

THE RED-EYED RAVEN GAZETTE

The Official Newsletter of Author Tim Ritter



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WELCOME!



Welcome to the May 2026 issue of the Red-Eyed Raven Gazette!

Here in Southwest Missouri, Spring has gotten our full attention. We've had tornadoes, hail the size of softballs, and according to my rain gauge we are over five inches ahead for the year on rainfall. We have a friend here that's from Wales and after the storms, his question is "Does this happen often?"

I hope you remain safe and dry where you are located. Here comes summer. And the bugs. And the heat. And the humidity.

In this issue, I want to talk about switching gears, and not being afraid of it. Take a look at what I have to say. Then I go on a brief path of silliness with some behind-the-scenes info about some of my past presentations. Then of course as always there's the Presentation Update, which gives you the latest info on locations and dates for my public talks.

As always, thanks for your encouraging messages sent when these newsletters are released. Your support is very much appreciated.



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SWITCHING GEARS: DON'T BE AFRAID OF IT

In my last newsletter, I blabbed alot about my upcoming book *Letters from Glen*, the tale of my great-uncle who served in the Second World War as a guard of German prisoners of war. I spent an amazing day researching at one of the National Archives facilities in Maryland last month, and made some adjustments including a new title idea, *Barbed Wire on the Prairie*. The research continued to be daunting and I was considering a trip to Kansas City to visit the National Archives facility there to see if they had more information.

Then something happened...

Last week, I was invited to attend the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Chadwick Line Trail. If you have not heard of it nor have seen my presentation about the Chadwick Line, this is a project in which a greenways organization has partnered with the City of Ozark, Missouri, and other organizations, and they have taken the train's general route and in some cases original roadbed and are working to create a walking/biking trail that will run between the cities of Ozark and Springfield. It's an amazing project, and I've gotten to step into the middle of it a time or two, invited to speak on the subject of the train.

So the ribbon-cutting ceremony was to dedicate and officially open a bridge that now spans over Missouri Highway 65 in the original location where the train crossed that area so many years ago. And I got invited to attend this event.

It was a nice ceremony and I enjoyed getting to see it. At the end, as I was getting ready to leave, I shook hands with my friend Jeremy, who is the Director of Public Works in Ozark and a great guy. We met several years ago during those opportunities I had to help raise awareness for the project. He knows I've been researching the train for years, and he knows that I have done some initial work on a book about the train. So that day, Jeremy and I shook hands and I said, "Let me know if there's anything I can do to help."

He grinned and said, "Finish that book about the train! That's what you can do for me."

I was a bit stunned. I don't really know why. I guess it was because someone was specifically asking me, waiting for me, waiting for one of my books. It felt good. But it also awakened a feeling of purpose, more than I have felt in a while.

So I'm setting aside the book about my great-uncle's service in the Second World War, and I'm going to dive once again into *Chasing the Chadwick Line*, or whatever its final title may be.

SWITCHING GEARS (CONTINUED)

So here I am, switching gears. And I don't feel bad about it. It's ok to switch gears sometimes.

I remember back in 2017 I was standing in an artist's studio, and I noticed his trash can. And a friend of mine standing nearby nudged me and said "Can you imagine what treasures of art this guy throws away?" That artist's trash wasn't really junk. It wasn't bad work, or at least wouldn't be to the rest of us. It was him switching gears.

In all forms of art, whether it's dance, painting, drawing, singing, instrumental music, or writing, each artist has the right to change gears. Something doesn't feel right, or sound right, or something else takes a higher priority or the artist feels more of a calling to do it.

In the initial moment, I was a bit nerved to change gears. I wondered if I would look foolish, since I had already talked about writing the other book, and had already invested time in it. Or was I making the right decision? There are other train experts out there; could I measure up? But I also started thinking about how I write, and what I want to tell everyone about the train. I'm not too worried about telling you the gauge of the track or how many axles the locomotive had. There's a great article that was written about the train that includes such technical information.

My intent is to give the reader a heart-and-soul look at this iconic train that was part of the industrialization of Southwest Missouri, and explain how railroad service reached the area in the first place, and the arguments that ensued, and why there were two depots in Springfield, and where the depots were in Ozark, and why Chadwick was the terminus, etc, etc, etc.

