

The INKSLINGER

Sail On

High Desert Branch CWC
INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS
January 2024



A word from our President

By Mike Apodaca



Happy New Year!

This morning, in the check-in Zoom group, we were talking about our lives and how active we are, even though most of us are over retirement age. It made me think of this new year and how I want to live for the next 365 days.

One word comes to mind—engaged. I want to spend 2024 in the middle of the action, in the fray, engaged in the battle for a better world, advocating for the weak and being there for my family. In short, I want to live.

Another thing we talked about was how elderly people were viewed when we were kids. I have the image of Granny Clampett on the porch on her rocking chair with her corncob pipe hanging on her lip. The aging were supposed to sit around and spout wisdom, right? Well, now that I am able to order from the senior menu in any restaurant, I am finding that this model of aging is completely wrong.

I am overwhelmingly impressed with how much people my age (or older) get done. In fact, they are some of the most active and engaged people I know.

Back to my word—engaged. My hope for myself and for you is that we will find a way to become engaged in all areas of life. My main areas include my faith, my family, my friends, my household, my writing, and our writing club (I would guess that yours are much the same). My goal is to stay engaged in each of these. What does it mean to be engaged? Here are my thoughts.

Take responsibility. Don't assume it is someone else's job. Where there is a need, fill it. Sometimes we need to just roll up our sleeves and just do it.

Assume no job is beneath you. I had a friend recently tell me how amazing it was for them to visit Japan and to see how clean it is. Why is that? It is part of the culture of the Japanese that everyone cleans all the time. One simply does not leave things dirty—even if you didn't make it that way. I see some of this same mentality when our members help us pack up after our meetings. They jump in to stack chairs or wipe up spills on the floor. When we assume no job is beneath us, we will make the world a much better place.

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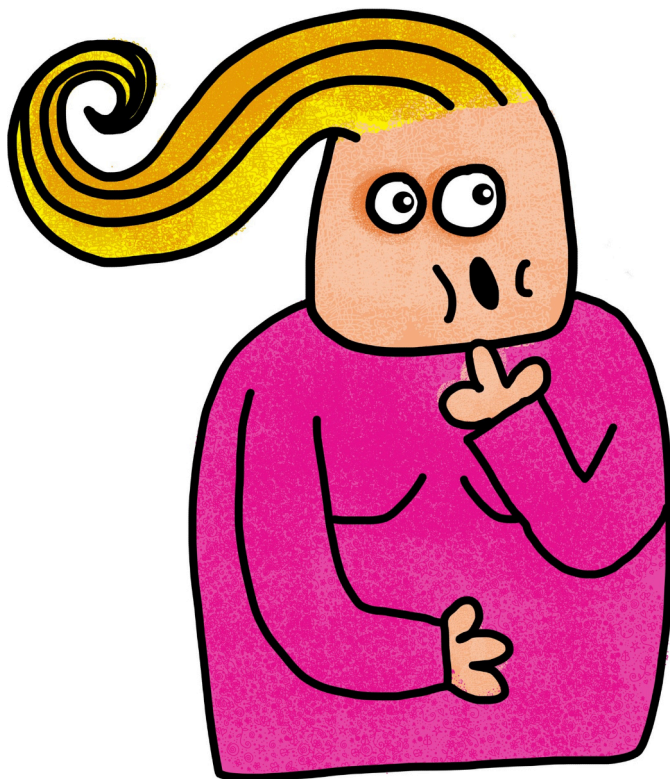
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Stay active. Do a lot every day. Physics tells us that an object at rest tends to stay at rest. The same is true of us. There will be plenty of time to relax when we're gone. Let's make a difference while we're here.

Keep your eyes open and see where the needs are. I am so excited that our members have stepped up to initiate new programs in our club. Barbara Parrish and Anita Holmes started the Wednesday morning Zoom Check-in. John Garner began our meetings at Corky's on Thursdays. Richard Zone, Lorelei Kay, and John Garner resurrected the Salons after they were stopped by COVID. Freddi Gold recently initiated a book lending library. Jim Grayson and Bob Isbill put together the opportunities for our On-Topic speakers to test their speeches at the Apple Valley library. Please note, these wonderful ideas did not come from the board. They came from members who saw a need and stepped up to fill it. Boy, am I ever grateful for that initiative!

Go to bed tired every day. You will have a great feeling of accomplishment for a day well spent and you will have better sleep.

Again, I hope you have a very happy New Year and a most productive 2024. 🚢



*Every year we
make resolutions to
change ourselves
and what we are
going to do.
This year, why not
make a resolution to
simply be ourselves?*

A Word from Our Vice President

Joan Rudder-Ward



Library of Congress Online Photographic Resources

The Library of Congress houses a vast array of photography collections covering various themes, time periods, and subjects. Here are some of the notable photography collections accessible online.

Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Collection



The Farm Security Administration (FSA) was established in 1937 as part of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal initiatives to address rural poverty during the Great Depression. It aimed to improve the lives of farmers affected by the economic downturn and the Dust Bowl by providing loans, resettlement assistance, and other forms of aid.

One of the most significant aspects of the FSA was its photography program, initiated to document the impact of the Depression on rural America. We're all probably familiar with photographer Dorothea Lange's iconic Migrant Mother image, created when Lange was a photographer for the FSA.

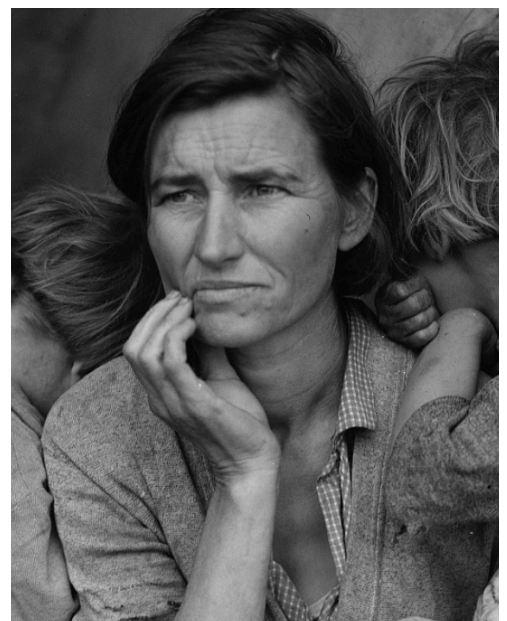
I've been pleasantly surprised to find photographs for several of my documentary projects from this collection. Who would of thought that Pie Town, New Mexico, had been heavily documented by the FSA in the 1940s? This resource helped me tremendously when I produced a television episode featuring Pi Day in Pie Town.

