

# Between the Clouds and Sea



## Winning Poems

From the 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual  
John Gardiner Community Poetry  
Contest

Courtesy of  
Friends of the Laguna Beach Library



**Dedicated to the memory of**



**John Abbot Gardiner**

Photo courtesy of Mary Hurlbut, used with permission.

## **John Abbot Gardiner 1947 - 2017**

John Gardiner was born in Hawthorne, California, and was proud to be a fifth generation Californian. He studied at UC Irvine where he received a BA in theater arts and he was an early cast member at South Coast Repertory Theatre in Costa Mesa. He lived in New York for several years, where he pursued his acting career. John loved acting in Shakespeare's plays. He appreciated the complexity of the language and, much to the delight of those who knew him, could recite passages and speeches from numerous plays from memory.

John was a long-time resident of Laguna Beach and was widely appreciated as a poet, actor, teacher and raconteur extraordinaire. He read at numerous venues throughout Southern California and was invited to read his poems in Prague, St. Petersburg, and Rio de Janeiro and especially treasured the invitation to read in Ireland, home of the Gardiner clan.

John was the much-beloved leader of the Laguna Poets Workshop for the last 15 years and emceed the library's annual Community Poetry Contest for many years. He was working on his 13th collection of poems when he died on October 24, 2017.

**- Ann Brillhart and the Laguna Poetry Workshop**

## **Mike Sprake**

Master of Ceremonies

Public Reading of Winning Poems, June 5, 2021



Mike Sprake was born in Winchester, England. He studied at Winchester College of Art (1966-67) and studied sculpture at St Martin's College of Art, London, under the tutelage of many 'New Generation' sculptors (1967-70). He went on to study and make Lutes for some of the renowned lutenists of the time including Anthony Rooley and Nigel North. He has been involved with painting and writing since living in the USA, over forty years ago, and is a member of the Laguna Poets Workshop. He has poems published in anthologies by Tebot Bach and Moontide Press.



While reflecting upon this year's competition and the fact that 2021 is Laguna Beach Library's centennial, I got to thinking about time, how our lives moment by moment make their way into the future, and what a magical journey it is.

However, if we were to go back 102 years in Laguna Beach, we would find a tiny library tucked away in an alley storefront that was opened by Mrs. Bafford when the population was, in 1920, recorded at only 363 people. What strikes me about this is the desire for learning and the enjoyment of books was present in such a small community. It was only two years later in 1921, that a Library Board was formed to establish the library which has thrived ever since.

We are now, in a sense, living Mrs. Bafford's vision when we enter the library, when we partake in library activities and the poetry competition. We have all the past people to thank who have served to run and support the library through all the changing decades of challenges, but we also have to thank the present staff who have been keeping the library alive through a difficult and dark year.

The year ahead looks brighter, so keep to your task, poets, keep the pencil sharp, jot down your thoughts and dreams as they occur, capture the magical moments as we move into the future in a town that was inhabited by "Laguna Woman, the First American", thousands of years ago.

**- Mike Sprake**

*Note: A portion of a female skull, dubbed the "Laguna Woman", one of the oldest in the Western Hemisphere, was found by two young Laguna Beach teens in 1933.*

**23rd Annual John Gardiner  
Community Poetry Contest  
Winners 2021**

**Adult**

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

**Tanner Laguatan**

Night Surf

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

**Roger Owens**

Clouds Came Into Our Town

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

**Erin Halford**

Flight

## **Ninth – Twelfth Grade**

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

**Clara Becker** (*12th grade*)

Albatross

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

**Tannya Gallegos** (*10th grade*)

Depth

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

**Daphne Boyd** (*11th grade*)

What We've Taken For Granted

## **Sixth – Eighth Grade**

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

**Lili Bazargan** (*8th grade*)

The Portrait of Our Lives

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

**Elise Chen** (*7th grade*)

Reaching

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

**Natalia Calef** (*6th grade*)

Dancing Clouds



## Third – Fifth Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

**Ava Hulett** (*5th grade*)

Precipitation

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

**Barrett Purko** (*4th grade*)

Summer Fun

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

**Ava Boussaa** (*3rd grade*)

Splish, splash, Ocean

## Preschool – Second Grade

1<sup>st</sup> Place:

**Andrew Zingale** (*Preschool*)

Dinosaurs

2<sup>nd</sup> Place:

**Cyrus Martin Akbarzadeh** (*Kindergarten*)

About the World

3<sup>rd</sup> Place:

