



Writers  
of the

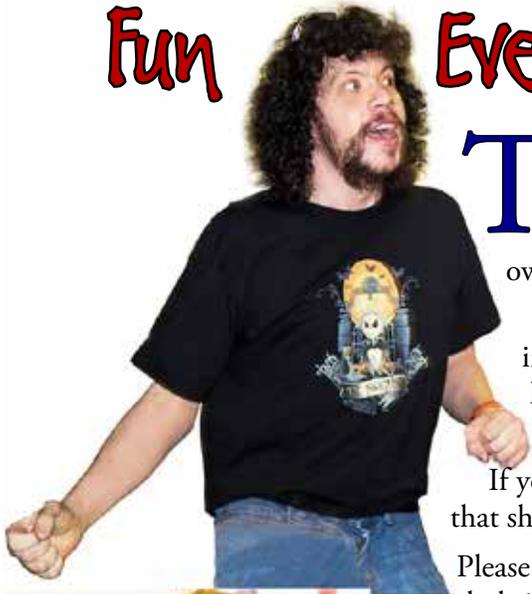
# PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

August 2016

## Fun Evening of Sharing Set for Aug. 4



This month's program, our always-popular annual Open Mic night, will begin at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, Aug. 4, at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church. Members of the public are also invited to attend and to read from their own work.

Presentations must have been written by the people who read them, must be in good taste, and are limited to no more than 5-7 minutes in length. If you have not already signed up to read, you can get your name on the list at the beginning of the meeting.

If you do read, please send a copy to *Purple Sage* editor Liz Babcock digitally so that she can run it in a future newsletter. (Thanks!)

Please also bring a plate of fruit, cheese, cookies, or other finger food to share. And do bring your friends. Sometimes our guest Open Mic readers turn into members!



Some of the participants in last year's Open Mic Night are (counterclockwise from top left) Eric Tobias, Juli Black, Bob Budlong (aka Robert Mariner) and Donna McCrohan Rosenthal.

Photos by Liz

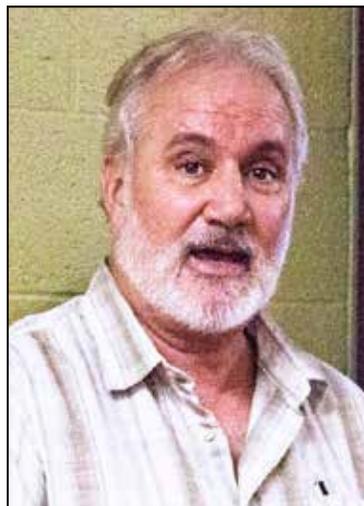


### Our Sept. Speaker

**Todd Kessler**

Sept. 1, 6:30 p.m.  
Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church

This Blues Clues co-creator and show runner will address the topic, "The Myth of Kids' Attention Spans." Here's a wonderful opportunity to learn from a pro!



Jim Kiggins

### Report on July Meeting

## Games 'n' Goats

by Eric Tobias

Our guest speaker for July, Jim Kiggins, bestowed upon us tales of goats and gaming.

He has written three books on 3D animation and two books on game design. From writing a single chapter (Chap. 8 in *The Gamification of Learning and Instruction Fieldbook: Ideas into Practice*) to working in a tight group (Fostering Human Development through Engineering and Technology Education), to even writ-

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# A True Original

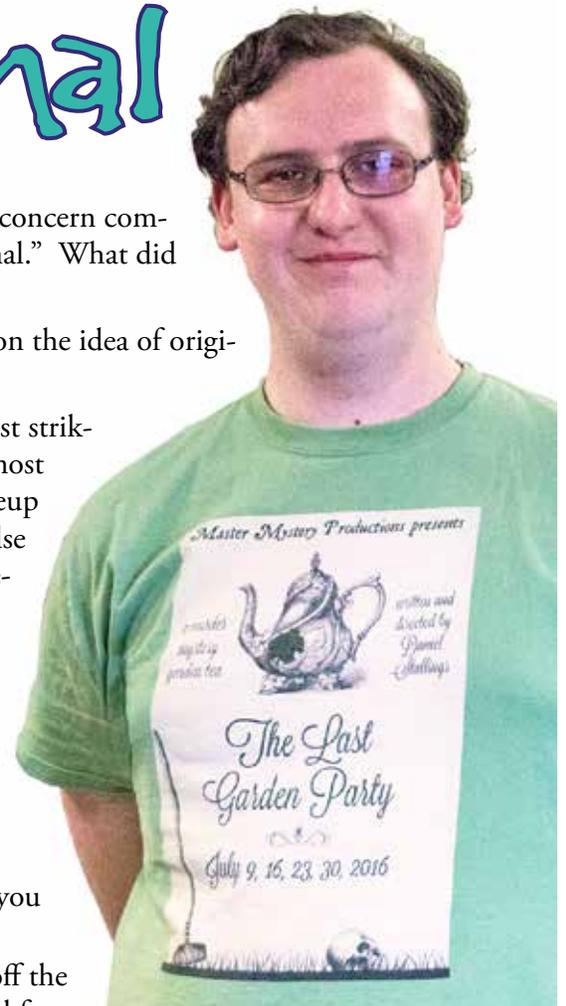
At our July Critique Group meeting, one member expressed a concern common to all creative people. He wanted his work to be “original.” What did that mean?

