



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

April 2017



Dynamic, Dramatic Denise Hamilton to Speak – Twice!

Nationally bestselling and critically acclaimed novelist Denise Hamilton will give two Ridge Writers programs on Thursday, April 6. The first will be a “Read the Book, Meet the Author” afternoon at My Enchanted Cottage, 214 W. Ridgecrest Blvd., at 2 p.m. (See p.3). The second, entitled “True Crime to Mystery Novels: One Reporter’s Journey,” will be at the Ridge Writers meeting that starts 6:30 p.m., Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores.

Editor of the Edgar Award-winning short story anthologies *Los Angeles Noir* and *Los Angeles Noir 2: The Classics*, Hamilton has written five contemporary crime novels in the Eve Diamond series. They appear on the lists of finalists for almost every major mystery award. *Savage Garden*, featured title for April’s “Read the Book Meet the Author,” was a finalist for the Southern California Booksellers Award for “Best Mystery of 2005.” Among Denise Hamilton’s journalism credits: *Wired*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Der Spiegel*, *New Times*, and first-place awards from the Los Angeles Press Club for feature and business writing. During 10 years on staff at the *Los Angeles Times*, she spent the bulk of her career in the suburbs of Los Angeles. Please join us for both programs, and remember that the evening presentation is free, so please bring your friends.

Mark Your Calendar...

Linda O. Johnston

May 4, 6:30 p.m.
Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church
This very prolific author’s titles include over 40 romance and mystery novels.

Stephen H. Provost

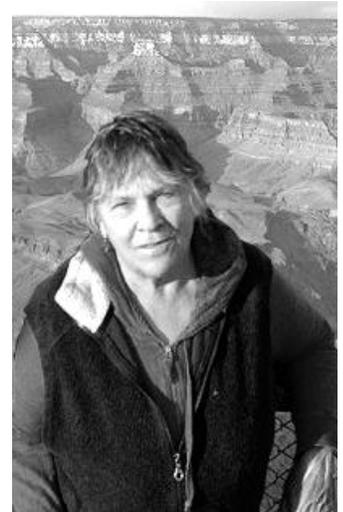
June 1, 6:30 p.m.
Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church
Journalist, editor, columnist, and author of *Fresno Growing Up* and *Memortality*, a fantasy about raising the dead.

Report on March Speaker – by Linda Saholt

Mary Sojourner - Author, columnist, NPR commentator, and devoted fan of the Mojave Desert

“I write intuitively. I don’t plan it out ahead of time.” Mary Sojourner’s approach to writing has certainly worked well for her. So far, she’s authored eight books, including three novels, two short-story collections, one essay collection, and two memoirs. Her latest book, *The Talker*, was released by Torrey House Press this spring.

“If I try to analyze my characters, I’ll kill them. I don’t try to figure them out, I just let them talk.” After a lifetime of people-watching, Sojourner likes to take herself out of the equation and just let the story flow.



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Rolling with the Punches



This month especially has taught me a great deal about rolling with the punches when dealing with the boxing match that is professional writing. Many of you know about my upcoming show, *Bury Me in Paris*, taking place at My Enchanted Cottage end of March and early April. It has been one of the most challenging production phases of my entire career and has taught me a great deal about my resolve, my ability to improvise, my patience, and my willingness to keep moving forward.

I won't mince words. It's been unusually difficult mounting this production. Things have ranged from turbulent weather, scheduling conflicts, medical emergencies, flu outbreaks, actor irresponsibility, last-minute change of plans, and personal grief. So many of these things were out of my control that, for an almost compulsive planner and organizer like me, I felt completely at sea. That's life though. Things happen. Things change. Things don't go as planned. And sometimes the amount of "things" can be very high. It can feel like an avalanche. You start to wonder if you're strong enough.

As I said before, that's life. It will most likely happen to a lot of our writing careers. Rejection letters. Publishers going bankrupt. Agents quitting. Sales dropping. Contracts ending. Any number of things. Is that scary? Absolutely. Can it be overwhelming? Without a doubt. Does that mean you should--?

--Ah...but wait. What should you do? It's something I've had to ask myself during the course of this production. What should I do when it got very difficult? Sure, there were times I considered quitting. I'm only human filled with human emotions. But would quitting mean that things got better? Was that actually what I wanted?

To me, the thing to help me through really rough patches in my career was to try and gain some perspective on the situation. I'd ask myself questions. Does this moment define me? Is the work I'm putting out really the pinnacle of my achievements as a writer, or do I believe I still have room to grow? (Spoiler alert: I know I have greater stories within me. I'm not perfect.) Could I let go of any of the feeling of responsibility I held for some of these events? Well, I can't control the weather or a flu outbreak or unexpected tragedy. So that lightens my emotional load just a little. I'm gaining perspective.

Ridge Writers Leaders

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To reach any of these leaders, use ridgewriters@yahoo.com
 Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters
 and our website CWC-ridgewriters.org.

