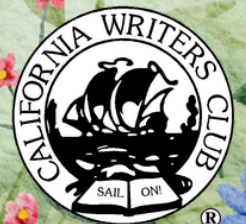


# Inland Empire California Writing Club



# Fresh Ink

May 2026



# CONTACT THE BOARD

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Hello everyone,

Take a moment to check out the flyer for May's meeting—beautifully put together by Ben Alirez—and our latest newsletter, where Anaïs continues to charm us with her thoughtful and creative designs. Their contributions add so much to the spirit of our group.

For May, we'll be gathering for a storytelling-focused meeting, sharing our own journeys as writers—past, present, and what lies ahead. It's a chance to connect more deeply with each other's work and creative paths. Looking ahead, June will center on haiku: small poems with a surprising amount of power and precision.

Thank you to everyone who continues to lend their time and energy to make this group what it is. Your support truly matters.

On a personal note, I am not doing a good job leading our organization because my frequent travel and work demands are so distracting. Again, thank goodness for the team: Sam, Ben, Anaïs, Constance, Cindy and the constant participation of members. That said, I am open to continuing as President—with the support of a strong, engaged board that I can mentor and collaborate with. Building that team of executive board members remains a work in progress. We may soon have a treasurer, and if we don't secure a Program Chair, we'll shift toward a more interactive format—fewer guest speakers and more opportunities to workshop and create together.

That's where things stand for now. I'm looking forward to hearing what everyone has been working on and reconnecting at our next meeting.

Warmly,

Judy

# EDITOR'S NOTE

This issue was edited using  
*Canva*

Hello Readers!

May Gray has rolled in, bringing California's familiar swings between cool mornings and bursts of heat. Still, it's hard not to appreciate this moment in the season—spring is in full bloom, and across the state, flower fields paint the landscape with color before giving way to the dry, golden backdrop we know so well.

That sense of transition inspired this newsletter's theme. May marks the final stretch of spring before June brings in summer—though, as Californians like to joke, we really only get "summer" and "almost summer."

While putting this issue together, I leaned into that feeling with floral elements and watercolor textures throughout. Canva's imagery helped bring the vision to life, allowing me to create something colorful and whimsical that reflects the vibrancy of spring.

I hope you enjoy not only the design, but also the stories our writers have shared. It was a pleasure to read through their work, and I think you'll find plenty here to appreciate as well.

Take care everyone!

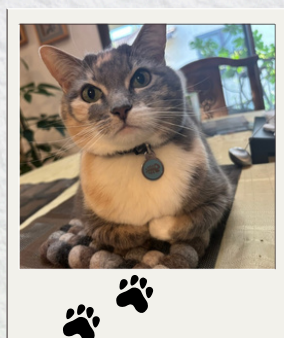
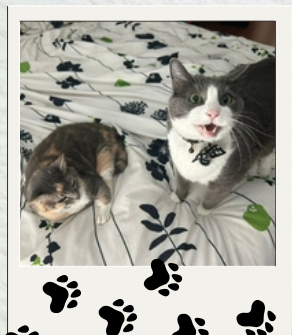
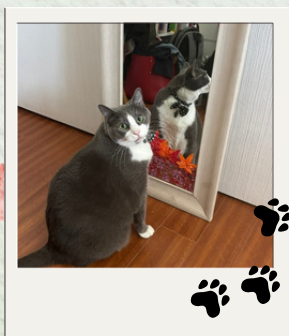
Ink to page, tales unveiled.

Anais Hamel



@globetrotteuse99

Our furry assistants are, as always, contributing—mainly by shedding everywhere as spring turns to summer. I'm constantly brushing fur off my keyboard and clothes; at this point, they've practically co-authored this issue.



# UNVEIL TALES UNTOLD



**SHOW AND TELL**  
Bring your current work-in-progress, chapbooks, tomes, coffee soiled manuscripts, and graphic arts to share with your fellow writers and creatives. Come prepared to grab the limelight and share the stories behind the stories, the truths behind the fictions, and the joys of accomplishment. There are tables to display exhibits that might include your books, graphics, marketing, and other items.

This in-person meeting is open to all!



**May 23, 2026**  
10 AM - NOON

**OVITT FAMILY LIBRARY**  
215 E. C ST., ONTARIO, CA

**The Inland Empire Writers Club**

# MARCH 2026 MEETING REVIEW

## Ontario Art Book Fair Overview by Ben Alirez

Saturday, March 28, 2026  
Chaffey Community Museum of Art  
217 S. Lemon Ave., Ontario, CA 91762



It was a warm and sunny Saturday,  
When artsy people came to say,  
'Come see my wares and artifacts,'  
'Come taste the food and yummy snacks'  
There were animators, illustrators, glittery keychains for you  
And poets and artists, heck, flavored boba, too  
Printmakers, bookmakers, zinesters galore  
Comics, quilters, and storytelling lore  
There were painters, publishers, doodlers—a few  
And graphic designs in striking blue hues  
Bookbinders, freelancers, authors, come see  
Repurposed books, can you believe it—all free?

