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Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California at Santa Barbara

POSTSCWRIP

Credibility in the Classroom:

Unabashed Yeses and Some Serious No's

by Diane Siegal ('09)

"I meant what I said and I said what I meant. An elephant's faithful one-hundred percent!"

Horton the Elephant, by Dr. Seuss



Diane Siegal taught for sixteen years at Santa Ynez High School and was named the Santa Barbara County Teacher of the year in 2010, shortly before she was given a pink slip, an irony that did not go unnoticed. Nevertheless, she persisted, as always. A world traveler who studied abroad in Spain and Costa Rica and was a competitive cyclist in Osaka, Japan, Diane brings remarkable energy, creativity, and commitment to everything she does. Under her guidance, students were involved in philanthropic service projects, mock trials, and not-for-the-lazy writing assignments. Now, at the start of her retirement, she looks back on the learning, and ahead to new adventure.

When I became a teacher at age forty-two, I said yes to teaching with the zeal of a corn stalk pushing up in damp soil and sunlight. From the moment I entered the teacher education program at UCSB, I was all in, unabashedly. In grad school, I had to let go of my role in the family –a role I owned as a full-time mom—to become a teacher. I worked fervently, believing that the challenges of grad school would prepare me for the demands of teaching. I was determined to succeed, so I established a practice of preparing for my classes thoroughly, which set the bar for my expectations of myself as a teacher. It was frankly exhausting at times, but the pleasure of a well-guided educational “happening” in the classroom held immeasurable satisfaction for me. Teaching well was an affirmation of my desire to be purposeful and service-oriented, and, as with many other self-motivated educators, those are intrinsic rewards for me.

Being clear with one's self is powerful, and yeses and no's hold a lot of weight. Knowing what I embrace, what I reject, and why it matters, deflects a lot of confusion and fortifies me when I am challenged.

My husband and family allowed me to say yes generously to the many demands that teaching presented: I said yes to the long hours, the hormonally-amped teens, the workshops in weird neighborhoods in LA, and the anxious parent conferences at the ATM machine. By turning toward the work, and not trying to dodge it (as teachers are often encouraged to do), my work became rich, nuanced, and important to me. The longer I taught, the more avenues teaching afforded me to

build on my own interests and to make the curriculum dovetail with the lives of my students. When the students "got woke," it would open a whole new opportunity for us to go deeper, which meant I was saying yes to more planning, creating, structuring, writing, and assessing.

Teaching at a high level takes time, and I readily admit I suffered when my English class sizes went from twenty to thirty students. Something had to be sacrificed, but what to cut? Not so many essays to be graded by me? Less planning? Reduced participation in student-based extra-curriculars? Slower responses to parent inquiries? Fewer writing conferences? A lesser role in leadership? I cringed when once, upon my lamenting the class size, a well-intentioned administrator said, "Why not just dictate your essay corrections into Siri and have her print them out? Or send your students a voice-message with your comments?" Having already tried that years earlier and finding Siri to be a sloppier listener/writer than most of my students, I found this advice to be laughable. I would spend all of my time proofing and correcting Siri. Moreover, when students have a continuous written record of corrections, subsequent conferences and goal setting are far more effective. My administrator's advice was not based in good pedagogy, just expedience. (And I said as much in my exit interview.) Cultivating critical thinkers and teaching clear writing takes time and concentration. It demands real attention from both the writer (student) and the editor (teacher). A half-assed job yields half-assed results, at least in my experience, and that means the senescence of a once-lively classroom.

I had started with a full-throated yes, but those sixteen years of teaching were also the years I learned how to say no, and mean it. This showed most evidently in my home at first, and later in my classroom. I said no to cleaning my house (it was messy for the first time...don't tell my mother); no to laundry (all our t-shirts had a pinkish hue as my twelve-year old son learned how to do laundry); no to cooking (with my husband in charge, we ate enough meat to populate a mid-sized ranching operation); and no to chillin' with friends (whom I told to imagine I was living in Kentucky and that I'd be back in summers). Even Christmas break demanded a rigorous schedule of grading from 5 to 8 AM, while summers included seminars, and Sundays were always prep days. At times, I had to suppress my own roiling inner rebellion in order to meet a deadline, but, in this discipline, I grew and became a real teacher. I wanted my students to know that I demanded the same discipline of myself that I did of them. Their work couldn't be late, so neither could mine. Like them, I said no to other activities so that I would be prepared for class.

I know no other way to work than with my whole heart, and I do not apologize for my intensity. It fueled me in the classroom as it fuels me now.

By the end of my career as a high school English teacher, I coined a phrase called “groveling for grades.” A warning to my students, it conveyed my disdain for a student’s last-minute scramble to turn in a mountain of overdue work in order to bump a grade. I cautioned students against groveling. My classroom was a much happier place –for my students and for me—once I learned how to telescope my yeses and no’s well in advance and with clarity. Being clear with one’s self is powerful, and yeses and no’s hold a lot of weight. Knowing what I embrace, what I reject, and why it matters, deflects a lot of confusion and fortifies

me when I am challenged. It prepares me so I’m not easily intimidated, and naturally this extends way beyond a classroom setting. Of course, I revel in opportunities to offer an open welcoming yes (always the best starting place), and I cherish flexible problem solving, but equally I respect the precision of a judicious no. The kids came to respect my “no groveling” policy because it flowed both ways.

I understand that people are often encouraged to seek balance in their life, but I am prone to burn hot and then move on. I love a challenge, so I taught at all different grades and often re-invented the unit depending on what was happening in the world at the time. I was a demanding teacher, but I am not a hard person. I loved the kids and the literature, and I would like to think I gave it my all up until the day I danced myself out of my classroom for the very last time. When that day came, I hungered to say yes to the other interests I’d pushed aside...longings that had been trying to seduce me away from work for years. That’s when I knew it was time to retire.

To me, retirement is a beginning. I see it as the chance to direct all the structure and self-discipline I have learned through the years of teaching, and apply it to those things in life to which I can now say yes. My career was like an extended graduate course for my life. Now I want to say yes to adventure, yes to creativity, yes to service, yes to reflection, yes to writing, and yes to my friends and family who continued to love me despite my long years of social exile.

I know no other way to work than with my whole heart, and I do not apologize for my intensity. It fueled me in the classroom as it fuels me now. But just as raising my own children helped me cross the bridge from childhood to adulthood, so did teaching help me grow. I am thankful that teaching gave me a podium from which to challenge my assumptions and develop my resolve, and I am thankful that retiring gives me the freedom now to self-direct that love of challenge and practice of resolve. One of the joys of getting old and sassy is learning what matters, and having earned the ability to say yes or no as one wishes. To me, that is freedom. I wish nothing less for my many beloved students as they journey toward an examined life.

In This Issue:

Credibility in the Classroom by Diane Siegal

From The Editor by Cynthia Carbone Ward

That Secret Sauce by Tim Dewar

Writing is Hard by Anne Elrod Whitney

Teaching 7th Grade by Jessica Mezzetta and Karen Polinsky

A Tree House Library by Aline Shapiro

A Space by Gaylene McPherson

Theater As An Antidote by Phil Levien

Voices From Young Writers' Camp by Nicole Wald

Remembering Shelley Savren

And poems by:

Ian Foutz, Veronica Gallardo, Lucia Lemieux, Beth Lindley,
Monique Navarro, Shelley Savren, and Lou Spaventa



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From The Editor... by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)

I've been thinking and writing a lot myself lately about navigating through change, trying to stay purposeful and hopeful in these discouraging times.

