

HOW TO BUILD CHARACTER(S)

Eugene author teaches young adult fiction

“I was definitely a complete nerd. I sat at the lunch table alone and got picked last for P.E., but books saved my life,” says Sidney Swanson, local novelist for young adult audiences and traveling speaker/educator. Swanson will host “Character Building: The Viscera of Young Adult Fiction,” Friday, Aug. 9 as part of Wordcrafters in Eugene’s ongoing program to teach the essentials of fiction writing.

Whether you’re brainstorming a new protagonist or polishing one for publication, the workshop is intended to support writers of all ages and abilities. “We’re back at the

roots of how to write,” says Patricia Marshall, executive director of Wordcrafters. “We want [to see] people putting in the work to make their stories better.”

Swanson, who authors speculative fiction (fantasy and sci-fi), will offer solutions to populate a novel with characters that are not necessarily believable, but rather *relatable*. She says her popular *Rippler* trilogy and *Saving Mars* series may have “out there” scenarios in terms of action, but that “the moral or emotional development of a character as a result of that action” is more important.

Mars Burning, the fourth of her Terran/Martian novels, was released Aug. 5. If you want to see your name on the spine of a book, Swanson’s three-hour workshop will offer pointed instruction, discussions and writing breakouts — hoping to form “tools that everyone will go home and use for themselves.” A half-hour Q&A with Swanson will follow.

‘We’re back at the roots of how to write.’

— PATRICIA MARSHALL, WORDCRAFTERS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Swanson and Wordcrafters believe it’s important to pay it forward with literary success. “It’s my duty, my obligation and my pleasure to help the next [generation] of writers,” says Elizabeth Engstrom, Wordcrafters board member. “We’re hoping to engage the

whole literary community of Eugene, because we have an amazing literary heritage here.” Wordcrafters is gearing up for an inaugural conference in March and year-round activities radiating from the 50th anniversary of Ken Kesey’s *Sometimes a Great Notion*.

But for now: some character building. “In writing, character is one of those things you can always come back to and hone and refine and go deeper with,” Swanson says. “So how do you go about it?” ■

The “Character Building: The Viscera of Young Adult Fiction,” workshop runs 9 am to 12:30 pm, Friday, Aug. 9 in the Lamb Cottage at Skinner Butte Park. Register at wordcraftersineugene.org.

WINE BY LANCE SPARKS



MYSTERIOUS PINOT

Complexity turns wine snobs into philosophers

Last weekend, Kat and I attended the annual salmon bake at the International Pinot Noir Celebration (IPNC) in McMinnville, urban heart of the north Willamette Valley wine country. This remarkable annual event (2013 marked the 27th version) in wine culture draws participants from nearly all the regions of the world where pinot noir is cultivated and vinified — Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Canada (!), Germany, California and, of course, France (Burgundy) and Oregon. Wine swells cough up nearly a thousand bux apiece to attend the three days of speechifying, tasting the world’s best pinots, eating superb grub prepped by outstanding NW guest chefs (Eugene was repped by Chef Crystal Platt of Marché and Chef Joseph Mihm of Rye) and generally hobbing and nobbing about this one grape variety. This raises the question: Why pinot noir? Why all this hoopla about one particular varietal?

Genuinely wine-savvy folk know the answer, but before we delve, some news related to Oregon’s *south* Willamette Valley, our home country, usually given only cursory attention by the world’s wine press (even though some of our state’s best pinot noir is made here):

First, congratulations and good luck to Eric and Lorrie Normann on their purchase of Buzz Kawders’ share of Domaine Meriwether Winery, makers of fine sparkling wines (and some really good pinot noir). Buzz has contributed huge personal efforts in promoting this region’s wine industry, but his personal health has him struggling, and he deserves rest, restoration and heaps of gratitude. The Normanns are young, energetic and committed to maintaining the highest standards for their label.

