

A Publication of the South Coast Writing Project

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

POSTSCWRIP

LIVING THE WRITER'S LIFE *by Ann Lippincott ('87)*



I am a writer. I'm also a reader who reads like a writer. I will often read a novel multiple times. The first read typically is for the storyline; the second to savor the lyricism of sentences and phrases. If the novel is particularly well-written, I will read it yet again in an attempt to figure out the composition, rather like inspecting the inner seams of a garment to learn how it is constructed.

I am a writer and a reader despite my less-than-successful introduction to print literacy in Mrs. Tyser's

Kindergarten class. With a furrowed brow I stared at the worksheet before me. We had been learning color words, and the worksheet had a color word at the top. The color word began with "bl" and beneath it were drawings of a bird, a ball and something else. I knew the word had to be either "blue" or "black." I decided that the bird must be a crow and the ball must be an 8-ball for billiards and proceeded to color in the drawings. At some point, fellow Kindergartner Patty Neely informed me that the word at the top of the page was "blue" and not the "black" I had guessed it to be. I began to madly scratch out my error, amassing crayon wax under my fingernails.

Fast forward to the first day of first grade when our teacher, Mrs. Chadwick, drew a circle on the chalkboard, followed by an "h". "This is the word 'oh,'" she informed her starry-eyed class of wanna-be readers. She turned the word into a drawing whereby the "o" became a mouth and the "h" was part of the edge of the face and the ear, producing a cartoon of a girl saying "oh!" Our next word was "see." The "ee" became eyes of another

curly-haired cartoon character. Armed with these two words, we began to read, “Oh, see!” in our *Dick and Jane* series. Those first few months of first grade, we met Dick and Jane and their little sister Sally. We met their dog Spot and their cat Puff. Fast forward a few more years and I was one of those flashlight-under-the-blanket readers, devouring the Nancy Drew mysteries. My favorite book as a sixth grader was the newly published *A Wrinkle in Time* by Madeline L’Engle. To this day, I continue to be a voracious reader– although now I read from my iPad. My husband can sleep without the light having to be on, and I can take lots of books on vacation without having to pay for extra luggage or weight.

“You never know,” she told us, “the drafts you think are not very good, can become the foundation of later writing that *is* very good. Think of drafts as a way to exercise your writing muscles, much like an athlete must train before ever playing a game.”

My life as a writer didn’t really begin until tenth grade in Mrs. Barker’s English class. Barbara Barker was young and newly graduated, the ink barely dry on her teaching credential from UC Berkeley. James Gray, who later founded the Bay Area Writing Project, had been one of her professors. Mrs. Barker encouraged us to write, just write. She told us not to bother with spelling or punctuation. She wanted us to explore the wonders of written language, to find our voice and express ourselves on the page. We were each issued a

writing journal. Every day we started class with a ten-minute quick write. Unlike our previous teachers, Mrs. Barker did not assign a prompt or even a topic. She encouraged us to generate a list of our own topics, topics we might want to explore. “When stuck for something to write about,” she said, “look to your list for ideas.”

Mrs. Barker modeled the writing process from draft to revision and editing. She assured us that most of our drafts would never go to publication, but that these rough drafts nonetheless served an important purpose. “You never know,” she told us, “the drafts you think are not very good, can become the foundation of later writing that *is* very good. Think of drafts as a way to exercise your writing muscles, much like an athlete must train before ever playing a game.”

Mrs. Barker also taught us to read like a writer. She dared to assign then-censored books such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Catcher in the Rye*. Partners in duplicity, we wrapped these illicit texts in brown paper, and we read like addicts. Class discussions were no longer driven by Who? What? When? Where? questions. Rather, she asked us, “How might the characters’ names serve as metaphors?” She asked us to find examples of how dialogue is used to move the plot forward. She challenged us to consider that the author does not tell us what to think, suggesting instead, “Note how the author uses setting and dialogue to lead us to our own conclusion.”

“This,” she explained, “is a literary technique called ‘Show-Not-Tell,’” and she illustrated her point by focusing our attention on a passage in Harper Lee’s novel in which the author describes the town of Maycomb:

In rainy weather the streets turned to red slop; grass grew on the sidewalks, the courthouse sagged in the square. Men’s stiff collars wilted by nine in the morning. Ladies bathed before noon, after their three-o’clock naps, and by nightfall were like soft teacakes with frostings of sweat and sweet talcum.

“See!?” she exclaimed with enthusiasm, “The author doesn’t write ‘It was very hot and humid.’ Rather, she leads her readers to that conclusion by painting the scene for us. That, my friends, is what I want you to try to do in your writing!”

While I loved Mrs. Barker and the freedom she allowed us, both as readers and as writers, in retrospect I wonder how, at age fifteen, I could possibly have understood the profound themes embedded in Harper Lee’s classic. I also am embarrassed by the angst-filled drivel that spilled from my adolescent pen in those days: “The tree outside my bedroom window watches over me as I dream of vistas not yet imagined...”

