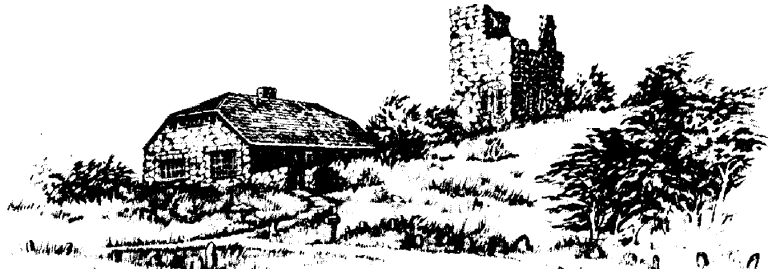


Tor House Newsletter



Fall 2020

It began more than a decade ago. Should the poet not be honored with an appropriate tribute in the heart of Carmel, the town he chose to call his home? Alex Vardamis, then Foundation President, and John Courtney, Trustee, started the journey. Fast forward another decade. A new generation of advocates, most prominently Trustee Deborah Sharp, approached Carmel City Hall. No decision was reached. Then Vince Huth, the Foundation's next president, discovered that a few miles away in Monterey's modern, new Conference Center, there was already a designated "Jeffers Plaza," though only a name on a wall, an aide-memoire for attendees to locate their next meeting. Vince suggested that here should be the site of an appropriate tribute to the poet for whom this largest city on the Central Coast was a frequent point of reference, going all the way back to the "loves with dark eyes in Monterey back-streets" of *Tamar*.

Today's president, Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts, continued the quest for appropriate recognition. He placed the challenge into the competent hands of Vice-President Amy Essick, the right person for the job, a professional expert in the placement of public art in urban settings. Amy crafted a proposal for an installation at the Monterey Conference Center. The pandemic slowed everything down, of course. The project had to be reviewed by the Tor House Foundation Art Committee and Board of Trustees along with the City of Monterey Museums and Cultural Arts Commission. Finally, on June 16, 2020, the Monterey Planning Department and the Building Department approved a permit for the placement of two objects in Jeffers Plaza. One, by Monterey artist Will Pettee, would be an image of Jeffers and his signature, but no other words. In the plaza, adjacent to the wall, there is a planter box framed by permanent seating. Here Pacific Grove artist Carol Courtney would provide a bas relief of Jeffers inspired by an Edward Weston portrait and an excerpt from Jeffers' "The Answer," with sculptured hawk perched on the plaque's upper right, looking down at the words: a space conducive to contemplation and the savoring of Jeffers' message, the two images, together, adding life to the otherwise unadorned plaza. The work has begun.

Tor House Foundation Trustees have made a designated donation to cover all costs for this long-anticipated project.

In the Winter issue of this Newsletter the art will be discussed in more detail. By early 2021, the tribute to Jeffers will be installed at the second-floor plaza of the Monterey Conference Center. Come visit when next you are in town. We believe Jeffers would be satisfied with the endeavor.



The Progress of Summer, Poems by *Laura C. Newmark*

Sea Creature

Between two mountain ridges,
white fog above San Jose Creek
creeps slowly up Carmel Valley –
a sea creature drawn inland
by summer heat.

(June 2018)

Japanese Maple

Among dark coastal evergreens
beneath a foggy sky,
resplendent in orange and yellow leaves,
a Japanese maple flames with light.

(July 2020)

Fog Layers

Fog layers enhance the western view –
on the sea of teal blue
lies a band of pale gray
edged by darker fog overlaid
by a swath of pale sky,
then white fog streaked on high.

(July 2020)

Agapanthus

Nodding in the ocean breeze,
lilies-of-the-Nile delight
as, backlit in late afternoon,
their blooms burst into purple light.

(July 2020)

River Fire

Smoky haze from the wildfire
tints mountain ridges blue
and colors the sun a fiery orange
late on a summer afternoon,
but a wildfire in Carmel Valley
blankets the hilltops with smoke –
a shelf overhead extending west
to blue sky off the coast.

