



The INKSLINGER

Sail On



HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC
INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS
OCTOBER 2023



FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Mike Apodaca

IN PRAISE OF VOLUNTEERS

One of my favorite things about being a part of the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club is that every one of us who work so tirelessly for this club are volunteers. As president of the club, I do not receive a dime from the club—neither does anyone else.

Why, you may ask. Why would so many people give up so much of their time for free when they could be making money or even writing during those hours they are giving to this club?

I cannot speak for others. I also would like to hear of their motivations. People like Bob Isbill (one of the most talented men I know), or Joan Rudder-Ward, Jenny Margotta, Mike Raff, Mary Thompson, and many others work countless hours to keep our club on its feet. They have their own reasons. Here are mine.

The joy of giving. This is a lifestyle choice. I have found that I need to have a place where I can give. It keeps my life in balance. Those who take all the time, or who only give when they receive (transactionally), seem to me to be far less happy. What they do receive is never enough. It is far better to give at times with an open hand, expecting nothing in return.

The excitement of being part of a community. I've heard some say lately, "When I found the writing club, I found my people." This is how I feel. This club is my people. This is why I enjoy going to the Thursday morning meetings at Corky's restaurant. This casual time of coffee and good food gives me a chance to get to know our members at a deeper level. At a recent breakfast time, I had a great discussion with John Garner. We have so much in common!

The fulfillment of contributing to something important. Imagine how highway workers feel when they have completed a stretch of road that becomes a main thoroughfare for their community. They have impacted lives. This is how I feel about helping the club. Our writers—yes, you—are going to change lives. Look at what Ann Miner has done for so many suffering with Parkinson's. I could point to dozens who have done the same. The ripples of our writers go far and wide.

A sense of ownership. When we volunteer, this club becomes ours. Those who help set up chairs for meetings or who bring snacks, or who teach classes, this is their club. If you are feeling like an outsider or a perpetual visitor, get involved. We will help you find a place where your talents can be put to good use.

The benefits of membership. I asked Bob Isbill recently, "Isn't it fun to create the kind of club that we would want to be a part of?" Bob has said recently that some of our members don't realize that the best writers never stop learning how to write. They are life-long learners. I am getting an education in this club. Having just finished John Truby's excellent book, *Anatomy of a Genre*, I felt like I had taken a masters level class on story—and we get to talk with him! I learned about developing characters from Jenny's excellent presentation at the latest salon. Everywhere you look in this club there is something you can learn about writing and publishing.

If you are a volunteer in the HDCWC, thank you. Thank you for contributing your time and energy to these wonderful people. I am sorry that so many of our volunteers are not recognized for all that they do (not that they do it for that reason). I hope you know that what you contribute is meaningful. We would not be the healthy club we are without the consistent efforts of so many. 

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Joan Rudder-Ward



TAKE YOUR “SEEING” TO ANOTHER LEVEL

In her enlightening essay *Three Days to See Helen Keller*, shares her observation of how...

The eyes of seeing persons soon become accustomed to the routine of their surroundings, and they actually see only the startling and spectacular.

Those who have never suffered impairment of sight or hearing seldom make the fullest use of these blessed faculties. Their eyes and ears take in all sights and sounds hazily, without concentration and with little appreciation.

The Atlantic Monthly; January 1933. *Three Days to See* by Helen Keller

In essence, the routine things we see daily are taken for granted.

As part of the photograph workshops that I teach, I've started offering what is known as Contemplative Photography.

Contemplative photography includes approaching photography, and the things you photograph, in a meditative sense. These mean that you:

Slow Down. Reflect. Meditate. Heighten your visual awareness. Renew your imagination. Gain new insights into your creative self.

Photographic exercises are combined with journaling. This helps participants experience the images they create on a deeper level visually, emotionally, and spiritually. The key to contemplative photography is being fully present in the moment and connecting with your environment on a deeper level.

One of my favorite places to have this type of workshop is at a botanic garden, such as the Huntington Gardens and Library in San Marino. I was there recently with a group of students, teaching an introduction to infrared photography, with contemplative photography as an added component.

Here's an example of one of the exercises (And yes! You can do this at home!)

The One-subject focus:

Pick a single subject, such as a flower, a leaf, a rock (a butterfly!).

Spend time with it, exploring it from different angles and capturing various aspects of it.

Observe closely for things you'd normally overlook.

Photograph intuitively, breaking rules if need be.

Let your imaging come from your inner man, your spirit.

These are images from your “inner eye”, and not for approval from anyone else.

In your journal:



Chinese Gardens - The Huntington
photographed with infrared light

(Continued on page 2)

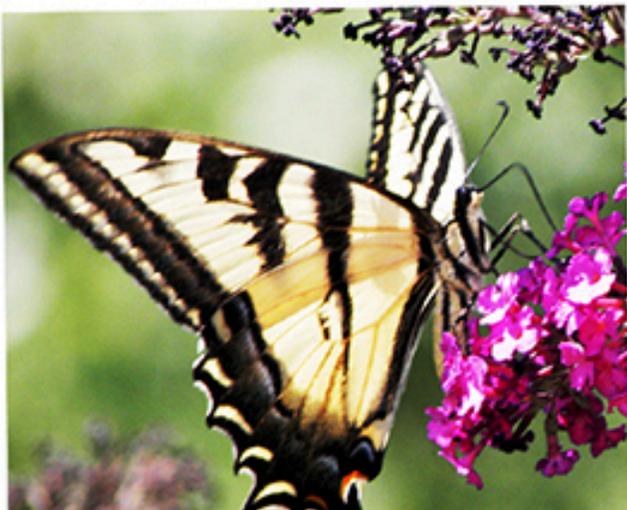
(Continued from page 1)

Write what you observed in your image capturing. Take time to be as detailed as you can. And then ...

Write about something you've accomplished in the past year.

Looking at it from different angles, write all the positive things that came from it.

Practicing contemplative photography can help you become even more perceptive about what you're writing. Try it and see! 





Oopsy owl had a roommate. His roommate's name was 120 WPM. All his friends called him "120,"

120 was a write and very good writer but his written creations came in spurts, much like the multi-vitamins he took every morning to get his engine running. And how did he get the name 120 WPM? Well, he took a typing test and his score was 120 WPM (words per minute) and his friend joked and said he typed as fast as a Western Union teletype machine. One day, when 120 had finished his 8 pages of word search puzzles, he absentmindedly picked up his clipboard and started to write nonsense words which were

words that just happened to pop into his head.

What does it mean
to have stories in my mind
the words to lay on paper
hides from me
Words
elusive words
hiding between the pages of
Webster's unabridged dictionary
It's maddening
It's painful
Stories
poems
even photos
of casual rendezvous
"Hey, did you forget us?
When will you set
the words on paper
to bring us all to life?
Huh..., when?"
"Yes, I know
I, myself,
want to know..."

When Oopsy owl picked up 120's clipboard that had fallen to the side when 120 fell asleep, he read the words on the yellow writing pad. He smiled and he looked over to dozing 120, "There's nothing to worry about this boy. He'll do just fine". 

