



Writers
of the

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

July 2016

Goats, Literature, and Surprises

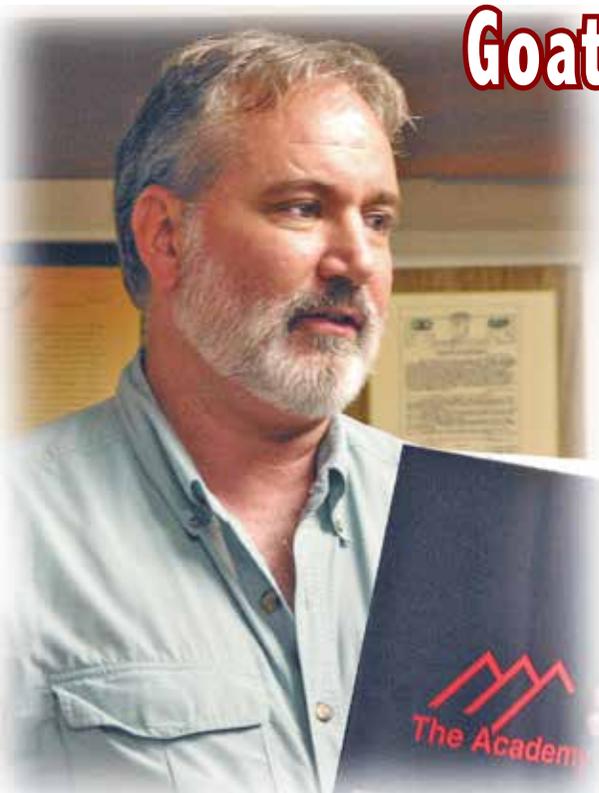
The always enterprising Jim Kiggins will appear at our Thursday, July 7, meeting to speak on “The Literary Goat and World-Building (and a Few Surprises).” Our meeting begins, as usual, 6:30 p.m. in the Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church meeting room, 633 W. Las Flores Ave.

Come hear Jim share tales, adventures, and insights, including some thoughts on the fascinating role of goats in literature and how writers can incorporate goat lore in the world-building aspects that reside at the core of science fiction and fantasy creation.

If you’ve been in our branch for a while, you may remember Jim’s talk in 2002, back when he chaired the Cerro Coso Community College Media Arts Department. And you may remember that he and his wife Debbie hosted us twice for readings at their Sequoia Studio in Weldon as part of our October celebration of National Writers Week.

In the intervening years, the Kiggins left the area, so Jim could continue his career in CGI and game development. Still a game developer, he recently came home to the South Fork of the Kern River to add goat ranching to his portfolio.

See page 4



Jim Kiggins speaks at a 2002 Ridge Writers meeting. Photo by Liz

Report on June Meeting

by Robert Mariner

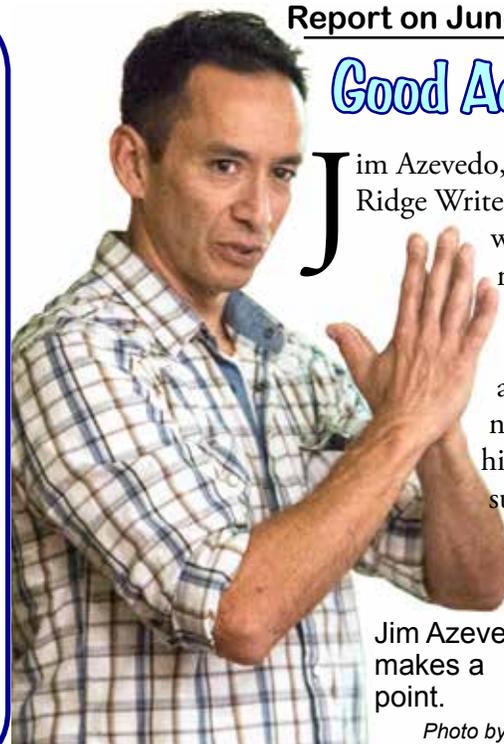
Good Advice for Indie Writers

Jim Azevedo, featured speaker for the June 2 meeting of Ridge Writers, serves as Marketing Director for Smashwords, an on-line eBook publisher and retailer.

