



May, 2014
Volume 2, Issue 5

The Writers of Kern
PO BOX 22335
Bakersfield, CA

Regular meetings:
The 3rd Saturday of each month,
10 to noon. Registration, 9:45.
Fee: \$10, members and guests.

Clarion Hotel
3540 Rosedale Hwy.
Hwy. 99 at Rosedale
Bakersfield, CA
www.writersofkern.com

The Writers of Kern Executive Board

President & Program:
Dana Martin
president@writersofkern.com

Vice President & Webmaster:
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Treasurer: *Joan Raymond*
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Secretary: *Janet Skibinski*
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Membership: *Open*
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Newsletter: *Annis Cassells,
Terry Redman*
newsletter@writersofkern.com

CWC Representative:
Sandy Moffett

Hospitality/Sunshine:
Annis Cassells
sunshine@writersofkern.com



May Speaker **Don Thompson** **Read the Book! Meet the Author!**



It's the Writers of Kern 2nd annual Read the Book! Meet the Author! This year we feature

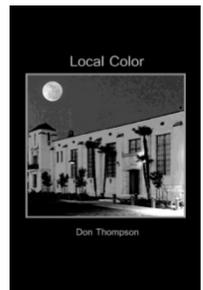
Bakersfield poet, Don E. Thompson and his book-length narrative poem, *Local Color*. Thompson will read passages from his book, discuss finding the universal in the local, and talk about the unique structure he employed.

A fifty-year celebrant of the landscape, history, and people of the San Joaquin Valley in poetry, Thompson did extensive research in preparation for writing *Local Color*. His exploration netted him numerous fascinating stories of interest to writers of prose and poetry, Kern County history buffs, and the general public.

Set in the Kern County Museum over a fictional night watchman's shift, Thompson's all-inclusive poem allows us to meet both imaginary and real Kern figures, including Colonel Thomas Baker,

Chinese and Yokuts inhabitants, folks involved in oil and agriculture, and mountain men.
folks involved in oil and agriculture, and mountain men.

Thompson is a Bakersfield native who's lived in the region most of his life. Beginning in the early 1960s, he has published numerous poems, including eight books and chapbooks since 2000. He is the 2008 winner of the prestigious Sunken Garden Poetry Prize for *Back Roads*.



"...Absolutely stunning, unified... deeply sensitive, responsive to the natural world..." (Gray Jacobik, competition judge).

His poem, "October" was featured on the website of American Life in Poetry. And, this year he has read at the Museum of Contemporary Art Santa Barbara, at Dagny's Coffeehouse in Bakersfield, and most recently at the final celebration of National Poetry Month at CSUB.

Copies of *Local Color* will be available for sale at the meeting for those who wish to "Meet the Author" then Read the Book.

President's Corner
May 2014



Greetings Writers!

After our collective hiatus from Writers of Kern due to the Easter holiday, we're back in the swing of things this month with our regularly scheduled meeting on May 17th. The meeting should be a great learning opportunity before our annual June dinner the following month. If you want your monthly dose of writing inspiration, try not to miss this meeting!

The months of May and June also herald annual officer elections for Writers of Kern. Many of you may not know it, but I've been the president since 2009 when I was installed at the June dinner. It has been a joyous journey, where we've seen growth in our ability to fund scholarships, hold writing contests, provide paid speakers, and in the number of enthusiastic critique groups we manage. We've also seen more members become published authors, start blogs, and finish novels. We now have an outstanding,

usable website and a newsletter that is informative, collaborative, and reflects the massive talent in our ranks. We have an exceptional meeting room and a relationship with a hotel that treats us with respect and appreciation for our loyalty. We've bid peaceful and sad farewells to a handful of amazing writers during my terms and said "hello!" to many new friends, as well.

This job was never meant to be one person's permanent position, and I've always known that. I felt compelled yearly to continue my work with WOK because I knew we were progressing beautifully with my total focus and dedication on improving our club. I didn't do it alone; we've always had great board members to help me achieve my goals for WOK. Today, we have the most energetic board members we've ever had, and I am blessed that they have taken on jobs that have made our club expand beyond what I could have ever done with my ideas alone. Dennis, Joan, Janet, Terry, Annis—thank you. Just when I felt my fuel running low, you came along and gave me a full tank again.

The last few years, however, my passions have become split between groups of amazing writers and groups of amazing young people who act in my haunted attraction. What used to be a seasonal job has turned into a full-time commitment as we venture into the non-profit arena and develop a program to continue improving the lives of these incredible young adults.

