



# The INKSLINGER

Sail On



**HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC**  
**INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS**  
**SEPTEMBER 2023**



## FROM THE PRESIDENT - Mike Apodaca

The lights dimmed and we were reminded by a ubiquitous voice, ala Mount Sinai, to turn off our cell phones and that pictures and video were strictly prohibited. We obeyed.

It has been ten years since my stepfather, David Apodaca, passed from this earth. At the time, my wife, Debi, and I made the commitment to take my stepmom to the Festival of the Arts and the Pageant of the Masters in Laguna in his honor. Each year seems better than the one before.

What I didn't expect from this evening—INSIGHT.

The topic for the evening was art colonies. The program began in France where Monet, Manet, and Renoir were part of a collection of artists who stepped outside the rigorous, accepted conventions of art in the establishment and dared to produce what they saw in the world around them and how it made them feel. I read a book once about how Manet was rejected by the art

establishment in his day.

Many such colonies erupted in the art world throughout history. One of the earliest was in Florence, producing such geniuses as Michelangelo and Leonardo.

In the early 1900s, in America, bold artists like John Sloan and George Benjamin painted the unnoticed moments of everyday life, revealing the inherent value of these mundane events.

New Mexico, Harlem, East Los Angeles, and Laguna Beach all became safe harbors for artists looking for new ways to express themselves.

While I watched this visually stunning presentation, it dawned on me—we in the HDCWC are an artist colony! The HDCWC is a community of creative artists who express themselves primarily in writing but also in painting, video production, music, etc. We even get together in various meetings to exchange thoughts on the trends in writing and art, learning from each other and sharpening our skills in the process. We edit, critique, discuss and debate. Mostly, we laugh and smile. We care about each other. We are friends with a common mission.


I feel this energy growing.

Many of our writers are churning out their best writing ever. We are taking seriously the craft, doing what we can to learn and grow. And we are leaving our comfort zones, trusting one another, and attempting forms of writing unfamiliar to us, like poetry and memoir.

Best of all, we are finding the joy of being heard. As we learn to better express ourselves, we are being noticed.

It will not surprise me if one day someone writes about the explosion of talent that burst forth from the High Desert in California in the 2020s. They will point out the explosion of craft, talent, and innovation that was inspired in living rooms and gatherings, in conversations and multiple drafts. They will talk about the HDCWC.

You and I are part of this creative explosion.

We are a part of art history. 



## FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Joan Rudder-Ward



### TOGETHER AGAIN

At our July “write-in” I was fortunate to be at the table headed by Freddie Gold. Freddie provided a handout of universal themes in literature that we could use for writing prompts. There were, oh, easily a hundred or more themes. What perked my interest in particular was that I could see the themes being used as an outline for someone writing their memoir or a story about someone they knew. I decided to challenge myself to select various themes and see what I could come up with to submit monthly for *The Inkslinger*. So, here goes! This story fits the category “Reunion” under the Friendship and Family theme.

On a bitter, cold day in January 1937, my grandmother Catherine Barlow died of pneumonia, leaving behind three young daughters. The girls were barely 2, 4, and 6 years of age. What happened to them happened to many families of the day- they were separated and sent to live with three different families. Only the eldest, Elouise, lived with actual relatives. My mother, Gloria, and the youngest Juliet were adopted by family acquaintances.

The separation was particularly difficult on my mother. Years later she would tell her children how she cried every day after she was taken away from her sisters. So much so, the adoptive family brought her back to her maternal Aunt Ida, who was caring for Elouise.

“She won’t stop crying”.

Aunt Ida took Little Gloria aside and softly but sternly told her.

“I’m so sorry, but we cannot afford to keep you. This is your mother’s good friend. She and her husband are willing to take care of you and raise you. So you go back and stop crying”.

Little Gloria did as she was instructed.


For several years, the families tried to meet at least once a month, and the girls were able to keep in touch. However, the family that adopted Juliet eventually moved out of state, which ended any further contact with her.

In later years, Mom gave birth to my two sisters and me. Growing up, we would listen to her fond remembrances of the rare and treasured times she spent with her own sisters. We could sense the longing in her voice and the hope that they might, one day, be together again. As a child I resolved that one day, I would reunite my mother with her sisters.

Time passed and my sisters and I married and started families of our own. Life continued happily. But in the background hovered the unanswered question Where is Juliet? I began genealogy research on my family and uncovered the name of Juliet’s adoptive family. Through the wonders of cyberspace, I was able to get online telephone information for cities in Maryland and Michigan where she might have been living. One sister and I divided the phone calls between us, and voila! Within a couple of days, a family tie that had been severed for 50 years was reconnected when we located one of Juliet’s sons.

Although Elouise passed away before the three “girls” could be reunited, my mother was able to visit Juliet a year later and brought back a picture of this

younger sister as a teen. I gathered the few worn photos available of Mom and Elouise and created the family portrait the three sisters never had a chance to take. Using my skill in digital restoration, I was able to put together a picture of my mother’s past and mine and my children’s as well.

The sense of family that once eluded my mother and her sisters seems born again with the simple placement of three young, smiling faces on a single page. 



## FREE ZOOM MEETING WITH JOHN TRUBY ON GENRES

By Mike Apodaca



### HIGH DESERT CWC BRANCH TO PRESENT FREE ZOOM MEETING WITH JOHN TRUBY ON GENRES

It has been said that if you're ready to graduate from the boy-meets-girl league of storytelling, meet John Truby. His lessons draw epiphanies that make you see the contours of your psyche as sharply as your script.

On Tuesday, September 26, 2023, from 6 PM to 7 PM, the High Desert branch of the California Writers Club will present story master John Truby, who will discuss his latest book, *Anatomy of Genres*. This remarkable Zoom meeting is free to all members of the CWC, and the link to the meeting may be found below.

Truby says, "What if I told you there was a secret to storytelling that will increase your ability to sell your stories 100-fold?"

According to John Truby, GENRES have more to do with how your story works than any other element — any other idea, plot device, character archetype, beat sheet, methodology, or prescribed structure — by far. Whether you're writing for movies, TV, or novels, **the game is won or lost in genres.**

John Truby is the founder and director of Truby's Writers Studio. Over the past thirty years, he has taught more than 50,000 students worldwide, including novelists, screenwriters, and TV writers. Together, these writers have generated more than fifteen billion dollars at the box office. He regularly applies his genre techniques in story consulting work with major studios, including Disney, Sony Pictures, Fox, HBO, the BBC, Canal Plus, Globo, and AMC.