During his presentation, Jim briefly introduced himself, then walked his audience through his personal entrepreneurial history in Silicon Valley, including his initial contact with Mark Corker, his subsequent successful efforts in the high-tech field, then his reuniting with Corker to promote and represent Smashwords.

Jim then explained Smashwords’ goals, and finally went through a presentation of how an indie writer

See p. 7



Jim Azevedo makes a point.

Photo by Liz

Mark Your Calendar . . .

Open Mic Night

Aug. 4, 6:30 p.m.
Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church

Here’s our annual opportunity for members and the public to share their brief, entertaining writings (no longer than 5-7 minutes, please). Members, please also bring finger food for everyone to nibble on.

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!

Imagining Underwear (and Other Myths About **STAGE FRIGHT**)



Perhaps this self-portrait Daniel shared in 2011 illustrates the concept?

Photo courtesy of Daniel Stallings

You're probably reading my President's Note right now with a small frown on your face, wondering what stage fright has to do with writing.

The truth is that writers have to be much more public and active with their readers and customers today than they had to even 20 years ago. With the decline of publisher-paid book tours and expensive publicists and the rise of digital publishing making it easier to get your books out there, authors today have to take on the roles of media personalities if they ever hope to make a sale.

This can be outright terrifying for some. I know. Believe me, I know.

Creative people are very often an introverted or introspective species. We cherish our solitude, our "Me Time," to create, to process, to dream, to invent, to solve, and to solidify the stories in our hearts and heads. We need that time to recharge and evaluate. It's vital to our emotional and creative well-being.

Nevertheless, we have to learn to become public figures, even in the smallest of ways. To be successful as a writer, you need to put your work out there. You need to share. Authors give public readings or lectures. And as ever, putting your work out there means putting yourself out there. That thought can paralyze even the most talented individuals.

And that's okay. It's perfectly natural to be afraid to share something so deeply personal to you. It means opening yourself up to the world. You just can't let the fear own you.

I know that's a heap of clichés I've just thrown at you, but I want to see all of our members shine as creative superstars. I don't want stage fright, the fear of judgment, to stand in your way. I myself am terrified before every Ridge Writers meeting. Because I have to stand up there and talk about Ridge Writers business in front of faces who want me to hurry up so they can hear the speaker. My heart races every meeting. I'm only human. And despite my theatrical background, I am not fond of acting. It means being vulnerable. And vulnerability is something I fear. So I am really familiar with stage fright.

Here's what I've done to fight it.

Recognize that stage fright doesn't disappear just like that. It takes work. And even then, some of the most prolific presenters and performers still have stage fright. It's something you work with and work through in order to get the job done. Rehearse or prepare if you can. The more you practice, the better you'll feel about the material. Before the meeting or presentation or reading,

See p. 4

Ridge Writers Leaders

President — Daniel Stallings

Vice President — Julianne Black

Secretary — Donna McCrohan

Rosenthal

Treasurer — Andrew Sound



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

Visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/RidgeWriters and our website at CWC-ridgewriters.org

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- The author's name and original publication credit must be printed with the text.
- The text must be printed in its entirety, without additions or changes.
- 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.

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.

Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, shown at our June meeting, holds a list of the five people who agreed to run for open positions on the Ridge Writers board — four incumbents, plus Andrew Sound, a relatively new member who has a lot of experience as a treasurer for the Historical Society (hurrah!). Needless to say, the slate was elected by acclamation. In July, when the new CWC year begins, the board will vote on which of these people will fill which positions. We're lucky these generous members have agreed to run — that means we can look forward to another year of innovative and creative activities! And speaking of the new fiscal year, now is the time to pay your dues. See the announcement on page 5.

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

◆◆◆ Announcements ◆◆◆

There are still a few days during which you can enter the **Central Coast Writers Contest**. It's part of the **32nd Annual Central Coast Writers Conference**. The theme of the contest is "The Final Word," and all entries are expected to interpret this theme. Categories include Short Fiction (1,000–2,000 words), Poetry (up to 40 lines), Flash Fiction (up to 500 words, and (a new category) Screenwriting (up to 20 pages).

You may enter more than one category, and the contest deadline is **July 15**. For information about submission guidelines and fees, see www.CCWritersContest.com.



