



The INKSLINGER

Sail On



HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC

Inspiring a Community of Writers

JUNE 2023



FROM THE PRESIDENT *Dwight Norris*

SCIENTIFIC CREATIVITY IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

I believe it takes creativity and some credibility to be good enough to steal some attention in junior high school today. If you've forgotten, that was age fourteen or fifteen, grades seven or eight. When I was in eighth grade, we moved from one school to another—a nearby school district but a whole new group of students and teachers.

I remember the first day I walked into that new classroom. Ronnie Guerrero, the resident bully with Hulk Hogan arms, took one look at me, laughed, and said, "Wow, he looks tough!" I so wanted to prevent Guerrero's hard muscular fists from colliding with my skinny little arms.

The science teacher had taken on the task of demonstrating the scientific principal of peristalsis.

As we know, we learn better by experiencing and discovering facts and concepts for ourselves rather than just being told about them. When a student discovers a concept for himself, he is not likely to easily forget it.

If I tell a child to be careful around the bees, to stay away from them, to not allow them to sting them, to take caution and prevent the bees from biting or stinging them because the pain may cause inflammation and severe pain, some children may listen and follow instructions. Other children may be skeptical about the warning, doubt it, and actually want to test it, questioning how severe a bee sting could actually be.

An ambitious jr. high school teacher helped forty students understand by experience and self-discovery what the scientific principle of peristalsis actually was. Two classrooms full of eighth-grade students piled into a single classroom to witness the magic.

"We need a student volunteer," Mr. Folio announced. "Who is willing to eat part of his bag lunch early?"

"I'll do it!" Ricky said.

"Let see what you've got there," Mr. Folio said as he took the bag in hand. "Let's see, a wrapped tuna sandwich, a bag of chips, and here's a medium-sized pickle. You like pickle to eat like an apple?"

"Yeah, I do," Ricky said.


"All right," the teacher said as he took charge of the demonstration. "Now there's just one thing I forgot to tell you. Ricky, as you take bites of this cucumber, I will be holding you by your ankles. Are you okay with that?"

"You mean I'll be upside down?" Ricky asked.

"Yes. That way you will feel the pulsating pull of your body from your organs down into your digestive tract and we will witness it as you experience it."

Ricky kept munching on his pickle and I sat low on the floor to watch every move. Suddenly, about half the pickle fell from Ricky's mouth and bounced up and hit me in the face. Ricky started to say something but kept choking on chunks of pickle.

"Come on, you can do it," Mr. Folio kept saying, not noticing the chunks of vomit that kept falling to the floor.

In self-defense, I grabbed about half the pickle that had found its way to the floor and tossed it against the left wall, where it lodged near the top. The whole class of students was laughing, and Ronnie Guerrero? Let's just say it looked like he had found a source of humor that would keep him contented for a good, long tir 

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Mike Apodaca



THE GENIUS OF DWIGHT NORRIS

Samuel Johnson defined genius as “a mind of large general powers accidentally determined to some particular direction.”

For over three years, I’ve worked alongside Dwight as his vice president. This unique position has given me a perspective few of our members have. As Dwight shifts his role in the club from president to respected member, I thought it best to pull the curtain back just a little bit.

Dwight’s motto is, “We get more done when we don’t care who gets the credit.”

Because of this, he rarely takes credit for all the many things he does for our club. There isn’t a time I have visited Dwight when he doesn’t mention a member and something they are going through. He never speaks of our club in the abstract. He only thinks of individuals, people he genuinely values and cares about.

Dwight has led our club by example. He is first and foremost a writer. He’s written more than half-a-dozen books and many articles and short stories. He is currently working on a wildly difficult project where he’s writing about the life of Paul the Apostle. I have read some of this. I felt I was right there with Paul, experiencing his many struggles and victories.

After reading about Johnny McCarthy and Sandy Armisted, I was sold. Dwight is an excellent writer.

Dwight’s also a good speaker. I still recall the things he shared with us over a year ago about creating a good presentation. Dwight has an easy-going, soothing way about him that puts an audience at ease and makes us feel like we’re all friends.

I have also learned from Dwight the importance of keeping our club focused by screening every decision through the club’s mission statement. Our club exists for a purpose: to aid writers in their writing careers. Whenever anyone makes a suggestion for something we could do in the club, Dwight always brings us back to the mission statement.

Along with this, Dwight is open to new ideas. He guided us through the difficult times with COVID. I stood with him outside the Community Church on the first Saturday morning when we had to cancel our meeting because of the disease. Dwight did everything he could to make sure our club remained strong—which it did. He called through the membership, encouraged Zoom meetings, and kept our club moving forward. We were able to continue in no small part because of Dwight’s leadership.

When he’s not promoting the club, Dwight runs his own business. It is his day job. He tutors clients who wish to pass the very difficult real estate exam. People who have failed as many as fourteen times will pass after working with Dwight. He uses materials that he has written, materials that make the vocabulary and ideas of real estate make sense in context. It is a brilliant way to teach.

I am so glad I was able to serve with Dwight. He has been my mentor and my friend.

We’ve all gained from Dwight being willing to direct his time, energy, and intelligence to the benefit of our club. Be sure to shake his hand when you see him and thank him for all he has done for us in his eight years as our president. 🚩

By Mike Apodaca

Saturday, May 13th, was daunting. Dwight had sprung a new idea on the board—he wanted to have an author share at our regular in-person meeting while on Zoom. He expected me to figure out how to make it happen. If this worked, it meant we could have anyone willing to share with our club from anywhere. But, if we failed, if we delivered a poor experience, this idea would die.

