



*Writers  
of the*

# **PURPLE SAGE**

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

**East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club**

**May 2017**

## **LINDA O. JOHNSTON LOOKS AT COZIES AND ROMANCE**

Mystery and romance author Linda O. Johnston will give two Ridge Writers programs on Thursday, May 4. The first will be a “Read the Book, Meet the Author” afternoon at My Enchanted Cottage, 214 W. Ridgecrest Blvd., at 2 p.m. The second will be at the Ridge Writers meeting that starts 6:30 p.m., Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores.



For “Read the Book, Meet the Author,” Johnston and participants will discuss *Bite the Biscuit*, from her “Barkery & Biscuits” Mystery series. This book distinguished itself as a finalist in the fiction category for the 2016 Dog Writers Association of America’s annual Maxwell Awards. The \$35 ticket, available at Red Rock Books, includes the cost of the book, tea and scone, and entry in a door prize drawing. For the evening presentation, for which admission is free, Johnston will speak about “Cozying Up to Cozy Mysteries: The Fun of Reading and Writing Them.” Johnston has written dozens of mysteries and romances, notably the Pet Rescue Mysteries and the Pet-Sitter Mysteries for Berkley Prime Crime, and *Lost Under a Ladder* in the Superstition Mystery series with Midnight Ink. Her first published fiction, in *Ellery Queen's Mystery Magazine*, won the Robert L. Fish Memorial Award for Best First Mystery Short Story of the Year. She authors four popular series: The Superstition Mysteries from Midnight Ink, The Barkery & Biscuits Mysteries from Midnight Ink, Alpha Force paranormal romances for Harlequin Nocturne, and Identity Division romantic suspense novels for Harlequin Romantic Suspense.



### **Report on April Speaker – by Liz Babcock ADVICE FROM THE QUEEN OF NOIR**

Denise Hamilton, our formidably talented speaker in April, shared insights into her own career that can help all of us as writers. One such insight involved mining any life experience to enrich our writing.

Her career as a journalist “paid me to collect raw material for what turned out to be my novelist career,” she said.

After her early presence in Budapest as the Berlin Wall was coming down, she dreamed that her next assignment would be as a foreign correspondent. Instead the *L.A. Times* sent her to Monrovia. So how did she “make lemonade” there? “I’m going to pretend that this is a foreign country,” she told herself.

By working hard, writing rapidly, and keeping her eyes open for human-interest stories, she discovered a topic for her first book, *The Jasmine Trade*, a mystery exposing the plight of affluent Chinese teens left alone to attend school in America while their parents live and work in Hong Kong. That book was an immediate success. Since then her Eve Diamond crime novels have become best-sellers nationally.

Although her familiarity with L.A. adds verisimilitude for her tales, Denise said fiction writing is very different from journalism. “I had to give myself permission to make things up.”

### **Mark Your Calendar...**

#### **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.

#### **Master Mystery Productions Panel**

July 6, 6:30 p.m.  
Panel discussion on how to draw strength, intensity, power, and emotional connection through our storytelling.

## Teaching What You Know



I've been blessed the past few months to have opportunities to speak in public about what I do for a living.

To be asked to speak about my work or expertise in writing is a huge honor. It seems to validate all the hours, days, months, years I have put into my craft. It's a gift to be able to share any scraps of knowledge I have gleaned from my work as a writer, and I always look upon those opportunities as blessings and my duty as a writer.

Before I realized my love for the written word was too strong to ignore, I wanted to be a teacher. Preferably English as my adoration of the alphabet has been a lifelong affair.

I wanted to surround myself with books and knowledge and ideas and communicate that passion to new generations, to get them as excited about literature as I was. It's a feeling ingrained in my DNA as I still wish to impart my

passion to whoever is interested whether it be an audience or a room full of new writers. If it's mysteries, the art of wordsmithing, or putting on a show, I've always wished to share my admiration and respect for my art, my craft, and my genre with the world.

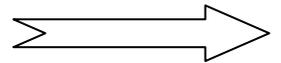
Why tell you all this? Once again, I'm hoping to impart even just a smidge of my passion for this field and the opportunities it can provide. Every writer I speak to has a different strategy, a different voice, a different ambition. We are all built of unique stories. And our duty, as storytellers, is to share them. If you ever are given an opportunity to speak at a conference, a book club, or a Ridge Writers meeting, I say go for it. Because passing on your knowledge to the next generation of storytellers is a gift. That's how our craft survives.