HDC WC HOLDS ON TOPIC MEETING AT APPLE VALLEY LIBRARY

By Bob Isbill

Jim Grayson and Joan Rudder-Ward opened a new era of On-Topic Speakers For You meetings at the Apple Valley library on Wednesday, September 6, 2023. This marks our first return to the Apple Valley library for meetings in many years. For a long time, the HDC WC help their general membership meetings at the Apple Valley library until it closed for remodeling, which took much longer than anticipated.

Jim Grayson spoke on how to do a PowerPoint and illustrated pros and cons and methods to be successful in a presentation.

Joan Rudder-Ward illustrated how to do a video of yourself using your cell phone camera. She illustrated how you can get a tripod with remote control for use with your cell phone.

Future meetings are scheduled for October 4 and are anticipated to be held on the first Wednesday evening of each month from 5 PM to 7 PM.

Members of the On-Topic Speakers For You program are encouraged to contact Jim Grayson or Bob Isbill to line up a practice talk. Other members of the club are encouraged to investigate the possibilities of belonging to the On-Topic Speakers For You  program.



HDWC OCTOBER BIRTHDAYS

MARY RUTH HUGHES OCTOBER 12

MY OLD FRIENDS: MY BOOKS

By Mike Apodaca

Inspired by the organization in Jenny Margotta's library (I'm not kidding, you should see her spreadsheet on every book she owns), I decided to bring my personal library under greater control. I've been working for the last couple of weeks to make my almost two thousand books more accessible by labeling them with their Dewey decimal numbers. In the process, I'm finding some books that I will never read. These I am donating to the public library.

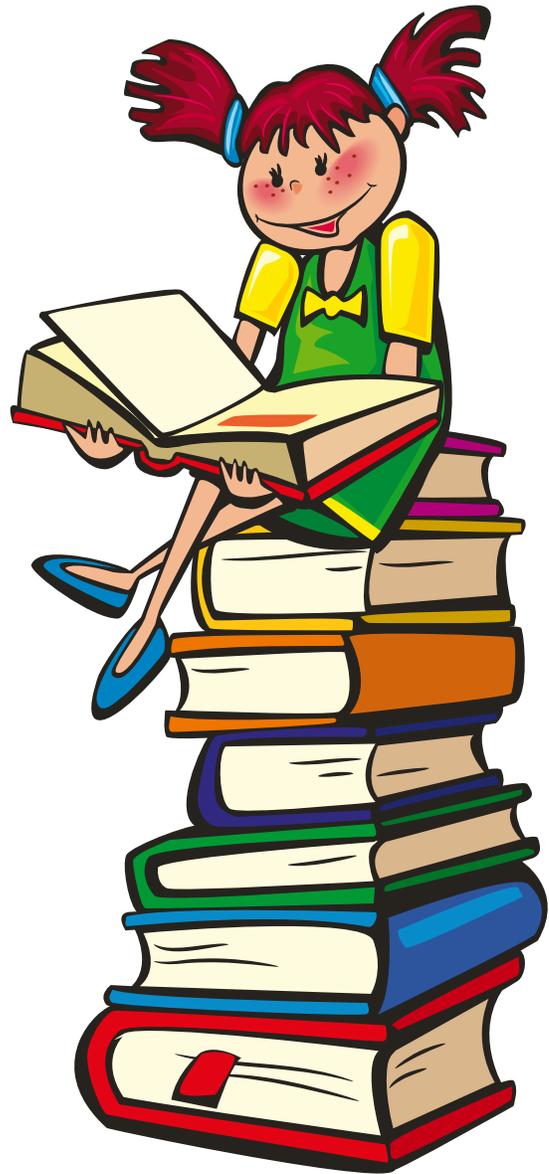
I've always looked at books as mental Tupperware. It's where we communication-oriented humans preserve ideas, information, and persuasive arguments. When I read a good book, I feel like I'm having a conversation with the author. Through my reading, I have interacted with some of the greatest minds. Sometimes, I learn. Oftentimes, I argue and write my thoughts in the margin. And sometimes, I weep or laugh out loud. Each book I read is a unique experience with the writer.

When I read a book, I outline it. My thought is that I should never have to read the same book (word-for-word) twice. I try to underline key phrases so that, later, I can come back to the book and get the gist of each page with just a few words. I can usually reread an entire book in a matter of minutes.

Often, I come across sentences or paragraphs that are too good not to keep. They are jewels. It could be great dialogue, or an amazing description, the perfect turn of phrase, or an argument made by a worthy sage. I bracket these precious finds, write the topic in the margin, and then list it in my own index in the back of the book. After I'm finished reading the book, I type the index into a Word file. This file is now 295 pages long, single-spaced (I've been doing this for a while). This provides me a searchable database of every good quote I've ever read. So, say I want a quote about hope. I just type in the word and the file will tell me every place where the word hope is found in every book in my library (there are 50 entries). And this is why I'm organizing my books. Sometimes books can be hard to find. I have spent too much time trying to hunt down a book to find just the right quote. Soon, they're all be numbered.

Spending some time in organization can save us time in the long run. Something as simple as putting our files and folders in some kind of order on our computer can be extremely helpful.

There are many time-saving ways we can organize our lives (calendars, databases, phone directories, email address folders, financial ledgers, are just a few). An investment of time now will pay off in dividends later. I'm not as organized as Jenny, but I'm a step closer. 🚩



PING!

By Dwight Norris



It is summer in the High Desert where cool is hard to find, and heat envelopes your body and gives you a new pulse rate—shakes it right into you, where the sun is high and the rocks are blistering. After a full day outside, I am exhausted and sleep late to catch up by morning. I live in a condo, and the sliding screen door to my bedroom is open to my back yard to suck in any cool night air that it's possible to find. And for good measure I empty my pockets on the top of my dresser.

My wife, Gloria, is at work and knows nothing of this but listens intently.

The clock reads 9:45 AM as I finish off a late-night dream while still buried in sleep. The sound emitted is the ringing of that silver mountain of an alarm, the kind that emits an unmistakable ping on the counter of a hotel lobby when a guest needs some attention.

It is a piercing sound, designed to shake one to the bones and thrust him into action, but I linger on my pillow because of exhaustion. And subconsciously, my mind does not try to tag my ring with familiarity. Ding dong would be better, and this definitely was not ding just dong. But wait! This is not the front doorbell, as is my custom to answer. My front doorbell does not sound like that. My legs try to take action independent of my brain. It leaves me in a pile of confusion. The outcome is never favorable.

“Are you sure somebody rang the bell?” Gloria asks. “You know how your imagination can run away with you.”

Of course I'm sure. So listen to this. I had assembled a good amount of clothing, half of which is doing its job. I make my way to the front door. Then I remember, it is not the front door that I seek. This probably will not turn out well. The planning is ill-conceived. Ping is not the sound of my front door. So, what am I doing here in the middle of my floor half-dressed? Investigating, I suppose. Let me go back to my sliding glass door, the one that stands ajar, welcoming critters and insects from my back yard. Let me check again. Yes, the entry is as silent as a butterfly sailing over a jar of water sitting on top of a fence. So, what shall we do about the silent intruder? Shall we announce his arrival with some fanfare? How shall we welcome his presence? More to the point, how shall we keep him out? An even more, an intruder so armed with a baseball bat could take a life! I am interested in avoiding conflict and violence. How about you? No sir! I want the jerk to be turned out never to come back! The nerve of him to come back through just because the door had been silenced for the sake of a cat! I have never heard of such gall!”

