



# Gold Country Writers

*Forging Better Writers*

## January 2026 Dispatch Newsletter

### About Us

Gold Country Writers is a 501(c)(3) non-profit volunteer organization of writers that meets every Wednesday at the Auburn City Hall Rose Room from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

Email [gcmembership@gmail.com](mailto:gcmembership@gmail.com) to join or find out more.

**Website:** [goldcountrywriters.com](http://goldcountrywriters.com)

**Facebook:** Gold Country Writers

**Mailing address:** P.O. Box 5991, Auburn, CA 95604.



## President's Message

Now is a great time to reflect on our creative goals and to celebrate the small victories that often go unnoticed. As we look ahead to the new year, I'm excited about opportunities to explore new ideas, challenge ourselves, and support one another in the ever-evolving journey of writing.

One important way we do this is through our Specialty Spin-Off groups, many of which focus on critique. In January, part of our 2nd or 4th Wednesday Drop-In Critique sessions will be dedicated to a discussion on how to give and receive constructive feedback.



Thank you for being part of this community, for sharing your stories, and for inspiring others with your dedication.

Here's to the unwritten stories awaiting us in the year to come.

Keep Writing,  
Nicolle Goldman

## 2026 DUES ARE DUE!

**Membership dues are \$60 and are due now! You can:**

1. Pay on the GCW website using PayPal
2. Write check payable to "Gold Country Writers" and **mail to Gold Country Writers, P.O. Box 5991, Auburn, CA 95604.**
3. Bring your cash or check to a GCW Event in January.

## Calendar of Meetings January 2026

*\*All meetings take place at the Rose Room, Auburn City Hall, 1226 Lincoln Way, Auburn, unless otherwise indicated.*

<b>Wednesday, January 7</b>	
General Business Meeting	10:00 a.m. - noon
Evening Mixed Genre Critique Max's Cafe, Auburn	5:15 p.m.
<b>Tuesday, January 13</b>	
Memoir Critique Atwood Business Park 11768 Atwood Road, Auburn	Currently full
<b>Wednesday, January 14</b>	
Drop-in Critique	10:00 a.m. - noon
Poetry Group	noon - 2:00 p.m.
Inspirational	noon - 2:00 p.m.
Children's Lit	noon - 2:00 p.m.
Sci Fi and Fantasy Group Flames Restaurant 3434 Lincoln Way, #3215, Auburn (Raley's Shopping Center)	2:30 p.m.
<b>Wednesday, January 21</b>	
Guest Speaker: Screenwriter and Author Matthew Minson  "Similarities in Writing Comedy and Horror"	10:00 a.m. - noon
<b>Tuesday, January 27</b>	

Memoir Critique Atwood Business Park 11768 Atwood Rd., Auburn	Currently full
<b>Wednesday, January 28</b>	
Drop-in Critique	10:00 a.m. - noon
Poetry Group	noon - 2:00 p.m.
Inspirational	noon - 2:00 p.m.
Children's Lit	noon - 2:00 p.m.
Sci Fi and Fantasy Group Flames Restaurant 3434 Lincoln Way, #3215, Auburn (Raley's Shopping Center)	2:30 p.m.
Memoir Share Group	noon - 2:00 p.m.

## Parking at Oddfellows Hall

by Lisa Schliff

If you are struggling to find a parking place for any Gold Country Writers events, you can now park behind Oddfellows Hall! It is conveniently located across the street from Auburn City Hall in a two-story red brick building. Terry Wicks, our security manager, called Oddfellows recently to secure their back parking lot for our use.

Thank you, Terry and Oddfellows Hall!

## We Need You! Volunteer Positions Available!



Our wonderful group is comprised of many volunteers who dedicate their time and effort to keep our operations running smoothly.