Welcome to our special end-of-summer, back-to-school edition of PostSCWriP. It's brimming with inspiring words and sound advice from current teachers, reflections from a few recent retirees on what it all meant and what they're doing now, and thoughts about creating safe spaces in a volatile world. There are beautiful poems also, including four by Shelley Savren ('94), in whose memory we dedicate this edition.

Having retired from teaching a few years ago, I've been thinking and writing a lot lately about navigating through change, and trying to stay purposeful and hopeful in these discouraging times. Recently, I went for a therapeutic walk on the beach with two friends: David, a local veterinarian, and Lauren, an impressive young writer and grad student who was long ago a student in my sixth grade class. It was a fine opportunity to touch base and share a bit of Boomer-Millennial communication about the meaning of life. The air was warm and humid, the shore was heaped with tangles of kelp, and little flies hovered about our faces.

We detoured first to see the state of the whale that had died at sea in January and washed up onto the sand. It lies there now in graphic decomposition, having gradually become part of the landscape, from the distance just a mound of darkened sand, and in close-up a crash course in mortality. What does it say about us that we visit the dead whale like a shrine, or point it out to others as though it were a local landmark? We respect the majesty of its being, are shocked at the enormity of its death, and at the same time are morbidly fascinated by its remains—that something this large, once living, is becoming earth and dust before our eyes. The crowds of vultures, gulls and occasional coyotes that initially came to peck and feast on the carcass have long since abandoned it to ruin. Its discolored skin has collapsed like a tent, here and there is the shock of bone exposed, and a vacated eye socket stares blankly into eternity.

We each bring something of ourselves to it. David points out a few anatomical features, although they are present only like Dali's melting pocket watches, gone soft and shapeless, devoid of purpose, for time takes all, and even time is taken. Lauren leans down to look more closely, falls silent, and gradually slides into kneeling, honoring the spirit once housed within this vessel. She gently touches what we think is skull, and closes her eyes for a moment. She holds a quiver of raggedy feathers and a broken bit of abalone shell, treasures gathered as we walked. Lauren is young, and open to the everything-ness, even when it overwhelms. And I am the one who suggests we get going.

Elsewhere, there are families on the beach, umbrellas and coolers, children and dogs, a kind of playful chaos that I remember well. No one can fathom how swiftly it all goes by...and then there comes a time of reinvention, which is where I'm at now. I walk on the sand in my jeans and with shoes on, part of the scene but apart from it, zigzagging and wobbly, always inclined to be a teacher, one of hope's intrepid foot soldiers, but baffled and trying to learn.

We talk and fall silent in comfortable waves, and we inevitably get to the heart of things. Still in the ascending arch of her early thirties, Lauren has life events to share, the kind that seem to come at you fast, ground shifting when you've barely found your footing. And it's all a great adventure, but there is also a fire raging in the backcountry nearby, with the threat of evacuation, and a relationship that hasn't really launched, and the college debt that feels impossible to climb out of, and most of all, there is the disillusionment of what is happening since the 2016 election. "I grew up in a hopeful time," she tells us. She didn't know that misogyny and racism were still so prevalent, that our democracy could be under siege as it is, and everything we care about threatened. "I guess I don't feel hopeful anymore," she says.

But I was Lauren's idealistic sixth grade teacher once, more than twenty years ago. And I still believe that my role is to act in hopeful ways.

I know what she means. The weight of the world is bearing down on us all. But I was Lauren's idealistic teacher once, more than twenty years ago. And I still believe that my role is to act in hopeful ways and demonstrate resilience as an elder of the tribe. It's dangerous to flirt with despair, or even give it leeway it as an option. When it comes to despair, I'm deliberately in denial. Despair, like hope, is a self-fulfilling prophecy. I strive to be realistically constructive.

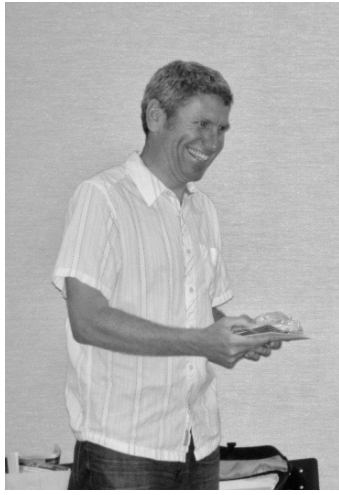
Oh, I admit that life was easier when I didn't understand how fleeting it is, when I didn't know that rather than abating, loss compounds, and time heals nothing. Life was easier when I wasn't bombarded moment by moment by news near and far, when I thought that suffering was not in vain and some kind of *everything-will-be-okay-ness* ultimately awaited. Now it all weighs so heavy, it's sometimes hard to stand up. But I point out legitimate victories to my young friend, and remind her that unanticipated developments are yet to come, some of which will be wonderful. We cannot be the ones who gave up.

When we three get together, we have a little ritual before we say good-bye. Lauren calls it "postcards to the universe". We speak aloud what is in our hearts, what we would want in the year ahead. On this occasion, David begins: "Dear Universe," he says. "This is not so much a postcard or a request, but rather a statement of intent. I hereby resolve not to try so hard to control everything. I intend to have a lighter touch, to trust the give and take, the natural ebbs and flows, to navigate gently and know that we cannot force things."

Lauren's postcard is essentially a wish and a summoning of strength, and mine is mostly gratitude for love and wonder, and an oft-stated hope that we'll get through this dark time, as a nation and in our own lives, maybe even emerging better than we were, more cognizant, more engaged. Maybe something like faith will reassert itself and it won't take such exhaustive effort to pretend it isn't shaken. My heart is heavy, but there's still a spark within. And sparks upon sparks can light the world.

Please read on. There's a good deal of wisdom and love in here. May it inspire and fuel you.

That Secret Sauce by Tim Dewar ('94), SCWriP Director



Every summer as the Institute begins I worry that this time it won't work. That the magic won't happen. That people will not experience the transformative power of SCWriP. So every summer since I became director, I have tried to figure out what makes the Summer Institute so different than other professional learning. It's not like SCWriP is the only game in town. Districts send teams to AVID conferences. Google lures teachers with the appeal of certification from a tech giant. And don't get me started on the College Board and AP training. From faculty meetings and publishers' workshops, to Twitter and Pinterest, opportunities are plentiful. Yet, it feels like there is something unique about SCWriP's Summer Institute, some special ingredient or "secret sauce" that sets it apart. One might think that as director I would know the recipe. I'm afraid I don't. What I do know are the stories

I tell again and again about the Summer Institute, and I think they might reveal some of the key ingredients.

My first story isn't really mine; it's Jack Phreaner's. Jack was the founding teacher of SCWriP and central in every Summer Institute until his death in 2011. I heard Jack tell this story so many times, I feel like I was there when it happened. I can see the round tables and cinder block walls of room 1172 in Phelps. This large L-shaped room was wedged between the dean's area and a hallway full of classrooms. It had a piano in one corner, access to a kitchenette around another, and a patio along one side. Though not the first home of the SI, it was the base for many years. As Jack told the story, he and several other Fellows were sitting at a table having lunch when one of the double doors that led into the hallway opened. An obviously frazzled summer session student peered in, looked around, and asked, "Who's the teacher of this class? Jack and the other SCWriP Fellows looked at each other, then, in chorus, replied, "We are." The baffled student backed out, never to be seen again.