Here's a great excuse to take a trip to Hawaii! The **Kauai Writers Conference** will take place **Nov. 4–6** and will be preceded by **Master Classes, Oct. 31–Nov. 3**. The conference days are billed as being packed with presentations by best-selling authors, top publishing agents, and publishing professionals. You can attend these two events separately or together. Questions? Go to kauaiwritersconference.com.



Literal Latte, an online journal for prose, poetry, and art (and a beautiful website at www.literallatte.com) offers a po-

etry contest with generous awards (\$1,000, \$300, and \$200) for unpublished poems, 200 words maximum. There's a \$10 reading fee for a set of up to six poems, with a \$15 fee for up to 10 poems (can't beat that!), and all poems will be considered for publication.

For guidelines and a way to submit the poems, please go to www.literal-latte.com/contests/poetry-awards/. Hurry, though! The deadline for submission is **July 15**.



The **Ridgecrest Branch Library** has a variety of fun-sounding events lined up for this month. First off, for some ideas for summer reading, check out the Spy List in the **Spy Display Case**.

An activity that sounds well worth attending will be **STEM-Tastic Day** starting at **1:30 p.m.** on **July 8** and **July 22**. These events are for all ages. Great to see our library making lemonade from the lemon handed Kern County voters in the form of nonpassage of the small tax for the county's libraries.



Got a book you'd like to market to other writers? The CWC Bulletin (not the same thing as the Literary Review) offers opportunities to purchase ads. See calwriters.org/advertising-in-the-bulletin/.

Goats, Literature, and Surprises

From p. 1

Today Fairy Mountain Farms Goats, operated by Jim and Debbie, specializes in soaps, lotions, and artisanal “Moroccan Date” Chevre cheese, and has a booth at the Ridgecrest Farmers Market on Sundays.

They launched their effort with eight Nubian goats. The herd has grown, and its award-winning lineage and registration allow Fairy Mountain Farms to support local education in that kids born each year can go to FFA and 4H families.

“When our does get older and retire from the milking line, they will live out their days on the farm as store mascots and assisting with landscaping,” declares their website *fairymountainfarms.com*, “and every goat has a name and a story.”

Admission is free, and please do bring your friends.



Debbie and Jim Kiggins at their Weldon studio, October 2002. Photo by Liz

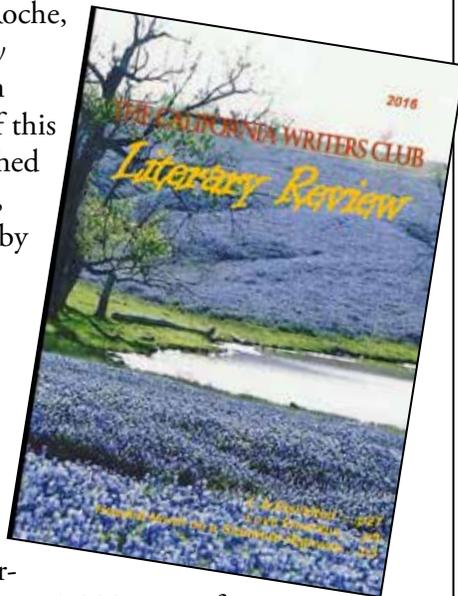
News About the CWC Literary Review

According to Dave LaRoche, editor of the *CWC Literary Review*, members will soon receive the 2016 edition of this anthology, which is published yearly and contains stories, essays, and poetry written by CWC members.

The upcoming edition will be the fifth *Review* produced by CWC volunteers and published by the central board.

LaRoche said this year's *Review* will offer member-authors the opportunity “to be read by well over 2,000 pairs of eyes.”

The submission window for the 2017 issue will open from Sept. 1 through Nov. 30. Guidelines will appear on www.calwriters.org. Each member may submit two items for this issue, with a \$10 submission fee for one or two items. LaRoche encourages all members to submit.



Imagining Underwear

From p. 2

take time to yourself. Use your recharge time. Don't reflect on what you're about to do. Just relax.

Once at the meeting, talk to the people around you. This way, they stop being strangers and reduce the feeling of performing in front of an anonymous mass. Stand up straight. Just put your shoulders back, lift your chin, keep your hands at your sides, and take a deep breath. You'll feel better, trust me.

Project your voice nice and loud on your greeting and smile. This will take the tension in your body and project it out of your body in the form of sound. Try it. It works. I do it every meeting. My hello is big and loud to diminish the tension, and I feel more relaxed. Then I can do my job properly.

