



The INKSLINGER

Sail On



HIGH DESERT BRANCH CWC
INSPIRING A COMMUNITY OF WRITERS
NOVEMBER 2023



FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Mike Apodaca

DON'T BE A LONER WRITER

Writers can easily become reclusive, shutting themselves off from others in order to get their writing done. When we take into account all the research, drafts, editing, critiques, publishing, and promotion

(social media, newsletters, website) that go into writing, it can be all-consuming. This can cause us to shut ourselves up in our own mental worlds for the sake of getting out the next project(s).

With this pressure, it is easy to see how our circles of friends and family would shrink, perhaps even disappearing altogether.

I have found it very important to prioritize my relationships above my writing. This is especially true of my marriage (Debi and I just celebrated 40 years). Good marriages are the result of time and a big dose of intentionality—they are strategically built. They do not happen by accident.

Second, I try to stay connected to my extended family. We do a weekly Zoom meeting to keep in touch. I make phone calls and we have family gatherings every month or so. We also go on vacation together every year.


Beyond this, I spend time nurturing my relationships in our writing club. I hang out with members at Corky's, drinking coffee and sharing stories. I also attend the Wednesday Zoom check-in, a place where I have developed some good friendships. Then there is my critique group, where I can share my writing, mistakes and all, while talking and laughing with trusted comrades. Finally, I get to see my writing friends at all our regular meetings.

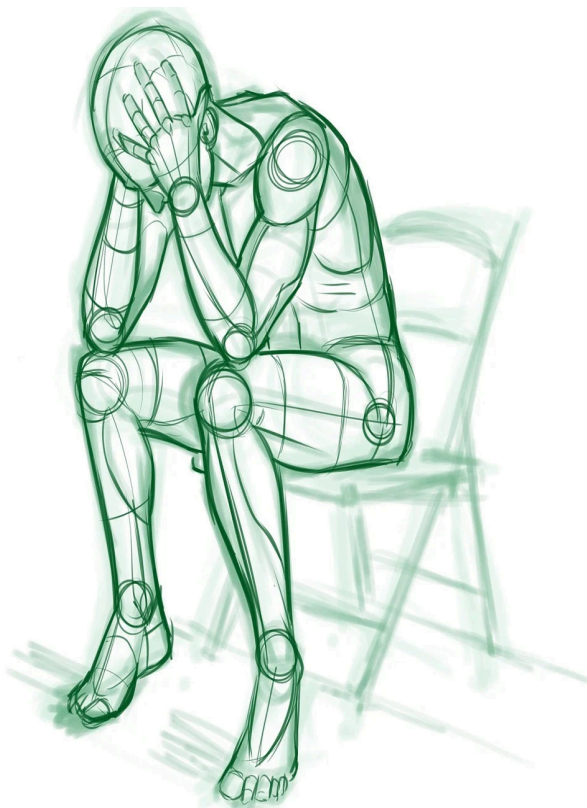
Now why is all this so important?

Because you never know when you are going to need the support of family and friends. Life happens to us when our guard is down. It has been two weeks since my mom passed

away. She had been infirmed for some time. It was not unusual to have members of the club ask me how my mom was doing. When she passed, I received wonderful support from our club. Members sent me lovely cards. Losing my mom has been an unspeakable loss. But having a community of support and love around me has made all the difference. Thank you all for your friendship.

No matter how famous you become, no matter how strong the pull is to shut yourself up in a writing cocoon, my advice is to make your relationships your priority. Your books and stories will not comfort you in dark times. Your friends will.

I am thankful for you all. 



IN MEMORY OF JUDI ISBILL

The family of Judi Isbill is sad to announce that Judi passed away on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, in Apple Valley after long illnesses.

She was an enthusiastic supporter of the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club and worked behind the scenes to help plan special events and design flyers for the club. She was excited about buying the books written by the members and reading them.

A celebration of her life is planned for Monday, November 20, 2023, at 11:30 AM at the First Assembly of God church 21811 Ottawa Road in Apple Valley California.



FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Joan Rudder-Ward



WHAT'S OUTSIDE YOUR WINDOW?

Last month I talked about the benefits of contemplative photography and how you can use it to take your “seeing” to another level. Here is another exercise if you’re willing to take the challenge: Observe and photograph what is outside a window in your home or office, using these parameters.

Set aside time: Allocate a specific time for this contemplative practice. Ensure you won't be rushed or distracted during this time.

Find a comfortable spot: Choose a comfortable chair or location near the window where you can sit or stand without any distractions.

Mindful breathing: Start by taking a few deep breaths to calm your mind and focus your attention on the present moment. This helps to clear your mind of clutter.

Observation: Look out the window with an open and curious mind. Try to see as if you are seeing the view for the very first time.

Ask yourself questions:

What do you see? Begin by describing the obvious physical details: buildings, trees, people, animals, or anything that catches your eye.

What do you hear? Pay attention to any sounds from outside. Is it the chirping of birds, the hum of traffic, or the wind rustling leaves?

What do you smell? Notice any scents that may be present. This can be especially relevant if your window overlooks a garden or natural area.

How has it changed? Reflect on how the view has changed over time. Are there seasonal changes, different times of the day, or other transformations you've observed?

What emotions arise? Contemplate how the view makes you feel. Is there a sense of peace, nostalgia, inspiration, or any other emotion?

What stories can you create? Let your imagination wander. Create stories or narratives about what you see. This can help you see the familiar in a new light.

Be in the moment: Try to be fully present and avoid drifting into thinking about other things.

Gratitude: Consider what you are grateful for in this view. What aspects of it do you appreciate the most?

Record your thoughts: In your journal and post photo(s) there, as well. This can help you track changes in your perspective and appreciation over time.

Looking through one of the bedroom windows of my home, I see trees that I planted, and one I did not.




(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

The center tree is commonly known as a creosote bush. These things pop up, unannounced, uninvited, and in my case, unwanted. I don't care for them as part of my landscape.

I would have cut this bush down when I first noticed it growing (it appeared about 5 years ago). Only problem—it's technically rooted on the other side of the fence on the neighbor's property. I asked the tenant who was living there at the time if she wanted us to cut it down. She said no... she rather liked it. Drat!

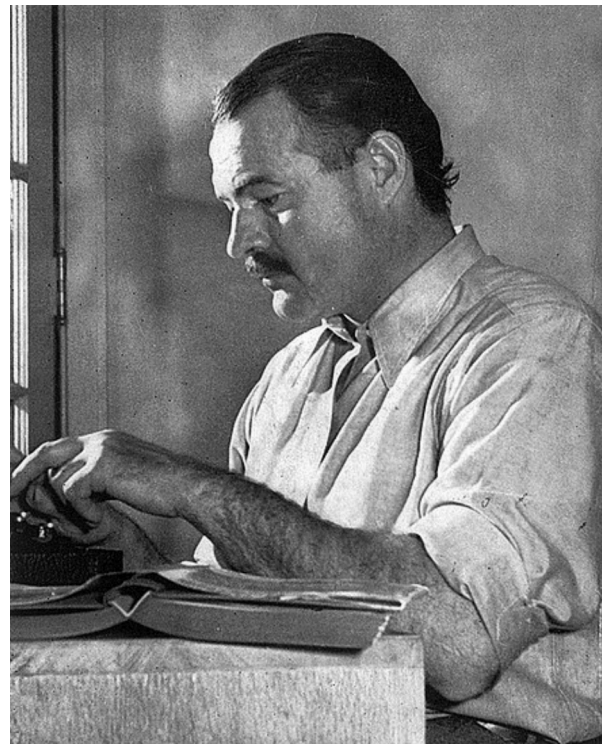
And so it stayed. And grew. And spread through our fence. And eventually provided something I had been wanting for some time. Privacy. It became a shield—providing privacy from street traffic.

