



*Writers  
of the*

# **PURPLE SAGE**

## **Newsletter of the Ridge Writers**

**East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club**

**August 2022**

### **OPEN MIC NIGHT FOR MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC ON AUGUST 4th**



*Kate Ashton, 2019 Allison  
Aubin Scholarship winner,  
reading at Open Mic Night  
(August 2019)*

Ridge Writers members and the general public will share and present their original works on Thursday, August 4, in the meeting room of Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. The monthly general meeting starts at 6:30 p.m.

Open Mic Night is a chance for members, prospective members, and guests to have the spotlight to share their written work. A Ridge Writers summer tradition, it provides a forum for aspiring writers to showcase their work and get an audience's feedback. Hearing new voices and listening to the next great story from veterans is part of the fun and true joy of Open Mic Night. Many of our favorite pieces have emerged from this classic Ridge Writers, and we want to hear your voices added to the growing collection of amazing member work.

We limit each speaker to 5-7 minutes, and contents must be in good taste. We'll have light refreshments on hand, and plenty of time to socialize. Remember, the public is invited and admission is free. Bring your friends!

### **Brett Battles offers great writing tips at July meeting** **Report on the July Meeting written by Liz Babcock**



*Brett Battles speaking, photo courtesy of  
Brian Wangenheim*

Brett Battles, a local-boy-made-good, has become a Ridge Writers' favorite in the process. During his information-filled talk at our July meeting, he emphasized two words to follow to writing success: quality and quantity.

A prolific writer in an impressive array of genres, he has 41 books to choose from at [brettbattles.com](http://brettbattles.com).

Brett was in grade school when he decided to be a writer, but that

wasn't an obsession at first. After graduating in 1980 from Burroughs High School, he went to CalState Northridge, traveled for a bit, then held down a job as a TV graphics for 20 years, marrying and raising three kids along the way.

In 2002 he reached a point in his life where he decided, "If I'm going to be a writer, I'd better get started." He took a short-story and novel writing class at UCLA Extension, then joined a writing group that grew from that class. "By 2005 I had finished four novels and had an incredibly large pile of rejection letters."

At first nobody wanted to publish his work. So he continued on with a second and a third book. Still no nibbles from publishers. But he was learning from each book. He also achieved momentum by starting a new writing project the minute he sent a finished manuscript out.

In spring 2004 he was sitting in Starbucks editing his fourth book when he got an acceptance call from a small press. After his first sale, everything began to go smoothly as he built a reputation in the mystery-thriller community. Then his publisher went bankrupt.

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

**August 4** – Open Mic Night – Bring your writing to read – 5 to 7 minutes – in good taste

**September 1** – Jeannie Barroga, author of *Turn Right at the Water Buffalo*

**October 6** – Iris Hattersley, author of *Lucky Thirteen: Memoir of One of the First Female Deputy U.S. Marshals*

**November 3** – Jennifer Crittenden – "Beyond the Book: websites, blogging, audio versions, publishing others, consulting, podcasts"

**December 1** – Member Holiday Party

## Cycle Breaker



You ever get stuck writing something new? I'm not quite talking about writer's block, but more of a writer's slog. A trudge. A grind. A difficulty working out your thoughts even when your process remains the same. We develop working habits that generally stand the test of time for us. Habits we have curated and exalted as The Ones That Work. Maybe there's a special ritual you do. Maybe you always write longhand first. Maybe you need a firm outline every time. Maybe you write a story backwards. Maybe you are a chronic drafter. These habits you develop to ensure success with your work and do the most important job as a writer—getting words on the page. And by no means am I going to use this President's Message to mock practices writers use to get the job done. But I am going to shake things up a little.

I am a habitual start-to-finish writer. I plan and plot and outline and mull and ponder and dream in advance and then I sit down and write from start to finish. It's a practice I especially have to develop for writing my mystery plays for Master Mystery Productions. The turnaround for those works is quite tight, so a rewriting schedule isn't really on the cards for me. Not with a tight deadline. So I plan and plan and plan and then bang a script out, editing and rereading as I go. I have started fresh drafts when I can tell the story isn't going how it should. It's not quite being a "pantser"—writing by the seat of your pants—but it allows me to produce and finish work in time for production.

That's one way to work. However, recently I have been working on a new play. I had issues trying to write as I usually did—working from beginning to end. The transitions stitching scenes together were nothing but stop gaps, preventing me from getting ideas out and actually writing. So I took a cue from a playwriting master class I watched and wrote scenes individually, saving the actual sewing the full play together for later. And it's working. I'm generating content. I'm writing again, getting the ideas out. Rewriting and editing and sculpting the finished piece comes with time. This change in my usual writing habits has allowed me to overcome a sticking point with a project and free myself up to do the main work—actually *writing*. I want to encourage our members to identify their own cycles of practice as writers...and break them. Take the chance to reinvent your own process, even for just one project, and see what wonders you can make.

### DUES ARE DUE

Dues for the club are now due starting July 1st. Membership renewals are \$45 per year. Dues support the statewide California Writers Club as well as our branch and will allow you to continue accruing benefits of the club. You can send your dues to the Ridge Writers P.O. Box. 484 in Ridgecrest, CA 93556. Please make out any checks to Ridge Writers. Deadline for membership dues is September 30th.

#### Ridge Writers Leaders

**President** – Daniel Stallings  
**Vice President** – Janis Kunz  
**Secretary** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal  
**Treasurer** – Andrew Sound  
**Member at Large** – Monica Dwyer  
**Historian** – Maryann Butterfield  
**Newsletter Editor** – Daniel Stallings  
**Programs & Publicity** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal  
**State Rep** – Donna McCrohan Rosenthal  
**Youth Coordinator** – Janis Kunz  
**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).