In this book-club-type meeting where the participants are encouraged to buy Truby's latest book, *Anatomy of Genres*, they can submit written questions pertaining to genres in the book to Bob Isbill via email sent to [HDCWC@aol.com](mailto:HDCWC@aol.com). In the subject line, please put Genre Question. Include your name, your branch, and of course the question you would like to have John Truby address.


*Anatomy of Genres* may be purchased through Amazon.com or [www.anatomyofgenres.com](http://www.anatomyofgenres.com).

Truby's first book, *The Anatomy of Story*, changed the way writers develop stories. *Anatomy of Genres* shows writers how to tell their best stories and, through the power of fiction, how audiences can live their best lives.

Join this exciting and informative Zoom Meeting at 6 PM on Tuesday, September 26, 2023. Here is the link:

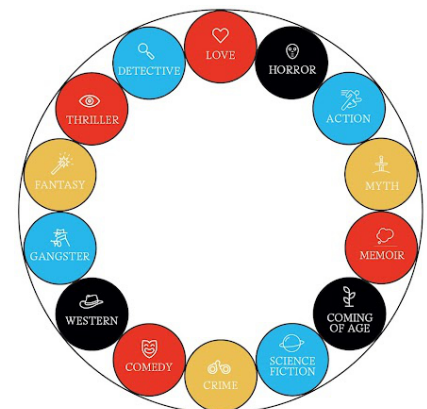
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86220784034?pwd=TThCMWhyc0FYbjRidlJmUnZiWit6Zz09>

Meeting ID: 862 2078 4034

Passcode: 375034 

## GENRES

How Story Forms Explain  
THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS



AUTHOR OF THE ANATOMY OF STORY

## THE SEVENTH STRANGER

By Michael Raff


### ANNOUNCING MICHAEL RAFF'S LATEST NOVEL *The Seventh Stranger*

(NOW AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM)



Two boys survive a bloodcurdling encounter at the century-old Breckenridge Mansion, an incident that soon catches up to them. Twenty years later, Jake and Lindsey McKay and their young daughter fall in love with the newly restored mansion. They are warned about the six ghosts supposedly haunting the premises, spirits that according to the real estate agent, did not present any type of danger. After they move in, however, the unknown “*Seventh Stranger*,”

repeatedly attempts to murder them.

Katherine Price, a clairvoyant with suicidal issues, is called in. 



### HDWC SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

**HDCWC BIRTHDAYS FOR SEPTEMBER 2023**

**SEPTEMBER 5 KIMBERLY GYNETH WONDERS**

**SEPTEMBER 17 MS. LINDA BORUFF**

**SEPTEMBER 19 RICHARD SPENCER**

**SEPTEMBER 24 BARBARA A PARISH**

**SEPTEMBER 26 RICHARD A. ZONE**

**SEPTEMBER 27 MICHAEL APODACA**

**SEPTEMBER 29 PEG ROSS PAWLAK**



## DID YOU KNOW?

Truman Capote was Harper Lee's inspiration for the character Dill in

*To Kill a Mokingbird?*

## BETWEEN THE BLEAK AND BOUNTIFUL

*By Aylin Belle Amie*

From bleak to bountiful the trees become,  
from spindly gray and the cold lake's blue black shadows.  
Leaves exquisite, luxurious of verdant, gold and red tints,  
escape old winter's sullen song.

Spring's tender innocent buds,  
are ideas which grow slowly.  
They fill the spaces between branches of my alfresco view.  
They give me feelings I'm young at heart again.

Summer breezes buoy greenery abundant,  
shading, hiding harsh sunlight  
which dries, fatigues me.  
Yet, I search for its sizzling spark.

I push my body and mind  
toward fresh auras of my spunky classmates,  
that run swift like a spirited yearling  
innocent and pure.

Away from my weary draining decline,  
life's fiery force offers hope  
and mends, animates, rekindles  
my weakened branches and cool, slow responses.

2)  
I thrust myself through time's restraints.  
I mingle with the young to grasp their energies,  
to propel myself to the top  
of the full foliage on bountiful trees.

I reach through summers  
lush, lively sweeping window of learning,  
that blends with my winter's wisdom,  
to become renewed.

Now, I feel the pressure on sore bones,  
my ancient aches, like the cracking, bending branches  
in the depths of mid-winter.

I flourish between nature's seasons of life. 



**“MY MOTHER ALWAYS TOLD ME I WOULDN'T  
AMOUNT TO ANYTHING BECAUSE I  
PROCRASTINATE. I SAID, ‘JUST WAIT.’**

*- Judy Tenuta*

## AUGUST ACT II: GERI SPIELER SHOWS US HOW RESEARCH IS DONE

*By Mike Apodaca*



I have to admit, I thought I knew how research was done. I've spent my fair share of hours in library basements, rummaging through books and periodicals, and doing internet searches. But Geri Spieler took research to a level I never knew even existed.

Geri began her well-organized presentation with cautions about how much misinformation is on the internet and how we have to be careful when doing research. The last thing we want to do is put something incorrect in our writing.

Ms. Spieler's PowerPoint was centered around the research she did for her book, *Housewife Assassin: The Woman Who Tried to Kill President Ford*. She explained the difference between secondary sources (material in print) and primary sources (new information gleaned from talking to eyewitnesses).

The three different types of webs gave structure to our understanding. The first is the Surface Web. This is the web I am familiar with—Google, Bing, Yahoo, etc.

Then there is the Deep Web. These are sites you have to register with, getting to them by using a password.

Finally, there is the Dark Web. These sites use proprietary software to access. There's a lot of helpful information on the Dark Web.

Geri showed us how to hide our searches to keep from getting ads related to our searches.

We learned that each search engine is different, and it is best to use many of them because each will give you different results.

AI is helpful in research but only to get references. The information is not always accurate.

Libraries are also a good place to do research, especially those with reference librarians. Not everything is on the internet.

There are specialty sites that focus on one topic (medical, legal, etc.).

When examining websites, make sure they are credible. Who wrote the information? What expertise do they have? What authority? Who do they work for? Who is paying for the site? Are they selling anything? Look at the bottom of the website to see who they are. Geri told us to use the CARS system (Credibility, Accuracy, Reasonableness, and Support) when using a website.

