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POSTSCWRIP

Forty Summers of SCWriP



Commitment and continuity: Sheridan Blau, SCWriP's founding director and Tim Dewar, SCWriP's current director

Reflections on the 40th Summer of SCWriP by Sheridan Blau

It's hard for me to believe that more than a decade has passed since I have lived in Santa Barbara and was teaching at UCSB and conducting the SCWriP Summer Institute with Jack and Rosemary and fifteen to twenty teachers (K-college) and spending our last day of the Summer Institute at the Cliff House, reading aloud some of our writing, giving gifts, and celebrating our transformative time together. Even 1979, when we had our first SCWriP Summer Institute, feels like recent history to me. I turned thirty-nine the year we organized our first SCWriP Summer Institute that was formally launched, as all our subsequent Institutes were, with an orientation meeting and luncheon in late May at the UCSB faculty club, where (in the early years) our new Fellows were welcomed by the Deans of the College of Letters and Science and the Graduate School of Education, both of whom had committed substantial

funds to support our project. Our directorial team then included, aside from me, Jack Phreaner and Carol Dixon, and Stephen Marcus. The twenty-five Fellows of our first Summer Institute had taught for an average of twelve years, and I remember distinctly that most of us were about the same age --mid or late 30s or early 40s, with a few outliers in their 60s or late 20s.

There is no way in that first summer that I could have known or understood how the Writing Project would transform my life nor how it would shape my entire professional career from that time to the present.

Our SCWriP office at that time was in the English department in South Hall at UCSB, across the hall from my own English department office, and Terri Cooley (now Cook), who was then a doctoral student, served as our Administrative Assistant, figuring out how a SCWriP office should work and persuading me that I could keep it all together, or, more precisely, trust in our team to keep it all together. I had forgotten until this minute, writing this memory, how terrifying and difficult it was to figure out in that spring how to organize and run a

writing project. Nor was there at the time an official California or National Writing Project with an office and expert leaders to guide new Writing Project sites in how to create a Writing Project. We made it up mostly for ourselves, though we were grateful for what I managed to learn by talking to leaders of the Bay Area Writing Project (founded in 1974) and it was enormously helpful to see a model schedule that was sent to us by the UC Irvine Project (that had started the year before we did). I also invited Miles Myers from the Bay Area Writing Project to be our first presenter for the opening morning of the first Summer Institute, and his presentation and presence served to initiate us into the culture of the writing project. After that, I would attend an annual two-day meeting of all the writing project directors in California, held every fall at the Asilomar Conference Center near Monterey, where Jim Gray (founder of the Bay Area Writing Project) would preside, and where every writing project site would report on its summer institute and continuity program and in-service work, and we all learned from each other – and most especially from Jim—how a writing project ideally works and what values inform our work.

There is no way in that first summer that I could have known or understood how the Writing Project would transform my life nor how it would shape my entire professional career from that time to the present. Most of the articles and books I have written and edited since 1979 I owe to my writing project experience, including the textbooks and scholarly and professional books and articles, and the workshops I have conducted around the country and continue to conduct. My teaching in almost every course I teach is influenced by my writing project experience, and my courses in the teaching of writing resemble nothing so much as a SCWriP Summer Institute, including the assignment I give to my students to engage in the daily discipline of writing starting one month before our course begins. SCWriP Fellows would be amused to see how familiar my students are with such names as Marylyn Stewart, Joni Chancer, Jack Phreaner, and Rosemary Cabe, along with those of James Moffett and George Hillocks. The names of SCWriP Fellows are often on handouts I use, and I always tell the origins of various writing exercises I employ

When I introduce the neighborhood map, I try to do so the way Jack did it in SCWriP, and I tell stories about Jack.

and about how various SCWriP teachers employed or varied their use of an exercise. When I introduce the neighborhood map, I try to do so the way Jack did it in SCWriP, and I tell stories about Jack. When I introduce the focusing exercise I tell about Jack's t-shirt, and I hand out the article published in *California English* by Cheryl Smith describing the exercise and crediting Keith Caldwell for its development.

The Fellows of our writing project are with me every day of my teaching life, and in every workshop I plan and conduct for a school or college or conference. And they will continue to be with me (in a different way, I suppose) when I finally retire, as I expect to, fairly soon. As a professional I feel I have been shaped by the family of our writing project much as a child is shaped by his family of origin, except that the writing project family I come from was entirely a healthy, loving, and therapeutically positive one. That kind of family is never forgotten and is forever loved.

In This Issue:

Reflections on SCWriP's 40th Summer by Sheridan Blau

From the Editor by Cynthia Carbone Ward

Director's Message by Tim Dewar

An Open Letter to Sheridan by Kevin Buddhu

Writing Through It by Tim Dewar

Scary Movie Music by Rosemary Cabe

What I Remember Most by Michael Tapia

Excerpts by Monique Navarro

Flood, Fire, Fury, and Forming Community by Mark Urwick

Red by Beth Lindley

The Things the Teachers Carried by Peg Kelly

What Are Your Core Projects? by Cheryl Oreglia

Writing in Nature by Anne Bumby

The Vending Machine by Becca Miller

Voices from Young Writers' Camp by Leina Ball and Beth Lindley

And poems by

Chella Courrington, Kimbrough Ernest, Ina Ettenberg, Dorothy Gagner Jardin, Beth Lindley



South Coast Writing Project
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education
University of California Santa Barbara, CA 93106
(805)893-4422 scwrip@education.ucsb.edu

Director: Tim Dewar

Randi Browning, Co-Director, College Educators

Heidi Crane, Co-Director, Elementary Educators

Amy McMillan, Co-Director, Summer Institute

Nicole Wald, Co-Director, SCWriPTech & YWC

Cynthia Ward, Co-Director, Publications

Dovas Zaunius, Co-Director, Secondary Educators

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

We began compiling this edition in the aftermath of the disastrous Thomas fire and flooding, which affected everyone in our community, whether directly or indirectly, and many of the pieces within are about these events. There was an almost apocalyptic aura to it at times...hillsides in flames, sky of smoke and ash, and then, the Montecito mudslide, horrific and unprecedented. It's hard not to think

Life is both beautiful and terrible, and it takes great fortitude to hold these two simultaneous realities in balance somehow and not lose heart.

about mortality at such a time, and what matters, and how abruptly things can change. Life is both beautiful and terrible, and it takes great fortitude to hold these two simultaneous realities in balance somehow and not lose heart.

Thank you to those Fellows who wrote about these events and shared their words here. This writing is a way of helping to navigate through the ongoing reverberations, and although it reflects the great sense of sadness, vulnerability, and trauma, it also reminds us that our far-flung SCWriP community is a supportive family network when it counts.

And speaking of the SCWriP community, this summer marked forty years of Summer Institutes. We celebrated with a special program in which participants focused on their roles as teacher leaders, the future of our organization, and what SCWriP has meant to us and can mean in the future. I remember my own SCWriP summer with great fondness. How exhilarating it was to connect with dedicated, talented teachers who were striving to be better, sharing ideas...and sharing laughter too! I met many friends there, including my lifelong Bestie, Vickie Gill, and I know am not the only one who looks back on that summer as a time when I began to see myself as a writer as well as a teacher. It's an honor to include some reflections from SCWriP's founding director Sheridan Blau in this edition, as well as an open thank you letter to him, by Kevin Buddha.

Meanwhile, on a larger screen, political developments have continued to discourage and disillusion, and as teachers, we seek ways to make a difference, find meaning, make America hopeful again. Along these lines, Dorothy Gagner Jardin shares her poem "Another Call to Arms", Peggy Kelly writes "What the Teachers Carried", and guest blogger Cheryl Oreglia reflects about finding the true work of one's heart in "What Are Your Core Projects?"

