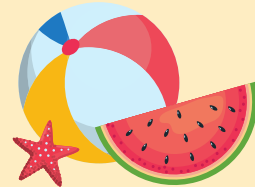
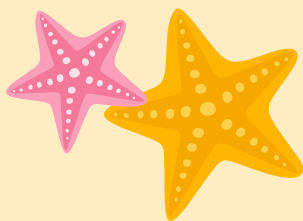




July 2026

Fresh Ink



Inland Empire
California
Writers Club



CONTACT THE *board*

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temporarily standing in for

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Board Contacts	2
Presidents Message	3-4
Editor's Note	5
What's Coming Up	6
Meeting Review	7-10
Club Benefits	11

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CWC's books	12
Kudos Page	13-15
Press Release	16-17
Help Needed	18

OPPORTUNITIES

Fresh Ink guidelines	19
----------------------	----

SUBMISSIONS

"Poetry Musings"	20-23
------------------	-------

by Samuel Thomas Nichols

"A Boat To Float"	24
-------------------	----

by Shirley Petro

Next Month Theme	25
------------------	----

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy Summer!

I am happy to announce that we have been awarded a \$300 grant to support the reading and literacy programs at the Ovitt Friends of the Library! The Ovitt library has hosted our group for so long, and it makes me happy to give back to a facility that has been a cornerstone of our community.

As we look toward the future, we are introducing three major changes designed to elevate your writing journey, expand your platform, and strengthen our community.

Honoring Our Leaders & Welcoming the New Board

First, we extend our deepest, most heartfelt gratitude to Ben Alirez and Sam Nichols as they step down from the board. They have been the stalwart protectors of our club—dependable, knowledgeable, helpful, and innovative. They leave big shoes to fill. I thank them for their years of dedicated service. Please join me in welcoming our new leadership slate, ready to guide us into this next chapter:

- **President, CWC Central Board Member, & System Administrator:** Judy Kohnen
- **Treasurer:** Eric Rowlands
- **VP & Membership:** Kelly Lewis
- **Secretary:** Cynthia Demone
- **Webmaster:** Scott Skipper
- **Fresh Ink Editor:** Anaïs Hamel
- **Critique Group Leader:** Constance Cassinelli
- Note: Our Program Chair position is currently empty—if you want to help shape our future, we would love to have you!

Your New Digital Showcase: Centralized Website Launching September

Get ready to amplify your author brand! This September, we are launching a brand-new centralized website designed to feature writers from all branches. Every member will get a dedicated member page with the option to keep a profile private or make it fully public to the world. Your customizable page can include your writer photo, public and private bios, social media links, multiple genres of writing, and your published books—complete with front covers, short blurbs, and purchasing links.

A Dynamic Shift: The 5-Month Interactive Workshop Series

To streamline our efforts and maximize value for our members, we are shifting away from booking external guest speakers. Instead, we introduce **A "Show and Tell" Writers Workshop** —a highly interactive, hands-on learning experience running from July through November. We are offering two distinct tracks to meet you exactly where you are in your writing journey:

- **Foundations Track:** Master the essential building blocks of storytelling, including premise, genre, character development, point of view, dialogue, revision, and publication basics.
- **Master Craft Track:** Step into our monthly "Show & Tell" discussions. Members are invited to bring published books, completed manuscripts, or works in progress to demonstrate how craft techniques work in real stories. You will share excerpts, dissect revision choices, and help connect writing theory to practical, real-world application.

The 5-Month Roadmap

- **July:** Turning Ideas into Stories.
- **August:** Writing for an Audience: Genre
- **September:** Character Drives Plot
- **October:** Dialogue and Point of View
- **November:** Revision, Publishing, and Finishing Strong

Thank you all for making our club such a vibrant and supportive space for creativity.

Let's make this season our most productive writing year yet!

Judy Kohnen

President, Inland Empire Club
California Writers Club

EDITOR'S NOTE



This issue was edited using
Canva



Hello Readers!

Summer has finally arrived! The temperatures are climbing, the hills are turning their familiar golden color, and everything feels just a little bit slower and sunnier.

Another sure sign of summer is here too: the Men's Soccer World Cup. When I was living in France, the World Cup was always one of the things that marked the beginning of the season. All conversations with friends would revolve around the latest match, and there was an excitement in the air that made summer feel like it had officially begun. It still gives me that same feeling every time.

While everyone is getting caught up in the excitement of the games, I've been trying to embrace a slower pace. The past few months, I've been dealing with hip pain, which has meant intentionally resting and taking things a little easier. It's not something that comes naturally to me, but it has been a gentle reminder that rest is just as important as staying busy.