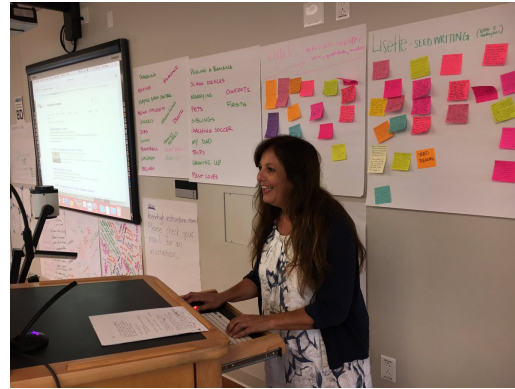
No one leads,
and *everyone*
leads. We each
teach each other.



Jack loved to tell that story, and I loved to hear him tell it. He could make his single voice sound like a table-full and evoke the poor student's confusion by letting his mouth gape like a fish. It's a story that has taken on almost mythic stature in my mind, for the very reason that Jack loved telling it. It illustrates one of the key principles of SCWriP: Teachers teaching teachers. Unlike a traditional class, there is not a single teacher in front leading every activity, directing every discussion, and certainly not grading

all the writing. No one leads, and everyone leads. We each teach each other. Shared leadership is one ingredient of the sauce.

I caught a glimpse of another recently. On the morning of the third day of the Summer Institute, as I was making copies for the day, a colleague from the Teacher Education Program at UCSB asked, "How is SCWriP going?" I paused, and thought, "How can I explain *Hopes, Fears, and Expectations*, Pam's stories about the neighborhood house that was a magnet for 'crazies,' or the first draft plans for TIWs?" So I answered, simply, "It's amazing what can happen in two days." We had done so much so quickly.



In SCWriP we push the pace, yet still run short of time. There is too much to do and too few days to do it all. We fill the day with a variety of activities (writing, reading, talking, questioning), in varied configurations (individual, partners, small groups, and whole class). There is not much wasted time. Even when I think a presentation could move faster or the sharing has gone on too long, no one is resorting to time-fillers.



SCWriP is able to push the pace because there are five Returning Fellows. We share the leadership and pace setting. And as the days go by, increasingly, new Fellows help run the day, being the teachers who teach teachers. We are like a relay team, each Fellow taking the baton, and then passing it off. Or Canadian Geese flying in V-formation, rotating from the point down the lines. Or best yet, a cycling team in a pace line, reeling in the break, wheels just inches apart, the rider in front at his or her maximum heart rate, taking a pull, digging for just a

few more watts, before sliding off to the left, and drifting back, knowing the next in line is now pulling just as hard. Working together, we can go faster than even the best individual rider.

Please pardon my rapturous writing about cycling and the too long analogy. Every summer the Institute coincides with the Tour de France, the one sporting event that I tend to get fanatical about. The drama, the history, the athleticism, the spectacle! During July if I am not thinking about the SI, I am thinking about Le Tour. What is happening on today's stage? Are Chris Froome and Team Sky really invincible? Will today's mountain stage upset the GC? If Marcel Kittel doesn't get over the first climb with the peloton, Michael Matthews will surely take the intermediate sprint and the green "Points" jersey. Aaah, fandom. But back to my point: Both cycling and the SI concern time. A group of teachers, like a group of cyclists, can cover more ground in a shorter time working together. SCWriP's ability to make the most of the time we have is another ingredient in SCWriP's secret sauce.

Not only do we teach each other, we nourish each other, literally and figuratively.

Jason Duque ('96) taught me another ingredient, a more tangible one. When I returned to UCSB as a graduate student, Jason was a relatively new faculty member, but I knew him first as an elementary teacher in Carpinteria and SCWriP Fellow. While I had been teaching high school, he had gone off to Stanford and received a Ph.D. Now he was teaching

my "Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods." He had arrived at the beginning of class, maybe a few minutes late, with a rolling crate of supplies: cups, napkins, a collection of teabags, hot water pot, grapes, crackers, cookies, and I think he even had a tablecloth he draped over the counter. Anyone who had ever been in a Summer Institute would instantly recognize the spread. He'd brought the snacks. Among the many things he had taken from his Summer Institute was the power of sharing food. To be clear, I remember much of the lesson that first day. (We drew "research," compared our drawings, and wrote about what we had found. That is, we did research.) Jason is a great teacher, but for him, the most SCWriP thing he did was bring food. He was convinced that food was one of the ingredients in the SCWriP stew. I don't disagree. Snacks, and potlucks, and dinner meetings bring us together like families gathering for a traditional holiday feast. Not only do we teach each other, we nourish each other, literally and figuratively.

The figurative nourishment can be a small thing. Our Morning Pages time is only thirty minutes, but years of research have shown us that it is central to the SI. However, we need to help each learn how to best use those few moments. I tell a story to new Fellows about Chris Mullin ('11). As the SI began, Chris would sit at a table scrawling in his journal, and one could tell by looking at him that he was uncomfortable, if not in pain. I don't recall how long this went on, but I'm embarrassed to admit that a long time passed before I suggested to him that he should type, rather than write by hand. It was a sea change.



Suddenly, the words poured out of Chris. He typed rapidly, almost furiously, his thoughts no longer blocked up by a sticky ballpoint pen. We all noticed the change, so we asked him about it. He said, "I can type almost as fast as I can think." The obvious ingredient is the writing, but I would also point out the role of choice. We allow people to write whatever they want *and* in whatever form or format they want. It is their time and space to do their work in the best way they find. We help by offering each other our own discoveries of what the best way is for us, but we do not demand that others follow. It is a simple offering. Take it or not. No offense meant or taken. We honor the varied, individual ways of being in this world. That is definitely part of the secret.



We honor in another way, by thanking and acknowledging. We clap or snap after some one shares their writing. We try to give credit to the sources of our classroom ideas. However, sometimes our intentions are greater than actual actions, and my favorite SCWriP story is of just such an occasion. I make sure to tell it on the final day of each Summer Institute. When SCWriP still had renewals at Cliff House, and Sheridan was still the director, he wanted to thank Doris, who was at that time

SCWriP's office manager. She made everything work, handling billing and payments, room reservations, catering contracts. The list of tasks for the SCWriP office manager is just short of infinite. At this Renewal, as we came back from lunch, Sheridan gathered everyone's attention and brought Doris to the front. He was going to publicly thank her for all she had done and continued to do on a daily basis. Just as he was winding up to deliver one of his famous introductions extolling the virtues of Doris, someone called out, "Hey! Look! A whale!" and pointed out the windows towards the sea. Everyone's head snapped away from Doris to the Pacific. We all rushed outside to look out. Yes, there was a whale. Yes, there were more than one. The migration was on, and it was happening just off the cliff that gave Cliff House its name.

Whatever your story, there is room for it in SCWriP.

Fifteen or twenty minutes later, we reluctantly returned inside. The moment for celebrating Doris was lost, and we resumed the activities of the Renewal. Doris continued to work for SCWriP for years, but she never let Sheridan

forget that he had never thanked her after being upstaged by a whale. The needling was done in good fun, in part, I think, because Doris recognized that both the effort to acknowledge and thank, and the capacity for spontaneous amazement and celebration were crucial ingredients to SCWriP. We wouldn't be the organization we are without them. They come from the same impulse: wonder. As an organization, SCWriP tries to be alive to the wonder of it all: writing, students, thinking, action, teachers, and, yes, large marine mammals. We applaud the writing of Fellows and students because it is wonder-filled. How could you write that in six minutes and 45 seconds? How can your story be so much like mine? How can your story be so different than mine?