On a personal level, I've been on a difficult journey myself. I had brain surgery in February to remove a benign tumor, and I greatly underestimated the ensuing challenges and the length of recovery time. It's a transformative experience that I would love to have skipped, but I might as well turn it into something positive and emerge stronger and better. One thing I've learned is that we get to choose what owns us...I can focus on some new impairment or unpleasant sensation and let it dominate the day, or I can label it differently and pay attention to something worthier. I am learning to be more compassionate about the suffering of others. I'm learning that I have some remarkable, kind, and gracious people in my life. I'm learning to be helped. I'm learning that I have been truly loved.

And I will never again take an ordinary day for granted. I am grateful for the tea kettle whistling, oranges heaped in a blue bowl on the table, the neighbor who pulls over to chat in the canyon. I'm learning that I still like the way sunlight fades the paint on an old wooden house, and how the hummingbirds dart about the honeysuckle, and that if I happen to open my eyes and look up at night, I see a sky powdery with white stars so wondrous it's hard to imagine they are not singing us all awake.

We cannot make sense of the incomprehensible, but we can remember how much light there is in finding the words and sharing the stories, how much dignity there is in trying our best, and how much healing there is in helping one another.

A Message from The Director

by Tim Dewar ('94)

The South Coast Writing Project has been doing its thing for forty summers. Two simple ideas (*The best teacher of a teacher is another teacher*, and *To teach writing, one must write*) ground us, but it is the work of teachers that has brought us to such great heights over the past four decades. In 1979, no one would have predicted the reach and impact that SCWriP would have on students, teachers, and schools. As you read Sheridan's recollections of SCWriP's beginnings, Kevin's thank you to Sheridan and our collective idealism, and the other pieces of teacher-writing, I hope you see the role you have played in this remarkable network that we have built – The lesson you offered in a T.I.W., the question you asked in response to a draft in a writing group, your first tentative sharing of your own writing, the colleague you nominated, even the dish you brought so we could eat together during the S.I. We have made something amazing.

I also hope you feel inspired to see new ways to contribute to the collective work of SCWriP. This summer, for the first time in forty years, SCWriP did not have a traditional Summer Institute for new Fellows. Instead, we offered an Advanced Summer Institute that offered Fellows time, space, and resources (mostly in the form of each other) to commit to taking another step in developing their teaching and leading. I finished the two weeks excited, eager to see what SCWriP does in the next few (or forty) years. In the coming year, watch as ideas from those weeks become programs for Fellows, colleagues, and students.

I am also excited by an additional responsibility I have taken on. I am now the Executive Director for the California Writing Project. This "big" title means I lead the group of directors of writing project sites in California as part of the California Subject Matter Projects. I think I'm the one who sets up the conference calls and reminds/harasses people about deadlines for state reporting. Undoubtedly, there are more responsibilities that I will come to learn, but right now it is just excitement (and a number of unread emails). Writing project sites throughout the state are making schools better by supporting teachers to be better writers, teachers, and leaders. I am honored to help them continue their work.

As you prepare for the start of another school year, I hope you take a few minutes to read the work of your colleagues, to be inspired by our history and fortitude, and wonder how you might further contribute to this legacy.

Write soon,

Tim

"Even if, at the moment, you can't sit down and do the grunt work of stringing verbs and nouns together, you are writing. It is a way of seeing, a way of being. The world is not only the world, but your personal filing cabinet. You lodge details of the world in your sparkling nerve-library that spirals through your brain and coils down your arms and legs, collects in your belly and your sex. You write, even if you can't always "write." However, writers write. Active, not passive." *Luis Alberto Urrea*

An Open Letter to Sheridan Blau by Kevin Buddha ('96)

Dear Sheridan,

Thirty-four years ago, an Associated Press reporter told me, "There's a thin line between idealism and cynicism, and it's all too easy to move from the former to the latter." We stood above a copse of mahogany trees that carpeted the western slopes down and away to a shimmering Caribbean Sea. A hollow crumbling sugar mill streaked with the blood of its former slaves- the ancestors of my students in the public school- stood as an ancient headstone for the lives rendered within.

The reporter's name and his face have long receded in time, yet his words have not.

Five years after leaving St. Croix and the attendant institutional torpor and structural chaos I encountered, and the familial violence and sexual abuse, endemic racism, and economic neglect my students lived with, I found myself at a crossroads at Adolfo Camarillo High School: a passion for the beauty of young minds had found no collective faculty emphasis, no clear evident desire to challenge and encourage young writers to pursue their ideas and cultivate their voices, and no mandate nor guiding that emphasized the notion that studying language arts proves essential for understanding ourselves, humanity, and concepts both abstract and concrete. I couldn't square my belief in learning with "practices" deemed necessary and normal.

Then, a guy with a rainbow trout tie showed up at the Channel Islands High School in-service. The world others and I chose to inhabit would change forever.

SCWriP had sent Jack Hobbs. In a school cafeteria, on a grey and chilly day, at a mandated in-service I reckoned for another dollop of the same canned, unenlightened, and technical form-following, I sat transfixed: legitimate, well-received teachers spoke from their hearts about issues of importance in the lives of students and teachers...and I could not believe my ears. We read passages, we wrote prose, we discussed our findings at our tables, and we talked to the group as a whole. In essence, we practiced a model your project has gifted to us all, and this first exposure hooked me forever and propelled me to work tirelessly ever since to bring this kind of engaged and synergistic experience to students: ideals, evidently, had a place of substance wherein to flourish at SCWriP; the cynicism the travelling AP reporter warned me of could inhabit the lives of others.



You, Sheridan, made this happen: in one morning's time, I knew hope existed- that a collection of funny, serious, playful, intriguing, and quietly earnest people from SCWriP had committed themselves as a community of practitioners who held *students'* needs as principal and essential to how they crafted students' experiences and learning. That bleak morning introduced me to the South Coast Writing Project, and it is not hyperbole to write that SCWriP saved and enthralled my teaching career.

You created the Open Program where I met Cheryl Armstrong, Marilyn Stewart, and Jack Phreaner. That first summer propelled me into a room with thirty other teachers who felt similar desires to explore possibilities, and this institution created a community of like-minded peers developed long before the acronym PLC bobbed its way to the surface.

That first summer in 1989 led another seven years later to the Fellows Program, and dozens of Renewal Meetings in the decades that followed: the writing at the beginning, the sharing of “good things” from our work, the long list of smart, insightful, and thoughtful beings you brought to the Cliff House never fails to leave me with utter thankfulness for these moments. Sheridan, despite the hurdles put in place by my school for me to attend, every Renewal Meeting left me feeling energized, curious, and compassionate toward my students despite the onslaught of NCLB, test-pressure madness, and the Orwellian task of data mining.

Over the decades, our district office, our various principals, and members of our staff have attempted to institute ideas that make no educational sense...and I can only say this because SCWriP has taught me to ask questions, seek the theory and the pedagogy behind choices and instruction, and to also spot the kinds of educational charlatans who arrive as consultants and leave, at least in my mind, as emperors devoid of clothing- this need to have theoretical basis and actual practice as bulwarks of leadership decisions comes as a result of your hard work and that of your staffs throughout these past decades.

While penning this letter, I sought a way to express my profound admiration for you, and my sense of disbelief that my life has been so utterly shaped by SCWriP. While trying to succinctly, and failingly so, write this letter, I stumbled upon this notion—it’s hard if not impossible for me to write about my time spent in the presence of greatness. For me, it comes down to the four Ps: paddling, pedaling, pedagogy and practice. I’ve sat astride a surfboard in the ocean while world champion surfers carve past, I’ve climbed cols in Europe and watched the world’s best cyclists pass the same roads, and I have sat in a nondescript classroom on the UCSB campus and watched magic take shape.

One simple image: While sitting at a desk at the Summer Institute, I watched you enter the room, looking somewhat haggard (you told us later you had spent the morning writing a chapter in a text book). As you moved through the doorway, you paused and looked about, and slowly you moved from one teacher to the next, putting a hand on a shoulder, picking up a book from a desk and commenting, sharing a smile and quick rejoinder...and the mood shifted. We felt at ease and we smiled. Then, we wrote for those first ten irreplaceable minutes.