And don't imagine anyone in their underwear. I have never heard that work.

Ridge Writers will have several opportunities for our members to share their work — August Open Mike Night, Weird Weekend Storytelling Contest, the annual holiday party — and we want to enjoy all of your talents. If you're thinking of reading, I say go for it. Then put your shoulders back, take a deep breath, and let us have it. I'm always on your side.

KUDOS

Lola DeMaci has discovered a way to deal with mourning her husband Bernard. “I do believe I’m writing my way through my grief ... one word at a time,” she wrote recently.

Here are some of her recent accomplishments:

- A story in the May issue of *Sasee* magazine — “Autumn’s Rain.”
- A story in *Soul Survivors: From Trauma to Triumph* — “The Other Side of the Stars.” — published in June.
- A story in *Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Power of Gratitude* -- “A Teacher’s Echo” — release date of Aug. 23.

“And now I’m on to my next project: *The Power of the Pen. Healing.*”



Julianne DiBlasi Black has learned that her book *Sleep Sweet* has won an Honorable Mention in the Picture Books 5 & Younger category of the prestigious Purple Dragonfly Book Awards Contest.

“Winning any place in the Purple Dragonfly Contest is a huge honor because in order to maintain the integrity of the Dragonfly Book Awards, a minimum score is required before a First or Second place or Honorable Mention will be awarded to the entrant – even if it is the sole entry in a category,” said Linda F. Radke, president of Five Star Publications, the sponsor of the awards. “Competition is steep, too, because there is no publication date limit as long as the book is still in print.”

Five Star’s press release describes *Sleep Sweet* as “a gentle bedtime book for all ages that has recently been released in 3D through a digital application for mobile devices called Spellbound AR. The book retails for \$11.99 and can be purchased at *Amazon.com*.”



Our esteemed president, **Daniel Stallings**, is the subject of a wonderful online interview by Maia Chance, national bestselling mystery author. Go to *www.maiachance.com* and you’ll learn some new, highly entertaining and well-expressed things about Daniel, including his favorite food and his favorite place to read, as well as his favorite mystery authors.

In case you’re wondering about that favorite food: it’s his mother’s Bratkartoffeln. Read it, and your mouth will water!

Dean: My new thesaurus is terrible.

Jean: How bad is it?

Dean: It’s terrible!

(shared by Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
from the AARP Bulletin)

Critique Group

The next meeting of Ridge Writers’ Critique Group, run by Daniel Stallings and C.R. Rowenson, is set for July 8 at Beanster’s Lounge.

The meeting will start at 6:30 p.m. I don’t know what the plans are for this particular meeting — but I do know that these events are always fun and offer challenging learning experiences. — *ed.*

CWC Picnic

The California Writers Club’s popular annual picnic in Oakland’s Joaquin Miller Park is coming up on July 23, 1-4 p.m.

Free hamburgers and fixin’s will be available, as will tableware. Each participant should bring a side dish, appetizer, salad, or dessert to share, plus drinks. In keeping with the spirit of the CWC founders, beer and wine are permitted.

An Open Mic (3-minute limit) will be featured as will a Lit Cake Competition.

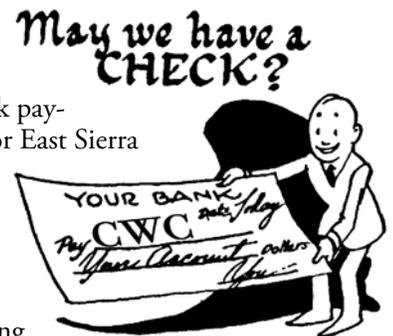
For more particulars and directions to the park, see *calwriters.org/cwc-annual-picnic-2016/*.

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.



can go from unpublished to published in a few easy steps using Smashwords' services.

While Jim's personal history of association with Mark Corker (founder and CEO of Smashwords) was fascinating, entertaining and fairly typical of Silicon Valley's more successful business ventures, the real value of his presentation for us Ridge Writers was contained in two very specific points.

First, writing professionally as an indie author is serious business, and needs to be regarded as such. And second, a point Jim stressed — invest in a good editor!

Obviously, we as writers have to produce material that readers will want to purchase. That is entirely up to us, as it should be. But then, if we try to get our work published through the traditional steps of getting an agent who will represent us to brick-and-mortar publishers of traditional hard-copy books on paper, most of us run out of luck.

