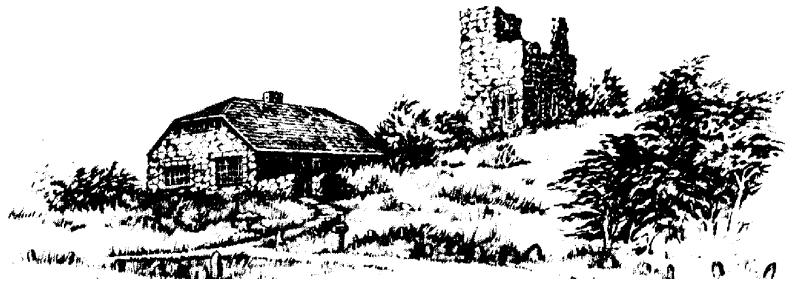


Tor House Newsletter

Fall 2021



A Letter to the Tor House Foundation Community

from Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts, President

Writing to you in the Spring *Newsletter* to announce the cancellation of our annual Garden Party, I was “hopeful that, with a successful nationwide inoculation program, we will be able to gather together in the garden at Tor House for the Sunset Celebration, the opening event for our annual Fall Festival, tentatively scheduled for the first weekend in October” At their May meeting, the Foundation Trustees enthusiastically decided to move ahead with the Fall Festival, and what a wonderful program we had planned: a Friday evening Sunset Celebration at Tor House with music and poetry, wine and cheese; a Saturday morning/afternoon program at the Carmel Women’s Club with a reading from the 1929 Jeffers family travel diaries by Jeffers family members, talks by Jeffers scholars Robert Zaller and David Rothman, a performance by tenor Jos Milton accompanied by pianist Melinda Coffey Armstead of five Jeffers poems set to music, and a poetry reading by this year’s Prize for Poetry Award winner Tom Goff; a Saturday evening dedication of the sculptures in Jeffers Plaza at the Monterey Conference Center followed by a dinner with keynote speaker artist Enrique Martínez Celaya, inaugural Fellow at Tor House, including a documentary of his time at Tor House by Gabriela Martínez Celaya; and a Sunday continental breakfast at Tor House followed by a poetry walk along Carmel River Beach. The Fall Festival was to be co-sponsored by the Robinson Jeffers Association.

Sadly, because of our concern with the current spike in Covid-19 infections, especially with the more contagious variants, we have decided to cancel this year’s Fall Festival. The decision was made after James Karman, President of RJA and I consulted with THF Trustee Dr. Gere diZerega. Our concern for the health of the Tor House and RJA communities and the larger community is at the heart of this decision. We are hopeful that we will be able to hold some of the programs scheduled for the Fall Festival as individual events once it is safe to do so.

Had we held the Fall Festival, we would have modified the program to include a tribute to Jeffers scholar Robert J. Brophy who died August 16 at the age of 93. Instead, we are paying tribute in the following pages to this exceptional scholar, teacher, and activist.

We are also acknowledging those who since February of this year renewed their memberships and/or donated to the Foundation. We are grateful for your donations during this time when income from one of our major sources, tours, has diminished greatly. Your support has been invaluable: it has allowed us to fulfill our mission of maintaining Tor House and Hawk Tower and their collections; promoting the literary and philosophical legacy of Robinson Jeffers; and serving as a cultural resource to the community.

In his poem “Carmel Point,” Jeffers speaks to “The extraordinary patience of things!” We whom Jeffers advises “must uncenter our minds from ourselves...must unhumanize our views a little,” are, hopefully, gifted with simple ordinary patience. Let us be patient. Let us hope we will be able to meet together for some of the events planned for the Fall Festival and next May at the Garden Party. Most of all, let us stay in good health and good spirits.

Robert J. Brophy – February 6, 1928 – August 16, 2021

He was heralded as “a new generation’s Jeffers admirer.” But that was long ago, when the likes of Dame Judith Anderson, Ansel Adams and Lawrence Clark Powell were at the heart of the Jeffers universe. In 2001 he was described, on these pages as:

The author of *Robinson Jeffers: Myth, Ritual, and Symbol in His Narrative Poems*, and countless other critical articles on Jeffers, and editor of *Robinson Jeffers, Dimensions of a Poet* (1995), Robert Brophy is the dean of Jeffers scholars. He was editor of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter* for more than thirty years and is now Senior Editor of *Jeffers Studies*, the journal of the Robinson Jeffers Association. Brophy, Professor Emeritus at the California State University at Long Beach, resides in Los Alamitos, California.