That idea of slowing down became the inspiration for this month's newsletter theme. You'll find pages filled with warm yellows, sandy neutrals, and beach-inspired details that capture the relaxed feeling of summer. I hope they encourage you to pause for a moment, enjoy the sunshine, and spend a little creative time with your journal.

I also noticed that we had fewer submissions this month than usual. I like to think that's because many of you are out enjoying summer adventures, spending time with family, or simply taking the opportunity to recharge. Creativity has a wonderful way of returning after we've given ourselves time to rest, and I can't wait to see what you'll share next month.

Until then, I'll be cheering for France throughout the World Cup and enjoying the little moments that make summer special.

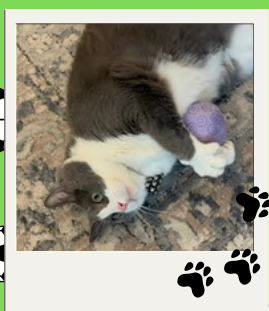
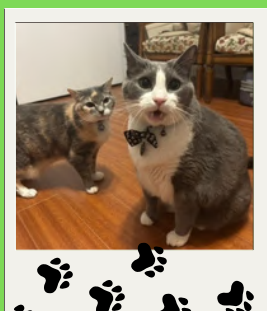
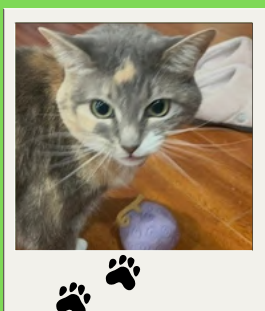
Ink to page, tales unveiled.

Anaïs Hamel



@globetrotteuse99

In the spirit of soccer, Litchi and Coco have become completely obsessed with their new toy, happily batting it around the house like a soccer ball. I think they're training for the World Cup too!



Master the Art of Writing a Story

A 5-MONTH MASTERCLASS: IDEA TO PUBLISHED AUTHOR

Whether you're a beginning writer learning the fundamentals or an experienced author refining a manuscript, this workshop offers practical tools, writing exercises, discussion, and opportunities to learn from one another.

Your story starts here.

A WORKSHOP FOR EVERY LEVEL



FOUNDATIONS TRACK

will learn the building blocks of storytelling, including premise, genre, character, point of view, dialogue, revision, and publication basics.



MASTER CRAFT TRACK

is invited to participate in our monthly **Show & Tell** discussions by bringing published books, completed manuscripts, or works in progress to demonstrate how craft techniques work in real stories. Share excerpts, discuss revision choices, and help connect writing theory to practical applications.

THE 5-MONTH ROADMAP

JULY

Turning Ideas into Stories



Date: July 25, 2026

Focus:

Condense complex plots into a single-sentence pitch (logline) to keep your writing focused.

Foundations Track:

Connect your story to universal themes using simple, powerful creative prompts.

Master Craft Track:

Map your current WIP onto a strict 3-act structure.

Deliverable: Lock in a 1-sentence story premise using a structural formula.

AUGUST

Writing for an Audience: Genre



Date: August 22, 2026

Focus:

Align your book layout with genre expectations to fulfill your promise to the reader.

Foundations Track:

Learn the "one-sitting" rule and transition from writing for yourself to editing for others.

Master Craft Track:

Analyze Amazon categories and check your book metrics (word count, popularity) against market standards.

Deliverable: Put your book through the "Bookstore Test" to target the right shelf.

SEPTEMBER

Character Drives Plot



Date: September 26, 2026

Focus:

Build multidimensional characters whose flaws and choices directly cause the story's main conflict.

Foundations Track:

Map out the foundational wants, needs, and flaws of your protagonist and antagonist.

Master Craft Track:

Use psychology to create internal desires that clash with external behavior.

Deliverable: Draft Act 2 and Act 3 obstacles that flip character situations from positive to negative.

OCTOBER

Dialogue and Point of View



Date: October 26, 2026

Focus:

Choose the perfect narrative point of view and make your characters speak with clear purpose.

Foundations Track:

Master 1st vs. 3rd person limited and cut out boring "real-life" greeting pleasantries.

Master Craft Track:

Weaponize dialogue with subtext, double-meanings, silence, and hidden agendas.

Deliverable: Eliminate narrative clutter and passive voice to match scene urgency.

NOVEMBER

Revision, Publishing, and Finishing Strong



Date: November 28, 2026

Focus:

Navigate the technical phase of self-publishing, formatting, and launching.



Production: Format ePubs, design genre-compliant covers, and hire development/copy editors.



Distribution: Set up an Amazon KDP account, pass the digital tax interview, and pick royalty tiers.