Gloria rolled her eyes just to be polite.

I looked at the framework of the door and was angered even more as I realized with what license this intruder came forward and took the liberty to ring the bell, putting me at alarm as if striking me with fear and announcing that no one was safe in my house. How dare he strike our sense of safety and security by stealing what little security we had—whether it be represented by a “keep out” sign or a locked door.

One of our dear members posed the notion, so what shall we not do to secure our safety and our possessions? Is there any way that we can be safe? The next meeting of the Homeowner's Association will take up this important discussion. No sane person wants to be at risk!

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

As an owner-member of the Homeowner's Association, I knew all of the officers of the HOA. Over the last six weeks I pushed each of them to hold a meeting to hear from our members. Our lives were potentially at risk, our safety and security in jeopardy, and I laid it all out so that an open discussion could be considered along with all possible solutions.

After about half an hour it became obvious that it would be difficult to work with this large group; the solutions were so diverse. One wanted to equip each window with locks, another shutters, yet another though it would be necessary to renovate at a cost of thousands of dollars. The units would need to maintain a high degree of similarity so they looked like they belonged together. Value was protected that way. And then there were divergent tastes, which were hard to overcome.

A young college student called Naomi entered the meeting late but was quick to assess the situation. "Is this the meeting on the security for these houses?"

"Yes, I said."

She quickly commanded the floor! "Are you the man who thought somebody entered his room and rang his bell?"

"Yes, that's what happened," I said.

"Sorry to be late," she said. "I don't know how much you know about your cell phone, but if you go to settings, you can make an adjustment of ring tone notification. Instead of like a phone ringing, it can be like a bell, kind of like a chime, some people call it. It sounds just like this.

"Ping!" it sounded!

"My guess is nobody walked into your house. That would be too balsy, you know, bold! It probably sounded just like it, but I'll bet you nobody did! Goodnight!"

"Well, so much for all that," Gloria said. "I think you could sum up all of this in one word."

"Ping?" I asked.

"I think ping will do it!" 



*"Think before you speak.
Read before you think."*

—Fran Lebowitz



WRITERS ARE READERS

BOOK REVIEWS

By Mary Langer Thompson

LAUGHTER THERAPY: HOW TO LAUGH ABOUT EVERYTHING IN YOUR LIFE THAT ISN'T REALLY FUNNY

By Annette Goodheart, Ph.D.

Laughter therapy is no joke according to articles by the Mayo Clinic and other medical groups. I never realized there is a whole school of laughter therapy and that there are certified laughter therapists. The author of this book, a psychotherapist, taught laughter classes at Santa Barbara City College for ten ears and traveled all over the world giving lectures and workshops and training health care professionals.

Dr. Goodheart believes that “all laughter comes out of pain—not that we laugh because we are happy.” Remember Norman Cousins and how he laughed himself through a life-threatening illness? The author met and interviewed Cousins and realized he lacked a framework for how laughter worked. Goodheart had developed a frame of reference and got signed up to teach college classes.

Laughter, according to the author, “is a powerful healing force.” Her goal is to have everyone bring more healing laughter into their lives. Here are a few of the benefits adding more laughter will bring: You can “strengthen your immune system;” “think more clearly;” “replenish your creative juices;” and “experience a deep connection with other human beings.”

Funny quotes and quotes about laughter are sprinkled throughout the book. Here’s one a writer will appreciate: “From the moment I picked your book up until I laid it down I was convulsed with laughter. Someday I intend reading it.” (Groucho Marx)

Laughter therapy suggests a different attitude toward problems, a changing of perspective. It allows us to play with our stress and pain. Some cultures are more serious than others, but some, like Kochi, Japan, devote one day a year to laughter and dancing. Neither is laughter contradictory to faith. Thomas Merton, a revered Trappist monk, was famous for his sense of humor, and Reinhold Niebuhr said, “Humor is a prelude to faith and Laughter is the beginning of prayer.”

Find out the three myths about laughter that prevent us from laughing. The first one is that we must have a reason to laugh. When we see a baby laugh, we don’t ask why. Often, we join in. Myth #2 is that we laugh because we’re happy. The reality is we’re happy because we laugh. The third is that laughter and humor are the same. Groucho Marx is known to have laughed only once. Did you know that other species laugh, too? This book, however, is about helping ourselves laugh.

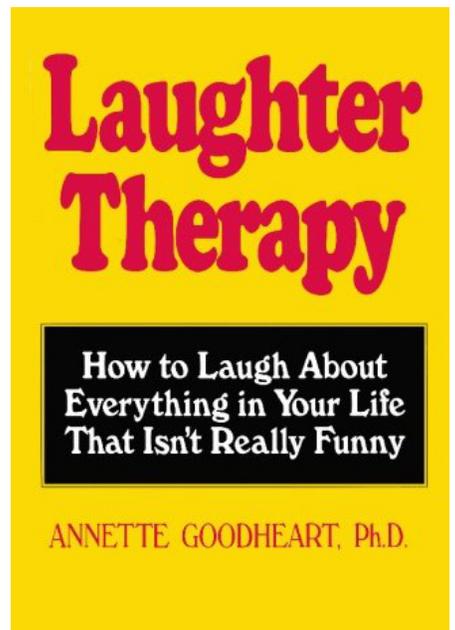
There is a dark side to laughter. Goodheart will help you distinguish between laughter that heals and laughter that hurts. Beware of teasing (usually no permission given), ridicule (including gossip) and even tickling, which is usually based, she says, on one person overpowering another. Even Proverbs holds a warning: “Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows and death, is the man who deceives his neighbor and says ‘I am only joking!’”

Chapter 5 talks about the physiology of laughter. “The more you laugh, the greater your ability to lower your heart rate and blood pressure.” Laughter workouts will keep our cardiovascular systems healthy. Laughter produces natural brain opiates and pain relievers. After fifteen minutes of belly laughter, Norman Cousins slept pain free for two hours. So when you are sick and tired, go home and have some fun. She adds, “The only thing laughter cannot rebalance chemically is grief, which must be resolved with tears.”

Laughter is catharsis. “Catharsis,” says Goodheart, “results in clearer thinking, which in turn enables us to take sensible, more appropriate action.” The author shows how to laugh your way through fear, anger and boredom. If we don’t pay attention, painful emotions will pop up later in different disguises. “Fear can become worry, anxiety, or violence. When anger is repressed it may turn into sarcasm, hostility, or hatred.”

Part 2 gives twenty-five practical, easy ways to help yourself laugh. Here’s a small sample: You can “fake it till you make it,” “Smile more,” “play with small animals,” “laugh with a baby,” “do something out of character,” wink at someone, throw a party, seek out laughers, “have a pillow fight,” or “consider a teddy bear.”

As writers, we know that sadness cannot be the whole story. Let’s add some humor and laughter to both our stories and our lives. 



