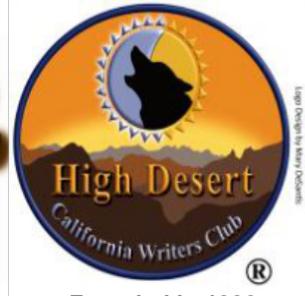




Founded in 1909

# The INKSLINGER

Sail On



Founded in 1990

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



## FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Mike Apodaca

### *Studying the Masters*

Marcel DuChamp once explained his journey to become an artist. He said that he began by copying the masters in all different artistic movements. He painted like the Fauvists,

the Impressionists, and the Cubists. Once he learned all he could from them and internalized their message and structure, he ventured out, becoming a great artist in his own right.

I have become far more interested in the structure of books and stories as of late. I just finished reading a book that I consider a terrific example: *Nightmare Academy*, by Frank Peretti. The book was written in 2002, but the message still resonates.

I guess this is why I like the book so much—it has a clear message which is stated and demonstrated throughout. The message is: Without right and wrong, we are left with chaos. And, in chaos, might becomes right.

Mr. Peretti takes this message and weaves it throughout a gripping story about two teens who have been raised by loving parents to believe in right and wrong. They are kidnapped by a secret government organization determined to demonstrate that if you can break down a person's grip on right and wrong, and on reality, then you can control them. The ultimate goal being to turn all Americans into mindless, blind followers of a strong man. They find it easy to do this with the majority of teens who do not have a strong grip on right and wrong. Now they want to see if they can do it with these two teens.

The students are taken to a camp and are pressured to go along with this message by their teachers and peers. When they will not comply, they are punished, threatened, bullied, and, finally, attacked. The last step in their captivity is to be subjected to drugs and a mind-breaking non-sense nightmare world where all normality disappears.

Meanwhile, the parents are searching for their kids. They work with a government operative who helps them find bread crumbs as to their kids' whereabouts.

The story picks up speed near the end when all the students at the academy are put in mortal danger. We have a "ticking time bomb" scenario. The scenes become smaller, finally reduced to paragraphs and, in some cases, single sentences. Tension is built right to the very end. I turned pages frantically.

The book ends with a resolution and explanation of the existence of this rogue government program and the family being reunited and returning to their life together.

Along with a good structure, the book has authentic dialogue and evocative descriptions. I found myself smiling at the talented way the book itself was written. It was clean and professional.

This whole thing makes me look forward to our coming conference on Book Architecture at the end of September with Stuart Horwitz.

As writers we must be awake learners, understanding our craft by reading those who do it well. I encourage you to find excellent authors in your chosen genre. Study how they create their stories, poems, or non-fiction works. Allow them to mentor you to become a better writer. 



## FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

*Joan Rudder Ward*

### THE POWER OF STORY IN CREATING SIGNIFICANCE

I recently read about a fascinating experiment that demonstrated the power of story. In this experiment, The Significant Objects Project, trinkets were purchased from thrift stores and garage sales for \$1.25 a piece. Writers were hired to write fictitious stories about the objects. A photo of the objects, with their stories, were posted on Ebay. Purchased for a total of \$250 the items sold for over \$8000! The stories had increased the trinkets market value.

You can read about the experiment at <http://significantobjects.com/>.

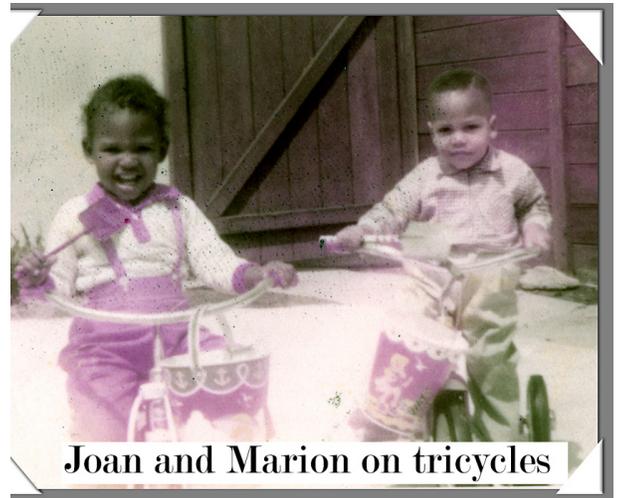
Really got me to thinking about the immeasurable value of people and how every person has a story worth sharing. And how we as writers have the power to help bring those stories to life.

Recently, my favorite aunt passed away at the age of 86 after a short, unexpected illness. From my earliest memories Aunt China was a bright spot in my life. She was loud, laughed a lot, and seemingly always full of energy. Her oldest son, my cousin Marion, and I are 3 months apart in age. I always introduce him as my first, lifelong, best buddy. We are still the best of friends today.

At her memorial service, I shared several of my favorite childhood memories of her. I told the story of how she saved my life when I was a little over 2 years old.

I'm part of a Southern family who migrated from the deep south of Mobile, Alabama, to California in the late '50s during a time period known as The Great Migration. For a short period of time we lived in a Los Angeles neighborhood, and my aunt was my babysitter while my mom worked.

My cousin Marion and I spent time riding our tricycles around a big, pear-shaped pool in the backyard. This was before there were laws requiring residential pools to be fenced in.



**Joan and Marion on tricycles**



Our first photo together



One of our last pictures together, taken last May

It was a hot day in July when I backed my tricycle into the pool. I don't remember falling in, but I do remember I was attempting to "parallel park" as I had seen my uncle do with his car. You just back up and align your tires with the curb. Right?

Provisionally, my aunt looked out the window and saw Marion alone, staring into the pool.

"Where's Nonie"? she asked.

*(Continued on page 3)*

*(Continued from page 2)*

“Her fwim’min” he replied.

In a panic, she put down the new baby she was nursing, ran out and dived into the pool, and rescued me.

That day, I didn’t have to take a nap. Though I tried to go to sleep, she refused to let me, fearing I wouldn’t awaken. It was a long time before she even told my mother what had happened.

In my message, I related my regret at not finding out more about the incident. Where in the pool did she find me? Where was my tricycle? How much time had passed before she told my mother about the incident? I wished I had asked my mother how she reacted when she was finally told about the incident.