The *Los Angeles Times* carried his obituary, parts of which note:

ROBERT J. BROPHY: SCHOLAR, ACTIVIST, PROFESSOR: Robert J. Brophy, 93, died August 16 of Alzheimer's disease in Alexandria, Virginia. As a former Jesuit, Dr. Brophy taught at the University of San Francisco (1965-1968). In 1968, he began his decades-long teaching career at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), where he joined the English Department, and co-founded the Religious Studies Department. A significant volume of Dr. Brophy's work is held in CSULB library's Special Collections Department, with some at UC Berkeley's Bancroft Library. In his years at CSULB, Dr. Brophy was an inspirational professor, often hosting classes in the warmth of his home. He lovingly organized annual fieldtrips with his students, to read poetry along the Big Sur coast, and to visit Robinson Jeffers' Tor House and famous Hawk Tower. Robert J. Brophy was an activist for peace throughout his life, avidly protesting the Vietnam war, nuclear armament, and the School of the Americas. He was arrested in civil disobedience on several occasions and advised college students on how to register as conscientious objectors. Bob Brophy's kindness, humor, brilliance, and spirit will be missed. . . . His ashes will be scattered in Big Sur.”



Bob Brophy during a Tor House Fall Festival Bus Excursion to Big Sur in 2000

What follows are portions of a remarkable essay by Dr. Brophy, himself, as well as memories and tributes by those of the Jeffers community who were fortunate enough to know this remarkable scholar, educator, and human being.

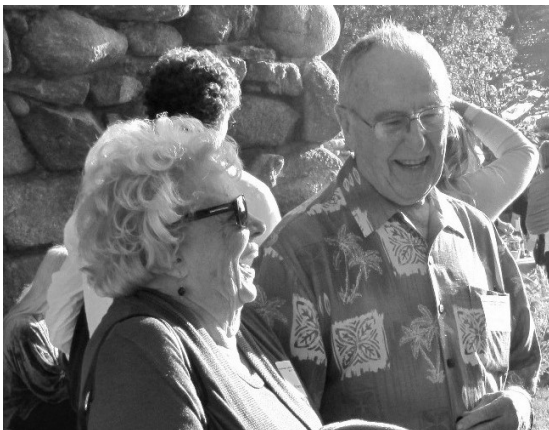
ShaunAnne Tangney is a Professor of English at Minot State University where she teaches American literature, critical theory, and creative writing. Her scholarly interests focus on literature and culture of the U.S. West. Her most recent publication is *The Wild That Attracts Us: New Critical Essays on Robinson Jeffers* (UNMP, 2015). She is also a poet, and her work has been published in the United States, Great Britain, and Australia.

ShaunAnne provides the following excerpt from Bob Brophy who apologized for his delayed response to her request for material: "Sorry it has taken me so long to reply but I was chained to the fence outside a nuclear plant last week...."

She goes on to say that she was, "totally blown away by his response. I have always wondered if everyone really knew the life Bob lived... It moves me deeply to this day, and I include it here--an amazing slice of Bob Brophy's life, in his own words:"

"That was the decade in which I was first radicalized in the South in grad school, marched, then taught at USF right in the middle of San Francisco, three blocks from Haight-Ashbury. Toward the end (1967) I was subpoenaed by the ACLU to give testimony on the "Love Book," a poem by Lenore Kandell, a trial in which the jury (all high school grads, ignorant of literature, and conservative) decided the poem was pornographic and the clerks of City Lights Bookshop clerks should go to jail. I sat next to Ferlinghetti during the trial. That was the beginning of the end for my life in the Jesuits!

Everyone I knew was into "sensitivity weekends." I joined a faculty press conference condemning the bombing of Cambodia. Opposed the building of a multi-million-dollar cathedral in the razed SF black district. We had compulsory Army ROTC on campus for all males and some of my students refused to take the courses and were not allowed to graduate. That was when I was first exposed to pacifism and conscientious objection. One of my best friends, a student, fled to Canada, having burned his draft card. We had a school teacher come to campus to discuss smoking marijuana as a way of relaxing and survival--to the consternation of the administration.