We need your help! We have the following positions open and ready:

**Mentor Program Manager position - Starting January 2026.** Please contact Susan Korn for details.

**Webmaster assistant position - Starting ASAP.** Please contact Sarah Pressler for details.

**Substack Media position -** Please contact Chery Anderson for details.

# December 2025 Holiday Party

## Holiday Sweater Parade and Contest Winners Books for Gift Exchange Salvation Army Toys For Tots Drive



Lisa Schliff and Kathryn Shields with the Toys for Tots donations.  
(photo by Margie Yee Webb)



Holiday Sweater Parade with some of the participants: Jojo Cook, Chery Anderson, Joy Hemp  
(photo by Margie Yee Webb)



Kudos to Gold Country Writers for supporting Toys for Tots! Vice President (Internal Affairs) Lisa Schliff and President Nicolle Goldman with Captain Hartt from the Salvation Army who stopped by to pick up the donations-filled box.  
(photo by Margie Yee Webb)



Holiday Sweater Contest Winners — Chery Anderson (Creative), Mac Daly (Ritzy Glitzy), Terry Wicks (Fun), Jeaninne Escallier Kato (Chic and Fashionable)  
(photo by Margie Yee Webb)





### Toys for Tots a Success by Lisa Schliff

Many attendees brought new, unwrapped toys to fill the donation box for Toys for Tots. I'm proud to say that we filled the box to the top! The Salvation Army in Auburn works in conjunction with Toys for Tots in Nevada County to deliver boxes to events and collect them at the end of the event. Children who might not receive a single gift for Christmas had a present to open thanks to you. Great appreciation goes to one and all for your generous hearts. (photo by Margie Yee Webb)

## Upcoming Events: Save The Dates! by Margie Yee Webb

*The Speaker Programs, scheduled on the 3rd Wednesday of the month (except in August and December), are free and open to the public. Writers, readers, and guests are invited! Join in these engaging events!*

*\*Please note changes in GCW meeting schedule due to holidays and holiday party.*

**Friday, January 16, 2026**

**Note: Read & Review date in January is confirmed by Kelly Lardner to be January 16 (not January 9).**

**Read and Review** — The Ranch by **Terry Wicks**, and  
His Story is My Story by **Elke McKee**

<https://goldcountrywriters.com/event/read-review-2026-1/>

**Wednesday, January 21, 2026**

Screenwriter and Author **Matthew Minson**

"Similarities in Writing Comedy and Horror"

<https://goldcountrywriters.com/upcoming-events/>

**Wednesday, February 18, 2026**

Writer and Poet **William O'Daly**

"Imagination and Community: Translating Our Lives Into Poetry" (Workshop)

<https://goldcountrywriters.com/upcoming-events/>

**Wednesday, March 4th, noon to 1:00 p.m.:** March Mixer for new members. All members are welcome to meet and greet our new GCW members. Light refreshments and beverages.

**Wednesday, March 18, 2026**

Writer **Jojo Cook**

"Social Action Writing: What Makes The Pen Mighty?" (Workshop)

<https://goldcountrywriters.com/upcoming-events/>

## GCW Speaker for January

### Writing for Laughs and Scares

by **Margie Yee Webb**

We are pleased to welcome Matthew Minson for a presentation to Gold Country Writers. On Wednesday, January 21, 2026, he will present "Similarities in Writing Comedy and Horror."

Screenwriter and author Matthew Minson will talk about what the greats have taught us about how humor and horror are two sides of the same mirror. Both are visceral reactions. Both amount to an experience without consequences. In a literary or theatrical send up, there are some similarities that artists such as Hitchcock and King have mastered. We'll talk about the horrific in the humorous and vice versa. We'll look at the setup and the payoff; the timing, pace, and similarities in a scare and laugh; and how horror without humor is a one note song.

Matthew Minson, MD, has written for Esther's Follies and numerous comedians. His work has been recognized by Library Journal, BIBA, Faulkner-Wisdom, Writer's Digest, Goldberg, First Novel, Publisher's Weekly, and the Academy's Nicholl Fellowship among others. His Prepare to Defend Yourself series of healthcare and social advocacy books published by Texas A&M University Press received a "Best of the Year" selection by Library Journal.

His debut novel, Sun City: A Hilariously Addictive Story of Rebellion, was the 2022 Best Indie Book Award winner for humor. His follow-up novel, Crockettville, debuted as Amazon's #1 in Political Satire, and #1 in Cultural, Ethnic and Regional Humor. His noir novel Perspectives was a finalist for the Silver Falchion Award in 2024, and the screenplay adaptation was a semifinalist at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Nicholl Fellowship. He is represented by Dean Krystek at WordLink, Inc. For more info, visit:

<https://www.writerminson.com/>.



