



Magnolia Grove resident BJ Barnes with her book "From Near and Far" that captures the life stories of the caring staff she has come to know.

Writing from the Heart

For BJ Barnes, capturing the life stories of the caring staff who attend to her needs at Magnolia Grove, the Gardens' skilled nursing community, has become a personal passion. Since she started her interviews a year ago, BJ has completed 36 one-page profiles. The paths taken to the Gardens, she's found, are inspiring, frequently punctuated by daunting obstacles, and usually in sharp contrast to her own life experience. "I was eager to know more about where they had lived, what that was like, what had driven them to come here, and how difficult the transition was." One woman had arrived from Vietnam as a boat person; another escaped from Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime and lived in a refugee camp for 25 years. Another faced nearly a year of constant

The paths taken to the Gardens, she's found, are inspiring, frequently punctuated by daunting obstacles, and usually in sharp contrast to her own life experience.

setbacks while finding her way from Peru. The stories, carefully fact-checked with the subjects, are assembled in a notebook that is available for staff members to review in the break room at Magnolia Grove. It's an opportunity, BJ says, for residents to learn more about the people who care for them, and for staff members to get to know each other better. The notebook is complemented by a map on which BJ has pinpointed the points of origin of the caregivers she has interviewed, which includes a large cluster from Southern California. "Assembling these stories," she says, "has been a wonderful opportunity to draw a portrait of the special caregivers and their varied cultural backgrounds that, when pieced together, enfold Magnolia Grove's residents in friendly and comforting warmth."



BJ illustrates the points of origin of the caretakers she has interviewed on a large colorful map that hangs in the skilled nursing facility's entry corridor.

For the Love of Books



A Claremont Public Library volunteer shares a love of reading with children from the CLASP summer program that was held on the Gardens campus this July.

...there's always the possibility of some marvelous discovery.

Continued from page 4 and each child was able to select a book to read. The kids also participated in a reader's theater, reading roles or enacting characters, depending on their age and capabilities. "They seemed to really enjoy the experience," says Carole. At the conclusion of the camp, each child was given a backpack filled with back-to-school supplies. "Together we make a great team," says Carole of the many volunteers who make the camp program possible. While residents embrace the formal, and not-so-formal, groups and activities devoted to literature at the Gardens, the wonderful thing, according to Nancy, is that you don't even need any structure in order to enjoy and share your love of books here. "A lot of the conversation in the Dining Room is about books, and there's always the possibility of some marvelous discovery."



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The New Leaf

October 2016



For the Love of Books

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Twelve of the Gardens resident-authors gather together with their published books. Pictured clockwise from left are Peggy Spear, Kurt Liepman, Ralph Riffenburgh, Ladell Payne, Jack Doyle, Sam Tanenbaum, Bill Relf, George Roleder, Ed Ansell, Orpha Ochse, Jean Wright and Carlynn Christian.

For the Love of Books

When Tish Butler and Richard Carlson made their first, exploratory visit to The Gardens, Tish was sold the minute she stepped into the library. "That and the trees, and I knew this was the place for me." Little did she know then that the 9,000-volume library was just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the abundance of literary interests at the Gardens. For residents who embrace, in equal measure, a passion for learning and discovery, and an eagerness to share their own interests and expertise with others, literature – the consumption, critique and creation of – is an ever-present part of life at the Gardens.

Library

"Without libraries what have we?
We have no past and no future."

– Ray Bradbury



So Many Choices

As Tish quickly discovered, the crown jewel of this love of the written word is the resident-staffed and managed library – an extraordinary amenity for residents, when measured by any standard. Long a fixture of the Gardens, the library was transformed into a professional-caliber resource in 1988. A retired librarian, newly arrived at the Gardens, saw a gem within the loosely assembled, then-3,000-volume collection. With her guidance, a legion of resident volunteers inventoried and cataloged every title, creating a first-class library for residents that has grown to more than 9,000 titles, including 170 books penned by residents. That same combination of bibliophiles and professional librarians comprises the volunteer team that continues to ensure residents have a satisfying experience when they step inside the spacious library.

The library was completely volunteer-run until 2005, when Library

Services Coordinator Bridgette Evangelista was hired to assist on a part-time basis. "This is definitely the residents' library. I'm here to help fill in any gaps, but they have it so well organized," she says. Currently, 45 volunteers support the library operations, including three former librarians: Mary Pierson, Nancy Waldman and Eiko Tomiyasu. Some of the volunteers serve on the Library Committee, which Tish now chairs, and the Book Selection Committee. Others run the day-to-day operations of the library with the oversight of two volunteer supervisors. Past chair of the book selection committee, Meg Evans and current chair, Becca Kurtz oversees book selection, collection maintenance and circulation, and Marilyn Peppin

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The New Leaf

Mt. San Antonio Gardens is a nationally accredited Life Care senior community in Claremont and Pomona, California.

