

## A Publication of the South Coast Writing Project

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

# PostSCWriP

## WHO ARE YOU WRITING TO?

A Message from SCWriP Director Tim Dewar



Struggling with what to write for this issue of PostSCWriP, I asked my daughters for ideas. My older daughter asked back, “Who are you writing to?” When I explained that it was for teachers who had been through the Summer Institute, she looked up from my laptop where she was “typing” her poetry into Google docs. “Tell them about teaching kids to write without making them feel like they are in a box.”

There is probably enough in that exchange for an essay. I could point out how she asked the right question, a question every writer needs to consider: Who is my audience? Or I could explore the various aspects of technology involved in the encounter. She's using *my* laptop to *type* poems in a web-based word processing application, while I am doodling on scratch paper and distracting myself with my phone. I would note that she is composing these poems as she sits "typing." Writing is what she does by hand with pen or pencil in notebooks and on paper; "typing" is what she says she is going to do when she requests some screen time. Or I could write and try to explain how to teach writing that frees our students rather than boxes them in. Of course, that assumes I actually know how to explain the Summer Institute and all that I've learned from everyone.

Composing is done in networked environments that offer new powerful tools but still leave us to struggle with the basics. What do I have to say? Who am I saying it to?

My younger daughter took my question and disappeared into another room with an iPad so she could send me her answer in an email, her ploy for screen time. When she emerged a few minutes later to ask me what I thought, I pulled up her emoji-filled email on my phone. She was disappointed to see that the format had changed to fit the phone screen, and the line of writing-related emojis was no longer centered. I was puzzled as to how she had made her four distinct topics look like they had emerged from an

email chain. Before I can even read her ideas, she's offered me plenty to think and write about. About those topics, here they are:

Topic: Writing and the use of emojis

Topic: Section idea: Quoting

Topic: Electronics and the digital age

Topic: Autocorrect (omg autocorrect autocorrects autocorrect!) errors/pros+cons

Idk those are just some ideas

I don't really know what she means by the second and third topics, but I know she is fascinated by emojis. Both girls are. Any new operating system update for the parents' phones had better come with new emojis. I thought they would be satisfied once there was a unicorn emoji, but they are not. Sending little cartoon pictures is fun, and so is debating the plural of emoji. Yup, we are that kind of nerdy family.

The fourth topic confirms the nerdiness. My younger daughter and I send each other emails typed as fast as we can on the small keyboard of a phone. We make no corrections, letting autocorrect do what it will. For example, she once wrote: "Ho ddy! I just wanref t snd y a quick bad tping mesaage s here it is" which she transcribed as "Hi

daddy! I just wanted to send you a quick bad typing message so here it is.” Then she added some commentary, “P.S. I like the words ‘wanref’ and ‘mesaage.’”

Who likes words like “wanref” and “mesaage”? Nerds, that’s who. Nerds also like it when computers surprise us, like autocorrecting a misspelling of “autocorrect” (Nerds verb nouns, too). And they use, *correctly*, texting abbreviations like “omg” and “idk.” Yes, these girls are growing up in a world with a different understanding of literacy. Words and images interact in new ways, sometimes supplementing, sometimes replacing each other. Composing is done in networked environments that offer new powerful tools, but still leave us to struggle with the basics. What do I have to say? Who am I saying it to?

Words matter. They mean things.  
We must take care in selecting them,  
using them, and interpreting the  
words of others.

After the girls are tucked into bed, I doodle some more, circling around what I need to say. I’ve found it hard to write since the presidential election. The results came as a surprise to me, as it seems they did to nearly everyone,

including the candidates. In the days and weeks after, I noted how people sent around links, articles, and videos to help others understand what happened. It was a coping mechanism. It basically said, “I don’t know what the hell just happened, but have you seen this?” Never had texts seemed more important to people. They were lifelines we threw to each other to keep from drowning in the confusion.

That tumultuous sea has since calmed a bit, but it seems to me that we need words to connect us, as indeed we always have. We need words to connect us to our own thoughts, to our family, friends, and neighbors, and, maybe most importantly, to others, those not like us.

I think my daughters, raised by word nerds and taught by great teachers, know this. Words matter to them. They mean things, and we must take care in selecting them, using them, and interpreting the words of others. I don’t know how to quantify how much has changed with the election, but I do know that it is still important (vital/crucial/essential/imperative/critical) to help our students know the power of words. That has not changed. We’ve always faced those who want to use language sloppily, unfairly, or deceptively. Sometimes they’ve been on the edge of our awareness; other times they’ve been right in front of us, even in our classrooms. From wherever they’ve spoken, it has always been our job to use language clearly, fairly, and honestly, to refute their falsehoods and confront their power. Let us now teach our students how to do the same.

## FROM THE EDITOR by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)

It's impossible not to perceive both dismay and defiance in this edition of PostSCWriP, compiled as it was in the immediate wake of the 2016 election, whose disturbing repercussions are still hitting us in what has come to feel like a daily assault. But as teachers, we also seek the learning, and we do what we can do in our daily lives to make things better. We will never cease in our efforts to resist injustice and stay true to our ideals. And we will write, for we know that writing can help us to heal, find hope and clarity, and give voice to what matters.

So there's a lot to ponder in our journal. In *This Hurts*, Emily Reich recalls her sense of shock and sorrow as the election results became known. In *The Fourth Wave: A Tipping Point for Women in America* Kari Hall reflects on the changing roles of women and the need for "connectors" who will reach across divides to help our nation heal. In *The United States of Journalism* Josh Goldstein reminds us all of our crucial responsibility to become critical readers of the news. Tim Dewar writes about the power of words and the importance of choosing them well; Vickie Gill reports on a volunteer tutoring program she started in her small town as an example of local action that can have a real impact; Judy Garey writes about activating reading; and Justina Weinbender celebrates the phenomenon of little free libraries.

On a more personal level, we are honored to include *A Hymn to Life*, John Isaacson's beautiful tribute to his mother, Katherine Laughlin Isaacson, who passed away in 2013, and *Family 3.0*, Erika Cobain's essay on parenthood, families, and the love that renders these real.

We are chockfull of poetry too. Print out a hard copy if you don't enjoy online reading, and relish the words of Rosemary Cabe, Michelle Detorie, Jennifer Gunner, Brandon Janes, Dorothy Gagner Jardin, Lanny Kaufer, Luscia Lemieux, Christine Penko, Robert Polski, Trish Studley, and Nicole Wald. Note too the parting shot by Diane Siegal, because a little whimsy and humor never hurt. And Nicole Wald reminds us how to stay connected to the SCWriP community. Please, let's do that. It's more important than ever.

The other day I drove through the rain to attend a community meeting in a church hall in the Santa Ynez Valley. We stood by the entrance, shaking out our umbrellas and stomping our boots, recognizing friends, then dutifully arranging chairs and flip charts and plates of cheese, all of us suddenly allies in a resistance. There were artists and teachers here, parents and grandparents, peaceable and decent folks still a bit stalled by shock but thrust into a level of activism we never expected to need. It's hard to organize and strategize, to become an effective group, link to others, and grow into a movement. But our commitment is firm, and we're getting the hang of it.