Ever had anything like that happen? Something that you didn't want, that became the thing you needec 

“All good books are alike in that they are truer than if they had really happened and after you are finished reading one you will feel that all that happened to you and afterwards it all belongs to you: the good and the bad, the ecstasy, the remorse and sorrow, the people and the places and how the weather was. If you can get so that you can give that to

people, then you are a writer.”

— Ernest Hemingway



BIRTHDAYS FOR NOVEMBER

Ann Miner November 10

Katina Newell November 13

ADJUST ME LORD

By Lynn Denise Puckett



Dear Lord...
Hear my prayer
Change my attitude so I do care.
Dear Lord...
I know you're real;
Just help me be more sincere.
Dear Lord
I am so angry
Why can't I see the warmth of you're
Blankee?
Dear Lord...
I am so spoiled
That I can't see....
All that you have provided
For ME!
Dear Lord...
I am so pissed
I want, I want, I want
All that I have missed...
Dear Lord...
It hurts so much that I you test my
soul
Do I forgive all that is untold?

Dear Lord...
I surrender, surely I
do
Just know that you
made it so hard to
get through...
Dear Lord...
Bully for you, where
is your kindness?
My heart is limited
to your design..ness.
So really are you such a kind hearted
being?
For me right now , I vote NO, not
from what I am seeing!
Dear Lord...
I am in your kitchen, just trying so
hard
to find the one last supper;
So do I walk the streets just to eat?
Dear Lord...
I want to love you... I got that lesson,
Just tell me what I am missing?
My heart is real,
the world's, not so much.
I want to care
But really WHERE is your touch?
Somewhere along the way I learned
to not trust
Not much to say after that much.
I know my bloodlines leads back to
you
So guess what?
You must come to my rescue!
Dear Lord...

Somewhere in my reach for your
heart, I messed up...
Because now, I need another fresh
start!
My heart and body are not in
alinement,
My soul is struggling so much
That all I see is darkness; no
kindness.
OH Crap! I thought I was a beautiful
soul---
But really I just did what I was told!
Dear Lord...
My question is this, for all that may
wonder
Seriously is this just one a big
blunder?
So sick is this world that we love to
fight
And then really we can't sleep at
night.
So "OH MY LORD" with all due
respect,
I think you need to help us more
And loosen the veil;
Because somewhere in this mess;
We are all doomed to hell.
Dear Lord...
We want to love you, surely we do;
We just can't seem to make it
through this thick cruel veil; that
supposedly reaches to you!



CONFLICT!


By Jenny Margotta

Conflict is defined as a struggle or a clash of interest, opinion, or principles. It can be exclusively internal or it may be external with any number of people, groups, or countries involved. When it comes to writing, conflict is the basic ingredient for every good story, the “secret sauce” if you will, that engages the reader and holds them until the very end—and often leaves them wanting more.

This key ingredient is the theme for *CONFLICT!*, an anthology of turmoil, the seventh bi-annual anthology offered by HDCWC, which will be debuted at our November 11th meeting.

Thirty-one branch members, ranging in age from twenty to one hundred, contributed forty-eight short stories, sixteen works of poetry, one stage play, and one screenplay that delve into the complex emotions and actions of beings dealing with conflict. The works are a combination of painful, tragic, sad, sometimes violent, sometimes uplifting events—both true and fictional. A few are even humorous.

We hope you find the results as creative, engaging, and memorable as the authors whose work is proudly presented in *CONFLICT!*, an anthology of turmoil. Along with debuting the anthology, the award-winning submissions will be announced and cash prizes will be awarded.

For one time only, at the meeting, the anthology will be \$10 each. After that, the book will sell for \$15—and even more on Amazon—so don't miss your chance to purchase plenty of copies at the meeting. They make great Christmas presents! 



"Read, read, read. Read everything – trash, classics, good and bad, and see how they do it. Just like a carpenter who works as an apprentice and studies the master. Read! You'll absorb it. Then write. If it's good, you'll find out. If it's not, throw it out of the window."

– William Faulkner

VOLUNTEER TO BE A JUROR IN THE SCHOLASTIC ARTS & WRITING AWARDS PROGRAM

By Jenny Margotta



Would you like to be part of a century-old, prestigious program that includes such notable authors as Joyce Carol Oates, Sylvia Plath, and Stephen King? Well, here's your chance. HDCWC is once again participating in the Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards program, and we need volunteers to join us as jurors. Bob Isbill has dubbed it our "blue ribbon panel," and it is definitely something you can be proud to be a part of.

For those who might not be familiar with the program, The Scholastic Arts & Writing Awards Program was founded in 1923 and, for more than a century, has "inspired bold ideas in creative teens throughout the country." (www.artandwriting.org) There were six applicants that first year and the prize money was a whopping \$5.00. Last year, there were 260,000 participating student artists and writers! A number of cash prizes and scholarships are awarded, including tuition for various summer writing programs and \$12,500 scholarships for Writing Portfolio winners. "Entries are selected for awards without knowledge of the student's gender, age, ethnicity, or hometown by some of the foremost leaders in the visual and literary arts." (www.artandwriting.org)

The program is open to 7th – 12th grade students in the United States and Canada, and writing categories include critical essay, dramatic script, flash fiction, humor, journalism, novel writing, personal essay and memoir, science fiction and fantasy, short story, poetry, and an all-inclusive category called writing portfolio. Poetry entries are part of the National Student Poets Program, the nation's highest honor for young poets (grades 10–11). Annually, five student poets are selected for one year of service, each representing a different geographic region of the country. National Student Poets act as youth poetry ambassadors, spreading poetry to their communities through individual service projects, April Poetry Month readings and workshops, and a variety of other opportunities, such as national poetry conferences, galas, and festivals.

Notable alumni of the Scholastic Arts and Writing Awards Program include:

Frances Farmer, 1931 Actress
Robert McCloskey, 1932 Author, Illustrator
Truman Capote, ca. 1936 Author
Maureen Daly, 1937–38 Author
Andy Warhol, ca. 1945 Artist
Sylvia Plath, 1947 Author, Poet
Edward Sorel, 1947 Artist
John Updike, 1948 Author
Alan Arkin, 1951 Actor
Robert Redford, 1954 Actor, Activist, Director
Joyce Carol Oates, 1956 Author
John Lithgow, 1963 Actor
Stephen King, 1965 Author
Ken Burns, 1971 Director, Producer



Jurors do not critique the works and there is no communication between writers and jurors. Participating jurors are tasked with identifying works that exemplify the Awards' core values: originality, skill, and the emergence of a personal voice or vision. Works are then scored from 1 to 10 based on criteria provided in an easy-to-follow rubric.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Judging will probably start in late December after Christmas and end in mid-January. The average number of hours is generally 15 to 20 hours per judge. Join us this year to be part of a prestigious group of jurors that include such notables as Robert Frost, Langston Hughes, William Saroyan, and Judy Blume.

For our efforts, the club is paid \$2,000. So not only are you a part of a wonderful program that supports, encourages, and awards emerging writing talent among our young people today, but you are supporting HDCWC. The stipend we receive each year helps the club fund all the local programs and events we offer each month.

To become a volunteer juror, please contact me at jennymargotta@mail.com or Mike Apodaca at MrDaca.ma@gmail.com. Or see me at the November meeting. We will be offering a comprehensive training session via Zoom in late November for all the jurors.