The New Leaf is a newsletter for friends and family of residents, board and staff, as well as individuals who have inquired about life at the Gardens.

- Penny Maines, Writer
- Sioux Bally-Malool, Heartstone Arts Art Direction and Photography

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Also In This Issue:
Magnolia Grove resident, BJ Barnes, captures the life stories of the caring staff who attend to her needs.



The Crown Jewel of those seeking literary pursuits at the Gardens is the 9,000-plus-volume, resident-staffed and managed library.

For the Love of Books Continued from page 1

is responsible for staff supervision, training and library maintenance. Just like a public library, residents find stacks, a circulation desk and card catalog – although the collection is now digitized and available online – a reference room, newspapers and periodicals. There's even a children's corner so when grandkids come to visit, there are books for them to enjoy. Just outside the library is a paperback book area, to which residents can freely donate and borrow. While not part of the library collection, volunteers manage the donations and classify them by category. In addition to the main library in the Social Center, there is also a satellite location in Oak Tree Lodge, the Gardens' assisted living community.

The sheer delight residents take in working in the library is clearly evident. For Marilyn, "helping people find a book they'll enjoy is like solving a mystery. You ask them questions to understand what they like and then make recommendations you think they will enjoy." Nancy also loves serving as what she calls an "intervener," helping people find what they're looking for. Ironically, one of Nancy's first responsibilities when she worked at the Pomona Public Library was bringing the bookmobile to the Gardens every Friday. "I got to know the people who lived here and talked to them about their interests. It was

very satisfying to form those relationships then, as it is now. I think the library is an aspect of the Gardens that residents feel strongly about."

Bridgette also sees the library as a resource that can serve everyone's needs. "I've gotten to know so many people through the library," she says.



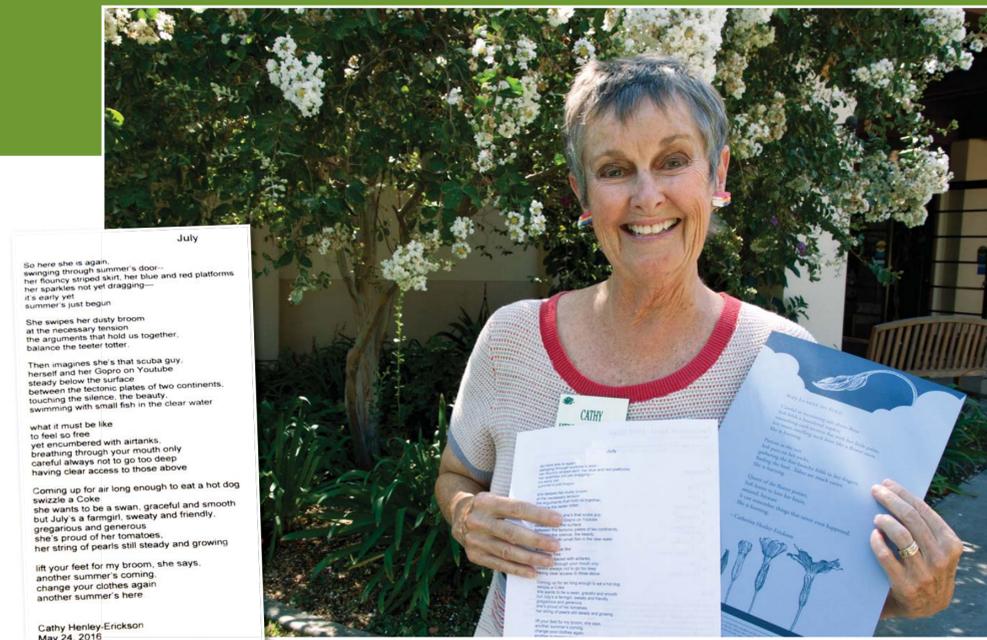
Books from the children's corner in the Gardens library are always available when grandkids come for a visit.

"If someone goes into our skilled nursing center and can't access the library, I often know what kinds of books they like. So I can make a selection and take it to them, which they always appreciate."

One of the most critical parts of making sure the library remains an appealing resource for residents is managing the collection of books – balancing the existing titles with what is new and exciting, as well as culling those volumes that aren't being read. That challenge falls to the Book Selection Committee, which is tasked with allocating the book acquisition funding provided annually by the Gardens Club. The committee meets four times a year to review

catalogs and journals distributed by book publishers, to scrutinize book reviews and do a little crystal ball gazing of their own to anticipate what acquisitions will be most appealing to residents. "We depend on our own experience and our familiarity with what the residents enjoy reading," says Nancy, noting that the committee periodically surveys residents. "We have a pretty sophisticated group of readers here," although mysteries top the list

The library houses mystery novels (many in large print) a favorite genre at the Gardens and a "too good to miss" table that is constantly being updated.