The city of Ontario held its second annual art book fair at the end of March, and this time the Inland Empire California Writers Club was permitted an exhibitors' booth and allowed to sell the published works of members. The club supported the event in lieu of a monthly branch meeting, and it proved to be another wonderful opportunity to fellowship with other IECWC authors, engage with inquisitive fairgoers, and explore the exhibits of art vendors. In fact, two new faces at recent IECWC branch meetings assumed shifts and volunteered their time at the table—thank you Eric Rowlands and Tim Martinez. Also, volunteering were Constance Cassinelli, Sue Andrews, Judy Kohnen, Sam Nichols, Cynthia Demone, and Ann Casas. My thanks to all of you.

This year the event was held across the street at neighboring Chaffey Community Museum of Art, since last year's venue—the Ontario Museum of History & Art, was in the middle of exhibit renovations. In all, fifty-seven exhibitors showcased their talents, many of them new and from as far away as the Bay Area. During the fair, a custom zine cart was created, a block-print making workshop was presented, an introspective quilt square project was witnessed, and a live screen- printing demonstration produced free tote bags. These were just some of the highlights.

According to Rebecca Ustrell, event coordinator, the fair saw 800 visitors and by all accounts, continues to be a local favorite. Here's hoping the Ontario Art Book Fair remains an annual festivity for years to come.

Now where did I leave off? Oh, yes ...

There were photographers, mural-makers, crafters on floor,  
Artisan instructors to help you learn more,  
There were crafty clay shapers, print-screen bag makers,  
Ontario crime stoppers, fanzines for shoppers,  
And on and on and on it went

# Benefits of IECWC

# MEMBERSHIP

- ALL AGES are welcome!
- Entrance into monthly meetings
  - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Access to monthly speakers on topics related to the craft
- Exposure & practice by submitting to our monthly literary newsletter, FRESH INK
- Network with other club members
  - (various levels of expertise, mentors)
- Participation in Critique Groups
  - (in-person or remotely through Zoom)
- Your OWN PAGE on our Club website at no additional cost
  - Highlight your bio, photo, website, social media, and published books
- Opportunities to serve on the board or on committees of our branch
- Camaraderie among other writers at all levels, all genres, and all ages!
- Partake, volunteer, and/or help plan our Spring and Fall Conferences which are provided at little (or sometimes no) cost to our members
- Annual opportunity to showcase your work at Open Mic events.
- Annual opportunity, each January, to attend/appear on our Panel of Authors
  - Members who were published the year before
  - Learn/share advice on the publication process, ask/answer questions, and buy/sell your books on site
- Annual opportunity to submit, read, and assist with judging the competitive Statewide CWC Literary Review, with readership of about 2,000 members and their readers and associates
- Simultaneous Co-Membership into California Writers Club
  - Our state-level parent organization at [www.calwriters.org](http://www.calwriters.org), with additional volunteer opportunities

- Read/advertise in the Tri-Annual CWC Bulletin available online, free of charge
  - Access to news from the other CWC Branches throughout California, gaining perspective about other serious, mostly published, writers, editors, Web designers, graphics experts, etc.
- Potential for your writing to be chosen to be displayed in the Southern California Writers Showcase at [www.socalwritersshowcase.com](http://www.socalwritersshowcase.com)
- A wonderful addition to your curriculum vitae or resume!
- Access to the monthly IECWC Blind Review Team
- Utilize our FACEBOOK PAGE to get your works word out to the public interested in writing

## JOIN or RENEW at:

<https://iecwc.com/membership-meetings/>

**Active**  
**\$65**

**Supporting**  
**\$65**

**Student**  
**\$15**  
ages 8-22

**Renewal of Membership**  
**\$45**

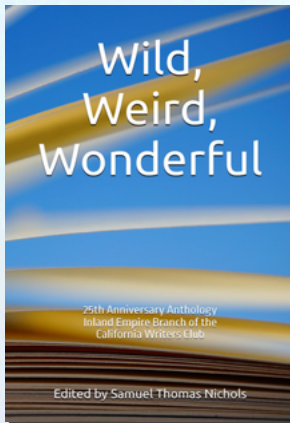
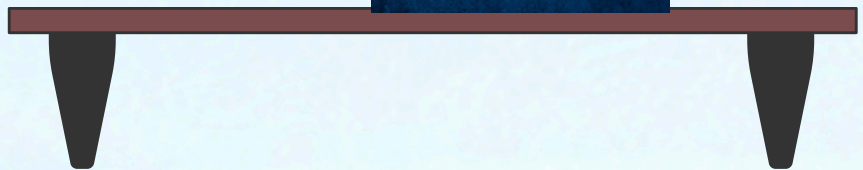
Renewal deadline September 30.  
On October 1, CWC shall drop all delinquent members from the rolls.  
If dropped, you must pay the new \$65 member enrollment fees.



