Whittier Public Library's

Book Club in a Box

WHITTIER PUBLIC LIBRARY

Sponsored by the Friends of the Whittier Public Library

MY CALIFORNIA (OUR WHITTIER)

About the Book

My California: Journeys by Great Writers is an exciting collaborative publication by CaliforniaAuthors.com and Angel City Press. Now in its seventh printing, the proceeds from sales of this volume of narrative travel and adventure stories by 27 California authors and journalists benefit the California Arts Council and literature programs statewide.

This unique project is made possible through the generosity of everyone involved-the editors, the publisher, the printer, the original publicist, and all 27 authors.

http://www.cac.ca.gov/116/

We hope our anthology will raise desperately needed money for the California Arts Council, and also raise awareness about the critical importance of supporting the arts and arts education in California. Arts education is disappearing from many of our schools and communities and that's tragic.

- Donna Wares of CaliforniaAuthors.com and editor of *My California*

Contents

About the Book 1

About the Authors 1-4

Discussion Questions 5

About the Authors

Mark Arax is the co-author of the 2003 best-seller, *The King of California*, and author of *In My Father's Name*. He graduated from Fresno State University before receiving a master's degree from Columbia University. He began his journalism career at the *Baltimore Evening Sun* and then returned to California to work for the *Los Angeles Times* in 1984. Arax is based in Fresno and writes about the life and culture of California's Great Middle for the *Times*. www.markarax.com

Michael Chabon is the author of two short story collections and four novels, including *The Mysteries of Pittsburgh*, *Wonder Boys* and *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*. His most recent book is the young adult novel *Summerland*. Chabon's work has appeared in such magazines as *The New Yorker*, *Harper's*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Playboy*, and in a number of anthologies, among them *The O. Henry Prize Stories* and *Best American Short Stories*. In 2001, he won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction for his novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay*. He lives in Berkeley with his wife, Ayelet Waldman, also a novelist, and their children. www.michaelchabon.com

Kate Cohen is a veteran designer, writer and co-founder/creative director of CaliforniaAuthors.com. Her Long Beach studio — Kate Cohen Fine and Applied Arts — specializes in the complete production of beautifully crafted smaller-scale web sites, as well as the sale of her oil paintings and sculpture. Kate provided the cover graphic design for *My California*. www.katecohen.com

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Veronique de Turenne is a journalist and screenwriter whose work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times*, *Salon*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, *Variety* and other publications. She lives in Malibu.

Anh Do writes an Asian affairs column for *The Orange County Register* and is vice president of business at *Nguoi Viet Daily News*, the oldest and largest Vietnamese-language newspaper in the United States. She is a graduate of the University of Southern California and has studied international relations at Regents College in London and Spanish at the National Autonomous University in Mexico City. Her writing about race, culture and faith has been honored by Columbia University's School of Journalism, the University of Washington's DART award and the Asian American Journalists Association. Do previously worked at *The Dallas Morning News* and *The Seattle Times* and has reported from India, Mexico, Vietnam, Guatemala, Peru, England and Cuba. She lives in Orange County.

Firoozeh Dumas is the author of *Funny in Farsi*, a *Los Angeles Times* and *San Francisco Chronicle* bestseller and 2004 selection by the "Orange County Reads One Book" program. She was born in Abadan, Iran and moved to California in the 1970s when her father was an engineer with the National Iranian Oil Company. She wrote her memoir because she wanted her children to know her stories; many middle and high schools and colleges now use her book as part of their curriculums. She and her French husband, Francois, met at UC Berkeley's International House and live in Northern California with their two children. Their favorite food is sushi. www.firoozehdumas.com

Percival Everett is the author of seventeen books of fiction. Among them are the novels *American Desert*, *Erasure*, *Glyph*, *Watershed* and *God's Country*. He has received awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Hurston/Wright Foundation and the Fellowship of Southern Writers. He is Professor of English at the University of Southern California. He lives with his wife on a small ranch outside Los Angeles and on Vancouver Island, British Columbia.

Flemming Chalef, Inc., an organization of sales representatives to the gift industry, has generously volunteered their services on the *My California* project.