National Child Labor Committee Collection (NCLC)

These photographs document child labor in the United States from 1908 to 1924, raising awareness about the issue during that time. The photographer, Lewis Hine, documented working and living conditions of children in the United States during that time.

Civil War Glass Negatives and Related Prints

A significant collection of photographs from the American Civil War era, showcasing portraits, battle scenes, and other aspects of the conflict. Provides access to about 7,000 different views and portraits made during the American Civil War (1861-1865) and its immediate aftermath.



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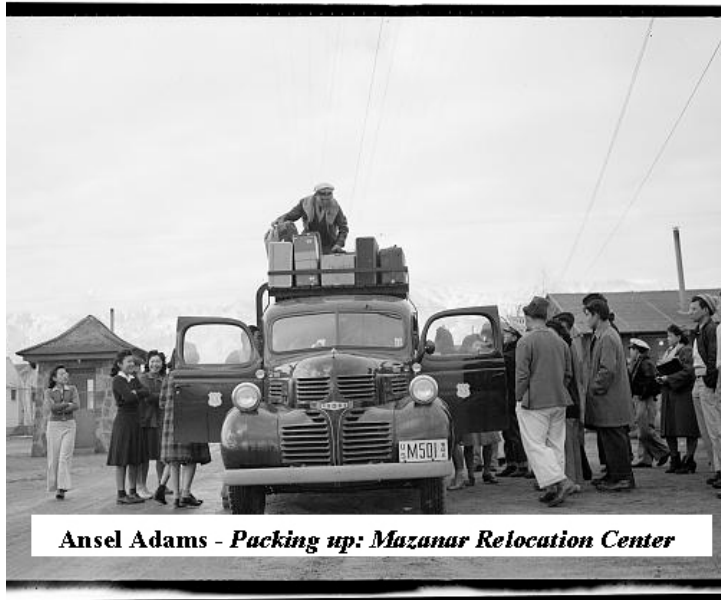


FSA- *Business Section, Pie Town, New Mexico*

photographer, donated a significant collection of his work to the Library of Congress. A body of his work that I found particularly impressive is his photographs documenting Japanese-American life at the Manzanar War Relocation Center in California. This relocation center is where Japanese-Americans were interned during World War II.

Additional Collections of Historical Interest:

Detroit Publishing Company Collection: This collection contains photographs capturing scenes from



Ansel Adams - *Packing up: Manzanar Relocation Center*

around the United States and some international locations from the late 19th to early 20th centuries.

Stereograph Cards: These are 19th and early 20th-century stereoscopic images that, when viewed through a stereoscope, create a 3D effect. They cover a wide range of subjects.

Panoramic Photographs: A collection of panoramic photographs capturing landscapes, cityscapes, events, and gatherings, providing a unique perspective of various historical moments.

American Memory Project: This is a digital collection encompassing various historical

photographs, including daguerreotypes, stereographs, and other formats covering different periods of American history.

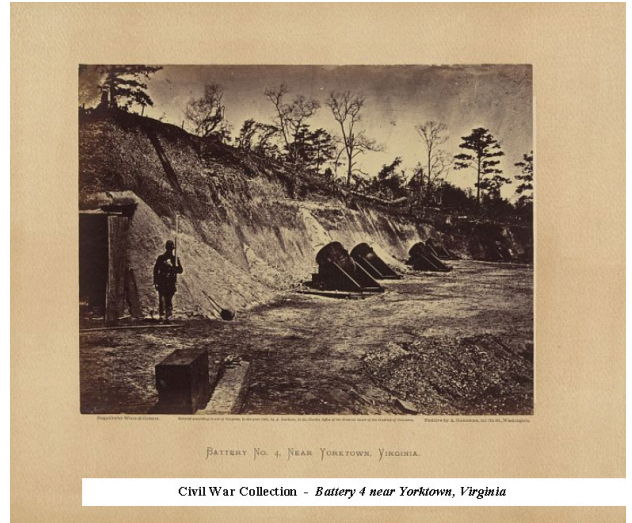
Gottscho-Schleisner Collection: A collection focusing on architectural photography, capturing buildings, interiors, and exteriors primarily in the United States. ⚓

Daguerreotypes

Photographs of individuals from the mid-19th century.

Though it mostly consists of portraits, there are a few architectural views, outdoor scenes, and copies of works of art. **Ansel Adams Photographs**

Ansel Adams, renowned landscape



BATTERY No. 4, NEAR YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA

Civil War Collection - *Battery 4 near Yorktown, Virginia*

A January 2024 Salon!

Led by Ann Miner

Tuesday January 16, at 3:00 p.m.



The January Salon at Richard Zone's place will be held on Tuesday, tJanuary 16th. from 3:00-5:00 will be a fun, social gathering. Ann Miner will lead us in a discussion about setting and keeping goals in the new year.

Please let Richard know right away if you plan to attend.

Space is limited so reserve your spot soon!

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



*“Procrastinate now,
don't put it off.”*

— Ellen DeGeneres

From an Editors Desk

By Jenny Mangotta



My Christmas Memory

In the December edition of *The Inkslinger*, Mike Apodaca challenged us to “find a beloved Christmas memory that you shared with someone special in your life, write it out . . . and send it to that person as a Christmas gift.” I don’t know the name of the person who created the following memorable event for me, and I doubt he’s still living, so I can’t send it to him, but I can write it out and share it with all of you.