Step up and support the latest generation of writers. 

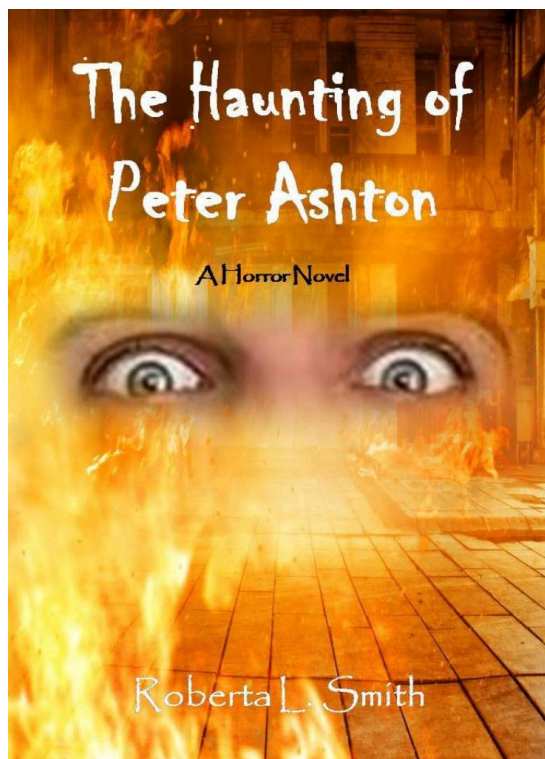


ROBERTA SMITH PLACES AS A FINALIST IN THE 2023 AMERICAN FICTION AWARDS



American Book Fest has announced the winners and finalists of the 2023 American Fiction Awards. Roberta Smith's latest novel, *The Haunting of Peter Ashton*, placed as a finalist in the Horror: Paranormal/Supernatural genre. The novel is a suspenseful psychological horror tale set in modern-day Los Angeles that is part chilling crime drama, part supernatural thriller. Winners and finalists were announced in over 70 genre specific categories. Awards were presented for titles published in 2021-2023. All finalists were listed alphabetically and have equal merit.

Roberta has been a member of the HDCWC for fifteen years and has served the club in various capacities including as vice president and membership chair. She currently maintains the club's website. She is the author of seven novels, two books of short stories, a non-fiction book about her two-times great grandfather's experience in the American Civil War, and one children's book. Her YA novel, *Simone's Ghosts* was the Grand Prize winner of the 2017 Hollywood Book Festival contest.





WRITERS ARE READERS

BOOK REVIEWS

By Mary Langer Thompson

CALLED TO PERSEVERE: ONE MAN'S JOURNEY TO OVERCOME PAIN, DISEASE AND DISAPPOINTMENT WITH GOD

By Dane Davis

This memoir of High Desert resident Allan Schwartz will inspire you to persevere, no matter what you are dealing with physically, emotionally or spiritually. Holly La Pat wrote Schwartz's story for the *Daily Press* in 2010 and again in 2022 when his book came out. I ordered the book on Amazon and then found a copy on the Mustard Seed bookstore's local authors' shelf started at the suggestion of our own Ann Miner.

Allan Schwartz has a rare spinal disease that changed his life dramatically. Author Dane Davis first met Allan in 2009 when Allan was already in a wheelchair. From the age of 3, he had played organized sports beginning with soccer, then baseball, swimming, volleyball, and roller hockey, excelling in all of them. School, however, was a struggle, and he was diagnosed early with ADHD. His mother got involved volunteering in his school to help in any way she could, not knowing at the time she would have to help him fight for his life later. Looking forward to sports at recess and after school, however, helped Allan persevere through his classes.

Allan always had the support of his close-knit family and friends, including Bruce, whom he met in the hospital, and grumpy "Old Ed." That support and his faith would prove to be crucial when his physical pain started in his senior year at Apple Valley Christian High School when Allan broke his left wrist in a fall while playing basketball at lunchtime. After six weeks off the courts, his back began to hurt, then his legs. His parents took him to several doctors and, after surgery, he was able to cross the stage to receive his high school diploma at AVCS. He thought he was on his way to recovery.

His symptoms and pain (10 on a scale of 1-10) became so bad Allan didn't think he would reach his 20th birthday. After many medical procedures, more pain and either no diagnosis or wrong diagnoses followed. The author does not downplay negative experiences at renowned hospitals and with Allan's doctors.

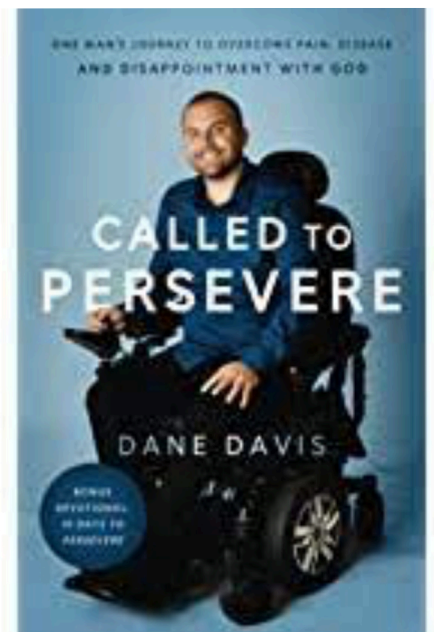
Allan was 20 years old and the youngest patient to be diagnosed with the disease, arachnoiditis, a rare, incurable illness causing inflammation of the arachnoid layer of the membrane surrounding the spinal cord and brain. Although relieved there was finally a diagnosis, hearing there was no cure and, that if the disease traveled to the brain, death could occur was another devastating blow to Allan and those who cared about him. Everyone felt helpless.

Read about Allan's encounter with God and how his parents, despite economic problems and problems within their marriage, found a German neurosurgeon who was the world's leading expert on arachnoiditis and had perfected a surgical spinal surgery that, although not a cure, would help ease pain and increase mobility. Dr. Warnke agreed to perform the surgery free of charge.

But like the plot of a movie or novel, even after the trip to Germany and surgery, Allan had to return to a wheelchair. He had reached his lowest point on this "medical roller coaster ride." Once again his mom searched and found the Hansa Center but then learned it would cost \$20,000 for a 2-week stay, money the family could not afford.

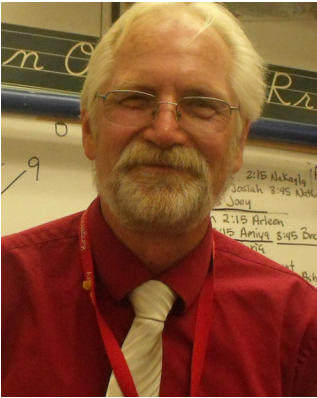
Then Allan went to work. Find out how Tom Carpino, owner of Mama Carpino's Italian Restaurant in Apple Valley, held a fundraiser dinner that sent Allan on his way to the Hansa Center, a center for alternative medicine in Wichita, Kansas.

Further incidents and struggles led to what Allan and his family and church believed were miracles to bring Allan to where he is today—a man with a wife and family (the doctors said he couldn't have children), and a career as a motivational speaker and conference organizer. I recently met Allan at his second Perseverance Conference at Town's End in Apple Valley. I stood in line to have Allan sign my book. This inspirational young man in a wheelchair was interested in my life and my story. I conclude his life is truly a miracle and a captivating story you'll want to read. 🚤



A STRUCTURAL CHANGE: WAGON WHEEL

By Mike Apodaca



Although we rarely realize it, we are all forced into patterns of behavior by the structures we create. When we build a house, the floorplan will determine how space is maximized. City planners map our transportation systems (roads, railways, etc.) that determine where we can travel. Structure can often set limits that we are not aware of. Changes in structure can also open up new utility.