Dana Gioia, an award-winning poet, critic and literary anthologist, is Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. He is the author of *Interrogations at Noon*, *The Gods of Winter*, and other volumes of poetry, as well as *Can Poetry Matter: Essays on Poetry and American Culture*. Gioia divides his time between Sonoma County and Washington, D.C. www.danagioia.net

Kathi Kamen Goldmark is the author of *And My Shoes Keep Walking Back to You*, a novel published by Chronicle Books in 2002. She is the co-author of *The Great Rock & Roll Joke Book* and *Mid-Life Confidential: The Rock Bottom Remainders Tour America with Three Chords and an Attitude*. She also is the founder of the all-author rock band The Rock Bottom Remainders; president and janitor of Don't Quit Your Day Job Records; and producer of the coast-to-coast radio show "West Coast Live." She lives in San Francisco. www.dqydj.com

Amy Inouye, a Southern California graphic designer, designed the interior pages of *My California* and has designed several Angel City Press books.

Jacqueline Green Public Relations Inc. is a boutique public relations company, based in Los Angeles, specializing in the literary field. For eight years, JGPR Inc. represented Turner Publishing on the West Coast. Green's clients include Angel City Press and Balcony Press; she also has worked with many New York publishing houses. In fiction, Green has a specialty in the mystery genre and has worked with Jonathan and Faye Kellerman, James Ellroy, P.D. James, Janet Evanovich, Barbara Seranella, John Morgan Wilson, Ridley Pearson, Robert Crais, Martin J. Smith, Charles Fleming and Jacqueline Winspear, to name just a few. Her non-fiction authors, past and present, include Walter Cronkite, Al Gore, Joel Kotkin, Letitia Baldrige, Richard Louv, Jane Fonda, Greg LaVoi, Charles Phoenix and Harriet Rochlin. Contact JGPR here.

Gerald Haslam is the author or editor of twenty-seven books, most of which are set in his native Great Central Valley. His *Coming of Age in California* was named one of the West's 100 most important non-fiction 20th-century books by a San Francisco Chronicle readers' poll. His most recent novel, *Straight White Male*, won the Western States Book Award in 2000. Haslam lives in Penngrove. www.geraldhaslam.com

Edward Humes is a journalist and author of seven narrative nonfiction books. He received the Pulitzer Prize for his newspaper coverage of the military and a PEN Center USA Award for his groundbreaking book about the children of juvenile court, *No Matter How Loud I Shout*. Humes spent a year inside California's top public school to research his latest critically acclaimed book, *School of Dreams*, named a Best Book of 2003 by the *Washington Post*. His other works include *Baby E.R.*, *Mean Justice* (an *L.A. Times* Best Book of 1999), and the bestseller *Mississippi Mud*. www.edwardhumes.com

Pico Iyer has been writing about his adopted home on and

(Continued on page 3)

off for twenty-five years now. He is the author of numerous books about the dance between cultures, including *Video Night in Kathmandu*, *The Lady and the Monk*, *The Global Soul* and *Abandon, an Islamic Californian romance*. His latest book is *Sun after Dark* (2004). Iyer's work often appears in *Harper's*, *Time*, and the *New York Review of Books*. He divides his time between Japan and California.

David Kipen — Southern Californian by birth, Northern Californian by affiliation, pan-Californian at heart — is the book critic for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. He also reviews books for KCRW, NPR's "Day to Day," and KQED's "The California Report."

Aimee Liu is the author of *Flash House* (2003), a tale of suspense and Cold War intrigue set in Central Asia. She also has written two other novels, *Cloud Mountain* (1997) and *Face* (1994). Her novels have been translated into more than a dozen languages. Liu published an acclaimed memoir of anorexia nervosa, *Solitaire* (1979), at the age of twenty-five. She has worked as an associate producer for NBC's "Today" show, co-authored seven nonfiction books on medical and psychological topics and is past president of the national writers' organization PEN Center USA West. Liu teaches creative writing at UCLA Extension and lives in Beverly Hills. www.aimeeliu.net

Mary Mackey's published works include four volumes of poetry (*Split Ends*, *One Night Stand*, *Skin Deep*, and *The Dear Dance of Eros*); a novella (*Immersion*); and nine novels (*McCarthy's List*; *The Last Warrior Queen*; *A Grand Passion*; *Season of Shadows*; *The Kindness of Strangers*; *The Year The Horses Came*; *The Horses at the Gate*; *The Fires of Spring*; and *The Stand In*). Her tenth novel is *Sweet Revenge* (Kensington, 2004). *Breaking The Fever*, her fifth collection of poetry, will be published by Oso Books in fall 2004. Mackey is a Professor of English and Writer in Residence at California State University in Sacramento, where she teaches creative writing and film. She also writes under the pen name "Kate Clemens." www.marymackey.com

devorah major became the third Poet Laureate in San Francisco in 2002. Her poetry books include *street smarts* and *where river meets ocean*. She also has two novels, *An Open Weave* and *Brown Glass Windows*. Her poems, short stories, and essays are available in a number of magazines and anthologies. She has taught poetry and creative writing as community artist-in-residence and college lecturer for more than twenty years. She also publishes, records and performs with Opal Palmer Adisa in the performance poetry group Daughters of Yam. She was born and raised in California.