So I brought all the technology into my living room, did a dry run, and it all seemed to work. Fortunately, it all worked on Saturday as well. Yay!

It helped that we had an excellent speaker: Diane Fanning, true crime and mystery writer.

Ms. Fanning's topic was interviewing others for your writing. She provided us with some excellent points and great wisdom. She encouraged us to:

- Write legibly. Read the notes after the interview and expand them.
- Let the person you're interviewing know your genre.
- Give your credentials and mission and how they will help you.
- Identify yourself honestly and completely to your interviewee.
- Research the person you are interviewing and the topic. Be knowledgeable.
- Prepare questions, but be ready to think on your feet. Be flexible. Go with the flow.
- Schedule the appointment in advance, according to their schedule.
- Dress to respect your audience. Identify with who they are. Fit in.
- If someone offers you something (like a water), take it.
- Be a little early, but not too early.
- Mirror their body language in a way that shows you relate to them.
- You may not want to tape your interview. It can be used in a lawsuit against you.
- Practice your recall for those times when you can't take notes
- Know your limitations (language, physical limitations, etc.). Accommodate them.
- Accept what your interviewee says as true, then verify later.
- Be aware of your subject's intimidation factor. Make them comfortable.
- If you are intimidated, try not to show it. Stay in control of the interview.
- Be empathetic. Invoke positive memories. Give them space to talk. Don't step on the silence. Your tone is important. Ms. Fanning calls it, "The social worker voice."
- With professionals, use logic and facts.
- Respect their time.
- Maintain respectful eye contact.
- Use open-ended questions and save the tough questions for the end.
- Make sure you have their preferred contact information.
- Ask them who else they think you should talk to.
- Ask them if there are any other questions you should have asked.
- If the environment is important, write a description of it.
- Always thank the person for the interview.

Ms. Fanning also shared with us from her fascinating career. When asked which of her own books was her favorite. She responded, *Written in Blood*. If you weren't able to see this presentation, it will be available on our YouTube channel.

Thanks so much for Dwight Norris, Michael Raff, Mike Neumeyer, Rita Wells, Jenny Margotta, Bob Isbill, and everyone else who helps make our Saturday mornings together such a great success. 🚩



HOPE AND GIDDINESS


By fumi-tome ohta



My friend Judy and I would buy a lotto ticket whenever the mood hit us. Well, we would buy a ticket only to find out we lost. This time she bought the lotto ticket; in fact, she bought a Mega Million, Fantasy 5, and a Super Lotto Plus. Last night she texted me, “We lost tonight.”

At 5:35 this morning, I texted her back:

Do you think it's best that we could better spend our 'nickels and dimes' on other things? The economy has exploded negatively. Our apartment complex replaced all our washers and dryers for new ones. Previously, it was \$1.25 to wash and \$1 to dry. Now, it's \$2.25 to wash and \$2.25 to dry. Last Sunday I spent \$9 to do laundry. Can you imagine that! \$9.00 to do laundry! Do you remember, years ago it was 50 cents to wash and 10 cents to dry. Well. At least we got something for our money. But when we spend our money on the lottery, we get nothing back. No, I take it back, from the time we buy the ticket to when the numbers are announced, we get to experience 'hope and giddiness.' I used to buy my lotto with a well-worn dollar bill, but now, I seek out loose change then buy my lotto ticket with old and tarnished coins. I guess I'll continue spending my money on the lotto because I like that feeling of hope and giddiness. I know, it's insane to throw our money away knowing full well the likelihood of winning is nil or none. But guess what, in spite of all that, when I have that just-bought lotto ticket in my hand, I have a smile on my face and in my heart and when I do, I have it all day.

I'm looking at the clock. It's Saturday evening and it's almost 8 o'clock. Here we go again. \$1 for Hope and Giddiness; you can't beat that to put a sparkle in anyone's eyes. 

JUNE BIRTHDAYS

JUNE 9 FRAN SAVAGE

JUNE 21 JUNE LANGER

JUNE 27 HENRIETTA WILLIAMS


POEMSMITHS

By Lorelei Kay



On April 22, the Poemsmiths of the Mojave High Desert performed for a full hour onstage at the First Annual Neenach Poetry Festival in Neenach near Lancaster. Their big smiles reflect the fun they had performing their poetry.

The Poemsmiths have previously performed at the Cultural Arts Center of the High Desert in Victorville and plan to continue their performing tradition.

From left bottom row are Anita Holmes, Aileen Rochester, and Mary Langer Thompson. From left top row are Bob Young, Debbie Rubio, and Lorelei Kay, who was hostess and master of ceremonies for the event. 



THE ENERGETIC ROUTINE

By John Paul Garner



We each have our own writing routine, what frees our imagination and guides our choices. Before I changed, I'd wake early and write. My days often began at 3:00 or 4:00 in the morning. It was, I found, the best time to write. It's so quiet and peaceful I'd sink deeply into the writing and feel like I was the only thing moving. Everything around me was still and silent. I'd write until I got tired then I'd break for the day.

Afterward, I would follow Stephen King's advice and go for a walk and read or maybe nap. I'm reading *The Solace of Open Spaces* right now. It's truly a lesson in the use of language. Or, now that I think about it, sometimes, just for the fun, I'd go to Del Taco for a large iced coffee and a spicy chicken burrito, which I'd eat in my car while watching the world unfold around me.