I recently restrung my guitar. I use a little plastic crank tool that spins the guitar tuning pegs faster. What I didn't realize until I used it this time was that there is also a curved cut-out at the end of the tool that can be used to pop out the bridge pins. It works great! Restringing my guitar just became much easier.

In the same way, structural adjustments will need to be made from time to time to make sure our branch is working at maximum efficiency.

Looking at the writing world, there are two main parts: Writing and publishing. Our branch has tried to focus on both, but I think we can do better with the publishing side of things. Here's what I am proposing.

I'd like to see some new groups developed in our branch. These groups would be formed to a particular target market. For instance, I would like to see Joan Rudder-Ward reach her vision for a youth group in the HDCWC. The new model would go something like this:

The entire group meets together every two weeks at an agreed upon time and place. This can be on Zoom or in person. Each member will bring one thing (at least) that they recently learned about publishing. They may have a magazine that is taking submissions or a publisher or agent that is looking for new clients. In the second part of the meeting members would break up into their critique groups. If there are sixteen students who show up to a meeting, they would meet in four or five pre-established groups. These groups would critique submissions turned in the week before. The cycle is—meet one week, submit the next, and then meet again.

This new model will help fill the need we all have to learn where we can send our books, poems, stories, and articles. I'd like to launch this new structure in the new year. This gives us some time to plan and communicate with each other. I'd like to start with a youth group, a short story group, a new poetry group (for less experienced poets), and a group for those who write to a Christian audience. Other groups can also be launched at any time (writing in Spanish, memoir, Hindu, horror, etc.). We will still meet as a whole branch in many venues. This new venture will be an addition.

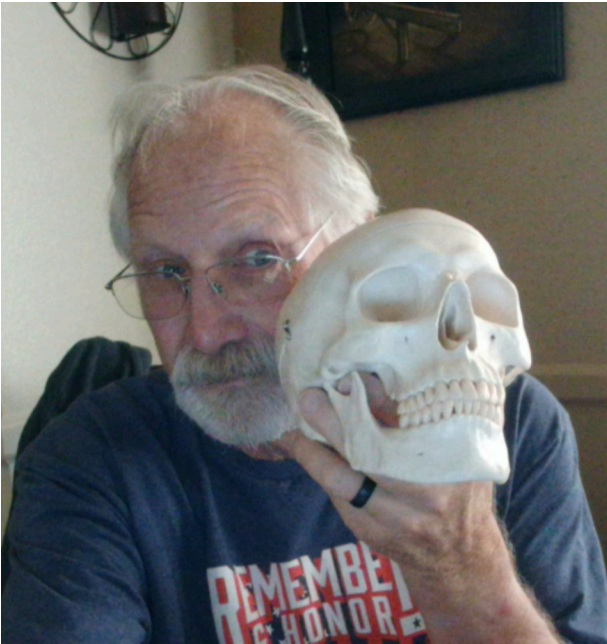
I'm calling this new structure, The Wagon Wheel. The hub is the general meeting while the spokes represent the critique groups. Hopefully, this will get more of our members published.

The wheel changed human history. Hopefully, it will be just the thing for us as well. Please give it a try. 🚢



SKULLS CAN TEACH US ABOUT STORYTELLING

By Mike Apodaca



I've always been enamored by skulls. I have a collection that includes skulls from big horn sheep, beavers, and many other smaller animals. Each skull tells the story of the animal it was from. The type of teeth tell you what it ate. The shape of the head, how the creature stands, how it views the world, and how it defends itself against its enemies can all be seen in the skull. Each of these elements align with good storytelling.


The shape of the head. It's easy to tell what animal a skull came from. A bird skull is different from a lion's skull. Both are different from an alligator skull. A skull provides the infrastructure to the head in the same way that an overriding genre provides the underlying shape of our stories. A romance will be different from a mystery. Knowing our genres well helps us to give a shape to our story that our readers will recognize.

How the creature stands. Animals that stand erect have the hole for their spinal cord at the base of the skull. Creatures that stand on four legs have the hole in the back of the skull. The placement of this hole determines the trajectory of the spinal cord, the key to the direction of the nervous system. In the same way, writers must decide how their stories will stand structurally, how this amazing feedback loop will be set up. Will the structure be linear (events following one after another) or cyclonic (a swirling story that gets increasingly more intense)? Will there be flashbacks? How will the story stand?

How the creature sees. The placement of the eye sockets is essential to sight. Some birds have large eye sockets on the sides of their skulls with complicated muscle structures that allow them a nearly 360 degree perspective. Other creatures have smaller eyes in the front of their skulls and must constantly turn their heads to get a bead on their environment. Some owls can turn their heads all the way around. In the same way, the writer must decide the POV that will determine what the reader can see in their story. If an omniscient point of view is chosen, then all can be seen. If it's written in third person, then multiple perspectives can add vision to the story. But if it is first person, then everything depends on where the main character's line of sight is at any particular moment. They will miss a lot. But that can also add to the story.

Defense against enemies. The different parts of skulls have different thicknesses. Human foreheads tend to be thick (something I personally appreciate), while the bones of birds are extremely porous and light to aid with flight. Bones not only provide structure, they also protect vital organs like the brain, heart, and lungs. In the same way, every story must have a threat that is met by the strengths of the hero, or protagonist. The protagonist must protect vulnerabilities in himself or in another character or both.

Most importantly, skulls are organic. Bones undergo a constant process of removing older material and adding new. This keeps bone fresh and strong. In the same way, we edit our stories, removing flaws and strengthening all aspects of our tales.

Skulls can be seen as a metaphor for writing, sharing some of the same elements. We can learn a lot from observing the world around us, seeing metaphors and parallel relationships. We grow as writers as we learn to see our writing with fresh eyes. Try it. You may be surprised. 

A November Salon!
Tuesday November 21 at 3:00 p.m.



The November Salon at Richard Zone's place on Tuesday, the 21st, from 3:00-5:00 will be a fun, social gathering. A special cast will perform an amazing 1-Act radio play set in the United States in 1943. Complete with sound effects and a cold-reading- it's bound to be an intriguing, fun afternoon.

Please let Richard know right away that you'll joining us to maybe be a player or just to watch and listen as seating is limited. Munchies will be there as always, too! Oh, and please let Freddi know if you'd really like a part in the show, too! (freddigold3@gmail.com).

Space is limited so reserve your spot soon!

Contact:

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

"From now on, ending a sentence with a preposition is something up with which I will not put."

- Winston Churchill



UNRAVELING THE MYSTERIES OF SOCIAL MEDIA WITH BETSY

By Mike Apodaca

From time to time we will have a Saturday morning meeting where we will Zoom someone special, someone we could never get to fly across the country to join us for a meeting. Saturday, October 14th, we had the delightful Betsy Ashton join us from Virginia. Betsy is a very accomplished and experienced author who shared with us her strategies with writing and social media.

Betsy's main points were:

Use social media as a means to connect with your readers. It is just a tool. Use the platforms you want to use. Find out where your audience is and go there. You can also connect with other writers, especially in your genre.

Set up a schedule. Allocate your time strategically. Allow about six weeks for a book launch. Create ads for yourself on YouTube where you read a little of your book and then send them to your Amazon page. Stay away from paying for social media ads.

Be engaged. Betsy does a blog and a newsletter. She posts on Facebook every day and often on Instagram. She encourages all the things we are already doing in our club (our On-Topic Speakers bureau, the Town's End book selling opportunity, the anthology, our social meetings, etc.). Betsy encouraged us to take a closer look at Linked-in, saying it is becoming a place for professionals to connect with each other.