As the years pass, we all get so caught up with the challenges of everyday life that many past events are shuffled aside and discarded. But no matter how many years go by, there are some events that are so firmly embedded in our minds that nothing can erase them. I’m not sure if the one I’m relating here can truly be called a “memory,” because I was much too young at the time to etch it in my brain. But my mother told the story so often that it feels like a memory. And I certainly remember the result of the event!

In the 1950s, Louis Marx and Company manufactured the Fort Apache Stockade Playset, inspired by the popular TV series *The Adventures of Rin Tin Tin*. It contained Rin Tin Tin, of course, as well as a plastic log stockade, two block houses, four ladders, a tin log cabin with furniture, cowboys and Indians, horses, a buckboard wagon with horse in harness and spare wheel set, rail fencing, benches, teepee, rocks, a flag pole, oxen, and more. I don’t know how much it sold for, but I’m sure it was well beyond anything my parents could have afforded at the time.

We were living in Mannington, WV, in an apartment above a family-owned grocery store in the downtown area near the train station. I was four at the time. My older brother and sister were in school, so I was



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home alone with my mother. According to my mother, there was a small fenced yard between the building and the railroad tracks where I often played. Apparently, I never failed to wave at the man in the caboose when a train passed—and most waved back.



One day near Christmas, there was a knock on our door and my mother opened it to find a large man in bib overalls, a striped cap with a bill, and a red neckerchief around his neck. Under one arm he carried a large box wrapped in brown paper and he was holding my hand with his other hand. “This little girl lives here, right?” he asked. When my mother said yes and nervously asked if I’d somehow managed to get myself into trouble, the man told her his story.

He said he was the “caboose man” on one of the trains and always waved at the “smiling little crippled girl” whenever the train passed. One of his grandchildren, whom he rarely saw, also wore heavy braces, and he was reminded of her whenever he waved at me. One of his duties on the train was to handle all the packages being shipped and, unfortunately, many were damaged or their wrappings were torn in such a way that the packages were undeliverable. The box under his arm was one such package. He knew the playset inside was probably intended more for a boy than a girl, but he remembered seeing me in my Indian warrior costume (I was something of a Tomboy in those days) earlier in the fall and hoped I’d enjoy playing with the toy.

My mother thanked him and sent him on his way with a bag of homemade cookies.

On Christmas Day I opened that box and found the Fort Apache set inside. The “caboose man” was right—it was one of my all-time favorite toys for many years. In fact, I still have a few of the pieces in my keepsakes box in the garage. I don’t remember the man, but I have never forgotten the heartwarming story that accompanies that long-ago gift. They say you can’t put a price on a memory, but the current bid for the Fort Apache playset I found on eBay is \$399. ⚓

WORD OF THE MONTH

Lexiphanic (lek-si-FAN-ik) (adjective): Using pretentious words and language.

ETYMOLOGY: After Lexiphanes, a bombastic speaker, in the satire of the same name by Lucian (2nd century CE). Earliest documented use: 1767.

USAGE: “Someone who reads dictionaries for fun. ... Been totally lexiphanic and proud of the fact.”
Debra Adelaide; *The Household Guide to Dying*; HarperCollins; 2009. ⚓

Writers are Readers - Book Reviews

By Mary Langer Thompson



Bird by Bird: Some Instructions on Writing and Life

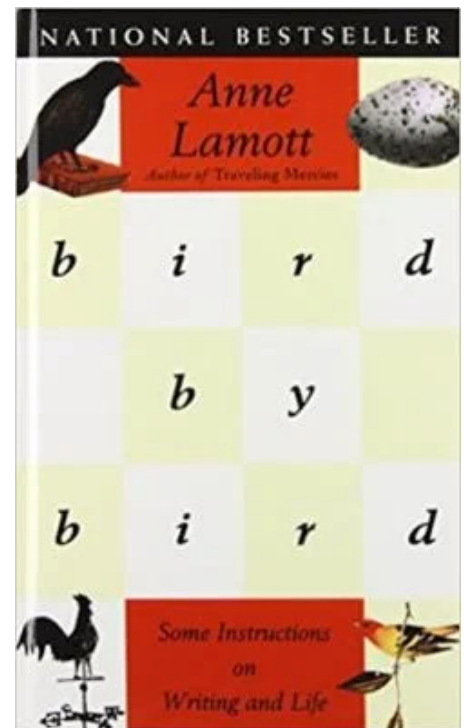
By Anne Lamott

Happy 2024! I'm rereading this book that beginning writers should read and advanced writers should return to occasionally. Anne Lamott, a wise and witty writer (she describes herself as "smart-alecky") grew up with parents who read and took her to the library every Thursday night to get books for the week ahead. Her family read every night after dinner and her father was a writer. She says, "One of the gifts of being a writer is that it gives you an excuse to do things, to go places and explore. Another is that writing motivates you to look closely at life, at life as it lurches by and tramps around."

In junior high, Anne thought she was "a total loser." But one day she went to Bolinas Beach and wrote a description of what she saw: "I walked to the lip of the water and let the foamy tongue of the rushing liquid lick my toes. A sand crab burrowed a hole a few inches from my foot and then disappeared into the damp sand. . . ." Her father convinced her to show it to a teacher, and it wound up in a textbook. She excelled in college English but dropped out at nineteen to become a famous writer. Her father told her to write every day: "Do it as you would do scales on the piano. Do it by prearrangement with yourself. Do it as a debt of honor. And make a commitment to finishing things." Lamott admits to writing some terrible stories. She didn't give up, however, because of her father's faith in her. "Hope begins in the dark, the stubborn hope that if you just show up and try to do the right thing, the dawn will come. You wait and watch and work: you don't give up."

When her father was diagnosed with brain cancer, he told her to pay attention and to take notes: "You tell your version, and I am going to tell mine." Anne believed that when each of her five books came out, "trumpets would blare, major reviewers would proclaim that not since *Moby Dick* had an American novel so captured life in all of its dizzying complexity." None of that happened.

Now she teaches and writes. This book tells what she tells her students, things they want to hear and things they don't. You should feel like milking a cow: "the milk is so rich and delicious, and the cow is so glad you did it."



