

## CWC Mt Diablo Branch: *Writers Table*

# TRAVEL & WRITING

*Travel imbues your writing with authenticity and interest*

*A panel with Bill Stong & Jill Hedgecock*

*Moderated by: John Marvin*

*May 9, 2020*

## QUESTION #1:

<1 OF 2>

**Have you used travel to find stories and/or your characters?**

# QUESTION #1: BILL STONG

Truthfully, no.

(Historical fiction, so characters and stories already exist). ***But!*** Travel gives

- ▶ Details that flesh out what history books tell you about the events and people
- ▶ The whole sensory spectrum of the places where your characters experience their stories



# QUESTION #1: BILL STONG

## Seta-no-Karahashi Bridge

Saved from  
metmuseum.org

Utagawa Hiroshige |  
Long Bridge of Seta |  
Japan | Edo period  
(1615–1868) | The  
Met

Signature: Hiroshige  
Inscription:  
Poem: The sun  
passing over Moriga  
and Fuji Mountains in  
the morning mist  
throws gold rays on  
the long Seta Bridge  
of Lake Biwa





# QUESTION #1: BILL STONG



Roanoke

Virginia  
Colony  
(now  
North  
Carolina)



## QUESTION #1:

<2 OF 2>

**Have you used travel to find stories and/or your characters?**

# QUESTION #1:

JILL HEDGECOCK

## *Rhino in the Room*

Yes!!

Three  
rhinos are  
poached  
every day  
in South  
Africa





# QUESTION #1: JILL HEDGECOCK (CONT.)

*Rhino in  
the Room*

Stories  
around a  
fire pit.



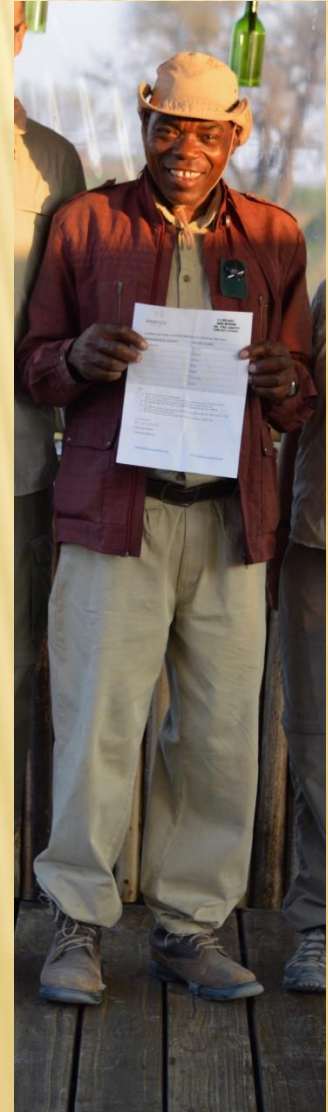


# QUESTION #1: JILL HEDGECOCK (CONT.)

## *Rhino in the Room*

Guide character was a composite of several guides. (Grouchy, yet knowledgeable)

Botswana camp manager (Kago) cracked up for no reason.





# QUESTION #1: JILL HEDGECOCK (CONT.)

- ✗ Doesn't need to be exotic travel

- ✗ The Red Book

- ✗ Let your muse speak





## **QUESTION #2:**

<1 OF 2>

**Has travel helped you to do research?**

**If so, what did you do & what was it like?**

## QUESTION #2: BILL STONG

1. **Roanoke** to get a feel for what it must have been like in the 1580's
2. **Point Reyes** to walk where Francis Drake careened his ship, the *Golden Hind*, after raiding the Spanish up the coast of South and Central America
- 3+. **Japan** to visit many of the places that are in my historical novel



# QUESTION #2: BILL STONG

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Roanoke Island Festival Park; 1600 merchant ship's galley



# QUESTION #2: BILL STONG

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Drakes Estero State Marine Conservation Area; Sunset Beach trail end



# QUESTION #2: BILL STONG

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Kuno-zan Toshogu; Tokugawa Ieyasu's first mausoleum; Shizuoka, Japan

## **QUESTION #2:**

<2 OF 2>

**Has travel helped you to do research?**

**If so, what did you do & what was it like?**



# QUESTION #2: JILL HEDGECOCK

Forces me to dismiss preconceived notions and identify the unusual.