Deliverable: Mine Amazon auto-complete data for 7 high-traffic backend search keywords.



Write. Learn. Share. Publish.

Five months. Essential skills. Your story.



Your story matters.



MAY 2026

MEETING REVIEW

Unveil Tales Untold
Overview by Ben Alirez

Saturday, May 23, 2026
Ovitt Family Community Library
215 E. C St., Ontario, CA 91764

The absence of a program chair has put a strain on securing a steady stream of guest speakers for quite some time. Still, existing board members have worked well to fill the yearly calendar to the best of their ability, especially, Sam Nichols. This month's branch meeting was no exception, as he proposed a "show and tell" format, an opportunity to share current works-in-progress, chapbooks, poems, and graphic arts. A chance to share the "story" behind the stories, the truths behind the fiction. Members were even encouraged to bring their publications and disclose the efforts it took to bring their projects to fruition.

President Judy Kohnen opened the meeting with important details about the club, its past, its present, and hopefully—its future. Because IECWC is struggling to maintain a healthy group of volunteers, the club may be forced to restructure some of its practices. It remains to be seen.

Constance Cassinelli, critique group leader, discussed the importance of monthly peer reviewed meetings for content feedback, editing advice, and the value of fellowship.

I also took a few minutes to elaborate on the many benefits of membership with the IECWC (see the applicable page in this issue for more on the subject).

For the remainder of the gathering, members and guest attendees shared fascinating details about their process, interests, and projects. Scott Skipper led first, a seasoned author with over twenty-one novels to his credit, many of which were on display. We learned his first book was published in 2010, and that his latest endeavor features a severely injured protagonist who is placed in suspended animation until such time (in the future) he can be healed. A process that rips him from the serenity of heaven itself.

Vicki Peyton dabbles mostly in poetry and short stories, an effort which prompted her to piece together a collection of entries to be published by the end of the year. Her goal is to be on the club's 2027 Author's Panel next January.





Guest Vanessa Tate-Robinson displayed a copy of her recently published children's book. It was a long, ten-year journey, and one that dictated the creation of her own publishing company. Chock full of colorful illustrations, Vanessa turned to the Animation Department of Mount San Antonio College to meet this need. In addition, professors at the institution performed editing services. Quick Fact: Judy shared that major publishing houses require the use of in-house animators for their children's books. They refuse to use independent artists or those chosen by the authors.

First-time attendee, Janet Beech, divulged she has been writing for thirty years, having published a few novels and a short story in that time. Janet also took the opportunity to recite a wildly entertaining and humorous poem on aging.

Retired engineer, Art Truman, professed that much of his days are now preoccupied with poetry, and happily so.

Visitor Kelly Wright recited the back page of her debut novel *A Heart of Ice*, a work of speculative fiction that was published last year. She fully expects the second installment of the trilogy to be released this year.

Abigail Handojo not only republished her debut chapbook, *Attached*, with a newfound cover, but is days away from releasing a second chapbook, *Lost in Conversation*, which features her own illustrations. Now a student at the University of Southern California, Abigail was the previous editor of *Fresh Ink*. She is currently participating in an on campus Asian Pacific writing club that publishes the magazine *Descent*.

An IECWC member since 2010, Sam Nichols has held several posts since that time—including president. A prolific poet, Sam estimates he has written 1,800 poems in his lifetime. He also edited and posthumously published poetry books of close family members. Ironically, he credits his love for books and poetry to a classroom episode, when as a young child, he was punished and forced to sit in a corner alone. To keep his mind active, he discovered the world of books and hasn't looked back since. It's Sam's ambition to publish a collection of his own works soon.

Gabriella and Zenneth DeHaan visited for the second consecutive month, in fact, joining the club before the assembly concluded. The husband-and-wife team enjoy writing in their own right, he heavily influenced by Star Wars, and she a duo language writer. Gabriella is also the scheduled speaker for the month of June on "The Healing Power of Art." She currently has three novels and a children's book in the works.

Guest Diamond Wortham is an artist and writer, something she took seriously about ten years ago. However, it was only when her beloved father passed away three months ago, that she was convinced she could wait no longer. Her favored genres are Science Fiction and Horror. She does picture books too, as evidenced by her imaginative children's book on strawberries.

Longtime member Constance Cassinelli regaled the audience with tales of her Italian ancestors. They had a deep impact on her life, even in her adulthood, as she was convinced it was a story she alone could share with the world. Three visits to her ancestral land ensued, lost letters, interpreting Italian, and being told places didn't exist nearly crushed her dream, but in the end, Constance was able to produce *Caro Nicola Promise Kept*. She also writes short stories and has added a western novel to her writing resume.

