



Library podcast

Virtual It's About Time Writers' Reading Series, #389

00:00:01 Peggy

Good evening and welcome to the It's About Time Writers' Reading Series. Since 1990, this series has existed in Seattle for all those who want to write. Each month features three writers, three readers excuse me, and during in person times usually featured a writer's craft discussion, but it still features three minute open microphone opportunities if anybody is interested. We're joined tonight by our founder, Esther Healthgott, who began this series, as I mentioned in 1990, and it was dedicated to the memory of her mother, Anna, and to the memory of Nelson Bentley, the quintessential teacher who gave Anna and scores of others help and hope. It's About Time is dedicated to an end of racism, homophobia, antisemitism homelessness and war. Tonight's April offering is dedicated to Edori Anne Shawl, 1934 through 2022, who perhaps Esther can speak to whether she was indeed reading as early as the founding of the program, because as long as I have been attending, which is a mere 20 years, Edori was never far from us. So I am hoping that we will be able to hear some of her poetry from her daughter and I will be looking to see if her daughter Elaine is able to join us. While we do that, I have two people for the open mic so far, Ginger Z. and Denny Stern. If anyone else is interested, please let me know. I will now like to introduce Nicole Cardina and who I just was delighted to learn had not been on Zoom for months, so we brought her back to the online world for tonight's reading and I'm very much looking forward to hearing her work. She is a Seattle based writer and the author of Little Washington, an exploration of 100 small towns in the Evergreen State. Her work has appeared in Scope, Months to Years, The Bellingham Review, Proximity, and elsewhere. She's received support from Artist Trust for her memoir in progress and account of love and grief. When not writing, she can be found in Sodo on The Flying Trapeze or making cocktails at Ballard's best whisky soaked gastro pub. Welcome, Nicole.

00:02:47 Nicole

Thanks, Peggy. Thanks for inviting me to be here. And wow, 30 years of readings. That's pretty amazing. Congratulations. I'm super excited to be here and thank you all for coming as well. Can everybody hear me all right? Yeah. Awesome. As Peggy mentioned, it's been a while since I've been on Zoom. I'm not very online at all, so it feels a bit unfamiliar. So today I'm going to read from my memoir in progress. This is from early in the memoir. This piece is called Find Someone Who.

00:03:23 Nicole

[Reading] My thoughts that morning were focused on my lesson plan, three pages long for a two hour class. I still felt new to teaching. Then on the bus, I reviewed my cues as though I were preparing for

an audition. 'Write' I had written on the plan. 'Ask.' 'Say.' It was my first quarter at the Institute of English. My students were mostly from China and Korea, with many from Saudi Arabia and Japan and just a few students representing the rest of the world. I arrived early to class and unpacked my bag, placing the handouts on the desk in neat piles. Each day's lesson had a specific goal, or SWBAT, pronounced swabat. Students Will Be Able To. I turned on the computer with the dry erase markers in the tray and wrote a student friendly version of the swabot on the board. Find someone who shares your experiences. I was an okay teacher. The most honest assessment I can make is that I worked hard at it. My students filed in, and I wrote the date January 29, 2013. The new chapter of our textbook was about phobias, so I began by asking the students to discuss theirs. What are you afraid of? I wrote on the board, as well as how to structure an answer. I'm afraid of blank, for example. Naturally, they wanted to know my answer, and I told them, I'm afraid of small spaces. We practice the pronunciation claustrophobia each time, claustrophobia overtakes me. It's the surprise the tunnel vision, the shortness of breath, the way I can know, logically, that I'm safe. But my mind and body shut down anyway. Memory pushes back, as though it's not really me to be this way. When I was a kid, I used to shut myself in my bedroom for hours reading. I liked to duck under the moths hanging off pine trees and sit in semi darkness next to a tree trunk, eating the little berries in the undergrowth. I've flown across the world. I've been crammed like a sardine with strangers in the bottom bunk of an overnight bus. This is to say, sometimes I tolerate small spaces as well. Sometimes I like them. Despite all this, small spaces can undo me. On a visit to the UK, I went with my brother to a cave that had been turned into a tourist attraction. I felt the walls close in as we descended 200ft to a boat on an underground river. The tunnel was small. Our guide pushed the boat along by pressing his hands against the Earth on either side. I felt a cool breeze moving over the water. Fresh air, see? 1000 meters on, the tunnel opened into a massive airy chamber, and I felt buried alive. The same thing happened at the top of the Duomo in Florence and on a restored World War II Growler submarine docked in New York. Often on an airplane, I have considered whether, if I were to run up and down the aisle, shrieking, they'd have to let me out. We'll be closing the cabin doors at any moment, the flight attendant says, and something in the breaks. I didn't share these details with my students. Of course. I have boundaries. I didn't share that I'm afraid of failure and spiders. And one of my uncles, even though he's dead. Increasingly, I'm afraid of losing my parents when I was growing up. On the rare occasion my parents vacationed without my brother and me, my mother would leave instructions for what to do in case their plane went down. As the students discussed their fears, I circulated, checking in on their conversations, answering questions. They were afraid of: bees, dogs, tall places- I clarified: afraid of heights. After completing the unit in the textbook, students would give a brief oral presentation about a phobia using the present perfect tense three times. For the rest of the day, we practiced the new grammar. I called out verbs, and the students raced in teams to write the present perfect form on the verb visit. I call go, need, want, be. Team Superstar was the winner, with Team Awesome Sauce coming in a close second. We reviewed the correct answers, visited, gone, needed, wanted. Then later, on the bus home, I was reviewing the lesson plan, making a note to clarify the difference between the verb to fear and the adjective form to be afraid of. When my phone rang, it was a fireman calling. Jalen had a seizure in class, the fireman said. We took him to the University hospital. You should go there now. The brakes side. The bus lurched to a stop. People got off, got on the bus, lurched forward. I remember being terribly afraid, though I don't know why. What I knew was limited to the fact of a seizure, the fireman's urgency, and