Meanwhile, the cottonwood trees are in their brief season of yellow leaves and a toyon by the house is a bounty of red berries. A woman in town is selling homemade tamales wrapped like presents in foil and brown paper, still warm, and a neighbor gave us a bowl of sweet persimmons, the kind you eat like apples. My daughter is visiting, curled up on the living room sofa in a shaft of sunlight, reading, and I saw three former students in the course of a week, all good people, all grown up, and it makes me feel I mattered a little. Everything around me is telling me this: we have no choice but to be better. The glint of hope and recovery is in our daily work and love.

**THE FOURTH WAVE:  
A TIPPING POINT FOR WOMEN IN AMERICA**  
by Kari Hall ('10)



*Kari Hall (above with her husband and their two sons) teaches U.S. history in the Santa Maria Bonita District and is currently wrapping up a Master's degree in history from ASU. She wrote this paper for a class in April 2016, when many of us had hopes of electing the first woman president and could barely imagine the below-mentioned candidate as a real possibility. "My paper calls for women in America to seek our similarities rather than our differences," she told me via email. She speaks of the need for "connectors" who will reach across the divides of culture, religion, and thought to help our nation heal. Clearly, the issues Kari raises are more relevant than ever.*

In Akron Ohio, May 1851, a former slave sat in the back of the room at a women's rights convention. After listening to several ministers argue that women should not have the same rights as men, Sojourner Truth rose from her seat and began a spontaneous speech later titled, *Ain't I a Woman*: "Well, children, where there is so much racket there must be something out of kilter. I think that 'twixt the negroes of the South and the women at the North, all talking about rights, the white men will be in a fix pretty soon..."

One hundred and sixty-four years later, something is *still* “out of kilter”. In Cleveland Ohio, August 2015, Fox News host Megyn Kelly, as a moderator at the first Republican presidential primary debate, asked candidate Donald Trump a question: “You’ve called women you don’t like fat pigs, dogs, slobs, and disgusting animals...You once told a contestant on *Celebrity Apprentice* it would be a pretty picture to see her on her knees. Does that sound to you like the temperament of a man we should elect as president, and how will you answer the charge from Hillary Clinton that you are part of the war on women?”

The next day, in an interview with CNN’s Don Lemon, Trump lashed out against Kelly, stating, “You could see there was blood coming out of her eyes...blood coming out of her wherever...” As a woman watching this exchange, I stared in disbelief. Was Trump implying that Kelly asked the question because she’s on her period? Would Trump have ridiculed a male correspondent’s hard line of questions as a result of blood coming out of *his* wherever?

Journalist Roxanne Jones affirmed my disbelief, “Men tying women’s behavior to their periods, as Trump seems to do with Kelly, is sexism familiar to women.” This must be the end of his presidential run.

It wasn’t. As I watched Trump catapult to front-runner status, anger brewed, and I realized woman’s fight for equality has a long way to go. My next thought: Does this realization, and my anger, make me a *feminist*?

Until now, I was apathetic to the feminist movement, and research reveals I’m not alone. According to a recent poll, only 23 percent of women consider themselves feminists, yet when asked if “men and women should be social, political, and economic equals,” the percentage flips. Why do women who believe in equal rights and opportunity for women, *not* consider themselves feminists? The short answer - because feminism in America is divided. It is divided by liberal fragmentation and conservative alienation.

The idea that the feminist movement is a sisterhood divided is almost universally accepted with over a century of internal disagreements and attacks on our own sex by our own sex. Women outside the movement are alienated by ill-suited rhetoric and images of angry “ball-busting” extremists. Furthermore, a significant portion of women believe they must choose between their conservative, political, cultural, or religious identity and their identity as a feminist. How women can band together for our greater cause is debatable, but it is vital that we do so. Our movement needs to unite to find a tipping point if gender equality is to permeate American society.

To understand why a majority of American women do not identify as feminists, it is important to study the history of how we got here. I begin by reflecting on my own association with the movement. I had never looked up the word “feminism” until five minutes *after* hearing Trump imply Kelly’s question was based on her *time of month*. I’ve never taken a college course in women studies - on purpose. I never wanted to be called

I never wanted to be called a feminist, but I never knew why.

a feminist; and I never knew why. Somehow, while I was growing up in the small town of Clanton, Alabama, a backdrop was set - "We all know what feminists are. They are shrill, overly aggressive, man-hating, ball-busting, selfish, hairy, extremists, deliberately unattractive women with absolutely no sense of humor who see sexism at every turn."

"If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again."

Sojourner Truth

No one said this to me directly, and I don't recall reading these words - until recently. In her book *Where the Girls Are*, Susan J. Douglas tries to capture the essence of epithets hurled at feminists, and it struck me - wow - this is the implicit message I heard softly, consistently, in the background while growing up.

And here we are now. I see Trump attacking Kelly for questioning his misogynistic track record and I want to know how women feel about

it. Are feminists speaking out? And I wonder who the feminists *are*? A search to better understand the movement brings to light the theory of The Three Waves of Feminism. Within and between each wave there is an ever-present internal conflict over the tone and approach women should use in their struggle for equality. While the wave theory has its share of critics, for brevity and clarity of a broader point, I will use the metaphor and generalize each wave's theme.

The First Wave (1848 - 1920) was a political movement. By 1913, the women's suffrage movement had stalled and split into two camps: NAWSA and the NWP. NAWSA's conservative strategy focused on the long game and worked within the system to influence sitting politicians, including President Wilson, to support suffrage. NWP's founder, Alice Paul, took a radical approach and attacked the party in power with pickets at Wilson's White House, arrests, and hunger strikes in jail. These competing strategies provoked its leaders to privately and publicly attack each other over how to win suffrage. The Second Wave (1960's - 70's) was a social movement. A three-way-split between social justice feminists and ERA feminists brought competition over who and what feminism was fighting for. A third group, Pro-Family feminists, emerged to oppose the radical demands for reproductive rights and sexual liberation. The Third Wave (1990's) was an individual movement. The daughters of second wave feminists reacted against the perceived shortcomings and failures of their mothers' movement. Communication technology proliferated and messaging fragmented. The third wave was not a hierarchical movement with overarching political or social goals like previous waves, rather; it was grass roots, individualistic, diffused and divided.

The Fourth Wave? Martha Rampton, in her recent article, says we're here now. I'm part of the Fourth Wave, or I could be. And for the first time, I *want* to be. My generation can define where the movement goes from here, but, if only 20% of women identify as feminists we have a problem. To reach a critical mass we need the masses. If nearly 200 years after Sojourner Truth challenged a minister for his faulty logic on

women's place in society, a misogynist could be our next president, our campaign to convince Americans to embrace gender equality needs re-energizing. Stick with me on the next part, where two previously unrelated notions merge: Malcolm Gladwell's "Tipping Point" and feminism.

