

BOOKS notes

Poetry Slams and Book Awards

If the recent weird spate of uncharacteristically sunny January weather has you out-and-about instead of curled up all cozy with a book, never fear, there are places to go to talk books and engage in that thing that's a little foreign to those of us who are bookworm types: social interaction.

On Saturday, Feb. 5 **Oregon's Poet Laureate Paulann Petersen** will give a reading of her poetry at 2:30 pm at the Springfield Public Library. Part of the poet laureate's mission is to promote reading, writing and appreciation of poetry throughout the state. This weekend teens will be the focus of that mission. If your teen is anything like half the *EW* staff was in our younger years, then she's wearing black clothing, piercing her nose and writing poetry in little notebooks. It's time to drag of her out of the corner and down to the library for Petersen's poetry writing workshop for teens at noon, also at the Springfield library, 225 5th St. in Springfield. The events are free; to register for the workshop call 726-2237.

If you haven't outgrown your teen penchant for writing poetry, or you're a particularly brave teen, then **Tsunami Books' Poetry Tslam**, Round Five, is where you want to be on Saturday Feb. 12 at 6:30 pm, \$5-\$10. The featured poet is Seattle's slam champion Maya Hersh. If you're rather hear literature than read it, then drop by Tsunami earlier in the weekend for UO Creative Writing Program masters students reading their works in progress (free).

If poetry and fiction aren't your thing, then the Thursday, Feb. 3 talk on "Creative Nonfiction: Telling the Truth like a Bald-faced Liar" might be more your style. Also at Tsunami, the event is free for members of Willamette Writers and students, and \$10 for the rest of us. Forager, blogger and author Langdon Cook is the speaker at 6:30 pm.

Finally, in book news, **Oregon Literary Arts** has announced the 2010 Oregon book awards finalists and fellowship recipients. Several local and localish writers made the cut. Jennifer Richter of Corvallis was nominated for the Stafford/Hall Award for Poetry for *Threshold*. Paul VanDevelde, also of Corvallis, is up for a general nonfiction award for his *Savages and Scoundrels*. UO prof Carol Ann Bassett (*Galapagos at the Crossroads*) and OSU prof Kathleen Dean Moore (*Wild Comfort*) are each up for the creative nonfiction award. Michelle Penaloza of Eugene received the Women Writers Fellowship award. Winners of the book awards will be announced at the end of April.

And in case you missed the news back in December when the **Oregon Arts Commission** was giving out its grants, UO instructor and writer Mike Copperman and Eugene poet Robert Hill Long were among the 13 recipients of the \$3,000 grants. See teens? You can make money writing. Sort of. — *Camilla Mortensen*



Paulann Petersen

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Oregon wines hit the cool '90s

“Wow.” We open with a direct quote from Sarah Palin, her deepest capture of the beauty and wonder of wild Alaska. When it comes to monosyllables, we just can't beat Ol' SP.

Here we quote our profound political philosopher to express our amazement at the news that Oregon wine has made the cover of that widely read mag, *Wine Spectator*, the inside article a rave about local achievements with the 2008 vintage, not just for our signature red wine, pinot noir, but also the white pinot gris, even — drumroll, and another “Wow” — chardonnay. Happy Valentine's Day, homies.

Those headlines couldn't come at a happier time, in the drear gray of winter and in the lingering agonies of the Republican Recession, when every sale might mean another day in business. But despite all that good news, there are going to be some hurt feelings, mainly from folks who didn't make writer Harvey Steiman's list of wines at 90+ points, but also because, as usual, the body of his piece gives short shrift to outside the grape-draped hills just south and west of Portland.

Still, “Wow.” Confirmation: Oregon's winemakers can make really good wine, at least for 2008. And some of the '07 wines.

And most '06 were darn good; '05 wasn't bad and '04 was super. See how it goes? Number of wineries mentioned from the south end of the Willamette Valley? Nil. Zip. The *New York Times* can list Broadley Sundance Pinot Noir as one of the nation's best, but not Steiman. But go to the back pages of the issue and get down under the 90 points, to the high-80s, and there we are: King Estate, Sweet Cheeks, a few others from south of us. Oh, boy.

Well, the tears shed will be mostly of the crocodile variety. Steiman left a gob of fine wines on the shelves, many at prices we can afford (the tops on his list usually run \$50 to \$75). We'll be looking for those.

Meanwhile, another national mag, *Wine Enthusiast*, wondered recently (December 2010) why pinot blanc “has not become more of a cult wine in Oregon.” Good question. Pinot blanc can thrive in Oregon, along with the whole pinot family of grapes, but this dry white is particularly versatile with food and responds to a variety of wine-making styles (more lush or more lean).



We like the wines made by our neighbors the Shown family, and locavores that we are we especially appreciate the family's respect for the land and sustainable farming practices. We also enjoy the way their wines match with food. The Shows' **Brigadoon 2009 Pinot Blanc** (\$16) delivers a glassful of ripe pear flavors on a creamy texture with well-balanced acidity that invites fresh seafood, cheeses, even vegetarian dishes. They produce tiny amounts of their wine, so you might have to special order or try their website.

J. Scott Cellars 2008 Pinot Blanc (\$14) wraps its pear/citrus flavors in a stony minerality that lends depth and charm. We put this wine with sautéed halibut, and we got music.

We're glad Steiman noted that the first releases from the 2009 vintage promise another strong year, and **Boedecker 2009 Barrel Select Pinot Noir** (\$15) advances the case. Flavors are typical — black cherry, earth, touch of spice — well-balanced, good value for this variety (expensive to grow and to make). Well worth a closing “Wow.” *EW*

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