as they flew in a harmonious straight line to the welcoming horizon and future before them. Such a scene, basically a one-in-a-million scene, to stand there with a fellow enthusiast looking up to the sky to one of the most beautiful and captivating sights in nature. I looked over to my friend. Without embarrassment, I saw tears streaming down his face. I too was feeling as he was feeling, a certain kind of happiness, a certain kind of pride. I imagined the mother as she watched her brood flying before her as they flapped their wings, keeping a straight and confident cadence. She must be feeling so proud, because we were feeling the same. Our hearts held a certain pride as our lips gave way to a soft tautness and tell-tale flicker of our lips, Smiling Happy – Smiling Proud. 



DEALING RESPONSIBLY WITH THE LAST STAGE OF LIFE

It's inevitable. We're all on a slanted waterslide heading toward our own personal end. For many of us, it will be a long end with frailty, memory loss, and possibly severe illness. What can we do to make this time the best it can be?

This last period of life is so difficult because it comes with dire loss. First, we lose our identity. Most of us have spent a lifetime building a self-image as a virile, productive individual. It's the American way. When our physical bodies no longer cooperate with this image, many will deny reality and pretend that nothing has changed. We will declare that we are as strong as we've ever been. In effect, we will lie to ourselves to preserve our identities.

We're also afraid to lose our autonomy. Independence is sacred to us. We don't want to be told where we are going to live and what we are going to do or not do. Consider how you'll feel when someone in your family comes to you and tries to get you to surrender your keys.

But, again, it's inevitable. There will come a time when it will not be safe for us to drive.

My plan is to try to be realistic about the last stage of life. With open eyes, I will attempt to face the truth about myself and my abilities.

I want to also think of others. My experience is that many of those in this final stage of life become extremely selfish. They shrink the whole world around themselves and what they want. They don't think about how their actions will affect everyone around them. But not all are so self-absorbed.

When my father-in-law, who suffered severe Alzheimer's, needed to go into a facility, my wife and I felt horrible. Bob, one of the most macho men I've ever met, was surrendering his home, his life, and his independence. My wife asked her dad what he thought as he sat in his new room. He blinked, looked around, and said, "Yeah, this will do just fine." These were some of the most beautiful words I have ever heard. That's what I want to do for my family.

Finally, as I approach this difficult time, I will expect there to be some degree of disorientation and illusion. For many of us, our minds deteriorate as we age. About a third of us will experience some form of dementia. I've seen older people hallucinate, lose cognitive abilities, and become confused.

There's a good possibility I will too.

The best thing we can do as we age is to talk with our families and friends and develop a plan for what is coming. Where will we live? How will we get around? Who will take care of us? How will we pay for it? Having these discussions early, before the crisis arrives, will ensure a smoother transition to the inevitable.

We are all on that tilted waterslide racing downward. But planning ahead can make it more like a ride and less like a nightmare.

If you would like more information about this time of life and available resources, contact:

- The Department of Adult and Aging Services Information and Assistance: (909) 891-3900
- The Victor Valley Community Services Council: 760-243-9646 



CHEWING BUBBLE GUM

By John Paul Garner

In the book whose first draft I'm about to finish, I have written about a subject I've been asked not to mention. So, I'll refer to it as "chewing bubble gum." Before I wrote about it, though, I did a little research about chewing bubble gum to determine how to treat the subject. I was concerned about how descriptive I should be.

Should I describe chewing bubble gum only on one side of the mouth or could I embellish and evoke images of it being chewed on both sides? And how, I worried, should I describe blowing a bubble? The methodologies of chewing bubble gum, I discovered, were many.

So I did an internet search of professional bubble gum chewers to determine how they chew. I was surprised by their number. There are a lot of bubble gum chewers out there. But the problem with them, I quickly deduced, was that they were too graphic. Their gum chewing wasn't natural. It was all staged.

Frustrated, I then asked a fellow writer what I should do. Without even thinking about it, he asked me, "Who's your audience?" I replied, "Adults. Mostly seniors." He smiled and said, "Be explicit."