Whatever your story, there is room for it in SCWriP. I've told a few of my favorite SCWriP stories trying to understand what makes the Summer Institute so special. As these stories have informed my understanding of SCWriP and the Summer Institute, I hope they inform yours. Their telling and retelling not only help me see the ingredients of SCWriP's secret sauce, they also help carry forward the culture of SCWriP. To know these stories is to know SCWriP, at least a bit. To know it more fully, I invite you to read the stories (& poems & essays) in this issue of PostSCWriP. Find shared truths. And find inspiration to tell a story of yours so that it may become ours.



Writing Is Hard by Anne Elrod Whitney ('02)



Above: Anne and her kids, William and Emily, enjoying a lighthearted moment

Anne Elrod Whitney is an Associate Professor of Education (Language & Literacy Education) at Penn State. She and her husband, Jason Whitney ('05) have two children.

Writing is hard. That's it; that's the main secret I have learned in my twenty years as a writing teacher and writing researcher.

Wait, you knew that already? Of course you did. Anyone who has ever written has felt writing's difficulty. Sometimes it's staring at the blank page or screen, not knowing how to begin. Other times it's sitting stuck in the middle of a sentence or a paragraph, reaching for a word that doesn't come. Or it's writing oneself halfway into an argument that suddenly, somewhere in the middle, breaks down. Or it's sharing writing with a reader and finding, painfully, that you have not made yourself clear, or—more often—hesitating fearfully before sharing with a reader, or before writing at all, for fear of criticism.

Writing is filled with hard moments. Even the most skilled writers find it difficult. But the best and most prolific writers have something that many others don't: the hard moments don't stop them. They know that if they can face the hard moments, the moments will pass—and the bad feelings of those moments, the shame and fear and worry—will pass too. They also have a repertoire of strategies for getting through those hard moments productively: routines for settling down and getting to work, strategies for drafting and revising, and skills for eliciting helpful feedback from others and for processing the feedback they receive.

Different hard moments call for different responses, but I am convinced that encountering another human being in a hard moment demands at least some response, even if it's simply to stand beside the one who is struggling.

In school, however, we often pretend writing is easy, or that it should be. "OK, write for ten minutes," we say, and we expect people simply to begin. Or we hand out prompts, and days or weeks later, we collect pieces of writing. These practices hide the difficulty of writing in ways that writers take personally. When writers struggle, they end up feeling they are doing so alone. They look around, see other students seemingly doing fine, and then they take their own difficulty as a sign that they're doing it wrong...or worse, that they simply aren't good writers.

Better to open up the difficulty of writing, to name its hard moments and explicitly teach how to get through those moments.

For example, when asking students to quickwrite, I do so too. As I begin, I speak aloud my feelings and what I am doing about those feelings. "Starting can be hard; I always worry my ideas will be stupid. But usually if I can just begin with something, even something stupid, I'll get through it, and it comes out OK," I explain. And then I write with the class, in my own notebook or on the overhead screen, thinking aloud as I do it: "I'm not sure where to start," I'll say, "so first I'm just listing a couple of words that come to mind... oh, ok, I like this one. Now I'm just going to write down what comes to my mind."

Or when sending students off to write at home, I preview some of the hard moments that might come. "Here's what I do when I find I'm procrastinating." "Here's what I do when I'm stuck on the first sentence." "Here's what I do when I find I keep switching over to Facebook when I should be writing." "Here's what I do when my sentences seem aimless."

(And the main thing I do, in all of those hard moments: Take a deep breath. Write a little anyway. Cut myself some slack.)

Once we acknowledge that writing is hard, we can do something about it. We can tell ourselves helpful things, encourage ourselves to go on trying. If writing is hard for you at moments, you're doing it right, not wrong.

"Yes, are you finding this difficult?" I ask. " Oh good! You're doing it right. It's not hard because you're stupid, or not a good writer, or in the wrong class—it's hard because it's hard." Just this reassurance is often enough to get writers going. Bodies relax, shoulders descend, and jaws unclench. A few quick smiles silently say, Yes, that is what I was thinking.



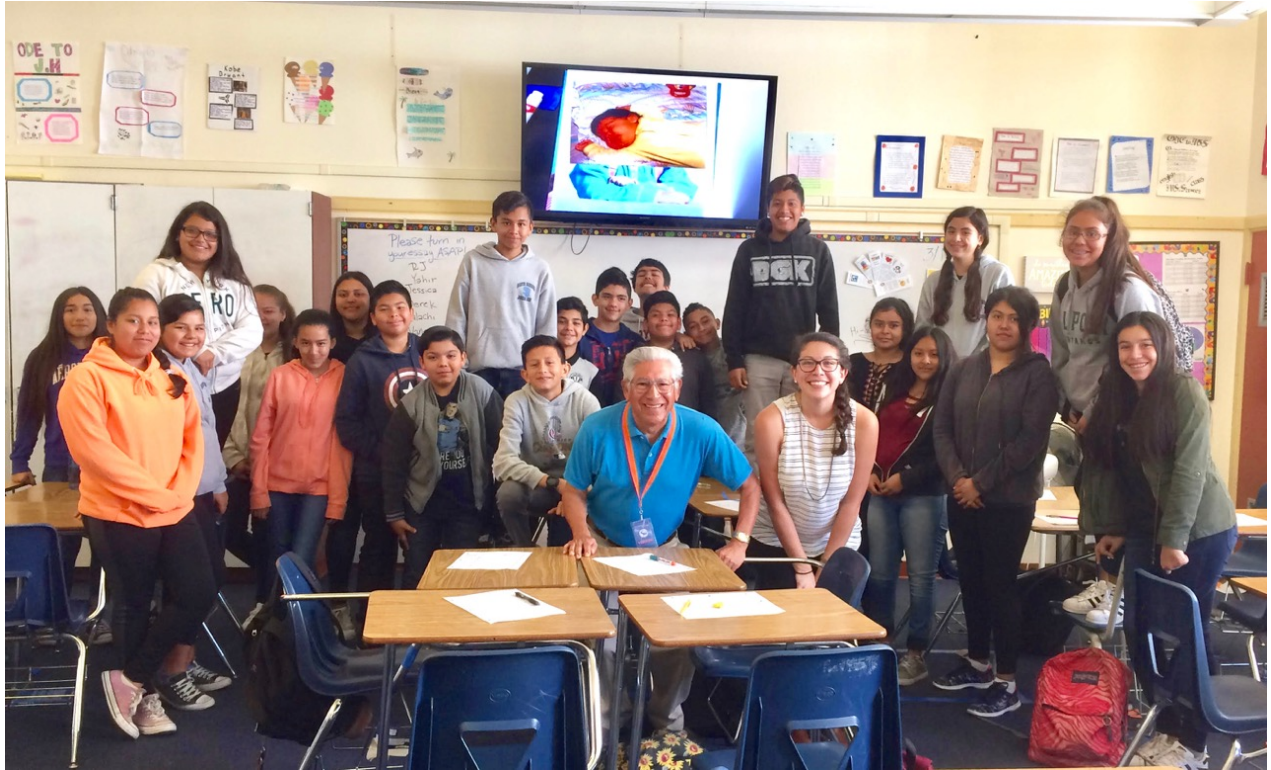
Our society tends to deny negative emotions, and I'm no different. As I circulate through my classroom during writing time, I sometimes catch myself turning away from a student who is struggling, as if to give him/her some privacy. I don't want to embarrass a writer by calling attention to the problem, and so I walk by, thinking I'll return in a moment after he's had a chance to get started or after I see she at least has a few words down.

