



Writers  
of the

# PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

October 2015



Julianne Black

Photo by Theresa Goldstrand

## Marketing for Authors Is Oct. 1 Topic

Indie author and Ridge Writers member Julianne Black will share her 20 years of marketing and professional creative experience at our meeting on Thursday, Oct. 1, at 6:30 p.m., Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores Ave.

Distilling down her work with mega-corporations such as Sears and Mitsubishi, government agencies across the country, and branding and marketing her own five books, Juli has compiled some of the most important information on successful branding into a checklist she calls “Hydra Self-Marketing.”

Designed to benefit authors at any project stage, this formula provides a set of action items that brings the monster of self-promotion into manageable steps to anyone looking to go public with their work.

What is the difference in choosing “.com” over “.org” or “.usa”? Do you need them all? Are Twitter, Facebook and

See p. 5

### Mark Your Calendar . . .

#### David Berg

Nov. 5, 6:30 p.m.  
Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church

Come learn from Jay Leno’s producer for 18 years and the author of *Behind the Curtain: An Insider’s View of Jay Leno’s Tonight Show*

#### Holiday Party

Dec. 3, 6 p.m.  
Place Being Determined

During this potluck and opportunity for sharing our readings, we will start half an hour earlier than usual so as to have time for the goodies, both mental and culinary. Start thinking about sharing your fun 5-7-minute reading!

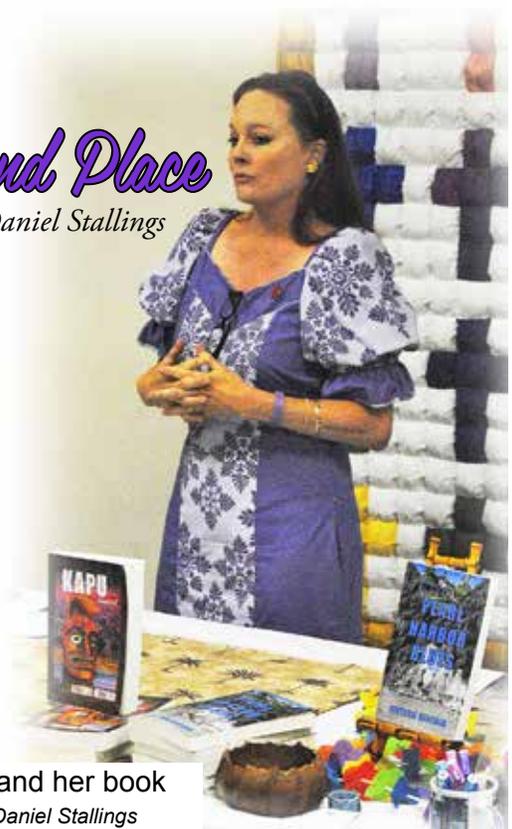
### Report on Sept. Meeting

## More Than Time and Place

By Daniel Stallings

Our happy, high-energy speaker for the September meeting, mystery author Victoria Heckman, had all of us remembering to treat our fictional places as importantly as our fictional people in her program “Setting as a Character.”

Heckman brought out all the big guns to illustrate the depth of research she employed in realizing the setting of her latest mystery, *Pearl Harbor Blues*. She drew upon her memories of visiting Pearl Harbor  
See p. 5



Victoria Heckman and her book display. Photo by Daniel Stallings

# Risks Are the Reward

Risk is something not often discussed in the world of writing. It can be risky to become a professional writer. It takes a huge amount of passion and dedication to pursue the world of publishing and the written word. But what about risks when you write? What creative risks do you take? How do you get out of your comfort zone?

A common cliché holds that writers should write what they know. But why not write what you don't know?

When I was working on "Hello Out There," the interactive murder mystery dinner for Weird Weekend, there were dozens of times when I had to decide whether to take certain risks.

