



*Writers
of the*

PURPLE SAGE

Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

January 2022

KELCEY NORTON SPEAKS ON BECOMING A FANTASY AUTHOR FOR JANUARY 6 MEETING

Local novelist Kelsey Norton will talk about “Becoming a Fantasy Author” at our January 6 meeting, Thursday evening, 6:30 p.m. in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Public welcome. No charge for admission. Masks required.

Aiming her spellbinding tales at the YA market (and some younger as well as older readers), Kelsey sets her tales in the Dells, a land of humans and mystics. Mystics have differently colored streaks in their hair, each hue revealing their individual powers: magic, light, emotions, and others. Blue, yellow, pink, and so on. But Alina, born with a red streak, poses a quandary because nobody ever had a red streak before. Kelsey explores a maze of questions of identity, self-acceptance, and self-doubt throughout Alina’s story. Ultimately, the message emerges that we should understand our power even if we don’t think we have any.

Now hard at work on her third book, Kelsey feels that she always had a flare for imagination. She started writing in the third grade, with a yarn about how a skunk got its stripe. In fact, she says, “I essentially wrote if for myself at 14. I would have wanted a book like this.” You can find her first two books, *Dragon Scale Prophecies: Truth* and *Dragon Scale Prophecies: Courage* available at Red Rock Books and online from Amazon. We hope to see you at our January meeting.

LET’S HAVE A HOLIDAY: RIDGE WRITERS HOLIDAY PARTY **Report on the December Meeting written by Daniel Stallings**

Ridge Writers hosted our annual holiday party with a Dickensian twist



This year's holiday craft: Yarn wreaths, courtesy of kits designed and made by Margit Stallings

this year. We blended traditions of the member party with the popular Dickens tea to create a new experience for everyone. We styled it as a dessert and hot cocoa party with plated desserts, cookies, bottles of sparkling cider, and a carafe full of hot cocoa.

Then came our traditional member readings, and we had three lovely entries from members new and veteran. Linda Saholt shared a charming holiday memory. Gerry Wisdom was inspired by our November “Letters from Abandoned Characters” workshop and shared a story she wrote as a letter from Mark Twain’s daughter about her father’s work. And a new member named Joanna Capazzi joined us and shared a former Facebook post-turned-moving-account of a shared moment of grief and celebration between seat neighbors on a flight. To close the reading, Ridge Writers president Daniel Stallings performed an excerpt from Charles Dickens’ short story from 1850, “A Christmas Tree,” an excerpt rhapsodizing the magic and wonder of the decorations secreted in the branches of the tree. The end of the excerpt asked us all to consider what we remembered best on the trees of our youths, so Stallings asked our members and guests present to write down the ornaments they remembered best, stories which now decorate the Ridge Writers Christmas Tree on page 3.

Mark Your Calendar...

January 6 – Kelsey Norton – “On Becoming a Fantasy Author”

February 3 – Robert Rotstein – “Legal and Copyright Aspects in Today’s Publishing”

March 3 – Jenny Margotta – Novelist and editor, author of *The Woman in Room 23*.

April 7 – David George – Author of *Grandad’s Garden: Stories of the Natural World*

May 5 – To be announced

Continued on page 3



If Memory Be the Food of Love

Forgive me, Mr. Shakespeare, for taking a little creative liberty with your immortal words. For the holidays, a friend of mine sent my handmade card with a special treat inside. She photocopied several recipes from her great grandmother—recipes dating from before the 1920's. They are over a century old! It was a fun little treat for my family, so to thank her, I typed up a favorite family recipe of ours to share with her. The gift of good food and memories.