Malloy Incorporated is a complete book manufacturing company known for providing the highest quality products and service to book publishers throughout the United States. The company is generously donating the first printing of My California. Malloy is represented on the West Coast by Publishing Sales Specialist Bill Ralph. www.malloy.com

Rubén Martínez was born in Los Angeles and is an Emmy Award-winning journalist, poet and performer. He was a Loeb Fellow at Harvard University and an editor for the Pacific News Service. In 2002, he received a literary fellowship from the Lannan Foundation. He is the author of C*rossing Over: A Mexican Family on the Migrant Trail* and *The Other Side: Notes from the New L.A., Mexico City and Beyond*. His newest book is *The New Americans* (The New Press, 2004), a companion to the PBS television series detailing the lives of migrant families.

Chuck Morrell is a longtime publishing industry veteran on the West Coast. The sales director for Angel City Press, he is generously donating his work on the *My California* project.

Patt Morrison is a writer and columnist for the *Los Angeles Times*; she is a member of two *Times*' reporting teams that won Pulitzer Prizes for coverage of the 1992 riots, and the city's 1994 earthquake. Her 2001 book, *Rio L.A., Tales from the Los Angeles River*, spent six weeks on the best-seller list, and was ranked as one of the year's best in the *Los Angeles Times' Book Review*. She is a regular commentator on National Public Radio and has won six Emmys and four Golden Mike awards as founding host and commentator on "Life & Times Tonight," the current affairs program on KCET. She lives in Los Angeles. www.pattmorrison.com

T. Jefferson Parker was born in Los Angeles and has lived all his life in Southern California. His eleven novels, including *Laguna Heat*, *Little Saigon*, *The Blue Hour*, and *Cold Pursuit*, all deal with life and times in his native state. His book, *Silent Joe*, won the Edgar Award for best mystery in 2001, as well as the *Los Angeles Times* Book Prize for best mystery. His next novel, *California Girl*, will be published in fall 2004 by William Morrow. www.tjeffersonparker.com

Derek M. Powazek is an author and designer from San Francisco. An accomplished performer, he's the leader of the storytelling magazine/movement Fray, which holds true story events all over the world. He also is the author of *San Francisco Stories*, a website and book of his true tales of life in the city. He lives in the Cole Valley neighborhood with his fiancee, a nervous dog, an evil cat, and a hoard of houseplants all named Fred. www.powazek.com

Carolyn See is the author of five novels, including *The Handyman* and *Golden Days*. Her most recent book is *Making a Literary Life*. She is the Friday morning book reviewer for *The Washington Post* and is on the board of PEN Center

USA West. She has a Ph.D. in American literature from UCLA. Her awards include the prestigious Robert Kirsch Body of Work Award (1993) and a Guggenheim Fellowship in fiction. She lives in Pacific Palisades.
www.carolynsee.com

Deanne Stillman is the author of *Twentynine Palms: A True Story of Murder, Marines, and the Mojave*, named one of the "Best Books of 2001" by the *Los Angeles Times Book Review*. Currently, she is writing *Horse Latitudes*, a narrative nonfiction history of the wild horse in the West, for Houghton Mifflin, and also is working on a book about Joshua Tree National Park for the University of Arizona Press. She writes for *Rolling Stone*, the *Los Angeles Times*, *The New York Times*, *Slate*, and other publications. Stillman's work is widely anthologized and her plays have been produced and won prizes in festivals around the country.
www.deannestillman.com

Thomas Steinbeck is the author of *Down To a Soundless Sea,* a critically acclaimed collection of short stories. After serving in Vietnam, he later returned there as a combat photographer, which inspired his interest in documentaries and filmmaking. Since then, he has written and produced numerous screenplays. He also sits on the board of the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas and the Center for Steinbeck Studies in San Jose. Steinbeck is an honorary board member of the Stella Adler Theatre in Hollywood. He lives on the Central Coast of California and is working on his first novel.