Be explicit?

To determine what exactly that meant, it occurred to me that, since my book is an attempt at a modern romance, I should consult with women authors who write romances that involve some bubble gum chewing. I studied a few books whose approach to and treatment of the subject would, I figured, aid me in deciding what level of description I should adopt for my book.

I was, in short, amazed! The skill with which the women authors described chewing bubble gum was astonishing. I came away from the experience, seriously thinking that, one, I should give up writing and, two, that I couldn't match their skill at chewing. Plus, I realized I'm not so far removed from an early childhood spent in a Catholic school that I could write about chewing bubble gum so explicitly.

There had to be a happy middle between glossing over the subject and describing it in great detail. What I discovered quite by accident while watching the movie *Spartacus* at the Turner Classic Movie channel was the power of imagination.

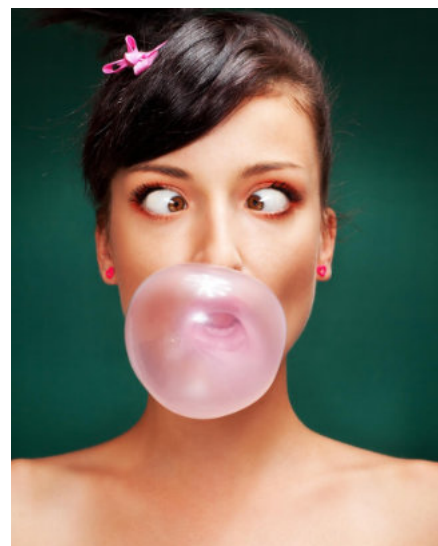
In the movie there's a scene in which the gladiator is provided the company of a servant girl. The gladiator confesses he's never chewed bubble gum before and the girl, understanding his dilemma, allows her robe to fall from her body. What the audience sees is her shoulders and her head. The rest is left to our imagination—to our experience.

It was, quite frankly, very sensual.

Nothing, I realized, could describe chewing bubble gum any better or more powerfully than a reader could imagine it. Between describing too little chewing and too much is the happy middle of simply setting the stage and letting the reader's imagination fill in the blanks.

Imagination is everything and engaging. It is, I think, what we as writers seek to do with the words we put to paper, be the story about an elf's journey in Middle Earth, or the opening scene of a movie about a giant white shark, or a romance that, at times, involves chewing bubble gum.

Because, when you think about it, when you let your imagination soar, anything and everything can become a flight to Mars.



HDCWC IS HAVING A WRITE-IN

By Mike Apodaca

MEETING JULY 10, 10:00, COMMUNITY CHURCH AT JESS RANCH IN APPLE VALLEY

Here's a wild idea for a writing club. Why don't we all get together and do some writing? At our July club meeting, we intend to do just that.

With a very interesting prompt, our writers will unleash their creativity in a writing workshop at our July meeting. We will work side by side, each person crafting a poem, essay, short story, or memoir—whatever you wish. Who knows? Maybe inspiration will hit and you will come up with something new for our newsletter, *The Inkslinger*. Maybe you will begin a short story that you see real potential in, will clean it up, and submit it for the new anthology (the deadline is July 15th, just five days after our workshop). Maybe you will launch the first pages of a new novel or memoir.

Best of all, we get to work with other writers, asking them questions, interacting with each other's writing, and just having fun.

What you need to know:

- 1) This is an in-person meeting only. There will be no Zoom.
- 1) You will need to bring writing supplies. If you prefer to write on a laptop, you may bring it (please make sure your battery is charged). If you wish to write on paper, please bring what you need.
- 2) This time is meant to get a new work started. Don't stress if you don't finish. That's not the point. We want to help you get started. And remember, we are all there to help.
- 3) We want to be supportive of others. You may be at a table with someone who writes in a genre or style that is not your favorite. That's fine. Just keep your comments positive, giving professional critique of the writing, not judging the individual.