Donna asked me to theme the show after the weirder side of our des-



Daniel Stallings and C. R. Rowenson perform "Hello Out There" to a full house at Weird Weekend's sold-out dinner and murder mystery. *Photo courtesy of Daniel*

ert, a topic I never before considered.

I had never collaborated on a written piece before, and I asked our amazingly talented C. R. Rowenson to co-write with me. When it turned out that I couldn't assemble a cast for the original version of the show, I made the hard choice to redesign it as a two-man, fully interactive game with a hands-on crime scene diorama to explore. All of this was new to me. It was scary to go forth with these choices because the results were uncertain. But that is the nature of taking creative risks and trying new things.

And it was a fantastic experience that I would repeat in a heartbeat.

The purpose of this story? To show how risks are worth taking. None of the spectacular success of "Hello Out There" could have happened if C. R. Rowenson and I didn't take the op-

portunities to push ourselves.

C. R. had never written a mystery, a play, or an interactive experience before, and he worked like a natural at it, allowing his immense talent to shine. Both of us took the creative risks and they paid off.

There are no guarantees in life, but you will never know the extent of your reach if you don't try. You might never know if you're talented at playwriting if all you do is poetry. Want to write sci-fi even though you've never read it? Go for it. Want to work with another writer to produce a novel? Take the risk. To quote my childhood hero, Ms. Frizzle, "Take chances. Make mistakes. And get messy." You may succeed. You may fail. But you will always learn something, and it will be rewarding.

The risks are the reward.

## Ridge Writers Leaders

- President** — Daniel Stallings
- Vice President** — Julianne Black
- Secretary** — Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
- Treasurer** — C. R. Rowenson
- ❖ ❖ ❖
- Historian** — Maryann Butterfield
- Membership** — C. R. Rowenson
- Newsletter** — Liz Babcock  
*lizbab@fastmail.com*
- Programs & Publicity** — Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
- State Rep** — Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
- Youth Coordinator** — Daniel Stallings
- Webmaster** — Julianne Black
- ❖ ❖ ❖

To reach any of these leaders (except Liz), use [ridgewriters@yahoo.com](mailto:ridgewriters@yahoo.com)  
Visit our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters](http://www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters) and our website at [CWC-ridgewriters.org](http://CWC-ridgewriters.org)

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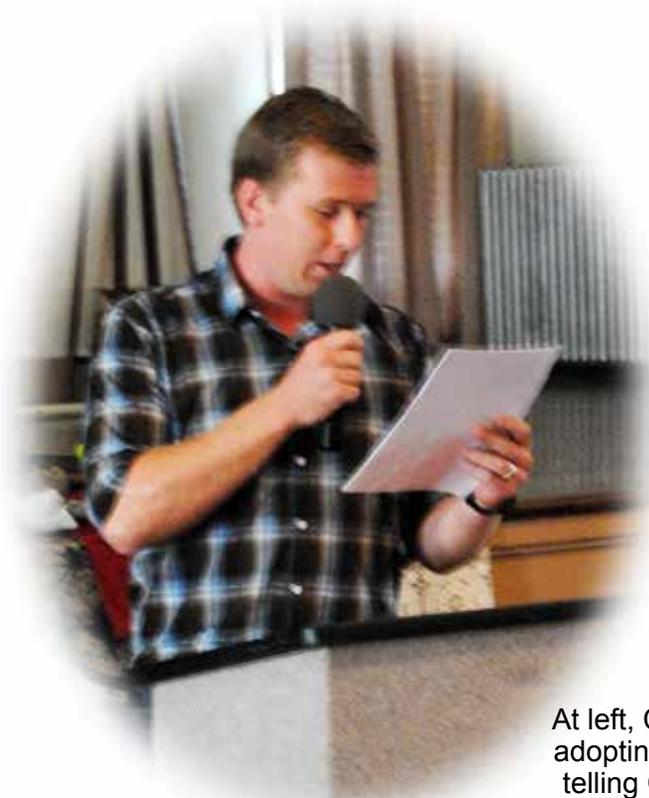
Contact the editor by mail at P.O. Box 484, Ridgecrest CA 93556, or by e-mail at [lizbab@fastmail.fm](mailto:lizbab@fastmail.fm).  
**SPECIAL NOTICE:** Photographs for publicity and newsletter uses are taken at all Ridge Writers events. By entering the venue, members and guests are granting permission that their likenesses may be used for publicity purposes.