Betsy took questions from our audience and was very candid with us. She explained that being a writer is a lot of work. When Rusty LaGrange asked her about her own writing, Betsy explained that she began with a traditional agent and publisher, but she has recently turned to self-publishing. She found that she was doing all the promotional work anyway, so why give an agent and publishing house a big chunk of the profits. Rusty made the observation that this is the opposite of what most writers do.

Finally, Betsy explained where she got the nickname, Buckshot Betsy. It's a great story, but you will have to watch the video on YouTube to hear her tell it. The recording of our session should be posted shortly—Thank you, Joan Rudder-Ward!

Betsy Ashton can be reached at <http://betyashton.com>.

You can subscribe to her newsletter on her website.

Her email is betsy_ashton2005@yahoo.com

Snail mail address:

Betsy Ashton

202 Minton Cir.

Moneta, VA 24121



WRITERS OF THE ROUNDTABLE AT CORKY'S RESTAURANT



We meet the first Friday of each month from 8:00 to 10:00

Every Thursday thereafter from 8:00 to 10:00

Senior specials and veteran discounts are available

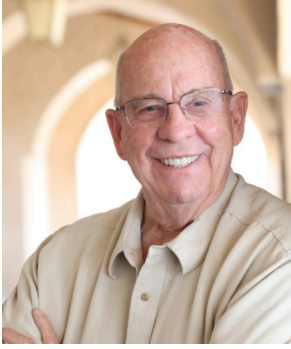
Come join us for good food, good friends, and lots of talk about that which we love the best: writing

Questions? Contact John Paul Garner at:

oksooner92311@gmail.com

HIGH DESERT BRANCH TO HOST OUTSTANDING MEMOIR MEETING FOR THE CWC

By Bob Isbill



In the tradition of past Zoom meetings featuring Chris Vogler (*The Hero's Journey*), Dean Koontz (*The Big Dark Sky*), and John Truby (*Anatomy of Genres*) the high Desert branch will present another outstanding writer on the topic of memoirs scheduled for January 30, 2024.

Al Watt's new book, *the 90-day-memoir*, will be published and available on December 1, 2023.

We are encouraging CWC members to buy the book and become familiar with it so that when Al


Watt joins us on a Zoom meeting on Tuesday, January 30, 2024 from 6 to 7 PM, you will be able to

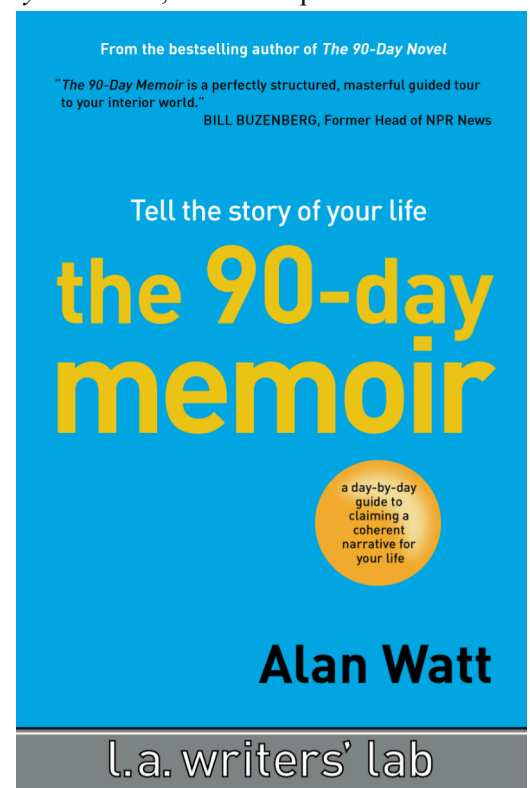
follow and ask your question about his teachings on memoir. This "book club meetings" format has proven to be very popular with the entire state's membership of the CWC. If you ever plan to write a memoir, now is the time to investigate those possibilities through *the 90-day-memoir*. In addition, for anyone who buys the book and shows proof of sale, Al Watt will send them a free e-copy of *My First Novel*—a book of essays that he edited and published, written by 25 published authors, including memoirists Cheryl Strayed, Jerry Stahl and Merrill Markoe. After our January meeting, we encourage you to follow Mr. Watt's strategies and write your memoir in ninety days. Then, in June, we plan to have Al Watt back for a debrief meeting where you can share with him your experience and get some more advice.



Alan Watt is the *L.A. Times* bestselling author of the novels *Diamond Dogs* and *Days Are Gone*, and the recipient of the American Library Association's Alex Award, a Book Sense pick, a *New York Times*'s New and Noteworthy book pick, and winner of France's Prix Printemps for best foreign novel of the year. Along with the national bestseller, *The 90-Day Novel*®, (Amazon's #1 book on writing for five months).

The LA Writer's Lab has published five other books on writing. Alan teaches a process of marrying the wildness of your imagination to the rigor of structure, and his students span the range from first-time writers to best-selling authors and filmmakers who've won numerous accolades for their work including the Pulitzer Prize.

For more information about Al Watt, visit www.lawriterslab.com. You will be notified of the Zoom link and specific details prior to the event on January 30, 2024. Do not miss this outstanding teacher and writer with an up close and personal interview at that event. 



A NEW CRITIQUE GROUP

By John Paul Garner

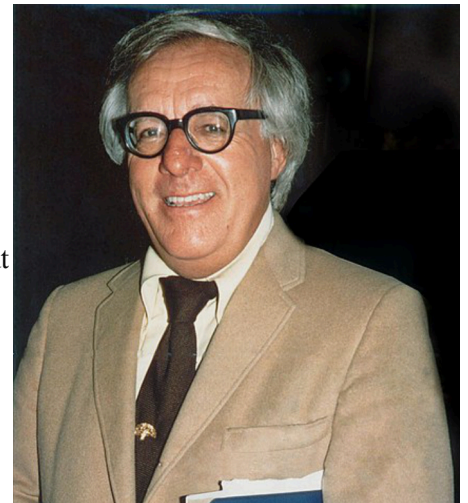


A great idea! Start a short story critique group that not only eyeballs stories but gets stuff published. The group—consisting of four writers: two men and two women—would meet every two weeks and, at the end of the month, supply each other with places where their stories should be submitted for publication. Then, at year's end, they will select the best stories from those submitted to the group for inclusion in an anthology to be published by KDP.

We thought the group should be called The Bradbury Group because of the famous writer's penchant for writing short stories. Bradbury once said if you wrote a short story each week, you'd have 52 at year's end. Certainly, one of them would be good enough to be published. We're thinking we can do that.

So, starting in February, we'd like to add The Bradbury Group to the club's offerings. If you're interested in joining us, please reach out to me at oksooner92311@gmail.com. Once we are formed, we can sort out the details about where we'll meet. We're interested in flash fiction stories with a maximum of 1,000 words and short stories of about 2,500-3,000 words.

It's not enough to write. The goal should be to publish.



WELCOME NEW MEMBERS!

By Michael Raff - Membership Chairman

Mary Waters

Meera Maheswaran

Debbie J. Bennett

Chatherine Blevins

Philip Vondra

Barbara Grayson

Kassidy Ridenour

Elizabeth Aguilar

Lillian Brown

Currently our branch has 96 members!

DWIGHT AND MIKE HIT THE ROAD—AGAIN!