At the end of the meeting, those who wish will be given the opportunity to share their work and their experience putting it together in this unique workshop. 🚤





WRITERS ARE READERS

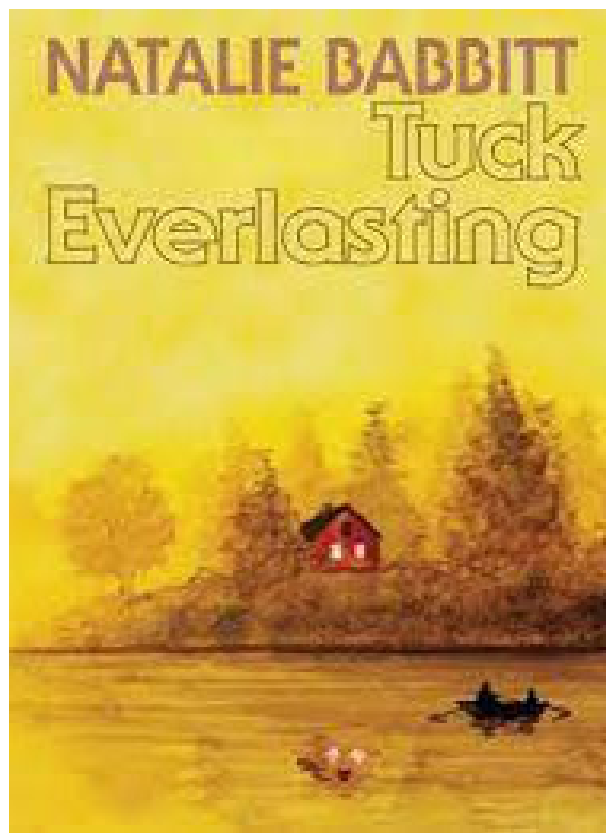
BOOK REVIEWS by *Mary Langer Thompson*

Tuck Everlasting by Natalie Babbitt

Tuck Everlasting is a classic story of a search for the Fountain of Youth. The Tuck family has found that fountain, and now Winnie Foster has to decide whether or not to drink of the water that would allow her to live forever. Winnie becomes the keeper of the secret of the fountain and learns what it would be like to have it fall into evil hands.

The novel is often considered a young adult novel, and students do relate to this book, especially if they have ever wondered what it would be like to live forever. Some of the disadvantages of being immortal are shown, too, such as having friends and family die and leave you all alone. This book will be popular with young people and adults who have read science fiction books that show what life could be like in the future. For example, a person living forever might have to adjust to life as it is in *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. “Big Brother” constantly watches everyone, and firemen are ordered to burn books because they make people think. How many changes would a person living forever have to live through?

The author Natalie Babbitt’s techniques are another reason to read *Tuck Everlasting*. The novel begins with a description of a ferris wheel, and the wheel of life is a symbol. The theme deals with what it would be like if we never got off the wheel of life. Would the wheel be more beautiful, or would it turn out to be a lonely nightmare? Winnie Foster has to decide between a normal life, in which everyone faces death or living forever. Her decision is not easy because she falls in love with Jesse Tuck, who is 104 but looks 17. What will she do: drink or not drink? Young adults and older adults will love this thought-provoking novel. 🚤





Jenny Margotta

FROM AN EDITOR'S DESK

YOU CAN LEARN THINGS READING FICTION

What a person might learn when reading fiction is a subject I've written about before. But since reading and learning are two of my greatest passions, I don't think revisiting the subject is a waste of time.

When I first met my late husband, he proudly proclaimed, "I don't read fiction. I read to learn, and you can't learn anything reading fiction."

What The bloom was still on the proverbial rose of romance at the time—and never departed, as a matter of fact—so I didn't argue, but internally, I bristled. I have learned so many things when reading fiction that I couldn't begin to tell you all of them.

Depending on the genre in which you are writing, such as historical fiction, factual information can add a significant, believable layer to your stories. But even in general fiction, little nuggets of information can be treasures to store in your memory. You never know when you might need it for the answer to a question in Trivial Pursuit, allow you to participate in a conversation you might otherwise have been left out of, or to add to your own creative efforts.

