

What is my best memory of the Manzanita Writers' Series?

Can there be just one?

For only our second Writers' Series event we featured Ursula K. LeGuin. Her novel, *Lavinia*, had just come out. Otherwise she would not have come. According to her web site, she only spoke when she was on book tour. A lucky bit of timing that. We were at the Pine Grove because this place was out of commission for some reason. I met up with her a while before the reading to make sure we had everything set. "Is there a bar around here?" she asked. I suggested the Wine Bar, somehow thinking that that would be the most appropriate place for such an illustrious author. "No. One where you can get hard liquor," she said in that deep and wise voice. She had a wry smile. "I like to have a Wild Turkey before my reading."

What about all the times that Brian Doyle came and made us cry, because he was crying.

Or, the dearest, kindest author, Thor Hanson, whose enthusiasm for his subject, whether gorillas, feathers, or seeds, was wildly contagious.

The time that Terry Brooks swamped us with more than 90 attendees, many of whom brought grocery sacks of his books to sign. He changed their lives, they said. They never read before they found his books.

Cheryl Strayed before she was famous.

Karen Karbo's slide shows of kick ass women.

To name just a few.

There were so many things I learned as a writer from reading all these books:

From Lindsay Hill, a former banker who took 20 years to write his first novel I learned patience with my own novel—I still have about four more years. He gave me hope, too. That you could be a former banker and still write beautiful prose. That you could have tiny chapters with no transitions.

From Lidia Yuknavitch. To hold nothing back when telling your story.

From Jess Walter. That humor can be anywhere. That humor can be heart-wrenching, too.

From Steve Duin, Shannon Wheeler, and Nicole St. Georges, that comics aren't just for 10 year old boys.

From Diana Abu Jaber that stories featuring food reveal so much about family and culture.

Vera Wildauer

From Rene Denfeld, that the hardest stories can still be beautifully told.

There were so many books that I never would have read without their authors visiting:

Chelsea Cain's gruesome serial killer novels. I read each one, horrified by every page, yet somehow drawn in anyway.

Mysteries by Phillip Margolin and Christopher Lord. Daniel Wilson's *Robogenesis*, where robots take over the world.

John Kroger's *Convictions*, a non-fiction book about a New York prosecutor.

Thor Hanson's Gorilla book.

Lauren Kessler's book about ways to combat aging and how to raise a teenaged girl.

I was lucky enough to house some of our authors in my basement apartment.

Naseem Rahka, who was here when I wasn't, and forgot her running clothes on the hook on the back of the bathroom door.

Deborah Reed who worked on two of her novels there.

Publishers Rhonda Hughes and Laura Stanfill, who both are avid caretakers of Oregon's writing community, with whom I spent long evenings in excited conversation about books and books and books.

Phillip Margolin, who is a very messy toothbrusher.

But it's not *just* all the authors I remember. The participants, too.

We heard so many poems, memories, short stories, and essays. Excerpts from novels that may never be finished. Or that were finished and published much to the pride of all of us listening. He did it, we think. She did it, so maybe I can, too.

Judy Allen's story about losing her leather skirt at an important international meeting.

All the funny little stories about life from Kay Stoltz and Dave Dillon.

So many love poems written for this place we live from Phyllis Mannan and Tela Skinner and Marilyn Burkhart.

The open mic pieces that had "it was a dark and stormy night" in them somewhere.

And, who can forget Julius Jortner's voice?

Vera Wildauer

And finally... so many memories about this place.

The times an author might have to stop talking because it was raining so very hard on our metal roof.

When it was so cold that we had to hand out blankets during writing workshops.

When we wound twinkling fairy lights around the poles in the middle of the room, thinking somehow *that* would obscure them.

When we ran out of chairs, so that people had to stand in what's now the Gallery, when we celebrated the release of the North Coast Squid and the Word & Image Projects.

And the quiet times in Writing Lounge when all you hear is the clacking of keys or a pen pressing on paper, when there were just a few of us on a Tuesday morning writing something inspired by five words we drew from a pile in the center of the table.

What a rich ten years this has been.