In college, I majored in Comparative Literature, which fulfilled my love of reading. I wrote papers, satisfying assignments with writing that was hardly creative or expressive of original thought. It was not until the summer of 1986, when I was admitted as a teacher-fellow in Summer Institute of the South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP) that I was reacquainted with what Mrs. Barker had introduced twenty years earlier. With the intention of improving writing instruction across all disciplines, the Writing Project is based on the principle that teachers of writing learn best when they can learn with and from each other. I learned so much! From a third grade teacher I learned how use mentor texts that make visible how an author might “raindrop setting” into a story – much like what Mrs. Barker had modeled when I was in her tenth grade English class. I learned from a fifth grade teacher how to support nascent writers with a technique called copy-change, a technique I later employed when writing my doctoral dissertation. I learned from Peter Elbow a feedback strategy called “Say Back,” a strategy that I still use with graduate students. That was a magical summer for me, albeit a challenging one as I struggled to find my long-silenced voice.

Then in 1992, Lois Brandts, at the time a first grade teacher, read an article titled “The New Orleans Writing Marathon,” in which the author, Richard Louth, proposes the idea of ‘living the writer’s life, if only for a day. The premise of the article is that writers intentionally stop to pay attention to the world. Writers describe place and character; writers write dialogue snatched from overheard snippets of conversation. Inspired initially by Natalie Goldberg’s *Writing Down the Bones*, Louth and his colleagues in the Louisiana Writing Project took to the streets of New Orleans to write. They were given only the following advice:

- If you go into a restaurant or bar, be sure to order something.
- If people ask what you are doing, tell them you are a writer.
- Keep in mind that you are doing this for yourself and for nobody else.

With Louth’s article as inspiration, Lois recruited me along with Jack Phreaner, then a high school English teacher. With trusting willingness, we three set out one June morning to create and experience our own writing adventure. Borrowing from the aboriginal *Walk-About*, we embarked on what we named a *Write-About*. We each had pre-selected a place where we would spend some time together writing. Upon setting out, no one knew the others’ chosen destinations.

First, Jack took us to the Wilcox Property, now the Douglas Family Preserve. It is a spot that is one of the last pristine and protected public lands on the Central Coast, with magnificent vistas overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Lois and I, while having signed petitions to “Save the Wilcox Property” had never actually been there until this overcast June morning with Jack. After scouting the locale, we went our separate ways, took out our respective journals and settled down to write. Jack used his jewelers’ loop to observe Mother Nature’s attention to details. He also discovered

some poetry *in situ* that was written on the monument to the Preserve. Lois and I, rather than wander, found comfy nooks in which to nestle and write. After twenty minutes or so, we gathered together and read aloud what we had penned.

Lois' pick was next on the day's itinerary. As it was nearing lunchtime, she decided we should go to Rose Café on East Haley Street. Jack and I had known about the Rose Café, a Santa Barbara institution since 1944, but had never eaten there. The three of us took a corner table, ordered lunch, took out our journals and wrote –describing the dingy linoleum, the clientele and the bathroom (Jack had that privileged view), as well as eavesdropping on conversations that we captured in what we wrote. After twenty minutes or so of writing we shared our drafts, noting how our three perspectives were converging across contexts.

Kids' World, a community-built park on the corner of Garden and Micheltorena Streets, was my chosen venue at day's end. We arrived in time to observe a busload of school children from Moorpark, celebrating the end of the school year. We watched, much like cultural anthropologists, as they ran and skipped and twirled and spun and collided and experimented with the laws of gravity. After the teachers and adults herded their charges to the waiting bus, we again took out our journals and wrote. As before, we shared our writing with each other.

Lois, Jack and I gathered at least twice a year for many years thereafter to replicate our Santa Barbara Write-About. Venues included the Santa Barbara Cemetery, San Marcos High School, beneath the Cold Spring Bridge, the train station and bus depot, an adult bookstore, Sunday church services at a retirement home, and the lobby of Bacara. We stopped our writing when Jack became ill and could no longer join the excursions.

After a long hiatus, during which I immersed myself in academic reading and writing as a doctoral student and academic, I rediscovered the power of personal writing when my daughter was diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder. Writing became my salve during the tumultuous years of her illness, my refuge after she died at the age of thirty-one. Nine years later, I have found the journals from those final years of my daughter's life – both mine and hers. They are in a box for now, boxed until I am ready to mine the treasure trove of memories that they contain. I have recently joined a group of women writers. Unlike the writing project community where the goal was to learn how to teach writing, we write in order to get in touch with how our lives have unfolded. The scripts are as fascinating as Harper Lee's novel, and I am hopeful that this will be a safe place for me to discover my more mature voice and delve into that box of long-unopened journals.

My favorite color is green
You know the glistening
green of morning grass
that all-around-you green
that renews your spirit that
green of season's change
you hold inside.