Gladwell, a staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine, has studied and written about trends for years. Although he never mentions feminism, his arguments may provide an alternative perspective to a feminist movement needing inspiration. In his book, *The Tipping Point*, Gladwell uses epidemic contagion theory to describe how an idea or social

Gladwell explains that for movements to spread like epidemics they need connectors - people who are trusted leaders who bring the uninitiated into the fold.

behavior spreads exponentially through society - and sticks. Gladwell found epidemics have three characteristics: contagions, stickiness, and connectors. While all could apply, I believe the connector principle is a weak link in the feminist movement.

Gladwell explains that for movements to spread like epidemics they need connectors - people who are trusted leaders who bring the uninitiated into the fold. The major feminist organizations lack nationally recognized conservative women leaders, leaders who may have different strategies and conservative, religious, and political values, but who support equality and could serve as role models for pro-family women.

Women in America have split into divergent camps - liberal feminists, disengaged non-feminists, and pro-family conservative women, each with unique perspectives and needs. But the split diminishes the collective's potential to confront sexism and fight for equality. It is profoundly jarring that a presidential primary candidate is catapulted to the front while continuing his misogynistic rhetoric. We need it to stop. We need to harness women's collective potential to be contagious and reach a tipping point. To actualize gender equality, we need inclusion and feminist leaders who are connectors rather than dividers.

Sojourner Truth reminds us of the hope I carry today - "If the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right side up again!" If we can unite with our similarities, rather than divide over our differences, we can focus our energies on making our Fourth Wave the Tipping Point.

*Editor's note: In order to save space, we have not included the bibliography for Kari's article here, but it's available upon request.*



## THE BABY BOOMER EFFECT by Vickie Gill ('01)



Vickie Gill (left) and a few Homework Help volunteers in front of the newly reopened Los Alamos Library

For the past three years I've been working on a project to reopen our local public library and develop programs to get the members of our small community to make use of it. I started this project the same week I retired, so I've been busy, but in truth, I'm not sure how I would have handled too much time on my hands. This experience got me to thinking about Baby Boomers and retirement and how much talent is out there just waiting for a new challenge.

As a teacher, I specialized in remedial reading and writing for high school students who were struggling to keep up. Most of my students had been labeled failures and/or behavior problems. Many were at risk of dropping out of school. My trick was to create a curriculum that was all about their lives and goals so that I could talk them into doing the hard work of increasing their ability to use the written word to their advantage. My class was an easy sell and we did our best, but many of those students graduated thinking of reading and writing as more of a chore than a pleasure.

A 2011 study conducted by a professor of sociology at CUNY-Hunter College suggests that 3rd grade is the "pivot point" -- children who do not read at grade level by then are "four times more likely to drop out of high school." They call it The Matthew Effect, referring to a verse from the Bible warning that those who have will get more, and those who do not have will lose even more. By high school, kids who have sailed through the K-8 curriculum have the confidence to tackle the most difficult classes in high school; those who continually struggle just to pass to the next grade keep losing ground.

I cannot fix the current state of the Union, but I can try to do something right here in my little town.

I cannot fix the current state of the Union, but I can try to do something right here in my town. Last year we started a Homework Help program with one-on-one tutoring because our small library does not have room for more than a few kids to gather at one time. Right now fourteen adults, all of them retired, meet once a week with students from the local K-8 who are falling behind. None of these volunteers are experienced teachers and many are

baffled by the assignments, especially with the new math, but they dive right in and allow the students to witness a persistent thinker tackle a problem. One hour a week won't get all of the homework done, but the kids and their tutors have created a bond that strengthens our little town. Let's call it The Baby Boomer Effect.

As Margaret Mead wisely observed, "A small group of thoughtful people could change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has." We just need to show up and do what we can.

### **ACTIVATING READING** by Judy Garey ('98)

I remember seeing my mother reading when I was little; I have a memory of her always sitting in a chair doing nothing but reading a book. The idea of reading always struck me as something boring and passive – you just sat there! It really wasn't until I became a theatre major in college that I discovered the true magic of reading and came to realize that reading was not passive, but a very active and imaginative journey of sight, sound, and action that one entered into with a piece of literature.

Young students need to approach reading as this multi-dimensional journey from the beginning, and continue to build the skills of active and engaged reading as they learn. Unfortunately, as they go through school, many students lose that early childhood sense of reading as an adventure, and it becomes a chore; something they have to do for school. It becomes a set of words they have to race to finish, rather than an experience that encompasses them, taking them to an exciting new time and place.

In theatre, we make that journey every time; we take literature off the page and live within it. We don't just zip through it and say we're done; we construct an environment and create characters. We choose colors and fabrics and texture, light and sound, space and timing, and physical action to bring the story to life.

We can give students the tools to read like this. A simplification of the strategies actors use to bring literature to life can teach readers not only how to see and hear what they read, but understand it at a deeper level, and ultimately use the same techniques in their imaginations as they become avid lifelong readers.

*Judy Garey will be doing a presentation at SCWriP's Winter Renewal on the use of drama techniques to deepen student engagement and comprehension. Details will be coming soon, but mark your calendars: February 25<sup>th</sup> at UCSB.*

## ALL ARE WELCOME AT THE LITTLE FREE LIBRARY

by Justina Weinbender ('16)



*Little Free Library* is a worldwide movement in which neighbors give and take books from each other. No due dates, bills, or checks and balances are required, just a love of neighbors and books. According to the website, *Little Free Library.org*, there are nearly 40,000 *Little Free Library* book exchanges in existence, and this is just since 2010, when the idea began. In the past few months, two have popped up in Carpinteria.

Maybe you've driven by the artsy little library home on Canalino Drive where the roof is made out of license plates. Maybe you've played at Eucalyptus Park and noticed the fairy cottage book nook across from it (on Chaparral Drive) and wondered if these were yard decorations or invitations to come browse. These book hosts want visitors, and they want books in the hands of as many as would like to partake. Simply stop at the curb, open the bookcase door, and browse until you're content. If you're on a walk, maybe the lure of a book will get you to walk a bit further.

"A house without books is like a room without windows," said Horace Mann, and we agree. However, many do not read much. The Literacy Project Foundation's website states that 50% of adults cannot read a book written at an eighth grade level, 45 million are functionally illiterate and read below a fifth grade level, 44% of American adults do not read a book in a year, and six out of ten households do not buy a single book in a year. Little Free Libraries can help get books in people's hands in a convenient, very low pressure way. It's not about competing with our wonderful library and Friends of the Library Bookstore, but *complementing* them. The target audience depends on who adds books - the goal is that there's something for everyone. Give one a try...or why not create your own little free library?

# THE UNITED STATES OF JOURNALISM: A CALL TO ACTION FOR CRITICAL NEWS READING

by Josh Goldstein ('12)



The outcome of the 2016 presidential election underscored the need for engagement and action in political processes and reaffirms a fundamental lesson: we must all be critical readers. In the short time since Donald Trump won the number of Electoral College votes to secure the title of president-elect, I have thought about our political system, particularly in the age of social media. In our democracy, every single voter has the power to influence the direction of our country; so, too, voters are obligated to ensure that news about the governance of the country is vetted, checked and factual. News outlets and social media drive our information-based culture, marshaling our attention, influence, and, quite directly, money.