But on a good day, I can do better. Different hard moments call for different responses, but I am convinced that encountering another human being in a hard moment demands at least some response, even if it's simply to stand beside the one who is struggling.

Sometimes I offer a strategy: like when the words simply do not come, and I feel stuck at a blank page, I roll my chair away from the desk, face another direction, and tell it to the wall. Literally. I talk to the wall. Or when the critical voices in my head get too loud, and I can't write without hearing them judging every line, I sometimes start a new document and begin as if it's a letter. Dear (name), I begin, writing to someone who will love anything I do, warts and all. Later I can change it back to the real audience. These strategies may not be groundbreaking, but to students they often feel as if they are: the teacher is recognizing and responding to the feelings of writing. Simply acknowledging that there are feelings, and that they are normal, is often enough.

"Writing and reading decrease our sense of isolation. They deepen and widen and expand our sense of life: they feed the soul. When writers make us shake our heads with the exactness of their prose and their truths, and even make us laugh about ourselves or life, our buoyancy is restored. We are given a shot at dancing with, or at least clapping along with, the absurdity of life, instead of being squashed by it over and over again. It's like singing on a boat during a terrible storm at sea. You can't stop the raging storm, but singing can change the hearts and spirits of the people who are together on that ship."

– Anne Lamott



Above: Jessica, her students, and guest presenter John Sanchez (Jessica's father)

This is Teaching 7th Grade by Jessica Mezzetta ('16)

It is getting up in the morning and loving what you do.

It is watching students grow right before your eyes, starting out shorter than you and then surpassing you even in your heels.

It is wondering what will happen to them in the future and hoping that they mature into wonderful adults.

It is seeing a student at the grocery store and turning back around to grab that "something" that you forgot.

Teaching is wishing you could save everyone from the pain you know they go through in their day-to-day lives. It is the scars that you cannot remove but also the hope that you can prevent them from reopening.

Teaching is wishing you had an endless supply of money to spend on your students. ...Michael who needs new shoes, Nayte new pants, and Kay who needs a home.

Teaching is telling your stories to people who never truly get to feel the way you do about the students. It is experiencing the students in an element separate from home, and seeing how they behave in that element...sometimes good, sometimes bad.

Teaching is not just about content, but about life skills that students have somehow missed by the time they get to seventh grade. It's the reminder to say "Thank you" and to truly apologize when they are in the wrong...besides getting them to actually understand that what they did was in fact wrong.

Teaching seventh grade is reminding kids that they *are* still kids and to enjoy themselves and be comfortable in their skin. It's letting them know they need not worry yet about what college they'll get into, and to allow themselves the fun of being a little silly while they still can. The A is just as acceptable as the A+ and will still take them far.

Teaching seventh grade is the struggle to get students to realize that I have already lived twice as long as they have, and I can tell them with authority that things *will* get better. It's about trying to wrap their growing brains around the fact that they have so much more life to live and should not make irreversible decisions for their significant problems.

Teaching seventh grade is being proud to say what I do, and to truly feel that it is what I am meant to do with my life. It requires no explanation, just a simple: "I am a teacher." And it is the best job in the world.

This, Too, Is Teaching 7th Grade by Karen Polinsky ('16)

Seventh grade is the beginning and ending of everything. The kids are not little, but they're not mature either. Everything is raw, everyone is working on re-forming or testing out what fits best. They know everything and nothing, at all times. They are quick to help, and quick to sabotage. It is whiplash of joy and pain.

Teaching these students is taking a ride on their roller coaster. Every day is fresh and new, yet the hurts and frustrations of yesterday linger in the background. It is necessary to always be on your toes, ready to grab a teachable moment. It is redefining what *expectations* means.

Being a seventh grade teacher is hilarious. If you can see past the drama, pain, loneliness, anger, fear and worry of these kids, it is magic. They are funny, sensitive, thoughtful, kind, confused, curious and silly. They are learning to navigate new territories: sometimes it is with aplomb and other times it is disastrous. Every now and then, it's shocking to remember that they are human beings.

A Tree House Library by Aline Shapiro ('91)



My husband and I live much of the year in the small Mexican fishing village of Yelapa. You need to take a boat to get there, and there are no cars; life proceeds at the slow pace of burros and horses. But for me, it has become the setting for many adventures over the past nine years.

Six years ago, I started a small library here in an empty elementary school classroom, stocking it with Spanish language books I inherited after retiring from my job as a school librarian in Santa Barbara. I invited one classroom group after another into the library, asking them to remove their shoes before entering. It quickly became apparent that most of these children had never before had a book read aloud to them, and they'd never had access to a repository where books were neatly kept. They were intrigued and excited to have a quiet place to read, play board games, create art, and check out books to take home. Although every family in Yelapa has a television, most have no books in their houses, or if they do, there is only one, a bible.

The library became a great attraction over the years, but our use of the classroom had restrictions. Whenever the library was closed, children complained to their parents. It was not unusual for someone to shout at me from a house as I passed, "Hey, when is the library reopening?" During these down periods, I started a reading tutor program, and I directed and produced a play by fourth and fifth graders.

This year we entered a new phase of our involvement. It began, implausibly enough, during a hike in the mountains, when I came upon an amazing tree house built by our dear friend Toño. I knew instantly that a tree house like this could be the makings of a library on the school grounds. A master woodcutter, Toño knows which mountain wood will not be eaten by termites, and he has the skill and imagination to transform it into whatever he envisions. Moreover, his kind and jovial nature made it impossible for him to turn down my idea.

I knew that very few people in the village had ever seen Toño's impressive carpentry or this type of wooden structure, so I drew a simple sketch and submitted it to the school director and the parents. Amazingly, just ten days later, all the parents *and* the school district had approved the plan—much to my dismay, because I had been sure it would take a year to obtain approval and I would have plenty of time to ponder the idea further.

But in a village like this, you need to seize opportunities when they arise. The political structure makes it very difficult to come to a consensus, and the people are used to being taken advantage of. I looked at permission to build a library as a little piece of heaven opening up. I knew it was a result of trust earned by the consistent work I was already doing, but it also seemed as if the grace of some higher power had given us a split second to jump in and do something outrageous.

The very first day we opened the new library, a first grader told me that it was the best day of his whole life.

And so we built a rough-finished, tree house library. All the wood was cut in the surrounding mountains, transported to the school by burros, and except for the door and shutters, milled by chain saws. Another friend designed and built a *lona* (tarp) roof with a welded tubular steel frame that does not require external lines. The structure is further protected by his innovative use of upside-down pie plates that keep insects out.



As time passes, I still marvel over a school community that six years ago had no interest in books and whose fascination with pictures and stories continues to grow. On the very first day we opened the new library, a first grader told me it was the best day of his whole life. He meant lying on a straw mat, reading his book under the canopy of a flaming red tabachin tree that overlooks the velvet, green-covered mountains rising in the distance. There is a peace in this rough-finished tree house library. It is a space to be, and to become.