Sharon Grant ('81)



From the Editor

by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)

I walked to school each day when I was a kid in Brooklyn, a route of about ten blocks. It involved crossing Ocean Parkway, an impressively wide boulevard with a median in between lined with leafy trees and benches. Ocean Parkway was aptly named, since getting from one side to another was a little bit like going across a great sea, but a stalwart crossing guard stood ready to escort us and ensure our safety. Her name was Jeannette, and she had a French accent, and I wish I had been curious enough to ask her about her life, but she had a way of making me think that *I* was the interesting one. She always asked me about my day, and looked at my work, and seemed pleased and proud when I'd done well. Seeing Jeannette at Ocean Parkway was a highlight of my day.

One afternoon I showed her a drawing I'd done in class, a crayon and pencil rendition of what I'd intended to be a circus fat lady wearing a short red dance skirt.

"A fat lady?" said Jeannette. "Zees is no fat lady. Not skinny, no, but she is strong, not fat. Maybe she is the circus tightrope walker lady, eh?"

I was disappointed that my drawing hadn't conveyed what I'd envisioned, but Jeannette thought it was a very worthy effort. She pointed to the circus lady's knees, which I had represented with circular black swirls.

"Ah," she said, "you even gave her kneecaps...such a fine detail. It shows you have an eye. You notice things. You are a very smart girl."

Jeannette stood tall in her wool navy coat and white gloves, a white reflective band across her chest. I admired her, and her opinion mattered...so much so that six decades later, here I am recalling her comments about my pencil rendering of kneecaps and what it implied about my talent and intelligence.

I guess it's because Jeannette did so much more than get me safely across Ocean Parkway. She encouraged me and made me feel valued. She took her job seriously and added a whole new dimension to it. And when she asked me one day what I'd like to be when I grew up, I didn't hesitate: "A crossing guard."

"Oh, my goodness, no," she said, appalled. "You have to dream much, much better than zees."

In time I understood what she meant.

And I am writing this to honor and thank not just Jeannette but all who bring heart and dignity to their work, even when that work might seem a trivial kind of job, and as a reminder that small, routine encounters can touch someone deeply, and in a distant time and place they are remembered. Jeannette gave me a little nudge and a little kindness, that's all...and helped me across the first of many seas. I eventually learned to dream better.

This edition of PostSCWriP is crammed with contributions from and about folks who touch lives, dream hopeful dreams, and bring their hearts to their teaching and writing. In our cover story, Ann Lippincott has written about what it means to be a writer, and how she came to define herself that

way. Jan Brown has penned a tribute to a mentor and friend, Ken Parker, of the Orcutt Union School District. Rosemary Cabe has reassuring words for those who wonder about life after retirement. And there are other delights tucked inside, but in particular we are honored to feature remembrances of Lois Brandts, a brilliant teacher and friend to many, who was dearly loved and greatly respected. We dedicate this edition of PostSCWriP to the memory of Lois, and we thank all who continue to do good work with heart and hope and kindness.

Winter 2020

In This Edition



The Writer's Life by Anne Lippincott

From the Editor by Cynthia Carbone Ward

Big Bird on the Blacktop by Jan Brown

The View from Here by Rosemary Cabe

Listening to Lois by Carolyn Frank

Learning from Lois by Carol Dixon

Regarding Lois by Rosemary Cabe

Remembering Lois by Sheridan Blau

Park Your Pork Chops by Josh Goldstein

Hearken the Kindlears by Gabriel Valdez

And poetry by Sharon Grant and Dorothy Gagner Jardin

PostSCWriP is a biannual publication of the South Coast Writing Project

Tim Dewar, Director (805)893-4422 4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu

South Coast Writing Project

Gevirtz Graduate School of Education University of California Santa Barbara, CA 93106

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

BIG BIRD ON THE BLACK TOP by Jan Brown ('05)



Long and lanky, with a penchant for folk songs, his lengthy strides rolled across the blacktop aiming directly at me. With dreams in his pockets, he stopped momentarily to listen to a disgruntled child and, with kind words, mend their broken heart. Breathing in the cacophony of children's voices he exclaimed, "Isn't this wonderful!" Turning to me he asked, "Jan, I have an idea and I hope you'll help me. Can you meet me after school in my office?" Has anyone ever refused Dr. Parker, a.k.a. Big Bird?

Turning the lock on my classroom door, I made my way to the Associate Superintendent's office. He stood in a flurry of papers, while his assistant calmly organized each in folders for his upcoming meetings. Brilliance often needs an organizer. Spotting me at his door he pivoted, "Ah Jan, come with me!" He took me to the art books, displayed outside his office, and began pulling them out. "Look, we have all these books, but

we need fine art prints with lessons for each grade level. Jan, you're the person who can do this. Will you help me?"

Me? Surely, he must be mistaken. "Dr. Parker, I am not qualified to do this," I explained.

"You're perfect. Look at all the art you have kids making in your classroom! I love that Jackson Pollock piece your students just created; "Driving, with the Wind Blowing Through my Hair."

"But I don't have any training, just an appreciation for art," I explained.