*Rhino in the Room sequel*

Bamboo forest and nervous guard



Giant worms



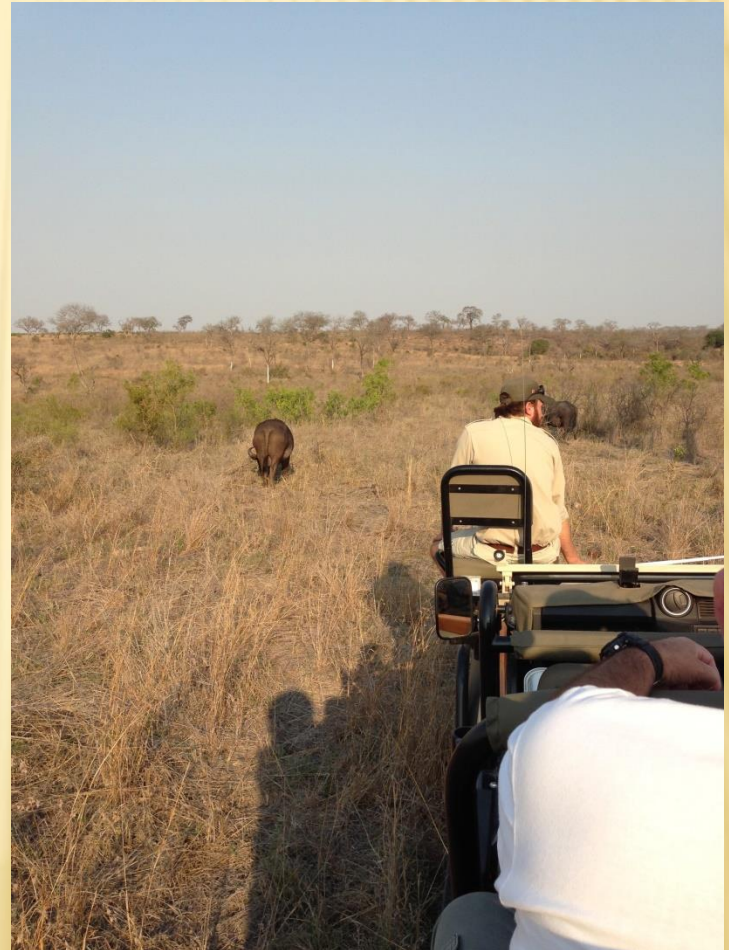


## QUESTION # 2 JILL HEDGECKOCK (CONT.)

*Rhino in the  
Room*

Looked for  
opportunities for  
tension.

(Asked to sit in  
the seat (not  
allowed))





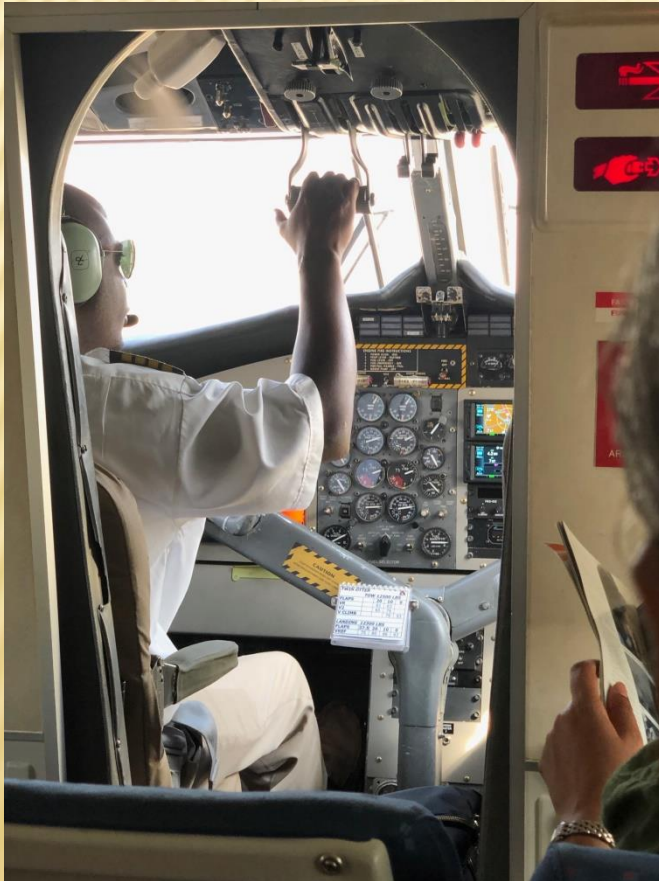
# QUESTION #2: JILL HEDGECKOCK (CONT.)