Dozens, hundreds of letters to agents go unanswered or answered with computer-generated form letters almost invariably presenting us with one or another variety of "we're not interested, go away." Mark Corker went through that process, with every major New York publisher saying "No."

Twice.

Rejection is no one's friend, so Mark did something about it, founding the company called Smashwords (www.smashwords.com/) so he could, and now we indie writers can, easily our finished, ready-for-publication manuscripts out of our computers, CDs, thumb drives or desk drawers and into the wide wild world where actual readers can find them and perchance buy them in Ebook form.

Smashwords provides the indie writer with conversion services from Microsoft Word .doc files (preferably from Microsoft Office 2003) to

Our speaker offers helpful remarks about what to do in an age when screens are the new paper.

Photomontage
by Liz



common formats used by most of the world's e-readers. It also provides distribution of Ebooks to a wide array of retailers worldwide (except in closed societies such as North Korea).

Smashwords does not offer editing services nor does it provide advertising and publicity; those remain our responsibility. Smashwords provides a free online Style Guide to walk us through the steps of making our finished manuscripts able to be processed by Smashwords' conversion software called "Meatgrinder," which renders our files into the more common e-reader formats in use today.

For those who may find the instructions or the process intimidating, the Smashwords website provides lists of individuals who will, for a fee, prepare our manuscripts in a form that can be successfully converted by Meatgrinder.

(Follow the steps outlined in the Style Guide! They work.)

Jim also stressed the importance of having a good cover for any book, and that we keep in mind that the cover must be interesting — and legible — when its image is shrunk down for display at any online Ebook retailer. (While Smashwords does not provide cover artists, it does have a list

of artists who will, for a fee, generate cover artwork.) Jim urged us all to go online to Ebook retailers and examine the covers shown in their listings to gain a proper appreciation of what is selling now and why.

At the end of his presentation, Jim provided, free for the asking, thumb drives that included the slideshow accompanying his presentation, and a folder containing Smashwords' "Ebook Publishing Toolkit." The toolkit folder includes several documents including the Style Guide, some of which are provided in .epub, .mobi, and .pdf format. These are all extremely valuable resources for those of us new to publishing Ebooks; read them with care.

Jim encouraged us to study the Style Guide and if we are interested in publishing through Smashwords, to make a copy of a fairly small portion of a manuscript and learn the steps using that portion. Trying to learn the steps while dealing with a large document can be a daunting process, but once mastered those steps become fairly easy.

(Robert Mariner — pen name for Robert R. Budlong — has published two science-fiction novels through Smashwords.)

THE SUBMISSION GRINDER

by C. R. Rowenson

MY "STORY"

More than anything, trying to sell my short stories was a massive time-sink. I spent hours hunting for fiction magazines, checking their records, reading reviews, and generally trying to figure out if they were legitimate or not. Markets identified, I wrote cover letters, formatted documents, and mailed them in.

Wave after wave of stories delivered out into the invisible network of the Internet, each carrying a sliver of hope.

Next came the onslaught of rejection letters. I'm not going to lie — they were painful, but I was persistent. More and more emails and submissions were sent only to meet with more rejection. Then I hit the true disaster.

There were no markets left to try.

Sure, I hadn't used every single one, but few seemed to match the tone of my story. If there is one thing magazine editors hate, it is authors that don't follow the guideline. So what was I supposed to do?

With nowhere to send it, the story could still be posted on my website, but that wasn't the fate I yearned for. There had to be something. Sure enough, while searching for new markets, I stumbled across an intriguing link. Thus I found the Submission Grinder.

WHAT IS IT?

Enough with the monologuing. The Submission Grinder is a market database and submission tracker for writers. The website currently has nearly 4,500 fiction markets listed, over 25% of which are currently accepting submissions. The site is still currently in the Beta phase, but it is amazing.

You can find the website by googling "Submission Grinder."

Pro Tip: don't just search for "Grinder." Trust me on this one, you won't end up at the right site and you will likely want to clear your browser history. So, yeah. "Submission Grinder." Both words. Don't skimp.