(August 2020)

Seaside Painted Cup

*by Dan Williams
(Asilomar Beach)*

Tiny sear of fluorescent fire on the dune
apricot melds into gold fades into scarlet
each alive in the eye at the same moment
what's needed to light its fuse the mellow
candle glow of a medium sized star
93 million miles away--
any closer and as the sea dries up
this tiny blossom shrivels
further out and this frail little
gem light sparkles just once
then dies in a darkening world.



Carmel at Noon on September 9, 2020. Where it is gray imagine the orange of surrounding fires.

DOWNWELLING

by

Stuart L. Carton

Memories roll in with dismembered limbs of crabs
 broken glass
 driftwood
like some beach I return to, covered in fog
on days when Facebook alerts me to past events
or on days I search for a photo, scrolling for an hour on my phone
like combing that grey beach
 like finding some lost sandal in a tidepool
our faces through the years- has it really been so long?
We are there on the cliff, douglas firs in the background
you are kneeling to take a photo of tafoni
 naturally hollowed, sandstone honeycombs
 the bizarre machinations of time
I have frozen you there, trapped you in that form
the shape of your hips then, fossilized
and what if by some coincidence you were also on your computer now
and your photo washed up on your screen
so you had your stone, and I had you
in this distance
maybe we are actually the remnants
more like the worn kelp drying in the sun
changed by the years since that photo
 time carving holes in us
 it doesn't feel so long ago
is that what the seal bones say?
 recalling their lost blubber
 the meat they gave to the gulls
or have they already forgotten themselves
returning to the sea on new wings, *a final unridiculous peace*
If you could see us, Jeffers, you worshipper of spirits
we've tried our hardest to forget
our technology, looming like cracking marble cliffs
would not surprise you, nor alarm
surely we've grown more abstract, and less wise
but even our island of plastic, growing every day
poisoning the nobler beings
cannot truly mar the dark glory of the sea
where death is a deep current, cold and healing
hardly waking in its thousand year gyre
we would be lucky to drown there
to dream forever in those waters

Stuart L. Carton is the president of The Sacramento Poetry Center. He has won awards, including a Bazzanella Award from his alma mater Sacramento State, where he was an executive editor for the campus literary journal, Calaveras Station, and hosted a regular reading series. His studies at CSUS led him to explore surrealism and ecopoetics. His chapbook, *A Field Guide For The Coming Extinction* was recently published by micropress, Little M Press.

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS (April 2020 – September 15, 2020)

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP (\$1000)

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Gary Girard

Charles Inge

William T. Ondrechen

Gregory Schopen

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Joan Hendrickson

Carolyn Hess

Ken Hinshaw

Alice Holzman

Simon & Nancy Hunt

Carol Jensen

Carol Krantz Johnson

James H. & Barbara Johnson

Judy Karas

Robert Keats

Barbara Ketchel

Paul W. Kroll & Amy Strickland

Edward Lesnick/Merilyn Ferrara

Karen Letendre

Barbara Livingston

George Lober/Kathy Dalesandro

Melinda Bowman Madlin

Mick McAllister

Barbara McEnerney

Richard & Susan Platt

Lawrence Potts

Gordon & Kathy Poulson

Richard Robbins

Jo Rogers

David J. Rothman

Kathleen A. Schiebold

Cara Stimpson

Barbara Stout

Elijah Taurke

Taelen & Charlotte R Thomas

James & Debra Thomas-Rossi

Peggy Van Patten

Jeff & Janet Wallace

Robert & Paula Weaver

Douglas Weisfield

Dan Williams & L. Anne Molin

Jennifer Rooney, in Memory of
Ripple Huth

CONTRIBUTIONS (April 2020 – September 15, 2020)

CONTRIBUTIONS - \$25,000

The Trustees of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation, in support of the Jeffers Plaza Project.

CONTRIBUTIONS - \$4,000

John and Ann Varady, in support of the Poetry Prize Contest and related poetry activities.