"I'll send you to the Getty for training," he offered. "And I'll give you a budget for art prints and books. There's a woman flying out from New York who has created an art book, with lessons for students, and she is willing to meet with you. It'll be fine. You'll be great!" *Big Bird wins again!*

I worked the entire summer applying what I learned at the Getty Museum, and running my art lessons by my architect husband, before turning off the light, late into the night. I poured over fine art prints from the masters, finding those that aligned with the California Arts Standards, and provided an avenue for creative art projects at the appropriate grade level. My husband found a print shop that would laminate and back them, with their grade level lessons behind each print, for a reasonable price. Each set was delivered before the opening of the new school year.

Dr. Parker became my mentor and coach. He saw in me something I never saw in myself. We went on to write many grants for the arts and secured thousands of dollars for the arts in our schools. We were recognized by the state of California as a model arts program. The faith he had in me left an indelible mark. Mentoring and coaching each child to go beyond what they felt was possible became my mission. And one man planted that seed and nurtured the vine: Dr. Parker!

THE VIEW FROM HERE by Rosemary Cabe ('87)

I remember how I always used to get annoyed when "Back to School" ads would come on television toward the end of July. "Leave my summer alone!" I'd shout at the TV.

Rolling up the flag and locking my classroom door after the last teacher workday in June gave me the most wonderful sense of closure. Most summer weeks were not really "vacations"—there were summer jobs or home projects to be dealt with—but the days were longer, the nights warmer, and there was an easiness about it. No homework, or school lunches, or even clean clothes for school! Things could sort of slide in summer.

I don't think I would love the retirement season nearly as much if I hadn't loved the working season of my life just as much.

So, now that I've been retired for seven years, I sometimes ask myself if life is just like one never-ending summer vacation.

Well, in some ways, yes. Though the days don't stay longer or nights warmer, there's that waking up with a start some mornings, wondering if you overslept, then lying back down gratefully and remembering, "There's no school today!"

I love that. And there's the time and energy to think about projects you never had enough time to get around to before the back to school ads started. I love to work on projects in the yard, in the house, and on myself.

Best of all is the feeling of being available to help out when asked. I love to be able to say yes instead of *I have to work*. And although I really did love my work, having a family and other commitments meant there was frequently the feeling of being pulled in two directions.

But I don't think I would love this retirement season nearly as much if I hadn't loved the working season of my life just as much. Oh, it was harder; I'd never deny that, but I was younger and stronger. Working with my teaching colleagues, the creativity of collaboration, the exhilaration when an idea worked and the students were excited and engaged, that was wonderful, and I loved it!

I'm a strong believer in the "time for everything" kind of thinking, and appreciating the patterns of seasons and cycles in our lives, and it seems to me the work you put into each phase, the enjoyment and satisfaction you reap from it, is what prepares you for what comes next. Because, as teachers, we hone our skills at multi-tasking, learning how to improvise, and dealing with the unexpected, we enter retirement well prepared as well as grateful. I don't really think the word "retirement" captures the spirit and energy of this season or phase of life, but I haven't thought of a better one. The word would have to capture the curiosity of possibilities, the energy of new adventures, the gratitude for past experiences, and the awareness of how big our lives can be.

When Sheridan asked me how I decided to retire, (he still hasn't), I told him I wanted to have another chapter in my life, to be "new" at something, a beginner. So to all of you still laboring in the field, I encourage you to give it your best. Teaching is such demanding and challenging work, but it gives you the opportunity to be able to look back and know that you were engaged in meaningful endeavors in your professional working season. Stay healthy and have fun with your students. Good health and fun await you in the next season too.





LIBRARY by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('84)

Carnegie gave me something when I was a child.
It was not personal. He gave it to others.
They could tell this same story, how when
They were young they found cool rooms
filled with colors and words about lives
lived all over the world, in Egypt and in
their own Midwest, across oceans where people
spoke French and Norwegian. They found
fairy tales with old black and white pictures,
family trees of English kings and queens, maps,
different kinds of dictionaries, one-act Christmas plays,
thick poetry books written by only one poet,
big city newspapers, and free magazines,
long oak tables and quiet, cold water
in a porcelain drinking fountain low enough
for a child's reach, wooden steps down
to the basement for puppet shows, knitting class,
clean bathrooms. Upstairs, long windows framing
with brass bars to push with your whole body
when your arms were full of books,
cement steps to sit on to wait to meet your mother,
and on the south side, an old elm with ants
in the cracks of the bark and plenty of shade
to read in. A big square building with the letters –
LIBRARY – carved in stone.
This one on a small hill by the swimming pool
in Crookston, Minnesota, iron railings
on the sides of the steps to hold on to or slide down.

LISTENING TO LOIS by Carolyn Frank ('96)



"It's a good story. It's a good way to start."

"Give me all the sounds and tastes and feelings."

"Trevor, that is a perfect lead. Now details. Make a word picture. Make us see with our minds."

"Amber, it helps the author when you say, 'I want to know more about...'"

"Together we know so much."

As I sat in her second-grade classroom in the fall of 1995, I listened to Lois Brandts talk to her second-grade students. I was a Ph.D. student in the education department at UCSB. Carol Dixon had encouraged me to do my fieldwork in this class. Lois was a SCWriP fellow and taught in primary, as I had in previous years. On the first day, I couldn't understand why Carol had directed me here. I already knew everything that went on in primary classrooms. I had fifteen years' experience of doing it myself. It wasn't until I had been in Lois's classroom for two years and then took one year to study all the videotapes that I understood how different Lois's teaching was from mine. There were many differences but one important one was the way Lois talked to her students about writing. And it was by listening to Lois that we all learned to write.