When folks have asked me about SCWriP, I’ve tried to make sense of decades and have at some point said that we are a community held together by beliefs, practices and by a man who is a world-renowned scholar, an author, a leader of teachers and founder of thought, and above all, a real human being—this last, perhaps the most important for those of us who don’t want our idealism to slide into cynicism.

Thank you.

Kevin C. Buddhu

Writing Through It

by Tim Dewar ('94) SCWriP Director

I faced a teaching problem. I needed to plan my first class meeting of 2018 with the credential candidates with whom I had been working since August. I face a version of this every year. Many teachers do – how do we resume our work after winter break? But this year was different. The Thomas Fire had not merely cancelled our class meetings in December, it had closed schools, caused evacuations, destroyed homes, altered communities. To the best of my knowledge, the candidates were okay, but my knowledge was limited to hurried text message check-ins.

In other, less tumultuous years, I had asked candidates to use a title from a novel or movie or song to summarize their break. That seemed too light-hearted now. Six-word memoir? Not nearly enough words. I knew I could not capture all that had happened in six words; hell, I was still processing all that had happened. The largest fire in California history was *a lot* to make sense of.

I was still processing all that had happened. The largest fire in California history was *a lot* to make sense of.

I realized that if I was still making sense of the trauma, they would need to as well. And so would their students. I made a calendar of the shared moments of the fire. It was a map of the event. Not a map of the geography of the fire, but a timeline, a map of the time. There were certain events everyone had experienced: The start of the fire. The death of firefighter Cory Iverson. Evacuation orders.

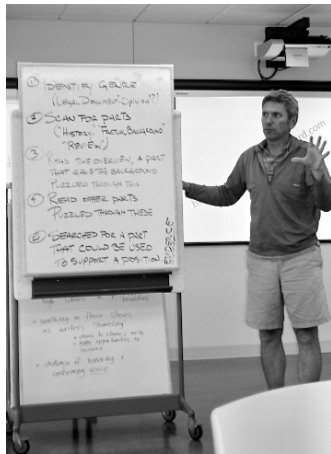
These moments that everyone could remember prompted recall of specific experiences. When did I learn there was a fire racing towards Ventura? Where was I when the procession of fire trucks took Cory home? When did I start packing up? The calendar had lots of room to add one's own memories of the days the fire burned. I hoped the calendar might allow one to gather a sense of control of the hectic events of those three weeks and to garner the seeds of possible writing topics.

They were like the landmarks we draw on our Neighborhood Map or the titles and assignments we jot on our Literacy Timeline. I hoped the calendar I created would both prompt memories and give a candidate some command over them.

When the candidates and I met in our seminar room in January, I didn't say much before explaining that the calendar was my attempt to aid them in sense-making. "Let's try it." And we did, and it worked. The candidates filled the calendar's squares, then shared stories, mostly quietly, but occasionally with a surprising chuckle at how much had happened in those few weeks. It was a lived example of how writing helps one make sense and gain control over the disorderly rush of life.

Days later I would rely on this lesson again. On January 9, 2018, a debris flow swept through Montecito. Again, my community was devastated by a natural disaster. And again, I faced a teaching problem. In just days I was to meet with a group of Santa Barbara teachers as part of ongoing professional development work known as the Pathway Project. The last time I had seen most of these teachers was before the fire *and* flood. How would we resume our work?

What was our work, when our schools and communities had lost students, children, parents, neighbors, friends?



I made a second calendar, this of the events of the debris flow. The first weather warnings, the new evacuation orders, the record rainfall totals, the freeway closures, the school closures, the list of victims, missing and found. This was harder to do; the events were still ongoing.

But on a Tuesday afternoon, I greeted a group of teachers and said, “We need to write. Writing is the only way I know how to make sense of what has happened in the last six weeks.” I explained the calendar, modeled on a document camera, and let them write.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue of PostSCWriP, many of our colleagues used writing to process the events and share their experiences. My own follow, though they are mundane, given what so many others went through. These snippets of the events came from my own use of the calendars. I’m not sure what they add up to, but I do know they are how I first gained some sort of control over a chaotic winter.

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I never understood how close everything is until the Thomas Fire. I ride my bike a lot, so I know how long it takes to ride to Carp or Ventura. It’s not just freeway miles. It is two lanes and backroads. Still, I think of Los Angeles as a long distance from Santa Barbara. Same with my home town of San Luis Obispo. Both are about one hundred miles away from my house in Santa Barbara. Car or bike, that is a long way in my book.

On the Friday after the Thomas Fire started, I was in Los Angeles, returning to Santa Barbara from a meeting at an airport hotel. As I merged on to the 101 from the 405, in surprisingly light traffic, I could see north. The sky was clear except for a pyrocumulus cloud that rose above the Thomas Fire in Ventura. That startled me. Not only was that cloud rising thousands of feet into the air, it made me see how close the LA Basin is.

The next day, Saturday, I was in San Luis Obispo, where my family had escaped for my birthday. The smoke had chased us away from our plan to camp along the Gaviota coast. We set out to climb Bishop’s Peak, the mountain that loomed above my childhood. I’d grown up at its foot, the open hills and oaks being my playground. A big adventure was to hike to Cow Pond #2 with my buddies to hunt pollywogs, never mind climbing to the top. Now, Cow Ponds #1 & #2 are somewhere beneath neighborhoods of ranch style homes, and there is a clearly marked trail to the top, complete with a bench part way up. We summited, enjoyed a snack of tangerines, and started back down. As I rounded a corner in the trail, I looked off to the south and saw another pyrocumulus cloud. A hundred miles in the other direction, and I could still see the fire.

By Monday afternoon, we were back in Santa Barbara. We hid in the house that day. By Tuesday, we needed to get outside, to run errands, to avoid going crazy, but the authorities were advising masks if you went outside. There were free distribution points all around town. The closest was the library, three blocks from our house. My wife and I set out with our kids at about 10:30, walking down Garden Street. We hadn’t gone a block when suddenly there was a man running towards us. He had abruptly pulled his pick-up to the curb and dashed across the street. As he joined us on the sidewalk, he held out two masks to the kids and said, “Here.”

“Thanks,” I sputtered. “We’re on our way to get some from the library,” as he pressed the masks into the girls’ hands. Before I could say anything else, he had turned and ran back to his truck.

I was all mixed up. I felt insulted. Did this guy think my wife and I were endangering our children, that we didn’t know the air was bad? And at the same time, I felt grateful. I mean, he was trying to help my children. He wanted to protect them. But I was also just a bit weirded out. He hadn’t even spoken to my wife or me. Who was this stranger giving things to my daughters?

By Friday I was back near LAX, escaping the smoke and filling time before a very early Saturday morning flight to Georgia. This was a long-scheduled holiday trip to see family, but it had the added benefit of getting us out of the smoke. The irony of leaving Santa Barbara for the fresh air of El Segundo was not lost on us as we walked along six-lane boulevards in search of dinner. This was not a community designed for walking, but after being house-bound for several days, walk we did.

After an uneventful flight to Atlanta with our phones in airplane mode, we turned them on to find message after message from Emergency Services and friends. The fire had blown up and made a run towards Santa Barbara, and new evacuations orders were in effect. While our house was not threatened, the homes of friends’ were. Could they take shelter at our house? Of course; use the spare key. Make yourself at home. Take whatever you need. Here is the WiFi code.

The next few days had us alternating between family holiday time and obsessively watching the news and following the story online. Close and far away. Because there was TV, and the fire was national news, I could see more of the fire than I had when I was in Santa Barbara. Near and far. Weather apps and emergency services alerts had us worrying about the wind from time zones away. Here and there. By the time we returned to Santa Barbara, the fire was all but out, with evacuations lifted, and our friends had returned home. The sky was a clear blue, but the hillsides from Ventura to Santa Barbara were black, and ash lay everywhere.

