Editor’s Page

By Alejandro Grattan-Dominguez

Ajijic Writers’ Group

(Ed. Note: With the group honored recently by the Lakeside Community Awards Committee, this seems a propitious time to rerun the following article.)

For almost a hundred years, writers have gravitated to this corner of Mexico. In the 1920s, D.H. Lawrence wrote *The Plumed Serpent* while living in Chapala. Later, another celebrated British author, W. Somerset Maugham, wrote some of *The Razor’s Edge* while spending a summer in Ajijic. A few years afterward, Tennessee Williams stayed at the Old Posada, where he penned a short story that eventually became a full-length play called *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

Given this illustrious backdrop, little wonder that writers' groups have always flourished here. The oldest and most established of the current crop is the Ajijic Writers' Group, formed 23 years ago, this writer having been its founder, in association with Mary Jo Kimbrough. The first meeting at the Old Posada went rather well, if at times somewhat unruly.

Mary Jo thought otherwise. She *never* came to another meeting. Two years later, I ran into her and asked why. She said that when she saw what a collection of egotists and rowdies we had brought together, she felt like Doctor Frankenstein must have,
wondering what kind of a monster has been created here!

Maybe not all that much has changed, but in the years since then, a sizable number of formidable talents have come through our doors. Among the most famous were **Ray Rigby** and **Bar bara Bickmore**. Ray had won the British equivalent of an Academy Award for his script of *The Hill*, which starred a young fellow named Sean Connery — who, it is said, went on to bigger things. Ray also published many top-flight novels. Barbara wrote several novels, most of which were translated into a dozen languages. Another excellent writer was **Tom Fitzgerald**, a Navy Seal (much in the news these days for its successful mission in Afghanistan), who wrote about his Vietnam wartime experiences in a harrowing novel that won glowing reviews all around the world.

Another member, **Marilyn Davis**, penned the classic, *Mexican Voices, American Dreams*, a book published by Henry Holt that went through six printings. Another early member of our group, the late **Jim Tuck**, published several acclaimed books, a few having to do with Mexican history. A more recent member, **Ed Lusch**, wrote two marvelous books on wildlife along the Pacific Coast that have become collectors items.

In the tourist season, our meetings sometimes attract as many as 80 people, and most remark that the sessions are surprisingly civilized. Occasionally, however, when someone complains about the harshness of a particular criticism, I remember a critique that was voiced years ago, when I was reading what later was the opening chapter of my first published novel. When I

finished, a sweet-looking old lady asked if she could voice her opinion of the chapter. "Of course!" I said, smiling. "Burn it," she snarled.

Despite these little bumps, our group continues to flourish, with new members appearing with gratifying regularity. As for the qualifications to attend, I once told an elderly gentleman, dubious about his being allowed admittance, that we had a stringent rule in that regard. *Attendees must have a palpable pulse rate!*

The group meets the first and third Fridays of each month at 10:00 at La Nueva Posada. The public is cordially invited—and if nothing else, dear reader, it's a good way to meet some of the most interesting people in all of Mexico!