The next day—and I knew I shouldn't do this—I'd review my previous day's writing. In doing that I'd find mistakes for sure but I also discovered that my writing became worse the longer I stayed on task. I'd lose my fresh eyes and just throw stuff down. Near the end of a session, I was cranking out trash. So, to improve the quality of my initial drafts, I decided I needed to make a change: either shorten the time I write or devise a new routine.

Because I love to write, I chose to develop a new routine.

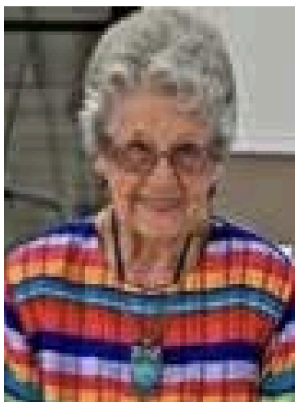
When I evaluated how I worked, I saw that I averaged 7 hours to writing, then around noon I'd break from the task. What came to me as I thought about this routine was the routine I used when I coached, how I'd break up a 2-1/2 hour practice into periods of instruction and repetition. Between the periods, there'd be a short break in which players could hydrate, and we'd reset for the next training period. Because of the breaks, no more than two to three minutes, the intensity exhibited during a training period was high and focused.

Using that routine as my model, I conjured up what I call my "energetic routine" and I admit I don't know why. The label seems to describe my new plan to divide my day into writing periods with breaks in between. I write for an hour to an hour and a half then I break for 20-30 minutes. During the break, I either go for a quick stroll around the block, perform some chore around the house, or watch TV just so I don't think about writing.

After the break, I return to the writing with fresh eyes and renewed energy. As a consequence, my day is now filled with writing which pleases me to no end, while my writing, despite being a first draft at this time, is improved and I am less drained afterward. The sense of accomplishment I derive from the process is exhilarating.

I can do this because I'm retired and have no hobby. I have time to write, and I'm sufficiently obsessed with it that a day spent at my laptop between breaks is a gift. I merely suggest that so much of the good writing we each are capable of is sometimes not realized because we are often too focused for too long. So consider taking a break before that happens. It can be the difference between good and great. 

CELEBRATING JUNE LANGER'S 100TH BIRTHDAY




June Langer was born June 21, 1923, and grew up in the Windy City—Chicago, Illinois. At age six on her first day of school, she declared she was going to become a teacher. She attended Fenger High School on Chicago's South Side, graduating early as an Honor student. In those days grades were "S" for Superior, "E" for Excellent, "G" for Good, "P" for Poor, and "F" for Fail. She enrolled in Chicago Teacher's College, but WWII, a husband, two marvelous children (her words), and a move to Glendale, California, via Route 66 temporarily stopped her formal education. Perseverance won out, and she returned to Glendale College and then Cal State L.A. to earn a degree and teaching credential. She taught elementary school for twenty-three years in the Garvey School District in San Gabriel.

In 2006, retired and widowed, June followed her daughter, HDCWC member Mary Langer Thompson, to the High Desert to live in Sun City in Apple Valley. Always active in her Glendale church as a Stephens Minister and deacon, June soon joined The Community Church at Jess Ranch and other organizations such as Tumbleweed Division of California Retired Teachers, AAUW, and Delta Kappa Gamma. June added the hobbies (she still plays piano and was an outstanding seamstress) of watercolor and acrylic painting (she's a member of High Desert Artists), cardmaking, and writing, both poetry and a popular regular column for Sun City's *The View*. Many readers tell her they read her column first for her personal histories of times past. As a member of The High Desert California Writers Club, June was involved in the Dorothy C. Blakely Memoir Project, which connected high school students with senior citizens, and was a judge for several years of the National Scholastic Writing Contest. She is published in several anthologies.

In *Let It Be Recorded: A Collection of Memoirs*, Academy for Academic Excellence student Katie Villalobos quotes June as saying, "Not only am I a proud mother and grandma, but I am also an involved woman with my family and community. Mistakes, experiences, and life's journey are what got me to become this woman. My parents always told their children that if we wanted to become something in this world then it was up to us to make something of ourselves. If we pushed ourselves in all we did, whether it was at school, home, or church, then we could leave a legacy. If we wanted to succeed as much as we wanted everything else, then that success was sure to come."

June Langer calls herself a late bloomer. She was due to be born on June 1st but waited until June 21st. She started her teaching career at age 40, began painting at age 80, and began her memoirs (*Bits and Pieces*, forthcoming) at age 88. In her mid-nineties she became a member of the writing critique group, "Wise Women," for women ninety and over. That group, taught by HDCWC member Janis Brams, consisted of Evelyn Blocker, Winnie Rueff, Amy Burnett, and June. She is a lifelong learner and can't wait to discover something new to learn.

Her ambition approaching her 100th birthday is to finish her memoir, paint more good pictures, and write more poems. She enjoys time with family and has three grandchildren, Matthew Thompson, Tara Smith, and Brad Langer, and four great grandchildren, Dixon, Grayson, Lydia, and Christopher.


Here is June's Legacy Poem from one of our HDCWC workshops: 

MY LEGACY *by June Langer*

I want to leave my piano, Venus and dove.
I want to leave green grass and roses.
I'm leaving society garlic and purple blossoms.

I want to leave angel food cake with lemon frosting and Spam and Velveeta casserole.
I'll leave Thanksgiving with roasting turkey and bestow blessings on Chicago, Glendale, and Apple Valley.

I want to leave the World's Fair and "It's Only a Shanty in Old Shanty town" and "Jesus Loves Me."