Brenda Jeffers and Brophy, Fall Festival 2012



Jean Grace and Bob Brophy, Poetry Walk, 2005

Then in 1961, when I was in first semester at U of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, another priest student asked me whether I would consider picketing the classy restaurant in the middle of town. I said yes, and while walking with my sign (and Roman collar), a car slammed on its breaks next to me and a guy got out red faced and came at me with a baseball bat. That shocked me into realizing that there was a whole culture that I was not conscious of, and my life changed (and continues to change). I had to reassess racism, classism, militarism, etc. Each step on the way was a grace.

Of course there were excesses. Three of my student friends fried their brains with drugs. One walked out of a second story window on LSD and became a paraplegic. There was an overreaction to authority, police especially. The pill hit campus hard, changed sexual mores. That society later abandoned Vietnam vets. It was very touchie-feelie, probably to excess. Patriotism lived and died. Questioning everything led to a kind of anarchism. Racial tensions burned several cities. Education became more eclectic. War and racism and their opponents disrupted classes, closed down campuses. Religion did not fare well.

It was an incredible age, questioning everything, trying anything, shredding sexual mores, denying family, overturning customs, societal attitudes, touting the individual, rejecting age-old restraints, nay-saying, pioneering, dismantling institutions, defiant, curious, revolutionary, sensual, spiritual, iconoclastic, confronting, dismissing, reinventing. The list is endless.

[This is a shortened version of Brophy's note. The TH office can put you in touch with ShaunAnne, for more.]

The Judgment of Those Fortunate Enough to Have Known Professor Brophy (in alphabetical order)

Terry Beers: Bob Brophy—insightful scholar, dogged editor, and dedicated teacher—was a pretty good listener (though not always). And being so, he provided great encouragement to colleagues, especially younger ones, and to students.

Rob Kafka: Bob Brophy's passing will be felt by all in the Jeffers community, for he took such a personal interest in each of us. His scholarship was impeccable and ground-breaking, especially in the early years when Jeffers was a dead letter in scholarly institutions. His book on myth and ritual in Jeffers's narratives will remain the starting point for any future consideration of Jeffers's primary poetic mode. His sole editorship over decades of the *Robinson Jeffers Newsletter*, precursor to the journal *Jeffers Studies*, was a labor of love. He gave each voice his full and sympathetic attention, and invariably offered wise counsel.

Jim Karman: In 1969, following the death of Melba Bennett, Bob took over as editor of the [*Robinson Jeffers*] *Newsletter*, a position he held for almost thirty years. During that time, as Jeffers' contemporaries passed away and new generations of scholars appeared, Bob was at the very center of Jeffers' world, in touch with an international community of readers interested in the poet's life and work. As a founding member of the Robinson Jeffers Association when it was established in 1990, and as the founding senior editor of *Jeffers Studies* when it was launched in 1997, Bob continued to inspire others. The course he set is the one we are on today.

Mick McAllister: I met Bob once at a WLA meeting. But my fond memory is that he gave me my first publication, an essay in *RJN*, when I was a senior at CSU. And my most solid memory is that it was *Myth, Ritual* that inspired my own exploration of RJ's work. I wish I had known him. He was a force of nature, with all her gentleness and ferocity, and he will be missed by many who never knew him.

Peter Quigley: Without Bob's generosity of spirit and welcoming warmth combined with his careful and loving treatment of Jeffers' verse, the last 3 decades of my life would have been very different and much less rich. In short, he changed my life and career by offering me the hope that I had something to say about Jeffers. Bob was a gardener of new Jeffers scholars. Whether accepted for publication or not, every manuscript I submitted to Bob came back with the most careful and thoughtful comments, in pencil mostly; small, somewhat shaky, cursive comments respecting the work you had shared with him but always always with fidelity to Jeffers' ocean cadence. He would suggest this or that passage from Jeffers to consider. There was so much attention, love, and care in these comments that one didn't mind if he was also saying "not there yet."

David Rothman: Bob was unfailingly kind and patient, yet highly (highly!) attentive to detail, as he shepherded my essay through the publication process. Bob drew me into the warmest, most engaging, supportive community of scholars and writers I had ever known.