What followed was one of the most interesting conversations I had on the idea of originality and what it takes to be a true original with your work.

So what does it mean? I can only speak for myself — and I highly suggest striking up this conversation with one of your fellow Ridge Writers — but the most original concept in the universe is YOU. Yes, you. From your genetic makeup to your experiences to your view of the world around you, there is no one else in the universe exactly like you. You hold the secret to originality by just being the person you are.

How does this apply to writing? It has to do with a major buzzword, a cornerstone of what agents, editors, publishers, and readers look for and respond to in great writing. Your voice. Your voice as a writer is the soul of your work, the trait that defines it as yours and yours alone.

That voice is influenced by you and your experiences, by the DNA that builds your life and makes it unique. Your voice is a manifestation of your style, the way you view the world, the way you respond to stimuli, the way you experience life.



Our truly original president's shirt advertises his most recent play, "The Last Garden Party," presented last month at My Enchanted Cottage and Tea Room. Photo by Liz

## Ridge Writers Leaders

- President** — Daniel Stallings
- Vice President** — Julianne Black
- Secretary** — Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
- Treasurer** — Andrew Sound  
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- Historian** — Maryann Butterfield
- Member at Large** — 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)

When we tell stories, we work off the same human nature that has existed for millennia. Sure, we might be in new settings, new characters, new situations, but we still pull from the same pool of human experiences. We talk about love and loss and fear and wonder and fury and betrayal and hope and triumph.

This hasn't changed in thousands of years. Even if you're writing about another species, you still have to take from the same well of human nature as the rest of us to make it relatable. So how do you keep from writing the same core stories as everyone else?

The answer is you.

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The *Writers of the Purple Sage* is the monthly newsletter of the Ridge Writers, the East Sierra Branch of the California Writers 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 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.



## Book Signing at Red Rock Books —

I must admit the people shown are my daughter Betsy and her husband Herb LePlatt hawking copies of her book *Mosquito* a few years ago, but the photo does serve to show off some of the bookstore's many assets — well worth exploring during this month's celebration of summer reading.

Photo by Liz

## 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

## CELEBRATE SUMMER READING AT RED ROCK BOOKS AUG. 13

Red Rock Books will celebrate summer reading on Saturday, Aug. 13, with local author book signings, a scavenger hunt, games, prizes, a Hawaiian shirt and cruisewear contest, and a free lemonade stand.

Adding to the day-long fun, we Ridge Writers will have our own table, with flyers about upcoming projects and programs, including September 23-24's Weird Weekend, and a sign-up for the September 24th Weird Storytelling Competition.

Also featured at our table will be information on how to join, and more games and prizes including a free raffle basket with the theme "To Read Is to Travel."

For more details, call Red Rock Books, 760-375-3454, or stop by 206 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.

## ◆◆◆ Announcement ◆◆◆

**The SF-Peninsula Branch** invites all CWC members to submit entries for possible publication in *Uplift*, the seventh in the branch's *Fault Zone* anthology series. For consideration, enter the branch's short story contest, deadline **Oct. 31** (plenty of time for you to get your entry in). The \$250 first prize also includes *Fault Zone* publication; prizes of \$100 and \$50 are also offered. All of the winning entries will receive editorial notes and one-on-one consults.