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I never used the Debris Flow Timeline to support my writing. To get my head around that overwhelming disaster, I joined the Bucket Brigade for a couple of days of digging. I needed to do something physical to get handle on the enormity of the devastation, and even if that thing felt infinitesimally small, it was better than mere words.

Eventually, I explored the roads I knew so well from cycling. The road names in news reports didn’t mean much, but seeing and experiencing, a reconfigured landscape did. “There didn’t used to be boulders along this road.” “The mud was up to there?!” “That garage got slammed.” “There used to be a house there.” “Turn around. The bridge is gone.”

Both digging and riding felt voyeuristic. Why did I need to see? That was a question I had to explore in writing in order to figure it out. And I came to realize that it wasn’t so much that I needed to get the events straight in my head, it was more that I just needed to get my head straight.

Writing helped with that, too.

But you already know that. Because you are a writer.

Scary Movie Music by Rosemary Cabe ('87)



There's a way the music in a scary movie can set you on edge; full of apprehension, even when nothing bad is happening on the screen. That's the way the disaster of fires and mudflows of December and January have seemed to me. I have lived in Montecito for thirty-eight years. I came here because it felt safe, and to be sure, it has been a safe place to raise my family. We lived close to Mt. Carmel School, so the kids could walk. There are bike lanes, the small public library, a market, book shop, and places to eat. Since I moved here as a newly single parent, I always felt like the kids would be okay if I was bedridden.

In early December, I was evacuated from my home when the fire could be seen from my driveway. It was about the third time I've had to gather "most important things", so it really didn't feel too scary. There's a familiar aspect to the routine, which feels like an out of body experience, where you see yourself getting ready to leave but it doesn't seem like it's really you. A strange mind game comes into play; trying to make peace with the loss of your familiar life and telling yourself that starting fresh might be a good thing. My house and neighborhood were saved from the fire, which makes me very grateful and relieved, but at the same time, I am full of sadness for the families that were not so fortunate.

Several days before Christmas, I returned home. Holiday events and celebrations were cancelled; the covering of ash and smell of smoke hung in the air. Knowing that many people had lost so much all over our golden state in recent months, from the devastation in Santa Rosa to our long stretch of fire damage from the Thomas fire, made it difficult to think of this Christmas as "Merry".

Just when we were convincing ourselves of the promise of a new year, the orange sky at 4:00 in the morning on January 9th broke the promise. When I learned it was from a gas explosion on upper San Ysidro Rd, and that a home was enveloped in flames, I felt sickened for the people involved, while at the same time, relieved it wasn't something worse: like the end of the world, which truly crossed my mind.

The devastation of the mud flow occurring at the same time a very short distance away is beyond my comprehension. I have walked down Olive Mill Road to the beach for years. Houses you pass on foot you know much better than ones you drive by. They are gone; the whole landscape, forever changed. Unlike the danger from fire, which has become familiar, this destruction is not like anything I have ever seen before, nor would have believed could have happened. The funerals are now being held for those lost in the deadly river of mud. Because Montecito is a small community, the loss of life feels very personal and the mourning is felt by everyone.

The scary movie music continues in my head, and I keep wondering: how do any of us feel safe? Money in the bank helps some people, top physical condition helps others, taking good care of your home gave many people comfort, but now I think we are challenged to find new ways.

Our vulnerability to nature, the sudden unexpected things that are out of our control, these are the lessons of the past months. We have all experienced this individually, when health, money, or relationship problems enter our lives, and we feel powerless, lose our sense of safety, comfort, and control. But now it seems that what I am feeling is shared by the whole community. How do we feel safe?

In the days since January 9th, I am experiencing an answer to that question. I believe people endeavor to feel better by doing good. There is a spirit of generosity I see; people want to help, to support and comfort. Those who might have been demanding are trying to be patient. Voices are softer. There's a certain deference shown one another, an awareness that people are hurting. John's deli, in the upper village, is providing free sandwiches, Jeannine's is offering coffee, scones, and a place to meet and share stories. In small and large ways, everyone seems more aware of the vulnerability we all share. When I moved to Montecito thirty-eight years ago, I thought it felt safe; now I think it feels kind.

In the words of the poet, Naomi Shihab Nye,

*Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment....*

The outpouring of love from family, friends, and even strangers, from outside the community, in the form of prayers, offers of places to stay, and emotional support, carried with it a deep sense of reassurance that we were not alone. Kindness is powerful, and not beyond our control, and I believe it is the only way to truly feel safe.

As Naomi concludes:

*Only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
it is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you every where
like a shadow or a friend.*

What I Remember Most... by Michael R. Tapia ('94)

What I remember most is the night before, watching the 10 o'clock news with Steven when the newscaster announced that a fire had erupted in Santa Paula and thinking about friends and colleagues who live there, hoping for the best and shortly thereafter our power going out, then back on, then out again and after going outside and looking up and down our darkened street, deciding it was time to go to bed, expecting the power to return sometime during the night.

What I remember most is going outside the next morning to get the newspaper and feeling the devil winds and smelling the acrid smoke and looking up at the hills just up the road from us, full of smoky clouds and occasional flames and thinking, *what the hell, how did this happen?!*

What I remember most is running back in the house to tell Steven, who had already turned on the news, only to discover that Ventura was now ground zero for the *Thomas Fire* and somehow, not only had we managed to sleep through the advancement of the fire from Santa Paula through the hills above us in Ondulando, Clearpoint, and Skyline, but other hillside neighborhoods through midtown, downtown, and the West side!

What I remember most is checking in with friends to make sure they were okay and hearing that we should consider evacuating since we are just down a few blocks from Foothill Road, the current southern edge of the fire and deciding we would evacuate. But what to do first? What to grab? What to pack?

What I remember most is getting the kitty carriers for Bella and Daisy and going through the house, collecting assorted irreplaceable photos of mom, Steven's parents, my grandparents whom I had never known, our marriage certificate, the photo of us taken on New Year's Eve 1982 (our anniversary) and a few other items like important documents and small electronics and technology.

What I remember most is getting on the roof with the hose, spraying water haphazardly and thinking to myself, how often I had seen others on the news doing this very same thing and ridiculing them for wasting their time, urging them from the comfort of my couch to just get the hell out and save yourself!

What I remember most is coming down from the roof and watering as much of the shrubbery as I could in the back yard, including the giant hedge along our back wall that I had nurtured over the past thirty-one years to provide privacy and a bit of noise abatement from busy Victoria Avenue and, all of a sudden, feeling a sense of true dread, I began sobbing in a way I had not since losing my mom to cancer in 2004 and, as if on cue, Steven joined me in my sadness and worry for just a bit, hugging me just long enough to reassure me, and I regained my composure.

What I remember most is how efficient Steven had been collecting other important items and packing them in his car (I had been oblivious to his part in this event) and leaving our house with at kitty in each car, the future of the house at 71 Madera questionable.

What I remember most is meeting up with our friends, Sean and Blake, in the parking lot at Buena High School where we felt just far enough from the flames to be safe while watching the progression of the pending disaster. Other friends had gathered there, too, keeping a wary eye on things, engaging in nervous chatter.

What I remember most is watching the house catch fire, the one with the red tile roof just east of the corner of Foothill and Victoria, first one floor, then the next, then the last, until it was entirely consumed, and wondering, is it going to jump Victoria and start heading down into our neighborhood?!

What I remember most is returning home after anxiously hanging out at Buena for about three or four hours and deciding we would stay abreast of the latest reports and notices while keeping our cars packed for at least another night, just in case!

What I remember most is, in the ensuing days, hearing about the devastation and loss in our community, including friends and relatives of friends who had been impacted greatly and feeling so sad for them, but also the incredible gratitude I felt because in Ventura County there was very little loss of life. Our friends were all safe, Steven and I, Bella and Daisy, were all safe, and our home, my sanctuary, was and is, still here!