Robert Zaller: Robinson Jeffers was a gentle man, though also as tough-minded as any man could be. Bob Brophy was a gentleman in every fiber of his being, yet he took Jeffers as a life talisman, and patiently excavated what was deepest and sometimes most terrifying in his work. That took great courage and dedication, and great pains, too, in all senses of the word. I found the book before I met the man, and only slowly came to realize how the two went together. I also came, but much sooner, to see in the humility, the generosity, and the essential goodness of Bob all that one could wish in a friend and a brother. We have all lost him, but he remains with us in his noble spirit, his lasting vision, and in our hearts.



Bob Brophy and Alex Vardamis, RJA 2008



Dr. Robert Brophy, RJA 2006

Such a sweet and soft-spoken man of great intelligence, strong lifelong beliefs and wonderful dedication to our grandfather's works. Our dear Bob will be sorely missed by all. Rest in peace--**The family of Garth Jeffers**

NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERSHIPS (April 2021 – August 2021)

LIFETIME MEMBERSHIP (\$1000)

Klara Kalvasova

PATRON MEMBERS (\$250 for Individual or Couple)

Bob Archer

Steve Barghusen & Katherine Knutson

Joe Callaghan / Robin Rose

Allene Thompson, In Honor of All Past and Present Tor House – Hawk Tower Docents

Gordon & Elizabeth Campbell

William T. Ondrechen

Susan Shillinglaw

SPONSOR MEMBERS (\$100 for Individual or Couple)

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Mick McAllister

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Thea & Kit Sagen

Kathleen A. Schiebold

Raymony & Amy Sims

Mary Jane Sligar

Bruce Smith

James Snyder

Cara Stimpson

J. W. "Jerry" Swan

Taelen & Charlotte R Thomas

William True / Louise Flick

Peggy Van Patten

Jeff & Janet Wallace

Robert & Paula Weaver

Brad Whitehurst

SUMMER POEMS BY Laura C. Newmark

A Gray Summer Day in Carmel

After early drizzle,
overcast dims the summer sky,
and dense mist in the mountains fades
the Monterey pines to ghostly gray.

(June/July 2021)

A Summer Accent

Between two mountain ridges
dark with evergreen trees,
a wedge of white fog floats inland,
a summer accent from the sea.

(May 2021)

Fellow of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Foundation Program: An Update

At their May 2 meeting this year, the Foundation Trustees formally established The Fellow of the Robinson Jeffers Tor House Program “to provide professional artists with access to Tor House and Hawk Tower so they can work on site and draw inspiration and generate new perspectives from their interaction with the site and with the poetry of Robinson Jeffers.”

In the Summer *Newsletter* we reported on the inaugural Fellow, artist and author Enrique Martínez Celaya, and the exceptional experience he had at Tor House, an experience he described as “a definite marker in my life-path.” We are pleased to report that we have the good fortune to welcome Jos Milton, Peter and Donna Thomas, and Tom Killion as Fellows.

Jos Milton is a professional, classically-trained singer (tenor) based in Oxford, Mississippi, where he is an Associate Professor of Music at the University of Mississippi. He has commissioned a song cycle, *The Place for No Story: Five Poems of Robinson Jeffers*. The music for the songs was composed by Zachary Wadsworth (Assistant Professor of Music, Williams College). The song cycle is part of a program of contemporary classical songs for voice and piano which Jos will be recording with pianist Melinda Coffey Armstead (who is also a Foundation Trustee). “It would be an honor and an amazing opportunity to be able to use the Tor House as space for music while I am in Carmel working on this project,” Jos wrote. “The thought of singing these poems in Jeffers’ house seems like an incredible center for artistic inspiration.” Jos spent time at Tor House in June and will return in early October for a performance at Tor House.

Peter and Donna Thomas are papermakers, book artists and authors from Santa Cruz. They work collaboratively, making both edition and one-of-a-kind books. They founded the Good Book Press in 1977; the last Good Book Press edition was a 1987 fine-art-printing of William Everson’s eulogy for Robinson Jeffers, *The Poet Is Dead*. In 1988 they reorganized under the imprint Peter and Donna Thomas: Santa Cruz. This year, The Legacy Press published a descriptive bibliography of their work, *Peter and Donna Thomas: Bibliography, 1974-2020*, listing over 500 books they have made during their careers.