the red flashing lights of the word emergency room. I called Jalen's mother, who lived 300 miles away. I called my parents, who lived just around the corner. Then there was no one else to call. The rain streaked city moved past the dark, bust window, and I saw a reflection of myself crying into my scarf. The woman next to me kept her eyes on the phone in her lap. At the hospital, Jalen looked tired. A box of wires led from the pocket of his hospital gown to a machine. A cuff squeezed his left bicep, and his blood pressure appeared on the screen next to the green line of his heartbeat. His shoulderling pair was gathered with an elastic at the nape of his neck, just as it had been in the morning when we were drinking coffee, as though everything were normal. The room seemed massive and we were alone in it. I threw my coat over the only chair and went to him. You had a seizure, I guess, he said. He looked tired and dazed. I stood on his right side, holding his hand. Your mom is coming, I said. Do you want to call her? I let go of his hand to reach for my phone, and he took it with his left hand. Do you want me to call? What happened next still plays in slow motion for me. Okay, he said. He reached out as though to hand the phone back to me. His body curled away to the left. The phone slid out of his grasp. His left shoulder wrenched forward, lifted off the bed, and dropped, lifted, dropped. His hand flew to his forehead in an awkward salute. The space between us seemed to flex. I moved my mouth in the shape of the word help but heard no sound. I thought I was watching him die. Then the room filled with people in scrubs, and time sped up. Someone held Jalen's arm while another thrust a needle into the joint of a tube that ran to the back of his hand. As the drug took effect, his body hitched again and then calmed. We gave him a lot of out of an. One of the scrubs said he should sleep for a while. The scrub veiled him away for a CT scan, and my parents arrived. Someone brought us another chair. We waited in the clean, empty room until they brought him back. Hey, Jalen, my dad said. You okay? Jalen said he was okay, but by then we knew he was not. I called a neurologist, the doctor said there's some kind of mass in his brain. Night in the hospital turned today. I sent a message to my boss requesting an emergency sub for my classes. Something is happening with Jalen's brain, I wrote. All I could do was report. First. They removed a piece of Jalen's skull and took out a bit of the thing that had taken up residences in his brain. A week later, the surgeon gave it a name. The surgeon was ready with a metaphor to explain why he couldn't remove it. It's like a handful of sand thrown into a glass of water, he said. On the black field of the MRI, I thought I saw a white tentacled arm reaching. The surgeon had a craggy face and a smile that held his regret. Three weeks later, I was back at work, just in time for student presentations. February 19, I wrote on the board swabat: give a short presentation describing a phobia using the present perfect three times. My Dean arrived late. She had chosen my first day back to observe the class and evaluate my teaching. She hugged me and held me at arm's length. How are you? She asked, but I had not yet figured out how to answer. The surgeon's voice was still ringing in my ears. This will almost certainly shorten your life. Sako volunteered to present first. He showed a scene from the movie Arachnophobia, and the class squealed when a Spider crawled from a bowl of popcorn into a dead woman's nostril. Sako was funny and confident before the class. I have never been afraid of spiders, he said. Each time he used the present perfect. I wrote a check Mark on the evaluation form. Next taste of talked about signophobia. 9% of people have experienced fear of dogs, he said. Check. I glanced at my Dean, who was also taking notes, ostensibly about me. Floriana went third. She put her whole body behind the podium and her voice wobbled when she said hello. Her PowerPoint presentation began with three big letters. I have a phobia of war, she explained. A pile of corpses filled the screen. When I was ten years old, war came to my village. The corpses were replaced by a