Eric Rowlands has always considered himself a storyteller, but it wasn't until his lovely wife encouraged him to be more intentional about it that he began to see significant strides. Today, he also produces study guides for his home church. The father of a 16-month-old son, Eric hopes to serve as a positive role model for him. *Alpha Male* is the title of a novel he's working on. It shares a similar concept to the bestseller *Wake Up and Open Your Eyes*.

Visitor Nathan Chung, a recent college graduate, is a part-time English teacher. He is working toward a Fantasy novel he calls *Earth Mover*. As he's discovering, each new rewrite provides philosophical insights. His only playful wish is that the effort of writing a novel was faster.

First-timer Collin Spencer has been writing for the last thirty years, including world building and game writing that date back as far as high school. After the tragic loss of his parents, his therapist suggested he find a writing club and dip his toes into the proverbial water. He is currently writing short stories of the techno-thriller genre, and space opera themed. As he further clarified, "It's as if Tom Clancy wrote Star Wars."

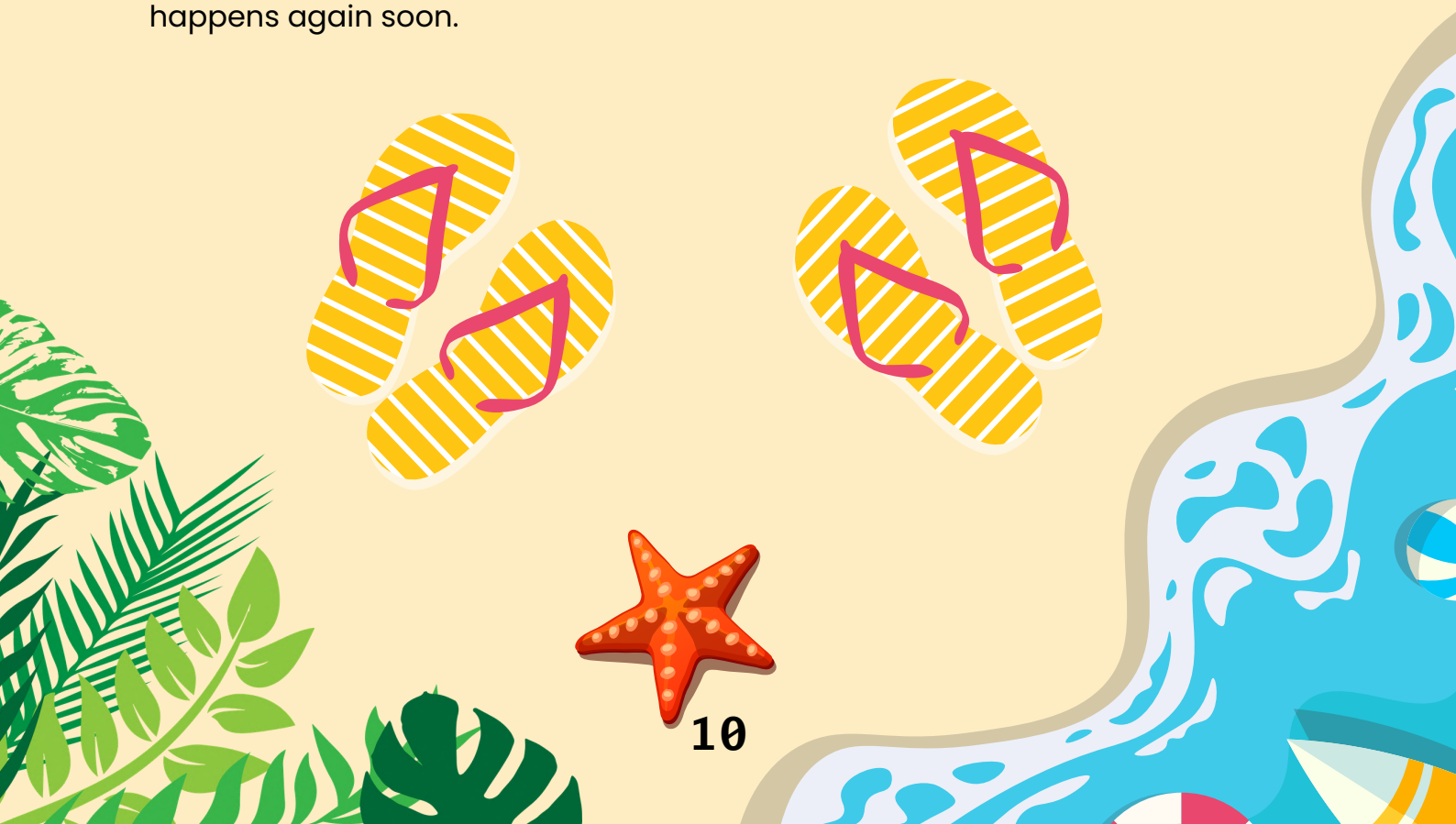
Retired military commander, John McBrearty, is a combat veteran turned author. He discussed some of the perils of facing literary rejection and how it forced him to change his strategy. He spends a lot of time helping veterans and provided a brief overview of his most recent non-fiction books. He also completed his fifth children's book and concluded his dialogue with warnings against scammers seeking to capitalize on an author's success.