Voters are obligated to ensure that news about the governance of our country is vetted, checked and factual.

As a former journalist and current teacher of middle school journalism, I believe *it is more important than ever to be critical readers of the news*. This means applying logic to discriminate among information channels, asking questions, knowing which sources are credible. Social media is fun and engaging, and it powers our lives in positive ways. However, a functioning democracy depends upon truth-based journalism to satisfy our demand for immediate information.

If we get our information only from the same selective news sources or rely on social media for news, we build an information – or misinformation – bubble in our lives. To burst that bubble and ensure we are well-informed voters, I propose applying an exercise to your news consumption, which I teach my student journalists:

- **Vetted:** Examine the context and the information presented. Follow the money. Ask critical questions.
- **Checked:** Read and view news stories from a variety of outlets. Check the mission / purpose of your sources.
- **Factual:** Consider whether information is opinion-based and emotional, or verifiable and objective truth.

*JOSH GOLDSTEIN is an 8th grade English and journalism teacher in Oxnard. He is a 2012 SCWRIP Fellow and continues to teach Young Writers Camp at CLU in Thousand Oaks and at his home campus in Oxnard. Favorite writing memory: place-based writing during sunrise or sunset anywhere within view of the Pacific Ocean.*

### **UNITED STATES OF GRIEF**

by Michelle Detorie ('16)

Before there are no sanctuaries. Without birds  
Flying through, the soul is open territory  
For wounding. We scraped the lakes dry  
Milking salt for our tears, fasting our hand  
To plates to placate the glacial creatures  
Living in papers, their occult markings making  
Promises they never keep. We build  
A new home with yesteryear singing in our ears  
While these old fevers burn in the roads and rivers.  
What's built on thieving? If you want to live, sign  
This petition. If you want to love, come on.

## THIS HURTS by Emily Reich ('15)



I woke up to nurse my baby and saw the very news I'd fallen asleep praying would not come true. Since then I've been trying to find a way to be gracious about these results and the people who wanted this, although I don't know many who did.

I understand a desire for a shift away from politics as usual, and I can even understand not liking Hillary, though I have tremendous respect for her.

What I cannot understand is so many

people the country over effectively saying "okay" to outright racism, misogyny, and hubris. My heart aches to think that these are the values moving into the White House during my son's first years, and that the policies based thereon may shape the world he grows up in.

I refuse to perpetuate hate by saying nasty things about those who voted differently than I did. And I rarely feel compelled to publicly share my thoughts on any issue, least of all politics.

But this hurts.

While watching election coverage, as the results started to become clear, my mind began buzzing, and I was on the verge of numbness when political commentator and attorney Van Jones said this and brought me back: "It's hard to be a parent tonight for a lot of us. You tell your kids, 'Don't be a bully.' You tell your kids, 'Don't be a bigot.' You tell your kids, 'Do your homework. Be prepared.' And then you have this outcome, and then you have people putting their children to bed tonight, and they're afraid of breakfast. They're thinking, 'How do I explain this to my children?' ...Donald Trump has a responsibility tonight to come out and reassure people that he's going to be the president for all the people he insulted, and offended and brushed aside."

There is relief in knowing there will be a conversation. Of course there will be a conversation.

## INDIAN SUMMER, 2016

by Christine Penko ('07)

Passing time with CNN, dreading, while longing  
for the removal of my hip, I didn't notice the slow,  
Days of Our Lives decline. Sleep deprived,  
I learned to value comfort in a chair, cocktail hour.  
Post surgery, I obsess over candidates' hair, click  
through channels, arrive at PBS—  
the English Raj circa 1936. Indian boys leaping  
through mobbed streets, their high-def bodies drenched  
in pink, blue, yellow chalk. Sapphire and ruby saris.  
And everywhere—green fields, lawns, palms.  
The British turned-out in crisp linen, yards of hand stitching.  
Ladies in petal soft slippers. Men's boots rubbed  
to a hardtack shine. So easy to get lost here.  
To romanticize the pain.  
I imagine the English wishing for their elegant,  
exotic past as we look back to our own "Happy Days".  
The natives are restless, but who cares?  
We all have problems of our own.  
I adjust the icepack, shift in my chair.



Christine Penko's recent book of poetry, *Thunderbirds*, was published by the Turning Point imprint of WordTech Communications. It's available at Chaucer's and The Book Den in Santa Barbara or online at Amazon.

# CHRISTMAS MORNING

by Christine Penko ('07)

Half awake, I imagine where I put that exacto knife,  
how I might use it to pare away a manger from an old shoebox  
and whether we have any toothpicks to build a crèche.

Downstairs in the closet lean three beaten brooms—  
straw for the roof, fodder for the animals.

Here it gets complicated: donkey and camel, Joseph, mother and child.  
Two dimensions cut from magazines?  
Crude figures raised from flour and salt by my inept fingers?

Fully awake, fancy dissolves—the birthplace of the Anointed  
remains a shoebox from Macy's.

From the next room my husband on the phone tells his brother:  
*My wife has not been without a child since she was seventeen years old.*

After eight years under our roof our granddaughter  
decided to live with her mother's people. Admittedly,  
raising her was a "Thy will not mine" predicament

even so, she'd become a gift over time, a second chance.

Some nights I go out into the yard and wonder about all of it.  
Near the scrub oak I can set down our past like a sack bulging  
with unexpected gifts and lumps of coal. The year our marriage almost  
fell apart followed by

New Year's Eve in a mountain town in Mexico—  
three wise men on donkeys dressed as camels roamed the plaza,  
fireworks so close the cathedral's bell tower seemed to explode.  
At midnight two *campesinos* held us close as lost friends.

This morning it occurs, *this body*, common as water and salt, should rise  
from her bed to open her gifts—each and every one of them.





**IN A SILENT HOUSE** by Rosemary Cabe ('87)

It takes a silent house for me to hear my thoughts  
remember falling down and skinning boney knees  
running home, a trail of blood trickling into socks  
remember waking up, how it hurt to straighten legs  
and how in mid September, new school shoes  
made blisters on sore heels

Memory labels, but can't hold  
the moment gone, even as I greet it  
Time becomes the flow of life  
from the banks I only watch it

Or do our bodies seek to breathe  
into blood and bone and muscle  
all that life is offering, to nourish as we grow  
Do the pains we learn to live with  
and the joys we treasure deeply  
teach us how to live this life  
if we will pay attention ?

## WAKING UP AT HOME

by Rosemary Cabe ('87)

My house is breathing  
see where it exhaled on the window  
hear the hum  
feel the life  
Good morning, house  
Have I thanked you for shelter  
the way the roof catches the rain  
and the floor stays dry ?