# GOLD COUNTRY WRITERS

## "SIMILARITIES IN WRITING COMEDY & HORROR"



MATTHEW MINSON



JANUARY 21, 2026

10 AM to NOON

Screenwriter and author Matthew Minson will talk about what the greats have taught us about how humor and horror are two sides of the same mirror. In a literary or theatrical send up, there are some similarities that artists such as Hitchcock and King have mastered. We'll talk about the horrific in the humorous and vice versa. We'll look at the setup and the payoff; the timing, pace, and similarities in a scare and laugh; and how horror without humor is a one note song. His book *Sun City: A Hilariously Addictive Story of Rebellion* won "Best Indie Book Award for Humor" and he wrote the psychological thriller and screen adaptation of *Perspectives*.

For more information: [www.writerminson.com](http://www.writerminson.com)

AUBURN CITY HALL ROSE ROOM

1225 LINCOLN WAY, AUBURN CA 95603

[www.goldcountrywriters.com](http://www.goldcountrywriters.com) Public invited FREE

## Nuggets

by Randy Landenberger

### Hooks, Taglines, Log Lines, Blurbs and Elevator Pitches, (Oh, My!)

These terms are often confused, being labeled interchangeably. Regardless, do you know how to use them?

Here's why you should; are you hoping/planning to sell your book or article? Why should I buy it? Convince me.



### Hooks and Taglines

Short. Punchy. Emotional.

Just enough to pull someone closer—nothing more.

### Famous Examples

(See if you can guess before reading the answers!)

- One ring to rule them all. — Lord of the Rings
- Don't go in the water! — Jaws

- In space, no one can hear you scream. — *Alien*
- An adventure 65 million years in the making. — *Jurassic Park*
- Life is in their hands—death is on their minds. — *12 Angry Men*
- Just kiss her. — *It's a Wonderful Life*
- (Once you've hooked them, then you reel them in.)

## Loglines

A logline is a super-condensed summary of your story.

It tells readers just enough to understand:

- the genre
- the emotional core
- the central conflict
- the stakes

These are perfect for:

- Amazon blurbs
- Facebook/Instagram ads
- Query letters
- Elevator pitches

## Examples

*The Kite Runner*

"Afghanistan, 1975: Twelve-year-old Amir is desperate to win the local kite-fighting tournament, and his loyal friend Hassan promises to help him. But neither boy can foresee what will happen that afternoon—an event that will shatter their lives. After the Russian invasion forces the family to flee to America, Amir realizes he must one day return to Taliban-controlled Afghanistan to find the one thing his new world cannot offer: redemption."

*Back to the Future*

A young man is transported to the past, where he must reunite his parents before he—and his future—cease to exist.

*Rear Window*

A wheelchair-bound photographer spies on neighbors from his apartment and becomes convinced one of them has committed murder.

*Home Alone*

An eight-year-old troublemaker must protect his house from two burglars after his family accidentally leaves him behind for Christmas vacation.

## Your Challenge

Start practicing. Do more homework. You need to have it ready to recite at a moment's notice. Write out a number of versions and try them out on your friends.

You may have only one shot to convince a reader—or an agent—why they should read (and buy!) your story.

## Helpful Resources

- <https://www.talenawinters.com/authoralchemist/2025/9/3/log-lines-taglines-hooks-and-more>
- <https://selfpublishingformula.com/hooks-and-taglines-what-are-they/>
- <https://industrialscripts.com/famous-logline-examples/>
- <https://www.nfi.edu/movie-taglines/>
- <https://reedsy.com/blog/guide/book-hook/hook-examples/>

(More about elevator pitches & loglines than hooks.)

## Final Nugget

"For three men, the Civil War wasn't hell. It was practice."

— **The Good, the Bad and the Ugly**



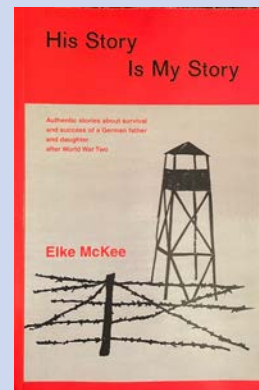
# Read and Review 2026 Book Lineup

## Read and Review is our very own GCW book club Upcoming Books for Read and Review

In 2025, our GCW book club thrived on a blend of thoughtful discussions and genuine camaraderie. We read a variety of books: fiction, non-fiction, memoir, and self-help, all written by our own GCW authors. With each new book, we dove into a different world, challenging our perspectives and sparking lively conversation that often spilled over from the characters' lives into our own. With each meeting we shared an enthusiasm for the written word. The real success, however, was in the strong bonds we built, where the books served as a delightful pretense for gathering, sharing, and creating a supportive community for all authors. Please consider joining us in 2026 at Depoe Bay in Auburn, 10 a.m. to noon, on the Friday dates listed below. Most books are available on Amazon, and all can be checked-out from our own GCW library.

