



*Writers  
of the*

# **PURPLE SAGE**

## **Newsletter of the Ridge Writers**

**East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club**

**January 2023**

### **KAREN BLAKES LOOKS AT STEM, GRAPHIC NOVELS, AND TRADITIONAL PRINT ON JAN. 5<sup>th</sup>**

Award-winning writer and poet, and also a STEM game and book publisher, Karen Blake will give our January 5, 2023 program that starts at 6:30 p.m. at Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633 W. Las Flores. Pubic invited. Admission free. Masks requested.

Her awareness of the importance of STEM education focuses on encouraging kids to learn about how the world works. This goes beyond science and into the world of business. She accomplishes this through games. She launched STEMdelivered.org and Rhizomes Books, Inc. in 2011 following her run for Superintendent of Public Instruction in 2010. It was her way of meeting the talent required to form the technical team for her publishing company that released two products in 2014, “Physics on the River” (a visual novel) and “Matwa Finds a Brother” (a children's book). The matching game, Antelope UP, is available on multiple platforms.

For her program, she will discuss finding outlets for her new projects, whether there is a STEM market if members want to break into writing for it, and given her background ranging from graphic novels to traditional print, she will examine the features they would need to succeed such as strong plots and characters, as well as what we should know about illustrations, lettering, any software that helps, and finding a publisher. She will leave plenty of time for Q&A. Bring your friends. We hope to see you there.

### **Holiday Happenings with Ridge Writers**

#### **Report on the December Meeting and Dickens Tea written by Daniel Stallings**



*A full table for Dickens Tea 2022*

December is a month for gathering, and gather we did as Ridge Writers revived two of our seasonal traditions in full effect for the first time since the lockdowns. We held our annual Member Holiday Party on Thursday, December 1<sup>st</sup> followed by our 8<sup>th</sup> Dickens Tea on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>. And both reminded me of why Ridge Writers is so special at this time of year for me.

The Member Holiday Party was a warm and wonderful time with a potluck filled with dishes brought by our members. Founding

Member Casey Wilson surprised us all with a visit, and we enjoyed member readings from Janis Kunz, who wrote a special poem about the Icelandic folkloric tradition of the Christmas Cat (see page 3 for the full poem) and Donna Rosenthal who shared a humorous true-life tale titled “The Big Bus Named Desire.” Janis went the extra mile to dressed for the party in her homemade Dickens Tea Victorian garb, adding even more festive charm to the evening.

The party continued with a workshop designed by Donna to help Ridge Writers create a brand new handout we can share at upcoming festivals like the annual Ridgecrest Petroglyph Festival with visitors at our booths. This handout’s theme is “How to Live with a Writer.” With a room full of writers (and those who live with them), we got a bounty of humorous and relatable suggestions for the handout. If you have any ideas, feel free to email them to Ridge Writers at [ridgewriters@yahoo.com](mailto:ridgewriters@yahoo.com).

And we concluded the evening doing what we do best—tell stories. An impromptu reading of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” led to Liz Babcock sharing a story of how her mother had writing...

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

**January 5** — Karen Blake, CEO of STEMdelivered.org (sciences, technology, engineering and mathematics programs through workshops, publications, videos, blogs, games and contests)

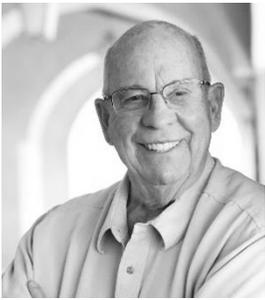
**February 2** — Jerry Bradley, backyard astronomical photography



*Janis Kunz reads her poem at the party.*

**Continued on page 3**

## The Value of Volunteerism



Experts generally agree that the best way to succeed is to surround yourself with great people. How best can we do that? You may think you know someone at the office (whatever “office” may mean in this context) or in your branch of the California Writers Club. Whether you are considering forming a business partnership, developing a professional project, or just contemplating the thought of hanging out together more often, one way to find out more about people is to volunteer with them. Immersing yourself in a temporary project can reveal flaws as well as talents you otherwise would never encounter in a relationship. The simple act of working together to complete a goal can be beneficial in many ways. We bond (or not) in a more meaningful way with the mutual joy of accomplishment. When I have related with others to

achieve something together, I have been astounded several times to discover they knew something or knew how to do something that I otherwise would never would have been aware. Discovering the abilities of others is just one byproduct of volunteering. Another obvious reason to “show up” is for our own personal development. It is a safe way to explore your own abilities. Giving time to do something for the general good of a project can be fulfilling in many ways.

I remember a dozen years ago when our High Desert CWC had enormous growth. We went from 14 to 100 members in 26 months. The reasons? Determination not to fail, but to excel was one reason. Another was not caring about who got the credit. Another key factor was establishing to visitors that we were looking for members, not dues payers. We expected them to contribute to our growth and achievement. It was something of a rite of passage. Newbies were expected to join in our success story by sharing their talents and abilities. The outcome was outstanding relationship building. Even today, years later, the close bonding that took place through massive volunteering is present now. Friendships formed are solid and growing stronger. And our branch is still thriving.