However, I wanted to make the recipe I gave her look a little more special, so I threw it into my design program and gave it some nice fonts and a picture of the dish. But it needed something personal. So, I walked to my parents and asked them for stories about the recipe. The restaurant (long since closed) where they first had it. The traditions my family had when they ate it. And that, in turn, led to more family stories. Stories of my parents going to the Alpine Village Inn in Las Vegas not long after they got married and my dad filling up on the house-made bread before his giant steak with a GIANT baked potato—The running joke being that the waiters would “apologize” for how small the potatoes were when they were as big as your head—arrived at the table. My family visiting Leatherby's ice cream parlor when I was really little where my grandmother, excited to be a new grandma, ordered the special “Grandma's Sundae,” which was like twelve scoops of ice cream, and everyone had to abandon their own sundaes to try and help her finish it.

So, with the success of that recipe, I decided to start a family recipe book with stories and recipes from our family over the generations. My mother dug out recipes for our family's German fare from my late grandmother, and she started telling my sister and me stories about each one, stories new and old, things she may not have shared if I hadn't asked to see these old recipes. And I thought, “What a great way to get people to open up and share stories.” As chef Art Smith once said, “Food is a common thread.” All of our families have food stories and histories, old recipes passed down, funny restaurant tales. Sometimes, family and friends can be resistant to telling stories if they think the writer in the group is listening. That denies us, and the world, of great stories. *Important* stories. Food is a neutral ground. Talking about the old recipes and fun memories—the food of love—can open up doors and let you see more of those true hearts than you could get by asking straight questions. One journey leads to another, and you will find the important stories that you, as a writer, will love.

NEW MEMBER

The East Sierra Branch of the California Writers Club, lovingly known as Ridge Writers, is excited to welcome a new member to our growing family! A big welcome to Joanna Capazzi for joining our branch! We are delighted to have you joining us for 2022.

Ridge Writers Leaders

President – Daniel Stallings
Vice President – John Anderson
Secretary – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
Treasurer – Andrew Sound
Member at Large – Vacant
Historian – Maryann Butterfield
Newsletter Editor – 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.

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

SoCal Writers Showcase



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

The Writers of the Purple Sage is the monthly newsletter of the Ridge Writers, East Sierra Branch of the 109-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:

- 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 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.



Following the Dickens reading, we moved to an annual Dickens Tea favorite—the holiday craft. Each year, Margit Stallings, mother of President Daniel Stallings, creates beautiful, self-contained holiday craft kits that our guests can use to create beautiful souvenir decorations for the holidays. Past favorites have included traditional English Christmas crackers, Victorian cornucopia ornaments, Buntenteller (A German tradition of a colorful plate to hold holiday treats), ornaments striped with lacey ribbons to celebrate Victorian lace, and ornaments designed like little wintry dioramas inside miniature tart tins celebrating British mince pies. This year, Margit designed gorgeous yarn wreaths decked with glittery snowflakes and bottle brush trees. The guests and members had a blast making them and finding ways to make each wreath uniquely theirs, such as reserving glitter and sprinkling it over the whole wreath.

The holiday party is always a chance for Ridge Writers to gather, share stories, and remind us of the important of the connection between fellow wordsmiths and word lovers. After years of uncertainty, it was nice to have an opportunity to reunite, celebrate the season, share some laughs, and simply enjoy each other’s energy and company once more. It will make yet another wonderful holiday memory. We will leave you with the closing words of Charles Dickens from “A Christmas Tree,” published 1850: “[M]y thoughts are drawn back, by a fascination which I do not care to resist, to my own childhood. I begin to consider, what do we all remember best upon the branches of the Christmas Tree of our own young Christmas days, by which we climbed to real life.”

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
- John Anderson 2019
- Andrew Sound 2021

*With a special Charmian London Award to Fran Wersan

Ridge
Writers
Christmas
Tree

Holiday
Party
2021

"Bubble lights"
Terri M.

