



Writers
of the

PURPLE SAGE

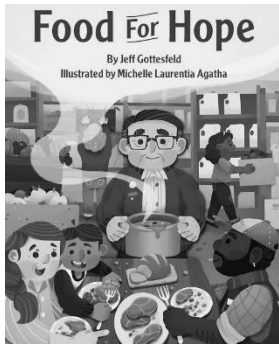
Newsletter of the Ridge Writers

East Sierra Branch, California Writers Club

May 2023

JEFF GOTTESFELD ON WRITING GOOD, OLD-FASHIONED KIDS BOOKS ON THURSDAY, MAY 4

Both a successful TV soap opera writer and a visionary creator of books for young people, Jeff Gottesfeld will talk about “Writing Good, Old-Fashioned Children’s Books in an un-Old Fashioned America” at our Thursday, May 4 Ridge Writer meeting. We’ll start at 6:30 p.m., Ridgecrest Presbyterian Church, 633W.Las Flores. Public invited, no admission charge.



Just out this month, his “Food for Hope” details how John van Hengel launched the world’s first food bank, in 1967. Art and text combine to show there’s no shame in being hungry – the shame lies in how long it took for someone to figure out how to feed people. It took one person with a good idea to change things.

Author Jeff writes for adults to elementary-age children, working on such TV shows as “Smallville,” “The Young and the Restless,” and “As the World Turns” (Associate Head Writer), numerous magazines and newspaper articles, and “No Steps Behind,” winner for the 2020 NCTA Freeman Award for the best children’s book about Asia. Also an accomplished fisherman, he played on his high school state championship Ultimate Frisbee team, grows a mean vegetable garden, and considers Big Lots his favorite store.

Earlier that afternoon, he’ll give a “Read the Book, Meet the Author” 2 p.m. at the Pizza Factory. For this event, sign up and buy your ticket for \$35 at Red Rock Books. On Friday, he’ll speak to Trona school children on “Tomb Guards at Arlington, Food Banks, and Jeff’s Five Creative Tips for Writers of All Ages.” Please bring your friends!

Westerson leaves Ridge Writers amazed and enlightened Report on the April Meeting written by Liz Babcock



Jeri Westerson shows off her miniature model of the Tower of London at Read the Book, Meet the Author

Thanks to Program Manager Donna Rosenthal’s excellent arrangements, we Ridge Writers were treated in April to a double dose of entertainment and instruction. Prolific historical novelist Jeri Westerson’s visit here began with a Read the Book, Meet the Author session of tea, scones, and enlightenment featuring her clever medieval caper, *Oswald the Thief*.

At our evening meeting, Jeri presented “Historical Mysteries to Modern Marketing.”

She told us that unlike many other writers, she was not a “natural born” novelist. After a lot of reading, even some writing, notably as a reporter for several newspapers, she began her first novel with no idea that a career in creative writing would follow.

Before she began that first book — largely as a lark — she analyzed the structure of a crime novel by studying Raymond Chandler’s *Maltese Falcon*. She took to heart his advice, “When you’re stuck, have a guy with a gun come into the room.”

With that, other lessons gleaned from her studies, and a lot of elbow grease, Jeri wrote her first Crispin Guest medieval noir, a book so popular that she went on to create 14 more in the series. And she kept going...

Mark Your Calendar...

May 4 — Jeff Gottesfeld (*As the World Turns* writer, playwright, novelist and author of *Food for Hope: How John van Hengel Invented Food Banks for the Hungry*).

June 1 — Liz Babcock and Mark Pahuta, *High Desert Double Exposures: A Photographic Retrospective of Ridgecrest and Its Neighbors*

Jiggery-Pokery and Humbuggery



Did you ever just love a nonsensical word? Or a story written for no other reason than to be silly or to make you laugh? Writers take our craft so seriously that, at times, we forget to have fun. I can name many instances where I have heard writers lament the actual construction of a written piece. Dreaming up ideas for a story is fun, they say, but the actual writing itself is not fun.

But why can't it be fun?

What's stopping you from being silly and just writing something that doesn't need to make sense or is just a piece that makes you smile? Not every story needs to be written with intent to publish. Creativity shouldn't be bound by rules and regulations. Sometimes, you just need to get the giggles out. That's healthy. Part of it taps into the same psychology as examining the effects of play in early development. It's important for kids to play. So you, adult wordsmith, should also play. Play around with how words sit on the page. Invent a new word (Eyeball, Upstairs, and Downstairs didn't exist until Shakespeare wrote them. A belated happy birthday to the Bard.). Mash genres together like a mad scientist. It's a form of creative experimentation, stretching out muscles, testing limits, examining new sides, understanding yourself more deeply. All the aspects inherent in play.

So I encourage you to experiment and find the "play" in your work. Write something silly. Make yourself laugh. Try something new. Don't take it (or yourself) too seriously. Take apart some of your favorite hobbies, genres, words, styles, and media and just mix them together. Write a story in Klingon or Pig Latin. Write badly. Write goofy. Write and write often. I have always said that a writer who writes will learn more than a writer who doesn't. And once you remove the pressure of having to write perfectly or sensibly, there comes freedom to explore. To experiment. To play. You can dream openly. Save the sensibility for editing. I hereby encourage you to indulge in all the jiggery-pokery and humbuggery and folderol and Quatsch you want. Life's too short to write without whimsy. Go out there and have fun!

