

Napa Valley Writers



November 2017 Newsletter

FROM THE PRESIDENT

by Kathleen Thomas



As usual, October started out all dressed up in fall colors of red, orange, and yellow. But soon enough, our world was wrapped up in a wide ribbon of black. We all suffered through the fires in some way or other. Neighbors lost lives; other people lost everything but their lives. With

the help of many neighbors, and strangers, much was saved.

Tom Petty and Chubby Checker went on a new journey. We said goodbye to Patsy Ann Taylor's time on Earth with her own writings. We climbed through weeks of tragedy, one minute at a time. We are still climbing.

Now we're being led to turn back the clocks. But we won't be turning back our lives. The eleventh month of this year brings us closer to the first day of 2018. Although I never expected our hillsides to be so black and bleak, I'm already looking forward to a bright spring that will paint the hills with wildflowers shooting up out of a dark earth, coloring life's palette anew.

It isn't easy. It takes time. Some of us need more time than others. I got myself out to a movie with a friend. I joined a bunch of rowdy fans at a high school football game. My respiratory mask is in a drawer. Critique groups go on. The 10/29 Open Mic was a big success. I laugh again when the sun shines through my window so brightly that I have to pull the curtain across the glass just to be able to see my words on paper. National Novel Writing Month begins ...50,000 words and counting. Which is why I need to see my words on paper.

Napa Valley Writers has a new set of roundtables coming to our second Wednesday of the month get-together on November 8. The Napa Valley Film Fest comes to town and my first-born son celebrates a big birthday.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday
November 8, 7-9 pm

Napa Valley Writers
will host its second
Writers Support



Group: a panel discussion with club members sharing their knowledgeable input on four valuable subjects.

How to Advertise on Amazon Amber Lea Starfire's memoir, *Not the Mother I Remember*, is currently #45 as an Amazon Best Sellers Rank in its Grief & Loss category. Find the best category for your book, how to start promotions and why keywords matter.

Five ways to Know Your Critique Group is Right for You: Napa Valley Writers President, Kathleen Thomas, will speak on the value of critique groups.

NaNoWriMo - What is it and how to Participate: Ana Manwaring will explain how National Novel Writing Month, or NaNoWriMo for short, works and how to participate in 2018.

Is Kickstarter for You? Larisa Stephensen recently launched a successful Kickstarter to help publish her book, *I, Lincoln Did Not Ask For This*. She will speak about her experience and will offer tips on how to reach your goal.

Each group will spend 10-15 minutes at each subject table. If a member has a specific question they would like answered, please email beforehand to [Let's Talk](#).

And I bet, around Thanksgiving tables this year, there will be such a bounty of smiles, hugs, and tears, and so much gratitude...that there won't be room for pie.

I could be wrong on that.



Remembering Patsy Ann

When Patsy Ann Taylor left this world on Tuesday, October 10th, we lost a dear friend and colleague. Several close friends and club members share fondness of her.



Barbara Toboni:

Patsy and I met about 15 years ago in a creative writing class, so I already knew of her work when I ran into her at a grocery store one day. Patsy was not shy. She walked right

up to me and reintroduced herself. In her pleasant and polite way, she told me that she admired my work and asked if I would be interested in joining her critique group. I hadn't thought about writing for a while. My life seemed busy enough. But, in the middle of explaining how I wouldn't have time, I became aware of how unfulfilled I had been feeling. Writing could fill the void. She told me to think it over and let her know.

I joined the circle of six writers. Over time, the members have changed, but Patsy and I remained pals. Because of her support over the years and her ability to critique my work in a kind and considerate way, my writing has improved. Patsy always encouraged me to keep writing, and I am convinced I am happiest when I do.

Marilyn Campbell:

I participated in a class with Patsy and was impressed by the thoughtful way she critiqued others' work and was happy when she invited me to join her

MEMBER READER

Alicia Hugg will be the member reader for November. Alicia writes an array of genres, including Fiction: Mystery/Thriller, Non-Fiction: Memoirs, Poetry and she is a freelance writer.

Additionally, we would like to offer time at the beginning of our meeting for any member to read a piece on how the Napa and Sonoma County fires touched their lives.

Napa Valley Writers meets the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Napa Valley Unitarian Universalists Church, 1625 Salvador Avenue in Napa.

Cost at the door: \$8 for guests, \$5 for CWC members. Students with ID, free. Refreshments, networking, books published by local authors and NVW's "First Press: Collected Works by Napa Valley Writers 2017" available for purchase and review.

For more information about this upcoming meeting, or any other questions, please contact Publicity Chair [Sarita Lopez](#) or see [Napa Valley Writers](#).

NVW events are open to the public.