The presentation ended with Geri giving us her research method:

Begin with secondary sources.

Use Deep sites and academic databases.

Check Wikipedia citations.

Follow up on primary sources.

Use different search engines.

Look up people on people search sites.

When our time with Geri was over, I think we all felt like we had been introduced to a new world of research. My toolbox is bursting. 



### *Summer Solstice, June 21*

Every year on this date, I'm reminded of the summer of 1983 when I was in England traveling with my three young adult children. One sunny day, we boarded a train in London's Victoria Station and headed towards Salisbury. From there, we took the local bus to Stonehenge.

Along the two-lane country road, we noticed people who looked a lot like the '60s hippies walking in small groups.

Ahead, we saw a sea of color on one side of the thoroughfare directly across from the giant statuesque monuments of Stonehenge. We learned shortly that the colors were of the tents set up to house hoards of young people celebrating the Summer Solstice.

It was a bit chaotic, to say the least. The youth were wearing belts and other accessories with spikes and sporting various colors of hair. The odor was not what one would expect of an English meadow in the summertime.


A more memorable moment was when I looked beyond the tents out to the rolling terrain. There was a tall, skinny man wearing a black coat and top hat and, apparently, nothing else.

He had a small, portable shovel with which he dug a hole in the earth. Then he lifted his coat and squatted over the hole.

One couldn't blame him, really. The large portable restrooms brought in by the government had an eternal line of people waiting to get in. This was made even worse by the event of a girl evidently fainting inside, causing authorities to make everyone wait outside until she was cared for.

We walked across the road and observed the ancient stones for a few minutes. The anticipated atmosphere of awe and quiet in such a mystical place was replaced with a desire to just get out of there!

But it was not to be an immediate escape. We waited an hour amid the unpleasant milling crush for the bus to return and take us away.

Once we were back in Salisbury, we sat on the shady lawn near the cathedral and had a nice, quiet picnic until the train pulled in to take us back to London. 

**“WHEN YOU FACE WRITER’S BLOCK, JUST  
LOWER YOUR STANDARDS AND KEEP  
GOING.”**

*– Sandra Tsing Loh*



## WHY SATURDAY MORNINGS GO SO WELL

*By Mike Apodaca*

You come to a meeting on a Saturday. You are greeted at the welcome table and given a nametag. There is a table where you can pay your dues or pay for any of the many events the club sponsors. The round tables are set up around the room for the meeting and the Zoom is ready. The meeting is recorded and put up on our YouTube channel. Club books are on a rack ready for sale. And there are delicious snacks organized with attractive decorations that catch your eye. The stage is set with a lectern and sound system at the ready.

What you don't see is that all this is put together by wonderful volunteers who come an hour early to set up our meetings every second Saturday. That hour is busy! We are buzzing, making sure everything is ready.

The stage manager is Mike Raff. He wears so many hats! He sets up the sound system, organizes the stage, and gets the welcome table ready. He sometimes hands out tickets and gets visitors to fill out a visitor's form. And during the meeting, Mike makes sure everything is going well.

Our treasurer, Jenny Margotta, sets up her table so she is ready to take money and charge cards. Jenny is a great representative for the club and is the person to ask if you have a question.

Rita Wells is the magician behind our amazing snacks. She deserves all the hugs she gets.

Kimberly Wonders makes sure everyone having a birthday each month gets their own personal birthday card signed by our members.

The first person to greet me every meeting morning is Michael Neumeyer. He says hi and asks me if I need anything carried in. Mike is all over the room. He sets up stuff, carries stuff—he basically does all the stuff that needs to be done.

Joan Rudder-Ward, our vice president, records all of our meetings, edits them (which is a lot of work), and posts them on our YouTube channel. She is amazing.

I work to get the audio-visual working, as well as the Zoom. I work with the speaker and make sure they have everything they need.

We are your behind-the-scenes people. There are others (like Dwight Norris and Linda Cooper) who also show up early and help. We are thankful for every bit of help we receive.

The monthly meetings seem like they just happen, but there's a lot of work that goes into each one. 🚢







## HOOKS FOR BOOKS


*By John Paul Garner*

A salon was conducted at Richard Zone’s house on Tuesday, August 15, about Hooks for Books and the set-up sentence that follows the hook. I was the facilitator and, apparently, I managed to fool everyone, as no one threw anything at me. The goal of the salon was, one, to clarify what a hook is and, two, using the elevator pitches that the attendees submitted, demonstrate how to reduce them in one sentence, which best-selling author John Grisham says is how it’s done.

If it can’t be said—or read—in one breath, it’s too long.

Thirteen club members showed up, and the discussion that followed the reading of a “hook” was lively and informative. I learned about “log lines” and “cliffhangers,” and I hope everyone else learned about the power of a single sentence—a single thought. The salons are proving to be a valuable and fun activity where club members can gather and share their ideas, experiences, and insights into the craft of writing.

Next month, Jenny Margotta will moderate a salon focused on “character development” and, in October, Richard and I will be conducting a Salon titled “Son of a Pitch,” which is part two of the pitch class. Then, in November, Mike Apodaca and Freddi Gold are leading a Reader’s Theater which promises to be great fun. So, sign up with Richard or me, as the seats fill up fast. We need the money! (Just kidding.) Salons are always free.

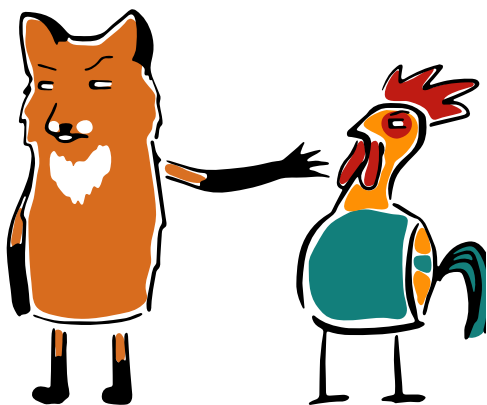
Contact: Richard Zone - [retiredzone@gmail.com](mailto:retiredzone@gmail.com) John Garner - [oksooner92311@gmail.com](mailto:oksooner92311@gmail.com) 

## *A September Writing Salon!*

*Tuesday September 19 at 3:00 p.m.*

*Led by Jenny Margotta*

*To be held at Richard Zone’s home*



**COME AND PARTICIPATE IN A DISCUSSION  
ABOUT “CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT”**

*Space is limited so reserve your spot soon!*

*Contact:*

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

John Garner: [oksooner92311@gmail.com](mailto:oksooner92311@gmail.com)

## WHAT ARE WE TO THINK OF AI?

By Mike Apodaca

On Saturday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, our own Richard Spencer, author of *Earther Wizard*, under the name Richard S. Thomas, treated us to a special presentation he dubbed AI 101. It was a clever, insightful introduction into the complex world of artificial intelligence. Richard explained that every new technology is met with opposition, that it inevitably displaces those who are invested in the old technology. He pointed out how streaming services put Blockbuster Video out of business. Those of us who have been around for a while have seen so many technology changes over the years. We can imagine all the companies that had to adapt or die (anyone remember Betamax?).