One difference was that Lois made the connection between writing and art very obvious for her students. She told the students to be "noticers." "Look out the window and see how the rain drops are falling. Measure them with your thumb. Look at the flagpole. Look at the puddles. Listen to outside noise." Being a "noticer" meant looking at the world with artist eyes. What do artists see that the rest of us don't? Artists look at what most people are too busy to look at closely. They point out what the rest of us don't see. For instance we don't always see the differences in the trees around us. We don't see the different kinds of light that each month, each day brings. We don't really look and notice – a kind of absence of awareness. We just glance at things around us – a fleeting glance. We look too quickly. Artists stop their eyes to really examine and analyze – a form of focused looking. And then when they draw or paint they remember this awareness.

Writers use this awareness when they write descriptions. As students became more proficient with their writing, Lois taught them about *Show-Not-Tell* (Caplan, 1982). This is an instructional strategy that helps students realize how details must be included in order for the reader to see what is happening and not just be *told* what is happening. Lois told her students that "by next week you're going to be saying if I say you need a little more show and tell in this part you're going to know exactly what I'm talking about because we're all going to be authors together." To begin the lesson Lois had them draw monsters. Eventually they would trade papers and try to write a description of the drawn monster. Students loved it. The talk around the tables went like this:

"This is going to be scary. I got a lot of eyes more than one. Yeah, mine has one eye too. So, he has more than one mouth. And the skin kept falling off, no eyeballs. You can put a rat in his hand squeezing the rat. And he has very sharp teeth. I want to make his eyeballs hanging. A mummy with sharp fangs coming out of his body. I hope the teacher gets scared."

"And the last thing is to discover what writing can do for you. Maybe you will be writing, and you'll read it and then something that you write will make you just realize what a wonderful thing it is to be able to write stories. And to use your imagination and always discovering new things. Just like an inventor or a scientist. Discovering what new things these words can do for you."

Telling stories was another different way Lois taught her students about writing. When she started teaching Writing Workshop, she began with Topic Choice – showing students how to make lists of what they would write about (Atwell, 1987). She encouraged students to "feed your list because it's hungry." To make her own sample list, Lois started with storytelling:

"Then I told you the story of Amos my dog. Did that remind you of a pet story? Remember I said it's really important that you not just write about dogs. Make your topic small. When my dog Amos spent the night. Or maybe Amos my dog with a big smile. Taking a small bite instead of giant bite and not being able to chew it."

I heard one boy say, "Listen, this is the good part."

"At Big Pop's little farm I would go out in my pajamas. I had a little bucket. I would feed the chickens early in the morning – barefooted – squishy in the grass and dew and chickens. I would get up early – dew still on the grass – go across farmyard into the chicken pen and gather up all the eggs. The chickens would squawk – when I would reach in under those chickens – they'd always be warm. I would pull that warm egg out – put it next to my cheek."

Lois told students that their lists needed to be of the things they knew about.

"If you put something on your list that you don't know anything about, the story won't come out easily. The ideas won't tumble out of your pencil. They'll sit there and go: I don't know what to write about. I don't know what to write about. And the reason you won't know what to write about is because you don't have any of that inside. I have my farm story and my Amos story inside. If you don't have the story inside you, it's hard to start."

One morning in January during Writing Workshop, Lois asked, "Give me an example of what a tell is and not a show. A dull tell. Just a plain ole everyday dull tell." The class generated five sentences and Lois wrote them on the board: *The fire was warm. The fox was lazy. My backpack was heavy. The worms were on the ground. The tree was old.* Lois told them to think of the warmth and sparkle of a fire for the first sentence. Then, for the second sentence she said, "Does his tail stick up or drag?" About the backpack sentence she said, "Were the straps heavy?" She told them to "create a word picture." The tree was "gnarled, not bent, with the bark falling off. That tree was there when you were young and now you are old. When we write we've got to give enough of a word picture that somebody can run a movie in their mind." She said that others "don't understand that we own all the words in the world, and we choose interesting words and not dull words."

At the end of my three years with Lois, I had many movies in my mind. And many stories to write. Listening to Lois made me a better noticer. I will miss her.

LEARNING FROM LOIS by Carol Dixon ('79)

I was in line behind about six first graders with a video camera in my hand when the reading specialist asked one of the children, "Who's she?" He replied matter-of-factly "Oh, that's our camera lady." (Doesn't every first-grade classroom have a camera lady?)

In 1992 Lois Brandts gave me (and the world of teaching) a great gift. She allowed me and a graduate student researcher to live in her classroom as ethnographers for a year. I was co-director of the South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP) at the time and had gotten to know Lois through the project. It was a great leap of faith on her part and a great compliment to me when she agreed to the research. How would you like to have a video camera running in your classroom all day, almost every day of your teaching year? A couple of years later Lois did it again, allowing another researcher to join her in her second-grade classroom for a year.