### THE SMALLS

The Smalls includes selections from the California Writers Club 2024 "Big Contest for Small Poems and Prose." This is a vibrant collection of unique voices chosen from the contest entries.

<https://a.co/d/45iqsdm>



### Wild, Weird, Wonderful: 25th Anniversary Anthology Inland Empire Branch of the California Writers Club

<https://a.co/d/0SVxuPT>

This collection includes short stories, poetry, memoir, nonfiction, memoir, original drawings and photographs, and one novelette entitled *Murder in Huckleberry Heights*.

This anthology contains the varietal work of eighteen members of the Inland Empire Branch with several genres being represented.

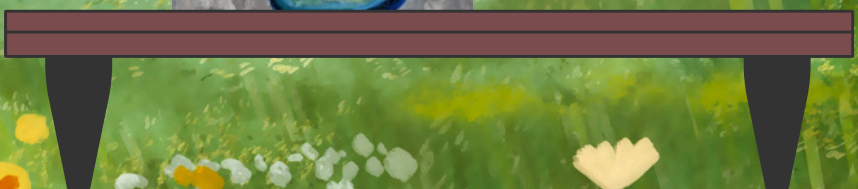
### Vision & Verse: A Fusion of Art, Photography, Prose and Poetry

The multi-talented artists and writers featured within these pages have come together to create a dialogue between their respective mediums. This collection showcases the beauty of visual art married with the magic of the written word.

<https://a.co/d/2zu0Afx>



# BOOKS

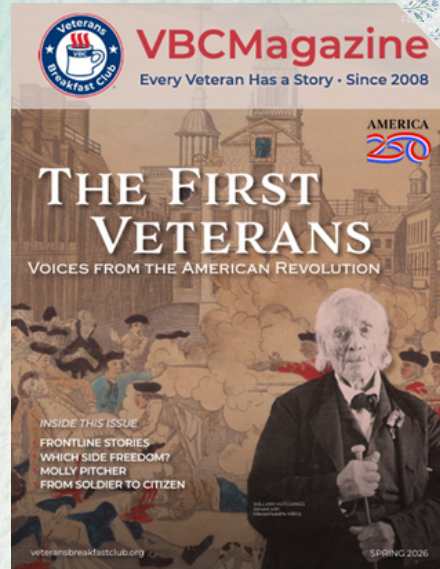


# KUDOS KORNER

**Abigail Handojo** continues to impress—balancing university classes while still making space for her writing. She’s currently republishing her debut poetry chapbook *Attached*, now featuring a fresh new cover design. On top of that, USC’s Asian Pacific Islander & Southeast Asian arts magazine, *Descent*, is preparing to launch its 11th issue under the theme “*Kaleidoscope*.” It’s inspiring to see her momentum—keep it going!

You can read her work on page 116-123:  
<https://www.descentusc.com/issues>





**John J. McBrearty** has been making the most of every opportunity, staying actively engaged in the literary community. He was featured in the Spring 2026 edition of the Veterans Breakfast Club's magazine and recently participated in book signings alongside fellow veteran authors at StoryFest 2026 in Santa Monica, CA. He's also set to appear as a guest speaker on Saturday, May 16, at the Veteran Author Luncheon in Corona. Great to see his continued involvement and impact.

Check his work and chanel via the link below  
[VeteransBreakfastClubMagazine](https://www.youtube.com/@JohnWritesHistory)  
<https://www.youtube.com/@JohnWritesHistory>