I advised the young people there to ask questions of their elders. Find out about their lives, childhood adventures and memories. This advice I believe is for all of us. Take the time to be inquisitive and to find out more about the people around you who live “everyday lives. Lives that on the surface appear routine, familiar, and even mundane.

The seemingly routine and familiar can indeed hold moments of great significance. 



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## **YOU KNOW YOU'VE BEEN IN THE DESERT TOO LONG WHEN:**

*By Ann Miner*

1. The temperature drops to 75 degrees, and you grab a blanket.
2. You start to build a cricket feeder in your front yard.
3. The temperature drops to 100 degrees and you're thankful for a cool day.
4. You stay up all night because your pet black widow spider is sick.
5. You plant flowers to see how long it will take them to die.
6. You complain when the humidity gets up to 25%.

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## **HDCWC MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

What? You haven’t renewed your HDCWC membership yet? Really? Are you trying to keep us all in suspense? Or are you trying to give the board members sleepless nights? Are you trying to make our president have to call through the membership to nudge you forward? Please, make everyone’s life much easier by simply renewing your membership now.

**NOW.**

**Really.**

Don’t read another word. Go to HDCWC and renew your membership first.

You did it? Awesome! Now doesn’t that feel better? One more thing you can cross off your To Do list. An accomplishment. One less thing to worry about. Yay! And, if you had already renewed, thank you

**WRITERS WRITE**  
**HDCWC MEETING: 7/8/2023**

*By Mike Apodaca*

For the time that I've been active in the club, I cannot remember a meeting where our writers actually put pen to paper and wrote during a meeting. This is what made Saturday's club meeting so important. Our writers, with all different levels of expertise, all different perspectives and life experience, all different genres of expression, spent time together writing—and we loved it.



My special thanks goes to Judith Pfeffer, who had this wonderful idea and then spent countless hours putting the meeting together. On top of this, she led the brainstorming session and pulled out of us major themes which turned up in the writing. Her dedication and tireless efforts must be acknowledged by all.



Of course, nothing gets done by one person in this community of writers. Rita supplied us all with delicious snacks and patriotic decorations to boot. Jenny Margotta not only managed her table, taking money and giving out membership cards, but she also sang for us a haunting rendition of "Summertime" where it seemed like time stood still. Mike Raff set up our sound system, then was managing the welcome table, greeting people and answering their questions. He was also giving out the guidelines for the coming anthology. He

does so much! Mike Neumeyer thankfully arrived early and helped us set up the room, supporting all of us as we frantically get things ready. Then there were our writing experts at the tables: Anita Holmes, Mike Raff, Ann Miner, Jenny Margotta, Freddi Gold, and Mary Thompson. These were the soldiers on the front lines that day, the face of the club. And then there was Bob Isbill, who helped with announcements and took all the incredible pictures. And Kimberly Wonders, who is now our Card Queen, who provided birthday cards for those born in the month of July.



My favorite time of the morning was also the part with the most risk. It was when I asked, "How was your experience this morning?" I have to admit, it could have gone either way. But I had confidence in the caliber of our people. The response was overwhelmingly positive. I was especially touched by those who said they kept putting off writing, but that this morning inspired them to keep with it. I was also inspired by the two women who explained their writing, giving us the context and their heart for their subjects, and then blessing us with their passion—one for fatherless youth and another for mothers raising special needs children. What they wrote was chilling. There were others who



*(Continued on page 5)*

## WRITERS WRITE

(Continued from page 4)

also read their excellent pieces that morning, each one to thunderous applause.

I have also been gratified by the many who have said that they are going to submit their writing to *The Inkslinger*. In fact, I would not be surprised if you were to read a piece or two in this very issue.

This will not be our last writing exercise. We all need to keep the juices flowing and to share our writing with our many friends in this fabulous writing club of ours.

Sail on. 





## SMILING HAPPY - SMILING PROUD

*By fumi-tome ohta*

### PARALLEL ROADS

As you are fledging  
I remember memories  
of years ago  
I remember  
days of your growing within  
your arrival in three-quarter time  
Years pass  
It's time to fledge  
a beautiful passage  
yet,  
my heart pains  
burning silver streams  
Go where your heart beats  
veering away  
your life, your dreams  
my life, my road  
our lives  
bring smiles  
A silver thread binds us  
our love intertwined  
parallel roads  
our lives 

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### HDCWC BIRTHDAYS FOR AUGUST

**Roberta Smith August 3**

**Robert Isbill August 6**

**Hazel Stearns August 8**

**Jerry Lentz August 8**

**John Wease August 17**

**Jenny Margotta August 21**

**Meera Maheswaran August 21**

**Elizabeth Pye August 26**

**Dr. Frederica L. Gold August 30**

## PURPOSEFUL SHARED MANHOOD

By Mike Apodaca



Our society is experiencing a crisis of manhood. The definition of maleness has become all but lost. The fruit of this is that many men are becoming dysfunctional and questioning their own manhood. In a recent article for *The Washington Post* by Christine Emba, she explains that men currently only account for 74 percent of earned bachelors degrees. More single men live with their parents than with a partner. And, sadly, three-fourths of the deaths of despair (suicide, drug overdose, etc.) are from men.

Disenfranchised men are far more susceptible to gangs, crime, and membership in violent groups.

When I was growing up, manhood seemed simple. My role models were James Bond and John Wayne. Being a man meant being tough, hard, domineering, unfeeling. It meant not talking about problems or weakness. A true man didn't need anyone or anything.

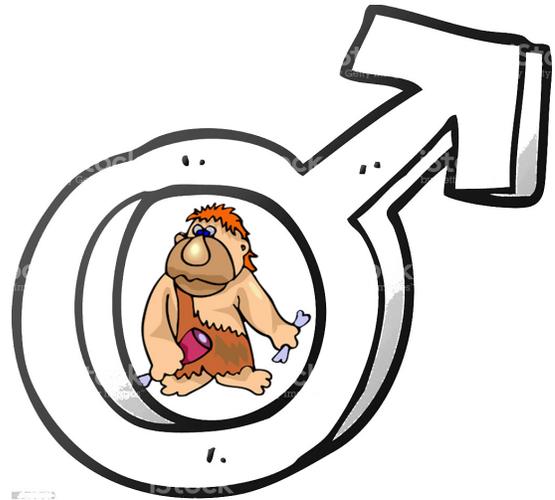
Of course, this was an unrealistic misogynistic abstraction, a model that has no place in real life. Throughout my sixty-six years of life, and, more importantly, after forty years of marriage, I have learned that my manhood is not something I have to force or defend. It is just something that is. But it is not *all* that I am. My wife and I have far more in common than what we have in difference. We have personhood. We are both intelligent people of faith with strong opinions and values that affect our lives. We enjoy many of the same things and respect our differences. Best of all, we have learned how to use my maleness and her femaleness, our gender strengths, to the best advantage of our relationship.