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Part one is about “Getting Started.” “Good writing is about telling the truth.” Don’t worry about writing well, just get it all down. Sit down at about the same time every day. Writing will make us better readers, too. Find out why you shouldn’t worry about getting published. Just “do your scales every day.” Next, Lamott talks about short assignments. She gives the example that makes for the book’s title. When her older brother was ten, he was writing a report on birds. He’d had three months to write it, but it was due the next day. Her father sat down beside her brother, who was close to tears, and said, “Bird by bird, buddy. Just take it bird by bird.”



Advice also helpful to me over the years: “Almost all good writing begins with terrible first efforts. You need to start somewhere.” “Perfectionism will ruin your writing . . . we need to make messes in order to find out who we are.” Find out why you are going to have to let bad things happen to some of the characters you love, why something needs to be “at stake” in your stories, why characters shouldn’t be too perfect, and why we shouldn’t worry about plot, but characters, instead. Why is dialogue important and how do we avoid bad dialogue? Discover what she has to say about the unconscious and using metaphors as a tool.

Part Two, “The Writing Frame of Mind,” tells why you need to have self-compassion before you present a character and why the language in which you write is moral. “So a moral position is not a message. A moral position is a passionate caring inside you.” In Lamott’s witty way, she will tell you how to “listen to your broccoli.” She has a whole chapter on jealousy, an “occupational hazard.”

Lamott’s advice is practical, too. In Part Three you’ll learn how to use index cards, pick experts’ brains, find a writers group, use the form of a letter, and what to do when writer’s block happens, which it will.

Part Four talks about “Publication and Other Reasons to Write.” She concludes with why our writing matters.

Your writing matters. Read or re-read this life-affirming Anne Lamott classic that tells you why and gives you sound writing advice. ⚓



*Write down one thing you're
grateful for every night.
End the night with gratitude and
you'll feel better when you lay your
head down on your pillow.*

The Most Famous Authors of All Time

By Michael Raff



Agatha Christie – Part Two

On December 3, 1926, after arguing with her husband, Archie, Agatha Christie disappeared from their home in Sunningdale, England. Her car was found the following morning parked by a quarry, and it was feared she may have drown in the nearby Silent Pool.

Her disappearance hit the newspapers, both in England and internationally. It was featured on the front page of *the New York Times*. Over 1,000 police and 15,000 citizens, along with some airplanes, searched the rural area with no results. The authorities feared for her life.

After eight days, Agatha was found at a hotel in Yorkshire, nearly 200 miles from her home. She was registered under the name Mrs. Tressa Neele, the surname of her husband's mistress. Upon being found, without a word of explanation, Agatha left the hotel for her sister's home. The public reaction was generally negative. Many thought her disappearance was either a publicity stunt or an attempt to frame her husband for murder.

Agatha divorced Archie in 1928, kept custody of their daughter, and kept her surname. Regarding this period, she wrote in *Agatha Christie: An Autobiography*, "So, after illness, came sorrow, despair, and heartbreak. There is no need to dwell on it."

Also in 1928, Agatha resumed traveling, including a trip to Iraq, and taking the Orient Express to Istanbul and, later, Baghdad. In her travels she met her second husband, Max Mallowan, an archaeologist 13 years younger than her. They married in 1930.

In 1927, Agatha created another one of her memorable detectives, a female, Miss Jane Marple, loosely based on her step-grandmother, Margaret Miller. Both Marple and Miller tended to "always expect the worst of everyone and everything and were with frightening accuracy, usually proven right." Jane Marple appeared in 12 of Agatha's novels, plus 20 of her short stories.

Drawing on her travel on trains, in 1934 Agatha wrote perhaps her most famous book, *Murder on the Orient Express*. Also in 1934, Agatha and Max purchased a house in Winterbrook, where she did much of her writing.

After *Murder on the Orient Express*, Agatha became extremely productive, publishing dozens of novels such as: *The A. B. C. Murders*, *Death on the Nile*, *Appointment with Death*, and *Then There Were None*.

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During World War II, she moved to London and wrote two more novels, *Curtain*, and *Sleeping Murder*.

Agatha published her final book, *Postern of Fate* in 1973. Remaining in poor health for five years, she died of natural causes in January 1976 at the age of 75. She is buried at Saint Mary's churchyard in England. ⚓

Fun Facts About Agatha Christie

During her lifetime, she was known as “The Queen of Crime.”

She wrote six novels under the pseudonym Mary Westmacott.

In 1971, she was made a Dame by Queen Elizabeth II.

At the time of her death, Agatha was the best-selling author in history. Her novels have sold over two billion copies and Guinness World Records lists her as the best-selling fiction writer of all time.

UNESCO lists her as the most-translated author.

Her play *The Mousetrap* holds the world's record of the longest run at more than 27,550 performances.

She is the first recipient of the Mystery Writers of America's Grand Master Award.

In 1950, she was elected a fellow of the Royal Society of Literature.

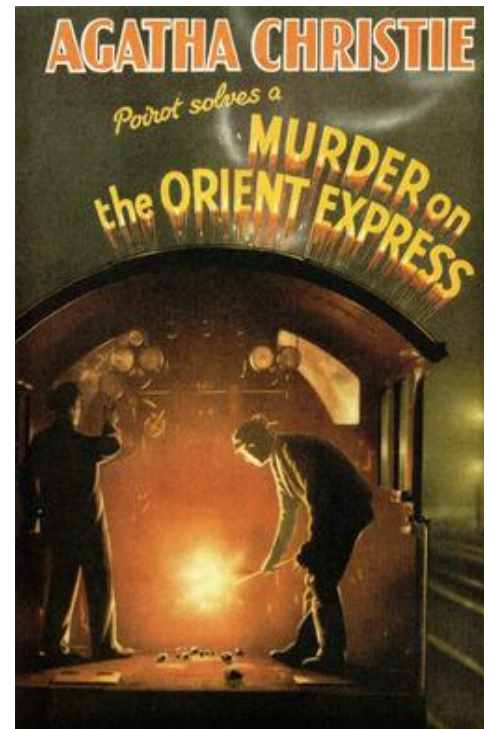
When she disappeared, to help find her, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle gave one of her gloves to a spirit medium.