CONTRIBUTIONS - \$1,500

Anonymous (2) in support of the Jeffers Plaza Project

CONTRIBUTIONS - \$500 to 1,000

Lacy Williams Buck, in support of the Poetry Prize Contest

Gary Girard, in memory of his daughter Michele Girard

Roland & Martha Mace, in memory of Mary F. Hearn

Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts

CONTRIBUTIONS - \$100 to \$499

Anonymous

Fran Vardamis in support of mailing expenses

Gregory Schopen

CONTRIBUTIONS – to \$100

Ben Boychuck – monthly pledged gift

Dan Gotch

Eva Hagen

Joan Hendrickson, in memory of Marina Romani

Barbara McEnerney

Peggy Van Patten

A. Webster and Rebecca Stiles, in honor of Doug Borer's birthday

Dan Williams

Jennie Hendrickson, in memory of Marina Romani, "a beautiful, talented, and gracious lady who was generous of her time and wisdom with docents-in-training and fellow docents in general."

Donations in lieu of Tours Cancelled because of Covid19

Luigina Gianfala

Antonet Phelps.

Elaine Hasbrook

Amy Lynne Phillips

Carole Jekel

Sam Ryan

Caroline LaVingne

Special thanks for support of the Monterey Conference Center Project

Tor House Foundation Trustees have, on behalf of the Foundation, donated the funds to cover costs for this long-anticipated project. In-kind donations were also made by graphic designer Herb Davy and Pacific Grove artist Carol Courtney.

Thanks to Amy Essick for a framed digital print on canvas from the original painting by Kate Carew of the portrait Of Robinson Jeffers; reproduction approved by the artist's estate.

[Please note: listings reflect only new and renewed memberships and contributions since the Spring Issue of the Newsletter. The Spring Issue lists memberships and contributions for December, January, February, and March. There are no listings in the Summer Issue because of space constraints (Poetry Prize winners are published in the Summer Issue). The Fall Issue contains memberships and contributions from April through mid-September of any given year, and the Winter Issue lists late September through November memberships and contributions.]

NEWS AND NOTES

Beyond the truly special announcement of the Jeffers Memorial in Monterey (see Page 1).

The best of news - **Tor House Tours:** After a season of quarantine, the Foundation is opening up once again, if gradually and on a limited basis. Since July we have been offering outdoors, docent-led tours of the Tor House Gardens. These weekend tours are conducted in compliance with California public health directives. Groups are limited, masks are required, social distancing is maintained. Yet, from reports, the gardens are as welcoming, the poetry as moving and the experience, since more intimate, perhaps even more exceptional than tours in “normal” times. These Outdoor Tours will be conducted as long as they are permitted by the Monterey County Department of Health. Don’t miss out. Reservations are strictly required. You can learn all the details and sign up on the web.

For those unable to travel to Carmel, we recommend a **Virtual Panel Discussion of Robinson Jeffers’ Poem, “The Purse-Seine.”** The program, presented in coordination with the Robinson Jeffers Association, met on the evening of July 29. The panel consisted of James Karman, Jeffers scholar and RJA President; Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts, THF President; and Susan Shillinglaw, former director of the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas. It was moderated by Tim Hunt, editor of the *Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers*. We are pleased to report that 83 Jeffers’ fans participated on Zoom, and an additional 15 via the Facebook link. To view a recording of the program, click the link on the Events page of the TH website at TorHouse.org. A copy of the poem under discussion is available there, as well as in your last, Summer, edition of this Newsletter. Quarterly programs are being planned, as are virtual Zoom-type tours of Tor House and Hawk Tower. If we have your e-mail address, we will notify you of future Webinar and Zoom programs.