So, what can be done about the crisis so many of our young men are experiencing? One thing that would help is mentoring. I've spent the last seven years mentoring a young man I met as a youth leader at church. I have seen

him through thick and thin. We have grown to trust each other and don't hold back in sharing what we think. I know that this relationship has helped promote stability in this young man. And, best of all, he has become a dear friend.

Our society needs more mentors. There are many young men out there who do not have male role models in their lives. It is imperative for older men, who are comfortable in their manhood, to step up. True manliness is communicated from older males to younger males. When my son was little, I used to spend time with him sharing our maleness—hanging out as men. I would tell him that we were the men of the family. Although I never defined what that meant, we both just knew. Unfortunately, many young men today have no genuine male role models in their lives.

When I was a teacher, I started and ran a football program for the sixth-grade boys. One week the boys had to come to my classroom and listen to me talk about what it meant to be a man—living by dignity and respect, with



strength that allows you to show compassion and humility and service. After they listened to me, they would pick their captains and the captains would pick their teams. The next week we would play football. Football was the draw, but I think they got more out of the talks.

If you are a stable male, ask yourself, is there a young man in my life who needs a male role model? It could be someone in your family or someone you have come across in your life journey. If you are a mother who is trying to raise a young man alone (nearly one-third of mothers are), you may want to ask a stable male you know if he would be willing to mentor your son. Young men need the example of stable, happy, moral, successful older men.

Mentoring is not the only answer to our crisis of male identity, but it is a great place to start. 🚩



## THE DAY I LEARNED ABOUT S-E-X.

*By John Paul Garner*

At the last club meeting, we were asked to write in response to the song, “Summertime.” I wrote the following:

*The dunes at Holgate was where I first learned about sex. That was in the spring of 1969, back when I was working for Levitt & Sons as a Program Manager except I had no program to manage. Mostly I supervised a crew of five men whose duties were generally comprised of moving things. Kitchen cabinets, sinks, commodes—almost anything that went into a new house and made it livable.*

*On Fridays, I was allowed to leave work early. I never knew why. My boss would simply say, “See you Monday John” and I would interpret that as permission to clock out. At the time, I owned a Volkswagen. A green one. For some reason, it reminded me of a frog and I’d hurry home and hastily pack it with clothes, food, and a sleeping bag and drive to Long Beach Island where I’d rent a surfboard at Ron Jon’s Surf Shop.*

*The surf shop was located on the other side of the Causeway and routinely displayed surfboards on the exterior of the small building, where they looked like colorful artwork for sale to the public. I saw a used, green surfboard—a Hobie 50/50 with thick rails—and chose it because of its color, thinking it would bring me luck.*

*But when I went into the ocean and attempted to catch a wave, I’d slip and crash into the stiff board. I did this repeatedly. I was certain I was doing something wrong but could not discern what. An old surfer was reposed on the beach and observing my troubles. When after several painful attempts to catch a wave, I emerged from the water, bloodied and bruised, he approached me.*

*“I’ve been watching you,” he said. “I know your problem.” With that, he extracted from a pocket on his shorts what looked like a square bar of soap. I couldn’t imagine how a bar of soap would help me surf. He then took the board from me, laid it flat, and started rubbing the square on the top of the board. “It’s called sex,” he said as he moved the square vigorously over the surface of the board. I was nineteen at the time and had already experienced sex, so I was hard-pressed to see how what he was doing was similar.*

*“It’s wax,” he explained. “You need it to keep from slipping. It’s how your feet control the board.” He was smiling.*

*“But you said it was sex.”*

*He laughed. “That’s what the wax is called. You need to apply it before you go out. Try it now,” he encouraged.*

*Grabbing up the board, I reentered the ocean. The waves broke against me and tried to pull me back to the beach. I mounted the board and using swim strokes, I paddled out beyond the inside breakers to where the waves first formed. They looked like shadows beneath the water.*

*Spotting a swell developing, I turned my board toward the beach and as I felt it lift the backend of my board, I paddled fiercely. The wave lifted me and I began to stand. I worried I would once again slip but my feet held firm. When the board raced out in front of the wave, I was crouched on it and felt fully in control. I rode the wave until its strength gave out and it spilled forward in a rush of white water.*

*I came off the board and looked immediately toward the beach. The old surfer was still there. I waved at him and he waved back then he turned and walked away. I wanted to thank him but he was gone. I turned around and paddled back out to catch my second wave.*

It took me eleven years to write that. That’s how long I’ve been writing. If I had been asked to respond to a prompt back in 2012, I’d have most likely written a few sentences and floundered. I didn’t have the confidence I have now.

I share my response to last Saturday’s prompt for two reasons: one, I failed repeatedly in those eleven years and two, I tried again as many times as I failed. And that, I think, is the secret.

To try again.

In anything in life, I imagine but most importantly in the craft we love. It is what wakes us in the dark of the morning, what keeps us at our laptop when dinner is ready, and what occupies our thoughts in the quietest of moments. But I tell you nothing that you don’t already know. What I’d presume to suggest, however, based on my eleven-year endeavor to get to this point, is that it gets easier. And, having said that, I know that the ease with which we apply words to paper doesn’t remove our doubts but it does diminish them so that our passion for it becomes a desire for precision—for exactitude.

The right word, the right image, the right kind of wax. 

## HDCWC 2023 NEW SLATE OF OFFICERS



### PRESIDENCY - MIKE APODACA

Mike Apodaca is an ordained minister with a master's degree in theology who pastored a church for nine years. He is a retired public school educator who has taught all subjects to classes from kindergarten to college. Mike is a speaker and a writer, and president of the High Desert branch of the California Writer's Club. His past responsibilities for the club have included running Zoom meetings, serving on committees, building websites, and editing the club newsletter. This year Mike was awarded the Jack London Award for his dedication to the HDCWC. Mike has written eight books (four self-published), and stories in anthologies (including two in the prestigious *Literary Review*), and newspaper articles. He is also a member of the On-Topic Speaker's Bureau. He loves reading, writing, and talking with writers.