Therefore, I would like to offer the position of president to someone if they would like it. Do you have ideas to improve the club and are simply waiting for an opportunity to implement them? You can do one term or (cough, cough) five, or something in between. A wonderful board is in place to transition a new president if someone is bold enough to take the reins and lead this talented group.

If no one wants the job of president, I will stay... but my time will now be split unabashedly between the two groups, and I will pray for volunteers to take over some of the positions I now manage. It's a collective effort, anyway—it takes many hands to make this fabulous club run like it does. It was never just one person, so let that be your encouragement. Even a flower needs sunshine, water, warmth, and an environment to thrive. Let. That. Be. You!

**Official WOK Email
Addresses**

**Go to the website, or email to
the following addresses.**

Thank you.

Events:

events@writersofkern.com

Information:

information@writersofkern.com

Membership:

membership@writersofkern.com

Newsletter:

newsletter@writersofkern.com

President:

president@writersofkern.com

Submissions:

submissions@writersofkern.com

Sunshine Committee:

sunshine@writersofkern.com

Treasurer:

treasurer@writersofkern.com

Webmaster:

webmaster@writersofkern.com

June Installation and Awards Dinner

Remember the enjoyment we shared with fellow WOK members back in December at the Holiday Dinner? Six months have zoomed by, and it's time to get together again.

Mark your calendars for June 14 for the Writers of Kern Installation and Awards dinner meeting. Expect a "writerly" evening to welcome the 2014-15 Board and plan to sit back and enjoy readings by budding young writers. Don't forget to bring a gently-used book for the much-anticipated book exchange.



This year, WOK was privileged to collaborate with a group of dedicated

community leaders to sponsor the Kern County Young Writers Writing and Poetry Competition. In two divisions, sixth-eighth grades and 9th-12th, students wrote short stories, essays, or poetry on the theme, "The Impact of Agriculture on Kern County." The contest garnered a record 137 entries.

Winners will be announced and awards presented at our June dinner meeting, where we'll have the opportunity to hear some of the winners' pieces. What an exceptional way to perpetuate the love, skills, and craft of writing in Kern County and an excellent chance for Writers of Kern to

encourage and honor Kern County's young writers. So, plan to be there: Hodel's, Saturday, June 14 (second Saturday) at 6:30. Please make your dinner reservations and pre-pay online at www.writersofkern.com on or before June 6. If you prefer, make your reservation online, then mail your check to Writers of Kern, P.O. Box 22335, Bakersfield, CA 93390-2335. Thank you!

Calendar

May 17

Read the Book! Meet the Author!
Don Thompson, *Local Color*

May 17

Release party for Taft College's
A Sharp Piece of Awesome, 3 p.m.
at Dagny's Coffee Company

June 14 (2nd Saturday)

Summer Members Dinner Meeting,
6:30 p.m.
at Hodel's.

KCYW 2014 Writing & Poetry
Contest
winners announced

July 19

Monthly meeting
Speaker pending

August 16

Monthly meeting
Speaker pending

September 20

Monthly meeting
Speaker pending

October 18

Wendy Hornsby -
"Make a Commitment to Your
Writing"

WOKians Getting Ink



Congratulations to **Robert Hargreaves**, who reports his second acceptance letter in two

months! "Thank you for sending us "Stem Cells". We love it and would like to publish it in the Spring/Summer issue of the *Tower Journal*, due to go live sometime at the end of May."

Nancy Edwards writes that her most recent publications in 2014 include her poem, "A Good Job," in the *Levan Humanities Review* and two poems in the upcoming Taft College literary magazine, *A Sharp Piece of Awesome*: "After Katrina" and "Through Abraham's Eyes."

The poem, "Emptiness," by **Portia Choi** appears in the latest issue of the *Levan Humanities Review*.

Hi Everyone, I wanted to share some amazing news with all of my favorite WOK writers. I attended the Mt. Hermon Christian Writers Conference in April and have proposal requests for *Mattie's Legacy* from one agent and two publishers. How cool is that? ~ **Iola Reneau** [Very cool, Iola. Ed.]

Joan Raymond joined the editorial team of *The Oddville Press*, an online non-profit magazine.

For First Friday, **Portia Choi** hosted a poetry event at Dagny's. In tribute to Mothers' Day, **Nancy Edwards** read with co-author Rosa Garza from their book, *Beloved Mothers/Queridas Madres*. Their theme was relationships with our mothers, and their poems presented in Spanish and English.