I recently finished a delightful book titled *A Killer Plot*, a Books by the Bay cozy mystery by Ellery Adams. The story features a group of writers who have formed a critique group. When one of the members is murdered, despite the police telling them to stay out of it, they began their own investigation. The writers' discussions and critiques of the other members' chapters reminded me of the HDCWC critique groups I've participated in over the years. And their comments about how the critiques and observations improved their writings were exactly the types of comments I've given and received over the years. I immediately felt right at home with the well-developed characters and I learned new things for my own memory bank. Those pieces—although they were not integral to the main plot—added a layer of depth and complexity to the overall story that greatly improved it, at least in my opinion. I already knew some of it—but appreciated being reminded—and some of it was new to me.

HAIKU: It is both the singular and plural form of the word, by the way. Haiku are three lines long, five syllables in the first and third lines and seven syllables in the second line. And, generally, haiku contain some reference to the seasons. They are also written in simple language so everyone can understand the imagery. New to me was the *cut*. According to *Killer Plot*, "Appearing in the first or second line, cutting was meant to divide the short poem into two sections. Each section could have a different meaning, but the overall poem would remain cohesive. The line containing the cut would end with distinct punctuation such as a colon or a dash."

Further along, the book group discussed mythology as it pertained to one of the writers' story. Several paragraphs were devoted to Atlas. Because he fought with the Titans in a war against the Olympians, Zeus—the premier Olympian god—condemned him to bear the weight of the sky on his shoulders for all time. Because of this, the Titans' Earth and Sky would never again be able to embrace. I always thought Atlas held up the Earth. In fact, all the paintings I've ever seen show him holding up the Earth or bearing the weight of it on his back. Hmm.

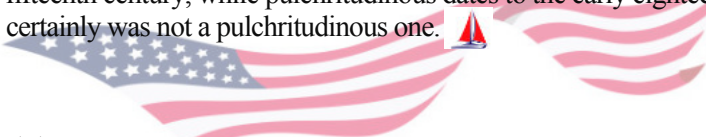
Continuing with mythology, the writers also discussed chimeras and gryphons. A chimera, which is always female, is comprised of a lion's head with a goat's head growing out of the back of the neck on one end and a scaly tail ending in a fire-breathing serpent's head on the other end. (I have trouble imagining that!) A gryphon, on the other hand, has the body, back legs, and tail of a lion, the wings and head of an eagle, and (sometimes) eagles' talons as front feet. The gryphon was believed to be especially majestic and powerful and was best known for guarding priceless treasures.

Right now I can't think of a practical reason for knowing these things, but who knows when I might want to use some of it in a story down the line. In the meantime, I have the joy of adding—or at least updating—one of my prized possessions: my own knowledge. Maybe I should find a gryphon to guard my treasures.

WORD OF THE MONTH

Pulchritudinous: (adjective) [pal krə' tu dən əs]

Physically beautiful (especially a woman). From the Latin *pulcher*, meaning "beautiful." Pulchritude has been in use since the fifteenth century, while pulchritudinous dates to the early eighteenth century. Ex: The chimera might be a formidable foe, but she certainly was not a pulchritudinous one.



OUR CLUB SHOWS ITS HEART

By Mike Apodaca

Our meeting on June 10th truly showed our heart. Here's what happened:

We elected new officers. The club unanimously approved the slate presented to them—Mike Apodaca, president; Joan Rudder-Ward, vice president; Ann Miner, secretary; and Jenny Margotta, treasurer. We members of the new board are thankful for the confidence you have in us. We also showed our deep love and appreciation for everything our former president, Dwight Norris, did and continues to do for our club. We presented Dwight with a memento of our love and esteem—a desk ornament which says, “There is no limit to the amount of good you can do if you don't care who gets the credit.” (A quote from Ronald Reagan). This was something of a guiding rule for Dwight, and we've all benefitted from it.