Agatha did not address her disappearance in her autobiography. Two doctors familiar with the incident claimed she had a “genuine loss of memory.”

MI5 investigated her because of her character's name, Major “Bletchley,” in her novel *N or M*,? a wartime thriller about two fifth columnists. The British agency suspected she may have had a spy in Britain's top-secret codebreaker center in Bletchley Park. As it turned out, the name was a coincidence.

Agatha thoroughly researched. In 1977, a thallium poisoning case was solved by a medical expert who had read her book *The Pale Horse* and recognized the victim's symptoms.

Until next month, keep writing and reading and look over your shoulder at one of Agatha Christie's mystery novels. ⚓



Either write something worth reading or do something worth writing.

If Comes Like a Hiccup

By Barbara Badger



It comes out like a hiccup. You are not expecting it. You are not prepared for it. And you can't stop it from happening.

This expulsion of grief can come in the form a moan, a blend of gasping for air and sobbing until you double over. Time goes on and it doesn't happen as often, but other things do. Just the right words, a well timed breeze to make the wind chimes speak, a fleeting memory that comes out of nowhere can have the same effect, just not as intense.

Now for the joy, I keep hoping the dream will come where I can talk to him, see him smile, hear his voice. Little pieces of joy occur, like something funny he used to say or do. They are the safest, because they don't bring tears. But a song, a line from a mutually loved play or movie finds me in puddles again.

Between these times are moments spent with friends and family, talking about the future with a sprinkle of our past with him. Oh oh—here it comes—give me a minute or two.

I keep hoping that finding things we both loved will make me smile or at least sigh and not cry. That is not happening yet.

I am strong and have had much loss in my life. When we married—all of that stopped. We grew things, built things, created a life of contentment for both of us. We found things that we could do together and things we liked to do separately. Neither of us was “the boss,” we were partners, and when we weren't it threw things into disarray, but we found our way back because we had one goal.


Making it work.

One thing that surprised me—astonished me—and I told this to my mental health counselor, I had no idea how much I really loved him. The loss of him was unimaginably painful. I had been giving him my time and attention intensely the last few years we were together and never really had a chance to take stock or meditate on how much energy I was putting into it. I even found it hard to believe that I felt so strongly about him. We often said, “I love you.” We never tried to quantify it. I doubt we really could have. Based upon my reaction at his loss, I know we could not have accurately gauged the breadth and depth of the love we created.

Be happy for me. I am finding ways to be happy. I am thinking of a future for myself. I am aware he is always by my side. Sometimes, when something really good happens, I feel him smiling.

You are never “ready,” even if you think you are—you're not. Whether it is your spouse, a parent, a child, a dear friend, or someone you admire from afar who had a positive influence on your life, we are not prepared to let go. It is hope that keeps us from being ready. We hope for...more time, more joy, more life together. That is a barrier that keeps us from being ready. It's natural. It's human.

Be good to yourself. Go slower. Don't push. Don't rush. Look for the joy. Be aware of how much gratitude there is to experience, and let it in and out.

Keep loving, keep giving, keep hoping. It is all in God's hands. 

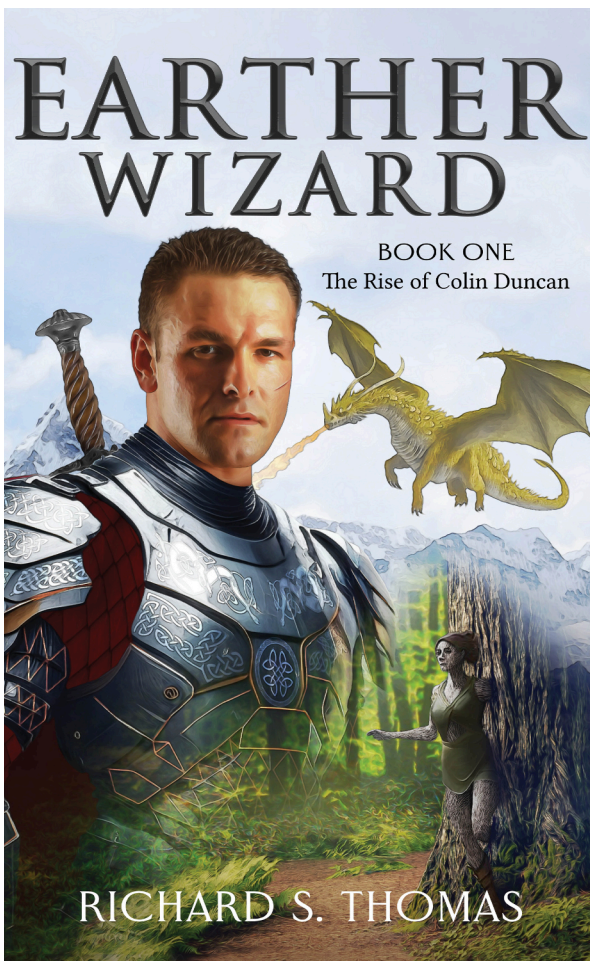
Congratulations, Richard Spencer

By Mike Apodaca



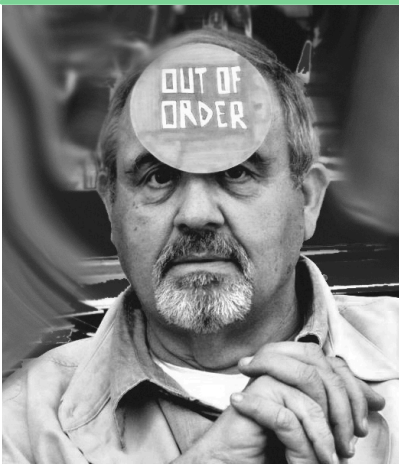
What it Takes to be a Winner

It is always good to have the opportunity to share the successes of our individual members with the rest of the club. One of our own, Richard Spencer (writing as Richard S. Thomas), published his first book in June of this year. Over the last few months, he has entered his book, *Earther Wizard, the Rise of Colin Duncan*, in several writing contests, including the American Writing Award. This contest only has a single winner in each category. They also name several finalists. In November Richard's book was named as a Finalist in the Fiction-Fantasy category. The award includes a badge that can be used to promote the book on a website, Amazon book page, and social media. He said that entry was easy, inexpensive, and well worth the effort. He also asked that I encourage all of you to consider entering your own books in similar contests. After all, you can't win if you don't enter. 🚩



HDCWC Member At Large: Richard Zone

By Mike Apodaca



Richard Zone has been selected as member at large for our branch of the CWC. What exactly is a member at large? I thought we should consult our bylaws and find out.