Welcome to our newest member ~

Lawrence Darnell, who writes non-fiction and spiritual pieces.

It's that time of year...

when, if you've been thinking about becoming a member of Writers of Kern, you can join and pay \$65 now, getting a bonus of two months' membership. The membership fee covers you for the rest of this year and through June 30, 2015. You become eligible to attend the June Dinner and to enter the Summer Writing Contest. Pick up your membership application at the next meeting. We hold your check until July 1st. Or, you can register and pay immediately online at www.writersofkern.com

It's a Win-Win.



The Write Way is published monthly in Bakersfield, California. The deadline for submission of news articles is the first day of the month of publication. Send to newsletter@writersofkern.com



The Writers of Kern website seeks and welcomes submissions of members' writing for the website blog. Prose, memoir, poetry, essays, and book reviews should be sent to submissions@writersofkern.com



Pay your WOK Meeting Fee online at www.writersofkern.com
About>Meetings>Meeting Fee

No line, no waiting on meeting day &

Book Review

by Anna Stewart

Miss Peregrine's Home for Peculiar Children

by Ransom Riggs



Jacob Portman is an over-privileged rich kid trying his best to get fired from his job at Smart Aid

when his grandfather calls, confused and frightened and talking about monsters. This is nothing new. His grandfather has always told fantastical stories about children with strange powers and the monsters that hunted them. Jacob is too old to believe in these stories. But when his grandfather is murdered by a monster, when Jacob sees the tentacles dripping from its mouth, Jacob finds himself consumed by the need to uncover the truth.

What follows is a mystery that both intrigues and disappoints as Jacob journeys to the dilapidated house where his grandfather spent his youth as a refugee during World War II. What Jacob finds there is a world more complex than he imagined, a world of time travel, ageless children and the peculiar talents that once featured as his bedtime stories.

Tantalizing black and white photographs of the bizarre interspersed with narrative allow the reader the opportunity to share Jacob's adventure on more than one level. However, the narrative itself disappoints.

Jacob's voice rings true but the peculiar children are flat characters as is Miss Peregrine. The romance between Jacob and Emma, Jacob stepping into his grandfather's role, is disconcerting nor are the time loop issues fully addressed. I was disappointed in the book, but intrigued by its structure.

While I wouldn't recommend it for the story, I would recommend it as an item of interest to anyone who has contemplated a mixed media approach for storytelling.

Meet Bob Cloud



"What I'm trying to do is write. We never know how

someone's help can enrich a life. It all goes back to my 9th grade English teacher at Shafter High School. Mr. Stringham told me I had talent and encouraged me to keep writing." This launched Bob Cloud's life-long interest in writing as well as his involvement with Shafter High's newspaper and yearbook. A member of Shafter's class of 1942, he even sent art pieces to *The Bakersfield Californian*.

At USC, his "little school down south," Bob wanted to take English classes but the demands of chemistry and other sciences en route to becoming a pharmacist left little time. He did manage a journalism class that meant subscribing to and reading *The Los Angeles Times*. He, the non-journalism major, got the only A.

Extensive notes record Bob's and my recent conversations. He has racked up 10,000 miles driving across Europe—twice. Bob is the only man I know who can say he was pulled from the audience for a folk dance on stage in Jerusalem.

He married Yvette in 1961, which explains why he's been to France five times. "I'm married to a French wife, so that's kept me pretty busy." After 52 years we can assume their marriage will endure.

Bob joined Writers of Kern in 2001 and is glad he did. He made sure he told me that he supports Dana's drive to get more members published. Involvement is what he urged in all the associations he joined. He regrets not being very productive of late, in part because he doesn't want to let Dana down. Over the years he has done a lot of non-fiction writing for pharmacist associations. And "I've written a dozen books in my mind."

At 90 Bob has trouble getting around but wants us to know how much he appreciates being a member of Writers of Kern. Last winter when a rumor declared him dead, WOK sent a plant for his family. "We like it," he told me when I asked.

He jokes and says he's often mentioned on TV, usually during the weather report. Remember this about Bob Cloud, "I've had a grand 88 years."

~ Terry Redman



WOKians Chime In

I can still hear my mother saying...