## LOCAL AUTHOR SHOWCASE

Coming up this Oct. 17, 11 a.m., is our Local Author Showcase on Oct. 17, presented at the Ridgcrest Branch Library by Ridge Writers and Friends of the Library.

Featured will be presentation panels, a “meet and greet” reception and a writers’ workshop put on by April Hayman of NanoWriMo. Assembled by Ridge Writers Vice President, Juli Black, the Author Showcase will spotlight local authors in panel discussions, workshops, and more — offering great glimpses into their world as writers. Several Ridge Writers are on the panel.

Just take a look at Ridge Writers’ webpage (under the Events Calendar tab) to find a list of the authors who have already signed up for this event. More will be forthcoming as the event gets closer. See our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters](http://www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters) and our website at [CWC-ridgewriters.org](http://CWC-ridgewriters.org).



At left, C. R. Rowenson reads his story, “Shadow Miners,” adopting an old-time Wild West drawl, at the Weird Storytelling Contest. He took first place. *Photo by Daniel Stallings*

## Our Jack London Award Winners

We’re proud of the Ridge Writers who have won the Jack London Award, the highest recognition each branch of CWC can give the year’s most outstanding member. Here are their names and the years they won:

Maryann Butterfield	1997
Casey Wilson	1998
Rlee Peters	1999
Judy Dutcher	2000
Curt Danhauser	2001
Judy Martin	2002
Donna McCrohan Rosenthal	2003
Holly Dworken Cooley	2004
Liz Babcock	2005
Allison Aubin	2007
Steve Wersan	2009*
Margaret Luebs	2013
Daniel Stallings	2015

\*With a special Charmian London Award to Fran Wersan

## Announcements

**The Flash Fiction Press** publishes flash fiction (naturally!) of between 100 and 1,200 words. The site is administered by Lester L Weil, who describes himself as an ex-professional bassoonist, ex-professor, ex-custom furniture builder, ex-house builder. He is retired in Arizona near the Mexico border.

Weil, who is also the fiction editor of *Silver Blade Magazine*, invites writers to contact him at [editor.theflashfictionpress@gmail.com](mailto:editor.theflashfictionpress@gmail.com). Good idea to go to the site first and look at the Submissions tab ([www.theflashfictionpress.org/guidelines-for-submissions/](http://www.theflashfictionpress.org/guidelines-for-submissions/)).

**CWC High Desert** is planning its fifth **Howl at the Moon Writers’ Conference**, set for **Nov. 7 in Apple Valley**— not that far away, and a bargain at \$50 for a day’s worth of workshops and presentations. The conference will have a new venue this year, the **James Woody Community Room on Navajo Road in Apple Valley**. Go to [www.hdcwc.com](http://www.hdcwc.com) to register and to learn more.

Here’s a poetry competition in the “I-can-dream-can’t-I” category. The **Walt Whitman Poetry Award** offers

its winner a six-week residency at the Civitella Raneieri Center in Umbria and distribution of the winning book to thousands of Academy of American Poets members. The competition is for previously unpublished poetry collections, and submissions are accepted online only **Sept. 1–Nov. 1** each year. The entry fee is \$35. See the guidelines at [www.poets.org/academy-american-poets/walt-whitman-award-guidelines](http://www.poets.org/academy-american-poets/walt-whitman-award-guidelines).

