

HEALDSBURG ALIVE!

EIGHT SONOMA COUNTY WRITERS
PAY HOMAGE TO A GREAT
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA TOWN

A HEALDSBURG LITERARY GUILD BOOK



McCAA BOOKS • SANTA ROSA



McCaa Books
1535 Farmers Lane #211
Santa Rosa, CA 95405-7535

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Healdsburg Literary Guild
P. O. Box 1761
Healdsburg, CA 95448

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ISBN 978-0-9838892-2-9

First published in 2012 by McCaa Books,
an imprint of McCaa Publications.

Printed in the United States of America
Set in Minion Pro

Cover photograph used courtesy of Barbara Bourne.
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Cover design by Sharon Beckman.

www.mccaabooks.com

*In Memoriam
Laurel Cook
Doug Stout*

*This book is dedicated to Laurel and
Doug—the founders and guiding
lights in the creation and growth of
the Healdsburg Literary Guild.*

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WINTER

*Winter solitude—
In a world of one color
the sound of wind.*

—Matsuo Basho

The River and the People

by Waights Taylor Jr.

Meandering out of the north, the Russian
River is enveloped in winter's grip:
steely dark waters, gray skies, bare trees,
and muddy banks filled with detritus
and flotsam from floods gone by.

The river wends around Fitch
Mountain ever seeking a path beneath
the dark skies to its destiny with the sea,
while daffodils, acacias, and mustard raise their
golden plumes to harken spring's coming.

He meanders under the river's two steel trestles—
a railroad bridge and a bridge for automobiles—
black holes for polluting fossil fuels.
Two fishermen stand on the railroad
bridge pier baiting their hooks.

The river and the mountain have so much
to tell—stories of the people who inhabited this land.
But first came the forces of nature:
the earthquakes, the glaciers, the floods;
shaping the land and its contours.

The first tribes came across the land bridge
from Asia's frozen tundra to the warm valleys.
The Pomo people shared the land with
the fish, fowl, and animals—none were
denied their dignity and right to survival.

The land gave the Pomo the acorns and seeds
for their pestles and the reeds for their baskets.
The river seemed to flow upstream, awash in bright
vermillion as instinctive salmon and steelhead
thrashed to their ancestral breeding grounds.

For thousands of moons, the Pomo lived
as one with the land until the strangers came.
First, the conquistadores came from the south
with their missions, ranchos, and a new god.
The Pomo's expulsion from the land had started.

Then from the west came the Cossacks
seeking new territories for furs, sea otters,
and trade. They also brought measles and
smallpox. An epidemic swept the people—
a tortured push from the land.

And finally, the allure of gold created a stampede
of Americans from the east—the Forty-Niners denuded
the mountains in their lust and then turned their
insatiable desire for land upon the Pomo, pushing
the people away by treachery, pestilence, and massacre.

The new people prospered, altering the land and
river with the trappings of the new society:
highways, bridges, and shopping centers.
The land was used for hops and prunes, and finally
grapes for wine to satiate Dionysus's minions.

The past, not to be forgotten, the Pomo people
returned with a bag of chips in one hand and
a bag of fool's gold in the other. The Pomo casino,
a temple to mammon, rises over the river
valley tempting all as Circe did Odysseus.

He yells to the fishermen, "Having any luck?"
"Nah," says the fisherman.
"Whatcha fishing for—steelhead?"
"Yeah."
He walks away thinking,
"Where did all the salmon and steelhead go?"

SPRING

*First day of spring—
I keep thinking about
the end of autumn.*

—Matsuo Basho

Spring in the Plaza

by Dave Mechling

The bronze boy scout
Folded flag in hand
Welcomes me
As I enter
The plaza

Free from winter's
Cold embrace
Where once barren trees
Pop with new life
In a palette of greens
Camellias in full bloom
Keep off the grass signs
Guard young shoots

An old golden lab
Enjoys a cool drink
From the plaza's fountain
Bicycle riders
Wearing a rainbow
Of colors
Pause to socialize
And have a quick snack
A young couple
Tiny tot in tow
Ohh and ahh
Pointing to a butterfly
As it floats past

Feeling the warm sun
On my face
A gentle breeze
Tickles my nose
With the scent
Of roses and
Orange blossoms