I'm leaving jump rope, roller skating on the sidewalk, dry October weather and deep snow in December, fifty-seven years of marriage, parents who said, "Yes, you can!" and several fine descendants. 

WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN

By Mike Apodaca



Forty years ago, I stood beside my bride, making a blind commitment—to stay together, to remain faithful, no matter what.

The traditional wedding refrain is: “In the name of God, I, Mike Apodaca, take you, Debi Mobly, to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, until parted by death. This is my solemn vow.”

In 1983, I wasn't old enough nor experienced enough to know how these words would become reality in our lives, nor how we would respond to them.

“In the name of God.” This is the secret sauce of our marriage. Debi and I never saw our marriage as

something we did. It was something we asked God to do to us. He married us, made us one flesh. After this, it was out of our hands. This perspective has gotten us through some rough patches.

There have been better times. Times of laughter. Times of wonder. We have traveled, explored, made friends, played, and welcomed babies into our family. And there have been worse times. Deaths, accidents, tragedies.

We've had our time of riches. This is not to say we are rich. We're not. But we are able to meet our obligations, and, compared to many, we are well off. Debi and I both went to college, acquired degrees, and worked hard to get to this stage. But we've also been poor. When our daughter was born, we established a college fund for her. But a couple of years later had to cash it out to buy groceries. What was the sense of having a college fund when we couldn't feed her? We lived hand-to-mouth for the first thirty years of our marriage.

And we've had some sickness. There have been surgeries and bouts with illness. As we grow older, illness will increase. It is inevitable. For the most part, up 'till now, we've been fairly healthy.

But this will not last.

The phrase, to love and cherish is another key to marriage. Love is a bonfire that needs to be constantly fed or it will wither and, ultimately, die. My wife and I have never been cavalier with our love. We tell each other often, sometimes multiple times in a day, and we mean it. Love doesn't mean we are blind to the things that drive us crazy about each other. But love turns these imperfections into quirks, character flaws, and room to grow. Love says, I will be here cherishing you no matter what. Being loved gives me the space to want to be a better person for Debi.

Cherishing is also vital. Every day, I try to affirm to Debi how precious she is to me. I greet her each morning saying, “Good morning, my queen.” I call her, “My one.” When I was in seminary, learning Hebrew, I came up with the phrase, “Ugot ha eretz, asher hiyata ata,” which means, “Cakes of the world, which you are.” For forty years, I have called my Debi cakes.

After forty years, we are most likely on the far end of “till death do us part.”

Debi and I have seen our marriage is a grand adventure, a solemn partnership, which has produced two children (both gifted, wonderful human beings) and two precocious, silly, talented grandchildren. The constant support we have shown each other has allowed us to blossom as people. Debi became a nurse at forty-nine years old. And I have ventured into writing and speaking, with Debi's blessing.

Forty years, and counting. 🚩

WRITERS ARE READERS

BOOK REVIEWS by Mary Langer Thompson




LIFE IN FIVE SENSES BY GRETCHEN RUBIN

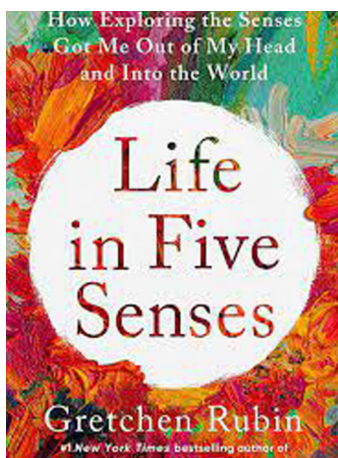
Bestselling author Gretchen Rubin is an author and researcher writers should know. About ten years ago she began to study happiness and human nature and came out with *The Happiness Project*, which is included in our bibliography of our Dorothy C. Blakely Memoir books. The description reads, “A woman spends a year devoted to her happiness project, trying to find out how to be happier.”

In her latest book, *Life in Five Senses*, Rubin describes going to the eye doctor, who told her she was at risk for a detached retina because of her extreme nearsightedness. This made her realize she’d been overlooking the importance of her five senses and was “too stuck in her head.” Sound familiar? So she began another journey of research (science, philosophy, literature) and self-experimentation, focusing on “The Big Five.”

When discussing her insights on seeing, she describes how different languages name colors differently. We supply meanings to colors “from our time, place and culture.” Did you know that before WWII, pink was a boy’s color and blue a girl’s? Color moves us in many ways. Different colored pens make Rubin happy, she learns. Because she lives close by, she decides to visit the Metropolitan Museum of Art daily. She asks an artist how to look at a work. The book is full of practical suggestions to appreciate our world through each of our senses.

We’re always looking and listening for people. She strives to know how to listen more closely to sounds around her and to people she loves. She creates an “audio apothecary,” beginning with music. Did you know that listening to music during medical procedures can help people manage pain? It’s also good for surgeons to listen to in the operating room to stay focused and relaxed. Did you know that while music evolves, we tend to prefer music from our twenties and younger because that’s when our musical tastes were established? Rubin discovers this truth about herself: “Most people were musician-focused or genre-focused. I was song-focused.” It made her happy to listen to a song she loved over and over, but she did not follow up with more music by a particular artist or in that genre. She developed a “one song playlist” for her smartphone’s playlist, an “audio apothecary” to give herself energy and cheer. Learn about “sound baths,” “taking the microphone,” and her “Manifesto for listening,” and her addition to listening to songs during her Met gallery visits. Learn, too, about her research into “quests for silence.”