By Mike Apodaca

Each year our terrific club partners with the Alliance for Young Writers and Artists for the Scholastic Arts and writing Awards. This is a contest where junior high and high school students can submit writing and art to win prizes which include scholarships. It also looks great on a resume. Dwight and I do a tour each year of the local junior high and high schools to let them know about the program. Here are just a few of our pictures of our special day to get the word out. Contact Jenny Margotta today to become a Scholastic judge.



**MIKE AND DWIGHT
HIT THE ROAD**





THE MOST FAMOUS AUTHORS OF ALL TIME

By Michael Raff

STEPHEN KING – PART II

In 1975, King and his family returned to Maine and he started working on his next book, *The Stand*, an apocalyptic tale about a deadly pandemic and its aftermath. King has stated that *The Stand* took him longer to write than any other book and, “the one (book) my longtime readers still seem to like the best.”

By 1977, King began teaching creative writing at the University of Maine. Beginning in 1979, he wrote a string of successful books including: *The Dead Zone*, *Danse Macabre*, (non-fiction), *Different Seasons*, (a collection of four novellas), and *Cujo*. Wanting to “bring on all the monsters

one last time,” he wrote It.

During this time, King became addicted to alcohol, cocaine, Xanax, Valium, and other drugs. His addiction became so severe, he claims he doesn’t remember writing *Cujo*. Having had enough, his wife held an intervention with several others, and King decide to seek treatment. Since recovering, he has remained drug free.

Starting in 1987, King began incorporating glimpses of his substance abuse into his writing. Annie Wilkes the female antagonist in *Misery*, symbolizes his many addictions. The protagonist in *Tommyknockers*, was a struggling alcoholic. Over the course of the next four decades, starting with *The Dark Tower: The Gunslinger*, King penned an eight book series.

On June 19, 1999, 4:30 PM, while taking a walk on the shoulder of Main’s State Route 5, King was struck by a driver distracted by the dog in his van. King suffered a collapsed right lung, multiple fractures of his right leg, a scalp laceration, and a broken right hip. The attending surgeon seriously considered amputating King’s right leg. After five surgeries and ten days in physical therapy, King was sent home. The driver of the van was arrested, convicted of aggravated assault, and served six months, (suspended).

Understandably, the brush with death made King reflect on his life. His next work, *On Writing*, published in 2000, was a mixture of memoir and, according to the *Wall Street Journal*, “a one-of-a-kind classic” on writing.

Since then, King has written one after another best-selling novels, including *The Green Mile*, *Under the Dome* and the *Mr. Mercedes* trilogy.

I began reading Stephen King’s books in 1976 with *Salem’s Lot*. One night while I was reading a frightening scene in *Salem’s Lot*, my cat at the foot of the bed began hissing and howling at the open doorway. Terrified with every step I took, I decided to investigate. As it turned out, a stray cat had wandered in through an open window. I was immediately hooked. To this day, *Salem’s Lot* is one of my favorite novels. I have read 32 of King’s books and currently working on the 33rd. Thus far, he has published 65 novels, 11 anthologies, 5 non-fictional books, and written 21 screenplays.

King’s story ideas often begin with a “What if” scenario. He has stated: “Stories are like found things, like fossils in the ground.”

FUN FACTS ABOUT STEPHEN KING

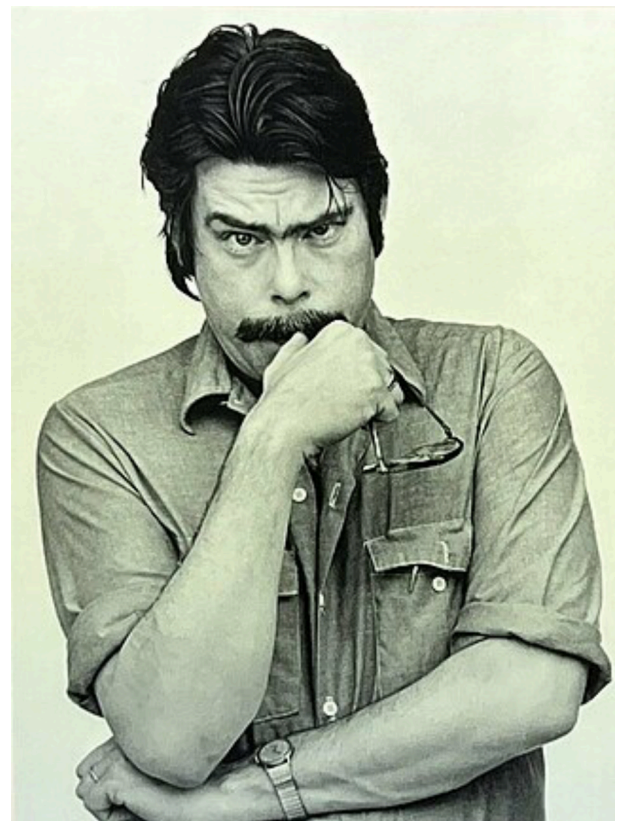
Castle Rock, the fictional setting of many of King’s books, is named after the mountain in *Lord of the Flies*.

King played guitar with the band Rock Bottom Reminders.

He has collaborated on several books, including *The Talisman* and *Black House* with Peter Straub.

Along with John Mellencamp, he wrote the song, “Ghost Brothers of Darkland County.”

(Continued on page 18)



(Continued from page 17)

Joyce Carol Oates called King, “Both a storyteller and an inventor of startling images and metaphors, which linger long in the memory.”

The van that nearly killed King was purchased by his lawyer and two others to prevent it from being sold on eBay. It was later taken to a junkyard and crushed.

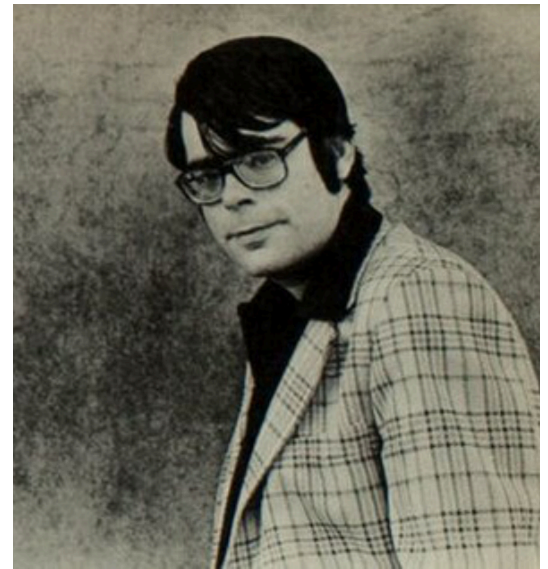
King donates about 4 million dollars a year to libraries and fire departments.

He has written over 200 short stories.

Over the years, King’s books have sold over 400 million copies,

King writes 3 – 7 books a year, and at least 2,000 words a day.

Until next month, keep writing, keep reading and give Stephen King a try. 🚩

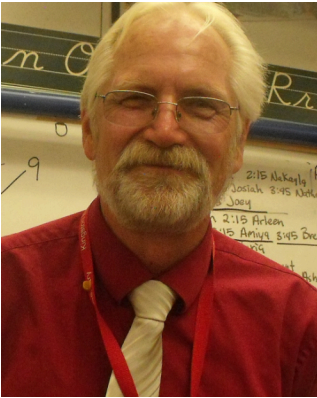


Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.
— Voltaire



ON-TOPIC SPEAKING AT THE APPLE VALLEY LIBRARY

By Mike Apodaca



Jim Grayson had a terrific idea. We have the On-Topic Speakers program (ontopicspeakers.com) where people looking to fill their programs can peruse our many speakers and the topics they are able to present on. But where is the support for these speakers? How are we helping them improve the quality of their messages?