The bylaws state:

Well, they don't really state anything other than that the president can appoint a Member at Large and that they are a voting member of the board. I chose Richard Zone. So, I will fill in the blanks with what I think our member at large should do. Here's what I think:

The member at large needs to be an exemplary member of our club. Here is why I feel Richard fits the bill.

Writing: I aspire to write at the level of Richard Zone. The man has an incredible command of storytelling and the use of language to engage the mind and the emotions.

Sharing spirit: Richard has the gift of hospitality. He hosts our critique group and the salons in his home. He is always gracious and makes us feel like we really belong with him.

Producing for the club: I can't say enough about what Richard has done with our newsletter, *The Inkslinger*. I put together the newsletter for a year. It was a purely amateurish effort. Richard has lifted *The Inkslinger* to a level of professionalism few thought possible.

Richard is someone you can talk to about concerns or ideas that you have for the club. He can bring things for you to the board meetings, getting them on the agenda. Thanks, Richard, for being willing to serve in this role. We all benefit from your efforts. ⚓



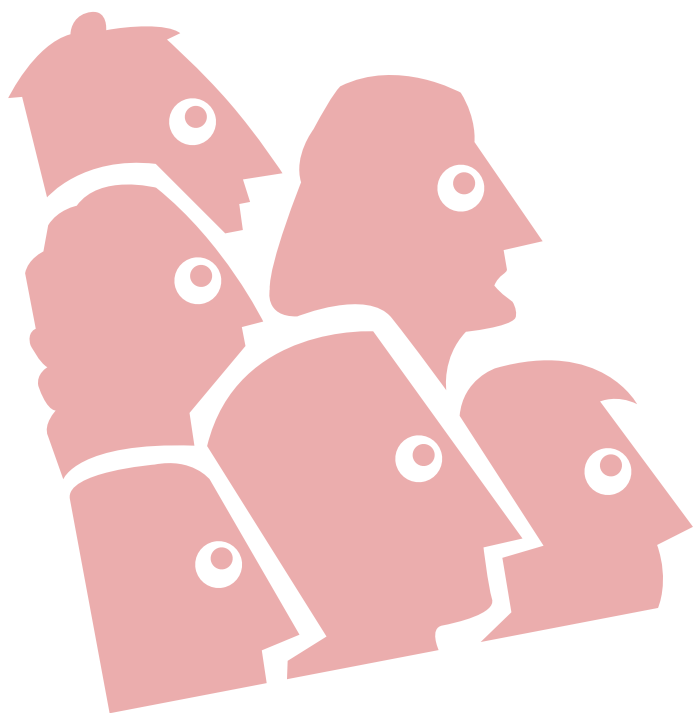
We should understand that new year's resolutions, will only come to pass when and if they are forged from the shards of the past, and not from its abandonment

On-Topic Speaker for January: Michael Raff

By Mike Apodaca

On January 3rd, at 5:00 pm, at the Apple Valley library, come and hear Michael Raff deliver his excellent presentation: “How to Write Suspense That Will Keep your Readers Thrilled and Turning the Pages.”

Building tension and suspense in our stories is an art. And Mike is an expert at it. If you’ve read any of his books or short stories, you know exactly what I mean. Come learn from someone who knows how it’s done. 🚢

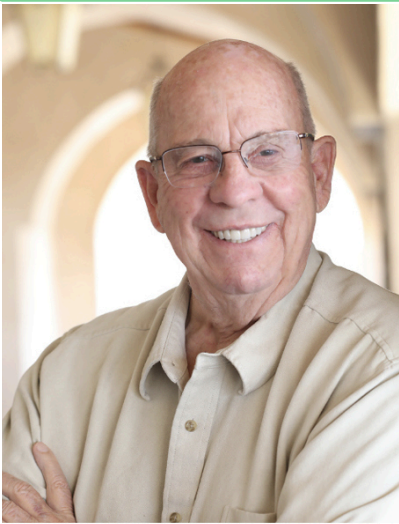


“It usually takes me more than three weeks to prepare a good impromptu speech.”

-Mark Twain

Bill Lopez Presents JFK Review

By Bob Isbill



On Wednesday, December 5, 2023, Bill Lopez presented an excellent review of Pres. John F. Kennedy, his contributions, his historical significance, and his assassination. The program was a presentation of the On-Topic Speakers For You project conducted at the Apple Valley library. The HDCWC is involved in bringing presentations to the public and at the same time offering on-topic speakers an opportunity to do presentations and get constructive critiques on their talk.

Bill Lopez, a history buff and teacher most of his adult life, presented a slideshow and an informal discussion on many aspects of the presidency of JFK. All of the participants in the audience remembered the event on November 22, 1963, when our very popular president was gunned down in Dallas, Texas. Bill Lopez questioned those in attendance to share their experience and their emotional involvement with this huge historical event. It turned out to be a very interesting discussion of where the audience was at that specific time in their life.