STRAWBERRY FUN

By Ann Miner



We bought a lug of plump, red strawberries at a fruit stand on the highway over the weekend. I was anxious to get them cleaned, cut up and frozen, so on Monday morning I dumped all of them in the kitchen sink full of cool water. While I was working with them, the phone rang. It was the United Way committee. They met at the local office a couple of blocks away and wanted me to come down to quickly discuss the budget with them as head of the District Campfire Girls.

I left my young son and the neighbor's boy outside playing and said I'd be back in a few minutes, which is what I thought. But I was gone much longer.

When I returned, I saw a kitchen chair and dishtowel in the middle of the kitchen floor. "Hmm," I wondered. "What's that about?"

With no answer, I went back to the task of cleaning strawberries at the sink. The phone rang again. This time I put the receiver on my shoulder and held it with my head while I continued with the berries.

After a few minutes, when my neck began to get stiff, I moved the receiver to stretch my neck. As I looked up, I saw strawberry bits on the inside of the valance of the kitchen window. Continuing to look, I found them on the ceiling and kind of everywhere in the kitchen. Now I knew why the chair and towel were on the floor. The boys had enjoyed a strawberry fight and tried unsuccessfully to clean up the evidence.

I went to get them from the yard. Pulling out rags and stepstools, I had them "clean" the mess. Of course, they couldn't reach the ceiling, but they did their best, giggling all the way through. They had a lovely time that Monday morning.

This was just one of the stories these two little guys provided for my memories of being a young mom. 

This is the notice of my story being accepted into the *Woman's World Magazine*

Congrats! Your story was chosen to be featured for the 'My Guardian Angel' column in our October 2nd issue of Woman's World, which will be on sale September 21st - September 27th, 2023. (Continued on page 11)

Angels

We were looking forward to our vacation in the mountains. Reservations for a rental home had been made weeks earlier, and we had every intention of arriving there during daylight hours.

Somehow, by the time we got ready and finally got out the door of our home, it was already late afternoon. This made our arrival in Lake Arrowhead late in the evening, and it was already dark. Pitch black, in fact. With no streetlights and no idea where the rental was, we were trying to follow our GPS.

Finally, the automated voice said, "You have reached your destination." For some reason I will never know, my husband did not believe that was the place, and he kept going. But after a few yards, he decided to back up and check the address. He could not see a thing behind the car in the darkness, and as he backed the car, we were suddenly going off the side of a slope. Our back rear tire was suspended in midair, and without it, we could not move.

We were tilted seriously towards the right. I was pushed up against the passenger door, and Ron's seatbelt kept him mostly in place.

Using all the strength he could muster, my husband pushed up on his door and managed to crawl out of the Lincoln to survey the situation. I was trying to crawl uphill towards him.

Once we were out of the car, we saw just how critical the situation was, and we were grateful to not have tumbled on down the slope, possibly end over end. Determining that we did, indeed, need help, I called AAA towing. They said they would be there as soon as possible, but the big towing rig we would need to pull us back onto the road was in service, and we must wait a couple of hours before it could reach us.

We walked over to the cabin and saw that it was, in fact, the one we had rented. Deciding we should get what we could into the house so we could relax, we went back and opened the trunk. I wondered how in the world either one of us would be able to get the heavy ice chest and the luggage out of the sloping trunk, and then carry it the distance to the front door.

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

Out of the darkness walked a young man. He was dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, with a flannel unbuttoned shirt over them.

“Would you like some help?” he asked.

Gratefully, I answered, “Oh, yes. Please!”

As he unloaded things, I asked him his name.

He said simply, “Joe.”

“Where were you headed when you stopped to help us?”

“Up the road, to see a friend,” and he pointed in the direction up the hill.

“Well, Joe, we sure do appreciate this. I don’t think we could do it without you.”

Joe carried things in and asked where to put them down. The ice chest was the heaviest, and he left it on the kitchen counter.

In all the confusion, I didn’t notice when Joe left.

The next morning, I took a walk around the area. Going up the road we were on before we backed up, I noticed that there were no other houses beyond that point. None. It was a dead-end street!

I concluded that Joe was an angel. For real. 



*Seated in my library at
night, and looking on the
silent faces of my books, I am
occasionally visited by a
strange sense of the
supernatural.*

– Alexander Smith



A DOOR CLOSSES, ANOTHER OPENS . . .

By John Paul Garner

Well, I'm happy to report I'm fully recovered from the recent rejection my romance received. It took a few days because I crashed back to earth. I had soared too close to the sun, thinking I had finally entered the AGENT ZONE. Strangely, though, the rejection gave me an idea for a new approach. I decided to repitch the agent who had declined to represent my book, which I now call Second Chances.

Having taught a salon about "hooks" compelled me to study pitches in general and learn what works and what doesn't. The hooks I now understand to be one sentence, capable of being uttered in one breath. The pitch that follows, however, should not be much longer. In fact, I once read that if you can't write your concept down on a matchbook cover then you haven't figured it out. What I discovered was a golden nugget of advice that pitches, in general, should be about a paragraph long. Synthesizing what I had used when I attended the Zoom production of the LA Writer's Conference last year was a challenge because I thought I had nailed it. I was wrong. Big time. Here's what I submitted via email to three different agents:

That Comeback Season is a romance whose protagonist is dealing with his wife leaving him for another man during his cancer's deadliest year and his fear he will fail as the head coach of a freshman football team. He hasn't coached in high school in ten years. It is through running he discovers his will to survive; through coaching, his true purpose; and through the widow he meets, his passion for life.

Jennie, the widow, after losing her husband of twenty-two years, has entered the troublesome and often treacherous world of online dating. Her goal is to meet a romantic and be in love by Christmas. She meets Gabriel who is unique among the matches

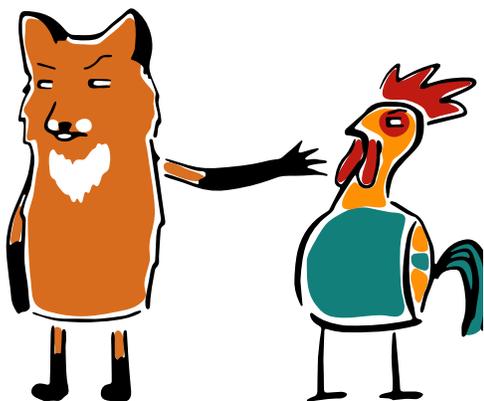
(Continued on page 13)

An October Writing Salon!

Tuesday October 17 at 3:00 p.m.

Led by John Paul Garner

To be held at Richard Zone's home



**COME AND PARTICIPATE IN A DISCUSSION
ABOUT "PITCHING YOUR BOOK" PART II**

Space is limited so reserve your spot soon!

Contact:

Richard Zone: retiredzone@gmail.com • 909-222 8812

(Continued from page 12)

provided to her but she doesn't trust that he's over his wife. When told of his cancer, however, she pushes him away to protect herself and then, at Book One's ending, pulls him back to heal, which is the basis for the story in Book Two.

Gunnar Thorson, the antagonist, is a fearsome combat veteran who, because he assaulted a parent at his previous job, is given an ultimatum by his new head coach: get therapy or never coach again. He is devoted to his son's success but is dismayed that he's gay and displeased he's coached by Gabriel—the "old man." Their differences as coaches and as men collide when "Coach G" disobeys the "Viking." How their conflict impacts the season that follows is conveyed in Book Two, as well when, at its conclusion, one man turns defeat into triumph and the other turns prejudice into respect.