## Upcoming Videos releases

2026-05-08

### **On Patrol in Iraq**

<https://youtube.com/shorts/T59MkXXL2wg?feature=share>

2026-05-21

### **Armed Forces Day (Honoring those still serving.)**

### **Veterans Breakfast Club Video**

<https://youtu.be/ffNAX7IWeCk>

2026-05-16

### **Many Stories, One Mission**

<https://youtu.be/-9io9jeDKcE>

2026-05-25

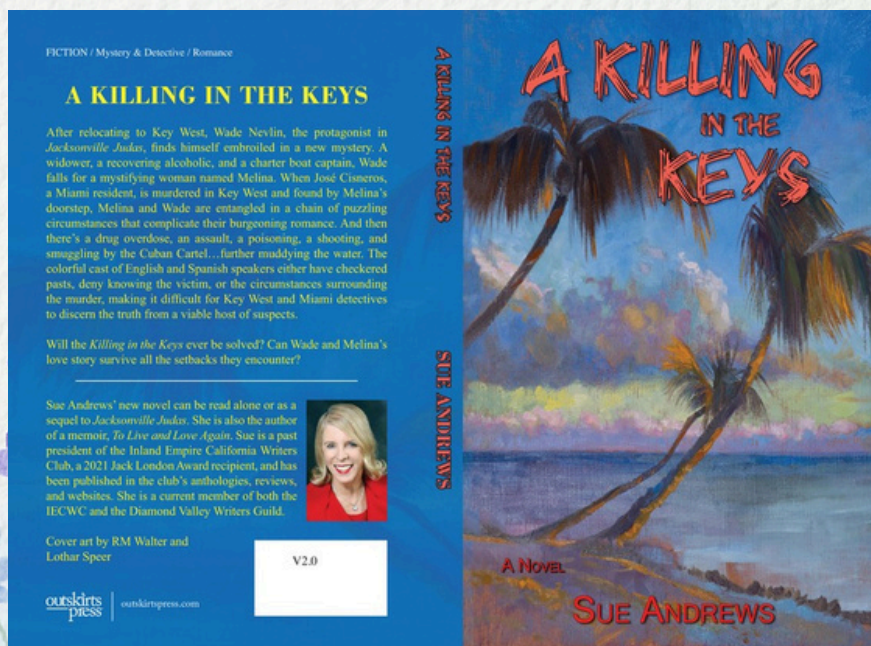
### **Army Values: Lessons in Leadership**

<https://youtube.com/shorts/dF5DPLqoyUk>



Sue Andrews is earning well-deserved recognition for her latest work. Her book, *A Killing in the Keys*, was ranked #3 among 20 newly published mystery titles of 2026 by King Pages Press. It was also one of only five books selected to be featured on Ric Bratton's YouTube program, *This Week in America*. Sue was interviewed for the program, which aired on April 20 and is now being broadcast across 27 platforms, including Spotify, where it will remain available for six months. In June, Sue will also appear on the Spotlight TV program with Logan Crawford (date to be announced). The feature will include two 15-minute segments highlighting both *Jacksonville Judas* and *A Killing in the Keys*. This marks a remarkable achievement and provides exciting visibility for her work.

Check out her interview via the link below  
**Sue Andrews - Murder, Mystery & Romance in Key West**  
<https://youtu.be/NICiS8G04RI?si=lvWfLR6atEqS2JU1>



FICTION / Mystery & Detective / Romance

### A KILLING IN THE KEYS

After relocating to Key West, Wade Neslin, the protagonist in *Jacksonville Judas*, finds himself embroiled in a new mystery. A widower, a recovering alcoholic, and a charter boat captain, Wade falls for a mystifying woman named Melina. When José Cisneros, a Miami resident, is murdered in Key West and found by Melina's doorstep, Melina and Wade are entangled in a chain of puzzling circumstances that complicate their burgeoning romance. And then there's a drug overdose, an assault, a poisoning, a shooting, and smuggling by the Cuban Cartel...further muddying the water. The colorful cast of English and Spanish speakers either have checkered pasts, deny knowing the victim, or the circumstances surrounding the murder, making it difficult for Key West and Miami detectives to discern the truth from a viable host of suspects.

Will the *Killing in the Keys* ever be solved? Can Wade and Melina's love story survive all the setbacks they encounter?

Sue Andrews' new novel can be read alone or as a sequel to *Jacksonville Judas*. She is also the author of a memoir, *To Live and Love Again*. Sue is a past president of the Inland Empire California Writers Club, a 2021 Jack London Award recipient, and has been published in the club's anthologies, reviews, and websites. She is a current member of both the IECWC and the Diamond Valley Writers Guild.