Richard finished his exciting talk by showing us the AI images he created for his website. They looked every bit as good as any I have seen produced by an artist. He revealed how AI could be used to generate book covers for authors—something we all need. To end his presentation, Richard had us all fill out a card describing a character in one of our stories. This was input into an AI app, which spit out a picture of the character in seconds—a six-foot-four-inch gold miner with gray hair and sunglasses.


The August 14 issue of *Time* magazine is heavy with articles about AI. The main story is about how a non-profit company named Karya is providing work for poor villagers in India, in some cases, doubling their annual income and giving them opportunities for a better life. But the same issue ends with an interview of Fran Drescher, president of the Screen Actors Guild, which is striking to prevent large media companies from stealing the images of actors without giving them proper compensation. It remains to be seen how this will all pan out.

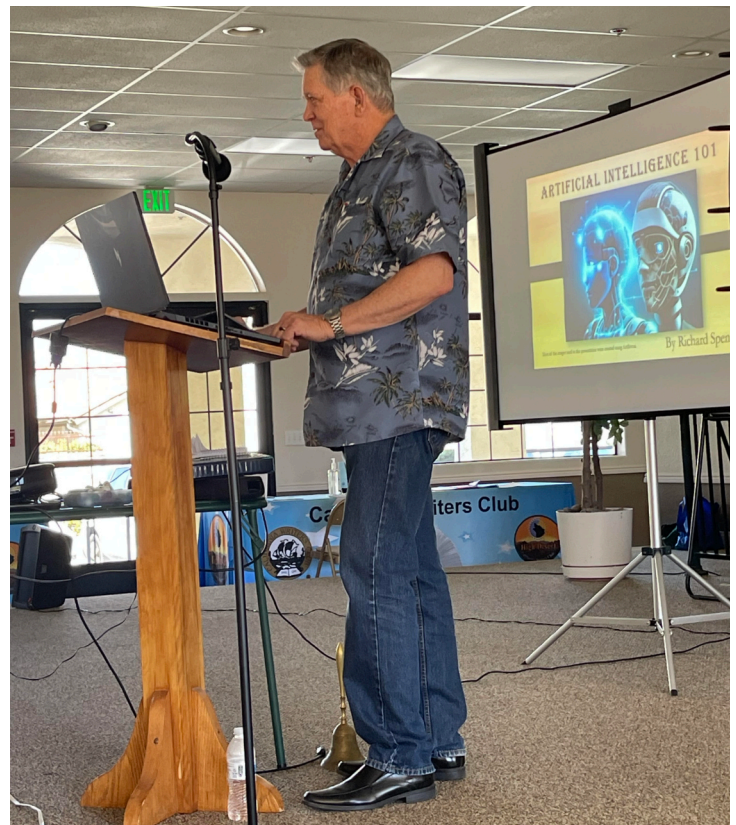
So what are we to think about AI? Is it the brilliant technology that will surpass human capability in assessing medical needs, creating more efficient crop production, and providing help in thousands of varied applications? It could be as big as the introduction of electricity during the Industrial Revolution.

Or will AI be used for nefarious means—to control populations, shape public opinion, take away our freedoms, and to produce more efficient killing machines? Or will AI become self-aware (a la science fiction) and decide that humans are an infestation that needs to be dealt with?

No one really knows.

In the Book of Genesis, after the flood, people build the tower of Babel. God sees what is happening and makes the remark, “Nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them.” Mankind seems to be at that same threshold today.

AI is a game changer. It has potential for great good and for great evil. It seems that the quality of its use will ultimately be determined by the quality of the people using it. 



## WRITE YOUR STORY SCENE BY SCENE

By Bob Isbill

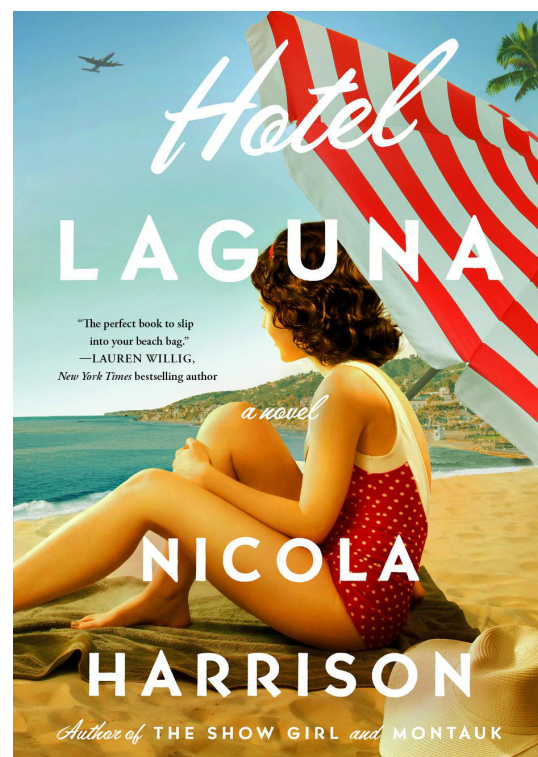
HDCWC PRESENTS

“WRITE YOUR STORY SCENE BY SCENE”

FOR SEPTEMBER 9TH MEETING

The HDCWC is proud to bring an outstanding author to our September 9 meeting. Join us in person or on Zoom at 10 a.m. to hear Nicola Harrison talk about writing scenes.