Jim decided to do something. He called a meeting with the leadership of the club and came up with a plan. Jim worked with Bob Isbill to secure the Apple Valley Library to provide a room once a month for our speakers. He then developed an evaluation sheet for listeners to use in giving feedback to the speakers.

On September 6th Jim Grayson and Joan Rudder-Ward spoke


On October 4th, Dwight Norris and I spoke. It was a blast!

Dwight shared what he has learned from his studies for the book he is writing about the life of Saint Paul. He read part of his manuscript (so well written and researched!).

I spoke second. Sharing with the group helped me to review my material, to connect with an audience, to get over the fear of standing in front of people, and to practice the basics of presentation (eye contact, timing, using gestures and facial expressions, etc.). Finally, the experience helped me to evaluate the power and relevance of my message.

We even had one visitor who is thinking of joining the club because she came to hear our presentations. What an unexpected benefit to Jim's program.

I write this to encourage all who are part of the On-Topic program to contact Jim Grayson and get on the schedule so that you can practice your presentations. If you are a member of the club and are not yet in the On-Topic program, please consider joining. Authors do not become famous sitting in their basements—not any more. Authors are recognized because they are out doing speaking engagements, managing promotional websites, and using social media. We want to help you do all this.

If you are not in the On-Topic program, go to the website (ontopicspeakers.com) and imagine your page and the topics you could present on. Relate them to your passions and your writing. You have something to say, get out there and say it. 



HISPANIC HERITAGE CELEBRATION OCTOBER 5TH

By Mike Apodaca



This was the second year our High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club, led by Mary Langer Thompson, honored Hispanic Heritage Month with a celebration at the Hesperia Public Library. This year, however, we did something different. We partnered with an organization in our

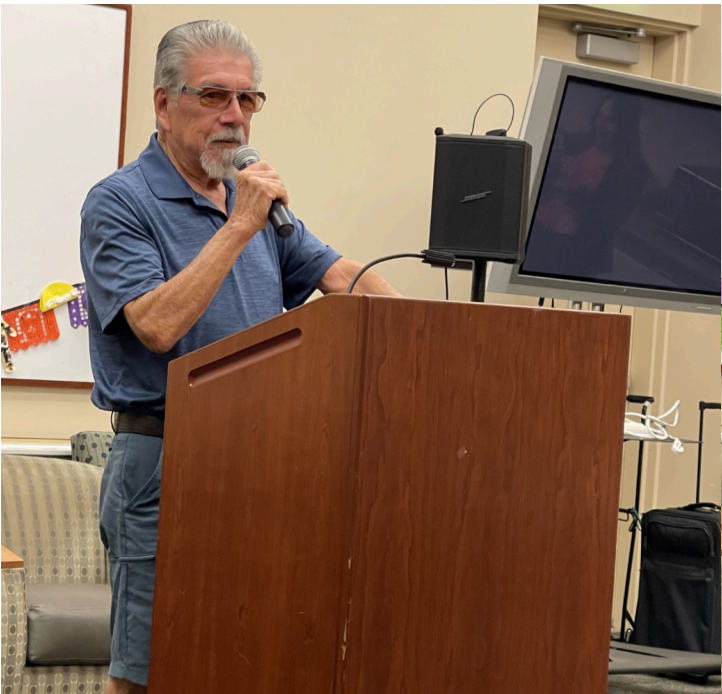
community with a vested interest in promoting Hispanics—the Hesperia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce. I called the president of the Chamber, Iris Gutierrez, a local business woman, who was excited about partnering with us.

Our evening began with Mary Langer Thompson welcoming everyone and introducing Luis Fuerte, one of our favorite speakers. Luis spoke about his career and some of the prejudice he experienced as the first Latino hired to work at his television station. Luis was never bitter or angry with his treatment. He always let his work do his talking.

After Luis, Iris Gutierrez spoke. She expressed her excitement over the partnership forged with the writing club. She also talked about the Chamber and the terrific work that they are doing in this community. Mostly, she talked about the importance of networking.

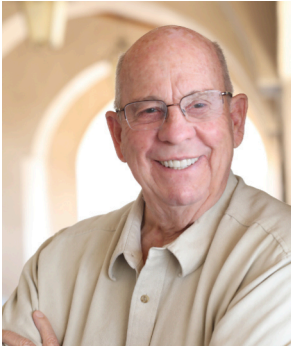
Our own Bill Lopez was next. He shared with us three songs—I have never heard him sound better. I didn't want him to stop.

During our break, we were treated to food that came from the La Fiesta restaurant in Apple Valley. There was so much food! I ate taquitos, quesadillas, and hot wings. Delicious! I licked my fingers, so thankful that Elizabeth Aguilar, an ambassador for the Chamber, had secured the food for us. 



MIKE APODACA AND OTHERS HONORED AT STATE AWARDS EVENT

By Bob Isbill



The CWC honored Jack London Award recipients from 22 branches on Sunday, October 22nd at the Holiday Inn in Oakland California, and three special awards of the Ina Coolbrith service award. Those attending were given a great lunch in a semi-formal atmosphere and entertained with a slide show about the evolution of the many branches. Thanks go to Joyce Krieg, who coordinated the event, and to our state president, Roger Lubeck.

Our HDCWC president, Mike Apodaca, was one of those awardees. His wife, Debi, accompanied him to proudly watch as her husband received this once-in-a-lifetime honor. The recipients were given a distinctive plaque and a pin to commemorate the occasion.

The Jack London Award is a service award honoring outstanding service to the branch. The Ina Coolbrith Award is given to those providing outstanding service to the state organization, or Central Board.

As we in the High Desert Branch know, Mike has for several years gone above and beyond volunteerism to improve our branch. We can be enormously proud of him.



AN UNFORGETTABLE SCHOOL DAY IN NOVEMBER

By Bill Lopez



*A time to weep and a time to laugh;
A time to mourn and a time to dance.
Eccl. 3:4*

60 years later the now more than familiar places and names that we've all heard of over and over again, the Texas School Book Depository, Dealey Plaza, the grassy knoll, Elm Street, the Stemmons Parkway, and Parkland Hospital and of course Lee Harvey Oswald, we're all completely foreign and totally unknown to a child who was 9 years old. Unless that child happened to grow up in Dallas, Texas. But I grew up in Pomona, California so it was a different story that day.

Strange how the fall season takes place in California. The typical late November has always been a mix of crisp air, bright sunshine and colorful Autumn Leaves on trees preparing soon to drop them completely exchanging fall beauty for dull brown thin empty winter branches. That day, November 22, inside the classroom of Sister Mary Pacifica, at St Joseph's Elementary School in Pomona, 9-year-old students were busy at work and then soon preparing for lunch and an opportunity to play outside at recess. Each of us had on our uniforms required by the school dress code. All boys were dressed in brown corduroy slacks and shirts that had tiny brown and white checkers. The girls had a similar color scheme with their dresses which were somewhat long and wore brown beanies whenever we had to go into the church next door for daily mass. A large PA speaker sat in the center of the room right above the Blackboard in the front where Sister Pacifica would stand and conduct our lessons. Sister principal would rarely ever interrupt our class time probably because she wanted us to stay focused at all times. *Bless her heart!* This particular day she came on shockingly clear and loud through that old brown box with the circular tweed speaker cover in the center as she announced that the president had just been shot. In the mind of a nine-year-old it just didn't make any sense. Was he on a hunting trip? Was he out in the wilderness somewhere with some friends? Was it a hunting accident? Or was he hiding behind some big boulders like Roy Rogers from a TV episode trying to avoid gunfire from the bad guys. The idea of a motorcade going through a crowd in the downtown area in the heart of Dallas was completely unimaginable in the creative thoughts of a child who was only used to seeing shootings happen in War movies or Westerns. It Wasn't long after that first initial startling announcement that the sister principal returned and announced again that our president had passed away.