A Space by Gaylene McPherson ('07)

*But the teachers don't give up.
They rise, dress, appear before us
crisp and hopeful. They have a plan.*
Naomi Shihab Nye

It was Roy who opened my classroom door for me the morning after the election. I gave him a sad, wistful look and said, "I know. I know."

He looked back at me and said, "No, you don't."

As I faced my thirty-one students in literature class that morning, I saw the weight of the world upon their faces. I felt the enormous silence that choked the classroom. Nearly all of them of Mexican descent, most first-generation college students, they had heard the collective voice of America and it was not, to say the least, supportive. Now, in addition to their already complicated lives of school and jobs and family, came all the implications of the election.

I was at a loss as to what to say or do. Roy was right. I may have had my own saddened reaction to the outcome of the election, but I had no idea what it was like to be in their shoes.

I did what I could. I urged them to go to the post-election forum the college was hosting. I acknowledged that it was a scary time. I stayed after class for students who were overwhelmed and needed to talk. I did not have the answers they were seeking, but at least I could be there to listen.

Still, I wanted to do more, but didn't know what.

Spring semester started, and without realizing it, I found myself being more stringent than ever about the rules of the classroom: cell phones away, get involved in the discussion in class, stay until the end of the class and use every minute allotted. I fiercely guarded my classroom and my class time. Although I had always somewhat enforced these rules, now I did so intensely and with a newfound fervor.

Upon reflection, I see this was my way of dealing with the outcome of the election. I could not take away the anxieties my students were feeling, but I could redouble my efforts to make my classroom a protected place, dedicated to learning, an oasis of structured time in which they knew what they would be doing and for how long.

It is shocking to me how increasingly rare it is to have these dedicated places and pools of time for learning and exploring who we are and what we can do.

I consider it an honor to be the guardian and protectorate of one of them, especially here, especially now.

The Alliteration of Light by Lucia Lemieux ('16)

Once,
If you let your light
Shine on others
It would be reflected back to you.
But that was before
The world became so dark,
And the people
So broken.

Today,
Time shadows
Even the lightest thoughts;
Dreams haunt the day,
Trumping even the most
Horrorific nightmares.
Life is fragile, but
Love is a theory few practice anymore.

Recently,
Scientists discovered that humans
Are bioluminescent in visible light;
Our eyes cannot detect this:
Not in ourselves,
Not in others.
Emission's intensity is a thousand times less
Than the naked eye can see.

Romantically,
We talk about seeing light in another's eyes,
Our globes are windows to the soul.
But like most forms, this light dims over time—
It doesn't last.
Some send light as forms of prayer;
When dying we ask that *perpetual light shines around us*.
We are blind until we see light in ourselves first.

Perhaps,
We must light our own candle—
If we can remember how.
Collectively, we are haunted by the
Negativity of fear.
If we could experience that we literally glimmer and glow,
The light we carry, this energy we cannot see
Can radiate into a shining universe once more.

Theatre As Antidote by Phil Levien ('01)



As I watched all the families walking down Stow Canyon Road this morning, headed for the Goleta Valley Junior High School graduation, I realized that it has been three years since I retired from my wonderful job as a teacher at San Marcos High School. Although I am a worker by temperament, retirement has been much more pleasant than I expected. A little over a year ago, my wife and I became grandparents. As you can imagine, playing with our grandson Stokely is a joy. I have a lot more time for swimming and taking long walks. Every day, I am busy with some form of creativity: acting, writing, directing, or teaching. And I am able to get enough sleep. There is only one thing that brings me continual disgruntlement: the horrible crisis in Washington, one in which the critical issues of our country are ignored while obstruction reigns supreme.

Each morning, I wake up hoping that the political nightmare is over, only to discover that some new outrage has been committed. It takes every ounce of restraint to keep from going on Facebook and exploding f-bombs. The only antidote for this seems to be doing something positive. I have had a dream, starting in the final years of my fulfilling career at San Marcos, of taking the sheltered theatre work I did there and expanding it to the community level. Recently, with the assistance of my wife, I came up with a possible name for this new enterprise: Theatre UA2. To explain, this would be a theatre for under-represented artists performing for under-served audiences. My daughter-in-law suggested another possibility: Shelter Theatre. By removing the “ed” from “sheltered,” one removes the sense of hierarchy, of being less than. It creates the sense of a place in which we can find sanctuary from a toxic environment. Shelter.

But no matter what we eventually call our theatre, the main point is to get started. To this end, I have applied to Adult Ed so that I can teach a pair of acting classes, one with tuition, at the Center for Lifelong Learning, and one without a fee, through SBCC's non-credit division. As the classes progress, I hope to be able to direct shows with interested students from each class. One goal would be to bring several diverse populations together through theatre: those working on their English skills; those with special needs; senior citizens; those with and without means; those on the margins of society; and those who simply have an interest in theatre.

The other goal would be to bring theatre to populations who do not have access to it, performing in retirement homes, homeless shelters, and libraries. Theatre creates community among the participants—practitioners and audience alike— and provides cohesion where once there were only factions. I noticed this in my classes at San Marcos, and critics and scholars have observed this since thespians first performed at the Theatre of Dionysius in Athens, Greece, over two thousand years ago.

Isn't this the best
antidote to the
infuriating political
climate today, doing
something positive
instead of ranting?

A professor with whom I studied in graduate school once said that one of the things he liked about teaching was that it forced him to bring his best self to class every day. I believe this holds true for the director in the theatre as well, as he or she facilitates the growth in all the production's collaborators. Isn't this the best antidote to the infuriating political climate today, doing something positive instead of ranting? Ideally, school and theatre are both group activities in which we all come together to share, to grow, to learn, to increase our understanding of ourselves and one another—to create community. Hopefully, together, we can heal this fractured world, or at least one small patch of it. And so, two of the endeavors I will continue to focus on in my retirement will be teaching and directing. A kind of 'busman's holiday'? Who cares? It's better than being an old angry guy!

Biology Lesson by Lou Spaventa ('01)

Sharing an umbrella is good.
Sharing a meal is better.
Sharing a bed is best.
It's not the act, but the intention
Not the word, but the awareness of who we are.

A biology lesson:
"Class, what separates us from our cousins, the chimpanzees?"
"An interior world, new each day that pushes poems forth,
those written and those not."
Sharing a word is good.
Sharing a feeling is better.
Sharing existence is best.

Voices from Young Writers' Camp by Nicole Wald ('09)

The cover has once again closed on the journal pages of Young Writers' Camp, where lovers of the written word converge into a community for two or three weeks each summer. This year, 148 students from grades one through twelve wrote with us. Here are a few reflections about YWC that convey a bit of the magic that happens.

*So here it is in raw form,
a little taste of how much fun we have.
What do I love about teaching YWC?
We welcome all to the day and invite them to write
morning pages, koi pond,
writing sprints to writing marathons,
a golden line and thank you,
some painting, some chanting, some drawing,
and of course lots of writing to go along...
collaboration, observation, reflection-the best PD ever,
an opportunity to refine lessons,
feel free to edit and/or delete anything
time to notice writers writing
watching the love of writing reignited everyday.
YWC shows me how to be my
most creative, authentic, and powerful self.*



Ian Foutz ('15), co-teacher for the YWC group of third and fourth graders at Cal State Lutheran, offered these thoughts:

It is almost impossible to list the reasons why I love the Young Writers Camp. I get to work with incredible colleagues and take part in a two-week whirlwind of idea sharing and tweaking, inspirational conversations, and joyous friendship that re-energizes my teacher self. I get to spend ten days with a wonderful group of young people who push me every day to be the best writer I can be, who astound me with the insights they are able to mine from themselves, and who make me feel that I am part of a community of writers. I get to spend over thirty hours with a co-teacher who helps me set up and tear down our room every day, who gives advice and asks questions that push my activities to heights that I could have never achieved on my own, and whose enthusiasm for the craft of writing helps me to remember why I fell so in love with it.