Congrats, too, Ashley and Matt LaVelle, for bringing into the world Ava Elizabeth (born July 11). We welcome the third generation (we hope) to the making of LaVelle’s superb wines, and we couldn’t prevent quipping that, at last, the south Willamette Valley has its desperately needed and deserved AVA (American Viticultural Area, a designation that marks the wines as distinctive of an area, vital to marketing and recognition).

Which brings us back to our question: Why all this chatter — bordering on obsession — with pinot noir? Of the 1,368 varieties of wine grapes, how many induce the wine elite to spend major bux to wing in from all over the globe to “celebrate” wines made from those grapes?

Answer: Nil. So, again, why pinot noir? After all, the variety is notoriously tricky to cultivate and to vinify. The resulting wines are often expensive at retail (exclusivity follows, which might add to the wines’ snob-appeal).

But really, pinot noir seems to be, for many people learning about wine, a kind of destination. Typical progression, from pleasant to powerful to mysteriously complex: sweet white wine → sweet rosé → California cabernet → Bordeaux → pinot noir. Mimi Casteel was this year’s chair of the IPNC (and did a tremendous job, though she credits the staff,

naming Amy Wesselman, Anne Nisbet and Brian Richardson: “They really knocked it out of the park this year.”) Casteel also has deep cred in wine, being the daughter of Bethel Heights’ (est. 1977, great pinot noir) Ted Casteel and his dynamic wife, Pat Dudley. Of pinot noir, Mimi Casteel opines, “Pinot noir speaks to the love of mystery ... can speak to the darker, quieter places of a person.”

Now, picture this: A perfect evening on the bucolic campus of Linfield College, a green sward adorned with dozens of large (10 seats each) tables, dressed in white cloths, tuxedoed wine stewards at the ready to fill crystal glasses for the long line of wine-mavens primed to trample the grass to claim seats before elbowing up to the lavish buffet tables, laden with yummy salads prepared by the *über*-chefs; then the entrées, slices of tender beef loin and the feature: salmon filets slow-roasted Native-style on alder spears set next to a long, open pit of burning alder. Delicious hardly begins to describe the flavors.

Pinot noir loves alder-roasted salmon. The wines were — all of them — quite remarkable, but Oregon’s Et Fille 2009 PN (\$24) just bloomed with fresh, bright fruit, rocked our table. This, we knew, was the kind of pinot noir that draws even the French back to Oregon (where some, like Drouhin, have bought property and now help define Oregon’s potentials).

Kat looked stunning, tall, elegant and beautiful, even next to her gnomish husband. But the joint reeked of wealth beyond our kin. Still, pinot noir has its effects on great and small. Last notes: The Burgundian wines “got people all in a twitter,” Casteel says. But so did Oregon’s: Tasters nattered about Cristom, Boedecker, Lumos and especially Big Table Farm (Yamhill, since 2006, a tiny producer of exquisite wines).

Even high summer is fine time for Oregon pinot noir. If you cherish complexity and mystery, Mimi Casteel says, “Once you arrive there ... it’s the one wine you’re never going to figure out.” Try some. Do your best. ■



traveling soon?
medical advice for global travelers

THE TRAVEL CLINIC

John D. Wilson, M.D.
1200 Hilyard St., Suite S-560
541/343-6028

www.TravelClinicOregon.com

Questions? Email us at travelclinicoregon.3436028@gmail.com

★ SY'S NEW YORK PIZZA ★

NOW FREE DELIVERY FROM BOTH LOCATIONS

55 SILVER LN. 654-0603 COUPONS GOOD UNTIL AUGUST 22ND, 2013 **1211 ALDER 686-9598**

11AM-10PM DAILY 11AM-MIDNIGHT SUN-THU 11AM-1AM FRI-SAT

SERVING DELICIOUS NEW YORK PIZZA BY THE SLICE AND BY THE WHOLE PIZZA PIE

\$2.00 OFF
ANY 18" LARGE

FREE LARGE SODA
W/ PURCHASE OF 2 SLICES