Cathy Henley-Erickson, Poet Laureate for the City of La Verne and retired University of La Verne Professor Emerita, displays some of her poems.

July
So here she is again,
swinging through summer's door—
her feisty striped skirt, her blue and red platform
her sparkles not yet dragging—
it's early yet
summer's just begun
She sweeps her dusty broom
at the necessary tension
the arguments that hold us together,
balance the teeter totter
Then imagines she's that scuba guy,
herself and her Gopro on YouTube
steadily below the surface
between the tectonic plates of two continents,
touching the silence, the beauty,
swimming with small fish in the clear water
what it must be like
to feel so free
yet encumbered with air tanks,
breathing through your mouth only
careful always not to go too deep
having clear access to those above
Coming up for air long enough to eat a hot dog
swizzle a Coke
she wants to be a swan, graceful and smooth
but July's a farmgirl, sweaty and friendly,
gregarious and generous
she's proud of her tomatoes,
her string of pearls still steady and growing
lift your feet for my broom, she says,
another summer's coming
change your clothes again
another summer's here
Cathy Henley-Erickson
May 24, 2016

as the most popular genre. With seven or eight opinions, reaching a consensus often involves lively discussions and debates, but judging by the usage of the library – circulation averages 500 titles per month – their decisions have been right on target. New books are promoted in the quarterly "BookShelf" newsletter, and they have a "too good to miss" table featuring special authors and publications. Books that are taken off the shelf are either archived, if they have some special significance, or donated to a variety of local non-profits where they enjoy renewed life. There's also a "free books" table where residents can help themselves to books that have been donated to the library but which aren't going into the collection.

Book Reviews and Discussions

"Choose an author as you choose a friend."

– Sir Christopher Wren

For those who enjoy sharing their reading experiences, the Gardens offers lots of choices. No less than five different groups, of varying degrees of formality and format, provide forums for discourse. The Mt. San Antonio Book Lovers club, chaired by **Helen-Jeanne Munter** and **Peggy Spear**, meets once a month. The Novels Club, also headed up by Helen-Jeanne, meets monthly as well. There's even a Jane Austin Book Club that resident **Norma Wilson** and friends created to enjoy the author's classic novels and memorable characters. Members of the Gardens Book Ends get together for dinner and discussion every Tuesday. "We read all kinds of books, everything from light fiction to politics, even some books that our residents have written," says Meg. The group usually numbers about eight, in order to keep the discussions manageable and ensure everyone has a chance to participate. "Some of the books we read are favorites, others are tied to current events. It's fun to have a focus for the discussion," and, bottom line, she says, "it's a place to talk about a lot of different topics."

"I think these kinds of discussion groups flourish here because of the large number of interesting and interested people who are attracted to the Gardens," says **Ladell Payne**, a former college president and English professor. Like some of the other literary groups at the Gardens, the now twice-weekly literary discussions that Ladell leads evolved spontaneously after a casual observation at breakfast one morning. "We were having coffee, when **Harvey King** said, 'Look, Payne, we are wasting our time here. Why don't you teach us some literature? I want to know something about Shakespeare.'" In an attempt to put him off, Ladell insisted they begin with Chaucer, and, to his great surprise, Harvey said OK. The initial group, high school grad Harvey, his wife Nancy, who is a former school teacher, and a handful of PhDs, spent an hour every morning after breakfast discussing "The Canterbury Tales." The beauty of the group, he says, is the different

experiences and perspectives each brings to the literature – some approaching the works emotionally, others analytically – which invariably produces lively discussions and opens minds to new ideas. "Our reading has been quite eclectic," says Ladell. Among the works tackled by the group, "The Sound and the Fury," "Long Day's Journey Into Night," "Macbeth," "Oedipus," "The Mikado" as well as poetry and other plays.

That same kind of interest draws large numbers of residents to the Assembly each month for programs presented by the Gardens' Book Review Committee. Members of the committee take turns reviewing books in a forum that can draw as many as 70 residents. "We aim for a good balance between topics we think residents will simply enjoy and some that will educate and inform," says **Patrick Culbertson**, current chair of the committee. "Typically the reviewer has some special knowledge of the subject or passion for the author," according to **Sandra Glass**, former committee chair. Among the many memorable presentations was one by resident **Tom Stoeber**, a retired Superior Court judge, who reviewed "The Case Against the Supreme Court" by Erwin Chemerinsky. Resident **Kathleen Wicker**, professor emerita of religious studies at Scripps College, who studied the religious traditions of the African continent, reviewed a selection of contemporary African fiction. They also periodically invite guest reviewers from outside the Gardens to present reviews, such as Samuel Yamashita, a professor of history at Pomona College, who presented his own work, "Daily Life in Wartime Japan: 1940-45." In September, Gardens CEO