Here’s another **CWC High Desert** activity — this one happening right away and with a theme to honor the month of October. Two CWCHD members will host a **Horror Book Fest, Saturday, Oct. 3, at the Courtyard Marriott** in Hesperia, 2–5 p.m.. The event will feature “**Creature From the Black Lagoon**” star **Julie Adams**. Other Horror-book specialists will be there, and short horror films will even be shown. Admission is only \$8! See [www.horrorbookfest.com/](http://www.horrorbookfest.com/) for more details.

The small space left in this section is just big enough to remind you that the **Ridgcrest Branch Library** and **Red Rock Books** are two of a writer’s best friends in Ridgcrest. Please patronize both of them!

# Hydra Marketing by Julianne Di Blasi Black

At our meeting on Oct. 1, I'll be doing a discussion on Hydra Marketing. As we all know, a Hydra was a devious nine-headed monster from Greek mythology. When you chopped off one head, two more would grow back in its place.

But what does that have to do with marketing and self-promotion?

Imagine that you just now realize you want to be a writer. How will you get your career off the ground? Writing is important, but if that is all you are doing, who will know about what you have written? Where do you start?

Now imagine that the body of the monster is your writing career and the heads are tasks you need to accomplish to get your name out. As you accomplish one task, two new tasks will present themselves and before you know it, you'll be devouring huge literary worlds with your unstoppable, multi-headed writing beast!

Envision hundreds of heads promoting your work and touching base with larger and larger fan segments. But you have to start somewhere, and I've narrowed down the most important items into nine easy, cheap, and painless tasks to get you moving in the right direction. Here is a sneak peak of the first "head" or task — your domain name.

Selecting your domain name is a biggie and of all the first steps, should be done, well, first. Domains run about \$10 a year, but *GoDaddy.com* (and many others) tends to run specials and price breaks. Purchase as many names as you can — but only ".com" names. People automatically type in ".com" so no worries about buying ".usa" or ".tv."

At one point, all the extensions seemed like they would take off and people would buy up extensions like crazy, but really ".com," ".gov," ".org," and ".edu" are the only ones that really matter in the States.

You may need to make several attempts at finding something available, but keep at it. GoDaddy will offer suggestions if the one you want isn't available.



Try not to get creative with spelling (as in Starz instead of Stars). It just ends up confusing people and you will find yourself constantly spelling out a domain that really needed to be quick and easy to remember to be effective.

I'll be going into that more and covering the additional eight heads at the Oct. 1 meeting. Hope to see you there!

## News From Lola

*Congratulations to our prolific Fontana-based Ridge Writer, Lola De Maci, who sent us the following news recently.*  
— ed.

Just sending a note to let you know that my story, "Packages of Christmas Joy," has been selected for Chicken Soup's Christmas book — *Chicken Soup for the Soul: Merry Christmas!* It will be available Oct. 20 at all bookstores.

I also have two stories in *My Gutsy Story Anthology Number 2* (Second Edition): "The Beginning of Tomorrow" and "Simple Splendor." The book has just been released.

Yes, I am still writing daily. And, yes, I still love it!

# More Than Time and Place

From p. 1

once a year when she returns to Hawaii, the memories of friends who inhabited the island at the time, and the treasure trove of maps, letters, newspapers and other documents.

She advised us to ask ourselves, “Can our stories be set anywhere else?” as the first test of determining if our settings are characters. Heckman described how the events of the Pacific Theater in WWII had been woven intrinsically into the plot of the novel, allowing the Hawaiian background to serve as yet another character in her mystery.

If your plot can happen in any place in the world, perhaps you haven’t considered integrating place and time elements into the story to strengthen. What about your setting can enhance your themes and story points? Is it a culture, a language, a dialect, a piece of geography?

She told us that settings say “a lot about your character and your plot.” As writers, we are given the freedom of choice when choosing the places for our stories. Real or fictional? Fictional places allow for more freedom. “No one,” advises her information sheet, “can say that street doesn’t exist, or the barber shop is NOT next to the post office.”