The Jack London-award winner was announced. Every two years the award is given to the person who has served the club in a very positive way, going far beyond what is expected. Mike Apodaca joins the list of HDCWC Jack London winners who have contributed admirably to our club.

We celebrated with June Langer her 100th birthday this month. What a milestone! The entire club sang to June and wished her well. We also presented her with a beautiful cake that we all happily shared (thank you, Rita Wells!).

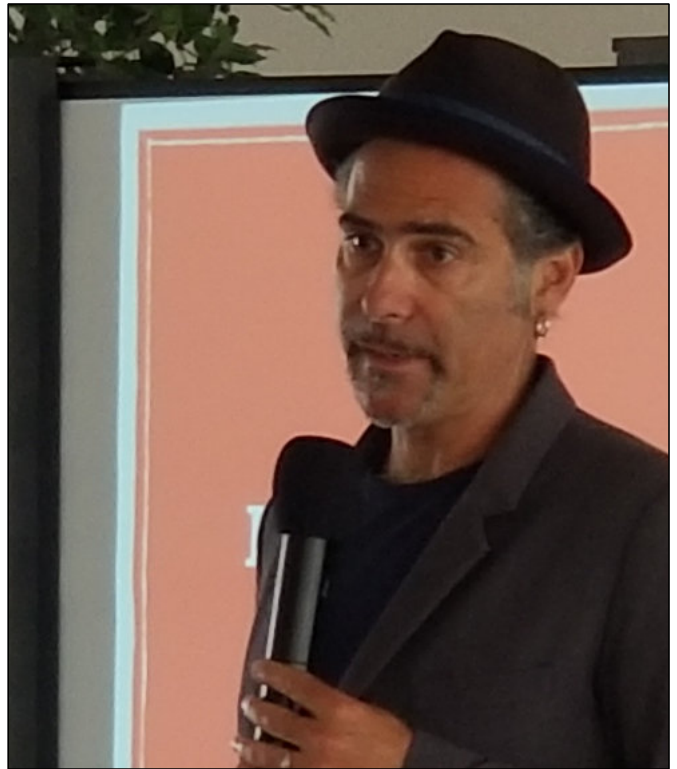
On top of all of this, we had a terrific speaker. Stuart Horwitz, from San Diego. Stuart shared with us about editing and self-editing. He had eighteen points that gave us all insights into the various aspects of good storytelling and keeping our stories sharp and vibrant. The point that stuck with me the most, and which I have used in recent editing, is the idea of stepping away after editing and seeing how the piece sits with you, how it affects you. Mulling the piece over like this will give insight into the impact that the writing has. It is a very effective strategy.

Stuart Horwitz was easy to listen to. He has a way of expressing himself clearly and succinctly. He is also willing to engage with the audience, creating a we're-all-in-this-together feeling. And, brilliantly, he is willing to laugh at himself. His presentation will soon be available on our YouTube channel. He also shared with us his many writing resources on bookarchitecture.com.

Mr. Horwitz will also be conducting our Book Architecture Workshop on September 30th. You can still sign up at the \$35 price, so sign up today.

This was a well-attended meeting with over fifty members present or on Zoom. We even had a member join us on Zoom from India.

Thanks to all who made this such a memorable morning. 



SPEAKING AT KERN VALLEY

By Mike Apodaca

I woke up at 3:30 am, drank some coffee, ate a bowl of cereal, showered, packed my car, and was on the road by 4:45.

The two-and-a-half hour trip to Kern Valley from Hesperia was long and without incident (as I had hoped it would be). I welcomed the sun when she rose behind me lighting the world and helping me wake up.

I arrived at about eight and met up with Sandy Moffitt, the very capable president of the Kern Valley branch. I made sure my technology was compatible with their system (thanks to David, their tech guy). And then I had breakfast and lively conversation with the members who showed up early for the meeting.

After greeting visitors, Sandy started the meeting with a three-minute writing exercise and sharing out. Next, some business was covered, including their upcoming elections.