NVW fosters professionalism in writing, promotes networking of writers within the Napa Valley writing community, mentors new writers, and provides literary support for writers and the writing community through education, networking, and leadership.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Do you have an idea for Arts in April? Let us know. We're currently working with the Napa Valley Museum and DiRosa to plan exciting opportunities for you to share your

critique group. She gently encouraged and nudged me to become a better writer. We became close during the last year when we both published young adult novels. We worked together to promote our books. She was an accomplished speaker, and I had occasion to accompany Patsy during her readings and presentations at the schools, where she mesmerized the students.

Patsy Ann had the gentlest of ways, but also harbored a razor sharp wit which she revealed in some of her more mischievous mystery stories. Her poetry illustrated her sensitivity to the human spirit. I love the tribute poems to loved ones such as "Candle," in which she speaks to her deceased son, and her whimsy in "Two Whistles," a love poem.

Near the end, I admired the tough decisions she had to make. This "pretty little thing" from Texas turned out to be a strong woman.

Sarita Lopez:

After I joined Napa Valley Writers, Patsy decided that she was going to be a part of my life, and that was that. At first we were pleasant acquaintances who shared small words at meetings, but soon she was the one I looked for first (along with her funny and kind husband, Lee) when I walked into the room.

I was thrilled when she asked me to be a part of her critique group in 2015. From that point on, we became friends. She encouraged me to become more involved with NVW, pushed me gently like a mama bear to publish my first book, and would occasionally send me emails to follow up with something we had spoken about earlier in the week, always signing her emails with "xoxo." Patsy was my guide and mentor, helping me to gain more confidence with my writing.

Amber Starfire:

I was a writer without a community, struggling with writing my first memoir, when Patsy Ann called me out of the blue one day and asked if I would be interested in joining her critique group in Napa. I don't know how she got my name, but with that call, Patsy changed my life.

With her and the group's encouragement, I was able to complete and publish my memoir. During the years, in addition to great respect for her writing, I grew to admire Patsy for so many of her qualities: always poised and thoughtful, a gentle exterior twinned with a steel core, and surprisingly young sense of humor. She was always years younger than her physical age.

My biggest cheerleader and mentor, Patsy opened doors for me in publishing and public speaking, and

SHOULD WE STAY?

A scorched leaf drops before me
wind traveler over ridge
and valley
far from fire lines that
shift and shimmy.



I inspect this black
oracle,
hearing only ambulance sirens,
airplanes overhead on missions.

Acrid air burns sinuses and eyes
forcing us indoors to pack
for possible evacuation

choosing between wedding photos,
my son's first baseball glove,
what memories to protect
from coming conflagration.

I worry about wind patterns
that drive cinders our way
as red sun sets in brown sky
neighbors come and go
yet we stay, smoke shrouded
masked in valley of vines
knowing others have lost everything,
ambushed by flames.

-by Jim McDonald

The Lucky Ones

My merciful home untouched
by seething cauldron of fire
that fortuitous night

I gaze out kitchen window with restless
eyes
feel the pulse of burnt earth
press its mystery into my living self

My emotions are strangers, my hands
clasp

I tremble in every nerve
still hear friend's voice deep as an organ

"All is burned up," he whimpers a wail
as if I sit on a mountaintop surveying
his home of forty years

His declaration rings through the chamber
of my soul like clanging of a church bell

she was there for me when I needed her in so many other ways. In truth, she was one of the best friends I ever had.

She called us her "writer girls." The group won't be the same without her, but we will continue on, even in the wake of her passing.

Patsy's Writing Accomplishments:

- *Stealing Home*, a novel-Published October 2015
- "Two Whistles": A Collection of Poetry-Published May 2017
- "This Much is Known", "Must Be My Jeans", and "Highway One With Kathleen"-chapbooks of poetry-Published between 1996 and 2000
- *Surprised by Murder*, a novel- Unpublished
- *The Last Rose*, a novel-Unpublished
- Prize winning poetry and short stories have been published in numerous literary journals and anthologies.
- Short stories selected for reading by Lucky Penny Productions of Napa 2016 and 2017.
- Recipient of the Sue Alexander Service and Encouragement Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators (Los Angeles Region).
- Past member of California Writers Club, San Fernando Valley and Marin Chapters.
- Member of Redwood Writers, and a charter member of Napa Valley Writers.

A poem Patsy titled "***We Are There Again***" could have been written in the last two weeks, had she been well enough to do so. At the end, it reads:

The parking lot is full
This is California
everyone's vacation
destination
Even in the wake
Of an inferno

Thank you Patsy Ann Taylor for your wisdom, your insight and your beautiful friendship. You will be deeply missed.