"Concave glass balls"
Andrew Sound

"A little rocking horse with red
horsehair mane and tail!"
Kathy Killinger

Tall bubble lights—watched those bubbles
go up and down for hours! Lois Lewis

"A white pipe cleaner Santa Claus. Every member
of my family had a different color." Gerry Wisdom

"The Wish Pickle. In German homes, a glass pickle ornament in
hidden in the tree, and the child who discovers it gets an extra
present. In my house, we made it a special Christmas wish instead.
Hence the Wish Pickle." Daniel Stallings

"Two specific Christmas tree ornaments from my childhood
remain in my mind: 1) Teal blue glass (metallic) with a tapered
shape and 2) Our tree topper was a silk doll angel, 1960's
style with hands folded and silk wings." Joanna Capazzi

"Four dozen homemade gingerbread angels, soldiers,
gingerbread men. My brother (age 10) and myself (12) spent days
decorating with white icing in ever more elaborate patterns.
Martha Stewart would have approved!" Rebecca George

"Angie the Christmas Tree Angel. She sat at the top of the tree and
was so cloyingly ugly that we kept hoping it would break every year,
but it never did. Despite our best efforts, she became a holiday
tradition." Donna McCrohan Rosenthal

"Gramma and Grampa often made ornaments. If we helped take down the tree and
put everything away, we got to keep the ornaments. One year, Grampa made 4"
turned wood shapes, and Gramma made dolls out of them. The Addams Family was
big that year, and my doll looked like Cousin IT, complete with yarn fur, feet shoes,
hat, and sunglasses! Great-Aunt made a garland of gummed foil stars stuck on thread
for her 3' tree. The other gramma made gingerbread cookies to decorate her tree.
They were yummy!"
Linda Saholt

The 2022 Big Moose Prize

Each year Black Lawrence Press will award The Big Moose Prize for an unpublished novel. The prize is open to new, emerging, and established writers. The winner of this contest will receive book publication, a \$1,000 cash award, and ten copies of the book. Prizes will be awarded on publication.

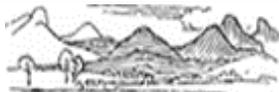
The annual deadline is January 31.

Submission fee is \$27 per entry. Submit your work through the Black Lawrence Press Submittable Page:

blacklawrencepress.submittable.com/submit

Ridge Writers does not endorse any contest, conference or publishing opportunity that appears in our newsletter. We merely collect and share news of opportunities for our membership. Member discretion advised.

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.



Poetry Summit at the San Francisco Writers Conference 2022

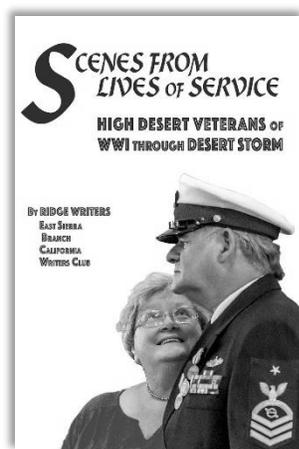
For the second time in CWC’s history, the San Francisco Writers Conference is offering two free passes to every CWC branch throughout the State for their all-day Poetry and Screenwriters Summits.

We ask each and every branch to select two members from their branch to represent them in each of the two summits. The date for the Summits will be Saturday, February 19th in San Francisco at the Hyatt Regency Embarcadero. The free passes give your members free entry to the all-day event and the privilege of mingling with top poets and screenwriters who will be teaching classes throughout that day.

Travel to and from plus accommodations will be handled by those who attend.

The names for your branch’s choices must be submitted by the branch president on or before February 1, 2022.

Ridge Writers President Daniel Stallings plans to attend the Screenwriters Summit, but there is still a free pass available for any Ridge Writers member interested in the Poetry Summit. Email your interest in attending the Summit to Daniel at beinmyhaus@hotmail.com by January 30. First come, first serve.



Cover Photo by Laura Austin

Our book featuring stories of High Desert veterans, *Scenes from Lives of Service*, is on sale at Red Rock Books and through mail order. To order through mail, send a letter and check to Ridge Writers, PO Box 484, Ridgecrest, CA, 93556; buyer should state name, mailing address, number of copies wanted, and enclose a check for \$32.50 each. Ridge Writers members can buy the book for \$25 each.

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