Judy Kohnen admitted to having “lots of manuscripts underneath her bed” with little to show for it, including a work in progress that centers largely around her mother and family. She further shared that her mother is not favorable to the project, a sentiment which makes the endeavor even more challenging. What our current president didn’t share is her unfailing dedication and commitment to the club, a labor of love that leaves little personal time for creative projects. Hopefully, someone steps up to head the group, and Judy finds the time to finish her projects.

Former president, Sue Andrews, elaborated on the writing inspirations in her life. First, as a young child, a teacher ridiculed an essay of hers in front of the class. It left a lasting impression, and an unquenchable desire to excel in the craft. Many years later, while at her retirement party, someone asked, “What are you going to do now?” She decided it was time to write a novel and five years later, *Jacksonville Judas* was produced. She has now written two mystery novels and a memoir. Much to her surprise, she has also been featured in the popular podcast, “This Week on America” with Ric Bratton. In one of the day’s more humorous confessions, Sue admitted a sheep-shearing farmer and author from England also bears her name. It’s a fact that has led to some confusion from prospective interviewers and publishers.

The event ended with Cynthia Demone, who began writing in earnest after she divorced. She prefers poetry and short stories and has even had a few of them published. She took the opportunity to recite a few.

That said, *Unveil Tales Untold* proved to be a truly insightful, inspiring, and wonderful occasion to fellowship with like-minded wordsmiths. Let’s hope it happens again soon.



Benefits of IECWC

MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
 - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
 - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
 - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
 - Members who were published the year before
 - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
 - Our state-level parent organization at www.calwriters.org, with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
 - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at www.socalwritersshowcase.com
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

Active
\$65

Supporting
\$65

Student
\$15
ages 8-22

Renewal of Membership
\$45

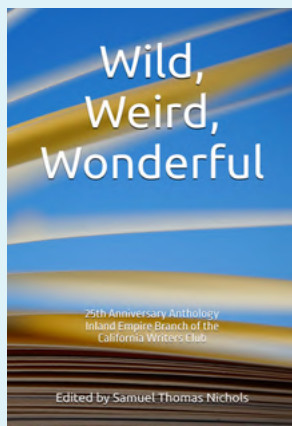
Renewal deadline September 30.
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls.
If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.



THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPT>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



KUDOS PAGE

Abigail Handojo is celebrating the publication of her second poetry collection, *Lost in Conversation*, along with a successful book release party marking the occasion.

Publishing a second book while balancing college coursework is an outstanding accomplishment. Abigail is also an active member of the campus Asian Pacific writing club, contributing to the literary magazine *Descent*.

We are proud to celebrate this exciting milestone with Abigail. *Lost in Conversation* is available on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/01B2C1a7>





Sue Andrews has been making exciting strides in promoting her books. Following the success of her Times Square debut on May 30, she was featured again on June 27 through Brightword Books. This Thanksgiving, she'll return to Times Square with a billboard featuring her photo and a video that will run through New Year's Eve. Those who can't see it in person will be able to view it on her website.

Her growing media presence has also led to several new interviews, including one with Suzanne Chessman of Ocala, Florida, and another with Hollywood actor Juan Corrigan, both of which will be available on her website. She is also scheduled to appear on Spotlight Cable Television with Logan Crawford for separate interviews about each of her novels.

Learn more and follow Sue's latest news at <https://www.sueandrewsbooks.com>.





John J. McBreathy has been actively promoting his work through interviews, book features, and videos on his YouTube channel. Highlights include promotion of his upcoming book, *Whispers of Mutiny*, and a special interview with renowned military historian and Veterans Breakfast Club co-founder Dr. Todd DePastino, exploring the extraordinary power of storytelling in honor of the USA's 250th birthday on July 4. With even more interviews, videos, and book promotions scheduled throughout July, John is keeping up an impressive pace. Be sure to check out his schedule and upcoming videos below.

