

For almost ten years my writing life in Manzanita consisted of sitting at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee, writing in my journal, looking out at the trees and birds and rain in our little yard. My entries from that period include frequent observations of Spotted Towhees and Varied Thrushes flitting about in the tree branches and underbrush. They were my writing companions, always there on the three-day weekends and school breaks when Fred and I would say no to vacation renters and actually use the house ourselves.

One such weekend, while reading through the *North Coast Citizen*, I noticed a “call for submissions” for the inaugural issue of the *North Coast Squid* literary journal, co-sponsored by the Citizen and an organization called the Hoffman Center. The publication would feature the work of writers with a connection to the North Oregon Coast. Always on the lookout for small publications where my modest little stories might find an audience, I jumped on this opportunity.

The following week, I sat down at my computer in Seattle and pulled up a story I had recently written about an off-duty police officer encountering a deer in the woods of rural Northeastern Washington. I trimmed it down to 1500 words--no small feat--and changed the location from the Elk-Chattaroy Road to the Miami-Foley Road, made one last careful proof check, printed it out, and mailed it to Manzanita.

It was accepted. Seeing my piece in print in a publication that I purchased months later in Manzanita made me feel so proud. I didn't know many people in town, but a couple friends picked up copies and told me how much they enjoyed my stories and others in the journal.

Sometime after a second story was published in the following year's issue, I was contacted by the editor, Vera Wildauer, who heard I had some experience managing a literary publication as a high school English teacher. Would I like to help with the next issue? Did I have any ideas about how to improve the magazine?

This was the point where my solitary writing life intersected with a vibrant literary community in Manzanita. I met local writers at workshops and author readings, at Tela Skinner's house for word games--the beginning of the Writing Lounge--and of course at Squid staff meetings. I still love to write with the Cedar Waxwings and chipmunks outside the kitchen window, but I also am so grateful that I can grow as a writer alongside others in my community, and that I can help support other writers in finding their voices and finding venues where their work can be shared.