Before or during your reading, you can go to <https://gretchenrubin.com> and download material to accompany the book. You can take a test and find out what your most neglected sense is and suggestions for awakening your appreciation of that particular sense. (I’m getting some “scratch and sniff stickers”!) You can also download discussion guides, one general and one sense specific, plus “42 Easy Challenges to Lift Your Spirits.” 





Jenny Margotta

From an Editor's Desk

Choosing the Right Font for Your Book

There are literally hundreds of typefaces (more commonly called fonts) available today. But not all of them are suitable for use in your book, at least not for the main body of your book.

The correct terminology by the way is “typeface” for the actual lettering design: **Times New Roman** or **Calibri**, for example. “Font” refers to the overall style: style and point size, such as **Times New Roman 16** or **Calibritalic 14**. But I'll just refer to everything as “fonts.”

This is a
serif
font.

Fonts are divided into two main categories: Serif and Sans Serif. A Serif font has little lines or strokes on the ends of letters.

SansSerif (literally, “without serif”) eliminates all those extra lines and tags. I used Calibri 12 point for this paragraph.

In addition to the serifs—or lack of—fonts often differ in size and spacing. Notice the difference between **Times New Roman 12 point** and □□□□□□□□ 12 □□□□□. And notice that **Calibri 12 point** is smaller than the **Arial 12 point** I used before and after it.

Serif fonts are recommended for the main parts of your book, supposedly because serifs help the eye more easily follow from one letter to the next, which makes reading less tiring and easier on the eye. (I find, however, that editing in a large sans serif font is easier for me, especially when I'm tracking commas, apostrophes, and other punctuation marks. But maybe that's just me.) According to most sources, sans serif fonts should generally be reserved for chapter titles, headings, or other shorter pieces of text. Many formatters like to use a small sans serif font for photo captions and table contents, too.

Baskerville
Baskerville
Caslon
Caslon
Dante
Dante

While Times New Roman is certainly still the preferred font of most publishers, there are certainly others that are acceptable. In addition to Garamond, other common serif fonts include Baskerville, Caslon, and Dante. The three examples are all the same point size, but notice the difference in horizontal spacing and both horizontal and vertical size.

Agency FB

Century Gothic

Microsoft Sans Serif

Common sans serif fonts include the Arial and Calibri already mentioned, as well as Agency FB, Century Gothic, and Microsoft Sans Serif. Again, all three fonts in the example on the left are 12 point in size.

Specialty fonts, such as the three examples here, are often used for section pages, letter or diary entries, and other small sections of text. These three specialty fonts are all 10 point.

Bradley Hand ITC

Freestyle Script


Lucida Calligraphy

While specialty fonts are definitely acceptable for some parts of a book, it is strongly advised that you do not use one for an entire book.

And feel free to be creative with titles and headings. I used a font called **One Dance** for the titles in a series of books on playing the lottery because the author felt the font rather resembled our paper currency. Another author liked the “techno” look the **Space Mission** font for his titles. Obviously, neither of these would have been suitable for the text of the entire book.

One Dance
SPACE MISSION

So what exactly is the “right” font to use for a book’s main body matter? It really comes down to individual taste—with a few exceptions. Almost any *legible* font can be used, so long as you keep in mind a few basic principles. Your font choice should like nice on the page, but more importantly, it must be easily readable. Your main objective is for readers to immerse themselves in your story without struggling to decipher your font. As long as you meet those main objectives, many of the so-called font rules can be broken if the situation really calls for it. But if you’re going to do an ebook, it is also important to consider how the font will look on e-book readers, tablets, or smartphones. Some fonts may look wonderful in print but not so much on an electronic device, especially considering the wide range of screen sizes on those devices.

Additionally, not all fonts come with all the standard styles (regular, bold, italic) and specialty characters, so make sure your font choice includes everything you’ll need to use in your book. Word 365 comes with about 175 different fonts but there are hundreds more available online—some free, some for a fee. Incidentally, you don’t *purchase* fonts, you *license* them. Word’s fonts can be used commercially, but not all fonts you might download from the internet can be. Check the Terms and Conditions on the site to make sure the license includes the rights to use the font for commercial purposes. I have used fonts from fontspace.com, envato.com, myfonts.com, dafont.com, and google.com. 

WORD OF THE MONTH

Tohubohu (,tōhoō 'bōhoō) Noun:

- A state of chaos; utter confusion.



THE LETTER AND SHAKESPEARE

By Ann Miner



The following is a letter from my late father-in-law to the gas company. He had received a request for a deposit “within the next week,” with the promise of being paid accrued interest on it if bills were paid on time. I present the letter exactly as I found it, unedited.

Waddy’s Battery Hospital
Lancaster, California
Jan. 5th, 1960
Gentlemen:

Am in receipt of your letter of Dec. 23rd, regarding cash deposit required to establish satisfactory credit with your company, and asking that I send a check of \$25.00 within a week.

I made a cash deposit of \$35.00 Nov. 25th, deposit receipt #155507, so would appreciate receiving your check for the \$10.00 difference within the next week.

I know that you do not know me nor do you know anything about my credit rating, so by the same token, I do not know your company nor your rating.

My credit department (me) has made several discreet inquiries as to your reliability and soundness as a depository for my \$25.00 and have received the following reply – and I quote: “dem bums, have nuttin’ to do wit em.” (Quote from a butane company worker!!!)

I am starting in the battery business here in Lancaster, and hope some day to sell your company a battery or repair one now and then for you.