### VICE PRESIDENT - JOAN RUDDER-WARD

From her earliest memories, Joan knew she wanted to be a storyteller. She always knew she'd be a writer. That "knowing" eventually manifested as not only a writer of the written word, but also into photo graphia – writing with light. By the time she was in grade school, she added to that list attorney and veterinarian. Oh, and teacher, farmer, and baker. And let's not forget be the boss of something. Whew!

These childhood desires (and others) have fully shown up in her life, some in surprising ways.

Writer – Joan is the author of numerous published articles, and 3 soon-to-be published non-fiction books. In 2004, she did publish her Master's thesis – *Welfare-to-Work: A Marketing Perspective*, Writer of Light – Her career has been one in visual media- photography, videography, television production. She had a photography studio in Moreno Valley for many years and continued with a home-based studio when she moved to Hesperia in 2002. She is an expert in harnessing the power of

the visual image and in showing others how to use that power to bring about clarity change in their own lives. Additionally, she is an award-winning photographic artist and award-winning producer.

She's currently in the midst of designing and publishing a series of journals. using photographs from her innumerable collection of images.

She produces a television program, "*Silver Sage*," which features people 50+ who are fulfilling lifelong dreams—writing new chapters in the second half of life.

As a filmmaker, her genre of choice is documentary. She is currently working on a documentary about the Chinese Railroad Workers who came to the US in the late 1800s, to help build the Transcontinental Railroad. Her next project to begin researching is the life of Marie Paneth, an artist who used art to bring healing to traumatized orphans of the Holocaust.

Her bent towards advocacy is evident in a photography-based personal development program she designed in 2004, to help girls and young women find purpose, self-value, and develop leadership skills.

And the vet part—she just loves animals and treats them all with respect. (This includes Bacon, the neighbor's pig, who's always at the fence snorting for treats and attention.)

She's known to her friends as a "Renaissance Woman," as childhood desires have shown up in her urban farming and gourmet baking ventures.

Joan lives in Hesperia with Arnie, her husband of 20 years; her special-needs adult daughter, Natalie, and cats, Leia, Gracie, Diamond and Pearl. Over the last several months, the family dogs Rusty, and Maggie, have both crossed the rainbow bridge. The family is looking to fill those empty spots, just not right away. Joan muses a baby goat would be a nice addition, but at this time, she'd be satisfied having some place she could go to play with one.

She and Arnie have 5 children between them (2 girls, 3 boys), one granddaughter, with another on the way.

*(Continued on page 10)*

(Continued from page 9)

### **SECRETARY - ANN MINER**



Ann Miner, is the author of adult inspirational nonfiction and children's books. She also has published her memoir, as well as a self-help book for people and families touched by Parkinson's disease. She writes a column for *The Pulse* a local monthly publication, which is distributed throughout the High Desert.

Through the local support group for Parkinson's people, which she founded and facilitates, she participates in "Meeting of the Minds," an organization of Senior Care Partners open to all organizations/businesses that cater to local seniors of the High Desert.

As a member of HDCWC since 2009, Ann is featured in the anthologies, *Desert Gold*, *Howling at the Moon*, and *On the Lighter Side*, published by the Club.

She has participated in the Dorothy C. Blakely program for mentoring high school students in writing memoirs of senior citizens, which get published by HDCWC at the end of the school year in

an anthology.

She has been a member of the Citizens on Patrol with the Apple Valley Police, is a member of and formerly on the board of directors of Supporting Women in Ministry, International, which has members across America, and in Costa Rica and Romania.

As a part of On Topic Speakers for You, through HDCWC, Ann speaks at various organizations about setting goals and about Parkinson's disease. She is developing a workshop for divorce recovery.

### **TREASURER - JENNY MARDOTTA**



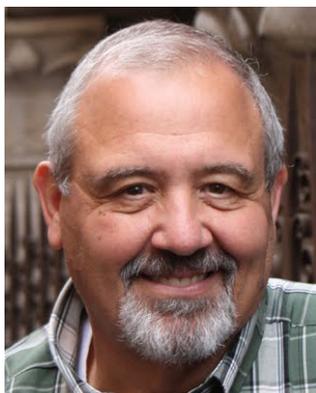
Jenny Margotta is a professional copy editor, book formatter and, working with graphics and photos, a book cover designer.

Writing as J Margotta-Ferrara, she is the author of four books, most notably the braided memoir, *The Woman in Room 23*. Her books are available on Amazon.com.

As a member of HDCWC, she volunteers for and participates in a number of the club's salons, judging projects, teaching ventures, and community outreach activities. This will be Jenny's 14th consecutive year serving as the High Desert Branch's treasurer.

Jenny can be contacted at [jennymargotta@mail.com](mailto:jennymargotta@mail.com).

### **MEMBER AT LARGE - RICHARD ZONE**



Our club by-laws explain that the president of the HDCWC will select a Member at Large to function as a voting member of the board. Linda Boruff has had this title and served the board with grace and faithfulness for years. However, she called me to say that she was ready to step down and allow someone else this honor. My hearty thanks goes out to Linda for her constant support for our club and her steady, cheerful, calming disposition. When you see her, please tell her thank you.

My selection for Member at Large is Richard Zone. Richard is a very active and productive member of our club. He edits and produces our excellent newsletter. He is also the host of a successful critique group. Along with this he hosts very popular monthly salons at his home. Choosing Richard seemed to me to be a no brainer. I am grateful for his willingness to serve.

Additional board members are appointed by the president. All of our board members exist to serve the best interests of our club members. When you have a question or issue with the club, please feel free to contact any of the board members with your concerns. We are here to serve you. 