LOSS

The past week has seen havoc in Sonoma and in Napa valley. Homes and precious belongings are gone, as if they had never been. I have lost nothing but a few nights of sleep. I'm very lucky. The air has been foul. This morning it smelled like the inside of a fireplace. It makes my chest hurt and I have to cough. I see many with face masks so it's not my fragility. The air is not breathable. Oddly enough, now and then I see someone on a sidewalk or a hidden alcove trying to

calling all wizened and wrinkled to pray

Many fortunate look out, their children too
innocent with wonder at the emptiness
lone wheelbarrow, tilted mailbox,
disfigured shovel

The lucky look out from safe homes,
voices still as death
smell dinner cooking from the heart of their
homes
evening sun touches the clouds with
orange and gold

The lucky ones look out from saved
homes, thoughts lost
in a labyrinth of hell they did not walk
outside an owl sings his dark questioning
to the night.

-by Marianne Lyon



Six Word Challenge

Members are invited to submit a six-word caption for the photograph. What do you think of our submissions?



Lenore Hirsch:
Em Oh You Ess Eek!

light a cigarette or happily puffing away. Apparently the air isn't smoky enough.

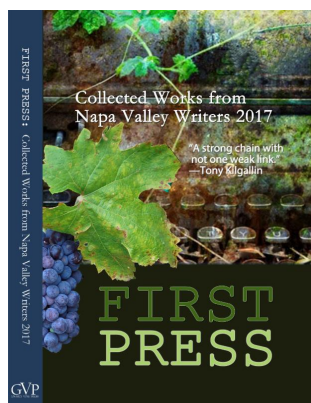
Over the years, I've seen these people and they always puzzle me. They are from a different planet. Now and then, I've approached them and made a proposition. I'd buy them all the cigarettes they will ever need if they will let me take out a million dollar life insurance policy on them. I'd pay the premiums and collect the insurance if, unfortunately, they passed away. It would cost them nothing and they would get their cigarettes, a win-win situation. Some look at me with puzzlement and mutter something like, "Let me think about it." Some chuckle and give me a suspicious glance, as if to say I'm up to something but they are not sure what it is. I've never had anyone accept this. To me, it's a money maker.

I feel for those who have lost something in the fires. Their lives are changed forever and they may feel empty and hopeless. However, one might look at this tragedy as a chance to simplify. Material things only bring sorrow and pain. They slip through our fingers anyway, like sand at a seashore. The Buddha would say, "Let it go." Unhappiness is caused by clinging to the past. Let it go.

Everyone is now looking forward to rain, to clean the air and clear our minds. Maybe the world will blossom again.

-by Bernold Rankenburg

The Perfect Holiday Gift



Are you looking for the perfect gift? Look no further. Copies of *First Press* will be available for your gift giving needs. We will have extra books on hand at our November meeting - and you can't beat the price: \$12 for *First Press*!

COMING SOON

**Holiday Party
December 3, 2017**

Every writer needs a break, including you. You won't want to miss our Holiday Gathering at

[Compadres](#) on December 3, 2017.

We will have appetizers and a no-host bar, along with

Cheryl Velasquez:

We stand united in danger's face.

It's YOUR turn. What will you submit for next month's photo?

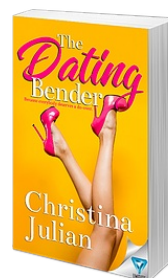


Submit your six-word caption to: [Six Word Story](#)

November Member Excerpt

The Dating Bender

-by Christina Julian



Dad was tanked, which was no surprise, yet he stood eager and ready to walk me down the aisle. I peered out from the back of the church and saw

no less than four hundred of my parents' friends and family. I wasn't sure if my vision was distorted due to the sweat that had seeped in, but it looked like the majority of the attendees were tipsy too. Perhaps it was my delay in getting to the church. I could have just been paranoid and projecting.

But this sizzling May day was all mine. I scratched my nose for courage, steadied my father, who looked dangerously close to toppling, and we set off down the chapel's gangplank. The cameras clicked, I smiled, and Dad gripped me for support. I felt as robotic as a Stepford wife.

Two steps in I realized why my wedding

festive fun. So that we may save the room, it's necessary that we receive your pre-payment of \$20. Thank you! You may pay at the November meeting. Other alternatives to pay are through PayPal, or send a check. This event is for members only and their special guest.



Book now as space is limited!

What Would Napa Valley Writers Be Without Authors and Writers?

Members of Napa Valley Writers are invited to display their published books, talk with others, and offer books for sale at our monthly meetings.

Doors open at 6:30. Browse, network, and gather with our local writers. If you're interested in this opportunity to showcase your books, please contact [Sarita Lopez](#), NVW Publicity Chair.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT OF THE MONTH



Five Things About...