small collection of Orange tiled roofs tucked into a lush hillside across from a snow capped mountain. She showed images of soldiers in formation, then a woman in a headscarf hanging laundry in front of a tank, then the shell of a bombed out building. There is no special word for this phobia, she said. The class was tense, and Floriana seemed about to cry. I wanted to get this over for her to stop making her look this subject in the eye in front of everyone. She persisted. Have you ever heard of Kosovo? I recognized her construction. On the day that ended in the emergency room, I led the class in an activity called Find someone who each student got a worksheet with phrases to turn into questions. For example, the phrase Visit Europe became have you ever visited Europe? The students mingled in practice. Have you ever needed help? Have you ever wanted something that you could not get? Have you ever been in love? The activity gets them practicing and also helps them bond the way that finding someone who shares your experiences will do. That day, many students have visited Europe. Now a few of them have heard of Kosovo, Floriana continued. Please raise your hand if you have seen a war. None of us raised a hand. I suspect none of us could even imagine what Floriana had experienced, least of all, it seemed my Dean. After the students left, she chuckled and said, War is not really a phobia. Phobia from the Greek phobia, meaning fear or panic. We may categorize fear as rational or irrational, but at its root, fear is fear. I gathered my things and went home to Jalen in the new shape of our days. Every morning now, I took him to his radiation appointment, where they strapped his head to a table for ten minutes under a mask of ultralight Kevlar that had been dipped in hot water and molded to his face while Jalen endured whole brain radiation with an extra strong dose to the right frontal lobe. I sat beside an aquarium filled with the characters from Finding Nemo and Meditated. I imagined the tumor in the form of a cloud of black smoke. Slowly, carefully, I drew it out, passing it easily through his skull. The smoke broke into tiny squares, moving through the Kevlar mesh before it reassembled and drifted down the hallway to the waiting room. I held the smoke in front of my chest and then, breath by breath, drew it into my own heart, as I had learned to do. I used the smoke to destroy my self-cherishing nature, which transformed the smoke into healing blue light. I beamed the light back down the hallway past the nurse station, through the door marked Danger: Radiation, through the mask and Jalen's head strapped to the table and into his brain, where I suppose it worked some kind of magic. "Taking and giving," this meditation is called. Sometimes I picture little radioactive miners. Jalen said once, and I imagined them to swinging glowing green pickaxes carting away tumorous rubble. Maybe the amount they carted away was commensurate to the amount of self-cherishing I had destroyed that day. There were 30 radiation appointments and all. We took an elevator to the hospital's low ceiling basement and waited quietly until they called his name. He took off his baseball cap, sweatshirt, and glasses and handed them to me. Most days he kissed me. Be right back, he said. I watched him smile at the radiation tech. He made a joke about Oregon's basketball team. The tech laughed and held out a fist. Jalen bumped it. They walked together down the windowless hallway, past the nurses, beyond the sign that warned Danger. [Finished Reading] Thanks.

00:17:10 Peggy

Thank you. You're going to leave us there? Oh, my goodness. Where are you at on your memoir?

00:17:19 Nicole

Oh, gosh. Some days it feels like this draft will be done any minute, and some days it feels like I'll never, ever, ever finish.

00:17:27 Peggy

And then one day it really will be. That draft will really be finished.

00:17:32 Nicole

Inshallah.

00:17:33 Peggy

Yes. No. Keep us posted. That was absolutely riveting. Thank you. We have been joined by Elaine Knobs Seashult. Edori's daughter, so if you'd like to join us.

00:17:51 Elaine

So thank you for the invite and I appreciate that. My mother, Helen Edori Angel, who changed her name to Edori when she was in her Sixties. Her middle name was a long time member of this group and long, long, long time. She talked a lot about Nelson Bentley when she went to the University of Washington or 30s. She passed away in January at the age of 87 and two years ago when during the middle of COVID, she moved to a memory care. But one of the things that I thought this group would find interesting is she always had her notebook to work on her poems with her, even as her memory was really going. So I appreciate everything that she participated in this group and many others around Seattle. So I told Peggy that actually for her funeral I had a writer friend of mine helped me go through all her homes, many like hundreds, and we chose nine to put in a booklet and I actually had these printed and if anyone is interested, I have extra. The printing and funeral company made extra, so I would love to send them to anyone who wants them. Peggy, should I just read one or what would you recommend?

00:19:38 Peggy

Now when I wasn't sure you could join us, I really quick looked at the booklet and I was wondering if you could read about the one instruction I seem to hear from her. My older sister died on Valentine's Day. That would be lovely.

00:19:55 Elaine

Yeah. I read Ode to a Potato at her funeral, which was one that she read a lot around Seattle. It's nice to read a different one.

00:20:07 Peggy

Yeah. And like I said, I volunteered, too, that if Elaine wants to send them to me, I can coordinate versus her having to send them to different people. But I would definitely like to have one. So I'll be sending you my mailing address once we get to be in person. Maybe I can share them more, but I would love I'm so glad you're able to join us, and we'd love to hear that poem.

00:20:31 Elaine

Okay. So my mother's sister Sydney died in 2005, and she wrote this home after she passed away. [Reading] Instruction, I seemed to hear from her. My older sister died on Valentine's Day, 2005. See if you can plant some herbs, put fresh Rosemary in vases, pull out your bad poems and water your better ones. Call up everyone who's left a message. Tell them something grand about me, something grand about them. Organize the photograph, then work on your dreams. Make them take place in Paris. You and me, young, singing duets at our upright, noisy in English with friends on the bus stalking our Hungarian loves at the fountain. Dream these things so I can dream two of us young, beautiful, wise, tortured by loving. So I can sing with you while I am gone. [Finished Reading]

00:21:41 Peggy

Yeah, that certainly takes on another poignancy in terms of that. But it's so fitting, so lovely. So I can hear your mom's voice so distinctly. She just has such a voice. So thank you so much. And you're welcome to come back for the next nine months if you want, like, read a poem a month, anything you want to do. But you'll always be welcome here.

00:22:07 Elaine

Thank you so much. I really appreciate it.

00:22:10 Peggy

All right. Thank you so much for joining us. Now I'm going to introduce Don Creeker. All right. Let me give you an introduction. So he is a biomedical researcher whose focus is the electric activity within the brain. That's fitting. He is author of the 2020 hybrid collection *Discovery*, the 2022 hybrid chat book *When Danger Is Passed, Who Remembers?* A 2020 Pushcart nominee and a 2020 Creative Nonfiction Foundation Sciences Story Fellow. His work has appeared in *The American Journal of Nursing*, *Neurology*, *Seneca Review*, *The Ostecho Sure*, *The Blue NIB*, the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*, and others, and has been translated into Farsi, Greek, Italian, German and Turkish. Welcome, Don.