#### SoCal Writers Showcase



The southern region of the California Writers Club maintains the "zine"-format [socialwritersshowcase.com](http://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:

- 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.

Brett then sent a manuscript to a friend who was an editor at Dell. “She bought my book,” he said, “and that’s what launched my career.”

*The Cleaner*, perhaps his best-known book, came out in 2007, and Dell accepted two more novels after that. Then came the big financial collapse of 2008, and things started to fall apart in the publishing community. Brett had already quit his day job, and he didn’t want to go back. So he struggled along living on savings and getting rejection slips for a couple of years.

In 2010 his agent and supportive friend suggested that Brett try publishing on Amazon. So he put two books online. He also began publishing on other sites, and today he has a whole shelf full of e-books. “The beauty of e-books is that they can be up there indefinitely and just continue to keep selling.” The small amount of return to the author for each book sold can mount up to a respectable income.

He added that he’s not saying that his route to publishing is the best, but that there are many routes a writer can take. “I didn’t write because I wanted to make money, I wrote because I had to.”

Although *The Cleaner* and other books in Brett’s Quinn international thriller series continue to be lucrative, he is now turning out books in several genres: sci-fi, fantasy, adventure, multiverse, and recently romance, a new favorite for him. He churns out thousands of words a day. On any particular day, he may write 1,200 to 1,500 words on one book, then put that down and start on another of his works in progress. Often he works on three books in one day.

## 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

He described his writing day as “very regimented but energized. I’m writing seven books right now. It’s not boring to me, but it would be to anyone watching.”

Brett emphasized that the two most important things are “one to have a quality product, and two to have as much product as you can up there. You’re more likely to do better if you have at least three to four books up there.” If someone reads your book, they’re likely to then read the rest of your available *oeuvre*.

“Rewriting is the real work of writing,” he said. “The first draft is really more of an outline.”

An editor (not a family member or a friend, but a real editor) and an eagle-eyed proofreader are also necessary to success. Readers will tolerate slight errors in settings, probably reasoning that in a work of fiction, it’s fine to install fictional hotels or railroad stations. But readers won’t tolerate typos and grammatical mistakes and “Two- or one-star reviews will tank your career.”

Brett emphasized that “If you really want to try to make money, you have to treat your writing as a business. For example, like it or not, people will judge your book by its cover.” That means spending money on a good, professionally designed cover.

As for formatting for the internet, several good programs, such as Vellum for the Mac, can make that easy. Research on that and other aspects of online publishing can help. Brett recommended [selfpublishingformula.com](http://selfpublishingformula.com) and [thecreativepenn.com](http://thecreativepenn.com) as great sources of information.

Thanks for a great presentation, Brett, and please do come back!

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### READ THE BOOK, MEET THE AUTHOR: GLENN BOOZAN

We will meet at **2 p.m. on Sunday, August 21**, in the back room of the Pizza Factory, where we will have tea and scones and talk to author, Emmy-nominated comedy writer Glenn Boozan. Masks requested except while eating and drinking. If you don’t have the book already and want to attend, Red Rock Books has a few left. The ticket price of \$32 includes tea and scones, a copy of the book that the author will autograph to you, entry in a gift basket drawing, and convivial discussion with Glenn. What to expect: Being a mom is hard – and being a perfect mother is an impossible, unachievable standard. And yet, every mom has felt a creeping sense of guilt and shame. Now, Glenn Boozan offers the antidote to “mom guilt”: “There Are Moms Way Worse Than You: Irrefutable Proof That You Are Indeed a Fantastic Parent,” depicting the outlandishly terrible parenting practices of the animal kingdom.

Note that unlike other “Read the Book” days, the afternoon speaker – Glenn – will not give an evening Ridge Writers program.

***The 2022 St. Lawrence Book Award***

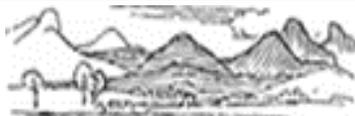
Each year Black Lawrence Press will award The St. Lawrence Book Award for an unpublished first collection of poems or prose. The St. Lawrence Book Award is open to any writer who has not yet published a full-length collection in any genre. The winner of this contest will receive book publication, a \$1,000 cash award, and ten copies of the book. Prizes are awarded on publication.

The annual deadline is August 31.

<https://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.



***Mimbres Press***

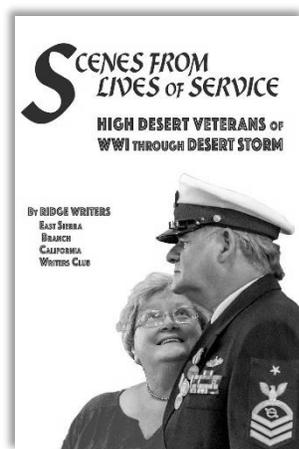
**Publishing opportunity from Mimbres Press of Western New Mexico University. From their email:**

“As an academic press, we are a traditional publisher. However, in addition to academic works, Mimbres Press welcomes submissions in the following genres: literary fiction, creative non-fiction, essays, memoir, poetry, children’s books, historical fiction, and academic books. We are particularly interested in academic work and commercial work with a strong social message, including but not limited to works of history, reportage, biography, anthropology, culture, human rights, and the natural world. We will also consider selective works of national and global significance.

- \*We welcome agented and unagented submissions.
- \*We welcome submissions from both new and previously published authors.
- \*We pride ourselves on a personalized approach, so you will hear back from us promptly.
- \*We offer above industry standard royalties.
- \*We are NOT a vanity publisher and publishing with us costs you nothing!

As we believe every great work deserves an audience, please accept this email as an open invitation and call for submissions. Projects can be submitted here:

[https://mimbrespress.wnmu.edu/get-published/.](https://mimbrespress.wnmu.edu/get-published/)”



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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