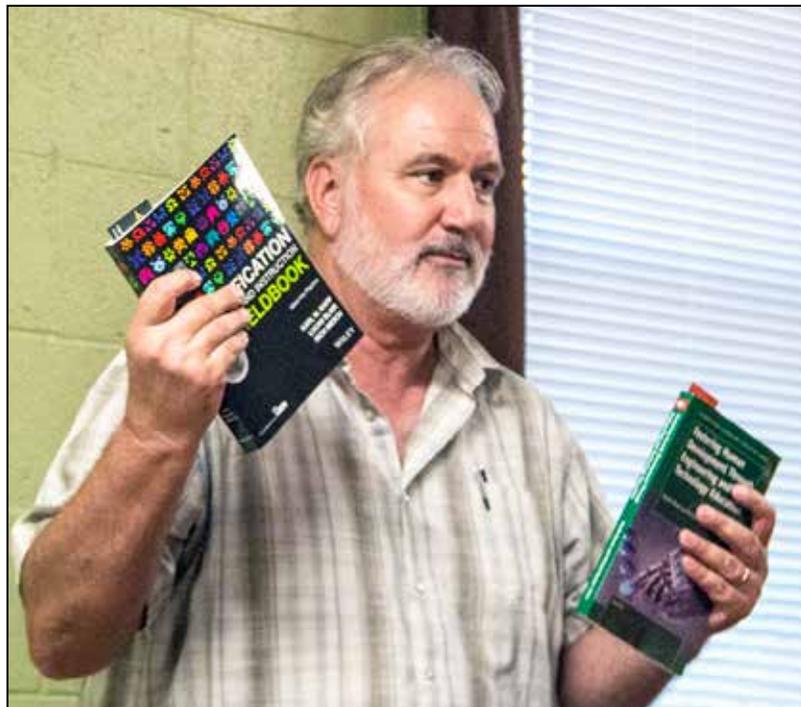
"Fault Zone has always been about shaking things up," said one of the organizers. "From the first (Words From the Edge) to the sixth (Transform), this edgy anthol-

ogy has tested the boundaries, pushed into unfamiliar territory, and taken its readers on wild and sometimes uncomfortable journeys."

In the seventh edition, the editors seek "morally or spiritually elevating experiences, rising above surroundings, or maybe being thrust from secure situations into ones beyond all personal control.

"We invite you to look at the different meanings of 'uplift' and create works that carry readers to unexpected places."

The fee is \$15 per entry, with no limit to the number entries you may submit. For guidelines and to submit your entry, see [cwc-peninsula.submittable.com](http://cwc-peninsula.submittable.com).



As Jim Kiggins gives Ridge Writers pointers on writing stories for games, he shows us a couple of books that discuss games.

*Photos by Liz*

ing 26 game formats (the narration of the game), one of which is about the same as a 237-page book, Jim has a vast experience writing on gaming.

One thing that Jim did not expect to be was a farmer. The farm in Weldon started as an art gallery, but as that plan was not as successful as he and his wife, Debbie, had hoped, they turned to farming.

The first “employees” that came to the farm were the chickens, which were very good workers and did what they were supposed to around the clock. After a visit to another farm, Debbie and Jim realized goats were what they wanted to raise.

When the goats arrived, Jim fell in love with them. Goats are very much like dogs; they are very mischievous, extremely curious, and very dependent, relying on Jim and Debbie for everything.

After the goats got settled, Jim and Debbie had some young visitors who came to the farm for a weeklong event called “Camp Debbie.” The girls, along with their moms, helped Debbie with the farm, learning how the lifestyle worked. With no TV, phones, tablets, or any kind of electronic distraction, the girls were completely engrossed.

Meanwhile Jim was working on a gaming project for a now-defunct doll company called “Only Hearts Club,” which made realistic dolls that had stories with a positive message. That, combined with the fact that each visiting girl had “adopted” a

goat, gave Jim an idea.

This idea is to have the goats on the farm have their own fable that children can play themselves on the website. The fable will be a choose-your-own adventure featuring goats and positive morals.

The stories will be short, with a minimum of two to three characters, and the goats will be anthropomorphized (like Donald Duck).

Kids will have to make decisions within the fables that will affect the outcome. The three choices they are given are one good choice, one okay choice, and one choice that indicates the child has no idea the moral the story is trying to teach. If they make the right choices, they will be able to customize their goats.

Jim is looking for writers to create the fables. He came to the Ridge Writers seeking our wordsmanship and imagination to concoct the tales. Our group came up with plenty of input for Jim.

When talking about the kinds of moral dilemmas the kids face, one of the options that came up was bullying. Jim had some rules for what kind of fables he wanted. Bad things have to happen for a reason, but nobody can die (unless a mountain lion decides on a snack). He wants stories like Aesop’s that are generally mild, rather than the scare-you-strict tales of the Brothers Grimm.