I expect my gas bill will average about \$2.50 a month so my deposit will be about ten times my monthly bill, so just in case I should sometime in the future sell you a battery (average cost about \$15.00) maybe it would be a splendid idea for you to send me your check, within a week, for say about \$150.00 to insure your credit with me.

I am very conservative in my business dealing, so do not promise to pay you better than two and seven eighths percent interest on your deposit, and being ultra conservative I do not even include a postage paid envelope.

However, in spite of this fact, I am sure I will at least receive a card from you each month.

Waiting with baited breath and great anxiety for my refund of \$10.00, I beg to be,

Very truly yours,

Waddy’s Battery Hospital

P.S. Please rush the ten bucks as I am expecting my first gas bill any day now. 

SPEAKING OF SHAKESPEARE

My son had a dog named Shakespeare. He also had dogs named Beethoven, T.S. Eliot, and - well, you get the picture.

Shakespeare was a British Mastiff.

I stored some boxes of books in my son’s backyard shed. Shakespeare, a puppy of six months and a mere 100 pounds, discovered them and chewed them up! The big baby was just cutting his teeth!

After that, whenever I visited, I simply had to ask the dog, “So, Shakespeare, eaten any good books lately?”

RICHARD SPENCER TO LAUNCH NEW BOOK



Richard Spencer is about to release his first novel, *Earther Wizard, The Rise of Colin Duncan*, on Amazon.com. The back cover text reads like this.

“What if I told you a parallel planet occupies the same space as the Earth? A planet filled with dragons, wyvern, wood nymphs, wizards and . . . Magic.

Colin Duncan is a 27-year-old former Marine with no prior knowledge of that place. He is introduced to magic when a wizard steps into his bedroom through a portal in the middle of the night, intent on killing him.

In a running battle across two continents, Colin must decipher a series of mysterious images in his mind. All while being pursued by wizards—who see him as a threat to their power—and the fearsome, shapeshifting, sentient creatures who assist them. Colin's only ally is Willowmae, a resourceful wood nymph full of surprises.

To survive, Colin must beat his adversaries at their own game, on their own turf. To do that, he must become the most powerful wizard on two worlds.

He must become the Earther Wizard in a journey filled with discovery, betrayal, friendship, and no small amount of pain.”

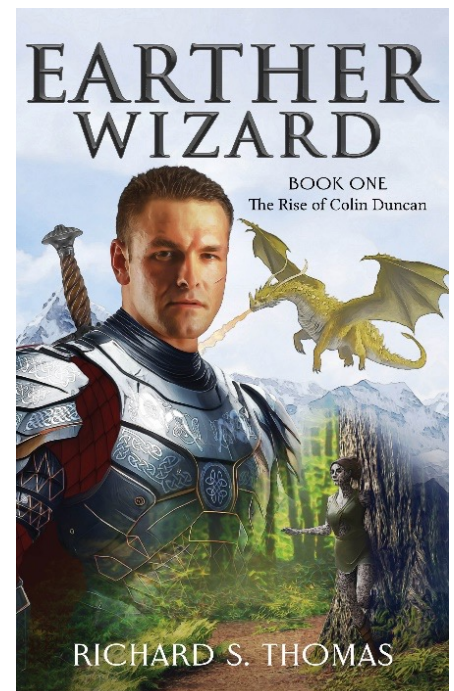
Richard Spencer, who writes under the name of Richard S. Thomas, is no spring chicken. He's seen a lot of water run under that bridge. Once he got over youthful endeavors like skydiving, scuba diving, and hang gliding, he spent fifty years as a serious woodworker. When he started losing his eyesight due to macular degeneration, he turned to a decades' old dream of writing.

Richard has been a member of the HDCWC for six months or so and he greatly appreciates all the help and encouragement he has received from other members. He has found the critique group, led by Anita Holmes, to be especially helpful. He said. “Every two weeks, four seemingly nice women would hack my chapter apart with a machete. But once the bleeding stopped, I'd take their advice and craft a better chapter.”

Richard went on to say that the last two years have been an exciting ride and writing a book is one the most satisfying things he has ever done.

You can visit his website at richardstomas.com. There you will find inside information on the characters, details on upcoming books, and a surprise from time to time. If you would like to contact him personally, drop him a line at

richard@richardstomas.com. 





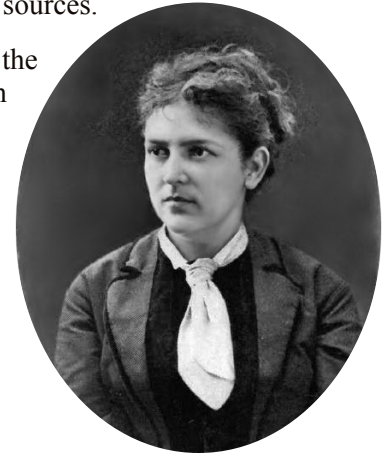
THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS OF ALL TIME

By Michael Raff

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Robert Lewis Balfour Stevenson (he later changed Lewis to Louis and dropped the Balfour) was born in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1850. His father and the majority of his paternal family designed lighthouses. He was an only child, and by most accounts, odd in appearance and behavior. All his life he suffered from either bronchiectasis or sarcoidosis. His frequent bouts of illnesses kept him out of school frequently, but a private nurse, Alison Cunningham, read to him from the Bible and other sources.