The word count for Book One is 134,687 words, while Book Two is three-quarters finished. The two-book concept has a happy ending. Because of explicit language and the popularity of the movie, *Eighty for Brady* and ABC's new version of *The Bachelor* TV show featuring a senior, I am targeting adult readers.

Why this worked with one agent is confusing because it violated the so-called pitch code. Maybe she had time to read, or the wine she was drinking was simply that good and she felt kindly toward a novice. I'm not sure, but after some rethinking and rewriting, my repitch is considerably shorter. I try to turn a negative into a positive:

You passed on my first book. So, like the characters in my rewrite, I seek a second chance. That's the name of the book, *Second Chances*. It's a two-book modern romance about a 62-year-old football coach who meets a widow the year she's determined to say "yes" to men and he's supposed to die. He gets a second chance at coaching and life, and they both get a second chance at love. But he must first overcome his doubts and the challenges created by a dynamic young coach bent on exposing him to be a loser. Book One has 134,206 words, while Book Two is half-finished. Because of the recent popularity of seniors in books, film, and television, I target an adult audience.

Better? I hope so, but I have no idea if this approach will succeed. Like with anything we do, we give it our best shot. I won't know until Jenny completes the magic she performs. And then nervously— anxiously—I will fill in the boxes at the agent's submission page and hold my breath while trying to finish Book Two.

Who knows? Maybe rejection doesn't close a door but opens one. 



*Books have that strange
quality, that being of the frailest
and tenderest matter, they
outlast brass, iron and marble.*

– William Drummond

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH CELEBRATION

By Bob Isbill

A collaboration between the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club and the Hesperia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Hesperia Library, October 5th, 6-8 pm.

This is going to be big. For years the HDCWC has hosted a celebration lifting up Hispanic Heritage. We have had Hispanic singers, speakers, and readings, all meant to honor those of Latin descent.

This year we are partnering with the Hesperia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for a bigger celebration, one that brings the strengths of both organizations.

We will start with a presentation by Luis Fuertes, author of the book, *Take a look at this, Luis*. Sr. Fuertes is a five-time Emmy award-winning camera man who worked tirelessly with Hugh Howser. Wait till you hear his crazy stories of him and Hugh crisscrossing the state to bring us a better understanding of this amazing land.

Next up will be Iris Gutierrez, the president of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. She will be highlighting Hispanic businesses in our community and the Chamber's plans for the future.

There will be a snack break with terrific food.

Ms. Gutierrez will be followed by Bill Lopez, who writes his own songs that pierce the heart.

Next will be Elizabeth Aguilar, who also works with the Chamber.

The evening will end with Ballet Folkloriko dancers.

The beauty of our country is not that we force everyone to surrender their culture for something that is believed to be the "American" culture. Instead, we embrace all cultures, honoring them, enjoying their special flavor and what they contribute to our multi-ethnic society. Come help us celebrate our wonderful diversity. 🚤



Celebrate Hispanic Heritage



Hesperia Library

October 5th 5-7 pm

Brought to you by . . .

The High Desert branch of the California Writers Club and the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce



Luis Fuerte



Iris Gutierrez



Elizabeth Aguilar



Bill Lopez

And many more!





Jenny Margotta

FROM AN EDITOR'S DESK

CREATE REAL PEOPLE, NOT PAPER DOLLS

For the most part this summer, I've found myself unable to get interested in watching television. There just doesn't seem to be anything that holds my interest as much as a good book. I've always loved to read, but now I'm reading more than ever.

Since I'm a storyteller as well as a reader, I found myself analyzing the books I read. Why did I only "enjoy" some books while, with others, I could get so lost in them that I would suddenly look up after several hours and be surprised that it was dark or that multiple hours had vanished with no awareness on my part? What was it that dragged me into a book and held me there, captivated, invested in

the story's events?

I discovered it was so much more than the "surface" story. Yes, the story by itself was of interest, but the books I lost myself in had one nearly magical ingredient others did not. And that ingredient was?

Characters. Characters that came to life on the page, that became, in my mind, real people. People I cared about, agonized with over their conflicts and decisions, laughed with and cried with. That, to me, is essential to making an okay book a treasure to read.

I love book series. When I pick up another book in one of my favorite series, I'm anxious to find out what my "friends" have been up since I last checked in with them. What new fiend is menacing them or their families? What new triumphs have they managed? New loves? New problems? In short, what have they been doing since I last visited them?

When I was a little girl, paper dolls were all the rage. You could buy a book where you cut out the paper dolls from the back cover or sometimes from a thin cardboard page inserted in the book. You then cut out the various outfits for your dolls from the remaining pages of the book. These "clothes" were attached to the dolls by small tabs that folded over the shoulders, around the waist, or around the legs. That was fine, so long as you didn't try to move the dolls very much. If you did, the "clothes" fell off. And, of course, you only had a vision of the doll from the front. The back was just brown or gray cardboard. There was no way you could think of those paper dolls as real people.

That's what I'm reminded of when I read a book with undeveloped characters. They appear one dimensional. Stiffly constructed with no depth to them. They react to the plot but don't interact with it. They have no capability to drive the plot; they don't develop and evolve, and the storyline simply swirls around them like debris caught in a flood.

So here's my advice for the month. Don't cut out paper dolls and stand them up in your story. Create real people. People who can love and hate, laugh and cry, grow and develop. People who don't just react to your plot but who can actually affect your plot. If the people you create in your books are real enough, you may even find them driving the plot, not the other way around.

Give your readers someone to care about. Someone to get invested in. Someone they'll eagerly wait to meet again in your next book.

WORD OF THE MONTH

HAECCEITY [hak-SEE-ə-dee] noun

Origin: Latin, mid-17th century

1. The property of being a unique and individual thing.

Haeceity is a person's or object's unique individuality, such as the difference between the concept "a man" and the concept of, say, "Walt Whitman" (i.e., a specific person).

Examples of Haeceity in a sentence:

"Each sculpture was endowed with a particular haeceity."

"The teacher knew each student had haeceity and could not be constrained by arbitrary categories." 

PLAN B: OUR SEPTEMBER 9 MEETING

By Mike Apodaca

It was about six-thirty Friday night. The next morning I would join the volunteers who converge on the Community Church at Jess Ranch to set up for our meeting. And then I saw the new email. Our speaker could not make it.

I will not go into all the thoughts that went through my head at that moment. I called Bob Isbill, our activities chairman. Bob, being the wise man he is, had told the board members to always have a ten-minute presentation ready in case of emergency. Bob made phone calls to Dwight Norris, Ann Miner, Jim Grayson, Jenny Margotta, and Lorelie Kay. All were willing to help. And I got to work.

I had my ten minutes ready, but that was going to leave us with about forty-five minutes to fill. I had an idea I had been playing with and took this opportunity to put it all together into a presentation. I stayed up late and got up early, but it was worth it.

The day was saved, thanks to quick work and willing leaders. Each speaker gave our writers something to think about. One member told me afterwards, "I think your plan B was better than your plan A would have been." That was a very nice thing to hear.