One of the things I love about the CWC is the concept of Jack London Awards. They are something of a barometer of how well a branch is doing. For example, if there is a year where no Jack London is given, it is a red flag that either nobody is doing anything or that people are doing a lot without recognition. The Jack London is awarded only once per lifetime, but have you noticed that JL Award winners just keep doing exceptional things over and over again? I recently contacted one of our former members who was a Jack London Award winner. I was not surprised to learn that years later while working for an internationally famous company she has been awarded that organization’s equivalent to our Jack London Award. She knows the value of volunteering and it has paid off all her life.

I find myself writing this on the anniversary of the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, who is famous for his challenge, “Ask not what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country.” Find a need in your branch and fill it. You will discover the value of volunteerism.

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### 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:

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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.*

...critiqued by Robert Frost in a class. So we started swapping celebrity encounter stories from a skiing encounter with Douglas Fairbanks to a grandmother meeting Mickey Rooney in a hotel elevator. It was a comforting, charming evening of stories and kinship with your fellow word-lovers.



Monica's table decor for the Dickens Tea

On December 3, we held the beloved Dickens Tea for the first time at the Heritage Club House. Member-at-Large Monica Dwyer was our superstar caterer who created amazing apple caramel scones and mini Victoria sandwich cakes, offered chocolate truffles, dressed the tables with beautiful décor and her collection of teatime wares, and brewed the tea. Donna provided the lovely books for the White Elephant Book Exchange. Margit Stallings created the holiday craft kits—a twist on German Bunterteller, colorful plates designed to hold treats, nuts, fruits, cookies, etc. for someone and given as gifts. Above, Janis and Jennifer Kunz show off the Bunterteller they designed at the tea. It all closed with Daniel Stallings performing an excerpt from Charles Dickens’ 1835 story, “A Christmas Dinner.” The event was practically sold out, and not a single craft supply or tasty morsel of food remained. A huge success for our branch!



Our Ridge Writers’ holiday happenings brought smiles on lots of faces this year. It’s good to be back to celebrating!

\* \* \*

## THE CHRISTMAS CAT

By Janis Kunz

Over white-glistening hills, the giant Yule Cat stalks on the prowl,  
Bringing fear through the land with its echoing screeches and howl.  
It creeps through the cobblestone streets, a listening twitch to its ear.

Searching, with glowing eyes, for anyone who isn't going to receive new clothes on Yule  
this year.

Its claws are razor sharp, its teeth long like fangs, and it hungers for Yule presents or  
extra Yule helpings it can steal,

From those without any gifted new finery, those who it might just make into its Yuletide  
meal...

But mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, neighbors and kin make sure to fashion  
clothes for any and all,

So the Yule Cat will pass by their loved ones, who are wearing some piece of new  
clothing no matter how small.

A new pair of socks or of gloves, infused with heartwarming love, are worn with a smile  
and a step that is light.

The children are wrapped up in warm new clothing with colors so bright.

And still the Yule Cat slinks though the night, keeping to its search for the desolate and  
poor,

But it finds laughter, festivities, and Yuletide cheer at every door.

It sharpens its claws and creeps through the alley so dark, on the scent of a little one  
nearly forgot.

It's shadow hovers at the windows, darkens the snowy stoops, but its prowling is all for  
not.

For clothes have been lovingly made for all and sundry,

And the Yule Cat, flees off into the night with an angry hiss, knowing that for another  
year it will go hungry...

### 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

***The 2023 Big Moose Prize***

Each year Black Lawrence Press awards 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.

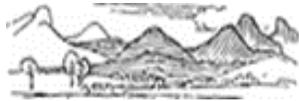
**Early bird special:** Submit your novel by November 30 and save \$5 on the entry fee.

**Submit here:**

<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.



**San Francisco Writers Conference 2023**

It is that time of year once again to bring to your attention the gift we have been given by the San Francisco Writers Conference 2023. The gift, as you may know, is for each of the twenty-two branches to receive two free passes, one each for the Poetry Summit and the Writing for Hollywood Summit. This may be our final year of receiving this gift, as the SFWC is making some changes in leadership. But they wanted to at least honor the commitment made to the CWC over the past few years, as we have been representing the CWC at the Conference since 2011-12.

Those CWC members who are interested must let the Branch President know, and you select one member for each Summit from your branch to represent you. What are the Summits? The links below give you a full understanding of what is on offer. You are responsible for your own travel and accommodations.

<https://www.sfwriters.org/poetry-summit/>  
<https://www.sfwriters.org/writing-hollywood-summit/>

The Writing for Hollywood Summit will be held on Friday, February 17, 2023 at 9 a.m. (Hyatt Regency Embarcadero - San Francisco) and the Poetry Summit will be held on Saturday, February 18, 2023, at 9 a.m. Deadline to let us know you are interested is January 15, 2023.

**SCENES FROM LIVES OF SERVICE**  
**HIGH DESERT VETERANS OF WWI THROUGH DESERT STORM**

By RIDGE WRITERS  
EAST SIERRA  
BRANCH  
CALIFORNIA  
WRITERS CLUB



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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