A Poem

by Kimbrough Ernest ('07)

It was the season of helicopters

First for fire
Then for flood

California was burning
And then it was slipping away

As if someone had to pay
For all our glorious days

The unthinkable happened
And then it got worse

Still as I walk almost daily
Past these devastated plots

Something new emerges
In the charred remains

A gargoyle, a file cabinet,
The hull of a boat

Remnants of what was recently
Someone's cherished ordinary life

Excerpts by Monique Navarro ('07)

December 5, 2017, 1:00 am

We brace ourselves against the 60 mph Santa Anas. We watch the hills blaze from our vantage point in the Ventura Harbor observation tower.

The fires of my childhood had exhilarated me. We watched the Wheeler fire of 1985 light up the summer hills from the backyard, evacuation bags at the door. We filmed wildlife dispersing in Yellowstone in 1988. We ignored our chapped lips, bloody noses.

Then, there was distance. Now, we wake to it a block up the hill, and flee to shore as embers rain down. Inferno re-defined. Changing climate tangible, visceral.

In Memoriam. January 10, 2018

The freshly departed pelican twisted in the shore break looks at me with an open eye, permitting me a glimpse of its awesome beak, breeding plumage, tangled wingspan, webbed feet.

I bless it, a small remembrance for the loss, washed up in ash, mud, debris.

Seven snowy egrets swoop into setting coral-drenched sky. My soul lifts.

Flood, Fire, Fury and Forming Community by Mark Urwick ('02)



SCWriP has always been a place that has helped me feel centered. A community of educators that gathers to write, share and celebrate. When faced with fires and floods that disrupted our lives in a myriad of ways; when faced with the fury many of us feel due to our current state of politics, we chose to form community.

On May 19, on the back porch of Kristin Storey's peaceful home nestled in the hills of Ojai and looking out on the Topa Topa Mountains, we wrote, shared, laughed and ate. It was like a family reunion full of hugs and catching up. RJ Frank Middle School's many SCWriP Fellows, including Josh, Emily, Kristin, Alma, Natalie and myself, all spent the last few months making plans to bring a renewal to Ventura County.

We started, as always, with journaling, where one could wander down pathways to find a private spot or enjoy the large shaded deck to put pen to paper as we felt the creative spirit flow from Fellow to Fellow. Introductions were followed by golden lines from morning pages, guided writing and sharing out. We shared food, stories and a desire to do this more often. We recommitted to taking the time, making the effort to keep the community that is SCWriP alive and thriving. The teachers at RJ Frank took up the challenge to plan and host an event, and I encourage you to also connect with your local group of Fellows to plan an event. We will join you!

Below is the link to some of the lessons Fellows brought to share as a way to celebrate our 40 Anniversary of SCWriP.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ShSnSVUWv2IFspiYjiKENFiINDJxL8dbgGIMG38oiw/edit?usp=sharing>

"We are each other's harvest; we are each other's business; we are each other's magnitude and bond." *Gwendolyn Brooks*

Red by Beth Lindley ('12)

Our backup word today is *red*. Red reminds me of fire. Fire reminds me of camping and roasting marshmallows and warm glows in the fireplace at Christmas and heat during long, cold, snowy winters, and the Thomas Fire, the unstoppable, uncontrollable Thomas Fire. It swallowed homes and melted cars to mere puddles. It raced at me from two directions. I was lucky. Our neighborhood was lucky. Unfortunately, so many were not. I could not walk around town without hearing someone talk of the Thomas fire. Everyone knew someone who had been affected, who had lost a home. It changed lives.

As I spent the night in my car in my friend's driveway near Rio Lindo with my dogs, I wondered if I would have a house to return to in the morning. I don't have fine furniture, jewels or expensive clothes to lose, but I have valuable memories stored in the "junk" that I possess. While I spent that long endless night watching the fire rage on from my car, my son spent the night in his, driving down from Berkeley. He had heard the fear in my voice when I called to tell him I had to leave our home. I told him not to come, but he never listens. I didn't expect to see him, but I hugged him tight and was grateful when he showed up. Once he saw I was okay and our home was untouched, he went to work helping a friend, helping his grandfather, helping in the neighborhood to keep embers out. He left the Thomas Fire a changed man. He returned home, enrolled in school and decided to switch careers. He has completed his first step in becoming a medic and is ready for step two.

I guess we never know how unplanned events can change the course of our life - forever. So, when I think of red, I think of fire, of its blessings of warmth and renewal and its frightening and uncontrollable wrath.

Ode to the Ocean by Beth Lindley ('12)

Oh, Ocean,
Your massive expanse enralls me
I stand at your edge
Each gentle wave buries my toes a little deeper into the sand.
The rhythm of your crashing waves
Settles inside my heart
Calms my nerves
Lets me breathe slower
Deeper
I soak in the gentle peace your soothing sound brings.
Oh, unpredictable ocean
Your mysteries await exploration
You hold the power
The power to destroy
The power to heal
Oh, vast ocean
You are a gift to my soul right now
How I love your ever-changing moods.
Oh great and wondrous ocean,
I long to sail upon you, dive into your depths
Sink into your silence
Let you wash away my cares.



*Peggy Kelly, the English department chair at Santa Ynez High School, is celebrating her 30th year of teaching since graduating from the UCSB TEP in 1988. As a member of her school's Instructional Leadership Team for the past five years, she has helped to design and present monthly professional development for her faculty. She enjoys working with budding educators by teaching an Introduction to Education course at SYHS and ED 330 at UCSB. This past year, while her college prep seniors wrote narratives inspired by the first chapter of Tim O'Brien's *The Things They Carried*, Peggy created this piece.*

The Things the Teachers Carried

by Peggy Kelly ('97)

Margaret Lawson carried color-coded folders overflowing with papers – essays, quizzes, worksheets – all carefully paperclipped into stacks, separated by course and period. Each day these folders made their way into her bag, schlepped from classroom to car to home and back to school once again, weighing her down like a stone around her neck. Or more accurately, like the mariner's albatross, a dead weight, a heavy symbol of the guilt she carried back and forth each day.

Sometimes these folders spent weeks, even months, in the bag. Paperclips eased their way off of their piles, corners of papers bent and ripped as they came into contact with the edges of the rough canvas bag. Margaret knew that the ritual was pointless. She told herself repeatedly that she should only carry home what she would actually grade that night, and she knew for a fact that there were nights when she would not even open the bag, much less whittle down the size of the ever-growing pile; nonetheless, the bag grew heavier as the semester progressed and she felt powerless to abandon the load.

Margaret was a high school teacher and like many of her colleagues, she carried more than papers. The things the teachers carried varied depending upon their age, gender, subject, and experience, but all of their bags were heavy. For whatever reason, the men tended to carry less than the women. Some of the men walked from their cars with backpacks or messenger bags slung over their shoulders, but others carried little more than a bran muffin and a wallet. They all carried keys – keys to their classrooms, their cars, their file cabinets, their homes – some even carried keys that no longer opened any locks at all, kept out of fear that someday a lock would present itself that only that one key would open. The women often favored keyrings decorated with personalized embellishments, worn on lanyards around their necks, while the men's were more utilitarian. They all longed for the one key that they didn't have – the key that would unlock the mind of a reluctant student.

Esperanza Diaz in her first year of teaching carried a journal. In grad school at Berkeley they had taught her to be a reflective practitioner and she made sure to reflect in her journal for twenty minutes at the end of every day. She had once read that you would have a happier life if you wrote down three good things that happened each day, so she was determined to find three good things even if it killed her. Her friends often joked that her name should be Esperanza *Diez* – senior class valedictorian, highest honors at Cal – she had been the perfect ten of a student. But now Esperanza thought *Uno* would be a more accurate surname – *Uno* for her first year of teaching, *Uno* for the number of good things she could actually find to write in her

journal, *Uno* for the grade she sometimes wanted to give herself. She had known that teaching math to freshmen wouldn't be easy, and everyone had been shocked when she chose that path: "Why waste your time teaching when with your talent and degree you could make 60K a year to start in the private sector?" They didn't understand why she felt she had to make a difference, pay it forward, change kids' lives the way Mrs. Tomasi had changed hers in third grade. Teaching seemed the right path, the noble path, and on some days it was. There were days when she couldn't wait until the end of the day to write her good things, days when everyone got the concept, when the collaborative groups functioned flawlessly, when a student commented on how fast the class went by; but on so many other days, she was overwhelmed by the planning and the discipline and the fear that this was all a big mistake. Days when Esperanza could not even find *uno* good thing to write in her journal.