IT'S THAT TIME AGAIN: NATIONAL NOVEL WRITING MONTH

By Anita I. Holmes

Every November, hundreds of thousands of writers around the world set out to write a 50,000-word novel during the thirty days of National Novel Writing Month. The NaNoWriMo challenge is a fast and fun way to churn out a first draft of your next novel.

Seem a little daunting? There are resources, coaches, local writing mentors, and near-to-you write-ins, all free. Online workshops in October offer getting-started help.

Plus, our writers' branch has (at least!) two members who've benefitted from NaNo-ing:

Therese Moore's involvement in NaNoWriMo has included serving as a municipal liaison for San Bernardino County writers, mentoring the Young Writers Program, and—yes—reaching her 50,000-word goal multiple times.

Anita I. Holmes has participated over the years, often reaching her word goal. Characters—and the community—in her current novels *In Their Wildest Dreams* and *Dream On* first appeared during NaNo.

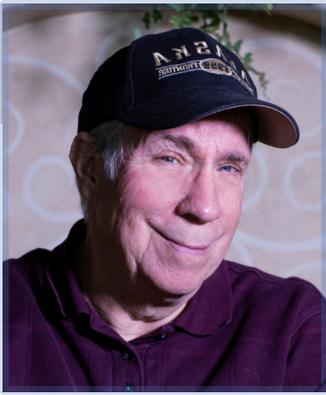
To find out more about what it's like to take part in National Novel Writing Month, contact Anita Holmes at pennedbyanita@outlook.com (Next time she's on Zoom, check out the NaNoWriMo posters behind her).

For info on how to sign up, resources, and the like, go to <https://nanowrimo.org/about-nano> 



*Asking a working writer what he
thinks about critics is like asking a
lamppost how it feels about dogs.*
- Christopher Hampton





THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS OF ALL TIME

By Michael Raff

STEPHEN KING

“Tommy opened his eyes and found himself alone, stranded in the dark. It was a darkness that relinquished nothing and possessed no limits or boundaries. Logical reasons for this startling phenomenon escaped the boy. What manner of desolate place he dwelled in he could not even begin to imagine.”

This is the opening scene of my very first horror story, “The Door,” inspired by the prolific, bestselling writer Stephen King.

Born in Portland, Maine, in 1947, to Donald and Nellie King, Donald left his family when Stephen was two-years-old, and the child grew up without a father. As a result, Nellie and her sons became financially strapped. They moved east to various locations, but before long, returned to Maine.

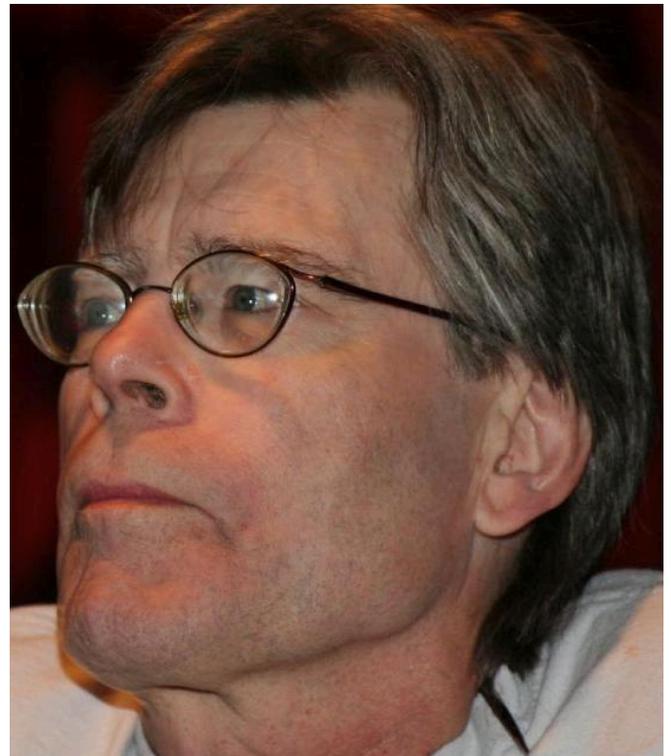
When he was young, Stephen witnessed a friend of his being killed by a train. Somehow, he made his way home in a clear state of shock. To this day, he hasn’t been able to remember the event.

King has stated he lived a “pretty ordinary” childhood. He was drawn to reading and writing at an early age, stating his favorite novel was Richard Matheson’s *The Shrinking Man*. He enjoyed comic books, and sometimes drew his own. He also became a movie buff, the darker the better. “I just wanted to be scared,” he admitted. When he was eight, he found a box that belonged to his father stored in the family attic, containing numerous books, including a H. P. Lovecraft’s collection, a virtual treasure trove for the boy. It was on that day he decided to be a writer.

King read William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, at an early age. He cites the novel as a major influence, stating it was, “the first book with hands—strong ones that reached out of the pages and seized me by the throat.”

As a teenager, King worked as a sports writer at Maine’s Lisbon High School. His story “I was a Teenage Grave Robber” was serialized in *Comic Review*, and he won a Scholastic Art and Writing Award. During his attendance at the University of Maine, he met Tabitha Spruce, also a writer, and fell in love. They married in 1971.

After graduating, King wanted to teach high school but had to wait for a position. His first of three children had been born, and he kept his family fed by selling his short stories to magazines. Through the early seventies, he wrote three novels on his wife’s typewriter but was unable to sell them. When he began teaching at Hampton Academy High School, their budget had grown tight, and they had to live from paycheck to paycheck.



(Continued on page 20)

(Continued from page 19)

When he wasn't teaching, King worked on his fourth manuscript, a novel about "adolescent cruelty and telekinesis." He didn't think it was very good and threw it in the trash. Tabitha retrieved the pages, read them, and encouraged him to finish. When he completed the first draft, she told him, "You've got something here."

King sold *Carrie* to Doubleday in 1973 for a much-needed \$2,500 advance, which he used to buy a Ford Pinto. They were so broke that their telephone had been turned off and the publisher had to send King a telegram to notify him. When he received \$400,000 for the paperback rights, King had to split it with Doubleday, as per their contract. That edition became a bestseller, sending King on his way.

While he was teaching his students *Dracula*, the newly established writer had an idea for this next book, calling it "Payton Place meets Dracula." He asked his wife, "What would happen if an old world vampire came to America?" *Salem's Lot* was published in 1975 and King was paid \$550,000 from Doubleday. For the next three to four decades, it was his favorite novel, stating "I have a special cold spot in my heart for it."

King and his family moved for a year to Boulder, Colorado. Since he placed his first two novels in small Maine towns, he wanted to write something different. On October 30, 1974, he and Tabitha stayed at the Stanley Hotel in Estes Park. King was clearly looking for inspiration. They were the only guests that night, as the hotel was preparing to close down for the winter. They ate in the enormous dining room by themselves and he was later served by a bartender named Grady.

King had a nightmare that night about his son running down the hotel corridors, terrified and screaming. Disturbed and unable to sleep, he stayed awake staring at the Rockies. By the time he returned to bed, he mused, "I had the bones of a book firmly set in my mind." He would go on to publish his next novel, *The Shining*, a major blockbuster. His editor had tried talking King out of writing it, afraid he would be categorized as a horror writer. King took that as a compliment. 🚩

I was sorry to hear my name mentioned as one of the great authors, because they have a sad habit of dying off. Chaucer is dead, so is Milton, so is Shakespeare, and I am not feeling very well myself.