YWC has also blessed me with dozens of ideas that I can take back to my colleagues to make our Writers' Workshops and ELD lessons more fun, engaging, and authentic. It has given me a network of like-minded teachers, samples of student writing that I can share with my class when they are struggling with challenging concepts, and an opportunity to let the world slip away for a few days every year and find the peace that only writing has been able to bring me.

Celeste Darga ('16), who taught YWC grades one and two at the Franklin campus, summarizes the experience using the format of *The Important Book* by Margaret Wise Brown:

The Important Thing about Young Writers' Camp is that you write every day. You can write into the morning. You can write poems. You can write like your favorite author. You can write about your friends and family. You can write about the world around you. You can write your own version of fairy tales. You can write about your adventures. You can even write about monsters! But, the Important Thing about Young Writers Camp is that you write every day.

Beth Lindley ('12), Rio Rosales Elementary, shared this excerpt from her journal:



It's amazing how fast two weeks goes by. I think what amazes me the most is how, in such a short time, we are able to bond together as a community of writers. It is magical how writing allows us to get to know one another in a way that would not otherwise be possible. We get to hear each other's ideas, voices, and heartfelt thoughts. In this way, we develop a deeper understanding and acceptance of one another as people, and the human-ness of us all is unveiled. For that short time the masks that we use to protect ourselves are off. As in families, where we learn to accept and love one another despite our annoyances at times with one another, a writing group brings people together

in the same spirit as family. Through the simple response of "thank you... thank you for sharing" we are given the freedom to embrace and accept one another for who we are at that given moment in time. I find this to be a significant gift. It comes with a magnitude of possibilities for making our own little worlds a better place, if only for a short time. If we can do that in this small group in two short weeks, maybe it is a mindset that can be spread. And, when something positive spreads, then maybe others will spread it too. The possibilities for these young writers to grow and spread love and acceptance to others give me hope for a better world in the future. May we all be free to share our inner voices... Although it is called YOUNG Writer's Camp, it is a process that encompasses any who participate.

Lucia Lemieux ('16) and Josh Goldstein ('12) co-taught the fifth and sixth grade group at Cal State Lutheran and wrote this little poem incorporating all their students and what each wrote about:

Five of Some, Six of Another

*Hanna grew an "Oreo Plant"
Jonah built a "Butterfly Boat,"
Ahana played "Popsicle Quidditch"
Delilah, "The Shadow Outside" wrote.*

*Jack penned "Football is Amazing!"
While a "Killer Llama" Jesse rode,
Owen found clues to Noah's Ark
Holly, a word-quilt of animals sewed.*

*Ria sailed an "Airplane Beachball"
Bryan built a Falcon with pride,
Allison crowned a "Pineapple Queen"
Sophia, a singing turtle spied.*

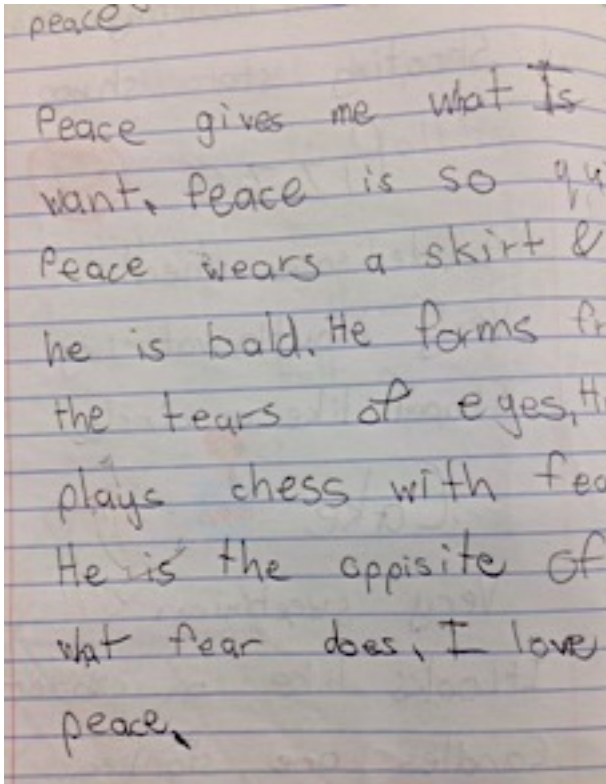
*Joshua writes of swim meet speed,
Nick made origami for all to see,
Shriya painted a "New Moon" bright,*

Simone found her place near the sea.

*Lauren writes of the love of writing
Anya, of Mother Nature's grace,
Logan's pirate ship stranded humans
While Marco penned at a cat-like pace.*

*Bronson couldn't stop the "Evil Bacon"
But Dane did shine the emerald bay,
Meredith mused of many travels;
Sam alliterated Fabulous Friday.*

*Josh wrote a conversation with himself
As Lucia highlighted her many days,
These were the adventures of Young Writers Camp:
Join us and you'll be AMAZED!*



Finally, Susan Fitzgerald ('02), who co-taught the third and fourth graders at Cal State Lutheran, shared a touching poem (to the left) by her student Aryan Patil.

Aryan felt his poem was too short to share at the anthology reading, so Susan opened the event by reading it.

"This is why I teach young writers camp," writes Susan. "It's the heartfelt desires of young writers who, like all of us, struggle to make sense of the world."

When I began to listen to poetry, it's when I began to listen to the stones, and I began to listen to what the clouds had to say, and I began to listen to others. And I think, most importantly for all of us, then you begin to learn to listen to the soul, the soul of yourself in here, which is also the soul of everyone else.

-Joy Harjo

Remembering Shelley Savren



The SCWriP community has lost a dear colleague, Shelley Savren, who succumbed to cancer in June of this year, but who never ceased in her mission to bring poetry to as many people as possible.

“My goal,” she wrote, “is to turn everyone I meet onto poetry, because poetry transforms the human spirit. It heals the heart, and I believe it also heals the world.”

As a member of California Poets in the Schools, Shelley taught poetry for forty years to over 60,000 people, in settings ranging from preschool to university classrooms, juvenile halls, prisons, homeless shelters, women’s centers, and retirement communities. She brought poetry to foster youth, emotionally disturbed adolescents, and plain old lucky kids who simply needed an infusion of inspiration.

Shelley was affiliated with SCWriP the summer of 1994, and provided numerous workshops for Fellows over the years. She was a professor of English and

Creative Writing at Oxnard College and served as its Poet Laureate from 2014 to 2017. She wrote four books of poetry, and two books about teaching it, (*The Forms of Things Unknown*, for teens and adults, and *Welcome to Poetryland*, for young children) and many poems and articles that were published in anthologies and magazines. Above all, she was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and friend.

“Poetry saved my life many, many times,” Shelley said in an interview earlier this year. A spirited early feminist who bravely broke away from a traditional upbringing to find her own path, she believed that it all begins with imagination, which, in her words, “not only helps us to invent and create, but also helps us to make choices and to survive; it gives us hope. I don’t mean make-believe hope, but real hope—possibilities.”