Then it was my turn.

With a short introduction, Sandy surrendered the lectern to me.

My topic was titled, "Do the Twist." I had presented it in the past at an ACT II meeting for our own club. Afterwards, I received some helpful feedback.

The teaching session went well. Everyone was kind and attentive. At one point, a member raised his hand and added something he knew about what I was relating. It was perfect.

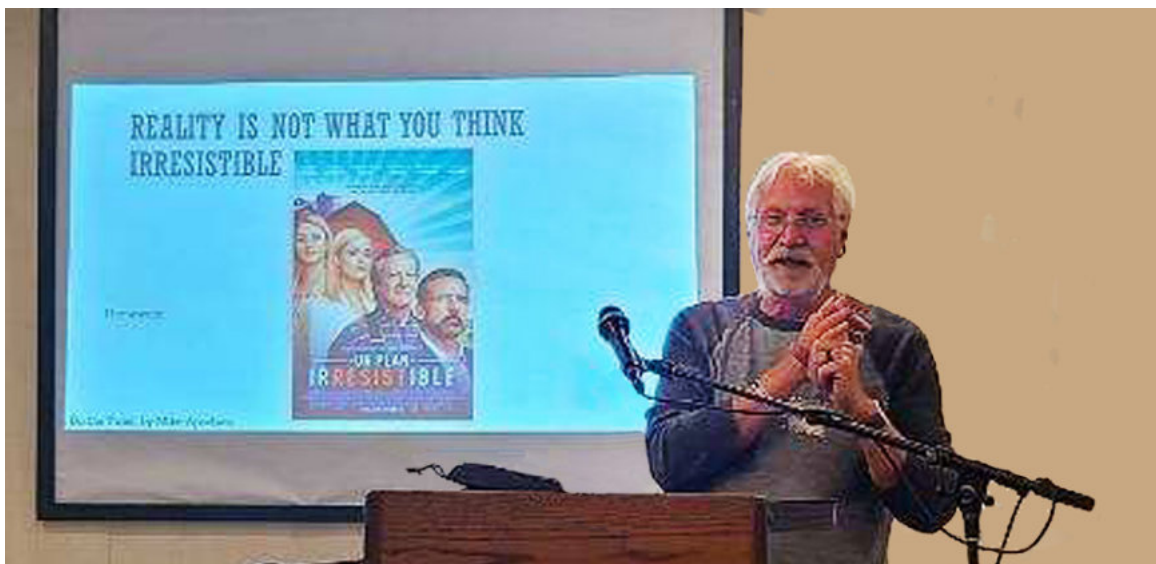
In the end, everyone was happy. Best of all, I felt like I'd made some new friends and extended my network in the CWC.

I also sold a few books.

And I got paid!

My hat goes off to Bob Isbill for his brilliant idea of forming the On-Topic Speakers Bureau. It is through this website that so many of our writers have been asked to speak. Becoming a writer today means building an audience, a bank of readers. We do this by getting out there and doing speaking engagements. Mary Ruth Hughes is aiming really big. Just ask her about the all-out campaign she is planning for her new book, with podcasts, television interviews, etc. We would all do well to aim as high.

Driving back from Kern Valley, I felt it had all been worth it. I'm hopeful that it will lead to many more fun speaking engagements. 🚩





THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS OF ALL TIME

By Michael Raff

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON (CONTINUED)

When he felt strong enough, Stevenson chartered a yacht and, along with his family, set sail from San Francisco in June of 1888, searching for adventure and a climate better suited for his frail health. Among his stops were Tahiti, the Gilbert Islands, the Samoan Islands, and New Zealand. In Hawaii, he made fast friends with King Kalakaua. All during this period, he kept up with his writing.