- Mark Twain





Gemini

Once I had a story to tell
But it hurt so much each time I revisited the hell.

So I did leave well enough alone
And let time turn my crying heart to stone.
I played and played and let myself go wander
I ran and ran and into the sunset I did blunder.

Time is a Gemini
With a two sided head
Left alone to pass it is said to even heal the dead.

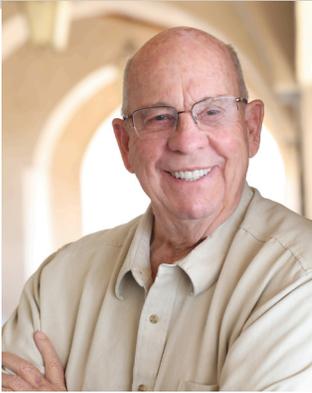
And strange it maybe be
The time did perform
While I played and played I took a new form.

My heart did heal as I looked to the sea
I smiled and smiled at the new me.
So Lucky I feel that time has two heads
I like the one that works with nature's bed.

So THEN the moral of all who need to heal
Just RELAX and let time
Reteach you how to feel. 

HDC CANCELS PLANS TO HONOR CALIFORNIA CALIFORNIA WRITERS WEEK

By Bob Isbill



The HDCWC had in place a book fair with Barnes & Noble lined up for October 17th, 18th and 19th which, due to several circumstances, had to be canceled. Several of the books from the authors who signed up were not in the Barnes & Noble system, which is a requirement for having them in the store for sale. There are also contracts to be signed and without a guaranteed inclusive date, we could not function. So the project is not dead in the water by any means, but will not happen on the California Writers week.

The California Writers Week is a statewide recognized time set aside by legislative decree to honor California writers, living and dead. It is also a time when our CWC promotes itself to the public and stresses the importance of literature and its effect on our communities.

Those people who did sign up will be notified when we reinstate the Barnes & Noble book fair, which probably will be in early 2024. 

HDCWC OCTOBER 14 MEETING TO FEATURE BETSY ASHTON

Betsy Ashton, an award-winning reporter and artist, will share her insights on how to use social media to create your author brand at the Jess Ranch Community Church on Saturday, October 14, 2023, at 10 am.

Ashton, who has written books, articles, and portraits of immigrants and refugees, will discuss which social media accounts are the best for publicity, why some are better than others depending on your genre, and why you can't and shouldn't try to do everything at once.

She will also speak about social media advertising, whether it's on Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok, and how to use it effectively to reach your target audience and grow your fan base.

She is the author of Betsy Ashton's *Guide to Living on Your Own*, *Mad Max* mystery series, *Eyes Without A Face*, a psychological suspense novel featuring a female serial killer, and "Out of the Desert", a coming-of-age novel set in the Mojave Desert.

She is also the creator of "Portraits of Immigrants: Unknown Faces, Untold Stories," a traveling exhibition that showcases the stories and portraits of today's immigrants and refugees to counter hate with empathy and understanding.

The presentation is free and open to the public. 



By decree of the Governor and State Legislature,
the third week of October is perennially designated as

California Writers Week

Celebrate the writers of California!

Jack London Eugene O'Neill Sam Shepard Alan Ginsberg F. Scott Fitzgerald Carolyn See Tom Wolfe Sue Grafton Dr. Leo Buscaglia
Raymond Chandler Dean Koontz Beverly Cleary John Steinbeck Robert Louis Stevenson Armistead Maupin Henry Miller Theodor "Dr.
Seuss" Geisel T. Jefferson Parker Robert Frost Elizabeth George Norman Mailer Julia Child Baba Ram Dass Mark Twain Jack Kerouac
D.J. Waldie Danielle Steele Gertrude Stein Ambrose Bierce Alice Walker Jessamyn West T.C. Boyle Ray Bradbury Joseph Wambaugh
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Wayland J.S. Holliday Anh Do John Muir Michael Scott Moore
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Don Miguel Ruiz Rebecca Solnit Isabel Allende M.F.K.
Fisher Firoozeh Dumas Lisa Alpine Steve Martin
Khaled Hosseini Edward Humes Faye Kellerman
Susan Ito Pico Iyer Freeman House D.P. Lyle
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Cooper Cohen Victoria Zackheim
Kathleen Sharp Joe Quirk Ross
Macdonald Lynette Brasfield
Gail Tsukiyama Jo Anne Van Tillburg
Bret Harte K.C. Cole June Dutton
Alexandra Haslam Elizabeth McKenzie
Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni Deanne Stillman
Jessica Mitford Ray Berry Pat Morrison
Rupert Hughes Hughes Thom Gurn
Susan Straight Rayn Roberts
Randy Shilts Peter Richardson
Veronique de Turenne Ursula K. LeGuin Tony Lazzarini Peter Lefcourt Raymond Strait Percival Everett
Yone Noguchi Wylene Dunbar Vladimir Lange Tony Johnston Malcolm Margolin M.L. Malcolm
Michael McClure Ruthanne Lum McCunn Lucille Lang Day Oakley Hall
Nik C. Colyer Robyn McGee Kelly Lange Tamim Ansary Nancy Hueb otter
Mark Coggins Kathi Kamen Goldmark John Gregory Dunne Alan Epstein
Thomas Steinbeck
Theodora Kroeber Alan Clements devorah major Joie Davidow
John Lescroat Linda Palmer Robert Haas Louis B. Jones Sylvia Boorstein
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and the list goes on



Watch for special events sponsored by:

California Writers Club

The nation's oldest professional writers organization

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Photo: Dave Oypert

THE ESSENCE OF BLUES IN A FOSTER CHILD

By Lynn Pucket



Writing Prompts

Summertime by Porgy and Bess written by Ira Gershwin

Summer time and the living is easy

Fish are jumping, and the cotton is high

Your daddy's rich and your momma's good looking

So hush little baby don't you cry.

Juxtaposed theory poem by Lynn Denise Puckett inspired by group discussion, with words of pretending, culture and sadness and her insights in dealing with At Risks Youths.

Dear No Dad,

Thank you for teaching me to be strong and resilient...By your absence.

While your summertime was easy, it lead to busy Mom finding more Dads.

Some good, most taught me not to trust.

Fish are jumping and the cotton is high.

Was the fish or the cotton, the only thing that got high?

Cotton mattress does smell, but more dads don't care.

As I look to the sky, my bathroom widow became my magical jumping escape route.

I stayed at school for the safety of it all.

Studied hard and got scholarships because of ...YOU, No Dad.

Your Daddy's Rich and your Mommas good looking...so hush little baby...don't you cry....

Secrets Inside my stomach and mind.

Heightened my resolve to hush myself, no foster family for me.

Dear More Mom

I watched you cry and then stand so tall

Orders you gave with notes on the wall

So tiny I was yet, I guessed at your words

Grew into instincts learned first to cuss using your slurs.

Shame I felt for your suggestive dress ware

Then I twisted my thoughts into respect for your care.

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

You could have left as many did.

Then what and where?

I could have been left for dead.