Cover art by RM Walter and Lothar Speer

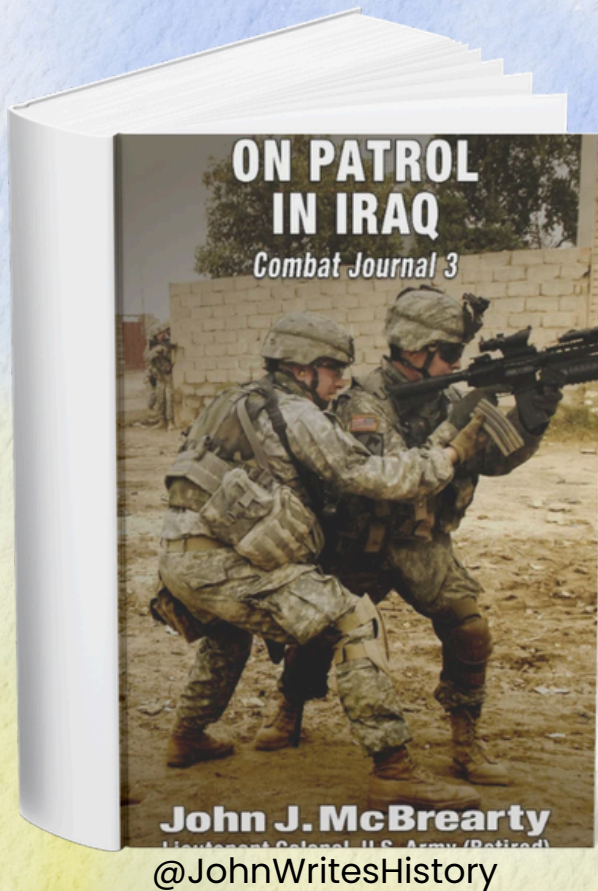
outsidertips press | [outsidertipspress.com](http://outsidertipspress.com)

V2.0

# PRESS RELEASE

**Amazon Book release**

**May 6<sup>th</sup>, 2026**



## **On Patrol in Iraq**

**Combat Journal 3**

**By John J. McBrearty**

Written in real time from the combat zone, this journal captures the grind of modern warfare and the quiet weight of command. A brief return home offers no relief—only the realization that the war follows you back.

This is not a story of heroics. It is a record of endurance, responsibility, and the cost of staying the course when there is no way out but forward.

# VETERAN AUTHOR LUNCHEON

**Feat. LTC John J. McBrearty**

U.S. ARMY, RETIRED



CALLING ALL VETERANS!  
JOIN US FOR A DISCUSSION OF HIS MANY  
PUBLISHED WORKS AND HOW HIS EXPERIENCE  
IN COMBAT SHAPED HIS WRITING

FREE ADMISSION

SATURDAY, MAY 16<sup>TH</sup> 2026

11AM - 2PM

WOMAN'S IMPROVEMENT CLUB OF CORONA  
1101 S. MAIN ST, CORONA CA, 92882

city of  
**corona**



In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this session, please contact the ADA coordinator at (951) 736-2266.

# Help Wanted

WE ARE LOOKING FOR PEOPLE TO FILL  
IN THESE BOARD POSITIONS!

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:  
SAM NICHOLS SAMUELTHOMASNICHOLS@GMAIL.COM

A decorative rectangular frame with rounded corners, featuring a yellow smiley face flower at the top left, a yellow flower at the top center, a yellow flower at the bottom center, and two yellow stars at the bottom right.

**TREASURER**

A decorative rectangular frame with rounded corners, featuring a yellow smiley face flower at the top center and small green leaves at the corners.

**PRESIDENT**

A decorative rectangular frame with rounded corners, featuring a yellow smiley face flower at the top left, a yellow flower at the top center, a yellow flower at the bottom center, and two yellow stars at the bottom right.

**PROGRAM CHAIR**

## Deadlines

Submissions are due the 20th of every month



## Content Limits

**Submissions with the following will not be considered:**

- Excessive or gratuitous violence (violence for violence sake)
- Excessive or gratuitous profanity
- Excessive or gratuitous sexual situations or pornography
- Political or religious agendas that are meant to persuade or denounce

## Form

- Prose word count <1,200
- No line count on poetry

Send as an attachment  
Google or Word document  
Times New Roman  
12pt font



## Photos

Accompanying images are optional

We can only publish digital images that **do not violate copyright**

You are encouraged to submit photos you have taken



## Email

[iecwcfreshink@gmail.com](mailto:iecwcfreshink@gmail.com)

Check your email periodically for suggestions from the editor



**FRESH  
INK**

*guidelines*

# Poetry Musings

By Samuel Thomas Nichols

## In Full Bloom

It's strange how the mind makes connections and ventures into completely unexpected realms. When I received this month's Fresh Ink and read that the theme for the month of May would be *In Full Bloom*, my thoughts drifted to Leopold Bloom, the unfortunate protagonist of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*. This is strange because it was not even a novel that I liked but suffered through it, just because. And just because poor Leopold is married to Molly, my mind drifted to the Beatles' song *Ob-La-Di, Ob-La-Da*, and to Desmond and Molly Jones' everydayness, not so unlike that of Leopold's banal existence. But hey, there are better things to think about when pondering things in full bloom, like a *host of golden daffodils*, which unfortunately has become something of a cliché, not unlike Nature's fading blooms, as described by Emily Brontë in her poem, *Love and Friendship*:

Love is like the wild rose-briar,  
Friendship like the holly-tree—  
The holly is dark when the rose-briar blooms  
But which will bloom most constantly?