## WRITERS ARE READERS

BOOK REVIEWS

by Mary Langer Thompson

### THE BUTTERFLY EFFECT: HOW YOUR LIFE MATTERS

BY ANDY ANDREWS

A highly esteemed educator, Rick Piercy, in our High Desert has passed. My mother, June Langer, and I first met Rick at a graduation for seniors of the Academy for Academic Excellence. The High Desert Branch had just completed a year of the Dorothy C. Memoir Project with teacher Charlotte Wilmeth-Street of the Academy. Unbeknownst to the students we taught and mentored who interviewed seniors for their memoirs, each was going to receive the book our club had put together for them as they crossed the stage: *Let it Be Recorded: A Collection of Memoirs*. In line for autographs from our students that June evening in 2014 was Mr. Piercy, the founder of the Lewis Center for Educational Research and its “flagship school,” Academy for Academic Excellence. Rene De La Cruz wrote of him as a “visionary leader,” and “guiding light.” (*Daily Press*, July 16, 2023)

At one graduation for the Academy for Academic Excellence, Rick gave every graduate a copy of a book titled *The Butterfly Effect: How Your Life Matters*. The book is a short, easy read but full of information that many Americans don’t know about their history. In 1963 the hypothesis was put forth by Edward Lorenz that “A butterfly could flap its wings and set molecules of air in motion, which would move other molecules of air, in turn moving more molecules of air—eventually capable of starting a hurricane on the other side of the planet.” People thought the hypothesis was fascinating but ridiculous until thirty years later when physics professors all over the world concluded the Butterfly Effect was “accurate” and “viable.” The hypothesis is now known as “The Law of Sensitive Dependence upon Initial Conditions.”

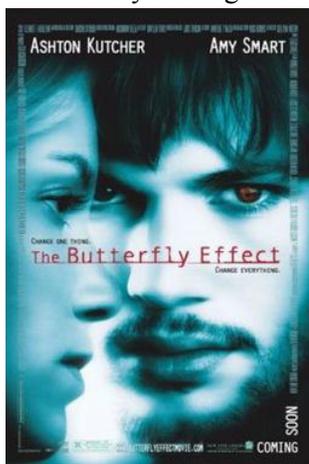
The book emphasizes that everything matters. Every move we make counts. Casual conversations matter. Time spent with friends, and especially, families matters. Our lives are more significant than we realize.

Find out how one individual amazingly changed the course of history during the Battle of Gettysburg, a story most have never heard. Discover how if two men, both named Chamberlain, hadn’t acted, our world would be radically different. Their effects still ripple through all our lives today. The conclusion? “You are no less an example of the butterfly effect than Chamberlain was.”

The author, Andy Andrews, weaves in even more history. How many even know the name of one of the vice presidents under FDR, let alone how this one person changed the world (1941-45) and saved two billion people. His name was Henry Wallace. George Washington Carver and Mary Washington are two more rare individuals.



The very beating of our hearts has meaning and purpose. Piercy told his graduates: “The mere fact that you were born changed a family, changed our school, changed the population of this world. So you’re not going to change the world; you already have.”



I give you this challenge. Order three books on Amazon of this title, keep one for yourself and give two away to friends, relatives, students, and try to find out what effect your actions have. If good, who should get the credit—you, me, Rick Piercy, the author, the reader, the doer, the man who came up with the Butterfly Effect hypothesis?

One man, Rick Piercy, founded the Academy for Academic Excellence and members of our writers club were privileged to work there with the students who worked with elders who were able to tell their individual stories.

**All our lives matter.** 



## Jenny Margotta

### FROM AN EDITOR'S DESK

#### WHY DO WE SAY THE THINGS WE SAY?

We all say things like, “It’s all Greek to me,” or “Pardon my French.” Now that I have a cleaning lady, my house is looking “spick and span,” and I occasionally have time “to be woolgathering.” And who of us hasn’t said, “Let’s go Dutch,” when we go to lunch with a friend? But how many of us know how we have come to use such phrases? Following is at least one explanation for just a few of our common idioms.

**SPICK AND SPAN:** For as long as I can remember, the term has meant something was neat, orderly, and thoroughly clean. But prior to the mid-1700s, the term “spick and span and new” only meant something was brand new. The earliest usage first appeared around 1300 and was just “span-new,” meaning “as new as a freshly cut wood chip.” “Span” in those days meant a wood chip and, at that time, spoons were made from chips, so “span-new” meant a new spoon that had not yet been used.

**IT'S ALL GREEK TO ME:** This one has serious literary origins. It’s from Act 1, Scene 2 of Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, which was first performed in 1599. In a conversation between Cassius and Casca, Cassius asked, “Did Cicero say anything?”

Casca replied that he did, but that he couldn’t understand what Cicero said. “. . . for mine own part, it was Greek to me,” he told Cassius.

While many during the Middle Ages still spoke or at least understood Latin, few spoke Greek, so the Latin phrase “Graecum est; non legitur”—“It is Greek and therefore is impossible to read”—began to be used. Down through the centuries, it has come to mean anything that isn’t understood by the speaker.

**PARDON MY FRENCH:** While it is generally understood to mean to excuse the profanity or less-than-polite words that are about to be said (or have just been said), that wasn’t the phrase’s original meaning. It actually did mean to excuse the speaker for speaking French. When William the Conqueror invaded England in 1066, he brought the French language with him. French was seen as a “fancier” language than English, and its use was considered to add prestige to its users. People wishing to show their status now used “mansion,” “progeny,” or “pork,” instead of “house,” “offspring,” or “pig.” So when saying, “Pardon my French,” they meant they were literally speaking French. (But being snobs, they weren’t really apologizing for it.) The first example of the meaning we now associate with the phrase was found in an 1895 edition of *Harper’s Weekly* in an article discussing an American tourist to France who was asked if the palaces interested him. His reply: “Palaces be durned! Excuse my French!”

**GOING DUTCH: TODAY:** “Going Dutch” means each person pays their own way, be it a movie ticket, a meal, or any other expense. Its origins have nothing to do with people from the Netherlands, however. It actually has its roots in a Pennsylvania Dutch (German and Swiss immigrants who settled primarily in Pennsylvania) tradition of bringing their own food to potlucks. The idiom “Going Dutch” itself dates to about 1914.

**TO BE :** Today, it means to be daydreaming or not paying attention in class, in a meeting, or to the conversation or task at hand. The phrase **WOOLGATHERING:** actually originates in the act of gathering wool. People—often children—wandered in what

(Continued on page 13)

*(Continued from page 12)*

appeared to be a seemingly aimless manner over the countryside, gathering fragments of wool left by sheep on bushes, fences, or other objects they brushed up against.

The first literary reference is found in the mid-sixteenth century in Thomas Wilson's *The Arte of Rhetorique*: "Hacking and hemmyng as though our wittes and our senses were a wool gatherying."