**Note: Read & Review date in January is confirmed by Kelly Lardner to be January 16 (not January 9).**

**January 16:** "The Ranch vol. 1&2" by Terry Wicks and  
"His Story is My Story" by Elke McKee



**April 10:** "Coincidences and Other Spooky Connections" by Susan Osborn and  
"Little Askar" by Sarah Pressler

**July 10:** "Fever Road" by Ernest Brawley and  
"Exploring the Sacred Mystery, A Quest for the Divine" by Mary Mohs

**October 9:** To be announced

Kelly Lardner, Coordinator  
[Irdnr@yahoo.com](mailto:Irdnr@yahoo.com)

## Kudos to Our Members!

To Our Holiday Party Committee:

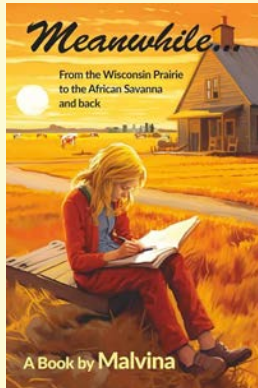
**Lisa Schliff, Barbara Young, Marla Mion, Terry Wicks, Frank Nissen, Bill Baynes, Randy Landenberger, Sheila Lopez, Susan Korn, and Chery Anderson**

For organizing a fun and festive Holiday Celebration in December. The toy drive was a huge success, the book exchange was spirited, and the sweater contest was a great opportunity for us all to rock our holiday swag!

**To Rosanne McHenry and Philip Jacques**

For their new program on Auburn Community TV called '*On the Road With Ranger Rose*'. It's all about making road trips throughout the west. The first episode came out in October and the second one aired in December. Episodes can be found on YouTube.

Here is a link to the first episode: [On the Road with Ranger Rose](#)



**To Sarah Michie Pressler aka Malvina**

For publishing her memoir titled

**"Meanwhile...From the Wisconsin Prairie to the African Savanna and Back"**

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## Newsletter Submission Deadlines

Please submit all kudos, articles, images, and news to Marla Mion at [marlamion2100@gmail.com](mailto:marlamion2100@gmail.com).

All submissions are due by midnight on the 26th of the month. Late submissions may not be included until the following month. Thank you!

**Share Your Milestones!**

Please send news of your writing milestones and accomplishments to Dispatch Editor Marla Mion at [marlamion2100@gmail.com](mailto:marlamion2100@gmail.com). Your news will be posted in the Kudos column. We want to read about you!

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## Speaker Programs on ACTV

Click on the blue link to view the Guest Speaker's presentation on youtube.com. Auburn Community Television (ACTV) Studio Manager **Phil Jacques**, a member of Gold Country Writers, has been filming the Speaker Programs since March 2022 when his schedule permits. Much appreciation to Phil!

To view past Guest Speaker videos, visit the GCW website:

<https://goldcountrywriters.com/gcw-videos/>

**Anne Da Vigo**, "Creating Fiction from Real Events," October 15, 2025

<https://youtu.be/nthxqeoCDTw>

**Bob Stanley**, "Why Is This a Poem?" September 17, 2025

<https://youtu.be/ecdUF93KbAY>

**Jennifer K. Morita**, "Querying A to Q — Pitching to Literary Agents," July 16, 2025

<https://youtu.be/Eu184wvSda4>

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## GCW Specialty Spin-off Group Information

Specialty Spin-off Group information can be accessed  
on the GCW website:

<https://goldcountrywriters.com/genre-specific-critique-groups/>

**Specialty Spin-off Groups Coordinator:**  
**Rebecca Inch-Partridge**

Contact group leaders on the latest club roster  
to learn the current schedule for your group.

### Snap Your Critique Group

Critique group leaders and participants: Please send photos of your critique groups in action to our newsletter editor Marla Mion at: [marlamion2100@gmail.com](mailto:marlamion2100@gmail.com). Also, you can visit the GCW Facebook page, like the posts, and generate more traffic and interest in Gold Country Writers.