Many of the teachers carried so much that they needed two or three bags to hold it all as they moved their lives from their cars to their classrooms each day. The industrious ones carried workout gear. In the teachers' bathroom after school they would change into their exercise clothing, trying to keep their pants from landing in the puddle of water under the toilet that had been leaking steadily for the past year and a half. The men favored trips to the gym, lifting in the weight room, or solo runs after school, while the women would often meet up with friends for a walk where they would verbally unload the baggage of the day, gossiping, sharing, commiserating, planning.

Most carried bottles of water, some carried Diet Cokes. They carried salads, sandwiches, leftovers from the previous night's dinner, and they carried chocolate – dark chocolate, organic chocolate, chocolate with acai berries. Thanks to recent studies touting its health benefits, they carried a conviction that the sweet, bitter, smooth, and oh-so-comforting squares of chocolate they savored each day were doing a service to their bodies as well as their souls.

For the first twenty-five years of his career, Jim Hansen carried a sport coat to complement the tie and button-down that he wore to school each day, and he carried a black leather briefcase, a surprise gift from his wife when he had earned his credential and landed his first teaching job. In the last twelve years, though, he had shed each of these items, one at a time – the sport coat, the tie, and eventually even his treasured briefcase – until all he carried in the morning was the daily paper, a mug of coffee, and keys shoved into the pocket of his cargo shorts. He still carried his wry wit and a deep love for his students. For years his wife had been begging him to retire and his friends kept asking him what he was waiting for, but the school was his home, the students and colleagues his family, and he couldn't bear to leave them.

More than anything, the teachers carried people. Many carried children, dropping them off at day care in a mad rush on their way to school or taking them to dance lessons and soccer practice after school got out. Others carried their aging parents, driving them to doctor's appointments, filling their prescriptions, paying their bills, trying to balance their needs and their independence as they powerlessly watched them steadily decline. They carried the weight of the sorrows that their students had shared with them, the memories of those they had tragically lost, and an almost parental pride in their many successes. They carried hundreds, often thousands, of names in their heads -- names that became increasingly difficult to retrieve as the years passed – names attached to memories of faces that never seemed to age. The weight of the people they carried was both a burden and a privilege and one they would never put down.

What Are Your Core Projects?

by guest blogger and teacher Cheryl Oreglia, a teacher at Notre Dame High School in San Jose. Cheryl was a participant in the inaugural On Being gathering <https://onbeing.org/> in February of this year, where four hundred souls, including your editor, gathered to ask big questions and think about social courage, moral imagination, and life on this planet together.



I have the privilege of a rather unique perch for observing personalities. Unobserved, or at least tolerated, I eavesdrop on private conversations and interpersonal interactions. It's my work and I'm paid to do it. I teach high school, and from my podium the view is spectacular. Through a sea of human subjects, I've learned to appreciate the amazing variety of operating systems we lug around with us – ones that prosper, ones that get us by, and ones that fail.

It's not surprising that my favorite types have remained consistent through the years. Teacher's pet is a real thing. I'm enamored with well-grounded people, those who are present, confident, and reliable but do not lack kindness or empathy. That's a deal breaker. There are also appealing types who are shy, still developing a sense of self, who, after four years of high school, emerge as confident empowered women. I thoroughly enjoy the enthusiastic types who surge with energy, are lively. Although hard to contain, they are a joy to be around after a few cups of coffee.

The displaced, depressed, angry types don't scare me as much as the apathetic, judgmental, rude ones, who absolutely could not give a damn about anything but their cell phones, and deplore you for giving them a poor grade. But there is hope even for these types, because we are not glued to one phase, one role, one way of being in the world.

It is rare for a student to surprise me. They stay pretty true to form throughout the high school years. I've discovered again and again how early childhood experiences are the dominating factors in developing a strategy for coping with life. Children emulate the adults who care for them; if the adults don't have it together, neither will the children, but when they do, it's magic.

Experience is powerful; it shapes the lens with which we view life. The more poignant the experience, the more efficacious it is to our foundation. Some things cannot be undone, and

that can be good, especially when it comes to a loving family, strong values, constructive guidance, laughter, and loyalty. Violence, ridicule, neglect, and bullying can sentence a person to hell on earth. Anyone can survive in life, but to thrive is a gift.

"I'm a big personality. I walk into a room, big and tall and loud." Adele

So of course this got me thinking about free will and our ability to choose right from wrong, healthy versus insalubrious, apathy or engagement, patience over temper. Is it possible to ignore formational experiences, break free from engrained patterns of behavior, and choose the attitude we would like to adopt on any given day? Most people would prefer to stay in the rut they dug for themselves rather than opt for change. I'm one of them.

Henry Morgan: "People with insufficient personalities are fond of cats. These people adore being ignored."

Of course, there is the case of the introvert vs the extrovert, and from my laboratory of observing and storing information, this is what I found. Regardless of the machine that drives you (intro or extro) when a student has a core project he or she will employ most any strategy to get the work done. Engagement is critical. The introvert can give a polished presentation in front of thirty students if need be, the extrovert can dim themselves in order for peers to shine, and I realized together the possibilities are endless.

I pride myself on being calm and kind in most situations, but when my mother was sick, and I needed an approval for treatment, a key to the front gate, or an emergency appointment, I was ruthless, determined, downright rude if need be. My core project was my mom and I was able to pull up aspects of myself (the bitch was a favorite) that I did not know existed in order to serve her needs. The personalities we manifest in service of our core are who we really are, and even when it is not comfortable, we are able to meticulously resurrect a variety of characteristics when needed.

"If you have anything really valuable to contribute to the world it will come through the expression of your own personality, that single spark of divinity that sets you off and makes you different from every other living creature." Bruce Barton

Does awareness matter? If your entire adult life is tethered to formational experiences, patterns we continually recreate, where is the space for improvement? *Is there space?* Or are we "predestined" to be enslaved to our histories? This is what keeps me up at night. You?

We're not always what we seem. What are your core projects?

"What can a person do to help bring back the world? We have to watch it and then look at each other. Together we hold it close and carefully save it, like a bubble that can disappear if we don't watch out." ~William Stafford



"I think the big lesson," says Dorothy Jardin, "is just keep learning. Be curious. Seek knowledge. Let go of what's done. Let go of what you no longer believe or is no longer appropriate in your life. And listen. Listen deeply to yourself and to other people." A beloved poet, artist, therapist, and educator, Dorothy has generously contributed many poems to this publication.

ANOTHER CALL TO ARMS by Dorothy Gagner Jardin

Let's arm teachers so they can shoot their students,
a stranger, colleague, depressed parent.

Let's have teachers hold one hand on a trigger,
the other on an open book, humming computer, magic marker;

on the hand of a child writing his name in cursive,
easily connecting one letter to another with gentle guidance.

Better, let's arm teachers with empathy, intelligence, insight;
with allies who can aid an angry, dejected, violent student
who can buy, steal, take from his home a gun, guns because
that's how he's learned to solve problems:
hours of filmed battles, killer video games, invading aliens.

Who is not traumatized by the time they are a teen?
Who are the teachers outside of school well armed
to assault our senses, violate our innocence, preach revenge?

Guns solve problems immediately.
Show them how it feels to hurt,
show how hurt kills you.

So many governing now advocate for the right to own, carry, celebrate, practice using assault rifles, hand guns, to wave enormous flags for the second amendment; so many generous donations for the right to bear arms because the governing are dangerous and might need to be overthrown by a militia galloping in a moment's notice to fight to be free from another's power, another's freedom to be different.