\* \* \*

If you're interested in learning more about many of today's commonplace idioms, *2107 Curious Word Origins, Sayings & Expressions* by Charles Earle Funk is a wonderful source. It's a fun read—informative—read. Or visit the website [www.wordgenius.com](http://www.wordgenius.com).

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### WORD OF THE MONTH

CALLLITHUMP (or cal·la·thump): [kal-uh-thuhmp]: Noun

1. A noisy, boisterous parade;
2. a noise, mock serenade (made by banging pans and kettles); a shivaree.

The 1856 edition of B.H. Hall's *College Words and Customs* attributed the word to a noisy band of Yale College students. It is derived from the Greek kalos, meaning "beautiful" and thump—a "beautiful thump." The term was meant to be used in a humorous way, as it referred to "thumpers" who "strummed on pans, kettles, coal buckets, and any other discordant noisemaker to make the night hideous." (*2107 Curious Word Origins, Sayings & Expressions*, p. 883) 

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### "BADGES? WE AIN'T GOT NO BADGES."



**Some have asked where they can get the slick-looking badges that our board members wear to meetings. You can order one of these from Jenny Margotta for just ten "stinking" dollars.**

## HDCWC PRESENTS AI 101 FOR WRITERS

*By Bob Isbill*



In a continuing effort to present cutting edge information for our members, the HDCWC has the opportunity of presenting Richard S. Thomas, author of Earther Wizard to speak to us on Saturday, August 12.

Richard S. Thomas is the pen name for our member Richard Spencer. When we asked him to describe himself, he wrote this:

Richard Spencer (writing as Richard S. Thomas) is no spring chicken. When he was born, Harry S Truman was president.

At seventeen, he joined the Navy. They told him “Join the navy, see the world.” They lied.

At 27 he married the woman of his dreams. It was a good move. They are still married.

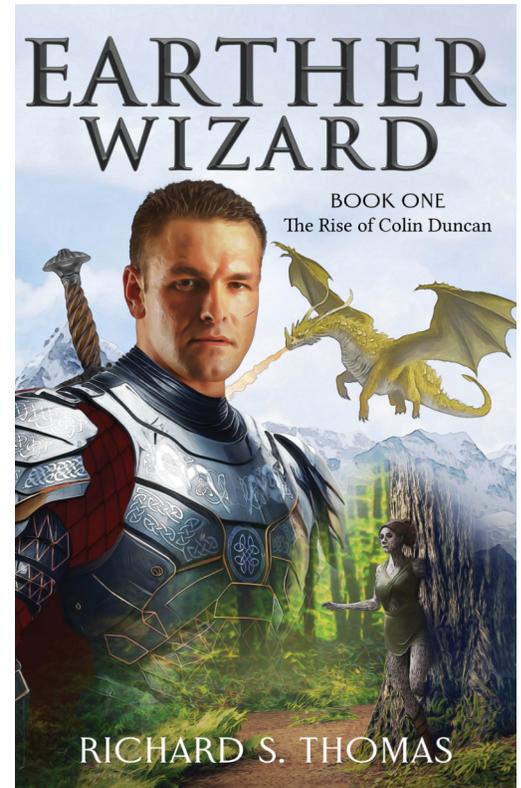
He spent the next fifty years as a serious woodworker. His work has won many accolades.

When he started losing his eyesight to macular degeneration, he turned to a decades-old dream of writing.

He has poured a lifetime of experience into his writing so that everyone who reads his books will be glad they did.

Richard has been involved in researching artificial intelligence for quite a while and used it in a unique way in producing his recently published novel. He did not use it for the writing part and will explain its benefits to him when he used it producing the book.

Artificial Intelligence 101 for Writers is intended to give specific information about the uses of AI for writers. Most of the things we read about it are very generalized and nonspecific. Richards’s goal is to clearly explain the benefits of AI and how to make the most of it in an efficient and low-cost way. 

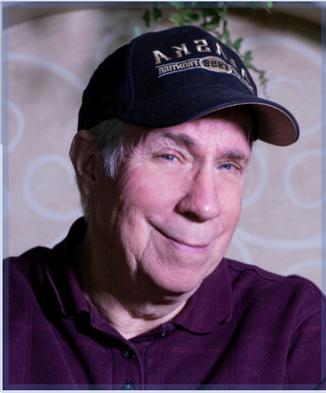


**DON'T MISS THIS PIONEERING PRESENTATION!**

### HDCWC MISSION STATEMENT

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





## THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS OF ALL TIME

By Michael Raff

### JOSEPH HELLER

Born in May 1923 in Coney Island, Brooklyn, Heller was born to poor Jewish parents from Russia. As a teenager, he wrote a story about the Soviet invasion of Finland, but it wasn't published. He graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School and spent the next year working as a blacksmith's apprentice, among other jobs.

In 1942, Heller enlisted in the Army Air Corps and was sent to the Italian Front, where he flew sixty combat missions as a B-25 bombardier. After the war, he studied English at USC and then at NYU. In 1949, he received his M.A. from Columbia. Following his graduation, he spent a year as a Fulbright scholar in St. Catherine's College, Oxford before teaching at Penn State. He also worked as a copywriter alongside future novelist Mary Higgins Clark.

Heller was married to Shirley Held from 1945 to 1981, and they had two children.

In 1953, Heller envisaged a character he called "Yossarian," then created a story, characters, plot, and tone. Within a week, he sent a chapter to his agent and didn't do any more writing for a year. The chapter was published as "Catch 18."

Although he intended "Catch 18" to be a novella, Heller was able to add enough material to turn it into a full novel. When he was one-third finished, it was sent to several publishers. The chapters were purchased by Simon & Schuster. Heller was paid an initial \$750.00 and given a deadline to finish. He missed that deadline by four to five years, but eventually sent in the completed manuscript. The plot was about a traumatized Army Air Corps officer, Captain Yossarian, trying to avoid combat missions, but the military bureaucracy was always able to bamboozle him. As Heller described it, "What does a sane man do in an insane society?"