The grand band shell
Full of young lovers
Sitting arm in arm
Lost in their own world
Spring with its promise
Of new life
Has finally arrived

Authors' Biographies

DAVID BECKMAN lives in Santa Rosa. His poems appear in *Present at the Creation*, the 2006 anthology of Sonoma County poets; in *From the Hills*, *Jackass Review*, *Blue Jew Yorker*, and *Western Friend*. His chapbook, *Times Three*, appeared in 2009. His latest chapbook, *Language Factory of the Mind*, was published by Finishing Line Press in December 2011. He's been featured at Healdsburg Literary Guild's Third Sunday Salon and Healdsburg's Literary Café; at Katherine Hastings's WordTemple Series (emerging poet), and at Ed Coletti's Poetry Azul.

ARMANDO GARCIA-DÁVILA has won awards for his prose and poetry and was named the Healdsburg Literary Laureate for 2002–2003. He refers to himself as the “Blue Collar Poet,” and says, “I am neither an academic nor an intellectual and try to write in the voice of the common man.” Armando also moonlights as “The Gourmet Poet,” merging his loves for cooking and poetry by preparing first class meals for dinner parties and then reciting his poetry.

SIMON JEREMIAH lives on the right bank of the Russian River, where he keeps a small retreat for artists and writers. He is a founding member of the Healdsburg Literary Guild and remains active in the local arts community.

DAVID MECHLING has been writing for only a short time but has found his way into the local Sonoma County publications of *The Sitting Room* and the 2010 *Vintage Voices*. Watch for his collection of poetry and stories titled *Daveisms, miscellaneous ramblings from a suburban kind of guy*.

MONA MECHLING considers herself a “dark Erma Bombeck”. As a teen, she began writing poems and short stories that went into a drawer. Her first story was published in the *Vintage Voices* anthology at age 50. Her writing is inspired by life in the ‘burbs. Watch for her story collection, *The Fridge Magnet Chronicles*, coming soon to a bookstore near you.

CHRIS PEASLEY is a writer of poetry and prose living in Windsor. She has published one book titled *The Rows Between*, an entertaining book of poetry with art by her husband, Bill Geer. She is also included in a number of collections including *Present at the Creation* and *A Day in the Life of Healdsburg-2007*.

WAIGHTS TAYLOR JR. is a Santa Rosa writer. His first non-fiction book, *Alfons Mucha's Slav Epic*, was published in 2008. His second book, *Our Southern Home: Scottsboro to Montgomery to Birmingham—The Transformation of the South in the Twentieth Century*, was published in October 2011. Waights has just recently started writing poetry, short stories, and one-act plays. His first chapbook, *Literary Ramblings*, was published in 2010.

MARGO VAN VEEN lives in Santa Rosa. Her poems appear in *First Leaves*, the 2009 anthology of Bay Area writers, and in *Continent of Lights*, the 2010 anthology edited by David Madgalene, as well as on line at *Burning Bush*. She performs her poetry throughout the Bay Area and has been featured at Healdsburg Literary Guild's Third Sunday Salon and Ed Coletti's SoCoCo and Poetry Azul.

Healdsburg Literary Guild

THE HEALDSBURG LITERARY GUILD’S mission is to enrich the cultural environment of the greater Healdsburg community through the literary arts. Our goals are to advocate and promote the literary arts by developing literary salons and other literary events that educate, entertain, and enliven our area. The Guild is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our Federal Tax ID number is 68-0315862, and donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The Guild has served the greater Healdsburg area as a literary venue for twelve years. In 2000, the Guild started hosting the monthly Third Sunday Salon in the City of Healdsburg City Council room. Currently, the Third Sunday Salon is held at the Healdsburg’s Bean Affair—Coffee and More shop at 1270 Healdsburg Avenue from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Guild, with the support of individuals and literary groups in the community, has selected the Healdsburg Literary Laureate every two years since 2000. Current and past recipients of this literary honor include:

- 2000–2001 Doug Stout
- 2002–2003 Armando Garcia-Dávila
- 2004–2005 Penelope La Montagne
- 2006–2007 Chip Wendt
- 2008–2009 Vilma Ginzberg
- 2010–2011 Stefanie Freele
- 2012–2013 John Koetzner

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