In remembrance of our Mothers this Mothers' Day, WOKians responded: "Learn to adapt to life as it is." Mom was a mild mannered, "don't rock the boat" kind of person. But I wanted to "rock the boat," challenge people and make changes. ~ **Caroline Reid**

"Oh, Jesus!" when startled or scared and, "I've had a terrible day." When that bus crashed in 1995, I know she screamed, "Oh, Jesus!" Eight hours later her last words to me were, "Terry, I've had a terrible day, let's talk tomorrow." ~ **Terry Redman**

"Laugh, and the world laughs with you. Weep, and you weep alone." This is the beginning of the poem: 'Solitude', by Ella Wheeler Wilcox. There are actually three parts, but this is the part I heard frequently. ~ **Nancy Clover**

I grew up in the country. On eighty acres of it. We four kids did a lot of playing out of doors but mostly because my mother was always saying, "Go outside and play!" ~ **Jacqueline Wallace**

"Stop frowning! Your bottom lip is hanging all the way to Texas." ~ **Donnee Padgett Harris**

To this day, I can still hear my mother saying, "Oppy Doop," when she picked a baby up. ~ **Ruth Smith**

My mother said in her North Carolinian accent, "I just don't understand why" something happened. She sparked the question about why someone acted without remorse or behaved badly or when a person disappointed her. I find I have that same desire to understand someone's motivation. ~ **Nancy Edwards**

"Brush your hair or people will think you're an orphan." ~ **Mary Morton**

Whenever I left the house, Mom said, "Are you wearing clean underwear in case you're in an accident?" Years later I learned they cut them off at the hospital when you're in an accident! ~ **Janet Skibinski**

Detroit Edison is the name of the electric company in the city where I grew up. When we'd leave the lights burning after vacating a room, our Mom would always say, "Get Edison outta my pocket!" ~ **Annis Cassells by Nancy Edwards**

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.

-T. S. Eliot

Poetry Corner

Around our Community



The Dezember Room of the California State University, Bakersfield Library was

the scene of celebrating the end of National Poetry Month in April. The month-long celebration of poets and the performance of original poetry concluded on Tuesday, April 29, 2014, with an audience eager to hear a variety of local writers in a fast-paced reading performed by six published writers from the Bakersfield/Kern County area.

Associate Professor of English and Creative Writing from CSUB Dr. Marit MacArthur hosted the evening and read some of her poetry along with Dean of Humanities Dr. Richard Collins; **Dr. Portia Choi; Dr. Nancy Edwards;** Dr. Matt Woodman; and Don Thompson. Dr. Stafford Betty from CSUB was also present to help to congratulate two students from CSUB who received a new poetry award which he established.

This is the fifth year of National Poetry Month. Bakersfield events included Open Mic night at Dagny's Coffee Shop, poetry workshops for middle and high school students, and a poetry workshop for Camille Gavin's 60 Plus class. Activities involved all ages -- from seniors to gifted ninth grade students from West High School, taught by **Nancy Edwards. Portia Choi** facilitated a Healing through Poetry and

Why Not? By Terry Redman



Last summer, when the new Board took office, a wildfire struck Writers of Kern. I can say this because I was not then on the Board. Suddenly we had a top notch website, we moved into the 21st century with California Writers Club’s email procedures, and the newsletter came back to life. In May we elect the slate of officers for the 2014-15 year and choose volunteers to serve on the Board. How are you going to help? Experience is overrated.

Dana Martin is in her fifth year of a three-year commitment as president. **Patrick Kelly** (membership) had to withdraw from the Board in March. **Joan Raymond** (treasurer) has just had surgery. No one ever shows up at the Board meeting as an at-large member. The role of speaker selection is unfilled, so **Dana** and **Joan** take it on. **Sandy Moffett** continues to serve as our representative to CWC.

Jason Brown took over as bagel angel and improved the food, **Nancy Clover** has added a new flavor to the column that highlights the previous month’s speaker, and **Dennis VanderWerff** (vice president, webmaster) takes great photos at the meetings. **Anna Stewart** contributes those interesting book reviews, and several of you wrote and shared your biography.

Jasmine Lowe, a full-time college student at Cal State Fullerton, does the layout, making *The Write Way* attractive. **Annis Cassells** and I have agreed to serve as newsletter editors until May 2015. We are looking for more contributors. If you have an idea for a column in the newsletter, write it. That’s what we do here. And I am always looking for fresh bios.

Participation in WOK has enriched my life for 13 years. One lesson endures: **Writers of Kern** improves when we are engaged. This is your club, so how are you going to pitch in to make it even better? Why not?