00:23:09 Don

Thank you, Peggy. Thank you, everyone. It's an honor to read here. Thank you, Sally, for reading that poem. And Nicole, thanks for opening it up for us in your voice. It's very fine. I'm looking forward to hearing Larry as well. I just picked this poem to read based on what we've heard so far. [Reading] *Celebration of Claudia*. Her body outlived her. I don't know how long, but for a long time it was written in their tired faces, in her husband's shrug, in each reminiscence with its patina of fiction, tierless near flat like wounds staffed for years till closed. I took two stones from her collection, round but nerled heavy in my pocket. I will place one at my friend's grave, murdered at the Tree of Life, the other on my Wills, and so sanctified them all. [Finished Reading] I think I'll read a couple from this chat book, which just came out *When Danger has Passed, he remembers*. The main part of this book came from a time in the 1970s when I built satellites and Rockets at the University of Michigan. [Reading] *Teflon Fred White, Roger Chassis Gus Grissom Apollo 1 January 27, 1967* Stitch welds came first. Gold plates, steel pins, nickel wire, each. Weld inspected rework till perfect. Flat packs on the flip side solder, gleaming like a mirror. Each inspected rework till perfect. Then the edge connectors and the wiring harness, Teflon coated copper soldered into gold plate cups. We knew by then Teflon flows under pressure. A kink and a cable can short and ignite. That's what killed Apollo one. Our work flew

no problem, though. Our last half ton payload landed in a Texas pasture on a cow. Tomorrow night is Passover. The Last Supper was Passover, and Easter, of course, is Sunday. That Last Supper is also called the Seder. No one was there. Lots wife died. Nameless for being unmailed. A young white man killed eight last week to save himself from temptation. Seven were women. Hun Jung, Grant Sunsha, Kim Young, Ashley Yawn and Paul Andre. Michelle. We shop today at the Pious Bookshop, bought stator plates for the kids, packed in a fresh pizza box with second hand bubble wrap. Passovers. This weekend they had coffee mugs and fridge magnets, skull caps with slogans we are stronger together and no place for hate. As if it was this morning I remembered passing security for the funeral. The line blocks long down Darlington Road. Eleven unorthodox killed at the Tree of Life. I longed for the others, the pious, to be with us together, down Darlington Road and at the Cemetery later, their beards, black coats and tits. It but no one was there. As if you're not Orthodox, you're not a Jew. As if it matters that the murdered are that no one was there. [Finsihed Reading] I think I'm going to read a very short poem by Denise Webertosh, who some of you may know. This is in book Denise Levertos Poem 68 to 72. It's titled dawn. [Reading] If the body is a house, the house, the temple. In that temple is a labyrinth. In that labyrinth core, a vast room. In the rooms remote depth and altar. Upon the altar, a battle raging, raging between two Angels, one feathered with spines with sharp flames, one luminous, the subtle angel of understanding. And from time to time a smile flickers on the face of the mean angel and slips shadowy over to the gentle face. [Finsihed Reading] I've been wanting to read. This one first appeared in the Seneca Review and their 50th anniversary issue. [Reading] Invisible for Susie leftovers, went to Rick, the human garbage can. He sat at the foot of the table, dad at the head, mom and Susie, Cathy and me. Mom served each of us cold milk, boiled Lima beans, burgers tasteless, and tough. Dad talked and mom argued. Sometimes Rick, too. Dad drilled Kathy and me arithmetic with three digit numbers. He quizzed us, too, when he showed us to his friends. One time I stumbled. After that he used numbers I knew. Another time I didn't answer. After that, the quizzes stopped when I took out the garbage. I searched the darkness for snakes, then brushed off the sand and picked the stickers out of my toes. Those same nights I washed the dishes with bar soap and burning hot water. Mom always washed them again when Father Knows Best was on. I slipped into the kitchen, made jelly sandwiches for school, and ate anything else I could find. Mom and dad are gone now.

00:31:03 Don

Susie, too. I never asked what it was like for her or Cathy, either. Rick says there was enough, though. We had no heat, and my first coat came when I let her in. Track. Mom wanted cremation to be spread on the sea. When I threw her to the wind, she tasted a tree bark. Rick called me at work about mom. We all met at Susie. The preacher talked Jesus in fish oil. Mom was in a plastic bag and a shoe box. When it was over, we couldn't find her. Cathy had taken the Ashes. Years later, I showed up at Kathy's door with a crowbar but walked away and wrote a letter instead. That worked. Kathy gave up the Ashes. Susie hired a boat and brought them. She and the captain prayed and shouted the whole trip. I was at work again when Rick called about dad, this time with no plan. I asked him, Please don't dump those Ashes down the storm drain. We bought another plot, but not too close to mom. She despised him longer than any of us could remember. No one showed up but me. The Cemetery salesman put the Ashes in the hole and closed the group cover. I gave him two twenties and asked, could we say cottage? Sure, he said. We have a minion and pointed to a funeral in