Driving on your street years ago  
I hoped you weren't  
the place where I would grow old  
but now I wake with gratitude  
for familiarity  
able to walk through the house  
at night, without a light  
knowing which window  
the sun will enter first  
which shelf holds my favorite cup

You rattle in the wind  
let cold air through your cracks  
the faucet in the bathroom drips  
the front door swells and sticks  
but I love you for your steadfastness  
a welcome at the end of the driveway  
Not me that built you on this plot of land  
but I have opened your doors  
to claim your address as mine  
to call you Home.



The always vivacious Rosemary Cabe had a thirty-year career as a teacher in Texas, Hawaii, and various districts in California, primarily at Lompoc Valley Middle School, before becoming Co-Director of SCWriP. At SCWriP her main focus was working directly with local teachers to find effective ways to engage students in the process of becoming writers. Now busily retired and a grandmother to eight exuberant grandchildren, Rosemary's own practice of writing still sustains her through hard times and helps her to capture life's beautiful and precious moments.

# A HYMN TO LIFE: KATHERINE LAUGHLIN ISAACSON

by John Isaacson ('16)



Every summer, my grandmother Rosemary took her children to the old Cathedral Park Lodge, a rustic red cabin with green trim that her father owned, on the west side of Fallen Leaf Lake, between Lake Tahoe and the Desolation Wilderness. My mother, Katherine, spent the summer playing with her cousins, fishing for crawdads, hiking in Desolation Wilderness with her mother, brother, and sisters, identifying thimbleberries, Jeffrey pines, and Indian paintbrushes, and swimming in clear, cold streams and lakes of run-off from melting snow-packs.

Her mother was the daughter of an admiral and her father was an officer who had a passion for music, art, and literature. Although Katherine was borne in Keene, New Hampshire, and briefly lived in Palo Alto as a young girl, the family eventually settled in Santa Barbara, where she attended Marymount, which was then a Catholic school for girls. The household her father, Herb, kept at Schoolhouse Road in Montecito was a vivid contrast to the habits and uniforms worn at school: Herb hosted gatherings where he would play flamenco guitar; peacocks, terrorized by Katherine and her siblings, roamed the grounds; and the house was big enough to have an elevator. Opera music filled the rooms, echoing outside.

Herb had opened two record stores: one in San Francisco called *House of Sound* and one in Montecito on Coast Village Road called *Sea of Records*. He was an avid classical music enthusiast who owned state-of-the-art stereo equipment for playing his favorite German Marches, Operas, and flamenco music. He despised the popular music of the day, such as the Beatles, but he probably sold enough copies of Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band to pay the rent on Coast Village Road. My mother, her brother, and my father, all purchased copies of Teaser and Firecat by Cat Stevens at Sea of Records.

After graduating from Marymount, Katherine went to Berkeley where she may have disappointed her father by going to see the Doors, but was disgusted that Jim Morrison was drunk on stage. There was a part of her that never accepted the counter-culture and revolutionary movement that swept around her in protest against the Vietnam War. On one occasion, she and her roommates had to leave their apartment because tear-gas from the riots in People's Park had blown in through the windows.



I always wondered how she came to possess such resistance to the changing times around her. For years, I thought it was her religious schooling that steeled her with the antidote to the hedonism around her. However, her spirituality

went deeper than mere indoctrination; it was a rock that kept her anchored through a sometimes-tumultuous household and more chaotic world. She kept a notebook full of the lyrics and chords changes to Bob Dylan songs. She had every one of his early albums and all of Simon & Garfunkel's albums too. She was a child of the times, and yet she resisted certain aspects of it. When her classmates were dropping out to protest the war or shut down the university, she prayed every day on her way to class, seeking spiritual guidance and peace in the turbulence of her surroundings.

Like prayer, nature was a grounding force in Katherine's life during times of uncertainty.

Like prayer, nature was a grounding force in Katherine's life during times of uncertainty. She found kindred spirits in her roommates, Kathy and Myrna, with whom she shared many outdoor adventures. One summer they went on a river rafting trip when rafting and whitewater rafting was a relatively new form of outdoor recreation. At one point their raft was upended going through a rapid. Their guides had stepped out of the

boat because they were not sure how to proceed. For years, she and Myrna laughed as they remembered going over the rapids while watching their guides try to direct them from the banks of the river. Their suspicion that the rapids were too difficult for the guides was confirmed when years later Katherine and Myrna saw the same rapid in a Meryl Streep movie, *River Wild*.

After her college graduation, she worked for several summers on the Darwin Ranch in Wyoming and earned her teaching credential at San Francisco State University. She was back in Santa Barbara, working at a bank where she met a young architect named Deming Isaacson. He walked into the bank to cash a check and was so smitten when he saw her that he handed her his Sierra Club card, which was not a valid form of identification, but perhaps an attempt to impress her. After a four-month courtship they were married at All-Saints-By-The-Sea, an Episcopal Church in Montecito.

Their marriage resembled something of a culture-clash. Deming's father, Baine, was a second-generation cattle rancher who met Deming's mother, Esther, at a dance held at a church in Ballard. Esther's parents were Danish immigrants who helped found Solvang. Deming had grown up on the El Chorro Ranch near Lompoc, attended rustic all-boy boarding school, Midland, and studied

architecture at Arizona State University. Despite their different backgrounds, Kathy and Deming found common ground in the outdoors, music, and spirituality.

They had three children. I was born in 1976, my brother Tom, in 1978, and sister, Holly, in 1982. Tom and I went to the Starr-King parent-child where my parents volunteered. My mom tried the ambitious project of making pasta from scratch with over a dozen preschoolers. She later drew a Family Circus style comic strip of the experience, herself and the pasta-maker in the center, orbited by tiny children and dialogue balloons, one of them saying, "I put mine in my pocket to take home!" She stayed home to raise children, making Jawa and Foulfellow Halloween costumes, while my father worked to grow his architecture practice and Amway business.



We weathered a transitional period, moving to the Mesa, then the Ranch, El Chorro, and finally to Goleta, all while I was in first grade. My mother wove the thread of her faith through all these different patches of life, creating a sense of consistency and unity that made the transitions less scary and unknown. She retained her love of music by singing in the choir at All-Saints-by-the-Sea choir. She worked part time as an assistant to the artist Lenore Hughes, wife of pastor at All-Saints-by-the-Sea, Gethen Hughes. And she began working as a teacher at All-Saints-by-the-Sea Nursery School, as my sister Holly moved through the age groups of the Butterflies, Bunnies, Beavers, and Bears. Her teaching career grew as she began taking night classes in Spanish in order to renew her

teaching credential. Eventually she began teaching kindergarten and first grade at Isla Vista School. During her teaching career, she travelled to Oaxaca, Mexico, as part of a cultural exchange program with teachers there, and presented her experience to the California Association for Bilingual Education.