However, in a fictional locale, there is less for the reader to identify with. Writers must fabricate the feeling of familiarity. In real places — New York City, London, the Mojave Desert — readers know them and can picture them far more easily.

In employing real locations, particularly locations the writer calls home, Heckman recommended that we develop a “tourist eye.” Treat your locations as if you’d never been there before, notice all the details that stand out and enhance your plot. Is it the faded sign above the post office? The man on the corner who always waves at the woman across the street? These details create life for your settings. Pay attention to the pieces of your world



Heckman displays a map of the Pearl Harbor area, the setting of her latest mystery, *Pearl Harbor Blues*.

that you might otherwise overlook in your day-to-day life.

She reminded us to avoid huge chunks of exposition, as well as information dump, which slows down the story and breaks up the build of suspense in your plot. She supplied us with elements of suspense to keep in mind as we develop scenes: empathetic characters who are curious, use of fear, remembering to keep hope, having your characters be vulnerable, and a sense of solitude. And never forget to employ all of your senses when you write scenes. How does the air smell? Is it hot? Cold? Damp? Does the ground hurt underfoot?

And her most important lesson? “You will never know unless you write it.”

Victoria Heckman has several mystery series, from her KO’d series set in Hawaii to her Elizabeth Murphy Animal Communicator series set on California’s Central Coast. Learn more about her work at [victoriaheckman.com](http://victoriaheckman.com).

# Marketing for Authors

From p. 1

LinkedIn all necessary? What would you write once you’re there? How about blogging, what is that all about and why would you do it?

Perhaps you think, “I don’t need a business card — the publisher will do all that, correct? I wouldn’t even know how to go about looking for a men-

tor, never mind what to talk about! Are you sure I need one at this stage? I don’t need to network until I have something to sell, right? I’m just starting out, don’t I wait until the book is finished before beginning marketing?”

If you’re thinking any of those things, from selecting a web address to

the importance of a mentor, if you are even just considering writing, you cannot afford to miss this program.

Juli will conclude her Oct. 1 talk with a Q&A and book signing of her own children’s books. The public is welcome, and admission is free. Bring your friends!



Gene Schneider holds a cup from the prize package she won from our September speaker. The cup, inspired by “Murder, She Wrote,” says, “Cabot Cove, Maine. If you lived here, you’d be dead by now.”

Photo by Daniel Stallings

## Tsk, Tsk, L.A. Times

Here’s an actual photo caption that appeared in the (increasingly sloppy) pages of the *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 12, 2015 (apropos of California’s new aid-in-dying bill): “DEBBIE ZIEGLER holds up a photograph of her daughter Brittany Maynard, who moved to Oregon last year to end her life after being diagnosed with terminal brain cancer, in celebration of the state Senate’s vote.” (And no, that comma doesn’t save this sentence!)

— ed.

# Report on September Critique Group

by Daniel Stallings

Wow. Critique Group is just buzzing along. We’ve grown this group into a fun get-together for all of us writers to learn from one another.

Our September meeting gave us another glimpse into Juli Black’s fantastic young-adult dystopian landscape.

It’s always a pleasure getting yet another sliver of the story behind this mysterious kidnapping, a shadowy hacker organization, and a techno-universe full of rich language and detail.

For the workshop, we took a cue from Victoria Heckman’s program, “Setting as a Character,” from our September Ridge Writers meeting. It was all about creating dynamic and immersive settings that pull readers through a vibrant, alive landscape.

So I pulled from one of my personal writing exercises to help improve my setting descriptions. I use Disneyland attractions, which are specifically designed to be fully

immersive, using heavily detailed sights, sounds, textures, temperatures, and even smell to create whole worlds for guests to enter. So many details for a writer to employ to create descriptions with punch and pep.

So I assigned a different attraction — Pirates of the Caribbean, Snow White’s Scary Adventures, and Indiana Jones Adventure — to each writer and had them each first write a paragraph describing the bare essentials of each attraction.