The wild rose-briar is sweet in spring,  
Its summer blossoms scent the air;  
Yet wait till winter comes again  
And who will call the wild-briar fair?

Then scorn the silly rose-wreath now  
And deck thee with the holly's sheen,  
That when December blights thy brow  
He still may leave thy garland green.

I do love the way Ms. Brontë turns the rose, a symbol of love, into the antithesis of that idea in favor of the constant and reliable holly, that not even winter's hoar can deride. She reminds me that not all blooms are desirable, such as the red tide in full bloom on the coast that can be deadly to both sea life and humans who choose to swim and surf in the ocean waters. But flowers, even roses, offer so much promise. Consider Lucian B. Watkins' *The Flower at My Window*.



O! my heart now feels so cheerful as I go with footsteps light  
 In the daily toil of my dear home;  
 And I'll tell to you the secret that now makes my life so bright—  
 There's a flower at my window in full bloom.  
 It is radiant in the sunshine, and so cheerful after rain;  
 And it wafts upon the air its sweet perfume.  
 It is very, very lovely! May its beauties never wane—  
 This dear flower at my window in full bloom.  
 Nature has so clothed it in such glorious array,  
 And it does so cheer our home, and hearts illumine;  
 Its dear mem'ry I will cherish though the flower fade away—  
 This dear flower at my window in full bloom.  
 Oft I gaze upon this flower with its blossoms pure and white.  
 And I think as I behold its gay costume,  
 While through life we all are passing may our lives be always bright  
 Like this flower at my window in full bloom.



Was there a flower, or was there the idea of a flower standing in for the promise of a bright and beautiful tomorrow? It really doesn't matter if the flower be real as long as the promise is there to sustain, but can be lost as with (these excerpts from) Walt Whitman's, *When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd*:



When lilacs last in the dooryard bloom'd,  
 And the great star early droop'd in the western sky in the night,  
 I mourn'd, and yet shall mourn with ever-returning spring.  
 Ever-returning spring, trinity sure to me you bring,  
 Lilac blooming perennial and drooping star in the west,  
 And thought of him I love.

In the dooryard fronting an old farm-house near the white-wash'd palings,  
 Stands the lilac-bush tall-growing with heart-shaped leaves of rich green,  
 With many a pointed blossom rising delicate, with the perfume strong I love,  
 With every leaf a miracle—and from this bush in the dooryard,  
 With delicate-color'd blossoms and heart-shaped leaves of rich green,  
 A sprig with its flower I break.

And when the lilacs no longer bloomed, we were left with the embodiment of a war between the states and the reports from the front lines told us of Death, and of a coffin:

Passing the apple-tree blooms of white and pink in the orchards,  
 Carrying a corpse to where it shall rest in the grave,



A grave that will be absorbed by the earth leaving the lilac to bloom once again in the door-yard with the return of the metaphorical spring. (This Whitman poem is available online at:

[:https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems)

As a diehard romantic, I was always partial to Louisa May Alcott's line from *Little Women* in describing John Brooke's military service: "life and love are very precious when both are in full bloom," which is a constant reminder that more than just flowers bloom. A quick check of the dictionary lets me know that a bloom can be: a mass or bar of wrought iron, a surface coating, a state of beauty, and even the far horizon, as in this excerpt from W.J. Turner's *Ecstasy*:

I saw a frieze on whitest marble drawn  
Of boys who sought for shells along the shore,  
Their white feet shedding pallor in the sea,  
The shallow sea, the spring-time sea of green  
That faintly creamed against the cold, smooth pebbles.

The air was thin, their limbs were delicate,  
The wind had graven their small eager hands  
To feel the forests and the dark nights of Asia  
Behind the purple bloom of the horizon,  
Where sails would float and slowly melt away.



I am also reminded that people can experience periods of full bloom. I have a smile as I recall one Eliza Doolittle, adorned to the nines, fully wrapped up in a moment, losing control as she slips back into her earlier self: *Come on, Dover! Come on, Dover! Move your bloomin' arse!* Eliza Doolittle arrived as a blooming flower girl, surrounded by blossoms in full bloom, only to be molded into a blooming lady by some blooming aristocrat. Hmm, which blooming is which?

Today is April the 20th, and I strive to finish this article for today's *Fresh Ink* deadline and I recall that twenty-seven-years have elapsed since the tragedy at Columbine High School when so many buds were plucked before their time in full bloom. We are a month into spring and I see flowerbeds in full bloom being admired by the blooming faces of the young, the old, and those bearing the years between these blooming extremes and though it may not be June the 16th, I wish you all a happy bloom's day.