Proposed 2023-24 Slate of Officers for the Ridge Writers Board

July marks the start of the fiscal year for the CWC, which also signals the start of a new year at Ridge Writers. We present the proposed slate of Board officers for 2023-2024. The slate will remain open until May 30 for people who want to run, and we will vote at the June general meeting. The current proposed slate is as follows: President, Daniel Stallings, Vice President, Janis Kunz, Treasurer, Andrew Sound, Secretary, Donna McCrohan Rosenthal, and Member-at-Large, Monica Dwyer. Nominations for the Board will continue to be accepted up until the June vote.

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.

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:

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- 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. **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.

...producing an amazing array of books — 43 to date, with no signs of slowing down. Along the way, she dealt successfully with the ups and downs of both commercial publication and self-publication.

How does she keep up the flow? “It’s a process of knowing my characters really well,” she said, “then painting them into corners — and getting them back out.”

Jeri studies her characters and their milieu intensively before she starts a novel. She stressed the importance of having characters whose idioms and names are believable. Nothing like an “O.K.” to take away the medieval verisimilitude!

Today she likes to spend about nine months on any given novel and prefers to have two in process at any given time, although she has sometimes worked on as many as four at once.

But in today’s publishing world, a writer needs to do a lot more than writing and research to have a successful career. Marketing is essential, and that takes investments in both time and money.

Having a publisher offers several advantages: editing, copy editing, formatting, sending a book to reviewers, making a pay advance. Another important plus is getting on the publisher’s list or catalog, where bookstores and libraries might purchase your book.

However, Jeri cautioned, “Publishers will never send you on a book tour, so forget that.” Such amenities as bookmarks are up to the author as well.

“Never pay a publisher or an agent,” she cautioned. “If you have to pay, you’re falling for a vanity press.”

Based on her early success, Jeri had an agent for a while, but after she wrote a book the agent couldn’t (or wouldn’t) sell, she fired the agent and began to self-publish many of her books.

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

One of her previous careers had been as a graphic designer, a skill that proved helpful in self-publishing. Among the tips she offered self-publishers: always get an editor (since typos, grammatical mistakes, or factual errors can lose you credibility in a hurry) and have a professional design your cover (since the attractiveness of the cover is paramount in getting that all-important reader first look).

Other marketing tips Jeri offered pertained to making presentations in libraries (excellent places to have book signings) and increasing visibility on social media, particularly blogs.

“Wherever you’re pitching your book, remember that you must give something to get something,” she cautioned. For example, if you can offer bloggers visibility on your own blog or at least provide something you’ve specifically written for their blog ((not a standard writeup and not a blurb about your book), they’re likely to be grateful and in turn accommodate you.

When Jeri gives presentations, she hands out beautiful bookmarks freely (as she did for us). She also uses artistic postcards featuring short book blurbs. These small gifts offer discreet advertising for her product.

She showed us a charming example of a gift she created for a host library. One of her latest books, *The Isolated Séance*, offers “sly Sherlockian fun,” so in keeping with the book’s Victorian theme, she has created a tiny 19th-century library inside a book-size box.

Space precludes describing more than a few of her many helpful tips, so I will conclude by saying that Jeri gave us a lot, and I can only hope that she got something in return. With that in mind, I’ll share her website, <http://www.jerwesterson.com>, and hope you give yourself the pleasure of reading her well-crafted, imaginative books.

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2023 ALLISON AUBIN SCHOLARSHIP FOR YOUNG WRITERS

Thanks to the tremendous work of our new Youth Coordinator and Scholarship Chair Janis Kunz, we are holding the annual Allison Aubin Scholarship for Young Writers again this year. The essay contest runs from April 1 to April 30. Ridge Writers members judge the entries in May. We award the scholarship in June. We ask our membership to please volunteer to help judge the student entries this year. We keep the judging process simple and straightforward, and we want the club as a whole to award the prize. Volunteer at the next general meeting or by sending an email to ridgewriters@yahoo.com.

DUES WILL BE DUE SOON

Membership dues for the California Writers Club, of which Ridge Writers is the East Sierra Branch, will be due starting July 1st. The dues are \$45 for the year (July 1st to June 30th) and grant you special perks such as newsletters, membership discounts for branch events, *The Literary Review* published by the CWC, access to be published on SoCal Writers Showcase, and more. If your membership expires, you will have to pay the additional \$20 initiation fee for a total of \$65 to rejoin. So plan to renew those memberships soon! Dues must be collected by September 30th at the absolute latest.

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.

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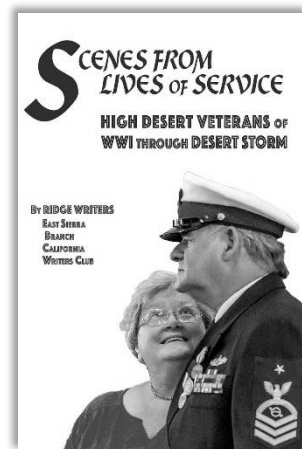
Allison Aubin Scholarship

Friends of the Library Book Sales

"The Friends of the Library are having two book sales this spring. One is on Saturday, April 15 outside the old Sears location on North Norma from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. \$5 a bag again as we did last fall. New members can sign up and then also purchase the \$5 bag option. The second will be on May 6 with more organization re: categories and individual item pricing schedule. Members from 9 a.m. – 10 a.m. and then everybody from 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. in that same location. Just one day for each sale. We still have a large inventory in that building and hope the sales will reduce it a lot. If you are on Facebook, we will provide more details closer to these sales dates.

Please plan to enter from Norma and park on the east side of our location near Albertsons. The school district has barriers set up on the west side of the building for the coming electric school bus base.

Carol Pearson
Vice President for Membership"



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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