### Ridge Writers Leaders

**President** – Daniel Stallings  
**Vice President** – Julianne Black  
**Secretary** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal  
**Treasurer** – Andrew Sound  
**Historian** – Maryann Butterfield  
**Member at Large** – C. R. Rowenson  
**Newsletter, Interim editors** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal & Daniel Stallings  
**Programs & Publicity** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal  
**State Rep** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal  
**Youth Coordinator** – Daniel Stallings  
**Webmaster** – Julianne Black

To reach any of these leaders, 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 [CWC-ridgewriters.org](http://CWC-ridgewriters.org).

### JULIANNE BLACK: OUR NEWEST JACK LONDON AWARD WINNER



We are proud to name Juli for our July 2017 designation with our grateful thanks for her work as our webmaster, Facebook administrator, organizers of successful Local Author Showcases, and for her design of last year's s attractive glossy Ridge Writer rack card.

*The Writers of the Purple Sage* is the monthly newsletter of the Ridge Writers, East Sierra Branch of the 108-year-old California Writer Club. Except where otherwise stated, all articles in this publication may be printed without special permission in newsletters of branches of the California Writers Club and in the State Bulletin, subject to the following conditions:

- a. The author's name and original publication credit must be printed with the text.
- b. The text must be printed in its entirety, without additions or changes.
- c. You must send a copy of the newsletter bearing the reprint to the author.

Contact the editor by mail at P.O. Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA 93556 or by email, [ridgewriters@yahoo.com](mailto: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.

She said a working writer cannot wait for inspiration to strike. “You have to just write.” Our guest credits her ability to write rapidly, to “just push through,” with her skill at exposing “dark moments of the soul.”

She also cautioned against making an outline before you start to write; “You really don’t want to be limited by an outline.”

After rapidly committing her thoughts to paper, she does “cutting, cutting, cutting.”

Today Denise is known as the Queen of Noir. She credits the Los Angeles area with providing “endless inspiration for stories. ... I’ve always been a storyteller, and I’ve always loved noir, and I’ve always loved L.A.”

## 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:

### *Agatha Christie Tribute*

“Ode to Agatha” on July 15<sup>th</sup> will celebrate Dame Agatha’s first novel, *Mysterious Affair at Styles*, set a century ago in the summer of 1917. It introduced Hercule Poirot.

### 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.

**REPORT FROM THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE: We thank the following for agreeing to run for 2017-18 officers.**

**Andrew Sound**

**Daniel Stallings**

**Donna McCrohan Rosenthal**

**We would very much like to have a fourth member serving on the board. Additional nominations may be made from the floor. Members will vote on the proposed slate at the June general meeting.**

**CONTEST and call for submissions: *Masters Review*** writes, “Send us big worlds in tiny packages, large ideas with a low word count. Dazzle us with your best fiction under 1000 words. \$2000, publication on the *Masters Review* site, and recognition in *Poets & Writers Magazine*. Entry Fee: \$20 for two submissions Deadline: May 31. <https://mastersreview.com/flash-fiction-contest/>. ***New England Review***: Seeking new submissions through May 31, and paying \$20/page for accepted contributions, in categories such as short stories, short shorts, novellas, novel excerpts (if they can stand alone), and translations. Entry Fee: \$3 prose, \$2 poetry. <http://www.nereview.com/ner-submissions/>.

## ANNOUNCING *TALES FROM THE OWL SALOON*

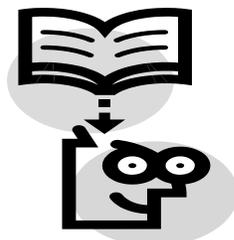
Liz Babcock's latest book, *TALES FROM THE OWL SALOON*, has just arrived in bookstores to enthusiastic acclaim. Published by the Historical Society of the Upper Mojave Desert, it's on sale in their gift shop. Also find it on book shelves at Maturango Museum, Red Rock Books, and Jawbone Canyon Station.

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!***

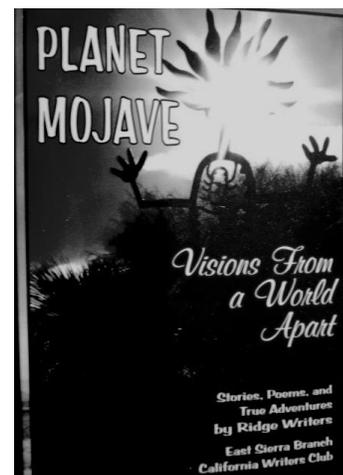
The wonderful, gifted, talented Liz Babcock served as editor of the *Sage* for a very, very long time. Recently, after giving us plenty of warning, she retired. We wish her rest, relaxation, and a world of



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 and credits. 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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