We are all terrorized now, imprisoned, guarded by lethal weapons in the hands of the fearful, the vigilant, the ready to act if threatened, threatened by a look, word, motion.

Let's arm our teachers with courage, vision, kindness; with time to teach how we cannot repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat past horrors; how to prevent harming ourselves and each other, how what we are is complex, full of possibilities, conflicting needs; and that each of us is precious.

Let's arm teachers with healthy parents, helpful laws, beautiful places to learn how to know what is true, how to solve difficult problems with patience, persistence, imagination, cooperation.

Students and teachers are right to walk out of schools into Washington, town halls, city squares. Too many have seen their friends, neighbors, children, parents of children shot dead, communities mourning and enraged for whose profit?

What is this epidemic infecting us?

We must become healers who teach that fear, greed, and ignorance can be alleviated.

No one is outside of this vulnerable human circle, this Earth School of multiple lessons, tough assignments, and difficult tests.

"Your opponents would love you to believe that it's hopeless, that you have no power, that there's no reason to act, that you can't win. But hope is a gift you don't have to surrender, a power you don't have to throw away... Hope just means another world might be possible, not promise, not guaranteed. Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope." *Rebecca Solnit*



Award-winning teacher Ina Ettenberg (pictured above) lost a dear friend several months ago and wrote the following poem in her memory. Our Judy, 1955 – 2018, forever in our hearts!

REMEMBERING OUR JUDY by Ina Ettenberg ('01)

As sunshine spreads its rays...
Touching, warming, nourishing, nurturing...
You spread your warmth, your energy, your radiance...
Mending children's lives with your wisdom and insights,
Touching all with your laughter, compassion, talents, your joie de vivre.
A teacher, a parent, an artist, a poet...

Crafting broken shards and scraps of cloth and unwoven threads
Into beautiful creations, like songs:
A scattering of notes... placed lovingly together in harmonious melody; and words...
Woven together tenderly into verses and prose
Sharing your inner radiance with all you've touched
Gifting each of us with your grace and love.

Does sunshine suddenly stop spreading its warmth, when the sky becomes dark?
Even out of our sight, its touch, its warmth, its nourishment endures...
In another setting, at another time, in some unseen place,
Just like the sunshine... your gifts of love
Will continue to warm us, to touch us, to nurture us, to keep your memory alive.

*Today, like every other day, we wake up empty
and frightened. Don't open the door to the study
and begin reading. Take down a musical instrument.*

*Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are a hundred ways to kneel and kiss the ground.
— Rumi*

MAMA'S ORCHID (after a painting by Georgia O'Keeffe)
by Chella Courington ('02)



With a Ph.D. in American and British Literature and an MFA in Poetry, Chella is the author of six poetry and three flash fiction chapbooks. Her poetry appears in numerous anthologies and journals, including *Spillway*, *Gargoyle*, *Pirene's Fountain*, and *The Los Angeles Review*. Her recent collections are *In Their Own Way* and *was it more than a kiss*. Originally from the Appalachian South, Courington lives in Santa Barbara with another writer and two cats. For more information: <chellacourington.net>.



Some of the ways Chella copes in the current chaos:

1. Read *The New York Times* & *Washington Post* daily.
2. Read lots of poetry & fiction including Muriel Rukeyser & Virginia Woolf.
3. Call US Senators and Congressional Reps on issues.
4. Watch Stephen Colbert, Seth Meyers & Samantha B.
5. Write.

girl, just look at that flower

all green and yellow
swimming together
spilling
over the edge
like rainbow sherbet
mama made in july
and spooned into glass cups
that slipped
from our sticky hands
crashing
on the black and white
linoleum she laid
when too old
to bear children.

just look at those petals

fringed in lavender
a feather boa
she tossed
over her shoulder
cascading
down a satin back
saturday nights
as daddy dipped her
to radio blues
with us praying
for long legs
and to stay up past nine
when ella and billie
brought it on home.

never cared for real orchids

those hothouse types
too busy
being fussed over
still don't bloom
like that purple flower
mama loved
to wear on her birthday
and afterward
stored it in the icebox
till petals turned brown

A New E-Book from SCWriP Fellow Lou Spaventa ('01)



Santa Barbara, California is a beautiful coastal city of around 100,000 nestled between the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Pacific Ocean. Its Spanish colonial heritage is marked by white buildings with red tiled roofs. Most people count themselves lucky to live here. But there are those whose luck has run out. They are the homeless of contemporary society: the war veterans with PTSD, the runaways from abusive relationships, the addicted and the discarded. For many of them, Santa

Barbara is a last stop on a long disheartening journey. Yet, these homeless are above all individuals with full, complex life histories. Lou Spaventa has written a collection of stories, *Last Stop Paradise*, which imagines the lives of six homeless people in Santa Barbara, available on Kobo ebooks. (Lou also has two novels on Amazon: *Joey White*, and *A Woman in New York*.)

The Living Stories Collective, A Project by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)



The Living Stories Collective is an ongoing project started by Cynthia Carbone Ward for the gathering and archiving of stories through personal interviews. The intent is to document observations and experiences that might otherwise be forgotten and record the wisdom and lessons life yields, providing an opportunity for individuals to share their memories and add their voices to a living historical record. Cynthia first began a form of this project years ago with her students, when she was a middle school teacher. Those interviews have since been incorporated into a website <http://www.livingstoriescollective.com/> along with newer interviews, including audio-clips, human interest stories called “glimpses”, and a gallery of photos. Collectively, the voices and images become a kind of poetry. As poet Elizabeth Alexander wrote:

*Poetry (here I hear myself loudest)
is the human voice,
and are we not of interest to each other?*

Often I Imagine the Earth by Dan Gerber

Often I imagine the earth
through the eyes of the atoms we're made of—
atoms, peculiar
atoms everywhere—
no me, no you, no opinions,
no beginning, no middle, no end,
soaring together like those
ancient Chinese birds
hatched miraculously with only one wing,
helping each other fly home.



Reflections on SCWriP's Winter Renewal: Writing in Nature *A Morning Guided by Wilderness Youth Project*

by Ann Bumby ('14)



A full lagoon. A warm sunshine peeking in and out of the clouds. The kind of bird-chirping that only happens after a long, nourishing rain. We arrived at West Conference Center, greeted by the spring greens, yellow mustards, and dew drops that clung to the plant-life, which seemingly sprouted up overnight. Thirteen of us gathered around the breakfast table, sipping on coffee and catching up on life. And then we began.

We spent the morning writing about and sharing with each other how we came to be connected to nature, each in our unique way. We shared our thoughts, hopes, and concerns about inviting our students out of the confines of our classroom walls and into the natural world- how would students behave? What would we bring? How would writing look outside? Do we write outside at all, or let the outdoors be an experience in itself? Do we have

enough expertise or experience to take students outside? What if it's a disaster? What if it's the most profound moment I have ever given my class?

With these questions unanswered but held in space, our Wilderness Youth Project leaders, Sharon and Andrew, led us outdoors. We circled up in the warming sun, and each took a moment to share some gratitude and an observation of our Talking Piece, an antler-adorned skull. And then we were off on our nature walk, with only two simple, yet powerful suggestions: step off the path, and change your perspective. With our senses shifted by these ideas, we spent the next hour tracing rabbit runs, investigating newly-hatched ladybugs, collecting plants and wildflowers, and poking at scat to see what animal had deposited it, and what it had eaten. We ended with a Sit Spot- a quiet ten minutes of reflection, in our own space within coyote-howl earshot of our leaders. We lay on our backs, feeling the rain-softened earth below, and watching the clearing clouds pass above. Ending our walk, several exclaimed that they hadn't made time to lay down on the ground since childhood, and what a difference it had just made. Others mentioned the newness of being off the path, or how interactions with nature change when you take the time to really see, hear, and smell.