Edgar Calvelo

1. Walking is my way to the outdoors. Sometimes during a walk I stop, sit on a bench and read and write a few notes.
2. I am a retired physician. I retained the habit of reading 4-5 books at the same time at night. A lull on one opens the other.
3. I write poetry mainly. I like Rainer Maria Rilke and John Ashbery. I read the old and the new, the pre-modern and post-modern poetry.

planner recommended against the full-length beaded silk organza gown. Its raised surface gave my father something to cling to when he clutched my forearm and pulled off the intricately stitched beading. Sheldon stood side-by-side with the priest up ahead.

From far away he looked like a little boy, afraid to meet his teacher on the first day of school. My father had that effect on people.

"Are you sure you know what the hell you're doing? We've never liked Sheldon," my dad said. His boozy breath almost made me hurl. He sounded just like Grandpop, who used to snap the fridge shut and snarl every time we reached for a Ding Dong.

I stopped mid-step and contemplated. Of course I knew what I was doing. Sheldon was an escape from the craziness, and he was my best friend, which had to count for something.

We continued forward. The crowd must have heard my father's comment because everyone had hushed to silence. With each step we took, I felt my cheeks turn from rosy to firebomb red. As if Sheldon had sensed my discomfort, he caught my attention with a subtle flip of his clean-shaven chin. He motioned for me to keep walking.

As we neared the rest of the wedding party, my father almost tripped. He grabbed my shoulder to stabilize. His maneuver knocked my pale pink baby's breath veil to the side of my sweaty noggin. I arrived at the altar with a headpiece that looked as tipsy as my father.

Want to read more from Christina Julian? Find [The Dating Bender](#) here.

Out Loud Yountville

The fall Out Loud Yountville event was held recently and the celebration brought smiles to all who attended. This event encourages people of all ages to bring their favorite poem, story, letter or recipe to read aloud and share.

4. I like okra, bitter melon, shrimp, and noodles.

5. My days revolve around the Rule of Six Plus One which I adapted from a program of a mother-home-schooler on what to teach her children.

California Writers

Club Literary Review



The California Writers Club

Literary Review is accepting

submissions for their 2018 edition. This juried collection contains superior poems, stories, fiction, and nonfiction by members of the California Writers Club.

Light, humorous works are highly sought. For complete submission guidelines, click [here](#) or visit calwriters.org.

Elizabeth Tuck of the Mt. Diablo branch and Scott Evans of the San Joaquin Valley branch have assumed management of the publication. The submission fee is only \$10 for two pieces of excellent work. Submissions may be previously published work as long as you own the rights.

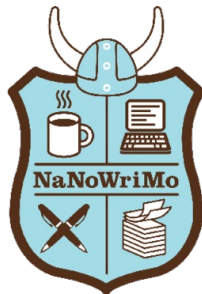
Before you do another thing, [click here right now](#)

Submission Deadline: November 30, 2017

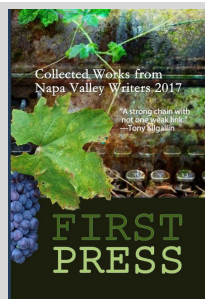
MEMBER NEWS

NaNoWriMo-November 1-30

Ready...Set...Write! It's NaNoWriMo. This year several club members have signed up to participate in the 50,000 word journey of National Novel Writing Month. If you're one of those brave writers, you'll want to take advantage our "Write-In" events. **Join us at Embassy Suites Napa Valley** (1075 California Blvd) on **the following dates:** Sunday **November 5** from 11am to 1pm, Saturday **November 11** from 10am to 12pm and Saturday **November 18** from 10am to 12pm. We'll spend the two hour time period writing, sharing experiences and offering encouragement (but mostly writing). To RSVP or for more information contact [Cheryl Velasquez](#).



Anthology Discussion Panel



A group of writers from our anthology will gather at Copperfield's in Calistoga for a discussion panel. A tentative date has been set for November 18th. Follow up with [Madeline Rogers](#) for details.



...Our thanks to the leadership & members of [Arts Council Napa Valley](#), [Arts Association Napa Valley](#), and [Napa Valley Writers Conference](#) for your continued collaboration in our arts partnerships.

...Thank you to everyone at [Napa Bookmine](#) for your support of our writers and readers

...Our thanks to the [Boys and Girls Club of Napa Valley](#) for their monthly donation of NVW Board meeting space.

NAPA VALLEY WRITERS
A Branch of the California Writers Club



Home of accomplished and aspiring
writers in the Napa Valley.
www.napavalleywriters.net

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BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF NAPA VALLEY

From Pen to Published



Save the Date!
April 21
2018
Finley Center
Santa Rosa

Redwood Writers Conference

NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS

We are eager to receive your newsletter submissions. Please keep poetry to 24 lines or less. Other articles of interest, including short prose, should be approximately 300 words or less.

Send us your photos, current events, news of interest to writers, new publications, conferences, etc., no later than the 15th of each month to be included in the next month's newsletter.

Thank you.

[Cheryl Velasquez](#)

Newsletter Editor