



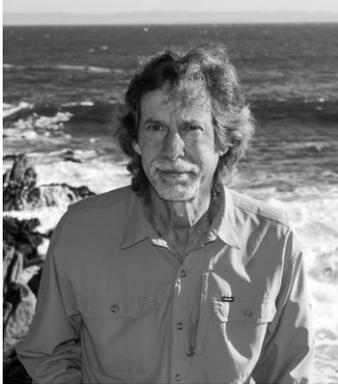
*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

June 2018



June Meeting Looks at Living and Writing on The Edge

For our June 7 meeting, Kim Steinhardt will share thought-provoking observations from a lifetime growing up along the California coast, including colorful personal anecdotes, along with historical, legal, and political insights – as well as how his recent book, *The Edge*, emerged from that experience. He will also discuss what it was like for an attorney and a scientist to write together on topics as varied as science and philosophy. The talk will be illustrated with some of his award-winning photographs.

A former Administrative Law Judge turned environmental author and marine wildlife photographer, he delivers popular talks on ocean conservation, sea otters, and the sometimes-troubled relationship between humans and nature. He writes frequently about these topics, and his photographs and storytelling have been recognized by National Geographic Books, as well as in his recent book *The Edge: The Pressured Past and Precarious Future of California's Coast*, co-authored with marine expert Gary Griggs. Kim also teaches law courses on legislation, emphasizing ocean protection and advocacy.

Please join us on June 7, 6:30 p.m., in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. The public is invited and admission is free. Bring your friends!

May program – Timothy Burgess Reveals “My Character Made Me Do It” reported by Julie Bradford

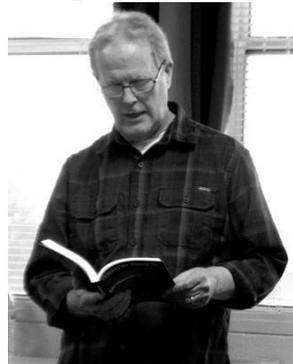
Timothy Burgess had an epiphany. For years he considered himself a "plot first" writer. He structured his stories using standard characters and plot twists that were fun to write but didn't sell. "I call it writing for *Lost* because I had all these great plot twists. Then I realized I was doing plot twists for the sake of doing plot twists."

That's when Burgess decided to let the characters do the leading. "Things happened in the book that I never wanted to happen. It was a bizarre experience. You think you're in control but you're not." Tim Burgess realized he was a "character first" writer.

In his debut novel, *The Never-Ending Swell: A Liam Sol Mystery*, Burgess delivers a sensory experience of the Southern California surfer scene, set in the late 1960s. He chose that time period for its "veneer of innocence," as he calls it, and because 1967 is before the modern tech age. In fact, he's not a fan of technology. "I still use a flip phone!"

Burgess grew up in the San Gabriel Valley surrounded by the surfing lifestyle, and although he isn't a surfer himself, he appreciates the culture. "I wanted to explore the soulful side of the surfer." Thus the character of Liam Sol emerged, a surfer-turned-amateur detective trying to solve the mystery of his father's murder.

Burgess selected a piece to read from his novel that immersed the listener in the casual California lifestyle of a beach restaurant surrounded by Santa Ana winds, then contrasted that atmosphere with the restless energy of his main character, Liam Sol.



Mark Your Calendar...

July 5 – **Open Mic** with readings by members and the public, and refreshments to delight the palate. Original material, in good taste, 5-7 minutes in length

Aug. 2 – **Amy E. Wallen**, essayist and an author of the memoir *When We Were Ghouls*.



What Will Happen If I Mix This with That?

Something I have been telling my actors as we prepare for my upcoming interactive mystery book signing at Red Rock Books is that I want them to feel free to start experimenting. During a production, the first few weeks are filled with crazy progress where actors get to know each other and their characters, learn their movements, get comfortable with their lines, and so on.

Then it stagnates as we just repeat, repeat, repeat to get those parts memorized. A final burst of amazing progress happens as we get off book and the actors start experimenting with their delivery. I've always encouraged this, because in those experiments we find moments of genius.

I have found that this happens in writing too. We start off with lots of ideas and plotting and inspiration. Then we sit down to write and it's just a case of getting out what you have in your head. But you shouldn't be afraid to experiment, to try a new approach, to examine a new genre, character, plot structure, style. These experiments stretch your ability as a creator, show you your weaknesses, build your strengths. Writing should be about learning as well as creating. Every piece is a new opportunity. Writing is an almost alchemical process – mix a little of this and that and “Whoa watch out for this crazy idea” and poof! Lead into gold!

One of our Ridge Writer members, who stuck steadfastly to memoir, took a major leap of faith on my request and wrote a mystery script for my company. It was a whole new genre, a whole new style, just everything was new and scary to her. But in the end – I kid you not – it ended up being one of the best mysteries I've read in a long time. She took a chance, experimented, pushed herself, and produced magic.