You can read more on his website at [fairymountainfarms.com](http://fairymountainfarms.com) or [jimkiggins@fairymountainfarms.com](mailto:jimkiggins@fairymountainfarms.com).

Ridge Writers hopes that some of its members will be contributing to this fascinating project.



Debbie Kiggins enjoys her husband’s talk.

# A True Original

From p. 2

You see the world totally independent from everyone else. You feel things in a way that is uniquely yours. You experience life unlike the rest of us. Take those concepts we know so well and filter them through your eyes, mind, and heart, and the result will be truly yours.

Afraid of using similar ideas from others? Filter them through your own unique vision. Give different cooks the same ingredients and you won't get the same dish. Even if they all tried to cook the same thing, they wouldn't create the same meal. Because your voice is yours alone.

I view true originality as the focusing of ideas and concepts through your personal creative lens, the lens you share with no one else.

But what do you think? How do you define originality? What do you think makes a true original? Bring this up with your fellow creators and see the wonder we can produce. It's one of the most fascinating discussions I've ever had.

# Donna's Lit Cake – A Winner!



During the July 23 CWC Picnic at Joaquin Miller Park in Oakland, Margie Yee Webb (at right) presents Donna McCrohan Rosenthal with her "prestigious" Golden Fork Award. Margie, of North State Branch, chaired the Lit Cake event.

All photos from Donna

At right is a closeup of the award. All cakes needed to have literary themes, so this year Donna cleverly concocted a collection of unfinished cakes called "A Work in Progress." Our local board rep has discovered the hard way that trying to take an iced cake all the way to Oakland and have it survive the journey unscathed is pretty much impossible. Donna was Ridge Writers' only attendee this year.



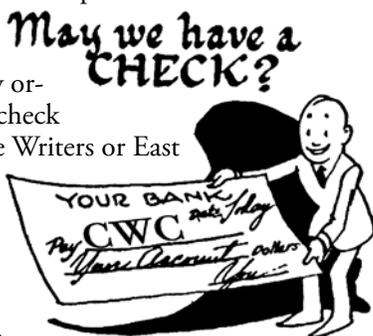
## DUE\$ ARE DUE

If you haven't paid this year's dues yet, now is the time to renew! The renewal fee for the coming year is \$45 per member.

You may pay in cash, check, or money order. Make your check payable to Ridge Writers or East Sierra Branch, CWC.

Checks or money orders may be mailed to Ridge Writers, P.O. Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA 93556. Or just bring your dues to the meeting.

You won't want to miss the renewal deadline of Sept. 30 because joining again will cost you that new member rate of \$65.



Enjoying the park's shade and one another's company are outgoing CWC President David George (center), incoming President Joyce Krieg (at the microphone) and other writers and guests in attendance.

# The WEIRD WEEKEND STORYTELLING COMPETITION Is Almost Upon Us

**R**idge Writers, the East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club, will hold its third annual storytelling competition in conjunction with the Sept. 23-24 Weird Weekend in Ridgecrest. The two-day event celebrates the stranger side of the desert — aliens, lost gold mines, apparitions, Bigfoot sightings, objects moving when they shouldn't, and an assortment of eerie tales.

The contest will take place on Saturday, Sept. 24, starting at 2 p.m. in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores Ave.

Advance sign-up at Red Rock Books (760-375-3454, 206 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.) is strongly encouraged but not mandatory. Prizes will be awarded, together with the concomitant bragging rights.

The rules:

1. The story must be original and written by you
2. It must be in good taste.
3. It cannot run longer than 5-7 minutes.
4. It must relate to the stranger side of the desert.
5. Truth is optional.

Admission is \$5 and includes participation in the competition for those who want to read, provided that the rules are observed. Last year was wonderful, and we even got a super new member (Julie Bradford) out of it. So start thinking up your weird tale now!

Two other Weird Weekend activities round out the festivities – actress Stevie Taken as Mary Shelley, “When Frankenstein Was Science” (plus tea and scones) on Friday Sept. 23, 2.p.m. at My Enchanted Cottage; and the Daniel Stallings-C. R. Rowenson interactive murder mystery *Pauper's Grave*, Saturday Sept. 24, 7:30 p.m. at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church.

Here's a reminder of the success of the 2014 Weird Weekend creation by Daniel Stallings and C. R. Rowenson. In this shot (courtesy of Daniel), our two authors (at right) entertain questions from a lively audience.



# The Pupstetrician

by Francine Wersan  
Feb. 16, 1989

Judy, our whippet, was pacing back and forth between the kitchen and the family room. How graceful she looked in her advanced condition.