progress. Her freshman year. Susie totalled the Corvair and my Lark too drunk both times. Her first husband was a hillbilly. The second had been a junkie. Whenever I visited them, he changed the channel to a sermon. One time I picked up a toy car. He shouted, don't touch that and snatched it out of my hand. It was part of his diorama of the current NASCAR standing. Rick calls about Susie's Memorial delayed a year for her preacher's return from China. Hearing she was gone like that. No goodbye, no chance. Each day I walked through the sports complex from the Ga lot to my office broken concrete, rust stained ponding. I walk lightly and keep to the shadows, slowing if someone is ahead so she won't fear the man Hawking behind her. I love the implacable weight of concrete, the forming, the astringent smell and heat of it as it sets the dead cold when it's cured. The foundation of our Florida house was a slab ground, glass, smooth and level before they laid the block walls, set the hand crank Casement windows and roofed it with concrete shingles. That Torazo floor was perfect for shooting down army men with marbles and for growing up unheard and unseen. My second wife was often startled when I appeared, till I began walking loudly, a choice so difficult that we both knew it. For an act of love, that's invisible. [Pause] Sparrow generations. On March 3, 2022, Katie Meyer, captain of the 2019 National Champions Stanford University soccer team, committed suicide in her campus room. Brown offered a full ride on my tennis MIT on academics. Even then, I knew I want to learn. In College. I have a choice. Chris Dolman, Tony Dorsett, Dan Marino. The lucky athletes who soared to glory their generations passed through Pit Stadium right outside my office window. I marveled as the Colosseum was demolished in one early morning at the end, when no one else was looking, the facade with the entrance gate fell. The last grand relic to come down broke the street and the sewer beneath, and I finally understood that choice I made at 16. Now it's an event center, the Peak glass and concrete food mall and WiFi, Judas Priest and basketball, Foo Fighters, hockey, Disney on ice. Sometimes I ride up the escalator. Mostly I walk outdoors through the hedges, alive with birds, feral cats and groundhogs. Either way, you can't miss that vaulted interior, limitless ceiling video wall like the side of the house. Sports news constantly running pictures of trophy athletes displayed in locked cases like numbered Autobahn prints or rare baseball cards. In the morning, I pass by the gym. Even at six, there are students on the treadmills, boys fit and massive. Beautiful girls fit and beautiful, too. I see them on campus with their teammates, lounging and laughing, bruised and brace, casts and crutches. Often a bird strikes, repeat windows and flight, then lies still on the concrete till the janitor comes. Sometimes I carry one back to the hedges when it's been days. Last week I saw a Sparrow by the glass wall, standing on the concrete like a statue. Even when I knelt beside it, I touched his belly, urged him step up. He hopped over my finger, then turned and flew onto my hand, the life and quickness in that tiny body, the bright trust of a stranger. I slowly stood and walked him up to the hedges, urged him once more, and he flew free onto his own life. [Finished Reading]. I have one more short poem, if that's okay to close it's. The closing poem. [Reading] And when danger passed in the beginning, Locks wife died nameless not because she looked back, but for remembering in a sweet vision. I live naked, small trees, wide space, warm shade rich with apricots, a white beach in view, gentle surf, a dark wall rushing across the water, a walled colossus to the south, masses Piers, men of all shades at labor oars and sales, slanted ships long and low, bilge and shackles babble the towers at city center in flames, smoke and harbor stench billowing silver in the sun. I have always long to live simply in an Orchard, figs and Cedar, olives and almonds, ladders and baskets, gloves and fresh bread each day time stretching to the evening cool. So many

remember their past lives as Princes like them. I long for Eden, where tyranny and forgetting were new. That's in the beginning. [Finished Reading] Thank you so much, everyone.

00:40:04 Peggy

Thank you, Don. Glad you could join us tonight. We now have an open mic reader, Ginger Ziskowski.

00:40:16 Ginger

I'm going to read a piece that may be in my memoir. Probably will, but It can stand alone. I've been working on this and reedited it. The title is But You're a Girl. [Reading] Will the percussionist please come to the stage? A voice boomed over the giant loudspeaker in the center of the ceiling in the Colosseum. This was my cue to go to the stage, collect all my instruments, and start setting up. I would be playing in the backup Orchestra for the rich little concert later that night, and I was eager to get organized and ready for the only rehearsal we would have for that concert. I made my way to the stage, located my instruments, and began putting together my 20 plus instruments in a setup that I could easily maneuver through during the quick changes of the songs. The challenge of this gig was that we only had this one rehearsal and we would only have time to run through the beginnings and the endings with transitions of all the songs. I would be playing the middle of the songs on site during the performance. No pressure. I had managed to set up the vibraphone. When the loudspeaker boomed the same announcement a second time, I stopped and spoke back to the loudspeaker that I was here and working on my setup. Loudspeaker must be blind, I thought, since I was the only person on stage doing my setting up of equipment, I went back to my work and about half of my set up together when for yet a third time, the loudspeaker boomed the announcement again, this time a little louder and with more urgency in the tone of voice. I stopped, looked up with arms outstretched, and in my loud voice said, I'm here. It was quiet. Nothing happened for a moment, and then I heard footsteps coming onto the stage. A man I will call Orchestra manager came chomping toward me with an in charge attitude and asked me what I was doing up here on the stage. I just looked at him and thought it was perfectly clear what I was doing up here on the stage. He told me that I wasn't supposed to be up here and messing with the instruments. Well, I said, I heard the first announcement for the percussionist to come to the stage and start setting up. So that's what I did. But you're not supposed to be doing this. The percussionist is supposed to be doing this, he said. At this point, I realized two things. One, I was mildly annoyed, and two, I had been presented with an opportunity to have a little fun. Thinking that Om Orchestra manager would figure the situation out, I kept silent, but no, he didn't get it. The next thing he said was, do you know where the percussionist is? Do you know why he is not here? I answered. Yes, I do, he replied. Well, go get him and tell him to get out here and get busy. We have a tight schedule. He turned and walked away. I was amused and just kept working some more. Time passed and most of my setup was done. Since I had a few minutes before downbeat, I decided to find the lady's room before rehearsal started. During this time, Om came back on the stage looking for the percussionist. Om approached several of the other musicians and asked where the percussionist was. They replied that the percussionist had gone to the restroom and would be back shortly. All of the musicians were in their places, including me. At two minutes before downbeat, I was looking through the charts when Om came toward me. Where is the percussionist? He yelled. I don't know what we'll do if we can't find a sub by tonight. He was frantic now, so I decided to fess up. I am the percussionist, I said. He stared at me, then stared at my