Please make your reservations for the June 14 Dinner and pre-pay online at www.writersofkern.com on or before June 6.

If you prefer, make your reservation online, then mail your check to Writers of Kern, P.O. Box 22335, Bakersfield, CA 93390-2335.

Thank you! See you there!

Elected Officers' Duties Writers of Kern

President

- Draft board meeting agendas and run board meetings
- Draft the agenda and run general monthly meetings
- Act as program and publicity chair
- Keep members informed of club business via email, social media, club website, and at meetings
- Read email and respond in a timely fashion
- Negotiate between other board members and chairs as needed
- Provide leadership with a positive attitude

Vice President

- Attend and participate in board meetings
- Run monthly meetings in the president's absence
- Oversee the Peggy Connelly Scholarship program

Secretary

- Attend board meetings
- Take minutes at board meetings and distribute them to board members in a timely fashion
- Correspond with membership as necessary

Treasurer

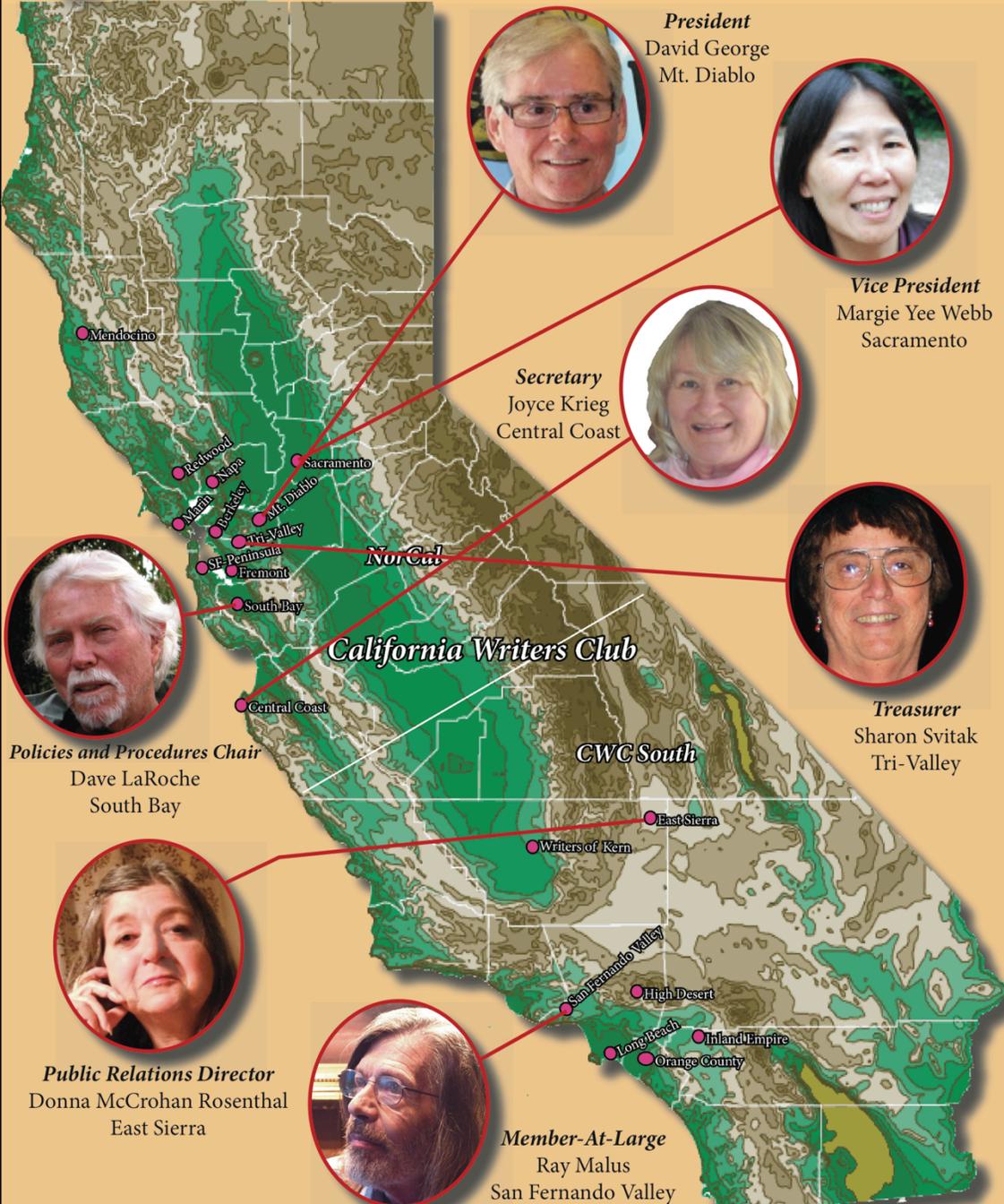
- Monitor and process income
- Make bank deposits
- Write checks for branch expenses
- Reconcile monthly bank statements
- Prepare reports for board meetings
- Hand in quarterly reports to CB's treasurer
- Create annual proposed budget
- Attend and participate in board meetings
- Check branch PO box regularly