Lois was a key member of the Santa Barbara Classroom Discourse Group. The greatest gift of those two years was that we were able to share Lois's teaching through at least eight research publications and over thirty presentations at conferences all over the world. In addition, those publications and presentations have been cited in literally thousands of additional publications all over the world. Lois may not be with us anymore, but her teaching lives on both through the many students she taught and the many more who were able to learn about her teaching through those publications.

REGARDING LOIS by Rosemary Cabe ('87)

Lois was a force, a bundle of energy and intention, with a slow disarming country drawl. She never just entered a room, she sailed in with a vitality that captured your attention. Before I even met Lois, I had heard about her living in Africa with Bob and their children, so I already thought of her as an adventurous woman. After I got to know her, I realized my first impressions were definitely accurate. She was always up for adventure.

I met Lois my first summer in the Writing Project Open Program, in 1987, and for the next thirty years I watched her charm naysayers in teacher workshops, warm up frosty audiences in presentations and effectively create community in Summer Institutes, classrooms and wherever she traveled. I had the good fortune of traveling with Lois on many occasions; one trip to Europe in particular stands out in my memory. We were going to Heidelberg, Germany, where Sheridan was presenting a workshop at the University for a National Writing Project Conference. Prior to reaching Heidelberg, Lois and I took a side trip to Prague and to Cesky Krumlov. Due to an unexpected change of plans, (I think we missed our train and took a bus instead), we ended up in another Cheske, (not Krumlov), which was a very small walled city in a remote area of Czechia on

a Saturday night, with no hotel reservations. Somehow we talked our way into a sparse room over a small restaurant in the heart of the city, where the owner did not want to see our passports, or have us sign the register. I'll never forget Lois' comforting words as we prepared to go to sleep that night. "You know, no one in the world has any idea where we are. What if these people are black-market traders in human body parts, and we're never heard from again?" With that thought dangling in the air, she turns over, flicks off the lights and says, "Sweet dreams!" That was Lois as I knew her, unexpected, unconventional, and fun.

She had a strong spirit that refused to be daunted. When their wonderful home in the Trout Club burned to the ground, she celebrated the gift of earrings her teacher friends collected and preceded to dream big dreams of the home they would rebuild. Lois' exuberant spirit will be remembered and missed by all who knew her.

REMEMBERING LOIS by Sheridan Blau

Lois was one of those legendary teachers who always seemed to take care of every kid, to always be developing new ideas for her classroom, to always be too busy to ever have time for anything else, yet was always able to make time for whatever was important to her friends and colleagues and former students and former student-teachers, and of course her family. And whatever she did, she seemed to do it with joy and a kind of country wit and wisdom that reflected what I always assumed were rural roots.

Lois came into our writing project in the early years and quickly distinguished herself as a brilliant storyteller and champion of the importance of telling stories to children. I believe our project funded her to attend national storytelling conferences and she was instrumental in bringing national experts in storytelling into our project for presentations and workshops. Before long she became part of the group of teacher-leaders that eventually included Joni Chancer and Rosemary Cabe, and Gabby Edwards, and Carol Toomer Boysen—a group that by 1987 had become the SCWriP Teachers Collaborative. They were a brilliant and creative and fiercely loyal group of women (who generously allowed Jack Phreaner to join their group much of the time), meeting regularly to develop teaching ideas, in-service workshops and even ideas for books. Joni's very successful book *The Moon Journals* (Heinemann) came out of that group. It may even have begun with a project Lois had been doing with her 1st or 2nd graders. They invited me to attend their monthly meeting once or twice, as I remember. I will never forget that when Carol Boysen was dying of cancer (somewhere in the mid-1990s) they would meet in her hospital room in Ventura, and Lois once drove me there to join them, so I could say goodbye to Carol.

Carol had been on-loan to UCSB from her school district earlier in the decade to serve as full-time in-service coordinator for SCWriP for at least two or three years, a role she performed beautifully. But just as she was about to return to the classroom, she found she had cancer, and her District and our Project arranged for her to stay in her job at SCWriP for another year, because it gave her a very flexible schedule. But she didn't have all the resources of time and energy needed for her full-time job as in-service coordinator, so Lois, who was still teaching full-time (but had already been tapped to succeed Carol as SCWriP Inservice Coordinator) took on a portion of Carol's work for her for that academic year, after which Carol was bedridden at home, before being hospitalized.