chest. I realized that this concept of a female percussionist was new to him. I repeated louder, that I am the percussionist. Other musicians were staring. Om's light was beginning to come on, but he stuttered. You're a girl. He was staring at my chest. My secrets out. He continued to stare. Why, yes, I am, I said. Aha, I thought to myself. Things are perking up. Please understand that back in the 70s, when this took place, my choices for responding to but you're a girl had not been expanded by the even the Me Too movement. So this clear bit of sexual harassment, as it would later be called, didn't bother me too much. It was certainly not the first time this had happened to me. I had learned to find the humor in it. Plus, I was getting to play for Rich Little, and so was my chest. [Reading finished].

00:45:49 Peggy

Thank you. I hope you'll join us again and have a full 15 minutes to read from your memory.

00:45:57 Ginger

Oh, that would be great.

00:45:59 Peggy

I love hearing everybody's. Okay. So now we're going to hear from our final featured reader, Larry Krist. And then we'll hear from Denny Stern with the open mic. Larry is not only from California, I believe he is in California. He lived 25 years in Seattle and many other places as well, but he's returned to his hometown in Humboldt County to take care of his elderly mother. He has two books *Undertow Overtures*, a poetry collection, and *Alibi for the Scapegoat*, a poem and short story collection. Both books are available online. Larry earned an MFA from Temple in Theater and has been informed in over 100 plays as well as a handful of films. Welcome, Larry.

00:46:48 Larry

Thank you, Don and Nicole and Peggy. And it's wonderful to be here. And Congratulations on your 20 year run. That's quite a well, that's me. I've only been doing it ten years. That's long enough. But...

00:47:01 Peggy

This is 32 years of the series.

00:47:04 Larry

Good. Okay. Well, this goes out to you and everybody else here. It's present. This is the Magical Poet Month, after all. And this is a piece for my first book, and I like to read this every so often. This is called *Poets*. [Reading] Look at all the horny, drunken poets, poets in droves, a parcel of poets writing and running up bar tabs and talking, always talking. One wonders when they find the time to write. So much to say and observe and 500 times that to read. And don't forget all the events and readings, hundreds of readings and open mics and book and magazine release parties and eulogies and memorials and workshops and happiness because things are always happening. And for a poet to write, they must be part of what is, just as what isn't. And it's good that poets lead such rich social lives because they earn almost no money and are sensitive lot and perhaps attached suicidal, though mostly in theory, and are prone to long walks in the rain, feeling things deeply, writing things down, lots of things down to get it right or just get at it at all. And they may be ugly or handsome or plain or

pukey or rich or poor, tall or short or missing limbs or in some cases have extra parts and perhaps are both well hung and unsung. But either way, they are sensitive, deep feeling folk of the Earth or city, and they love and hate things deeply, just as there are numerous things they Revere and hold sacred, like the written word, as well as the sanctity of the apt phrase, particularly if they're the ones who have uttered it. There is a funnel pyramid worth of poets to inspire and enthuse from here to Homer, writers who wrote before ink or text, just blood and time and memory, putting it out there to effect an insect, to make us see it like they do to see anew using our eyes as they did only through words from epics to epigrams, from rhyming couplets to discordant free ranging rants to haiku minimalism with tricks or lack of punctuation because of love or lack of love, but always some wavering measurement in between writing, because they must, whether they are dry or dripping wet, unleashing this torrent of infinite promise and failing in this suffocating under its own weight, sealing it with their lives. This poetic ultimatum called life. This stuff they tell us, this thing we are. [Finished Reading] I'd like to plug this. Thank you. This is called Spread, and this is the thing I've been in a whole bunch of times, and it's a free flyer in Seattle, and some of you are nodding like you've heard of this before. And it's just a little flyer. It's a little two page flyer, and they're always looking for submissions, and it comes out every single month. So look for it. It's free. You can subscribe to it if you don't want to miss any issues. But I've been in a whole bunch, and I got a really short one in this one. This is this month's. [Reading] Watching birds round the pond. Watching birds round the pond. I watch the birds. The birds watch me. They fly and flit Swift, economic. They perch with the intensity of a statue, fly with perfect precision information or freestyle without a shred of aerodynamic knowhow solid and sound with hollow bone Grace and elegance. [Finished Reading] I'm certain they must look down on us. I've been doing a thing lately because I did a lot of theater for a long time. I used to do that stuff professionally, and this is my new book, and there's a really long poem in it, and I've memorized it, and I'm not going to do the whole thing for you because it goes on for about 25 minutes. But I've been doing this theater piece, and we're going to be doing this live throughout the month of June. Here in Arcadia. There's a little theater there that seats about 35. So I've been trying to memorize this piece, and it's hard. And the piece is just kind of a thing about kind of like the biography and our memory of what television is and kind of interwoven with. I don't know. I shouldn't explain too much, but anyway, here's a little picture. I do drawings of it, and I have some drawings in the thing in the piece, and I'll just do the first page from memory. [Reciting] TVs were big boxy affairs, immovable monoliths cupboards of fake wood, Veneer dials and knobs. You had to touch an antenna mounted on chimney or roof. My father would climb up to and fiddle with, depending which of our two channels he wanted to watch. There's a contrast button, vertical hold and on off switch that doubled as volume. It took time to warm up, and when you switched it off, a small white dot peered in the middle of the green glass screen, requiring a full minute before vanishing. I used to imagine that Nielsen guy looking in to see who is still there. [Finished reciting]. So anyway, this goes on for a long time, and it does the whole biography of TV and the family and my family in particular, since I don't know about your family. So there's that that's one thing I'm doing. Oh, and this is something I wanted to read. This is a piece. It's kind of a long piece. Maybe this will take up my time. This is called The Presidents and Me, and this is a poem that will never be finished until I'm dead. And then I don't think it will be finished any other. But I revise it every four to eight years, depending on a President. And this is kind of the same along the same lines as the TV poem. It's a biography of my own biography, but with a chronological chart, as it were, of these events, this thing, whatever that we all perhaps still