But everyone who knew Shelley could see there was an additional ingredient involved, and that ingredient was love. This edition of PostSCWriP is dedicated to Shelley Savren, and we are proud to include a few of her fine poems on the following pages.

“Cause-and-effect assumes history marches forward, but history is not an army. It is a crab scuttling sideways, a drip of soft water wearing away stone, an earthquake breaking centuries of tension. Sometimes one person inspires a movement, or her words do decades later, sometimes a few passionate people change the world; sometimes they start a mass movement and millions do; sometimes those millions are stirred by the same outrage or the same ideal, and change comes upon us like a change of weather. All that these transformations have in common is that they begin in the imagination, in hope.”

Rebecca Solnit, from *Hope In The Dark*

Four Poems by Shelley Saxren

Purple Irises

for Joyce

*No one people can hold the entire light
without shattering. Each of us holds but a single ray.*

– Rabbi Gershon Winkler

Purple irises bloom
through the slant of morning.
Summer has raised a pale sky
and for a moment
nothing bends this silence.
You are watching through a window
as small threads of air
swirl through the garden
and birds begin to bustle.
It's not like you never noticed.
You've heard the hard whistle,
the last dot of train
as it curves the horizon.
You know the squeak of the door
when it opens,
your steps measuring the distance
between the porch
and pigeons rearranging the sky.
The garden bench is still dew damp
and your robe sweeps moisture
from the grass.
You step slowly
because it's the season of snails,
blackness chewing holes into leaves,
the crow cracking peanut shells
and fowling the birdbath.
But this moment,
when the cancer is no longer quiet
and light shatters each breath,
jasmine twists the fence
and slings its smell.
Irises breathe with you.
There are no shadows in this picture,
just light crackling,
a single ray quivering in your eyes
and your body bending into this bench.



Inevitable Love

*Lovers don't finally meet somewhere.
They're in each other all along.*

– Rumi

If I had met you twenty years ago,
at a Sufi gathering
deep in meditation,
would you have noticed
the way my curls tangle in the wind?
Would I have been lured
by your smooth, waist-long beard?
Would we have danced
with each other's eyes
holding hands, our bodies
interlocking at dawn?
Or would we have
just passed each other
on the street one autumn day
carrying groceries
or riding bikes to work
and without much thought
exchanged a simple "hi"
or just nod in courtesy?
Would our paths have wound
in different directions
eventually finding their ways
to this moment
where we lie side by side
brushing skin against skin,
hair against hair,
breath against breath
in morning light?

Approaching

from "Rock Mountain"
(R.J. Donovan Maximum Security Men's Prison,
San Diego, California)

The blue sky that follows me,
one stroke left at twilight
stretching through huge fields of dust,
tumbleweed then distant lights.

One stroke left at twilight,
a faint sign, *Border Crossing 2 Miles*
tumbleweed then distant lights:
State Prison Property. No Trespassing.

A faint sign, *Border Crossing 2 Miles.*
I follow curves to an access road:
State Prison Property. No Trespassing.
Watchtower, concrete bricks, barbed wire.

I follow curves to an access road.
My hands, a steering wheel, this growing dark,
watchtower, concrete bricks, barbed wire.
I signed up to teach these men to write.

My hands, a steering wheel, this growing dark.
I can turn around and leave, but
I signed up to teach these men to write,
don't want to know who did what crime.

I can turn around and leave, but
I want these men to smell the road –
don't want to know who did what crime –
to hear the wind, rip the darkness, open up.

I want these men to smell the road
stretching through huge fields of dust,
to hear the wind, rip the darkness, open up
the blue sky that follows me.

Ordinary Moments

You're wearing that pink and purple dress
you like to swirl in and you're not
looking up at the camera.
You are looking at the flowers
in your bouquet at my wedding
and you're not listening to poems or vows
or seagulls scratching up the sky.
You're picking at the flowers
as if talking to them about their behavior,
how they need to smile just right
to catch the sunlight
and not lean or wilt or fall apart.
How they have to last
like sweets or salt or a secret.
Some days I want you back in your crib
reaching your arms up to get out,
all that light wrapped inside you
so easy for me to carry.
Someone warned me,
She can't live in your pocket.
Watch the birds.
Every day a different one dipping
into the birdbath then leaping away.
I wake up one morning
and you're taller than me.
Now you hold another bouquet
in this garden with Malibu blue and lilac
draping the aisle where we walk.
If someone asks me who you are,
I'll tell them you're an actor stepping on stage
and making everyone laugh,
a teacher surrounded by a cluster of kids
who hold you like a keepsake.
I'll tell them you're my best friend.
Your honey-colored hair sways
and a Renoir bloom shimmers inside your eyes.
In a moment I will step aside
and this young man will walk away with you.
Just five months ago you wanted me
to help you find a wedding dress.
And how lucky I am, after all these years,
that you asked.



Water by Veronica Gallardo ('14)

Together we build a house
Small enough to clean
Big enough to lean
Solid it withstands the storms
Facing the morning sun
Sights of green, yellow, and
splashes of red
Blue skies
Rich in soil
We toil
Fruit grows
We grow
Living water fills
Together we build a home

Olfactory Offerings by Monique Navarro ('07)

Fecund earth.
Salty guano.
Sun-baked pine needles.

Prompt in me an inner quietude,
transport-ation to
wild at heart child soaking in
the beauty of the abundance of the earth.

Evoking everything and nothing all at once.

Eternity exists within these scents.
Eternity of
beauty
youth
abundance
nature
gratitude.

Eternity of that which lies beyond and that which I cannot
grasp
explain
fathom
see.

Evoking a reassurance of faith that all is good for the moment.

Inhaling, I begin to re-believe that there is beauty in everything.

Ode to Grandma's Brown Bread by Beth Lindley ('12)

Oh Brown Bread you luscious treat, you.
You have risen, been pounded back down, and risen again,
Kneaded and folded and dusted with flour
By Grandma's loving hands.
As soon as I open the door
The aroma from your freshly baked loaf
Flutters through the air,
Greets my nostrils with a welcoming waif.
I absorb your scent and my mouth waters.
Every day, all day, you tempt me
Sitting on the stove
Steamed and warm
Always ready, always waiting, always pleasant and fragrant.
You are perfectly paired with sweet, creamy butter or
Grandma's freshly made apple butter
with just the right hint of cinnamon.
I savor your soft, chewy dough
For breakfast, for lunch, for a snack, for dinner.
I chew slowly
Let the apple butter collide with the perfection
of your rich brown texture
Oh Brown Bread,
Grandma's Brown Bread,
I tried to recreate you to no avail,
The only recipe Grandma ever had was love.
There has never been another like you.
There can never be another like you.
How I miss your warmth, your smell,
your comfort to my soul.
Glory be to you,
Grandma's Brown Bread.

The Story of Lefse by Ian Foutz ('15)

Every time I smell brown sugar,
I think of *lefse*.
Whether it's being made by myself,
my mother, or my grandmother,
there is something about feeling the
crunchy crystals mixed with
warm butter and a flour tortilla that makes me feel safe
and loved and happy.
I also like that people tend to get
grossed out when I describe it.
What?!? You eat *that*?!
You're darn right I do.
It's a simple food for a simple man,
and it's cheap, so I can make a lot
of them for not much money.
That brown sugar smells as sweet
as life used to be,
when family was everywhere
and there was always
enough love to go around



"Not only do we teach each other, we nourish each other, literally and figuratively." Tim Dewar