It's not going to be easy. No one said it would be. So if you find yourself overloaded with stress about all these changes—whether by misadventure, deliberate malice, or just plain old bad luck--stop and breathe. Close your eyes. Ask yourself these questions. Will this moment define you as a writer? Or is there more to you than just a run of misfortune? What will it be? Gain perspective on life, and thereby gain perspective on yourself and your work. Things happen, but that's life. And living is one of the most

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Contact the editor by mail at P.O. Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA 93556 or by email, ridgewriters@yahoo.com. **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.

Mary Sojourner – continued from page 1

“I get moved by a place, or the people in that place—then the story comes.” Fascinated by the desert Southwest, the Rochester, New York native has lived and worked in many desert areas, including Wupatki, an old Hopi ruin now a national park. While working there, Sojourner eagerly absorbed knowledge about all the Native Americans she could. In pre-contact days, the Hopi placed a high value on very fertile women, as there was a high rate of child mortality.

“I wondered, what would life be like for a Hopi woman who couldn’t have children? And there was my story. My character told me, ‘Okay, tell my story—tell my people’s story.’” The result was her novel *Sisters of the Dream* currently out of print, but available used on Amazon.com.

Another place-inspired story was *29*, a novel set in Twentynine Palms, where she lived for a time. The “Read the Book, Meet the Author” tea held at My Enchanted Cottage on March 1 included *29* that showcases Sojourner’s deft and natural style.

To round out the evening, Sojourner rewarded us by reading one of the stories in *The Talker*.

Last “Read the Book, Meet the Author” of the 2017 Spring Series

On Thursday afternoon, April 6 at 2:00 p.m., Denise Hamilton and participants will discuss *Savage Garden* that features reporter/sleuth Eve Diamond. Coursing through L.A.’s theater community, the novel confirms Hamilton’s reputation for sexy, sophisticated crime writing with an urban edge. It “rises above the level of an ordinary detective novel to become a vibrant, powerful and relevant story” (- *Chicago Sun Times*). The \$35 ticket, available at Red Rock Books, covers the cost of the book, tea and scone, and entry in a door prize drawing.

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 outstanding members. The award was presented annually until 2005, and subsequently only once every two years.

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

COMING ATTRACTIONS:

INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE DAY

Saturday, April 29

Red Rock Books will have a reading and book signings by Ridgecrest children’s author Terry Pierce, crafts, and refreshments, and we’ll have a table there.

Agatha Christie Tribute

We’ll do something special this summer to celebrate Dame Agatha’s first mystery, *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, set precisely a century ago in the summer of 1917.

WEIRD WEEKEND

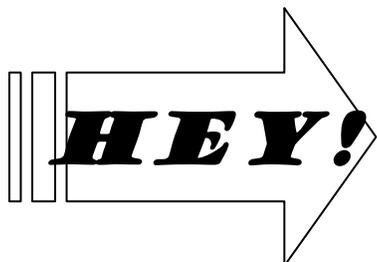
Friday-Saturday, September 22-23

celebrating the stranger side of the desert – Third Annual Weird Storytelling Competition on Saturday afternoon and a Master Mystery Productions interactive murder mystery on Saturday evening, both at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church. Additional fun stuff to be announced.

rewarding and most frightening experiences we can do.

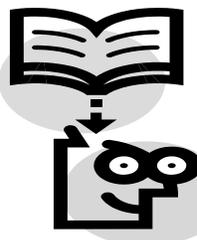
To quote my hero--Agatha Christie: "I like living. I have sometimes been wildly, despairingly, acutely miserable, racked with sorrow, but through it all I still know quite certainly that just to be alive is a grand thing."

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.



THE SAGE NEEDS AN EDITOR!

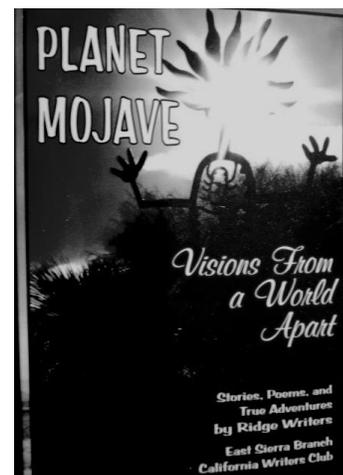
The wonderful, gifted, talented Liz Babcock served as editor of the *Sage* for a very, very long time. Last month, after giving us plenty of warning, she retired. We wish her rest, relaxation, and a world of exhilarating new



activities and challenges.

*BUT,
BUT,
BUT...*

She leaves us with a gaping chasm. We sincerely hope to find a new editor for the *Sage*, and soon. Liz has offered to train her replacement, and the assignment represents an excellent opportunity to add to your set of literary and editorial skills. If this prospect interests you, please contact president Daniel Stallings without further delay. Thanks.



Our book *Planet Mojave: Visions From a World Apart* is available at Jawbone Canyon Station, the Historic USO Building, the Maturango Museum, Red Rock Books, and online from our website.

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