remember. I'm sure everybody here is of age and has all experienced the same Presidents, if not the same TV show. So this is called The Presidents and Me. [Reading] I came in with Eisenhower like Churchill. We were both bald. I would outgrow this phase before it began in reverse. Jfk was the first President I remember. He was handsome and looked the way a leader ought. I was in lust with Jackie. I wanted to do things with her, and I didn't even know what they were yet. I didn't care whether she had kids my age. Carolyn and John. John only enhanced her mystique all of which fizzled once she married the Greek. After JFK, LBJ was harsh on the eyes. He seemed shifty, large, loudish, opish. And whether he was torturing his Beagle or showing off his appendectomy scar or increasing bombing of North Vietnam, I felt the first stirrings of political mistrust in kindergarten. I campaigned for Goldwater. He had the prettier name. I thought of him every time I faced the Journal. If LBJ inspired doubt, Nixon resembled a serial rapist shackled in his own trousers. I regret being too inconsequential for his enemies list. While Tricky Dick was threatened with impeachment or jail, I was in juvenile hall. I listened from a distant radio as his resignation was announced. I cheered, but only those in lockup could hear me. Poor President Ford. He was always tripping, had crazy women, assassins shooting at him in between clumsy stumbles and bad marksmanship. He survived. Instead of a better idea, he wore a wind button. His wife made a name for herself. His kids were a nonstop soap opera. Ford continued on, undeterred dull as dishwater, too tedious to be devious. We trusted Carter because he was so seedingly Christian. He offered Amnesty to draft Dodgers, admitted to lust in his heart, appeared comfy in jeans and flannel shirts, could wield a hammer and saw and smile with the Christian zeal of ten men. His eyes sparkled righteous integrity. He could damn near see the Halo around his aura. How he survived four years was anybody's guess. When Reagan took office, I thought the Antichrist had come home to roost. I'd given Ron too much credit. We'd already survived eight years of him as governor, eight years during which time bedtime for Bonzo could not be shown without your Democratic rebuttal. The day I heard he'd been shot, I high five the guy who told me we didn't know. Then at the time, that would be assassin who only wanted to impress Jodie Foster. I was in Mexico when Bush won was inaugurated. The Spanish speaking announcer kept saying Presidente Bushes. His wife looked old enough to be his mother. There was nothing obviously wrong with George Herbert, aside from a lifetime of covert shenanigans with the CIA and no one could follow his syntax. Then there was that meaty read my lip slip. Regarding taxes, he was a kinder, gentler, effed up reminder that America is still hungry for cowboy. Ron Clinton was all things to all people, from all presidents. Eisenhower projected earnestness Kennedy charm. A man who could lead with his penis. Johnson and Nixon smarminess an overachieving wife like Ford. Reagan smooth, theatricality Bush one sleazy double speak because Slick Willie could talk. He smoked pot but did not inhale. He had affairs but did not insert. He bombed but never went to war. Son of Bush. I know not what to say, and apparently neither did he. A stealer of two elections, an instigator of preemptive war, a pal of Big Oil. A man unafraid to hold hands with Arab Kings. An inarticulate proponent of intelligence, something or other, an unbowed enemy or do batters and evildoers. A sloucher, smirker, shirker, fratboy and sheath, ignoring both general and specific intelligence, preferring to create his own. The Obama drama began promising enough. Fox News warned he was too Liberal. Liberals understood him to be otherwise. The former feared his blackness. The latter said he wasn't black enough. He gave good speech, but even this was deemed racist. While actual racist doubted his nationality. He snuck cigarettes, had big ears, was rumored to be a Muslim. He cleaned up much of his predecessor's mess, took up bin Laden, endured endless war before the Supreme Judiciary ruled