Nicola Harrison is the author of three historical fiction novels, *Montauk*, *The Show Girl* and *Hotel Laguna*. Born and raised in England, she moved with her family to Southern California when she was 14. She is a graduate of UCLA and received her MFA from Stony Brook University. Prior to writing novels, she worked as a fashion journalist in New York City, where she lived for 17 years. Now she resides in Manhattan Beach, California, with her husband and her two sons. 



## WHAT'S IN A NAME?

By Ann Miner



My daddy and mother had long been hoping to adopt a child when, suddenly, a set of twins, my sister and I, came to their attention. We were neglected crib babies, and, at a year old, still did not even sit up. They brought us home with little notice to prepare.


Now we needed names. My mother had been raised by her older sister, Helen. So, she wanted to use that name. Her best friend was Ellen, and that name was also decided on. Then they came up with Helen Jan and Ellen Ann, with the idea that we would be called Jan and Ann.

Ah, but which twin would be Ann and which one Jan? They had little heart-shaped golden lockets engraved with “Ann” on one, and “Jan” on the other.

They put the lockets on the floor, and I crawled to the one with “Ann,” while Jan crawled to the other one. And that’s how I became known as Ann. It seems that I chose my own name.

When I meet new people and introduce myself as Ann, many women often say, “Oh, that’s my middle name.”

I always answer, “Mine too.” But I’ll bet they didn’t get to choose it.

I’ve always been a little “different.” 



## WRITERS ARE READERS

BOOK REVIEWS

by Mary Langer Thompson

### STEAL LIKE AN ARTIST BY AUSTIN KLEON


Author Austin Kleon will help you unlock your creativity in his short, quick reads that have become *New York Times* Bestsellers. Want to learn principles that will help you discover your artistic side? Kleon's *Steal Like an Artist: 10 Things Nobody Told You About Being Creative* begins with quotes by Picasso ("Art is theft") and T.S. Eliot. First, he tells us that "Nothing is Original," meaning "nothing comes from nowhere." We build on what came before: "There is nothing new under the sun." (Ecclesiastes 1:9) This is why we need to embrace influence.

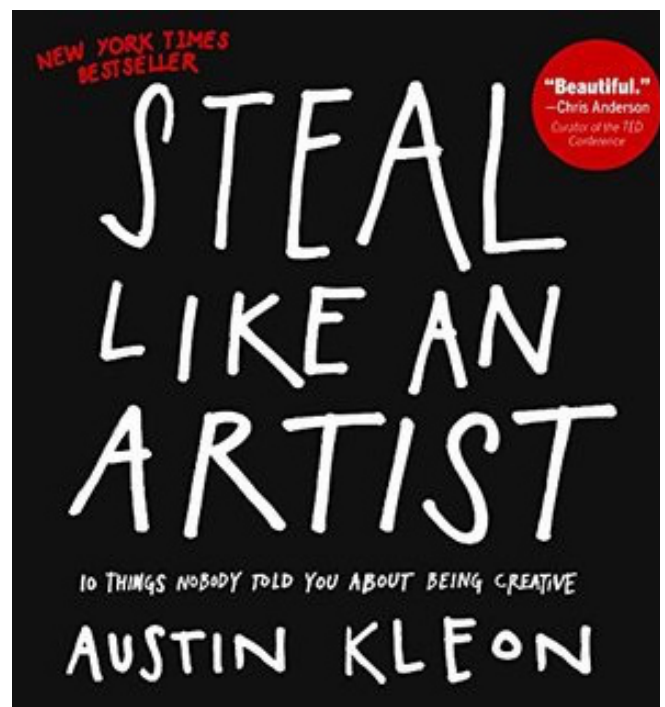
Find out how  $1 + 1 = 3$ . How you are the sum of your influences. Artists collect good ideas. Be curious. Google your problems. Read. Go to the library. Collect books. Carry a notebook and pen everywhere you go. Copy favorite passages. Doodle when on the phone. Start a "swipe file." Don't wait around. Start making stuff now. Show up every day. Kleon will help you understand the phrase, "Fake 'til you make it." Copying is not plagiarism. It's like someone taking something apart to understand how it works.

Kleon's books are peppered with erasure poetry where he has blacked out most words and left gems like "read deeply" and "continue to wonder." Always give credit when you steal, and never steal from just one writer or artist. Don't just imitate but transform their work into your work so that you add to the world only what you can add.

Principal number three is "Write the book you want to read." In other words, write what you like. Find out why all fiction is "fan fiction." Principal four is "Step away from your computer and use your hands." This is how we will engage our senses and write better. Kleon's first book was *Newspaper Blackout*. Every poem in that book began with a newspaper article and a permanent marker. "It didn't feel like work. It felt like play." Sometimes, we have to step away from our computers. Principle Five states: "Side projects and hobbies are important." Bounce between projects," says Kleon. Learn what he means by "Productive Procrastination." Also, take time to sit around and do nothing. Don't get too busy. Mess around. Wander. Find out the two-step, simple formula for becoming known. Find out what is meant by "Share your dots but don't connect them" and what Kleon means by "leaving home."

Why should you "Keep your day job"? And most important of all, why is it important to "Marry well"?

Kleon ends his small book with ten recommended books. One is *Bird by Bird* by Anne Lamott, but there are lesser-known works also. He has been featured on NPR's *Morning Edition*, PBS *NewsHour*, and the *Wall Street Journal*. A follow-up book is *Show Your Work! 10 Ways to Share Your Creativity and Get Discovered*. Check him out online before, during, or after reading his books at [austinkleon.com](http://austinkleon.com). 





# Jenny Margotta

## FROM AN EDITOR'S DESK

### A LESSON IN PRONOUNS

One of every student's early English lessons was pronouns. There are eight subject pronouns in English: I, you, he, she, it, we, you, and they. Okay, so far. The tricky part comes when you want to talk about an individual but don't want to—or are unable to—identify the person as male or female. The English language covers the non-human spectrum with the simple "it," but it fails to offer a singular non-gender-specific pronoun for humans. Take the following sentence for example:

The author has written several books.

The author isn't identified by name, so how do you refer to that person if you want to use a pronoun? I was taught that "they" was not an acceptable singular pronoun and there were two acceptable ways to write the sentence:

He/She writes in the science fiction genre.

He writes in the science fiction genre.