# *Au Printemps* *By Abigail Handojo*

Sunshine on your smile lines  
Creases in the floral sheets you sold  
Dancing shoes (or slippers) at the ready  
There was grace in your growing old

Spider veins laced around your legs  
Like purple pointe ribbons  
Bent around ballerina-blistered feet  
We kept the socks you wore to your finale

I remember pressing your swollen hands  
To my grief-stricken lips as if  
They could retain the same warmth  
You poured into me as a baby

My marmalade Marmee,  
Like all of Little Women in one woman  
Engrained with a sense of simplicity  
I seem to be lacking

You tried countless times  
To comprehend my eccentricities  
You did your best to provide  
While I complicated everything

If I had your philosophy on life,  
I wouldn't be half the poet I am  
If I didn't have you in my life,  
I wouldn't be half the poet I am

Waiting for winter snow to melt away  
So bloom bushels of bougainvillea  
Lantern-like inflorescences  
Fragile flowers in a vase meant for you

I've never visited your grave  
And I may die before I do  
Coda: Come curtain call,  
I have a bouquet meant for you.



# Death Comes Early

## By Ann Casas

(From unpublished manuscript *Love on the Reservation*)

July 1985

When my great-grandmother died in her sleep, it was the first time I saw a dead person. I'd seen many dead animals, but this was different. This was my great-grandmother, Dólii, which means bluebird in our language, Diné bizaad.

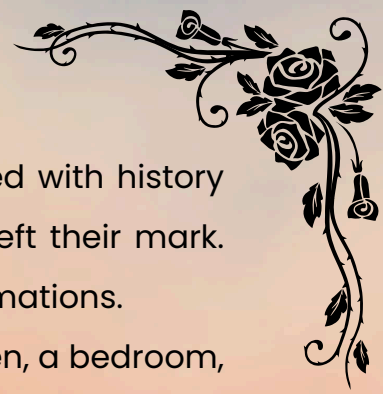

I came into the room, and when I went up to her, I kissed her cheek. She was still warm, with a peaceful look on her face. Like she was just sleeping. I sat and waited for her to begin to breathe and get up. But she wouldn't wake up, no matter how much I begged her. *Why won't my great-grandmother wake up? Please, my great-grandmother, wake up. Don't die.* I loved her so much.

My name is Enola. It means magnolia. I was only seven years old. I didn't want to think my great-grandmother would never hold me, scold me, feed me, or love me again.

My grandmother Kwanita, her daughter, was the one who took care of me, and my sister, Chenoa, white dove. Both our parents were dead. They died right after Chenoa was born. I was too small to remember them. Alcohol, the weakness for many of our people, was the reason. Still, because the government helped those of us who lived on our reservation, Window Rock, we survived. We looked out for each other, and I especially cared for my little sister, Chenoa.

Chenoa is a year younger than me. She was the pretty one, and I was the smart one, but both of us had the lovely features of our people, smooth olive skin, almond shaped brown eyes, and long black hair. Our great-grandmother would brush our hair and braid it every morning, humming and singing the songs of old in our language so we would get to know them.





The mesas were hot and dry but were our playgrounds, filled with history and legends. I appreciated the hieroglyphs; a way our people left their mark. We'd play with our brother and sister cousins around the rock formations.

We lived together on the rez in a five-room shack, with a kitchen, a bedroom, a bathroom with a shower and a living room. My sister and I slept in the bedroom, and my great-grandmother and grandmother had cots in the corners of the living room. They slept on sheepskin rugs and blankets, the lovely blankets our women have woven and have kept for generations. We made sure we carefully folded and put away their bedding before we went to school.

In the mornings my grandmother would make us fry bread and honey before we'd go to school, and a lunch of stuffed fry bread sandwiches of cheese or meat. In the afternoons after we did our homework we'd tend the sheep and help her make more fry bread to eat with the mutton stew or other food for supper. Stew was my favorite.