A sad note, in these difficult times: **Deetjen’s Inn in Big Sur** has announced it is closing. The virus played a part in the decision, but so did last winter’s storms and this summer’s fires. Deetjen’s was a favorite haunt of not only Jeffers, with his own dedicated corner, but such other Big Sur literary figures as Henry Miller, Richard Brautigan and Jack Kerouac. Next best to a visit would be the richly illustrated *Big Sur Inn: The Deetjen Legacy* by Anita Alan (2006) that was reviewed in the past on these pages and may be available through library loan. Or, if you’re a collector of Jeffers material, through Amazon, used at \$175.

Lest we be tempted to conclude on a low note, observe the September 12 cover feature about Tor House and Robinson Jeffers that appeared in San Francisco’s newspaper of record, The Chronicle. Not the content, though generally reliable, as much as the placement of the article that took over much of the weekly entertainment and book section, says much for Jeffers critical and popular reputation these days. “Rediscovering State’s Great Poet” by journalist Scott Thomas once again demonstrates that Jeffers, in Cassandra mode, as he foresaw, is truly the prophet and poet of tough times.



The Last Word from Jeffers

[In 2020 California has experienced wild fires as never before. So they say. Yet, Fire was an integral part of the landscape and the lives of those who inhabit Jeffers' poetry from Barclay to Cawdor and the rest. In Jeffers there are hundreds of references to fire, often the untamed wild fires that have shaped California, and the West, for centuries. Fire, for the poet-as-prophet, was at once beautiful, terrible, and regenerative. It was neither new nor unique.]

FIRE ON THE HILLS

The deer were bounding like blown leaves
Under the smoke in front of the roaring wave of the brushfire;
I thought of the smaller lives that were caught.
Beauty is not always lovely; the fire was beautiful, the terror
Of the deer was beautiful; and when I returned
Down the black slopes after the fire had gone by, an eagle
Was perched on the jag of a burnt pine,
Insolent and gorged, cloaked in the folded storms of his shoulders.
He had come from far off for the good hunting
With fire for his beater to drive the game; the sky was merciless
Blue, and the hills merciless black,
The sombre-feathered great bird sleepily merciless between them.
I thought, painfully, but the whole mind,
The destruction that brings an eagle from heaven is better than mercy.

from *Thurso's Landing* (1932) Hunt II, 173

THE BEAKS OF EAGLES

An eagle's nest on the head of an old redwood on one of the precipice-footed ridges
Above Ventana Creek, that jagged country which nothing but a falling meteor will ever plow; no horseman
Will ever ride there, no hunter cross this ridge but the winged ones, no one will steal the eggs from this fortress.
The she-eagle is old, her mate was shot long ago, she is now mated with a son of hers.
When lightning blasted her nest she built it again on the same tree, in the splinters of the thunderbolt.
The she-eagle is older than I; she was here when the fires of 'eighty-five raged on these ridges,
She was lately fledged and dared not hunt ahead of them but ate scorched meat. The world has changed in her
time;
Humanity has multiplied, but not here; men's hopes and thoughts and customs have changed, their powers are
enlarged,
Their powers and their follies have become fantastic,
The unstable animal never has been changed so rapidly. The motor and the plane and the great war have gone
over him,
And Lenin has lived and Jehovah died: while the mother-eagle
Hunts her same hills, crying the same beautiful and lonely cry and is never tired; dreams the same dreams,
And hears at night the rock-slides rattle and thunder in the throats of these living mountains.

It is good for man

To try all changes, progress and corruption, powers, peace and anguish, not to go down the dinosaur's way
Until all his capacities have been explored: and it is good for him
To know that his needs and nature are no more changed in fact in ten thousand years than the beaks of eagles.

from *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* (1937) Hunt II, 537

or for a treat, enjoy the 1973 Beach Boy interpretation of this poem from their album *Holland*.

Available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xt9ixKSre6s>



Robinson Jeffers
Tor House Foundation
 P.O. Box 2713 • CARMEL, CA 93921

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Fall 2020

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- Individual 40.00
- Couple 50.00
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Your contribution assists in the preservation of the unique home of the poet, Robinson Jeffers, and in community outreach programs.

Membership benefits include:

- ◆ Free tours of Tor House
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