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Kris Matarrese, Editor

Farewell and
Be Well to
our Poet
Laureate



AN AVID SUPPORTER of the library—writer, newspaper founder, parent of teenagers —Alameda’s Julia Park Tracey was also our second confirmed Poet Laureate. She strengthened that role by incorporating many public readings at the Main and branches, encouraging the Alameda Reads Adult Literacy Program participants to compose and perform their writings, and inviting teens to experiment with language. Above is one of her favorite FAL activities, the annual September gala of “Banned Books,” in which such disparate publications as Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* and Maurice Sendak’s *Where the Wild things Are* were showcased by a team of volunteer readers. □

Poetry: The Bouillon Cube in the Broth of Life

NOTE: Originally published in The Anthemion October, 2015; reprinted with permission. Unforeseen circumstances compel Alameda’s reigning Poet Laureate to move her household off-island. They are heading north a bit and plan to enjoy the serenity of the redwoods. Julia will of course continue her writing; see page 2 for her website information.

Julia Park Tracey—a writer since she could grasp a pencil—became the second appointed and anointed Poet Laureate (PL) of Alameda, in part because of a recommendation to City Council from Library Director Jane Chisaki. She and representatives from Alameda Island Poets and the Alameda Free Library Foundation strengthened the PL program after the death of beloved Mary Rudge, who held the title from 2002 until her death in 2014. *(continued on page 2)*

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The application and review processes for the position were exacting. Candidates had to present a solid body of outstanding poetry. They also had to be willing to present their own work and had to agree to encourage others to discover and express their own creativity. While the title sounds dreamy and idealistic, the PL volunteer position is both strenuous and highly rewarding.

“I have been a writer forever,” Park Tracey said. “I even wrote stories and poems as a child. However, I come from this professional background with family in banking, law, and accounting, and my parents were very practical. So I became a closeted poet, not ashamed of my passion, but I just couldn’t tell anyone in my family!” As poetry was not a ‘real job,’ she went into journalism, starting with her high school newspaper and then college degrees in English and Journalism.

Living here since 2001, she helped establish the *Alameda Sun*, a local newspaper thriving during an era when such papers are rare as puggles. She was both writer and editor at *Alameda* and *Oakland* magazines and also worked as a freelancer; writing of some kind always at the heartbeat of her daily life.

The PL discussed a broad definition of poetry, reminding us that it does not always have to rhyme! “Think of language as a big soup and poetry as a bouillon cube, the most intense flavor of all whether it is an epic or a haiku -- 17 syllables or 100 pages. The words in a poem have to do more than one job, because something is happening in each line and each word has to count. The same line might be about a red wagon pulled by a child or it might be about economics in America—or both!” Asked how people who are poetry “adverse” could become more inclined to appreciate “verse,” she suggested, “Listen to the words of songs you enjoy. Notice how they affect you and try to figure out why. Think of songs as poetry set to music.”

While Park Tracey does not write “on demand,” she did compose her Alameda impressions, keenly observing herself and others and double dipping into local history and relating what happened here last week. Here are just a few stanzas from her inaugural reading as PL,

Home at the Edge of the World.

*There are houses down your shaded streets –
beneath your oaks, your ginkos, your avenues of palm –
Leaded in glass, shingled in fish-scale, spangled with gingerbread,
Victorian ladies tarted up for Carnival,
their history and lore curving like a staircase into view.*

*Gentlemen strolled in spats, ladies swung their parasols,
bay breezes curling with fog and the clank of halyards, snapping flags.
Water, at every turn,
glittering to shore, to ship, to ankles and toes. . . .*

*Alameda taught me that even the least of terns has power.
That even people living in mansions sometimes lose their beach.
That two newspapers are better than none.
That when there’s trouble, raise the bridges.
That when in doubt, hold a street fair.*

*Alameda, Alameda, you’ve unfurled me, shucked me like an oyster.
Tell me your secrets. Send me scribbling
to the page.*



Find the entire poem and much more at juliaparktracey.com, where she is described as “Somewhere between tattletale and truth-teller, Julia Park Tracey is an award-winning writer, editor, journalist and activist.” The site also includes an impressive list of her writings, books, reviews, media reports, library happenings, and other events where you can hear her read in person, a real treat! ☐

Stella's Work Elucidated



LEARN MORE

about this phenomenal American artist at a talk by a deYoung Museum docent in the Stafford Room, Wednesday January 18, 6:30 p.m.