Check his work and chanel via the link below
<https://www.youtube.com/@JohnWritesHistory>

July Videos releases

2026-07-04

Whispers of Mutiny

<https://youtube.com/shorts/3FR5jqhTfJQ?feature=share>

2026-07-04

Veterans Preserving History with Dr. Todd DePastino

<https://youtu.be/8MvQlS-Blvw>

2026-07-11

Memorial Day with Written by Veterans

<https://youtube.com/shorts/IsIfDKanlvM?feature=share>

2026-07-21

Memorial Day Event

<https://youtu.be/IKJWDIzYBpc>

2026-07-24

Veteran Survivors Guilt

<https://youtu.be/pzJv8HquirE>

2026-07-25

Words, Service, and Legacy: Part 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liiXUtGBIto>

2026-07-27

Lead. Write. Serve.

<https://youtu.be/f7D4excZDdY>

PRESS RELEASE



Lost in Conversation: poetry collection

By Abigail Handojo

Lost in Conversation is sea glass, grief, smile lines, sunsets, heartbreak, and healing bundled into a poetry collection. Every word carries raw, human emotion and artistically composed vulnerability. Abigail experimented with form and visual elements, crafting an interactive chapbook for curious readers. This collection acts like a body of water, revealing the best, worst, messiest, and most precious parts of a person.

Check it out on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/07smAgAD>

Old Lady Running

By Ann Casas

Old Lady Running is a powerful and intimate collection of short stories that explore what it means to cross invisible thresholds—into aging, into reinvention, into deeper truths. Drawn from years of lived experience, writing classrooms, and life-altering moments, these stories move between fiction and memory, humor and heartbreak, grief and grace.

This is a book about continuing—about running toward creativity, toward language, toward the self that is still unfolding.

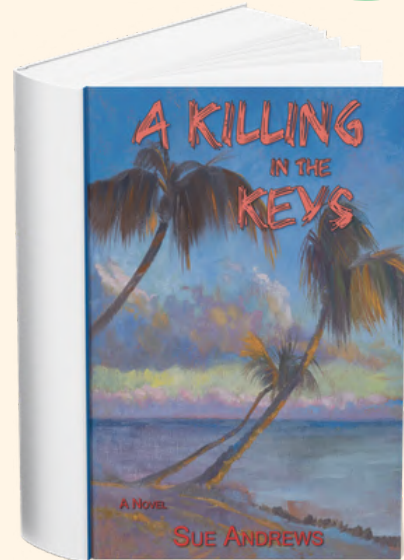


Check it out on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/024npJ32>

PRESS RELEASE

A Killing in the Keys By Sue Andrews

Jacksonville Judas' beloved hero, Wade Nevlin, has retired to Key West to forget his painful past in Jacksonville, rife with loss. After a friend introduces him to AA, Wade fulfills his dream of starting a charter boat company aboard the Beverly, named after his cherished, late wife. His new life includes a cadre of new friends, a charming cottage and his beloved dog, Sandy,

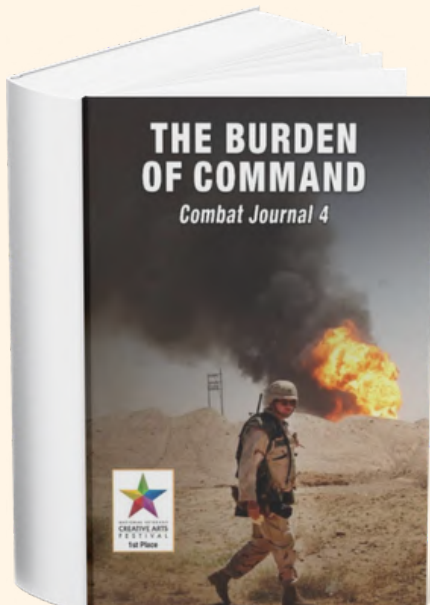


Check it out on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/0e1aHjoR>

On Burden of Command

Combat Journal 4

By John J. McBrearty



Set during Operation Iraqi Freedom, this memoir explores combat, loss, and the unexpected role of humanity—from rebuilding infrastructure to building a golf course in the middle of a war zone—as soldiers struggle to hold onto purpose amid chaos.

This is not a story of heroics. It is a record of endurance, responsibility, and the cost of staying the course when there is no way out but forward.

Purchase amazon Book Here:

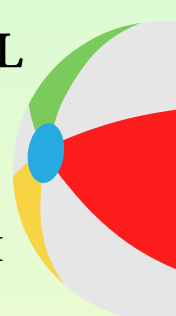
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Help Wanted

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE TO FILL
IN THESE BOARD POSITIONS!