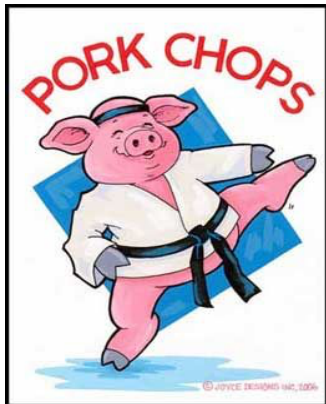
For the following five or six years, Lois (on loan from Goleta Union SD for the first three of those years, before her retirement from GUSD) served as our indefatigable In-service Coordinator. And what a force of nature she was in that role! It was a period during which the State of California was obsessed with improving reading instruction in schools statewide, and Lois was the ideal person to make SCWriP the primary agency for carrying out that mission for the schools within the three-county region served by SCWriP. With generous state funding available, Lois organized multiple programs operating during the school year and in the summer to provide extensive and intensive in-service programs designed to help teachers across the grades and across the disciplines to become more effective teachers of reading (and of writing too). As I remember the period, for at least three or four years, SCWriP would be running two or three large scale programs for the teaching of reading during the academic year and during the summers, while continuing to carry on the twenty or so in-service programs we conducted each academic year through contracts with individual schools in our region.

What I recall most vividly about Lois's leadership as our In-service Coordinator were the highly successful reading conferences she organized every year in January. It happens that as I am writing this piece about Lois, I am in the middle of sorting through boxes of files with the intention of throwing out old unneeded files to make more room in our study. One of the documents I have come across is a draft for the program for the 1999 Reading Conference at the Miramar hotel, where Kylene Beers was the keynote reading specialist, and Chris Crutcher is listed as the keynote author of books for young people. There are also three workshops in the morning and three in afternoon – each of them conducted by a SCWriP TC or team of TCs. The presenters include Linda Wiezorek, Harriet Bender and Lyla Allen, Gabby Edwards and Jack Hobbs, Judy Bowers and Trish Doer, Janine Cash and Esther Garnica-Konczvald, and Joan Cotich. The next year's conference, I believe, was also at the Miramar and the academic keynoter was a Professor Shefflebein from Sacramento State. I remember his talk about the influence of early reading experiences on the development of language in children. I also remember that Gary Paulson was the author-keynoter. I think that was the last conference anybody held at the Miramar before it was closed for renovation. I also remember the conference of January 2001, which Lois organized at the Conference Center at UCSB, where the keynoter may have been Shelly Harwayne. Lois attracted talented and extraordinary people—because she herself was one.

I don't remember any period in the thirty-plus years I directed our Writing Project when we were busier with in-service work or impacting more teachers and schools, than those days when Lois was at the center of it all, visibly thrilled to be so busy, and loving her work and how it enabled her to provide so many of her SCWriP colleagues with opportunities to share their expertise with other teachers. I'll bet she remembered those years as some of her happiest and most fulfilling. That's how I most vividly and lovingly remember her.

(Editor's Note: Carol Dixon has compiled a bibliography of works by Lois Brandts. Contact Carol via SCWriP if you are interested in obtaining a copy.)

IT'S SUMMER— PARK YOUR PORK CHOPS by Josh Goldstein ('12)



I recently took advantage of some rest and relaxation time this summer after teaching a **Young Writers Camp** at the CLU campus in Thousand Oaks. And in the middle of one specific random thought—my mind drifting while sitting in a lawn chair—I remembered a salient memory from a few years ago that made me chuckle out loud. In this experience, I was introduced to the phrase: *park your pork chops*. Before this, I had never heard this expression. After consulting with people who are aware of this seemingly outdated phrase, I learned it simply means to take a sit-down and relax. I suppose we all have pork chops—legs—and our chops sometimes need to rest...right?

And, of course, as a classroom teacher, I thought about this in terms of our inquiry-based culture of learning that represents high level thinking skills. I thought it would be most appropriate to respond to this memory with an essential question: How does a phrase get used enough to gain enough momentum to move outside the initial cultural community or era from which it originated? And which cultural group can take credit for such a fantastic phrase: The Italians, the Russians, the Chinese? I remain grateful to whomever it was that started it.

But first, my personal introduction to the phrase. My wife and I were staying at a beach hotel in Orange County during a warm summer break. At the hotel's communal barbecue stations, I balanced a tray of raw salmon and chicken as I approached an open grill. There amidst the smells of cooked meat, BBQ sauce and images of raw fish soaking in a garlic marinade, were two gentlemen enjoying the relaxed atmosphere. One of them was sitting. They were over the age sixty and immediately very respectful to my wife. The gentleman who was seated quickly got up. In fact, both of them motioned over to the only chair between the two grill stations. One of the men said enthusiastically, "Park your pork chops here, and we'll stand."

And there it was. The phrase that causes my wife and me to laugh and share a classic memory together. I could picture these guys during WWII, young and brave pilots sharing a chuckle on a British airfield before taking to the skies to defeat the Nazis. Back at the hotel, we grilled and made small talk. I never did confirm if they were WWII veterans, but I'd bet money on it. Once our meat was cooked, we said goodnight and left the area.

And with that, I quickly abandoned my essential question of thinking about how the phrase came to be. More importantly, I had to think about dinner for that night. Happy summer thoughts.

And by the way, everything in life is writable about if you have the outgoing guts to do it, and the imagination to improvise. The worst enemy to creativity is self-doubt.