*Rhino in the Room and seque*

Food

Accommodations

Transportation



## QUESTION #3:

<1 OF 2>

**When you've traveled to a place in support of your writing, what did you experience and what impact did it have on your writing?**



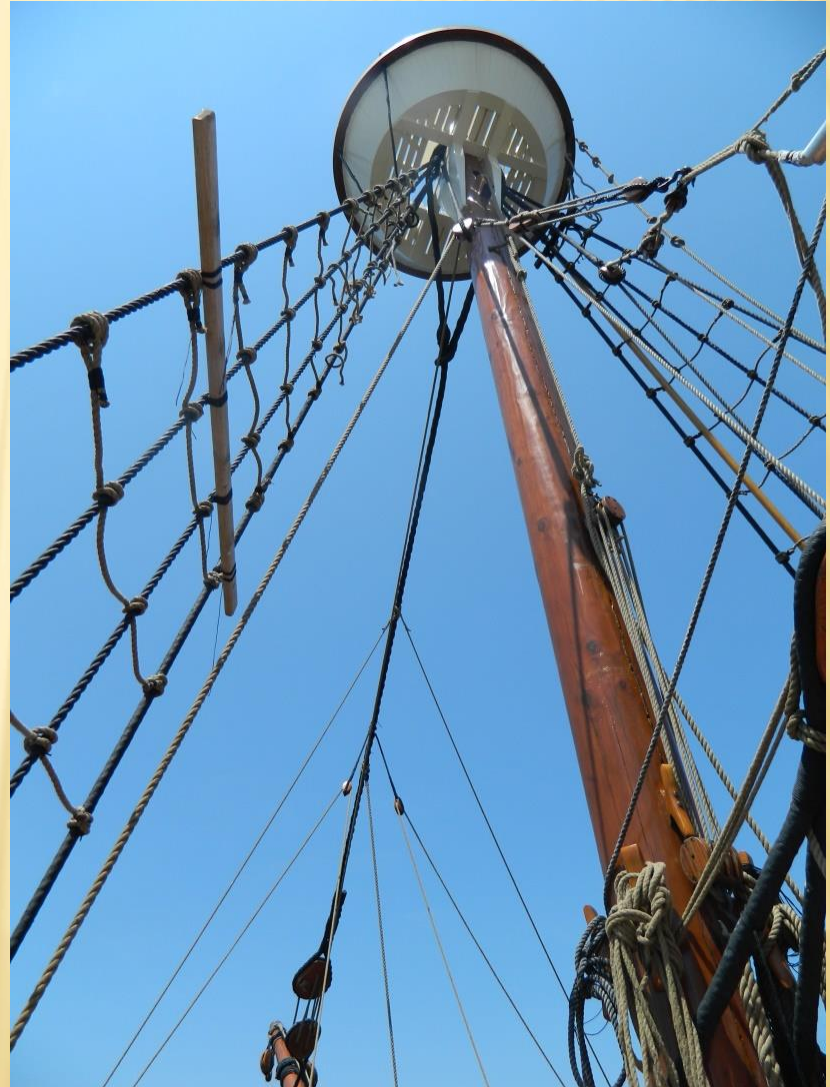
# QUESTION #3:

# BILL STONG

## Roanoke Island

1600s merchant ship

- Main mast
- Crow's nest
- Ratlines





# QUESTION #3:

# BILL STONG

## Point Reyes

- Drakes Estuary
- Sunset Beach hiking trail





# QUESTION #3: BILL STONG



**Azuchijokaku Museum**

**Huge scale model**

✓ **Rooms!**

✓ **Floor plans!**



# QUESTION #3: BILL STONG

**I can have my characters walk these corridors—move anywhere in the castle!**



**I can add intimate details of where each character is staying!**





## QUESTION #3:

<2 OF 2>

**When you've traveled to a place in support of your writing, what did you experience and what impact did it have on your writing?**

# QUESTION #3:

# JILL HEDGECOCK

*Rhino in the Room sequel*

The almost missed sighting.