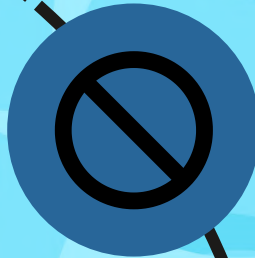
FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:
SAM NICHOLS SAMUELTHOMASNICHOLS@GMAIL.COM



PROGRAM CHAIR

Deadlines

Submissions are due the 20th of every month



Content Limits

Submissions with the following will not be considered:

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce



Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment
Google or Word document
Times New Roman
12pt font



Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



Email

iecwcfreshink@gmail.com

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor



**FRESH
INK**

guidelines

Poetry Musings

By Samuel Thomas Nichols

Relaxation

I was waiting for my *Fit After Fifty* class to begin this morning when I overheard one woman tell another female exercise-mate: "Retirement is not what it's supposed to be. I was looking forward to a little relaxation, but I'm working harder now than I ever did on the job." That's a sentiment I understand because I've found that retirement is a time for familial duties and giving back for a life well led, shifting the relaxing hobbies and treasured pastimes onto that *Round Tuit* of a schedule. However, I've read several times by several authors that the reading of poetry is a form of relaxation to which I must add that the writing of poetry is, as well.

When our son and daughter were in school, they were involved in extracurricular activities such as band and color guard, which, as a parent, meant lots of waiting in the car before and after events and practices. Poetry books and notebooks were always available, tucked inside the glove compartment or between the seat and the center divider. Although I might, at times, have been working on a novel or short story, poetry was my primary waiting output. Though surviving titles include: *Sonnet While Waiting*, and *While Waiting at Alan's*, most of my waiting compositions bear no evidence of being written in the front seat of my car. Yet, what does remain, are:

... gentle visitations of calm thought –
Moods like the memories of happier earth,
Which come arrayed in thoughts of little worth,
Like stars in clouds by the weak winds enwrought, –
But that the clouds depart and stars remain,
While they remain, and ye, alas, depart!

Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792-1822)

In this fragment, Shelley praises the value of calm thought, which I consider a pure form of relaxation, and a phrase that could be a synonym for both meditation and dreaming, such as the dreams that might follow the *Twilight Calm*:

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly: how the dews fall damp!
While close at hand the glow-worm lights her lamp
Or twinkles from afar.
But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East:
For night has come; and the great calm has ceased,
The quiet sands have run.

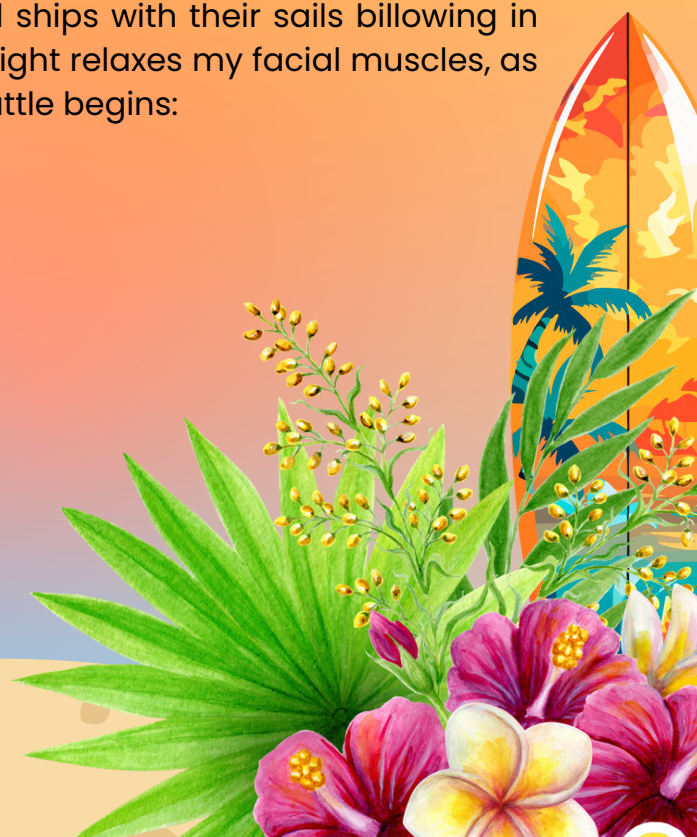
Christini Rosetti (1830-1894)

Growing up on the south end of the Santa Monica Bay, I often escaped to the beaches of the Pacific to find those precious, albeit scattered, moments of peace and, I venture, serenity. Though I now dwell far from the shores of the Pacific, I can still recall her sights and especially her scents, and imagine her calming *Sea-Fever*:

I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.
John Masefield (1878-1967).