ABOUT FRANK STELLA from *The Art Book* (Phaidon 1994 page 445) His work shows a number of influences: Minimalism shown in the use of mass-made material and Abstract Expressionism as evident in the freely applied paint.

Artist Stella is also an avid reader. In a recent *New York Times Book Review* feature devoted to what people are reading, Stella—listed among dozens of others—cited *On Growth and Form*, by D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson and *The Leopard*, by Giuseppe Lampedusa. We have not space for his other eight books; visit this enlightening array of readers at the *Times Book Review*, 12.25.16. □



DEVOTED TO DOCENTS: Thanks to a team of dedicated FAL volunteers devoted to art, the Library has been host to dozens of exhibits over the years, with far-ranging topics from harbor seals and bluebells to illuminated portraits of homes steeped in neighborhood lore. A humble café chair embodies a romantic tale, a wall of stylized portraits elevates Park Street folks into the sphere of Audrey Hepburn, and many other topics have been explored, explained, and exhibited.

According to longtime Volunteer Art Committee member Kumar, those art shows, housed in the Stafford Room and on the walls of the second floor, have been curtailed. However the committee continues its “art missionary” work—booking docents from significant Bay Area museums to give talks here. As Kumar said, “We have contacts with the Asian Art Museum, the Jewish Contemporary Museum, the DeYoung Museum, the Legion of Honor . . .” By absorbing the docents' information—both words and images—our patrons are prepared to extract the maximum from their museum experiences. As some of those Museums are represented in the ‘Discover & Go’ part of the Library website, we also encourage Alamedans to use their library cards for free or reduced admission!” □



LOOKING BACK. LOOKING FORWARD: A MESSAGE FROM THE LIBRARY DIRECTOR

HAPPY NEW YEAR! It's hard to believe that another year has flown by. It was an absolute whirlwind of activities with summer reading, working towards our new Integrated Library System (ILS), the Friends and Foundation merger, two book sales, Live@theLibrary concerts, and of course our grand celebration of ten years in our *new* Main Library. I guess we can't call it *new* any more.

2017 looks to be equally exciting and full. Our new ILS has been operational for less than a month. Please be patient as we learn our new system. As we continue to fine-tune the software, we are phasing in "back of house" modules and plan to share some new and exciting options that are now available for your reading pleasure. For example, a book carousel in the catalog featuring new additions to our collection.

We kick off January with a community blood drive. Did you know we host quarterly blood drives? Sign-up to be a regular donor, blood is life! Then the Presidential Inauguration viewing event January 20. In the first few months of the new year, we plan to install the flat screen message boards at all three libraries, with the generous donation from the Friends of the Library.

We are planning our second Big Truck Bonanza for the spring; diggers, fire engines, police vehicles, bucket trucks and more; we will be partnering with Alameda Recreation and Parks to establish 8-10 "Little Free Libraries" in our local parks and when the time is right (in phase two), coordinating with ARPD to get that Tool Lending Library opened in the new Jean Sweeney Open Space. We are also part of a pilot program to partner with the Alameda School District to offer eResource cards to high school students.

Staff is busy working on a special "Made in Alameda" event that will co-sponsored by the Friends, featuring artists & products made in Alameda! Of course we have our regular programs of story times, book groups, craft programs, class visits, author programs, Libraries Outdoors events and hikes, and much, much, more. Watch for stories in the FAL *Anthemion*, and keep an eye on our web page, follow us on Twitter and Instagram @alamedafree or like us on Facebook, Alameda Free Library to keep informed of and marvel at our activities! Jane Chisaki ☐

NOTE: Director Jane above during the celebration of the "new" Main Library's tenth birthday November, 2016.



View the Inauguration

JOIN FAL AND THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of Alameda in a live broadcast of the Presidential Inauguration Friday January 20, 2017 from 8:00 a.m. until 11:00 a.m. in the Stafford Room. Enter through the rear of the Main Library from the parking lot. Light refreshment will be available.

The new President and Vice-president will take the oath of office on the Capitol steps at 10:00 a.m. Pacific Standard Time, and a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue will follow. This ceremony marks the start of the term of the newly elected team, beginning at noon Washington D.C. time. The oath is traditionally administered by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court according to the U.S. Constitution. ☐

Very Alive at the Library: Eight Marvelous Years of Music and More to Come!