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## Out of Town Literary Events

by Margie Yee Webb

**Cameron Park Library — Tuesday, January 6, and Thursday, January 15, 2026 - 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.**

**Poets and Writers Workshop** led by El Dorado County Poet Laureate Emeritus Lara Gularte and author Beverly Parayno — held on the first Tuesday and third Thursday of every month. "We offer an encouraging space for writers and poets to gather in community. Bring one or two poems or six pages of prose, double-spaced. Read, discuss, critique."

*Cameron Park Library, 2500 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park, CA 95682, 530-621-5500*

**Face In A Book Bookstore — Sunday, January 18, 2026 - 1 p.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

"Drop by for a meeting of the **Writers' Coffeehouse** — a group open to writers of all levels and interests! Meet like-minded people and share writing tips, industry info, and a bit of what you're working on. There are no fees, no registration, and no publishing requirements. All writers are welcome!" The Writers' Coffeehouse meets on the third Sunday of every month. <https://www.getyourfaceinabook.com/event/writers-coffeehouse>

*Face In A Book Bookstore, 4359 Town Center Blvd. #113, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762*

**Left Coast Crime 2026: San Francisco Schemin' — Thursday, February 26, to Sunday, March 1, 2026**

An annual mystery convention, **Left Coast Crime** is sponsored by mystery fans, both readers and authors. Panel discussions and other programming on a wide variety of topics are designed to allow interaction among readers and writers. For details: <https://leftcoastcrime.org/2026/>.

*Hyatt Regency San Francisco, 5 Embarcadero Center, San Francisco, CA 94111*

**Sierra WordFest** (formerly Sierra Writers Conference) — **Saturday, March 7, 2026** - 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

The **2026 Sierra WordFest**, featuring Daniel Handler (Lemony Snicket) and centered on "Power of Place." Presenters include GCW members Catharine Bramkamp and Joan Griffin, and past GCW speaker Sands Hall. For details: 2026 Sierra WordFest Tickets, Multiple Dates | Eventbrite — <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2026-sierra-wordfest-tickets-1923958695249>

*Sierra College Nevada County Campus, 250 Sierra College Drive, Grass Valley, CA 95945*

—PLUS—

**Sierra WordFest presentations — Wednesday, March 4, and Thursday, March 5, 2026** (afternoon)

For details: see Eventbrite link above.

*Sierra College Rocklin Campus, 5100 Sierra College Blvd., Rocklin, CA 95677*

## Become a Member of Gold Country Writers!



*It's easy to join!*

Email your name, address, and telephone number to:

[GCWmembership@gmail.com](mailto:GCWmembership@gmail.com).

Please put 'GCW Membership' in the subject line. We will mail you a more comprehensive membership questionnaire.

Gold Country Writers is here to support and encourage writers of all levels and all genres — whether Novels, Poetry, Science Fiction, Fiction, Memoirs, or your own creative genre. Whether you are a beginner or an established writer — WELCOME.



Membership gives you: Critique groups, monthly speakers, networking, mentor program, Read and Review quarterly book club, monthly newsletter, website with your bio, social events, and much more!

## Printable PDF of This Newsletter!

Printable PDF File

## Gold Country Writers Leadership Team

### Executive Committee

President (2025-2027).....Nicolle Goldman

VP – Internal Affairs (2025-2027).....Lisa Schliff

VP – External Affairs (2024-2026).....Pat Snelling

Secretary (2025-2027).....Annie Hendrix

Treasurer (2024-2026).....Heike Kutchukov

### Directors

Director of Membership.....Joan Griffin

Director of Communications.....Chery Anderson

Director of Speaker Programs.....Margie Yee Webb

Director of Spin-off Critique Groups.....Rebecca Inch-Partridge

### Other Leaders & Coordinators

Mentor Program Manager.....Susan Korn

Newsletter Editor.....Marla Mion

Website Manager.....Sarah Pressler

Read & Review Coordinator.....Kelly Lardner

Librarian.....Kathryn Shields

Social Media Coordinator.....Michael O'Haver

Audio-Visual Tech.....Randy Landenberger/Phil Jacques

Drop-In Critique Coordinator.....Frank Nissen

Historian.....Barbara Young

Security Manager.....Terry Wicks

Greeters.....Kathryn Shields/Terry Wicks

[www.goldcountrywriters.com](http://www.goldcountrywriters.com)

Gold Country Writers | P.O. Box 5991 | Auburn, CA 95604 US

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