Bill also pointed out how JFK was very unusual in that he conducted many press conferences and often came in unexpectedly into the pressroom and answered questions off the cuff. He was so informed about world



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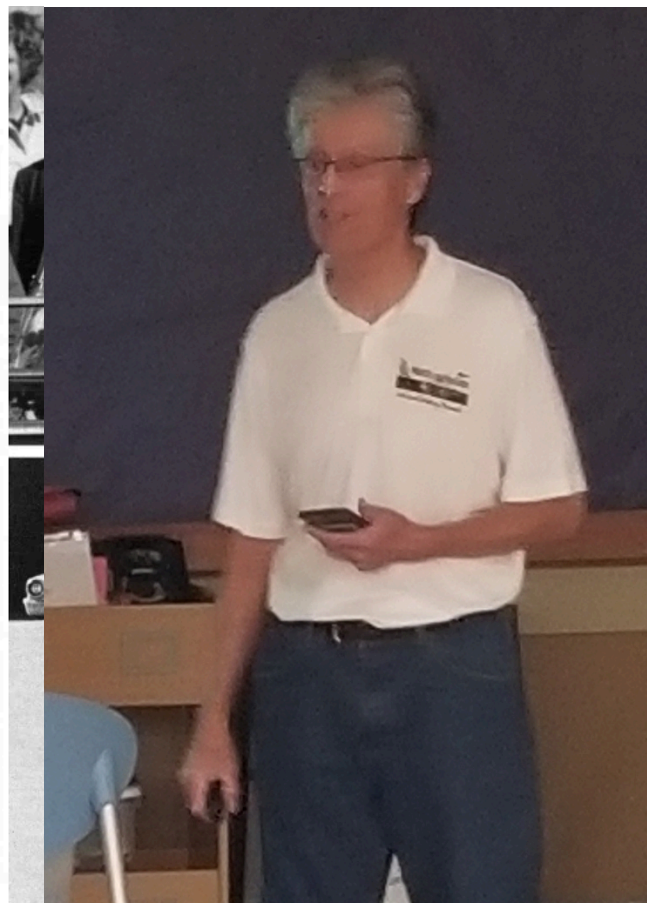
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events that he had very little hesitation about giving the press his opinion on what was going on. He was very well respected by the press for this reason.

JFK was advised to use the word quarantine with respect to the Cuban crisis because it was less confrontational and this advice is attributed to his brother, Robert Kennedy. President Kennedy stood his ground against Nikita Khrushchev, and with his cool headedness we were able to avert a serious confrontation that could have been involved nuclear weapons. The time was very intense.

John F. Kennedy commanded a PT boat during World War II, and at one point he was seriously injured when he broke his back trying to rescue some of the men serving under him. It was often said about giant John F. Kennedy that you never doubted who was in charge.

The HDCWC will continue to meet on the first Wednesday of each month at the Apple Valley library from 5:15 PM to 6:45 PM. All members are encouraged to attend and support this speakers bureau effort to enhance the on-topic speakers for you program. The meetings are free and open to the public. 🚢



To My Fellow Writers and Dear Friends of the HDCWC

By Karen / fumi-tome ohta



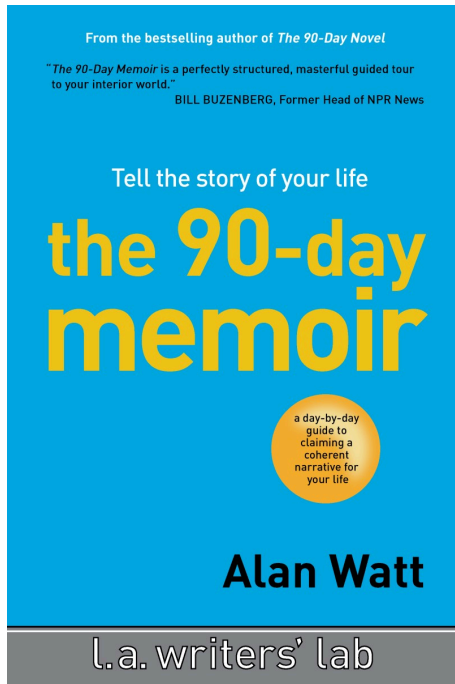
The little bird sitting zen-like one early morning among the serenity of the soft clouds and gentle blueness of the sky brought memories of my times with you in the High Desert. I miss you all and wish you a Happy New Year 2024.

One day, a huge rainbow on the horizon caught me spellbound with an awesome sight. The rainbow was so huge, bright, and full of happiness that a woman approaching her car from shopping kept looking back at the rainbow as if she couldn't believe what she was seeing and feeling. I knew what she sensed because I felt it too. 2023 had been such a difficult year, and here it was, a greeting from the sky in the soft brilliance of the rainbow, a heartfelt message to all of us that things will be okay.

Dearest friends, take care. I love you.



Join the 90 Day memoir Project!



Have you always wanted to write your memoir?

There has never been a better time to do it than right now.

The High Desert Branch is joining with author Al Watt to encourage you to write your memoir in the next few months.

Buy the book, review it, then join us for our Zoom meeting with Al on January 30, 2024.

Write your memoir in the next few months, then meet again on June 25, 2024.

Don't miss this **FREE Zoom meeting**
on the *90-day Memoir Project* with Al Watt

Tuesday, January 30, 2024 6 pm to 7pm Pacific Time

Join Zoom Meeting

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86220784034?
pwd=TThCMWWhyc0FYbjRid1JmUnZiWit6Zz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86220784034?pwd=TThCMWWhyc0FYbjRid1JmUnZiWit6Zz09)

Meeting ID: 862 2078 4034

Passcode: 375034

Friends, Wine, Food, and Good Cheer

by J. P. Garner



Just kidding. It was actually a festive and feisty group of writers that assembled at Lorelei's home on Tuesday, December 12th. There were twelve of us. The pot-luck, conducted amidst an amazing array of Christmas decorations, not only celebrated the best season of the year but what has always been the best about our writers club: the connections between us. Our friendship and mutual respect. It was more than a party, where good food, good wine, and laughter abounded, but a warm and endearing homage to our unique club and its members.

We are writers. Good and bad, and in between, we boldly put our hearts to paper while our thoughts seem to always hover over the written word—that which we have written or are about to. The party shortened the distance between us and brought us closer to each other. We each emerged feeling grand and ready for the world. Ready for what's next and grateful for what has passed, and—maybe—a little regretful that the party had to end so soon. Time enough to sleep later. Friends, wine, and food—plus good cheer—what better way to celebrate what we do and what we are during the merriest time of the year.