Just before publication, the title was changed to *Catch-22* to prevent confusion with another novel. *The Chicago Sun Times* called Heller's book, "the best American novel in years," while others called it, "disorganized, unreadable, and crass." It only sold 30,000 copies its first year in the U.S. but in the UK, in just a week, it shot to number one on the bestseller list. Years later, *Catch-22* managed to stir the imaginations of baby boomers with its anti-war outlook. It went on to sell 10 million copies in the U.S. The movie rights were purchased a short time later, making Heller a millionaire.

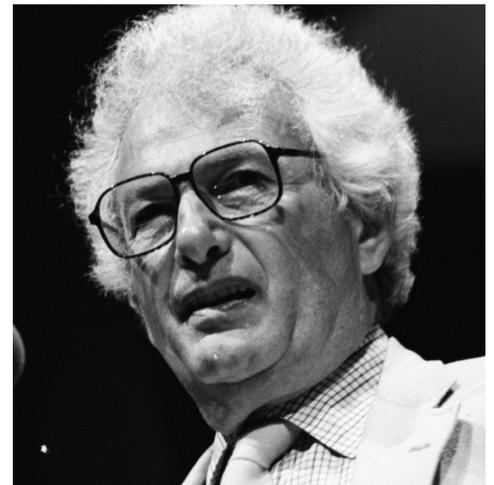
Shortly after *Catch-22* was published, Heller conceived an idea which would become *Something Happened*, but he didn't start writing it for two whole years. Instead, he focused on completing screenplays, such as *Sex and the Single Girl*. *Something Happened* wasn't published until 1974. Critics liked it, and it reached number one on the New York Times bestseller list. Heller wrote another five novels, each of which took him several years to complete. His *Closing Time*, revisited many characters from *Catch-22*. His novels sold well, but he could not duplicate the success of his first. When an interviewer mentioned he had never produced anything as good as *Catch-22*, Heller responded, "Who Has?"

Heller possessed a very unusual work method, not working on a story until he had finished a first and last line. Quite often, in the completed versions of the novels, these lines were not used.

Heller returned to teaching, working part-time as an adjunct professor at Yale and the University of Pennsylvania, and also taught creative writing at the City College of New York.

In 1981, Heller became ill from a disorder that left him paralyzed. He was admitted to Mount Sinai Medical Hospital, bedridden. His illness and recovery are described in the autobiographical *No Laughing Matter*. It depicts the moral and physical support he received from such famous friends as Mel Brooks, Mario Puzo, and Dustin Hoffman, among others. Heller made a substantial recovery and ended up marrying one of his nurses.

To be continued next month. Until then, keep writing and keep reading! 



## ADVANCED INTERNET RESEARCH

*By Bob Isbill*

### ADVANCED INTERNET RESEARCH FEATURED FOR AUGUST 29 ACT II ZOOM



The HDCWC is proud to announce it will feature Geri Speiler presenting a program in Advanced Internet Research for Writers—Internet Skills All Writers Should Know. This outstanding program is scheduled for 6 p.m. Tuesday, August 29, 2023 via Zoom.

How do you start your research process? What words do you use to find information? Do you know how to gauge when a website is genuine? In this workshop, we will introduce the methods that combine the main topics of “Online Research Methods,” which include several methodologies to equip you with the skills and tools to prepare you to find accurate information and discern whether it is reliable.

In this session, you will learn the following:

Why should you search using more than one search engine?

How to create better keywords and word-phrases

And searches using search strings

How to avoid “Disambiguation.”

What is the “Deep Web,” and how can it help the research process?

How can I search anonymously?

List of Deep Web search engines and databases.

What is the difference between search engines, metasearch engines, directors, and portals, and how can it help my research?

How to avoid “Filter Bubbles.”

What are invisible Web sites, and why can’t we use them?

Is people-search ethical? How can we use it for our purposes?

Geri Spieler a journalist and investigative reporter. She has written for the *Los Angeles Times*, *San Francisco Chronicle*, *Forbes* and as a Research Director for Gartner, a global technology advising company and currently is a regular contributor to Truthdig.com, an award-winning investigative reporting website.

Her nonfiction book, *Housewife Assassin—The Woman Who Tried To Kill President Ford* (Diversion Books) has won many first-place awards and has been optioned for a movie.

Geri is a past president of the California Writers Club, San Francisco Peninsula Branch, member of the Society of Professional Journalists, the Internet Society, and Book Critics Circle.

This meeting is presented by the HDCWC free of charge.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86220784034?pwd=TThCMWhyc0FYbjRid1JmUnZiWit6Zz09>

Meeting ID: 862 2078 4034

Passcode: 375034 

## OUR FIRST CLUB SOCIAL

By Mike Apodaca

Who would think to brave 90 degree heat and howling, blistering wind to go to an outside HDCWC meeting? Eighteen of our members, that's who. And why would they do such an unthinkable thing? Because we really like each other and want to see each other in person.

We did have some who bowed out. This is fully understandable. It was dangerously hot.

What fun, whimsical people we have in this club! You should have seen us putting on the tablecloths in the blasting hurricane-force wind. It took five of us to hold down the plastic tablecloth while someone ran duct tape around the table. Five or six of these stipes and the bubbling tablecloth wasn't going anywhere.

Thanks to the incomparable Rita Wells, we had plenty of healthy (and some unhealthy) snacks.

Our meeting started with Bill Lopez gracing us with three of his original songs. The last one was co-written with a woman he met in a retirement center, a profound poet. He took her words and put them to some music he had written. The combination was perfect.

After this, Lynn Puckett read a couple of her poems. They were so positive and uplifting! Just the thing all of us needed to hear. Her book is *Screams of Words and Trash Can Mornings*. You can get it on Amazon.

For the rest of our time together, we spun our club spinner and gave out prizes. Some people took home club books, others candy, and some received gift cards. Best of all, everyone had fun! We hung around and talked for a bit. The weather improved—thankfully. When it was time to tear down, clean up, and load the cars, we all felt that we were deeper friends.

We will have to do this again—when the weather cools down. 🚤



## ADVERTISE IN THE BULLETIN

*By Bob Isbill*

### ADVERTISE IN THE BULLETIN

Now advertise 4 times a year!

Want to increase your visibility? Sell your service?

Promote your book? Increase speaker engagements? Pump up your web traffic? Or just send a greeting?

Each issue of *The Bulletin* — published four times a year — reaches close to 2,000 published and aspiring writers in 22 branches throughout the state. AND it is published on calwriters.org.