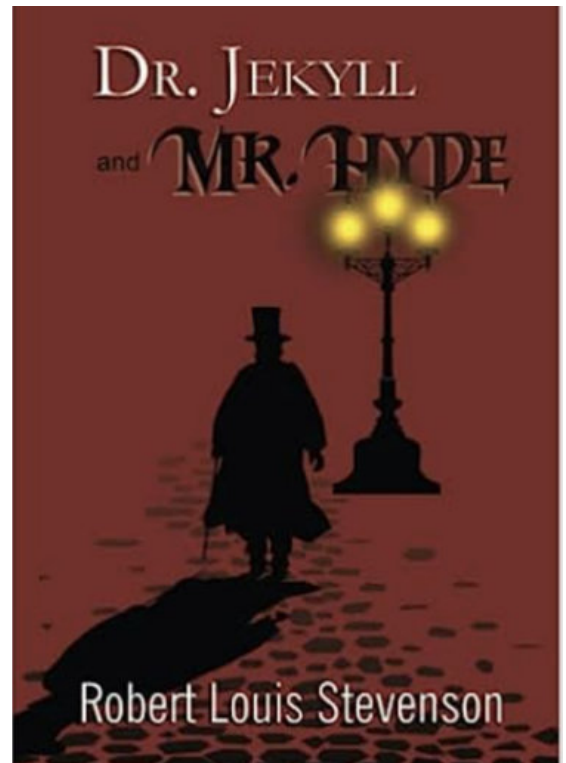
In 1889, Stevenson and his family settled in the Samoan Islands. They purchased a large amount of land in Vailima and built their two-story home, a first for those islands. He even chose a Samoan name of Tusitala as his own name, which means “Teller of Tales.” He became a political advocate while living there, writing essays and other works, and become involved with the sovereignty of all the South Pacific islands as several European powers and the United States began encroaching on their independence.

Stevenson wrote around 700,00 words during his life in Samoa. He broke away from being known as a “romantic” writer to being an author of “realism.” He felt he had too many irons in the fire and, later in his life, stated that he had grown overworked and his creativity had been drained.

On December 3, 1894, he collapsed in front of his wife, Fanny, and a few hours later, died of a stroke at the age of 44. The locals carried him on their shoulders to Mount Vaea and buried him on a spot overlooking the ocean.

You would think as a child, my favorite novel by Stevenson would be Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, but it’s not. I loved Treasure Island and still do. I think a lot of boys fantasized about having adventures on the open seas, searching for treasure chests filled with gold, and swashbuckling to the hilt against savage pirates. I was certainly no exception.

Since Stevenson was such a famous writer, I admired him as a writer, but even more so, I admired him as a person. He was born sickly and was considered odd in his appearance and behavior, but he achieved phenomenal success in his lifetime as a writer and endeavored to see the world while he could. He made every day that he wasn’t bed-ridden, heaven on earth.



FUN FACTS ABOUT ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

(Continued from page13)

The hotel in Monterey where he recovered his health is now a museum called the “Stevenson House.”

Stevenson once told a friend that wanted his writing to transport the readers away from themselves and their lives.

While living in Samoa, Stevenson briefly returned to his “romantic” style of writing and wrote *Catriona*, the sequel to *Kidnapped*.

The Writer’s Museum just outside of Edinburgh, Scotland, has a section dedicated to Stevenson featuring many of his personal belongings.

Incredibly, Stevenson was considered a second-rate writer for much of the 20th century by some literary critics. However, many of his famous peers held him in high esteem, including Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Rudyard Kipling, Arthur Conan Doyle, just to mention a few.

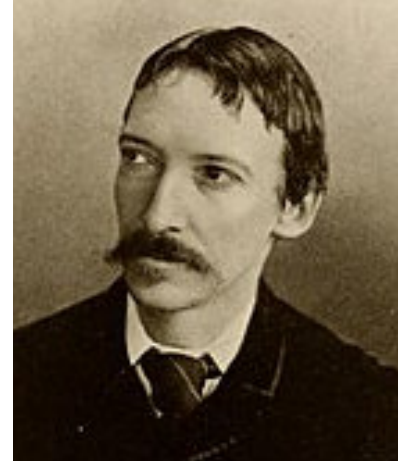
Fellow writer Roger L. Green said of Stevenson that he was a writer of a consistently high level of “literary skill or sheer imaginative power.”