"He" I was told, stood for a "human" in general and referred to both men and women equally. But if you're writing a long article about the author and still don't have a name—or the name is non-gender-specific like Riley or Sydney, continuing to write "he/she" for every reference gets very cumbersome. And in this day and age of gender awareness, "he" is definitely no longer an acceptable pronoun for "women in general."

Linguistics scholar Dennis Baron, author of *What's Your Pronoun? Beyond He & She*, states, "Depending on who's complaining . . . [the] singular *they* is anything from a minor sin to evidence of complete illiteracy, moral decay, even the end of civilization as we know it." (<https://time.com/5763175/they-as-singular-pronoun/>)

But as we all know, the English language is continuously evolving. New words are introduced at a fantastic rate and existing words morph into totally different usages and definitions every year. Baron goes on to argue that *they* is now "caught in the tide" of change. He writes, "At this point, resistance is futile."

The *TIME* article points out that as early as 1375, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, a medieval romance called *William and the Werewolf* used a singular *they/their/them*. In fact, it wasn't until the 1700s that grammar scholars began to argue that "they/their/them" could not be used to describe a singular antecedent. (I guess they forgot about "you," which has always been accepted as both singular and plural.)


Today, of course, those individuals identifying as non-binary prefer the gender-neutral "they/their/them" as personal descriptors. And the 2017 edition of the *Chicago Manual of Style* includes a comment about using a singular "they/their/them." They contend that it is "more comfortable" than "he/she." The *Associated Press (AP) Stylebook* and the *MLA Style Manual*, the other two most-prominent style guides, agree. And the *Oxford English Dictionary*, perhaps the most widely accepted definitive dictionary in use today, also accepts the singular use of "they."

Of course, as with any change, there are still grammarians who do not agree. But given that four official sources accept the singular use, I think that carries more weight than an individual—or a number of individual—grammarians. In my opinion, it's just another example of the rules of language finally condoning the way our language is commonly being used.

### WORD OF THE MONTH

**Eponymous:** [i- 'pā-nə-məs ] adjective: (first recorded usage in 1833):

of, relating to, or being the person or thing for whom or which something is named.

Music albums are often eponymous; that is, the title of the music album is simply the name of the band: *The Beatles*, by The Beatles (1968) or *Led Zeppelin* by Led Zeppelin (1969). Another example is the popular Prime Video series, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, starring the eponymous Midge Maisel. 

## A COACH TURNED WRITER

By John Paul Garner



Football is back! College games on Saturdays, the NFL on Sundays, and plenty of sun-filled afternoons with gobs of barbecue and ice-cold Modelos. America's favorite sport is once again the principal topic of discussion among its many fans.

But so many don't know the game. They know it's not rocket science, but they don't know it's basically math. Geometry played on angles and low to the ground. Throw in some physics and you have a game.

What John Garner's book *Football for Moms* does is reduce the game to its most common strategies while translating its unique and varied language into simple English. For depth, it describes the evolution of the game and includes slices of football's rich history. Because knowing what's going on in a game can make watching it that much more fun.

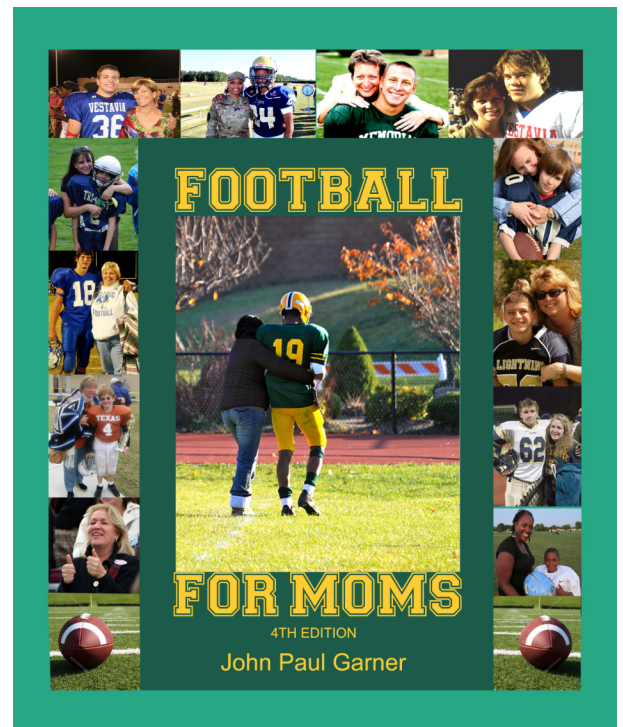
John coached football from 1990-2017 at the youth, high school, and collegiate levels. He's a retired veteran and most recently coached the offensive line at Silver Valley HS in Yermo, CA, whose football team is the subject of his book *Magic – A Season Remembered*, which chronicles their spectacular 2017 season. "I retired after that campaign. It was too awesome to be repeated."

He got the idea for *Moms*, however, from a mom. When he started coaching, John authored a pamphlet for the mothers of his players to acquaint them with the game. "I called it Football 101—truly original—and got it printed and stapled together locally. I then changed it to *Moms*. That made more sense." He expanded upon the mother's suggestion, and, during the last four years, he has updated the original version of *Moms* and published it through KDP. His current edition is his fourth.

He also recently completed his first draft of a romance novel, which is presently in the capable hands of Jenny Margotta. "After writing several bad memoirs, I learned about romances from Marilyn Rameriz," he explained. "I critiqued her book and was exposed to good storytelling. I realized I had to teach myself how to tell a story."

But most of all, he loves the time he spends with the writers at the California Writers Club. "There's great energy whenever we get together. It's inspiring. After a meeting of any kind, I want to go home and write. I don't think I'd be where I am today without them," he admits. "And certainly not where I hope to go."

*Football for Moms*, 4th Edition, is available on Amazon. 




**“THERE ARE THREE RULES FOR WRITING A NOVEL. UNFORTUNATELY, NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THEY ARE.”**

*—Somerset Maugham*

# BEAUTIFUL MAUI

*By Michael Raff*

The news coming in from Maui is not only tragic but devastating. The authorities still remain unaware of the death toll. Lahaina, a town I'm very familiar with and a place that could very well be called Paradise, has been burnt into ruins. I don't think my heart will ever recover, but I am grateful Joyce and I visited there twice in the last two years. Maui, along with Lahaina, are my favorite places to travel to. In September of 2021, we shopped on Front Street, ate lunch at Cheeseburger in Paradise, and took a sunset cruise from Lahaina's harbor. Just last April, Joyce and I, along with our friends Joe and Cam, stopped at the Subway there, bought sandwiches and enjoyed a picnic at a small outdoor mall before shopping on Front Street. My heart goes out to all those who have lost their homes, businesses, and loved ones. 