Back in the conference room, we had more conversation about taking students outdoors. Through the varying ideas, feelings, and inspirations, a theme arose, and it felt powerful for us all: it didn't matter that we didn't know if the tunnels were really made by rabbits, or what the names of the baby beetles or plants were that we had discovered, and we never did solve the mystery of the seed pods in the scat. But we questioned, mused, explored, and let our curiosity take us deeper into our experience- and *that* felt like powerful learning, no matter your background, your experience, your age, or your expertise. Nature is a great equalizer, and it gave each of us an arsenal of ideas, thoughts, and wonderings to take back with us and write about.

As we said our good-byes, we each shared a final take-away. As recorded by Sharon Tollefson, it reads:

Choosing to Remember

Step off the path

Switch perspectives - ant, bunny, vulture

Who are you in the midst of this complex world?

Lay on the ground for a few moments

Open your senses

Get into your body

Use the landscape as a metaphor for who we are

Use different talking pieces

Try various ways of 'being' outside

Gratitude

Easy to feel good about ourselves in nature

Do you think we belong here? Do we have confidence in being here?

What is our responsibility of being in the world?

Kids belong

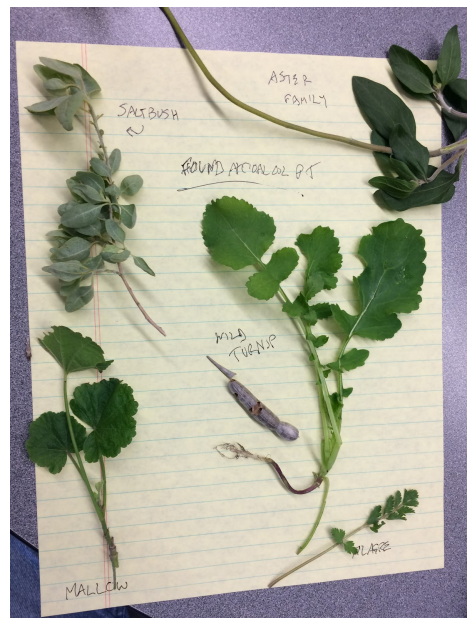
Let kids be in nature with no agenda

I encourage you to inspire your teaching, take your students outside, and see what happens. Then write about it and share your discoveries with us.

How Poetry Comes To Me

by Gary Snyder

It comes blundering over the
Boulders at night, it stays
Frightened outside the
Range of my campfire
I go to meet it at the
Edge of the light



A plant collection with possible identifications from one participant's time outside.

The Vending Machine

by Becca Miller ('16)

Becca teaches English at San Marcos High. She wrote this light-hearted piece as a "place-based" writing activity during the Summer Institute.



Cheetos, Hot Cheetos, and Cheez-Its. Famous Amos chocolate chip cookies. Sugar coated Skittles in lime green, highlighter yellow, electric blue. All sit serenely behind the glass of the vending machine, a yellow ribbon of caution tape encircling it like a bow. I wonder if the machine is actually broken or if this is the work of a rogue Michael Pollan or Mark Bittman disciple. I'd like it better if it was the second.

But I like Hot Cheetos too, even though now a few innocent chips make my stomach feel wobbly, like I've been days at sea, and sour, like the world's worst hangover.

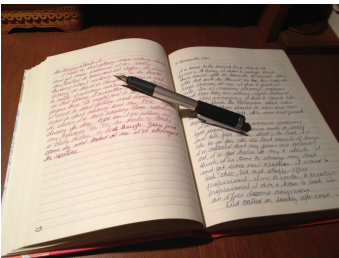
Thirty-year-old-stomach is a whole roll of yellow caution tape all on its own. Bigger and softer, maturity came strangely to this part of my body. A few bites of that

"flaming hot seasoning" (or really, any food made in a laboratory), and this organ flies into a toddler-like rage.

"Fruits and vegetables only!" it adamantly insists, toddler-like in tone only, certainly not in content. "Preferably organic. And locally grown if you've got it," it adds.

And so I schlep, like a harried mother, from grocery store, to farm box pick up, to other grocery store, and maybe as far as a Carpinteria farm stand, where the salad mix is best. I pay \$57 for a handful of items - I don't need a bag, I can carry these expensive, incredibly unstable treasures in my own two hands.

I get home, too tired to clean, chop, and sauté. I lounge on my couch. I nibble on a few Hot Cheetos. And wonder why I feel like dying.



"I kept always two books in my pocket, one to read, one to write in."

Robert Louis Stevenson

Young Writers Camp by Beth Lindley ('12)

Monday, June 18, 2018. The first day of writing camp is upon us. This is our first free-write with the word "sunshine" as our backup topic. I did not want to come today. I was tired from a long school year. But as soon as campers arrived, and we started to gather together I remember that writing camp is not at all like regular school. Writing camp is freedom - freedom to express ourselves however we want. We get to open our minds and open our hearts and let it out on the page with other writers. I am very glad to be here, and I am so thankful for this opportunity to spend time with these young people. They are already an inspiration. I can't wait to hear the ideas that flow from them, to hear their hopes, fears, dreams, and passions - all of the aspects that make each of them unique. The magical process of writing and sharing never ceases to amaze me. There is a sense of love and self-worth that is generated through the connections we make with one another simply by having the freedom to express ourselves openly and honestly. Nobody judges. Nobody is going to tell us what is wrong with our writing or that it is no good. We're just going to thank one another for sharing ourselves and our ideas. That is the thing that is, quite simply, magical and absolutely perfect. Writing Camp, 2018. Yes! Let's get started!

Writing Camp Teachers Reflect

Leina Ball ('11) & Beth Lindley ('12)

Being a writer at camp is...

Holding space for freedom, fun and growth
Getting to know new writers and friends
Deepening and widening our writing voices and identities
Learning fresh ideas from young minds
Speaking our hearts truths
Listening as different voices share their truths
Elaborating to take writing from telling to *showing*
Honoring the place where all of us are at this very moment in time
Revising for even more concise and more coherent writing
Knowing that we don't know what we will write until we write it
Focusing on meaning and content vs final edits
Taking the time to be thoughtful
Studying sample texts for ideas and inspiration
Allowing our minds to be free
Belonging to a community where you feel seen and heard
Realizing no one will judge our writing; they'll just say, *Thank you for sharing*
Celebrating the joy and art of writing
Connecting with the unique spirit in each of us
Being a writer at camp is unforgettable

Voices from Writing Campers at Rio Rosales (4th & 5th graders)

Compiled by Leina Ball ('11)

Being a writer at writing camp is...

Writing fast and furious in the morning
Feeling free in my heart since nobody is making fun of my writing
Learning from my classmates
Painting, Drawing Dragons, Talking and Playing Outside
Trying my best
Realizing you made a mistake and can fix it later
Observing what is around me, and how to write about it
Sharing my work out loud
Listening respectfully when people share
Learning new ways to write
Having fun making up stories
Revising your work over and over again
Understanding what you're writing
Thinking about what I want to write
Collaborating with my partner & my classmates
Respecting other people
Exploring the world of writing
Responding to others when they share
Learning ever day
Connecting with new friends and reconnecting with old friends
Writing a lot
Taking my teacher's breath away with my writing

Ode to My Writing Notebook

Leina Ball ('11)

Oh, coveted composition notebook, you affordable,
customizable, comfortable space.
I celebrate you.
You let me fill your pages.
You take in my words, ideas, truths, fears,
hopes, wishes, questions, gratitudes and stories.
You invite my writing.
You let the whole mess spill upon your paper: epiphanies,
rants, nonsensical ramblings, memories and more.
You connect my spirit with my passions and gift perspective.
You graciously provide a path to know myself better.
Oh generous, gloriously quiet notebook
You hold my writing for revisiting, reflecting, remembering.
You store my secrets
You don't judge what I write or how I write it.
You are simply a space
For my heart and my soul,
To feel seen and heard
Free to cry, laugh, question, and appreciate, indeed
To allow the wave of whatever surfaces to crest, fall and be held

O'mazing Writing Notebook
You are mine
And I am yours.