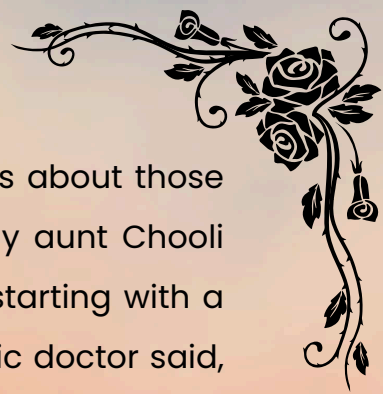
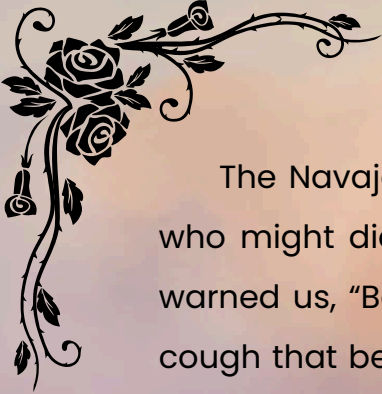
After we ate and did the dishes we'd sit by the fire and my great-grandmother would tell us tales from our people, how we were created, how we belong to our mother's clan, and born for our father's clan. She told us the mother's clan is the dominant clan, and everything passes through her, our name, identity and inheritance. We are connected to our father's clan, but not inheritance.

I loved her stories about the Earth People and the Holy People, how the Holy People are spiritual beings who showed us Earth People how to live in harmony. They guide is in our search for balance, goodness and order, and often appear in nature and communicate through animals.

She spoke of Mother Earth and Father Sky, and how the Diné always walk in beauty and harmony, or hózhó.

She'd explain how important corn is to our people, not just for nourishment, but for spiritual purposes. Corn and its pollen are used in our ceremonies.

I loved her stories about the Ancient Ones, the Ancestral Pueblo people, the Anasazi, how they lived within the Four Corners, the Mesa Verde, Chaco Canyon, Canyon de Chelly, and Aztec. Such wonderful stories. *Just thinking about these times with her makes me smile.*



The Navajos, or Diné as we like to be called, are superstitious about those who might die. "I heard the owl call every night for a week," my aunt Chooli warned us, "Beware." My great-grandmother became ill soon, starting with a cough that became worse, then settled in her chest. The rez clinic doctor said, "She has pneumonia." This, added to her diabetes and high blood pressure, was what killed her.

I remember my mother's two male cousins quickly took her body out and prepared it for burial. I didn't get to say goodbye.

The four days of mourning seemed like a blur; I was so sad. But we didn't cry or call out her name. That's forbidden. Once, when I went into the kitchen, Auntie Chooli pulled me aside and whispered, "See, I knew something was going to happen because of the owl."

We went to church and had a Christian service, but I remember the Navajo funeral prayer was also said. "When you were born, you cried, and the world rejoiced. Live your life so that when you die, the world cries and you rejoice." First nation people from all over Arizona came to pay respect to my great-grandmother, for she had been wise and kind to everyone, and when our people needed anything, even a place to stay, she'd welcome them. Whole families would live with her for a spell. We made room. They would help with chores, take care of the sheep, and shop for her. Everyone appreciated her. All came to her service.

Even though she died at home, no one mentioned burning our house like they did in the old days. That was a good thing. As was still our custom, she was buried in a place far away on the rez, with her things she treasured. I made sure she had a picture of me and my sister to take with her.

After she was buried, no one visited her grave or talked about her death. We removed anything she owned in this life. We wanted her spirit to be at peace and not wander as a ghost.

And now, with the way things are happening on the rez, the disappearance of our women, the fact that nobody seems to care, I hear the funeral prayer too many times. Something needs to be done.






# *The Angel In Glass*

## *By Shirley Petro-Timura*

In my childhood, Catholicism was not just a religion, it was a culture. I was raised in a city populated by Eastern European immigrants who settled near the rivers in the then industrial towns in Southern Connecticut. Each city had its own ornate church: Saint Joseph, the Sacred Heart, Saint Ann, and Saint Michael. Each structure displayed the work of master masons and fine glassworkers. The streets were lined with ethnic restaurants, bakeries, and specialty stores. The restaurants where I would savor the delicious smells of Hungarian foods rich with paprika and garlic and the Italian pizza that drew crowds each weekend.

Also too, the captivating oils of frankincense swung from the sensors swayed by the devoted priests during the annual Novena of Saint Francis. The highlights of these religious memories include the frilly white dress and veil I wore for my First Holy Communion, the prerequisite for the Confirmation ceremony a few years later.

But it was the unique artistry of the tall arch-shaped stained-glass windows that lined up both sides of my church. From my first gaze, I felt my heart unclench. Jesus glowed in brilliantly different hues as I sat in the pew and stared in awe at the vivid differentiation of colors. His drapes of clothing melted into bright then darker shades with each movement of sunbeam.



But it was the sight of a guardian angel which followed behind a young child which kept me spellbound during most of those boring Latin masses. Being a skeptical child by nature, I doubted these angelic helpers existed. Until one especially sunny morning, the clouds outside played with the beams, flickering against the white wings. The Guardian Angel fluttered and flew right to me.

June Theme

TRANSCIENCE