*(Upper left)*  
**The 150 year-old Banyan Tree**

*(Upper right)*  
**122 year-old Pioneer Inn**

*(Lower left)*  
**Cheeseburger in Paradise**

## A CLASS WITH POETRI

*By Mary Langer Thompson*

HDCWC speaker and spoken-word performer Poetri recently taught a four-week Saturday morning course with club enrollees Vice President Joan Rudder-Ward, Andrea Willow and Paul Frankel, and Poemsmiths, Anita Holmes, Debra Joy Rubio and me, Mary Langer Thompson at the 8th Street Cultural Center for the Arts. Over twenty poetry students of all ages came from Menifee, Lancaster, and L.A. to join us in the High Desert to learn more about poetry or to improve the poetry we were already writing.

Poetri began our first two-hour session by saying, “You know poetry doesn’t have to rhyme, right?” Other Poetri words of wisdom were, “Anything can be a poem,” and “God is the best poet,” and “When you write from the heart, no one can argue.” Then he went around the room and had us introduce ourselves and tell our favorite food, which included collard greens and Krispy Kremes. We then began a weekly practice of writing for five minutes (“5 minutes of funk”) without lifting our pens off the page. If we couldn’t think of anything, we wrote “nothing,” or “blank.” Our first exercise, or prompt, was to write about our least favorite color and to tell why. Mine is gray. Paul’s is chartreuse. When we read our two or three sentences to “tie it all together,” there was a lot of energy and laughter in the room. Another exercise that first day was called “The Pumpkin Exercise.” We were instructed to read our poems “with confidence” and to move. Poetri made all of us feel comfortable and welcome. We even had homework each week. The first week’s assignment was to write a poem no longer than three minutes about our favorite food (Joan’s is Mexican, Debbie’s is salmon). An additional bonus from class number one was that everyone was invited to Poetri Funk at the Bear Valley Country Club in Spring Valley Lake for free that evening. That evening, both Anita Holmes and I read our poems created in the class.

I looked forward to each week’s class. Other assignments were to write a poem about life using a simile or metaphor (Andrea Willow, “Life is an ocean . . .”) and to write a poem using five words out of a student-generated list of words in the order listed. Two people read poems taking turns with their lines. We even made up our own words with definitions and wrote a poem on the best one voted by the group (“Salore”—to be blind to yourself). Another exercise was to write a poem without using the letter “e.” Poetri read us his model poem and Anita Holmes met the challenge to write without an “e.”

After the class, on video Anita Holmes said this about the class: “It’s been amazing, it’s been challenging, it’s been fascinating. And fun.”

The last session had us reading our homework poems and then writing haiku, one answering what our purpose in life is and another using a metaphor and simile. After we read ours individually, we stood up four at a time and read them one after the other. Each of us had the opportunity to be filmed to say what we thought of the class. The last class ended with a lunch reception courtesy of Arts Connection in the restored 8th Street Theater.

If you have the opportunity to take a class with Poetri, I highly recommend it. If you are a beginning poet, his exercises will get you started. If you are an experienced one, his prompts will loosen you up and generate new poems. Don’t forget the monthly Poetri Funk at the Bear Valley Country Club. I’m so glad that Tony Award-winning Poetri and his family have moved to the High Desert. He has truly enriched our High Desert culture with poetry. 🚩







## THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS OF ALL TIME

By Michael Raff

### JOSEPH HELLER PART 2

In 1998, Heller released his memoir *Now and Then: From Coney Island to Here* in which he recalled his childhood and revealed more details about his inspirations for *Catch-22*.

Heller died of a heart attack in December of 1999. He was 76 years old.

As with several other novels in these articles, I had read *Catch 22* in my sophomore year in high school. I have fond memories of trying to figure what the plot was about back then. With its almost endless stream of characters and changing points of view, I found the book challenging, eye-opening, and a wonderful read. Above all, it is a satire on both war and bureaucracy and my first encounter with material that did not glorify war. A very wise choice by my teacher, considering the book's theme and the Vietnam war going on at the time.

#### FUN FACTS ABOUT JOSEPH HELLER

The expression "Catch 22" became a standard term for an impossible dilemma.

*Catch 22* is listed at number seven on Modern Library's top 100 novels of the 20th century.

The U.S. Air Force Academy uses the novel to "help prospective officers recognize the dehumanization aspects of bureaucracy."

On hearing of Heller's death, writer Kurt Vonnegut stated, "This is a calamity for American literature."

Heller wrote an episode of the sixties television show *McHale's Navy*.

Many literary critics suggests that young men read *Catch 22* before going off to war.

ABC aired a pilot episode of a TV series version of *Catch 22* in 1973, starring Richard Dreyfuss as Captain Yossarian.

Hula released a *Catch 22* miniseries in 2019.

The film version of *Catch 22* was released in 1970. It was directed by noted director, Mike Nichols, and starred Alan Arkin as Yossarian, and featured an impressive list of popular stars such as Orson Wells, Martin Balsam, Jon Voight, Anthony Perkins, Martin Sheen, singer Art Garfunkel, and many other actors. I saw the film upon its original release and a few times since. Although Arkin portrayed Yossarian very well, in my opinion the movie did not capture the novel's brilliance, mostly due to translational issues.

A second unit director fell to his death from a bomber's tail turret during the filming of *Catch 22*'s 1970 version.

Until next time, keep writing, reading, and give *Catch 22* a try. 



## WHEN BAD NEWS COMES, TRY AGAIN ...

*By John Paul Garner*



I woke early. I usually do anymore. Sleep seems to evade me or is simply as unneeded as before, I'm not sure which. So, I nap a lot during the day. The snippets of sleep sustain me and propel me into the next day. As a result, I manage. But this morning I woke to an email I wasn't expecting. A reply from an agent I had queried last year. It read as follows:

Dear John,

Thank you for thinking of me with THAT COMEBACK SEASON and huge apologies for the delay--I fell behind last year and am just now starting to catch up. Unfortunately, the project does not look like a fit for my list at this exact moment. I'm being extremely specific with my fiction selection lately. This is a very subjective decision on my part. So I'm sure another agent or editor will feel differently.