In order to get maximum functionality, you do have to create an account, but let's be honest, where don't you have to create an account these days? However, an account is not necessary to access useful information. You are still

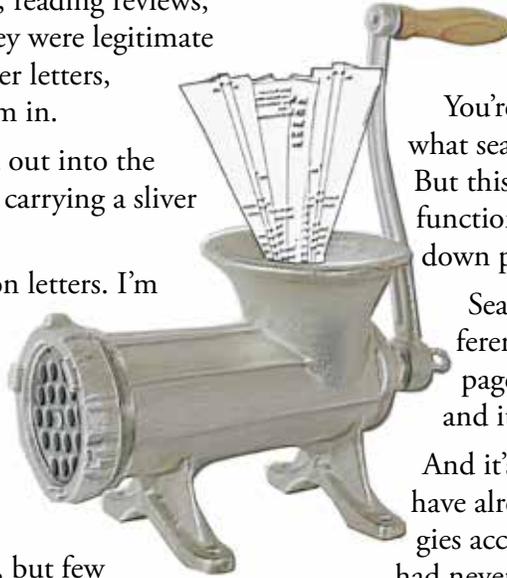
free to browse the massive catalogue of fiction markets using the site's awesome advanced-search function.

Have I not mentioned the search yet? You select the desired information from a number of fields (such as genre, pay scale, and story length), hit search, and bam. Instant list.

You're probably thinking, "Well, duh, that's what search functions do," and you're not wrong. But this is the first time I have seen a search function so perfectly optimized for hunting down places to sell fiction.

Search completed, you can browse the different markets to your heart's content, each page containing links to the original website and its particular submission guidelines.

And it's not just magazines the site covers. I have already used this site to find several anthologies accepting submissions as well as a contest I had never heard of. And that's just the free part.



RECORDING YOUR STORIES

By this time I was already waist deep in this wonderful pool of information, splashing about like a baby otter. Then I found there was even more to the site.

Honestly, all of this would be faster if you just went and checked it out, but I already have you hear so let's explore this, shall we?

Once you have created your account you will gain access to another two features of the website. One is a place where you record your stories and their metadata and the other is there specifically to track your submissions.

You will have to start by recording a story, filling in the boxes about genre, word count, and a few other things. You may be tempted to skip this, or leave the boxes blank, but you absolutely should not. Filling in the data will make your life so much easier in the trials to come.

Story recorded (note that at no time are you required to upload your actual story to this site), you may now begin searching for markets. In fact, there is a special button that will take the data of your story and generate an advanced search based on its parameters. Now all you have to do is submit to the market (following their guidelines of course), and record the submission on your account.

Cool, right? Now for the really awesome part.

See p. 8

SUBMISSION GRINDER — From p. 7

THE SUBMISSION TRACKER

Let's say you dove straight in, grey matter first, and have already submitted over a dozen stories through the grinder. If any of you have submitted short fiction, you know how complicated this can become.

You have to keep track of which stories have been submitted to which markets, who gave you rejections, who accepts reprints, how long have you been waiting, and likely a few other things I am forgetting. It gets to be a handful in a hurry. You could track it all through a spreadsheet. OR, you could use this awesome website I have been ranting about for the past 800 words.

Every submission that you register is tracked for your records. At any time you can see which stories are out waiting for a response, and which are still free to be submitted. And this only gets better the more you use it. Once a submission is rejected, you can immediately begin searching for a new home. You go through the same process, but the website will automatically exclude any markets that the piece has already been sent too.

I think I have ranted enough by now. I love this website, even if it has done nothing but get me more rejections. So please, go check it out, and I wish you the best of luck.

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 Perplexing Language

- ❖ “Appear” and “disappear” are opposites, but “appoint” and “disappoint” are not.
- ❖ “Flammable” and “inflammable” mean the same thing.
- ❖ A “wise man” is nothing like a “wise guy.”
- ❖ A “preteen” is not yet a teenager, but “precooked” food is already cooked.

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, www.planetmojave.com.



Inside...

Page 1:

July Program: Jim Kiggins
Report on June Meeting by
Robert Mariner

Page 2:

President's Notes by Daniel
Stallings
Ridge Writers Leaders

Page 3:

Jack London Award Winners
Announcements
Results of Annual Election

Page 4:

News About the CWC Literary
Review

Page 5:

Kudos
Critique Group
Dues Are Due

Page 7:

“The Submission Grinder” by
C. R. Rowenson

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