The Index Translationum ranks Stevenson the 26th most-translated author in the world.

The Stevenson Museum in St. Helena, CA is home to at least 11,000 of his artifacts.

Some literary enthusiasts have said that when they were children, they did not enjoy reading Stevenson’s books, and, instead, preferred the Classics Illustrated comic versions. However, later as adults, these same individuals reread those books, and admitted that they enjoyed them considerably. In other words, what was considered a children’s author in his day was very much an author for adults.

Until next time, keep reading, writing and give Robert Louis Stevenson a try! 🚢



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UNLOCKING THE MYSTERY OF PUBLISHING WITH LUCIENNE DIVER

By Mike Apodaca



“THE PUBLISHING INDUSTRY IS A BUSINESS.”

This was the message from writer/agent Lucienne Diver on June 27th at our ACT II Zoom meeting. Here are some of my takeaways from this meeting:

Word of mouth is still the best advertising. When a person reads your book and is excited about it, this has high credibility and will get people to buy your book.

When we seek an agent, there’s a process which includes the enthusiasm for the author to secure new books and the ability of the author and agent to work together.

Once this is in place, the agent puts the work before a publisher, who does a profit/loss assessment. Then it goes to a publishing board (with sales, editorial, marketing, and rights representatives). If the book will make the company money, they will publish it.

Publishing is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. There are different agents and publishers and each one is unique. Keep looking until you find the right fit.

Things a writer should do:

Read in your genre. Know the conventions for pacing and plot.

Treat it like a business. Finish your book, get feedback, revise, take time between drafts (2-4 weeks), and polish. Make it as close to perfect as possible.

Follow submission guidelines.

Query letter—use the agent’s full name. The letter should be one page. Include the title, genre, word count, comparable titles, summary which shows why this book is unique, bio, and close (I look forward to hearing from you. Many thanks in advance for your time). If they have requested material, state this in the subject line.

Where can you find an agent? Publishersmarketplace.com, Querytracker.net, agentquery.com. It is good to check an agent with The Association of Authors’ Representatives.

We need to watch for scams. Sfw.org/other-resources/for-authors/writer-beware/ is a good place to check out an agent. We can often find agents if we are part of writing organizations.

How are we to feel about rejections? Don’t get discouraged. Work on the next project and persevere. If you hear anything personal, it is gold. Many authors don’t get published until their sixth book is written. You improve as you go.

We had a lively question-and-answer period where Lucienne gave us her personal advice. The best I heard went like this:

Question: When do you give up looking for an agent?

Answer: Your journey only stops when you give up.

Now, that’s wisdom! If you missed this meeting, look for it on our YouTube channel.

Lucienne’s website is www.lucienneiver.com. Her agency is knightagency.net. 

HDC WC DONATES \$600 TO SAN BERNARDINO LITERACY PROGRAM

By Bob Isbill

On June 28, HDCWC president Dwight Norris, HDCWC vice president Mike Apodaca, and HDCWC program chair Bob Isbill donated \$600 to the San Bernardino County literacy program. The funds were obtained through the grant provisions of CWC South.

Money obtained through two separate grants from the CWC Southern California region of the California Writers Club was turned over to the Hesperia library and the Apple Valley library in the High Desert for their adult literacy programs.

Both facilities have active programs to teach those who cannot read or write.



Left to right: HDCWC vice president Mike Apodaca, Jacob Zylman, Apple Valley library manager
HDCWC President Dwight Norris, HDCWC program chair Bob Isbill



Left to right: Alyssa Lovell, Hesperia branch library manager, HDCWC President Dwight Norris,
HDCWC program chair Bob Isbill, HDCWC vice president Mike Apodaca

HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

By Michael Raff

The bitterest tears shed over graves are for words left unsaid and deeds left undone.

-Harriet Beecher Stowe

abolitionist and novelist (14 Jun 1811-1896)

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