At ten years of age, he was sent to the Edinburgh Academy for Boys. He later attended the University of Edinburgh and initially studied engineering, but he displayed little enthusiasm and often dodged the classes. When not in school, his family took him on trips to inspect their numerous lighthouses, which he relished, and traveling would remain one of his lifelong passions. He also enjoyed writing essays, poetry, and stories, and, by 1871, informed his father that he was going to “pursue a life of letters.” Although his family’s minister encouraged him to practice religion and be ordained, Stevenson stated, “I must suppose, indeed, that he was fond of preaching sermons, and so am I, though I never had it maintained that either of us loved to hear them.” At one time he declared himself an atheist but later came to regret it, saying, “Christianity, as among other things, is a very wise, noble and strange doctrine of life.”



Among Stevenson’s good friends was Leslie Stephen, the editor of *Cornhill Magazine*. Stephen took Stevenson to see a patient at an infirmary, William Henley, who was a talkative, charismatic poet with a wooden leg, who quite obviously, became the inspiration for *Treasure Island*’s unforgettable Long John Silver.

Time after time, Stevenson was laid up ill in bed, sometimes fighting for survival. He remained frail and gaunt his entire life. He did study law while in school and qualified for the bar exam in 1875 but never practiced law. Instead, he spent his time traveling and writing. During his travels in 1876, he met Fanny Van de Grift Osbourne, an American short story writer ten years his senior, who was separated from her husband, traveling with their children. Shortly later, an enamored Stevenson wrote an article for the *Cornhill Magazine*, titled “On Falling in Love.” He decided to take a train from New York to California to join her. He was dying by the time he arrived in Monterey, where some ranchers nursed him back to health. By the time he traveled to San Francisco, he’d become impoverished and lived on a mere forty-five cents a day. When illness struck again, Fanny, divorced her husband and, having recovered from her own sickness, joined Stevenson and nursed him back to health. They married in May of 1880.

Stevenson and Fanny, along with her children, continued his lifestyle of extensive traveling, mainly in the United States, England, and Scotland, all the while at the expense of his health. They settled for about three years in the English seaside town of Bournemouth. He named the house “Skerryvore,” after a lighthouse built by his uncle.



While they lived in Bournemouth, Stevenson was largely bedridden, stating he was “like a weevil in a biscuit.” Being bedridden, however, didn’t seem to hamper his writing. During this period, he wrote his most well-known works, including: *Treasure Island*, *Kidnapped*, *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *A Child’s Garden of Versus* and *Underwoods*. Although all these titles were considered his most popular, it was the *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* that won him worldwide fame.

Stevenson’s father died in 1887, which may have triggered his decision to resume traveling and search for a climate that would better suit his declining health, most likely, the South Seas. After arriving in New York, they spent a bitter winter in the Adirondacks at a cure cottage, now called Stevenson Cottage, at Saranac Lake. It was there he wrote his finest essays.

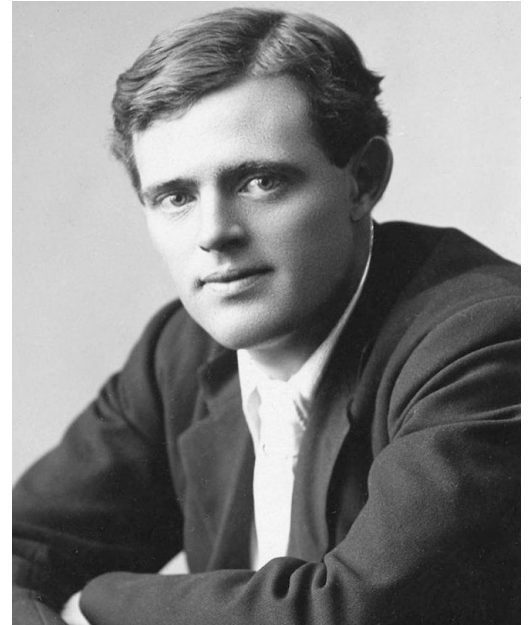
To be continued next month. 


THE JACK LONDON AWARD

By Dwight Norris

Every other year, each branch of the California Writers Club can offer to a member of their branch an award for outstanding service, either to the branch or to the corporate CWC. The award is independent of writing abilities and accomplishments and is a way of saying thanks to an individual member for exemplary service to the club. The branch does not have to offer this recognition, and sadly, some have fallen into a habit of not expecting this type of activity.

Fortunately, such is not the case for the High Desert Branch of the CWC. Over the past sixteen years, the club has awarded seven Jack London Awards to Carol Warren, Bob Isbill, Roberta Smith, Dwight Norris, Mary Thompson, Jenny Margotta, and Rusty La Grange. Rusty and Bob also received the Ina B. Coolbrith Award for outstanding service to the corporate CWC. As members of the HDCWC, we can be proud of the leadership that has led to these accomplishments.



Well, it is time once again to announce the recipient of the Jack London Award, this time for 2023. Names that have been submitted include Joan Rudder-Ward, Michael Raff, and Mike Apodaca. The selection will be announced orally only at the June HDCWC meeting 

A June Writing Salon!

Tuesday June 20, at 3:00 p.m.