Get out there and try something new. We've got our Weird Storytelling Contest coming up on Saturday, September 22 as part of Weird Weekend and I want to see you all out there with your amazing stories. All you need to do is set the story in the area and let your imagination run wild. Feel free to experiment and push yourself. You just might turn lead into gold.

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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.

The southern region of the California Writers Club maintains the “zine”-format socalwritersshowcase.com, containing monthly content from members, ranging from fiction, nonfiction/essays, and memoir, to poetry, interviews, discussion on writers' life and the craft, and news.



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.
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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.

May speaker report continued from p. 1

That's not how Burgess intended to write the character, at first. Liam started out as a wisecracking rich kid with snappy one-liners until Burgess realized that Liam was responding differently to the plot. "I didn't know where I was going until the characters told me."

The new Tim Burgess doesn't write character sketches anymore. "I just have ideas about them because sketches might limit me. I don't want to map it out because it's boring."

His advice to aspiring writers is to listen to your characters, and don't worry about writing rubbish. A dismal first draft is better than no first draft. "Don't stop writing your crap. Save it and don't get rid of it. If you edit too much, your writing will be stunted. Save it because it may work for another story."

For now, two additional Liam Sol mysteries are in the works but be warned, "I like those ambiguous endings," Burgess confesses. "Liam doesn't surf off into the sunset. He has some stuff to work out."

No one is more surprised than the author himself. "Sometimes writing it is like reading it. What's going to happen next?"

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
 Julianne DiBlasi Black 2017

*With a special
 Charmian London Award
 to Fran Wersan

Read the Book, Meet the Author (Summer Edition)

Ordinarily, the May gathering would have finished off this popular annual Ridge Writers spring series. But now, Amy Wallen – originally scheduled for April – will visit on August 2, 2:00 p.m. Participants buy and read the selected title in advance so that they can discuss it with its creator over tea and scones at My Enchanted Cottage, 214 W. Ridgecrest Blvd.



The afternoon program includes the book, tea, scone, conversation with the author, autograph, and entry in a door prize drawing. Tickets are available, \$35 per ticket at Red Rock Books, 206 W. Ridgecrest Blvd., 760-375-3454. Amy will give a different talk in the evening for the Ridge Writers general meeting.

"There is nothing to writing.
 All you do is sit down
 at a typewriter and bleed."
 — Ernest Hemingway

These reached our desk. Although we cannot formally and officially endorse them, they merit your attention.

New Millennium Writings Awards in Poetry, Fiction, Flash Fiction,

Nonfiction: Eligibility: All writers; Prize: \$1,000; Entry Fee: \$20; Deadline: June 30, 2018.

Los Angeles Review Awards: Eligibility: All writers; Prize: \$1,000 + publication; Entry Fee: \$20
 Deadline: June 30, 2018

BOOKS GALORE and A FAIR CHANCE OF BEING THE BEST...

Ridgecrest Branch Library Summer Book Sale, Saturday, June 23

The Friends of the Library will feature vintage books published before 1949 plus cookbooks, biographies, literature, and much more.

Members only: 8-9 a.m. Open to all 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Membership and renewals available at the door for \$5.

1301 N. Norma
("Old Albertson's" parking lot)

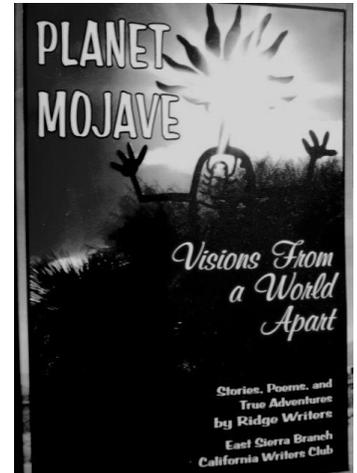
The East Sierra Branch (Ridge Writers) is the California Writers Club branch serving the eastern part of Kern County. Over the mountains on the west side of the county is our Bakersfield-based sister branch, Writers of Kern.



Your Writing Could Win at the 2018 Desert Empire Fair

If you excel at Creative Writing and/or have a skill, craft, or hobby, consider competing to win a Best of Show, Best of Division Award, Board of Directors Award, or the Howard Laire Appreciation of the Arts Award. Among other categories and divisions: photography, baked goods, fine arts, quilts, collections, preserves, and table place settings.

Anyone can enter: juniors up to 19, adults 20-65, and seniors 65 and older. The fair runs October 19-21. The deadline for Creative Writing is September 21. Check out the guidebook at desertempirefair.com; click on the link. The new guidebook posts in early summer 2018, but don't wait to plan how you might participate. For more information: Desert Empire Fair office, 520 Richmond Road, Ridgecrest, California, 760-375-8000.



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

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**The Ridge Writers
East Sierra Branch
California Writers Club
P.O. Box 484
Ridgecrest, CA 93556**