Then they each wrote the descriptive paragraph again, using a few key details to enhance the setting, employ foreshadowing, and attach themes to the piece.

The results were magical as befitting the Happiest Place on Earth.

Interested in trying this exercise? It’s simple. Pick your favorite ride at Disneyland. Write a basic description hitting on a few points on physical looks. Then rewrite the paragraph using the little details to enrich the piece. The magic is in



the rewrite.

Our next Critique Group meeting is Friday, Nov. 13, at 6:30 p.m. at Beanster’s Lounge.

We will be critiquing another member’s story and doing a workshop about creating distinctive dialogue through dialects, slang, word choice, and much more.

Attendance is free and open to everyone.

November also marks Critique Group’s one-year anniversary, so come and join us for the fun!

# WEIRD STORY- TELLERS

Here are the participants in the Weird Storytelling Challenge, conducted on Sept. 12 in the Historic USO Building as part of Ridge Writers' Weird Weekend. Holding their prizes are first row from



left, Linda Saholt, Sharon Backman, and Julie Bradford; and back row from left, Julianne DiBlasi Black, Robert R. Budlong, C. R. Rowenson, and John Nordlinger, who joined us from Bishop. See page 3 for a picture of the winner!

All photos on this page by Daniel Stallings

Below, Jenna Elizabeth Johnson, the author of *Lo-rehnnin: A Novel of the Otherworld*, signs books for participants in a Read the Book, Meet the Author session on Sept. 11 at My Enchanted Cottage and Tea Rooms. Wow, Ridge Writers were busy that weekend!



Above, Guests at Read the Book, Meet the Author look through their programs and listen to guest author, Jenna Elizabeth Johnson. This was the first event of Weird Weekend.

# Looking Forward to California Writers Week, Oct. 18-23

Get a delicious pizza on Friday, Oct. 23 and celebrate California Writers Week while you're eating it. Your Ridge Writers board decided to select that day to enter into an agreement with Pizza Factory whereby you bring in a flyer on that date and Ridge Writers get 30 percent of the proceeds from your purchase. Donna McCrohan Rosenthal will have flyers at our next meeting and will also have them

posted on our website and Facebook page.

Donna will also set up a display in the Ridgecrest Branch Library all October to celebrate California Writers Week, the third week in October. She promises to provide us a photo for the November Purple Sage — but how about also taking a look at in the library and checking out a book while you're there?

If it hasn't already arrived in your mailbox, you'll soon receive the latest edition of the *Literary Review*. Now in its fourth year, it's on its way to establishing itself as a CWC institution.

Sadly, costs are rising. In order to maintain a quality publication while balancing our budget, we have instituted a submission fee beginning with the next issue. Going forward, \$10 per submitter must accompany each submission of up to two pieces submitted at the same time, payable by PayPal or by check.

Find submission guidelines and payment details on the CWC website, [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org). The deadline is Nov. 30, and we look forward to reviewing your fine writing.

— David George

*CWC Central Board President*

The East Sierra Branch (Ridge Writers) is the California Writers Club branch serving the eastern part of Kern County. Over the mountains on the west side of the county is our Bakersfield-based sister branch, Writers of Kern.

Our book *Planet Mojave: Visions From a World Apart* is available at Jawbone Canyon Station, the Historic USO Building, the Maturango Museum and Red Rock Books. Don't have your copy? Get it today!



## Inside...

### Page 1:

Oct. Program: Julianne Black  
Report on Sept. Meeting by  
Daniel Stallings

### Page 2:

President's Corner by Daniel  
Stallings  
Ridge Writers Leaders

### Page 3:

Jack London Award Winners  
Announcements

### Page 4:

"Hydra Marketing" by Julianne  
Di Blasi Black  
News from Lola De Maci

### Page 6:

Report on Critique Group by  
Daniel Stallings  
Gene Schneider with her prize cup

### Page 7:

Photos of Weird Weekend by  
Daniel Stallings

### Page 8:

Calif. Writers Week Events

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