Hosted by John Garner

To be held at Richard Zone's home

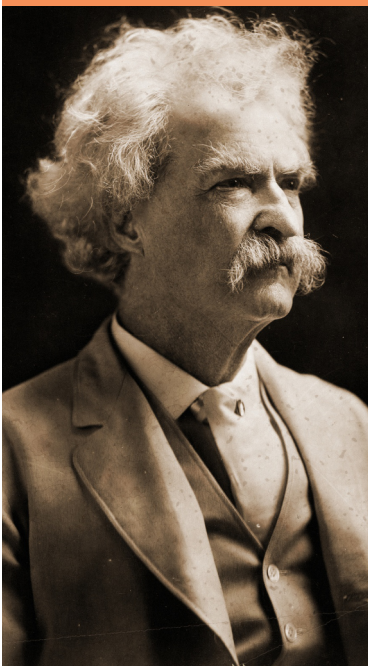
**COME AND PARTICIPATE IN A DISCUSSION ABOUT
WHAT MARK TWAIN MEANT WHEN HE WROTE ABOUT
LIGHTNING AND THE LIGHTNING BUG.**

Space is limited so reserve your spot soon!

Contact:

Richard Zone: retiredzone@gmail.com

909-222 8812



WRITING WORKSHOP


By Bob Isbill

SELF-EDITING AND CRITIQUE KNOWLEDGE GOALS FOR JUNE 10 MEETING

Writers are usually tasked with editing other people's work at some point, either as a beta reader, as part of a critique group or through a sideline as a developmental editor. We may not always have the editing skills we need when called upon in this capacity, however. This session will help you develop fifteen skillsets which you can then apply to your work as well. A general introduction will cover adopting a mindset of neutrality, how editing is a conversation, and knowing how to respond based on what draft a writer is in, followed by a set of specific tools such as working with genre conventions, narrative arcs and plot holes, scenic writing, links and transitions, tone of voice, characters and relationships, point-of-view, and theme.

The June 10 HDCWC Membership meeting will be conducted by our Book Architecture Workshop leader, Stuart Horwitz.

Stuart Horwitz is a ghostwriter, independent editor, and founder of Book Architecture (www.bookarchitecture.com). His clients have reached the best-seller list in both fiction and non-fiction and have appeared on *Oprah!*, *The Today Show*, and in the most prestigious journals in their fields. He is the author of three acclaimed books on writing: *Blueprint Your Bestseller: Organize and Revise Any Manuscript with the Book Architecture Method* (Penguin/Perigee), which was named one of the year's best books about writing by *The Writer* magazine, *Book Architecture: How to Plot and Outline Without Using a Formula*, which became an Amazon bestseller, and *Finish Your Book in Three Drafts: How to Write a Book, Revise a Book, and Complete a Book While You Still Love It*.

Horwitz holds degrees in literary aesthetics from New York University and East Asian studies from Harvard University. He is also an award-winning poet and essayist. He recently relocated to California with his family from New England, something he should have done years ago. 



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HDCWC TO HOST AGENT ON FREE JUNE 27 ACT II ZOOM MEETING

By Bob Isbill



What are agents looking for? How can an agent help writers? What is required to become an agent? Best general advice an agent would give to writers today If one does not have an agent, what things can he/she do to get representation?

Join us statewide as the High Desert Branch presents prominent agent Lucianne Diver at 6 pm on Tuesday, June 27 via zoom.

Lucienne Diver joined The Knight Agency in 2008 after spending fifteen years at New York City's prestigious Spectrum Literary Agency. With her sharp eye and gift for spotting original new voices, Lucienne is one of the most well-respected agents in the industry. A lifelong book addict, she graduated summa cum laude from the State University of New York at Potsdam with dual majors in English/writing and anthropology. She thus came well-equipped for her work as an agent.

Over the course of her dynamic career, she has sold well over 700 titles to every major publisher and has built a client list of more than forty authors spanning the commercial fiction genres, primarily in the areas of fantasy, science fiction, horror, women's fiction, romance, mystery/suspense, and young adult. Her authors have been honored with the Hugo, Nebula, Colorado Book, and National Readers' Choice Awards, and have appeared on the *New York Times* and *USA Today* bestseller lists. A publishing veteran, Lucienne has superb industry knowledge and a keen understanding of the foreign rights market.

This Zoom presentation is open and free of charge to all CWC members. Registration is not required. However, there will be limited seating for what we feel will be a popular event.

The link to join the meeting may be found on the sidebar "Special Zoom Meetings" on www.hdcwc.com. 


NAVIGATING THE AMAZON

By Mike Apodaca

In our ACT II meetings, we strive to provide relevant, practical training for our writers. This is what led Jenny Margotta and me to present a meeting on using Amazon and KDP (Kindle Direct Publishing). In just a little over an hour, we covered everything we could think of to make your experience in publishing and promoting your book successful on the Amazon platform.

The best part of the presentation was when Jenny shared her very special spreadsheet she developed to ascertain the cost of publishing and what you should charge for your books (and the cover price she sets for her books the club publishes). What a great tool to have. If you did not get the latest version (all who attended did), just email Jenny and she will send you one.

The response of all who attended was overwhelmingly favorable. If you missed the presentation and want to view it again, you will be able to watch it on our YouTube channel.

Amazon is the single most popular marketplace for books. All authors will have to work with the Amazon platform or hire someone else to do it for them. Thankfully, Amazon has gone to great lengths to make the experience fairly straight forward and user-friendly. Our hope was to give our members encouragement that they have what it takes to navigate the Amazon. 



HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE
CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB
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APPOINTED POSITIONS ARE CURRENT
UNTIL THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR
ENDING IN JULY 2023.

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"WHAT A TANGLED WEB

WE WEAVE, WHEN FIRST

WE PRACTICE TO DECEIVE!"

Walter Scott, novelist and poet.

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Take advantage of your membership benefits

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Call Richard if you would

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909-222-8812