# QUESTION # 3 JILL HEDGECKOCK (CONT.)

*Rhino in the Room sequel*    Reorganized our trip





# JILL HEDGECOCK QUESTION 3 (CONT.)

*Rhino in the Room sequel*



- ✗ A charging silverback
- ✗ A two-week old infant
- ✗ A head cold that could have ruined it all!





## QUESTION #4:

<1 OF 2>

**COVID-19 restrictions won't last forever.**

**Do you have any tips for writers going on future trips to research their writing?**

## QUESTION #4: BILL STONG

### Before the trip:

- ▶ Plan ahead
- ▶ Before leaving, know what you don't know
- ▶ Imagine what you will (or hope to) learn on the trip
- ▶ Set up as many stops as possible before you leave, including how long you think each activity will take— *then double that time*



## QUESTION #4: BILL STONG

### During the trip:

- ▶ Have fun and roll with all the things that might go less-than-perfectly
- ▶ Indulge all of your senses
- ▶ Buy stuff pertinent to your writing
- ▶ Keep a daily log & jot down unclear points
- ▶ Talk with everyone; ask tons of questions
- ▶ Get as much contact information as you can

# QUESTION #4: BILL STONG



**Sensory  
detail  
&  
your  
writing:**

**The water is  
crystal  
clear.**

**But *please*  
tell me,  
what color  
is it?!**



# QUESTION #4: BILL STONG

**Some facts:**

- **Small ship**
- **Many people**
- **Months on board**
- **Head is in the bow**

*Wait, what?*

**Why not the stern?!**





## QUESTION #4: BILL STONG



Whenever you can,

**do** what your characters do/did.

I now know how heavy the helmets are!



## QUESTION #4: BILL STONG

**Yep! That's part of the way up the mountain to Azuchi Castle.**

**Your characters walked it.**

**Now, when you've done it, you'll know exactly what it was like.**



## QUESTION #4: BILL STONG

### After the trip:

- ▶ Send thank you notes to everyone who helped
- ▶ Review your daily logs—relive the trip
- ▶ Make sure you have all your open questions in one place: you do want answers eventually!
- ▶ Enjoy the stuff you bought
- ▶ **Get back to writing!!**



## QUESTION #4:

<2 OF 2>

**COVID-19 restrictions won't last forever.**

**Do you have any tips for writers going on future trips to research their writing?**

## QUESTION #4: JILL HEDGECOCK

- ✗ Keep a journal. Record everything, sights, sounds, smells.
- ✗ Take lots of photos and videos.
- ✗ If allowed, use your voice memo to record tour guide information (but confirm the information when you get home).
- ✗ Listen for dialect. “Remember.”
- ✗ Ask people about their culture.
- ✗ Fellow tourists. (Twitcher).



## QUESTION #4: JILL HEDGECOCK (CONT.)

- ✖ Pay attention to details. Closeup and angles.





## QUESTION #4: JILL HEDGECKOCK (CONT.)

- ✗ Don't forget big picture (landscapes). It's easy to get caught up in the tourist highlights.





# QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

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***From the audience!***

**CWC Mt Diablo Branch: *Writers Table***

# MT. DIABLO BRANCH MEMBERS!

- We have enjoyed overseeing *Writers Table* for the past three years
- **THANK YOU** for your enthusiastic support & encouragement
- Without your active engagement, it wouldn't have been nearly as much fun
- As we trot off into the sunset, please welcome John Schembra as the new leader!



# ENDINGS & BEGINNINGS



***Really—what's the difference?***