LOOKING BACK ON 2016, Live@theLibrary's concert series brought Grammy-winning musicians to the Alameda stage. Our audience thrilled to Grammy winner Geoffrey Keezer's solo jazz piano performance in September. We received an amazing gift of a \$1,000.00 donation with a note saying "I want to thank you. Keezer just may be the best pianist I have ever heard." Currently, Keezer is on tour with contemporary jazz trumpeter and 2013 Grammy Award winner Chris Botti at major venues.

October featured impressive singer Jonathan Poretz, delighting the audience with songs from Sinatra, Bobby Darin, Mel Torme and Tony Bennett. Poretz was backed by the swinging Richard Hall Trio. Our audience loved Poretz' songs from *The Great American Songbook*.

In December, we switched gears to two-time Grammy winner and instrumental virtuoso jazz violinist Mads Tolling. With a play-list ranging from a pure Argentinian Tango to a song called "Danish Dessert," to "Blue in Green" by Miles Davis and a composition from Gershwin, Mads brought variety, complexity, and great jazz to our listening experience. The Mads Tolling Quartet earned a standing ovation!

This season, we added a professional sound team that worked closely with all of our musicians.

We thank our audiences for "Sold Out" shows for all eight years. Some ask us how we get top notch performers. We personally connect with the musicians, pay a fair salary, promise appreciative audiences, and feed our musicians delicious food. With your support, we hope to keep bringing you the very best in live music performances here in Alameda. Watch this space, and see you in September.

Eileen Savel, Co-Producer

(NOTE: For more about how this highly successful program was founded, please see page 2 of *The Anthemion*, July, 2016. □

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AMAZONSMILE is a simple and automatic way for you to support the Friends every time you shop Amazon, at no cost to you. To register, go to smile.amazon.com. You will be asked to select a charity to receive donations from eligible purchases. Select Friends of the Alameda Free Library Inc. You use the same account on Amazon and AmazonSmile. Your shopping cart, Wish List and other settings remain the same. Friends will receive 0.5% on each eligible purchase. This adds up when we all shop on AmazonSmile. Take a few minutes and register today. You'll be supporting the Friends every time you make an eligible purchase. Luzanne Engh □

Notes from Kris, Our Editor

Contributors to this issue: Thanks to Jeffrey Allyn, Luzanne Engh, Hallie Fields, Judith Lynch, Billy Reinschmiedt, and Eileen Savel.

We would like to hear from you: *The Anthemion* is published by The Friends of the Alameda Free Library, P. O. Box 1024, Alameda CA 94501 or visit us at friendsalamedafreelibrary.org. Our email is friendsalamedalibrary@gmail.com Have a story idea, a correction or an image to share? Our deadline for the February issue is January 27. Please email inquiries to judithlynch7@gmail.com. □



MISSION: Friends of the Alameda Free Library

✳ TO PROVIDE A VARIETY of ways to contribute to the on-going services and growth of the Alameda Free Library for the enjoyment and benefit of the entire community.

✳ TO ACT AS STEWARD for the library and its many services and programs through advocacy, volunteerism, and fund-raising to supplement public funding. □



Friends of the Alameda Free Library

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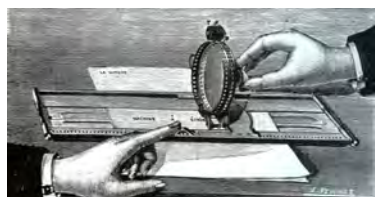
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Thanks:

For years

valiant FAL volunteer Jerry Yarborough has hauled, distributed, mailed, and just generally taken care of deploying copies of *The Anthemion* throughout the land. Now he is taking a well earned break, and we wish him all the best!



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☞ "Frank Stella Retrospective" at the deYoung Museum, San Francisco through February 26, 2017. Alameda docent talk Wednesday, January 18, 6:30 p.m. Stafford Room; sponsored by FAL and the Library Volunteer Art Committee.

☞ Friday, January 20, 2017, 8:00 a.m. "View the Presidential Inauguration," Stafford Room; co-sponsored by FAL and the League of Women Voters of Alameda.

☞ Wednesday, February 15, "*Islam 102: A Dialogue*," 6:30-8:00 p.m. Stafford Room; co-sponsored by the American Association of University Women and the League of Women Voters of Alameda.