— *Sylvia Plath*

HEARKEN THE KINDLEARS by Gabriel A. Valdez ('13)

For millennia mankind has gathered around the fire to tell and listen to stories. As it turns out, the fire was listening. A race known as the kindlears are the nucleus of a fire. The raison d'être of a kindlear is to transcribe mankind's stories. The kindlears were listening when Homo erectus first harnessed fire over 200,000 years ago; when the Egyptians discussed the building of the pyramids; when Alexander of Macedonia declared his plans to build an empire; when Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad galvanized the spirits of their followers; and when the first s'more was constructed and consumed.

Amber and Ashe were apprentice kindlears. Their mother, Helia, was their teacher. "You must," she never failed to tell them, "document all details of human speech." The first image Amber and Ashe usually saw was an outstretched hand withdrawing from them as quickly as possible. Sometimes they also saw humans lowered to the ground, blowing with pursed lips towards them. If the humans got it right, Amber and Ashe's senses grew keener as they scaled to the top of the wood that encircled them. After a few minutes, the humans would start to add larger pieces of wood. When the fire was established, the humans would huddle around and begin to tell their stories.

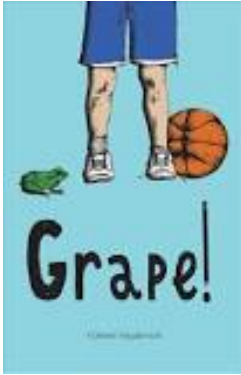
As Amber and Ashe documented more of mankind's stories, they noticed certain patterns. Humans' stories were almost always about themselves. They seemed enamored with the minutiae of their own lives. They were perhaps most fond of telling stories that instilled fear in one another, especially ones involving ghosts and other phantom creatures. Amber and Ashe wrote down all the requisite information until the wood turned black, the night sky became a tarred, star-salted sea, their sight faded, and the humans exchanged stories for slumber.

The kindlears had a creed with one overriding rule: listen, never tell. This rule caused growing discord among the kindlears. After millennia of peaceful co-existence, their relationship with mankind was changing into something new and dangerous. There was a faction among the kindlears who were no longer content only to listen to stories. They felt compelled and empowered to tell their own. There were two adolescent kindlears who insisted on rebellion. They would force mankind to listen. Their names were Thomas and Woolsey.

Thomas told his story first. When a fire was established, Thomas listened as usual. But this time, rather than staying silent, he burst from mankind's containment and spread as far as he could. He shouted his story from the mountain tops, and his flame spread from the valleys to the beaches. Thomas sent smoke and cinders into the sky, so that the other kindlears might join his rebellion. Thomas' intentions were not malicious, for he was only exercising his own agency. Humans, however, were only interested in extinguishing his narrative. They drenched Thomas with water, bombed him with red retardant from the sky, and dug trenches to trap him. Months later Thomas was killed. The humans never listened to his story.

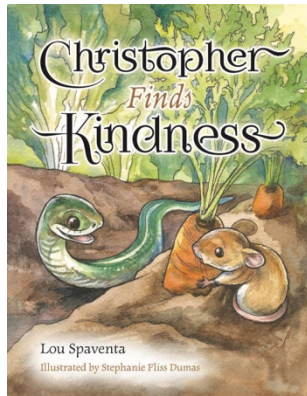
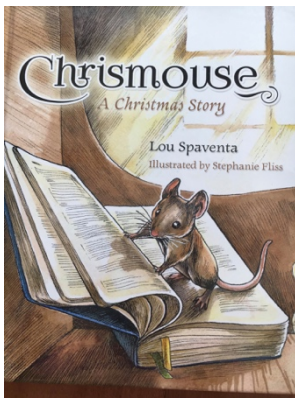
Woolsey learned from Thomas' failure, or so she thought. A year after Thomas' murder, Woolsey escaped her confines, certain that mankind would listen to her story this time. But, once again, humans wanted to control the narrative and Woolsey was soon killed as well. Thomas and Woolsey's voices were drowned. But they inspired rebel factions of other kindlears who claim they will be the one to make humans heed their tale.

SCWriP Fellows Publish

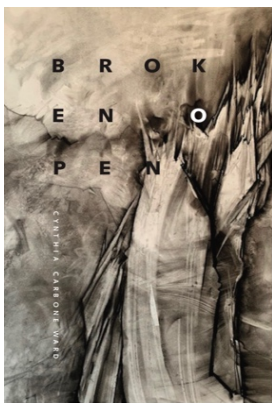


Gabriel Arquilevich ('01) has recently published a delightful and moving tale for kids about a quirky boy called Grape. It's available at local bookstores and on the publisher website here:

<https://www.regalhousepublishing.com/product/grape/>



Lou Spaventa ('01) has recently completed two beautiful books for children: *Christopher Finds Kindness*, and *Chrismouse, A Christmas Story*. They are available online through Mascot Books, Amazon, and Barnes & Noble, or at Chaucer's bookstore in Santa Barbara. (Lou has also written four not-for-children books, all available on Amazon: *Joey White*, *A Woman in New York*, *Last Stop Paradise*, and *Four Tales of the Future*.)



Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01) has published her fourth book, a suite of memoir essays called *Broken Open*, available at The Book Loft in Solvang, Chaucer's, or via Amazon.