Tom Killion is an American artist, author, African historian and educator. He is internationally known for printmaking linocut, woodcut and letterpress techniques. The subject matter of his artwork is often the landscapes of Northern California. Three of his books were co-authored by Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Gary Snyder; the last of these, *California’s Wild Edge* (2015), won a Gold Medal from the California Book Awards. His art studio is in Inverness Ridge on the Point Reyes Peninsula in Marin County. Holder of a PhD in African History from Stanford University, Killion spent much of the 1980s and 1990s working and teaching in Africa. He has also taught at Bowdoin College, the University of Asmara and San Francisco State University.

During their time at Tor House (January 25-27, 2022), Peter, Donna and Tom will “develop the concept, format, and content for a broadside that Peter and Donna will print, on paper they make, using Jeffers’ words and an illustration (relief print) cut by Tom....We plan to have the broadside completed in time to show it at the 2022 spring Garden Party.”

We are so fortunate to have these exceptional artists as Fellows.

~Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts

Tor House expresses appreciation for the following gifts:

Kirk B. de Ford for photos taken during his 1965 visit to Tor House

Brent Sepulvado for three fire extinguishers

Stanley Willis for a portfolio of Jeffers family letters/photos and newspaper articles.

Contributions (Year-End Appeal & April – August 2021)

Contributions: \$5,000 to 10,000

Anonymous Peter Bennett Family Grant

Contributions: \$1,000 to \$5,000

Lacy Buck Dana & Mary Gioia
Rob Kafka Elliot Ruchowitz-Roberts
John & Ann Varady, in support of Poetry Prize and Poetry Programs

Contributions: \$500 to \$999

Anonymous Jim and Paula Karman Carolyn M. Kleefeld
Don & Laura Newmark Alice Phelan Sullivan Corp.

Contributions (Year-End Appeal & April – August 2021)

Contributions - \$100 to \$499

Diane H. Campbell Jim & Paula Karman Kriss Ostrom Jenepher Stowell Susan Shillinglaw

Contributions to \$99 Ben Boychuk William True

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A NOTE OF SOME INTEREST

Included in the longlist for this year’s prestigious British Booker Prize is *Second Place* by the Canadian-British novelist Rachel Cusk. A fictionalized memoir narrated by “M,” the wife of the laconic “Tony,” and addressed throughout, by name, to “Jeffers,” the plot revolves around M’s obsession with bringing “L” to her artist colony, not, as one might expect, in Taos, New Mexico, but on the shores of an unidentified marsh. In an afterword, Ms. Cusk credits *Lorenzo in Taos*, by Mable Dodge Luhan (out of print but available on Amazon Kindle if it is not already in your Jeffers library). Alas, the novel has not proven a breakthrough in the popular reputation of Jeffers, who seems almost unknown to critics from PBS to the Guardian to the LA Times that does note that Jeffers, “seems to be a reference to the poet Robinson Jeffers, one of Dodge Luhan’s correspondents in Lorenzo.” Certainly, to enjoy this most interesting roman à clef, an exercise in turning fact into fiction, it might, indeed, be better to enjoy the novel and not to know the backstory.

THE LAST WORD FROM JEFFERS

REARMAMENT

These grand and fatal movements toward death: the grandeur of the mass
Makes pity a fool, the tearing pity
For the atoms of the mass, the persons, the victims, makes it seem monstrous
To admire the tragic beauty they build.
It is beautiful as a river flowing or a slowly gathering
Glacier on a high mountain rock-face,
Bound to plow down a forest, or as frost in November,
The gold and flaming death-dance for leaves,
Or a girl in the night of her spent maidenhood, bleeding and kissing.
I would burn my right hand in a slow fire
To change the future...I should do foolishly. The beauty of modern
Man is not in the persons but in the
Disastrous rhythm, the heavy and mobile masses, the dance of the
Dream-led masses down the dark mountain.

From *Such Counsels You Gave to Me* (1937) Hunt II 515



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

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Fall 2021

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- Full-time student/TH Docent \$15.00
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Consult Website for on-line payment

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
- ◆ 10% discount on merchandise
- ◆ Advance invitations to coming events
- ◆ Quarterly newsletter

**ROBINSON JEFFERS
TOR HOUSE FOUNDATION**

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