We should party more often. 🚢



A Common Aspiration Amid Great Diversity

By Mike Apodaca



In the last year I have had numerous meetings with members of the HDCWC. We've come together casually, socially, in board meetings, and to roll up our sleeves and work on various projects. I just came back last night from flying to Oklahoma with Bob Isbill, where we spent hours swapping stories and getting to know each other on a deeper level. As I get to know our members, I am impressed with the greatness of our diversity. As Bob mentioned to me, each person has their own unique experiences, their own story. In our club we have people from a great variety of different races, ages, religious persuasions, political parties, occupations, family systems, and on and on and on.

Beyond this, we have writers at all different levels of the writing process. We have beginners, writers who are at the beginning of their journey, just learning the rules of the road. Grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, technology, story format, researching, outlining, archetypes, genre, editing, publishing, marketing, and many more elements are all part of the writer's craft. Writing is like entering a whole new world. Along with these new writers, we have some who've been writing for some time, who have learned these basics, and are now breaking new ground in all these areas. These writers have written stories and novels, or poems, or non-fiction. They are experiencing the thrill of accomplishment. They know they still have a long way to go, but they're on the road.

Then there are our more professional writers. We have a smaller group that has been in this writing game for a much longer time. They have a deep well of knowledge about writing. In many cases, they are our teachers and speakers. They are the ones everyone bends their ears towards. These authors are winning contests, getting publishing deals, and are recognized experts in their genre, even outside our club.

What do all these disparate groups have in common? What is their mutual aspiration? Put simply, it is the desire to improve. There's not a member of our club who feels like they have arrived. Even those among us who've been writing for many decades have a deep sense that we have much more to learn.



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I recently had someone mention to me that they thought our club was just a gathering of amateurs—inferring that our members would never really amount to anything. Well, everyone is entitled to their opinion, I guess. But I have a very different view. I spent thirty years as an educator. It was my job (and my honor) to see raw potential in every young person put before me and to help them get on a life track that could lead them to greatness. It is satisfying to me when I hear of a former student, one

I taught when they were in elementary school, who are now professionals living highly productive lives.

I have the same view about our writers. We do have writers at all levels. Everyone starts at the bottom. But this is why we have a writing community. It is why we have our YouTube channel, our teaching meetings, our programs, our book club meetings, our critique groups, our conferences, our newsletter, etc. We are all heading in the same direction—toward improvement, toward the ideal of becoming professional writers who are recognized for our hard-earned professionalism and high-quality products.

If you are feeling lost or that you are faking it, if you are doubting that you will ever be seen as a real author, take heart. Everyone starts at the bottom—even famous authors. It takes many years to develop any craft to a high level. You are not a poser in a group of posers. You are simply a writer who is on a path that will lead to excellence if you will stay the course, pay your dues, and devote yourself to continuous learning and improvement. Being a writer is a process, one that will take the rest of our lives.

Sail on! 🚢



The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot.

January Birthdays for 2024

Sheryl Thomas-Perkins	January 4
Rusty LaGrange	January 6
Angie Horn	January 8
Anita Holmes	January 9
Robert Young	January 18
Dwight Norris	January 22
Tom Foley	January 22

HDCWC Celebrates Christmas Plus

By Bob Isbill

The High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club celebrated the holiday season in a few ways which proved to be educational, fun, and interesting. HDCWC president Mike Apodaca open the meeting and introduced the Sunsationals, a singing and dancing group of Apple Valley High School students who performed in an outstanding fashion. The group, headed by Mr. Name, sang and danced their way through an hour-long program consisting of Christmas music and entertainment.



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The next part of the program was an explanation of Kwanzaa done by Joan Rudder-Ward, and a history of the menorah and what led to it in Jewish history done by Mike Apodaca.

Bill Lopez and Patty Hedges sang duets accompanied by Bill Lopez on his guitar. Mike Apodaca then joined Bill Lopez to do guitar duets, which was a lot of fun.

Intermission consisted of holiday treats furnished by Rita Wells and a book exchange conducted by Jenny Margotta. The program culminated in another wonderfully successful meeting by the branch. 🚢





Christmas at Our House

**Drinks in tall glasses that sparkle and ring,
roasts and stuffing, potatoes and beans.**

**Candies and cookies, pies and cakes,
firsts and seconds till stomachs ache.**

**Gifts are opened, more food consumed,
carols are blaring in every room.**

**Teens watch hard rock, men prefer games,
The women gab 'bout fashion 'n fame.**

**Lively preteens skated and fought,
Grandma fidgeted, directed and bossed.**

**Family squabbles, common each year,
a part of life, with those held dear.**

**Big hugs and kisses were shared all around,
wishes for a brilliant New Year abound.**

**The clan has gone, the house is thrashed,
the dishes are scraped, some glasses smashed.**

**No deaths or births, a good year in sight.
another year passes, to all a Good Night!**

-- Hazel Stearns

Extending the Season . . .

By J P Garner



I'm distressed by the passing of Christmas. Not depressed but missing it already. Sadly, it comes but once each year. We celebrate it in many ways, and in the best place of all: our hearts. We gathered in homes and churches, town squares and city halls, and schools and shopping malls. We walked briskly from store to store, looking for the perfect gift when the perfect gift is the time we give . . . the time we spend with each other.

Is there a better way?

It is the season to give and remember. The season to pray . . . and forgive. No greater gifts are there, I think—no better acts of love. We should grab those feelings and hold tightly to them because they are, quite simply, the gifts that should be given each day in the coming year. Time and forgiveness. They are the gifts most needed because we are all broken in some way . . . all flawed. We heal best when we come together, and we are healed when we are forgiven.

Hoo-ah!



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 2024.

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Quote of the Month

By Michael Raff

"What I like in a good author isn't what he says,
but what he whispers."

- Logan Pearsall Smith, essayist

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Take advantage of your membership benefits

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- To find out more, contact a board member or Roberta Smith, our webmaster.

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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.

909-222-8812