Volunteer Positions

The **Membership Chair** inputs new members and their information into the Member Record Management System (MRMS) and reports those numbers to the state organization, California Writers Club (CWC). The **Newsletter Editor** solicits, gathers, edits, formats, and writes newsworthy articles and features for the club's monthly online publication, *The Write Way*. The editor coordinates with the layout person to ensure that the newsletter goes out to the membership 7-10 days prior to the monthly meeting. When the newsletter is ready for distribution, the editor sends it to the webmaster, the WOK membership, and to presidents and newsletter editors of the other CWC branches.



California Writers Club Officers and Appointees of the Central Board (2013-2014)



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David George
Mt. Diablo

Vice President
Margie Yee Webb
Sacramento

Secretary
Joyce Krieg
Central Coast

Treasurer
Sharon Svitak
Tri-Valley

Policies and Procedures Chair
Dave LaRoche
South Bay

Public Relations Director
Donna McCrohan Rosenthal
East Sierra

Member-At-Large
Ray Malus
San Fernando Valley

Regions: NorCal, CWC South

Other Locations: Mendocino, Redwood, Napa, Marin, Berkeley, Sacramento, Mt. Diablo, Tri-Valley, SF-Peninsula, Fremont, South Bay, Central Coast, East Sierra, Writers of Kern, San Fernando Valley, High Desert, Long Beach, Inland Empire, Orange County

Map-Ray Malus, San Fernando Branch
Compilation-Linda Brown, Berkeley Branch

THE BACK PAGE

Editors' Inkwell

What's the World Coming To?

By Annis Cassells



Fifty-four middle school entries and eighty-three high school responses to the 2014 Kern County Young Writers Writing & Poetry Competition show me involvement, commitment, and perseverance among our youth. So does the increase in younger guests and members who attend Writers of Kern meetings.

Recently, I served as guest speaker in a friend's ESL class at Bakersfield College. Some of those young people entered the classroom pulling out their assignment, a first draft of a paper reflecting the themes of Sandra Cisneros's *House on Mango Street*. They sought out classmates for a quick critique and help before it was time to turn in their papers.

A polite and attentive audience, they had questions about writing and about my writing history and process. "Do you ever get writer's block?" "Do you have music or any noise on when you write?" "When did you first start writing?"

I gave them a short poetry exercise and one student, Omar, who sat at the front table said, "I want to show you some notes I wrote." He whipped out his phone and prefaced my reading by saying, "I wrote this in my language (Arabic) and my friend who speaks better English translated it for me." Omar and I connected when after I read my own poem from the exercise, he said, "You and I are just the same."

I'm hopeful, excited, and proud. I see the desire to learn and excel. I see humans connecting through writing. Looking forward to connecting with you at the March 17 Writers of Kern meeting.

Jean Chapman Recommends

In response to last month's member question, "What are you Reading," Jean sent a response too lengthy to publish -- and too good to miss. So, we invited her to post it on our Writers of Kern website blog. Here's a preview of what Jean has to say:

I have to recommend two terrific books: Sue Monk Kidd's latest, *The Invention of Wings*-- fictionalized account of Sarah Grimké, who was raised in the antebellum south of Charleston and received a slave as a gift for her 11th birthday. This is a gripping novel that provokes thought and applauds the courage of a woman who forsook a life of privilege to follow the inner voice of her convictions and moral compass.



Also picked up Malcolm Gladwell's current, *David and Goliath*. Non-fiction, it is giving me heart to be courageous in the face of what seems strong in the face of my weaknesses and fears. Gladwell offers real-life examples of the often defenseless who win the ultimate battles in which they engage as they tackle formidable foes who "look" strong and talk "strong."

To read more of what Jean has to say about these two recent favorites, click on BLOG at www.writersofkern.com.