Thank you for considering me and best of luck with your future queries.

Sincerely, Jill

She had expressed such interest last year that this reply was like getting kicked in the balls. It hurt. I had labored so hard on my romance and was certain I had written something publishable—something others would pay money to read. I was crushed. It meant I was back to where I had started—back to where so many of us are, so you might relate to the feelings I was experiencing. I was discouraged.

But then I had a moment of clarity. Once purged of the sense of failure that had inserted itself into my feelings, I realized that the process to get published is populated with bad news. Rejection, however kindly worded, is to be expected and should be counted as a sign that we're getting closer. King kept his rejection slips on a nail above his desk. They inspired him to keep trying. I will do the same. I will retain it in my Inbox at my Gmail account so I will see it every day. I will use it as fuel.

I've only approached three agents regarding my romance, so I am encouraged by the fact that I'm at the beginning of the process and not the end. I will continue to try because that's what we do, isn't it? We keep writing because that's what we've become in this second life we live as writers. When I coached, I told my players they were going to escrew up—to not sweat it. Don't be defeated by mistakes but learn from them and try again—to always try again.

And that's what I'll do. That's what we all do, isn't it? We always try again.

**Hoo-ah!** 🚩

## A LESSON LEARNED

*By Ann Miner*

My parents taught me not to “beg.” That is, if I saw someone with something I would like to have, candy or gum, for instance, not to ask them to share. They called it begging. No matter how I wished for it, I was not to ask.

Daddy, owner of a busy grocery business, often made time in the middle of the day to spend time with me. The bank was in the county seat, about 17 miles from our little town. Some days, he stopped at the house to ask me if I wanted to ride along while he did the banking for the store. I always said an enthusiastic “yes!”

One day, while he was at the teller's window, I heard him asking for money. “Give me \$100 in quarters, \$20 in nickels...” and so on.

“Daddy,” I whispered.

He continued. “Give me \$50 in dimes...”

“Daddy, Daddy,” I nagged, pulling on his pants leg.

“Annie,” he said, “what on earth is it?”

Daddy,” I cautioned, “Don't beg!” 🚩



# WRITERS OF THE ROUND TABLE


*By John Paul Garner*

## THE FIRST ROUNDTABLE

Wanting to make sure I reserved the two round tables in the back, I arrived at Corky's at 6:05. They don't open until 6:30, so I waited in my car, wondering if anyone was going to show up. At precisely 6:30, I entered the restaurant, explained why I was there, and was escorted back at the round tables where we'd convene, again wondering if anyone actually woke this early in the morning. I do. But I'm weird. I wake up even earlier and nap during the day, so no problem.

The hostess whose name was Melanie and who turned out to be one of the managers, pulled the tables together and then asked if I was ready for coffee. I was. She brought it to me in a very large cup that bore the Zodiac sign Capricorn. I've been to a thousand restaurants and never got a cup of coffee that large. I sat and waited, growing more anxious with each passing minute, certain we had scheduled the roundtable to start too early.

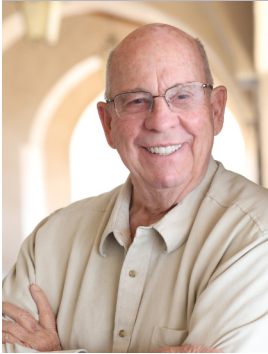
Then Jim Grayson and Lynn Puckett showed up just as I was about to concede that we had erred. It was great! Shortly after, they were followed by Mike Apodaca and Richard "Earther Wizard" Spencer. We had a quorum. I was jacked. Soon we all were talking about a variety of subjects, just getting settled in, when Ann Miner and Maheswaran Meera, the retired DA, appeared. I remember thinking that Meera looked like a college student, and I was stupefied to learn she was the mother of a college student. That was a big duh moment.

In total seven writers showed up for the first roundtable. A great beginning. All agreed it was worth getting up early, but all also agreed that a later start time was preferred. So, next Tuesday's meeting at Corky's will start at 8:00. Breakfast was good, the conversation better, and the company great. Be there when the "Team" gathers once again or be square. 



## ON-TOPIC SPEAKERS MEETING: LEARN HOW TO DELIVER SUCCESSFUL PRESENTATIONS

*By Bob Isbill*



Are you interested in improving your presentation skills? Do you want to learn how to create engaging and effective presentations with or without PowerPoint? If so, you are invited to attend the On-Topic Speakers Meeting on Wednesday, September 6, from 5:15 pm to 6:45 pm at the Apple Valley Library, 14901 Dale Evans Parkway, in Apple Valley.




This month's program will feature Jim Grayson, author of *Love Bites*, teaching how to do a great PowerPoint, and a great talk with or without PowerPoint. The second part of the meeting features HDCWC Vice President Joan Rudder-Ward, owner of The Image Maker Photography, showing how to make your own video with your cell phone.

The On-Topic Speakers Meeting is a monthly event organized by the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club (HDCWC) for its members and the public who want to become better speakers. The meetings will feature workshops, discussions, and feedback sessions on various topics related to public speaking.

This month's meeting will focus on developing successful presentations. You will learn tips and techniques on how to plan, design, and deliver presentations that capture your audience's attention and achieve your goals. You will also have the opportunity to participate in a presentation review process that will help you improve your skills and confidence.

Whether you are a beginner or an experienced speaker, you will benefit from attending this meeting. You will also get to network with other HDCWC members and speakers who share your passion for communication.

Don't miss this chance to enhance your presentation skills and join the On-Topic Speakers Meeting on Wednesday, September 6, at the Apple Valley Library. The meeting is free and open to everyone. For more information, please visit the HDCWC website or call 760.221.6367. 



*Practically everybody in New York has half a mind to write a book, and does.*

*- Groucho Marx*

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**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

*By Michael Raff*

I SHALL LIVE BADLY IF I DO NOT WRITE, AND  
I SHALL WRITE BADLY IF I DO NOT LIVE.

*-Francoise Sagan, playwright and novelist (21 Jun. 1935-2004)*

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- Send submissions to Richard Zone:  
[retiredzone@gmail.com](mailto:retiredzone@gmail.com).  
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