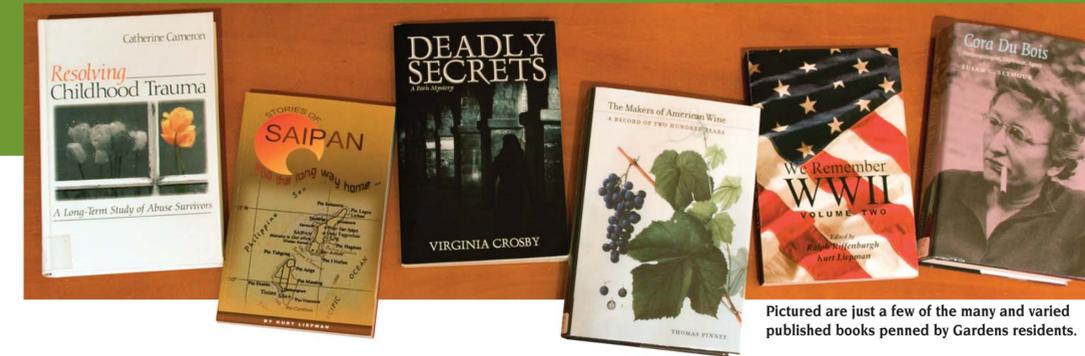
Maureen Beith is the guest reviewer, who has selected "Exit Right" by Daniel Oppenheimer as her subject. "When we present a review, we make an effort to provide copies of the book in the Gardens library so that people can enjoy it without having to purchase their own copy," says Sandra. All of the book review presentations are recorded and available on DVD from the Gardens library.

Writing

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you."

– Maya Angelou

Reading, enjoying and critiquing the works of others aren't the only literary activities that flourish at the Gardens. The volumes penned by residents encompass the full spectrum of literature, from poetry to novels, to works of non-fiction and scholarly discourses, too many to name here. Some are established, well-published authors while others engage in the creative process purely for their own pleasure. Jokes resident **Jack Doyle**, "I specialize in unpublished novels!" But his love of storytelling and optimism



Pictured are just a few of the many and varied published books penned by Gardens residents.

about opportunities to come, continue to inspire him. Now working on novel number five, he's decided a professional editor might be in order! As evidence of the organic nature of affinity groups that form at the Gardens, Jack's interest in having his own work critiqued, and thereby improved, by others, inspired him to launch a writing group. While his first attempt faltered, he remains hopeful that other like-minded residents will come together around his concept, as they did many years ago when the Live Poets Society was originally formed.

The Live Poets Society is now chaired by **Charlene Betts**. The group of about 10 residents shares a common love of poetry, with vastly varying degrees of experience. "Generally, the people in this group are very introspective, and they come from all backgrounds." Likewise, styles of poetry run the gamut from sonnets and ballads to Haiku and limericks. The group sometimes sets a theme for their monthly meetings, but, even then, members are free to write whatever they please. When they gather over lunch in the Gardens' Gallery each month, they present their work and talk about its creation. "It's very relaxed," says Charlene. "We come to have fun, to learn and to enjoy the camaraderie."

Sharing a Love of Literature

"Whenever you read a good book, somewhere in the world a door opens to allow in more light."

– Vera Nazarian

Residents' love of literature spills outside the Gardens' grounds as well. For the past six years, the Gardens has sponsored and hosted the

Claremont Community Foundation's "For the Love of Books." At the annual event, local authors are invited to present their literary contributions, describe their creative process and discuss their sources of inspiration. Engaging in the program is a natural outgrowth of the priority and significance that the Gardens

and its residents place on literary interests, and it is mutually rewarding to support a community organization that funds so many critical needs in the local community.

This summer, residents again made reading a central part of their second annual CLASP (Claremont After School Programs) Summer Camp for children from the surrounding communities. The four-week program, conceived and executed by resident

volunteers, provided a multi-faceted learning experience for 21 children, ages six to nine, supported by a whopping 114 resident volunteers. "Our goal is to provide a learning experience that doesn't look anything like school!" says **Carole Harter**, who guided the creation of the camp last year. "It has to be fun for everyone." It's not surprising that literacy had a coveted spot in the daily schedule, which offered a mix of educational, creative, and recreational activities. Many of the volunteers contributed their time reading individually with the children. "We have a wonderful variety of children's books that were donated to the Gardens," says Carole,

Continued on back page



Children from the CLASP summer camp at the Gardens visited the Claremont Public Library.