When she was fifty, her father died of pancreatic cancer. I was nearing the end of college at UCSB, my brother was at Cal Poly San Luis, and my sister was nearing graduation at San Marcos High. I had spent a year in Ireland through

the Education Abroad Program, and my brother was spending a year in Denmark. As our independence grew, her role as a mother diminished. The nest was emptying. She and my father had expanded time and space to themselves. To our dismay, despite a busy professional life as a teacher, my mother filled this precious free time with voice lessons, not family. She had sung in the church choir, but why did she suddenly begin singing opera? Did Herb's love of opera have something to do with it? Why did she wait until after his death to begin her own singing career? But it was never going to be a career. It was more than that. It was a sleeping passion that had awoken. She was often out late at voice lessons, and would come home with a Starbucks Grande at eleven o'clock on a school night. We were all thunderstruck.

After a lifetime of sacrifice and giving to others, she was finally embracing her own talents and abilities for the sake of self-realization.

Families change and divide. They multiply, add, and subtract members through marriage, birth, divorce, and death. My brother and I were not aware that this process had already been initiated by our absences. The family that was still physically closer to my mother felt the sting of her absence from the home. From my geographically distanced perspective, this new development in her life was not only inevitable, as she attempted to cope with changing conditions in her

life, but also fortuitous, as it demonstrated that, after a lifetime of sacrifice and giving to others -- her students, her church, her families of birth and by marriage -- she was finally embracing her own talents and abilities for the sake of her own self-realization. Taking voice lessons in opera may have been the fulfillment of her life's dream.

Another dream may have been to meet her grandchildren. This became a reality when my brother Tom and his wife Terese had their first child, Anton. Around this time, Katherine was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. After a year of chemotherapy, the cancer went into remission for another year. Soon after I was married, the cancer was back. My wife and I were expecting twins. While she was home on hospice she arranged a gathering for the baptism of our girls, Candice and Katherine, who were almost two months old. She ordered a cake and food and made a list of people to invite. She died a few hours after the ceremony was complete. It was the last thing she could do.

## STANLEY HAIKU

by Robert Polski ('14)

My Stanley thermos  
Tall and strong but not heavy  
Half-filled with coffee

In slouched frustration  
Why even question its weight?  
Laboring for words

Planted in my roots  
With its workman's silhouette  
Just like my father's

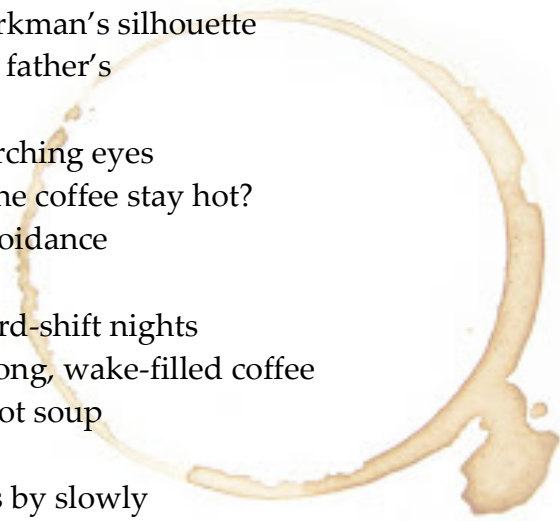
Staring, searching eyes  
How does the coffee stay hot?  
Dance of avoidance

On cold, third-shift nights  
Holding strong, wake-filled coffee  
Or maybe hot soup

Time moves by slowly  
Glaring onto emptiness  
Putting pen to page

Darkness turns to dawn  
Working as his family sleeps  
Pouring a hot cup

Half-filled with coffee  
Tall and strong but not heavy  
His Stanley thermos





## **WE ALL HAVE A STORY TO TELL**

by Brandon Janes ('16)

We all have a story to tell  
Whether we realize it or not  
Remember that time that you tried to cook  
A foil-covered potato in the microwave  
And almost burned the house down  
Remember when mom forgot that dinner was in the oven  
And almost did the same  
What about the time you fell off your bike  
And was forced to walk home blood oozing down your chin  
Or that college course where life got in the way  
And you forgot to study for the final exam  
Staring at a blank composition book  
Preparing to turn history into fiction  
How about running off to Vegas  
To marry a girl you barely knew  
At a wedding chapel at 2 AM  
Wearing jeans and a t-shirt.  
There's no way this can backfire  
We all have a story to tell  
Whether we realize it or not  
It lives deep within our cells waiting to be told



## **SALT AND PEPPER HAIKU**

by Lucia Lemieux ('16)

Critical to life,  
often a matter of taste.  
I'm not judging you.

## **THE THING ABOUT WORDS** by Lanny Kaufer ('03)

(Rap to the instrumental track "The Ghetto" by Too \$hort)

1)

Sittin' down at my Mac, Macklemore's throwin' down  
I'm all over Youtube, searchin' for sounds  
Got funk on my mind, G-Funk on the brain  
Goin' back to the '90s for this funky refrain

Back to "The Ghetto," Too Short's in the house  
And he got it straight from Donny Hathaway's mouth  
Now K-Dog is here and I'm makin' it clear:  
Funk is forever; it'll never disappear

Everyone knows that words carry meanings  
The beats and the music they fill in the feelings  
No bells and whistles, no whistles and bells  
The thing about words...they speak for themselves

2)

When it comes to the ghetto I know somethin' about it  
About segregation that's inhumanly crowded  
The fascists in Europe used it first on the Jews  
Next stop was the death camps and Nazi tattoos

My daddy was a Holocaust refugee  
Who refused to give up on the family tree  
Got his family out in the nick of time  
So I could be born to spit this rhyme

Now I'm tryin' to make sense of our history, ya see?  
How we got to this point's still a mystery to me  
So I'll use my words 'cause I feel compelled  
And the thing about words...they speak for themselves

3)

These lines that I'm rhymin' are multisyllabic  
I know how to have fun like "The Cat in the Hat" did  
And I tip my hat to the good Dr. Seuss  
If I'm stuck in a mood, he can sure knock her loose

And remind me that life's more than filling my needs  
Somebody's still gotta speak for the trees  
Before they fall victim to corporate greed  
And no one remembered to save any seed

So I've got an earth-friendly story to tell  
I don't need incantations or mystical spells  
No wise old Lorax or magical elves  
The thing about words...they speak for themselves

4)  
What makes us human is using our words  
I'm just trying to arrange 'em like they've never been heard  
In a poem or rap or whatever you call this  
And I'm callin' y'all as we face the abyss

Of nuclear warfare annihilation  
With the major governments in violation  
Of the United Nation's purpose for peace  
Yeah, consider these rhymes my press release

Announcing the day we put down our weapons  
And use our words; we've still got a few seconds  
Before we're forced to say our final farewells  
And the thing about words...they speak for themselves



*Musician, songwriter, and retired teacher Lanny Kaufer, the son of a Holocaust refugee, is involved in various organizations dedicated to peace, social justice and environmental restoration. The rap poem above is part of a musical multimedia presentation he has developed for schools and community groups based upon his 1965 experiences working for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

<http://CivilRightsVet.com>



**IMAGINE** by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90)

Einstein did, so now we can see ourselves speeding past light  
younger than when we tied on our shoes and took off.

Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, Hitler, Hillary, the neighbors,  
our ancestors, Shakespeare-- all of us have seen sights and heard sounds  
past, present, and future; which our fingers can't touch.

Imagination is a big business; multi-national, multi-level management,  
inherited wealth, uneven distribution, advertising departments.

Good idea to take stock of the stock, imagine the dividends, possible  
bankruptcies, long-term value.

Einstein was imagining riding beyond light  
heading into what could turn him around with some fiery formula.

Imagine him grinning, then grimacing aware of the hard work  
when he had to go home and pick up his pencil.

(Response to Bren Henri's *Imagine That*)

Poet, teacher, counselor, and mentor, Dorothy Gagner Jardin believes it is crucial that we "keep learning, listen deeply, and seek." Everything inspires her, and she in turn inspires. She shares her thoughts on writing, creativity, and life in this interview:

<http://www.livingstoriescollective.com/interviews/2014/12/11/dorothy-jardin>

**INKY HANDS** by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90)

Tough to re-ink my black Parker pen, but I am insistent.  
Its refill plunger sticks, hurts to push, chips fingernails,  
but grudgingly nudges when forced by its own cap  
to suck up more black so I can push its point,  
hoping it will write.

What is it I hope for?

Sense? Surprise? Ordinary truth?

Sounds ooze into the crossed t's, looped o's,  
scoot together to be words I have written before and  
words sighing in the shadows.

Ballpoints, felt tips, pencils perfectly satisfactory  
for some; straight into electronic keys,  
many prefer, but I am old and fell in love with  
fountain pens early on: the nuns' beautiful signatures  
on report cards, my mother and father's matching  
black and gold striped Schaeffers,

so I have inky hands on a regular basis, and a writer's bump  
on my second finger and rows of black writing books  
with a few dog-eared corners marking possible poems  
to type up and revise.

In a little while I will slide into my walking shoes,  
do laps up the road. Once muscles are trained  
they repeat their action. So talking to paper with ink,  
a habit re-chosen, re-chosen; a vocation I've answered,  
loving the call, accepting reams of futile scratchings,  
stained index fingers, smudged desk edges and

a few reformations from the dry carbon  
liquefied into language listening to its  
rustling branches toss leaves into open air,  
marking the ground with their heart shapes, arrows,  
their articulate green fingers.



**LAST DAY OF 2016** by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90)

List after list of famous deaths and disasters,  
campaigns lost and won,  
more murders, more refugees,  
more reactions to reactions,  
the news continual and usually awful  
while the garden blooms, the bees work the wisteria,  
the wood rats poke broken branches into their thickening hovels.

Grandchildren have learned to pump their own legs to swing,  
to type their own stories, which we have encouraged by example.

Cars have leaked coolant and oil, cost more to buy, to maintain.  
Gas is a glut that chokes us.

We have eaten how many roasted chicken thighs?  
We have swallowed fish oil, walked fast, fallen,  
built cabinets, poems, sculptures, fences, financial plans.

We have worn and washed jeans, underwear;  
sewed on buttons and lost some,  
ordered and sent back what looked like what we wanted.

We have traveled from home to Trader Joe's to New Frontiers,  
to kids, yoga, Los Angeles, Baja, Rome,

to work, studios, doctors; traveled from  
raging to napping, gritting our teeth, finding our tongues.

We have looked long at water  
and talking heads,  
to birds on high branches,  
to words, quarter notes, Visa bills.

We have planted, pruned, raked, hauled.  
We have lamented, meditated,  
loved, figured out, imagined, let go, held on,  
noticed we can't hear as well, see as well.  
We have been grateful we live in beauty with each other,  
that something is better than it was: the rain is coming,  
the wild fire is out, the moon is full.  
We are grateful we have some money to send  
where it might help, that millions plan to march  
to protest injustice, misogyny, racism, greed, lies.

We have fed and petted animals which wait for us,  
which follow us and listen, which play wildly and sleep often.

We have been humbled by our ignorance,  
momentarily important;

and so tomorrow another number and some new or repeated resolutions:  
peace, always on my list, peace and to be of service,  
to be truthful, to keep on dancing, to stoke the fire  
burning the wood we have planted,  
and burning the wood that grew from its own abundance,  
under its own leaves;

and we have not been burning but studying  
how life is lighting the darkness,  
gifting us with breath and vision,  
needing our care, our evolving wisdom,  
our attention to the details of the day and  
to the seeding of the future we hope to be celebrating.

## AT THE LAGOON by Lucia Lemieux ('16)

I'm intruding on a heron as he dines on unknown morsels in the lagoon. Off in the distance, two hundred yards away, a pelican flaps heavy wings in a four-by-four rhythm, sounding as if he is shaking off the algae-covered water before he flies out to the cleaner, moving sea.

A woman runs by in a jog bra and Capri pants. I am envious. I wonder if she realizes how lucky she is to be here, or if the repetition of running around the same path makes this place less special to her. Someday, perhaps not today, she might remember passing the nutrient-rich algae, floating atop the water in patterns, like the pointillism of Monet.

Or the two downed eucalyptus trees, partially anchored to the bank, with multiple arms spread across the water, trying to stay afloat. Maybe she will remember the occasional dots of red bottlebrush that from here take on the pattern of a four-leaf clover.

Maybe it will be the stillness that she recalls, disturbed only by the little heron sucking, the pelican's rhythmic flaps, or her two feet tapping their own beat on the path around the lagoon. But she is wearing headphones, taking in the silence with only her eyes.

Or perhaps she will miss it like a lost lover for whom you ache in hindsight, finally understanding that you had every opportunity to just be in the world—but you allowed the future to take away your present.

## THREE HAIKU by Trish Studley

Dead words flying home  
Piercing the heart of no one  
Decimating me

Curling time fractions  
Sharpened ice falling inward  
Freezing the slow rage

Loneliness lingers  
Soaking up the stagnant air  
Turning ash to stone





## FAMILY 3.0 by Erika Cobain ('13)

Like the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit* who is loved so much he turns into a real rabbit, love turned my family real.

I tried to write this three times. Thank you, Writing Project, for the permission to start over. Is the story about the birth of our baby? No, that could never be called a “small moment.” Or is the story, told in third person, about my wife laboring for three days ending in the hospital in a collaborative tug of war with my son? No, not quite. So I did what I

ask my students to do: start again. This time, I started with the sentence, “What I’m really trying to say is...”

What really I’m trying to say is that outdated ideas, attitudes and perceptions of family need to expand. As a kid, adults shook their heads over me and whispered, “She has a single mom...did you hear? *D.i.v.o.r.c.e.d.*” As if I couldn’t spell.

It is okay to start over. Both of my parents did. Never mind that both sets of grandparents, countless aunts, cousins and weekend visits with my dad meant I was completely loved and cared for; I felt isolated, different, shunned. I internalized the negative attitudes adults had about me; I didn’t have a “real” family; mine was “broken,” “tragic”, and I was “That poor kid.” In response to the negativity, I hated the changes that came to my world, resented them and the people who “married into” our family.