A month or two away from my fourteenth birthday I promised Janice, my older cousin, while standing in the starry darkness at the end of the Manhattan Beach Pier, that one day I would own a sailboat and sail her across the Pacific and continue on to circumnavigate our shrinking planet until arriving back home on Monica's sainted bay. Now a month or two away from my seventy-second birthday, I've only made that voyage in my vernal dreams, but within sight of this chair I now occupy are three tall ships with their sails billowing in the wind beneath cumulus clouds, and their sight relaxes my facial muscles, as do my thoughts of Dover Beach, before the battle begins:

The sea is calm tonight.
The tide is full, the moon lies fair
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
Only, from the long line of spray
Where the sea meets the moon-blanced land,
Listen! you hear the grating roar
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
At their return, up the high strand,
Begin, and cease, and then again begin
Matthew Arnold (1822-1883)



As a bicycle-riding child and then a motorcycle-riding teen, I spent many hours alone on a beach at night contemplating my life, my future, the morality of the world, and perhaps, rarely, my mortality. I often encountered others on our western beaches that challenged my solitude as I wrote verses lost to time, and yet, on an eastern beach in the century before mine, another man recorded his still extant thoughts *On the Beach at Night Alone*:

On the beach at night alone,
As the old mother sways her to and fro singing her husky song,
As I watch the bright stars shining, I think a thought of the clef of the universes and of the future.

A vast similitude interlocks all,
All spheres, grown, ungrown, small, large, suns, moons, planets,
All distances of place however wide,
All distances of time, all inanimate forms,
All souls, all living bodies though they be ever so different, or in different worlds,
All gaseous, watery, vegetable, mineral processes, the fishes, the brutes,
All nations, colors, barbarisms, civilizations, languages,
All identities that have existed or may exist on this globe, or any globe,
All lives and deaths, all of the past, present, future,
This vast similitude spans them, and always has spann'd,
And shall forever span them and compactly hold and enclose them.

Walt Whitman (1819-1892)

As the boy becomes a teen, the teen becomes a man, and the man shares the relaxing qualities of his beach experiences at night with another, naively thinking the ocean's medicinal qualities will assure harmonious coexistence. However, naivete will often survive relationships like the one that ended *On the Beach, that June*:

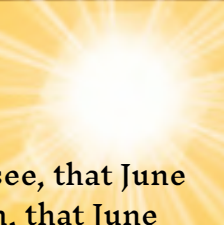
I cherished our day on the beach, that June
We lazed in the cove out of reach, that June

You and me and Mary made three, that June
You and I stole moments to teach, that June

Your daughter ten and oh so free, that June
Skipping, laughing, ever a peach, that June

We felt love growing so esprit, that June
And, your hand, I thought to beseech, that June

Standing beside that endless sea, that June
Listening to the seagulls screech, that June



Vain to what we couldn't foresee, that June
Mating each other unto each, that June

Each possessing a master key, that June
With our emotions set to pleach, that June

Twisted and turned they did agree, that June
Nothing we had could be impeached, that June

For at stake was our destiny, that June
Not realizing grief was a leech, that June

A leech that reared up bestially, that June
Antonia, my love, it breached, that June

As my ghazal (pronounced *guzzel*) attests, even the best of relaxation attempts can turn and flee, leaving us with only a memory that, in time, can birth that sense of nostalgic relaxation in a furtive daydream or the full cinematic pageantry experienced during the middle of the night. Relaxation is, after all, found exactly where we choose to look for it, and many of us find it in the same poetry of words that coexists within the ever-present music of the spheres.

The ghazal was an Arabic verse form that was favored by medieval Persian poets. The stanzas were often sung and frequently dealt with loss and romantic love. The stanzas were couplets that were both syntactically and grammatically complete. This form's complexity boasted an intricate rhyme scheme in which each couplet ended on the same word or phrase (refrain) and was preceded by the couplet's rhyming word, which appeared twice in the first couplet. The last couplet also contained a proper name. Traditionally, each couplet was of the same meter and length, with no set rules on the number of couplets, although five to fifteen predominated. More information on the ghazal may be found on poets.org and elsewhere online.

A Boat To Float

By Shirley Petro

The deep rowboat wears a paint color so mild.

One could not topple it and into the river fall.

The stream today is calm, not water once wild.

She picks up the oars so heavy -not small.

Which direction should she go?

If she paddles upstream, the boat will resist and move slow

Her arms now hurt with the strain of rowing against the flow.

The heart pounded inside her breast

Aching for rest

At last, she turns her boat around.

As it straightens, the waves now quickly carried her downstream.

The force smoothly lifted her to the shore, now lit up with beams.

She flung the oars onto the sand galore.

Never to fight the water force any more.



AUGUST THEME

UNDER THE SEA