Héctor Tobar is a Los Angeles-born writer and journalist. The son of Guatemalan immigrants, he was raised in Hollywood and educated in California public schools, including the University of California, Santa Cruz and the University of California, Irvine, where he received a Masters of Fine Arts in Creative Writing. His novel *The Tattooed Solider* (Penguin Books, 1998) was a finalist for the PEN Center USA West Award for Fiction. He is currently the Buenos Aires Bureau Chief for the *Los Angeles Times* and was a member of the reporting team that won the Pulitzer Prize for coverage of the 1992 Los Angeles riots. His nonfiction book, *Translation Nation: On the Trail of a New American Identity*, will be published in 2005 by Riverhead Books.

D.J. Waldie is the author of *Holy Land: A Suburban Memoir*; *Real City: Downtown Los Angeles Inside/Out*; and *Where We Are Now: Notes from Los Angeles*. His book reviews and commentary appear in the *Los Angeles Times*. He is a contributing writer for *Los Angeles Magazine*. He lives in Lakewood in the house his parents bought in 1946.

Donna Wares is a book editor and journalist. She is the Editor of *My California*. She also is co-founder and editor of CaliforniaAuthors.com, which collaborated with Angel City Press to create this special anthology. Previously, she worked at the *Los Angeles Times*, *Miami Herald* and *Orange County Register* and now teaches journalism at California State University, Long Beach.

Matt Warshaw edited *Surfer* magazine in the late 1980s, and has written articles for *Outside*, *The New York Times* and *Esquire*. He's written or edited five surfing books, including *The Encyclopedia of Surfing* (2003) and *Maverick's: The Story of Big-Wave Surfing* (2000). He lives in San Francisco.
www.mattwarshaw.com

Daniel Weintraub is the public affairs columnist for the editorial pages of *The Sacramento Bee* and his column also appears in several other California newspapers. His daily weblog, the California Insider, is at www.sacbee.com/insider. He has been covering California politics and public policy for twenty years and previously worked for the *Los Angeles Times* and *Orange County Register*. During the 2003 recall campaign he was a frequent guest on CNN and Fox News and was a political analyst for MSNBC. A native of San Diego, Weintraub lives in Sacramento with his wife and two sons.

Chryss Yost is a poet, writer, and designer. She is co-editor, with Dana Gioia and Jack Hicks, of *California Poetry: From the Gold Rush to the Present* (Heyday, 2004) and, with Diane Boller and Don Selby, of *Poetry Daily: A Year of Poems from the World's Most Popular Poetry Website*. A native of San Diego, she currently lives in Santa Barbara with her daughter.
www.chryssyost.com

Information about the authors taken from:
http://www.mycaliforniaproject.org/participants.shtml

Discussion Questions

1. What does California offer that no other state can offer, perhaps in the way of a dream? We seldom talk about a Wisconsin dream or even about a Texas or a New York or a Florida dream, but mention a "California Dream," and everyone will think she knows what you're talking about (though everyone will probably come up with a different kind of image).
2. When people read *My California*, the anthology inevitably sparks a lively and very personal conversation. Readers tend to zero in on a favorite story, or maybe two, as a jumping off point to reminisce about their *own* California stories. What memories does *My California* stir for you?
3. Several writers take readers along on their road trips through California, showing off the state's out-of-the-way corners or sharing fresh glimpses of familiar places people think they already know. Which journeys did you savor most? Why?
4. The great thing about a travel anthology is that you can take it with you and get lost in a new adventure whenever you happen to have a few spare minutes. How did you read *My California*? From start to finish? Or perhaps you created your own itinerary—starting with a favorite writer or locale and then zigzagging your way through the rest of the book?
5. The City of Long Beach read *My California* in March 2006 and teachers across the city used the anthology in class. The district's literacy team gave each teacher the same prompt, an open-ended response to literature: "Explain how the author's use of facts or figurative language added to the reader's understanding of the passage/text. Support your response with ideas and evidence from the text."
6. *My California* is a sampler of some of California's finest novelists, poets, nonfiction writers and journalists. All of the contributors generously donated their work to support an important cause—arts education and writing programs for children throughout the state. Sadly, the Golden State spends just six pennies per capita to support the arts—we're at the very bottom of states *and territories* nationwide. We live in an era when arts education is under siege in our schools and local communities, when many neighborhood libraries are struggling to keep their doors open and current materials on their shelves. What's happening in your community? How does this affect you? What should you do about it?

Developed by Donna Wares, editor of My California: Journeys By Great Writers
For more information, visit www.mycaliforniaproject.org