All was ready. Soft blankets had been arranged in the family room. A pot of boiling water was waiting in the kitchen. Steve, who willingly served as husband and father, now prepared to assume the role of “pupstretician.”

“Is it time yet?” asked one of our daughters. “Yes, very soon, I think,” he answered in his most professional manner.

We all tried to return to our regular weekday morning duties, but were unable to concentrate on our tasks and kept running back and forth to see how Judy was doing. Going to school for the kids and reporting to work for Steve were certainly not uppermost on their minds.

After all, this was a first-time experience for all of us, and we wanted it to go well. Our expectant mom was from a long line of purebreds, and her offspring were already spoken for.

As we waited for Judy to go into labor, my husband and I recalled the day we had first met her.

Our family had gone to a Kennel Club-sponsored dog show. I always watched our local paper for activities that sounded interesting. We had never been to such an event before, and our daughters, aged 5, 9, 11, and 13, were very excited as we prepared to leave the house.

As we were parking our station wagon, we observed every variety of dog being unloaded from their car carriers.

While walking toward the show area, we saw dogs patiently perched on



Judy the whippet in a photo taken in May 1968. Fran Wersan shared this photo with Ridge Writers to illustrate her story, written on Feb. 16, 1989.

tables to receive last-minute grooming from their owners or handlers.

Our daughters were especially attracted to a particular group of sleek-bodied whippets. Their breeder, seeing our interest, stopped her grooming duties to chat with us.

Laura wanted to know about this breed of racing dog. “How fast can they run?” she asked. “Could you teach me how to race them?” The woman smiled at her enthusiasm and gave us her card and an invitation to come to her home after the show when she could give us more time.

We stayed for the show, concentrating our attention on the “fun matches.” These contests were not as competitive or stressful as the regular events. Also, many young people were participating with their own pets, learning how to best display their animals’ good features.

Laura, we could see, was really hooked. She eagerly followed every step from set-up of an animal to final

judging. “Daddy, could I get a dog and be in a show?” she asked. Her sisters just listened, but I could see the same question in their eyes.

After the show, we visited the breeder, and as we approached her yard, we saw her current litters of about 20 pups all running and jumping about, vying for our attention.

From the bevy of beautiful babies bounced our Judy. She was all black except for a white star on her breast. The other pups disappeared from our view as we watched Laura kneel down and embrace this bold, brown-eyed beauty.

My husband and I knew that we had just increased our family number to seven.

All the way home, Laura held this small, warm body in her lap as she planned aloud how she would take care of her new companion.

“Mom, can Judy sleep with me?” she pleaded. “Can I have that extra

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# Pupstetrician

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blanket you don't use anymore? Dad, can we stop at the store for some dog food? And will you increase my allowance so I can enter Judy in a dog show?"

Well, all of Laura's dreams came true, even those of her sisters who always wanted to do everything Laura did. They showed Judy in "fun matches" and even brought home some ribbons.

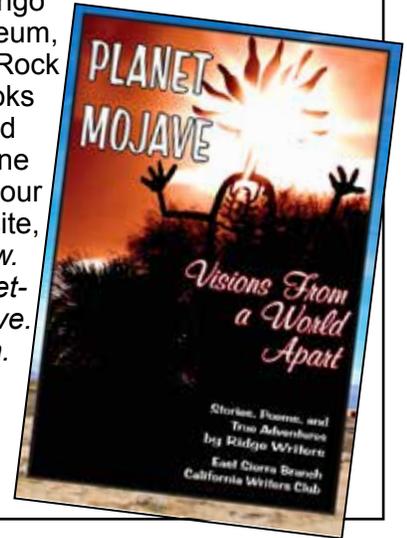
Breaking through our reverie, Judy's moans signaled that she was about to deliver.

My husband, the pupstretician, removed the membrane sac from each pup as they were delivered, 15 to 20 minutes apart. She delivered eight pups and these seemed to be four pairs of identical twins.

Between deliveries, Judy went to her water bowl and drank deeply. Laura was busy keeping the water bowl full.

Later that evening, we talked about this unique experience, reviewing each moment again, and we laughed as we recalled five-year old Elena's declaration as the first puppy was born. "Daddy, they all come in baggies!"

Our book *Planet Mojave: Visions From a World Apart* is available at Jawbone Canyon Station, the Historic USO Building, the Maturation Museum, Red Rock Books and online from our website, [www.planet-mojave.com](http://www.planet-mojave.com).



**T**he 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.

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