All of these and more are the stories that tell the whole saga of this train, and why it was more than just a locomotive, tender and cars; why it was such a vital connection, and why it mattered when it shut down.

So there you have it. I'm changing gears. And I don't feel bad about it. So stay tuned for more info, as I hope I can get this thing out by Fall 2027.



MISCELLANEOUS SILLINESS

Since beginning my journey as a featured speaker, which officially started back in 2018, I have written presentations on a number of topics dealing with local, regional, national or international historic events; historic individuals; and a few talks about the mechanics of being a writer. The number of talks in my current list of presentations now has passed 120.

I keep the PowerPoint file for each talk in its own folder, and also within that folder is the collection of images used for that particular talk. Each of these subfolders resides under the overall “Presentations” folder.

However there is one folder that I don’t usually open. It is easy to glance over and miss. It is called the “Archives” folder. This folder holds a handful of talks that were, let’s say, not so impressive.

There’s one called “Mushy Stuff”. It’s only 12 slides. It has one image on each slide. And by the way, when I create a presentation, I use the Notes section to add text to help me recall what I wanted to say about that particular slide. In the talk “Mushy Stuff”, the notes section is blank on every slide. In other words, I have no stinking clue what I was supposed to say about each slide. No wonder I only gave this talk once and never did it again.



Then there’s one called “Spooky Stories”. This was created by request for the upcoming Halloween season at one of the senior living facilities where I frequently present. It was full of alleged true hauntings. When I gave this talk back in 2020, the audience just sat there. They didn’t blink when it was supposed to be scary; they didn’t chuckle or smile when it was supposed to be humorous. Fortunately they didn’t throw anything at me either. When I was done, they got up and left quietly. The enrichment coordinator commented, “They weren’t buying it. If this had been your first time here, you would have never come back.” Ugh. That talk is in the Archive folder. By the way, its cover slide wasn’t any good either (see above).

And then there’s the one about the Ice Storm of 1987. And it’s not that the talk is all that bad. It’s just that it’s not all that good. I think I’ve given it three times in its life. And I don’t expect to ever give it again. Although I must admit it had the best cover slide of the three.

So there you have it. There’s an Archive file. Files go in, but they don’t come back out...



PRESENTATION UPDATE

This year is another busy one!

June

23rd: American Legion Post #38, Fair Grove, MO - 7:00p.m. - To help celebrate America's 250th birthday, I'm going to give a special presentation at the American Legion Post on "Paul Revere, and the Ride You Thought You Knew." There's way more to the ride than you think. Be sure to make plans to attend this one.

July

10th: For the grand opening weekend of my wife's vintage decor store *The In-Between Mercantile*, I will be at her other store, *Festoons & Filigree* from 11:00am to 12:00pm for a signing and meet-the-author event.

September

22nd: American Legion Post #38, Fair Grove, MO - 7:00p.m. - This time I'm going to give my talk on "What Really Happened at The Alamo." This is another wild one that you won't want to miss. I didn't thoroughly understand what happened during the battle till I started researching for this talk.

26th: Civil War Tour, Ava, MO - 9:00a.m. - Once again I will be hosting the annual Civil War Tour in Ava, Missouri. You use your own vehicle, and we visit several sites in and around Ava to discuss Civil War activity specific to the region, and explore the little-known ambush that took place there in May of 1864, when the area was known as Militia Springs.

October

6th: Fair Grove Chamber of Commerce, Location TBA, 12:00p.m. - I'll be giving a brief talk entitled "Tell Your Story, or Someone Else Will Tell It For You."

10th: Republic Library, Republic, Missouri - 10:30a.m. - I will be presenting my popular talk on Bonnie and Clyde in the new auditorium at the Republic Library's new facility.

20th: American Legion Post #38, Fair Grove, MO - 7:00p.m. - This time the topic will be "The Young Brothers Massacre." I can't believe I haven't given this talk before in Fair Grove! It's time to do it.

Stay tuned for updates! There's more coming! I'm already scheduling into 2027.

My regular speaking engagements, twice each month, continue at the four Elfindale senior living facilities in Springfield. Also, I present monthly at these other senior facilities: The Preston, Mission Ridge, Turner's Rock, and Springhouse Village.