Deadlines: March 1, June 1, September 1, December 1, with publication occurring on the 15th of those months.

We are accepting writing-related advertising from businesses, CWC members, and individuals who wish to reach our target market at reasonable prices.

Four tiers of ads are being offered:

Business card size (2" x 3.5") ads for \$35..

Index card size (3" x 5") ads for \$60. These will be interspersed throughout *The Bulletin* as appropriate.

5" x 7" size ads for \$90 placed at the discretion of the editor-in-chief

All of the above can be paid for by check, as described below, or by PayPal (below).

We will make available one and one only full-page vertical or horizontal ad (7" x 10") for \$200. First come, first served, and for that reason, arrangement for this ad must be made by check and submitted by postal mail and by email as described below. Advertisers whose ads are received by mail too late to qualify will be notified of their option to buy a 5x7 or smaller ad and their checks will be returned.

All ads submitted must be self-edited, print-ready, and will be published as received. We reserve the right to decline material deemed inappropriate at the discretion of the editor-in-chief.

All ads must be emailed as a jpg file attachment to advertisingcwc@gmail.com and a copy sent to editor@calwriters.org.

A physical copy of your ad must be enclosed with the postal-mailed payment. Please include your return address, email address, and telephone contact number.

Deadlines for Branch news submissions are the same as for advertising:

March 1, June 1, September 1, and December 1.

Each CWC Branch is eligible to submit one 5x7 ad to publicize a branch conference that they are sponsoring, and this ad will be published free of charge.

Capacity for advertising will be determined by the editor-in-chief. In case we receive more ads than can be accommodated, advertisers will be notified of the option to reserve space in the next issue.

Space is limited, and appropriate ads will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. A copy of *The Bulletin* will be emailed to advertisers upon publication. Please include your preferred email address along with your ad submission. Questions? Call Bob Isbill at (760) 221-6367.

Checks or money orders for submitted ads must be made payable to CWC Central Treasury and mailed to:

HDCWC

17645 Fisher St.

Victorville, CA 92395 



## SAN FRANCISCO WRITERS CONFERENCE

Learn. Connect. Publish.

February 16-19, 2023 SFWriters.org

**2023 SAN FRANCISCO WRITERS CONFERENCE**  
**Hyatt Regency Embarcadero Hotel**  
**Thursday through Sunday, Feb. 16-19<sup>th</sup>, 2023**  
***Celebration of Craft, Commerce, and Community for Writers***  
[www.SFWriters.org](http://www.SFWriters.org)

The mission of the **San Francisco Writers Conference** is to build bridges to better tomorrows for writers connected to the conference by:

- Giving writers the information and inspiration, they need to:
  - write and sell their books
  - make them successful
  - reach their literary and financial goals
- Providing a forum for writers, agents, publishers, and writers' organizations
- Helping writers build the networks they need by creating a community of writers online and off . . .

Because the **California Writers Club's** mission statement mirrors that of the SFWC, in short, 'Writers Helping Writers,' we, the CWC, **are once again providing a booth as an outreach to many of the same writers who are seeking help, support, and encouragement in their writing career by providing them with information about our Club.**

In this regard, this is the tenth year that we have represented the twenty-two branches within our state-wide CWC at our Conference booth. And the most important aspect of our booth are our volunteers. If you would like to volunteer for this year's booth, contact Carole Bumpus at [carolebumpus@gmail.com](mailto:carolebumpus@gmail.com)

Please note that in volunteering at the CWC booth, you may display your books on the table, but you are there to speak to conference attendees about their own writing and the CWC. Our books cannot be sold on-site. Each volunteer will be able to share their experience within the CWC, what they have gained, and be able to talk about the twenty-two branches throughout the state. (We supply guidebooks.) **The shifts are for three hours, with one hour set aside to attend a class during the time slot.**

Also, for only the third time, the SFWC has offered **two members from each of the twenty-two branches free passes – (1) Poetry Summit <https://www.sfwriters.org/poetry-summit/> and (2) Screenwriters Summit <https://www.sfwriters.org/screenwriting-hollywood-summit/>** – which are all-day programs held in conjunction with the Conference and worth \$245 each. This is a very big gift to our Club and should be regarded as their acknowledgement of who we are and what we represent as CWC and for the conference.

Each branch must forward the names and email addresses of the two chosen winners to me, Carole Bumpus, at [carolebumpus@gmail.com](mailto:carolebumpus@gmail.com) to be able to receive the formal ticket. If your branch has not taken care of this gift by January 30<sup>th</sup>, the winners will lose out on this special benefit. Any questions? Let me know.

The San Francisco Writers Conference 2023 has once again embraced our CWC participation, and we want to thank those of you who have stepped forward to help make this another year of celebrating our fellow writers!

Cordially, Carole Bumpus – Past Chair, NorCal Group – California Writers Club

HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE  
CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



THE FOLLOWING OFFICERS AND  
APPOINTED POSITIONS ARE CURRENT  
UNTIL THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR  
ENDING IN JULY 2023.

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hdcwc\_web@aol.com

**QUOTE OF THE MONTH**

*By Michael Raff*

*No two persons ever read the same book.*

-Edmund Wilson, critic (8 May 1895-1972)

**MEMBERS ONLY**

Take advantage of your membership benefits

- Free advertising and free posting of your book titles and latest projects.
- Free PR author's webpage
- To find out more, contact a board member or Roberta Smith, our webmaster.

You can also review your Benefits Booklet online at: [www.HDCWC.com](http://www.HDCWC.com)

**HDWC'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL**

Catch the latest happenings at:  
[youtube.com/@HDCWC](http://youtube.com/@HDCWC)

**FREE ADVERTISING**

Do you provide a service that could benefit other writers?

Send a JPEG file of your business card or ad to

[retiredzone@gmail.com](mailto:retiredzone@gmail.com)

**We'll advertise it free of charge!**

**SUBMITTING TO THE INKSLINGER**

- We seek articles and stories of between 200 to 500 words.
- Poetry submissions are welcome as are photos and illustrations accompanying submissions.
- Please avoid sending items that are embedded in other media (like Word files). Simply attach items to email.
- Submit in Microsoft Word.
- Send submissions to Richard Zone:  
[retiredzone@gmail.com](mailto:retiredzone@gmail.com).  
Call Richard if you would like to discuss an article or idea.  
909-222-8812