corporations were people. Money is. Speech denied him. A third court pick blocked him on everything. Things get dark, grow dark, turn darker still. Money so dark no one can tell where it's going, where it's from. Suspect news sources, subjective opinion, agenda by invisible agents. No longer news at all, reported as fact by who the hell knows? We've been grooming the Orange one all along. Tv pundits loved him. He made racists feel good with their little red hats. Buy a gun, build a wall. Brown people are coming with Russian help. Bait and switch, high tech misdirection, relentless gaslighting projection cart Blanc to Big Oil. Big Pharma, Big Money, big everything. Allowing the big light to fester, grow legs, run laps backward around the truth. I will end the presidency as we know it says this autocratic Huxter commander in chief. I try not to say his name. I call him Caligula Biden. Has an impossible follow up. Venerable public servant, believes in government compromise. All that long gone FDR stuff. We stand again at another crossroads, a divisive time in our history, a short history as far as this life's concerned. A dozen presidents and counting. [Finished Reading] I'll close with this one. This is a jocular, funny one. Hopefully that last one wasn't funny. Well, it depends on how you vote, I guess. This is a Chicago poem, and I read this the other day at something, and it was interesting. [Reading] At Byron Barus off Clark Street. They asked us to leave after we'd been drinking there for some time, and we did for a little while until Martin said we should go back in and moon the bartender, which he did too. Low and halfassed, I said, like this, you moron. I climbed up on a stool, got my pants down, my underwear down, bent over with my ass level to the bar right where the bastard had to see it, then lost my balance, fell over stool and all with my bare ass on to that ancient peanut shell dust Bunny tumbleweadium, splinter riddled nail exposed car and gum filled crackbarboard floor with this 100 year old filth trod upon by rebels and convicts and sailors with SIF soldiers on AWOL, slumming frat boys, drunken Irish like Martin and the poets who don't write and the writers who never say what they mean. From across the bar I could hear Martin laughing, brain like an asshole,

01:01:02 Larry

and the bartender who had missed it all telling us to leave all over again as I struggled to join my belt and buttons, clutching dignity from the jaws of a bad moon rising. [Finished reading]. Thank you, everyone. It's been nice to be here.

01:01:20 Peggy

Thank you very much. Well, I think going to Denny to bring us home is a perfect last move here.

01:01:30 Denny

Yeah, well, that was great. Thanks, everybody. And I've got to do something very ill advised, which is to read something that I wrote this morning. I write something different every day...

01:01:45 Peggy

But you always do that. You pretty much always read to us what you wrote that morning.

01:01:54 Denny

Anyways. Well, a week ago I learned a new word. I love words. Anyways, I learned the word kushtika, which is, I guess, a Shapeshifter. It's a clinket, mythological being. So anyways, when I woke up this

morning and I wrote this for some reason. [Reading] The spinning top of time, its own resolution grinned whale teeth and the walrus Tusk bobbing tethered as it whirl a few yards shy of weather veins, wind form and fiction, striped and striated shellacked shark teeth bristle in a manner of marvels as otters play to ply in tune, unordered as chance today of vision, envisions, revisions, iterations, a change of inflection as of Article 90, where the clause contains feathers and other offerings that tossed tassels of the fray in their unfurling, just as feathers may do justice tomorrows in the downy velvet of a clear evening, even as Steven postured in suits with a cigar, a faux tycoon whose title was Eat the Rich with Bree and chocolate and Bach blaring of a Sunday latte. Lately nothing doing but watching these otters but the story of others reenvisions as the fog banks left and small heads roll, then tails spin in tidal swirl and outdance otters on board rocks revealed by the ebb as woods, other woods grow. Words too, in Bristol of cone and comet studded sky above heaven's vaunted vault where myths again revolve by whose resolution this witnessed evolution the shadows of a volition appear under whose starlet synopsis rings the phone cordless to Venus, under whose connectivity to receptivity as activity and proclivity as stripes color sky, where the otters rock on rock, out rock arch petroglyphs above the muscled rocks of the tide line eel grass, sea glass and flotsam over jetsam of dried trunks washed by King tides, Thunderbird wings rockfish and beak by the Cedar crested tops among the rocks converting otters mad Hatters or molding Potters or are they kushtika? Thank you.

01:04:45 Peggy

Thank you, Denny. Plus, what a treat to be able to see a bit of your home background. Give me a second. I can't wait for more next month. By the way, I learned a new word today, so work on it for me. Punctum. Do you know that one?

01:04:59 Denny

Punctum?

01:05:00 Peggy

P-U-N-T-U-M. Evidently it's a photographic term and it basically means the indescribable.

01:05:10 Denny

Oh, wow. That's a great word. It's a great word. How do you spell it?

01:05:16 Peggy

I think it's P-U-N-C-T-U-M. Supposedly like a teacher photography might say, when you get the shot, you know it when you see it, but you can't really describe where it works. Just kind of how I'm feeling about the light on my wall right now. Anyway, perhaps you can work that in for next month. Okay. Larry's piece about poetry reminded me time for a little Shameless promotion. I helped the Ballard Historical Society do one of those Images of America books, which are actually kind of fun. And I wrote a lot of the captions, so I hope you'll understand it sometimes a little subtext. But anyway, it's going to benefit the Belarus Historical Society. And a lot of the stories came out of an oral history project that I've been doing the last three years. And we're going to have a series of book launches next week in person at Secret Garden, a basic party at Sunset Hill Community Association, and then another one at the National Nordic Museum. So if anybody is around in Ballard at we made some



incredible discoveries. It turns out that during the pandemic is a really good time to deep, deep dive into archives as they emerge on that dark web. It was kind of fun. Anyway, it's been a lovely evening and I hope that you all join us next month on may some may and we'll have Anne, Spears, Danny and Catherine snip and it's always the second Thursday of the month and I'm going to stop the recording so that we can chat. [The End].