On the flip side, I celebrated two of everything: Thanksgiving, birthdays... even the tooth fairy shared her riches, convinced by a note that “my tooth was under the other pillow.” I had two dads and two moms and more siblings I didn’t really know.

It took a while for me to acknowledge my stepdad and stepmom as more than just fixtures in my family, but integral parts of a whole. My brother’s new wife’s kids are just as much my nieces as my biologically related nephews are, and my stepsister’s children will be my son’s cousins. But I differentiated them at every turn, “This is not my *real* mom/dad/sibling.”

They did not become *real* until my wife and I decided to have a child. I had to face my past. Contending with feelings of detachment and inadequacy, I questioned my beliefs. If I am not biologically related, is this still really my kid? Will I feel connected? Will I be a real mom?

In fact, when I realized that yes, I am going to be a *real* mom, then it would follow to say “Yes, you are my *real* step dad, *real* step mom, my *real* step sister,” as if the adjective “*real*” conferred some actual kind of connection beyond biology. It didn’t. But my attitude changed towards them. My family circle? It widened, broadened; the table held more places and more people who are welcome, who are *family*.

Like the story of *The Velveteen Rabbit* who is loved so much he turns into a *real* rabbit, love turned my family *real*. Love is love, no matter what form it takes. Love looks at you and sees you. Love acknowledges your worth. Love says yes instead of no. Love also turned me into a *real* mom.

I'm not a mom just because I have a child, I'm a mom because of the countless people who helped make me a mom and continue to treat me as one. Because these folks expanded their idea about what it means to be a mom *to include* me. I'm a parent in the expanded version of mom or dad. Let's call me parent version 3.0. Upgrade to parenthood thanks to the wonders of science or circumstance: like moms who adopt their children, or conceive through IVF, or IUI, as we did, moms who spend hormones and emotions on extraction of viable eggs, or dads struggling with paperwork for fostering and wait lists for adoption.



I'm a mom because midwives and modern medicine collided to bring this life into the world. I'm a mom because my marriage and committed relationship is recognized as *real*. It hasn't always been this way, and I am so grateful that it is now and I can tell my students "I just had a baby" and then help explain to their puzzled faces that my wife gave birth without fearing retaliation or termination. I'm a mom because I walked into the hospital and people saw me, acknowledged me, cared for me and my baby as a matter of fact, not awkward disbelief or ignorance or outright prejudice.

Forgive me for using a birth metaphor, but this experience is fresh in my mind. My baby had to be helped out into this world, and sometimes we too, have to stretch beyond what we ever imagined was possible, reach in and yank out that which wants to come forth, because what comes forth is love, pure and unadulterated love. He looked at me and I became *real*.

As teachers we are in a unique place to deny someone's existence by merit of our own omission or neglect. What we whisper over our student's heads they hear. "He has two moms, three pairs of grandparents countless cousins, aunties and uncles that adore him..."

"You are Franklin's parents? Congratulations! What would you like to be called?"  
"I go by mom, she goes by mama."

It was the first time we've ever been asked.

I like this new upgrade.

It is a no-fail, incontrovertible reality: If you get, give. If you learn, teach. You can't do anything with that except do it.

Maya Angelou



## CONNECTION LOST by Jennifer Gunner ('11)

I didn't check my cell phone for a day  
And thought that it would feel more like a year  
That earth's rotation stops in disarray  
When gone unchecked, a habit turned to fear

My abstinence was not by purpose seen  
No noble notion, social cure, or doubt  
Just one vacation day without routine  
Phone stashed away, unnoticed, gone without

Unreported memories enjoyed  
Unpublished mental pictures stored away  
No news to make me feel stressed and annoyed  
Relationships untended, kept at bay

For off the grid we trod, invisible  
One moment we were there, and now we're gone  
Just like the minute filling, filled, and full  
The unassuming night into the dawn

I had no pictures to compare my day  
No smiling stranger babies, no contest  
I didn't check my cell phone, and I may  
Just give it one more afternoon of rest.



Here's the narrative: We were watching a herd of seals jockeying for real estate on a harbor float. The alpha male just lay there, but all the others kept wrestling and squabbling for position, an ongoing fracas that got nasty at times. Some of them were so focused on a given spot they didn't notice all the other openings. Then there was this guy, just a few feet away, peaceful and sun-soaked because he found his own place to float. I wanna be that guy.

Diane Siegal ('09)

## CONNECT WITH YOUR SCWRIP FAMILY IN 2017

by Nicole Wald ('09)

New jobs, new publications, new projects, new family members — there is so much to catch up on in the new year for our broad network of fellows!

In my own family, 2016 brought us Emaline, a gorgeous baby girl born November 2. Among the many gifts of motherhood, she's also given me a renewed desire to write. Here's a poem she inspired in her first few weeks:

*My Little Em*

*Cherub cheek glazed with milk  
Hair slicked and wild from a hot night's rest  
She sleeps contentedly,  
draped across my chest,  
raising and falling to the rhythm of my breath,  
tiny arm encircling the breast  
that last fed her,  
Nothing in the world is sweeter than this,  
the new life we created,  
tucked snugly amid a soft sea of blankets as you snore gently by my side.*

*What dreams lie behind those fluttering eyelids, what thoughts furrow her brow?  
Where will life's path lead her 20 years from now?*

*All those questions can wait for a different day. For now there's a better way to measure time —  
in her tiny half smiles and fleeting expressions,  
the rise and fall of her chest against mine.*

What news do you have to share? There are lots of places to keep your SCWRiP family up to date. In addition to live gatherings like our upcoming Renewal on February 25th with Judy Garey at UCSB, here are some ways you can plug in digitally to SCWRiP:

[SCWriPFellows.wordpress.com](http://SCWriPFellows.wordpress.com)

We built this website as a community hub for SCWriP fellows to share what's working, provide support for challenges, and to be inspired by others. It could use your participation.

Some sections are still under construction, but this is a living site, so ideally that will be a permanent state of affairs. Please take a moment to peruse what's there now, and think about

how what you are doing could contribute to our SCWriP community conversation.

Here are some ideas:

- If you already have your own blog or website with your work, we can add this as a link for others to use as inspiration.
- Have a lesson you'd love to share? Add it to our Teacher Resources page.
- Join our latest book group or writing group...or create your own and we'll post it here for all to get involved! All fellows are invited to be authors on this site. Simply email [nicole@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:nicole@education.ucsb.edu) and she'll take thirty seconds to get you set up.

[Facebook.com/SCWriP](https://www.facebook.com/SCWriP) Look for announcements, inspiration, and news to show up here.

[Twitter.com/SCWriP](https://twitter.com/SCWriP) This is another spot for announcements, inspiration, and news.

Contribute to our [GoodReads](#) collection of book reviews. Just email fellow Daryl Myers at [historyteacher805@gmail.com](mailto:historyteacher805@gmail.com) and he will connect you to the account.

*PostSCWriP is a biannual publication of the South Coast Writing Project*

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