So this short thank you is a two edge sword

No Love, NO hate, no nothing.

For the human prison ward.

Yet time gave me strengths of insights to love the silence of the sunrise

To know well the blues of the summertime song.

And now I love and laugh with

Those who cry, at just the melting of their ice cream cones

For they have not yet found their own zones.

To love the acceptance my strengths

To know well the blues of the summertime song.

A lady I am because I saw what NO 'Dad and More Mom did

As I learned the song

Your momma's bad looking as she shags to the floor

My hope is happy as

They all left through the door.

Signed

The Strength of a Hushed little Baby..... Foster child.

PS...Just don't ask me to sing it..... 



AN EVENING WITH JOHN TRUBY

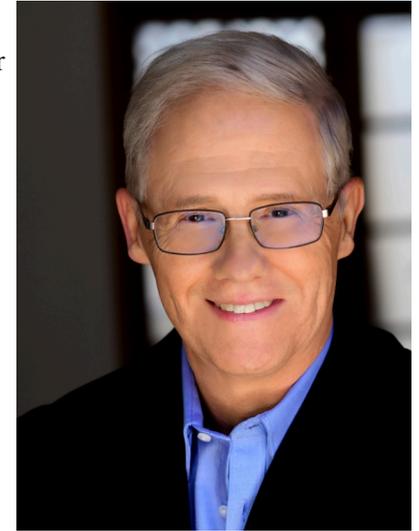
By Mike Apodaca



Another first for the HDCWC. Bob Isbill (the wizard) secured for the club the amazing teacher and coach, John Truby, author of *The Anatomy of Genres*, a 710-page tome that reveals the secrets of great storytelling. Although we normally invite speakers to come and teach—to present their material—we decided to make this meeting different.

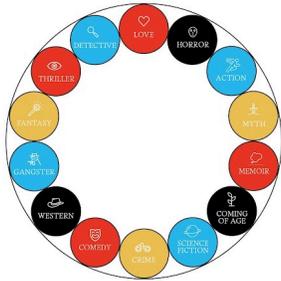
We launched a book club. We encouraged our club members to buy John Truby's book and start reading it. We discussed the book in various meetings. Then, when the ACT II meeting came with Mr. Truby, we submitted to him

questions we had about his book. We asked him to clarify things, to elaborate, and to help the material make more sense to us.



The Anatomy of GENRES

How Story Forms Explain
THE WAY THE WORLD WORKS



AUTHOR OF THE ANATOMY OF STORY
JOHN TRUBY

With fifty-five in attendance on the Zoom, from many of the branches of the CWC from across the state, we engaged with Mr. Truby, listening to him use his forty years of experience to explain how to enter into the highest levels of storytelling, to create stories that will delight our readers and will have high market value. He reviewed with us the Three Rules of Storytelling and the Seven Major Structural Steps. He explained that superior writing focuses on the character, letting the plot grow out of their weakness and need.

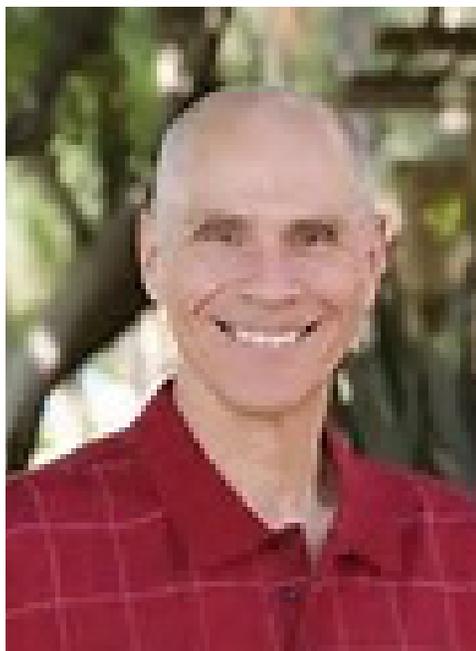
We did not record the session. We did not want to do anything that might inhibit the free flow of questions and answers. If you missed this wonderful experience, then I highly recommend that you read Mr. Truby's books. Start with *The Anatomy of Story* and then read *The Anatomy of Genres*. In these two books you will find all you need to master the art of storytelling. 🚩



*A good novel tells us the truth about
its hero; but a bad novel tells us the
truth about its author.*

~G.K. Chesterton

FORMER HDC WC MEMBER ROBERT KIRK PASSES AWAY



We were sad to learn that former member Robert Kirk passed away in September, after a brief illness.

Robert Kirk was an active member who wrote several books about his experiences in the military. Kirk was a combat veteran pilot who flew well over 100 combat missions during the Vietnam War.

The following obituary was published in the daily press:

Dr. Robert F Kirk, born in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on August 27, 1943, passed away September 15, 2023, in Tucson, Arizona, following a brief illness.

Dr. Kirk is survived by his devoted wife of 56 years, Vicki Kirk, his sons Dr. Timothy Kirk (his wife, Cathie Kirk) and Mr. Mark Kirk (his wife, Dr. Erin Kirk), as well as his cherished grandchildren: Carissa, William, Audrey and Leland Kirk.

He also leaves behind his two Wire Fox Terriers, Boomer and Sooner.

A distinguished veteran of the Vietnam War, Dr. Kirk valiantly completed 197 combat missions while piloting the F-4 Phantom. Following his dedicated service in Vietnam, he continued to serve his nation, piloting the C-141 transport plane in Southeast Asia.

Upon fulfilling his patriotic duty, Dr. Kirk pursued higher education, earning a Ph.D. in Education from the University of Oklahoma. His commitment to the field of education spanned over four decades, where he imparted knowledge at the Middle School, High School, and University levels. Dr. Kirk's exceptional teaching abilities earned him numerous accolades, including recognition as an Apple Distinguished Educator and Hesperia Unified's Teacher of the Year. In retirement, he continued his dedication to education by serving on the Hesperia Unified School District Board of Trustees, contributing significantly to shaping the district's future vision.

Dr. Kirk's passion for learning extended beyond the classroom. He held a private pilot's license and was a certified flight instructor with a commercial pilot rating. He and Vicki owned their aircraft, embarking on many memorable journeys throughout the US. Remarkably, Dr. Kirk pursued theological studies and enrolled in Seminary at the age of 79. An active Deacon at Tucson Mountain Baptist Church, he dedicated his time to the Food Room and Homeless ministries, in addition to teaching an adult Sunday School Class. Dr. Kirk's unwavering faith and devotion to Christ provide his family solace, knowing that he now resides in Heaven with our Lord and Savior.

A service in memory of Dr. Kirk will take place on October 16, 2023, at East Lawn Palms Mortuary, followed by burial with military honors at the Arizona Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Marana, AZ. In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests that donations be made to the Warrior Healing Center at 1838 Paseo San Luis, Sierra Vista, AZ 85635.

Posted online on September 27, 2023 - Published in Victorville Daily Press

HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE
CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB
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UNTIL THE END OF THE FISCAL YEAR
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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

By Michael Raff

"WHEN INSPIRED, WRITE. WHEN
UNINSPIRED, READ."

- *Stephen King*

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

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- 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.
Call Richard if you would like to discuss an article or idea.
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