From that point on the rest of the day went out the window. As much as we tried to carry on with the normal school schedule it was basically the only thing that was on the schedule, And on our hearts and minds. Everyone. Nuns and students and priests.

President Kennedy had been one of my heroes, a role model who kids and young people alike looked up to, someone who inspired us deeply. I used to even part my hair on the side and comb it over to copy him standing on a chair in front of a mirror. He was charismatic, optimistic, he was courageous, confident and bold. Though decades later we all found out about his faults, which were many, he was an encouraging leader and a capable one. During a previous Halloween I was lucky enough to get a President Kennedy costume at a local store; I persuaded my father and mother to buy it for me so I could trick or treat dressed like him. It came complete with a plastic flesh colored mask, JFK hairdo and a toothy John Kennedy smile complete with a pinstriped simulated suit with a handkerchief and a pocket that was embroidered that said "JFK." Right along with me, one of my sisters agreed to dress up like

Jackie and the two of us went around the neighborhood gathering as much candy as we could, playing it up and milking it for all we could.

When lunch time finally did come that tragic day, a friend of mine and I went out in the bright sunshine and walked around the school track; suddenly our eyes were drawn to the flag in the front of the school which was on the other side of the buildings with a tall white mast protruding up and the flags at half staff. Once again we were confused by the site of something we had never seen before. Why were the stars and stripes and the California state flag not at the top of the pole? A highly unusual occurrence in the world of two young school children used to being occupied with playing at recess.

On the way home from school as we walked back toward our neighborhood, which was a few miles away, reality continued to invade what we had known life to be. We paused in front of Shiro's liquor store on Holt Avenue to look at the newspapers which were published by the Pomona progress bulletin. All of them had the same headlines in bold black type "**KENNEDY KILLED.**" There was the unthinkable glaring in the large black type. And shouting at us from those newsstands. To this point everything that had happened that day seemed like some kind of a fantasy. A story from the *Twilight Zone*. Like a weird dream that would eventually vanish on the walk home. But it was not to be.

When we got home we clicked on the TV and all of our children's programs were gone and instead black and white footage from outside of the Texas School Book Depository was being shown over and over again as the reporters discussed the details up to that point. Which included the location of the shooting, the building and the events that were unfolding there in Dallas Texas. Now all of a sudden it was all beginning to become clearer. President Kennedy had been traveling in a motorcade and had been shot by an assassin.

I don't remember leaving the TV very much that afternoon and that evening but just staying glued to the reports as they were coming in. Pretty soon live TV replaced the repetitive news footage taken in Dallas and toward the last part of the evening we saw the live broadcast from Washington as Air Force One was Landing with the body of the president the first lady and the new president, who was unrecognizable to me because he had been our vice president, who I must not have noticed: Lyndon B. Johnson. After the president's body was solemnly taken away by an ambulance Mr Johnson got up to the microphones and made a short speech introducing himself to the country although the adult audience was probably more than familiar with him. I listened and along with the rest of the country was persuaded reluctantly that we would somehow move forward. It would be a hard road, at least that weekend. There were 3 more days of morning. Then eventually my country moved on. And so would life.

And 60 years later the incident is now one any of us can tell by memory; names, places etc. This is true only with a very small number of big news events a person can recall in vivid detail. Historical moments forever linked to the time of life we were in. It was a November day during the black and white yet colorful fall period of my fourth grade school year. A deeper lesson for a youngster, one not taught in Sister Pacifica's room: that seasons didn't involve just pretty leaves or favorite holidays but that there were divinely appointed seasons. Life would be moments of laughter and playing and times for national pride followed by mourning. And unforgettable school days.



Yikes! The Holidays Are Here!

I looked at the calendar,
and suddenly I knew:
The days and weeks to prep
are once again too few.



Leaves are falling, brown and gold,
Halloween is coming.
Thanksgiving's on its heels,
already I am running.

Then it's Christmas time again,
my favorite time of year.
But first are menus to be planned,
and gifts for those held dear.

Each year I make this solemn vow:
*"I'll never fall behind again.
I'll lounge with bonbons by the fire,
And savor the ham or hen.*

Frantically I count the days
to fix, to clean, to decorate.
I fear that now, with few days left,
there won't be time to roast or bake.

What the heck, why work so hard?
Will they be thankful for it?
Years of pumpkins, turkeys, gifts—
maybe this year I'll just quit!

Pull the fake tree from the box!
Call the grocer for the meal!
Hide the clutter, swipe the dust!
Who cares if it's a phony feel?

At times I wish I could, but no . . .
holidays, they are tradition.
They reinforce the family,
and that's my truest mission.



So on that day, I'll share the fun
and admire the house 'n tree.
I'll watch the crackling fire burn,
and be glad for the memories.

—Hazel Stearns

DESPERATELY SEEKING DWIGHT NORRIS!



Dozens of calls from frantic single women have reached the offices of The Inkslinger newsletter, inquiring as to the well-being and whereabouts of Dwight Norris. Those unable to reach Dwight at his usual phone number have experienced untold consternation.

Please remain calm!

Effective immediately, Dwight may be reached at the following number:

(760) 552-2000

TRUSTED BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS WORTH THEIR WEIGHT IN GOLD

A few months ago, Mary Thompson wrote a review for the Inkslinger about a book named *Tuck Everlasting* by Natalie Babbitt. Because I'm always telling everyone that I'm going to live to *at least* 150 years old to see all of the new inventions, I looked forward to reading about a family who lived forever.

I won't "spill the beans," but it was an interesting story about the pitfalls and pluses of eternal life.

Nothing is a bigger waste of time to me than reading a poorly written, or poorly plotted, book, so I really appreciate good recommendations. I look forward to Mary's book reviews. I trust her judgement. Keep 'em coming, Mary!

Hazel Stearns



HIGH DESERT BRANCH OF THE
CALIFORNIA WRITERS CLUB
BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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

PRESIDENT

Mike Apodaca
Mrdaca.ma@gmail.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Joan Rudder-Ward
imaker@msn.com

SECRETARY

Ann Miner
eannminer@yahoo.com

TREASURER

Jenny Margotta
jennymargotta@mail.com

MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Richard Zone
retiredzone@gmail.com

PROGRAMS/PUBLICITY

Bob Isbill
risbill@aol.com

MEMBERSHIP

Michael Raff
mprseven@aol.com

SALON COORDINATOR

Lorelei Kay
LoreleiKay7@gmail.com

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Richard Zone
retiredzone@gmail.com

WEBMASTER

Roberta Smith
hdcwc_web@aol.com

QUOTE OF THE MONTH

By Michael Raff

"BOOKS ARE THE PERFECT ENTERTAINMENT: NO
COMMERCIALS, NO BATTERIES, HOURS OF ENJOYMENT FOR
EACH DOLLAR SPENT. WHAT I WONDER IS WHY EVERYBODY
DOESN'T CARRY A BOOK AROUND FOR THOSE INEVITABLE
DEAD SPOTS IN LIFE."

- *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

HDWC'S YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Catch the latest happenings at:
youtube.com/@HDCWC

FREE ADVERTISING

Do you provide a service that could benefit other writers?

Send a JPEG file of your business card or ad to

retiredzone@gmail.com

We'll advertise it free of charge!

SUBMITTING TO THE INKSLINGER

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