**Nele Veaser** (*2<sup>nd</sup> Grade*)

the sky

**Adult: 1<sup>st</sup> place**



**Tanner Laguatan**  
Night Surf

In the spring we fostered a dog and taught her to not bite our hands

We learned that she ran in the shape of little infinities before she peed on the ice plant (she would only pee on this ice plant overlooking the lifeguard tower on Main Beach, the one beside an American flag kept half-mast for what feels now like months) when we learned this, we felt like we became her parents

We learned to surf on Thalia, we met a doctor in the water and we talked about the novel she wanted to write

We surfed until last light, the sky a block of concrete levitating above  
another block of concrete, and between these planets we floated

To catch a wave by streetlight and moonlight you don't look  
for a wave you look for a blackness that's darker than  
everything else and you wait for it to approach and you  
turnaround

We're looking for another dog, by the spring we hope for a  
dog that will be with us for years and

a dog that will lick the salt off our ankles a dog that will see  
our children. I will tell my children about this, what I learned  
between last spring and this one. I hope I live to have  
children

I hope they learn to surf when they are young, when their  
muscles are like a foreign language:

I want them to know how to sense the water in darkness,  
how to stand on it turn on it and carve

from it what they want

**Adult: 2<sup>nd</sup> place**



**Roger Owens**  
Clouds Came Into Our Town

Clouds came into our town  
And all towns.  
We sat above the sea  
And watched  
And watched.  
We could hear the birds  
Louder than before.  
No sound on the street.  
The earth breathed,  
Sighing, relieved  
Hoping to heal.  
We ran along the sand  
Our footprints the only intruders.  
Splash on the mind  
Splash on the soul

Splash on your heart  
Waiting to beat once again  
Wishing for a new start  
That loves the earth,  
The sea,  
And the clouds.

**Adult: 3<sup>rd</sup> place**



**Erin Halford**

Flight

tense strokes land and lift  
painting a plum hummingbird  
in effortless flight

**Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 1<sup>st</sup> place**



**Clara Becker**

Albatross

There is a type of bird that lives in a place  
between the earth and the heavens

Soaring between a sky so well known  
and an ocean of vast unimaginable toils

The Albatross takes flight  
mating for life, effortlessly traveling 100's of miles

Together they glide on tailwinds of the sea  
harnessing the breeze  
unneeding to flap their wings

A legend of sin and parts unknown  
when a sailor killed one the gales stopped

The voyage now cursed  
they blamed the bird  
long live the lore of the Albatross

Albatross inhabit spaces often forgot  
drifting in the sky and living above the deep  
Albatross survive and die in the freedom of the sea



**Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 2<sup>nd</sup> place**

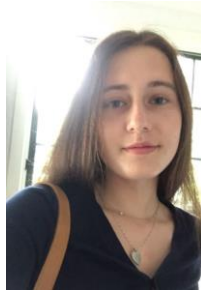


**Tannya Gallegos**  
Depth

Between the clouds and sea I am nothing  
A victim of my own naivety  
Afraid of wishing to go higher  
Afraid of going under  
Why am I trapped in the space between  
Of the white looming shadows up high  
Of the dark depths of the blue inferno beneath  
No clear choice to make  
There's no way I can succeed  
They're Mother nature's own simple creations  
But seen from the middle, I feel so little  
Could there be something  
Down under in the salty vast place  
Or is there only sharks that prey  
Oh no I have to pick now  
I can not fly or swim  
Thus the future must be grim

Ignorance is bliss but now I know  
That Between the clouds and sea  
Is the depth of my mentality  
Where I can never leave  
Many say that between the clouds and sea  
Is a glorious beauty  
But all I ever find is the ugliness within me

**Ninth – Twelfth Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup> place**



**Daphne Boyd**

**What We've Taken For Granted**

They watch from beyond as we sacrifice ourselves  
For perilous feats  
No man should survive  
As we try to part the clouds and look beyond  
Or dive until we reach the ocean floor

Though we like to focus on the calm waves and sunny skies  
We all know the days will come  
When the clouds darken and  
The sea crashes against the shore like  
Sharp jaws, looking for something to devour

So we retreat back to the soil  
That we tried so hard to escape  
Leaving our trash  
Our invaluable  
Littered across its surface

We cower in our homes and bask in what the vast earth has  
to offer

It is on these days that the universe reminds us of what we've  
taken for granted

The beautiful land

Between the clouds and the sea

**Sixth – Eighth Grade: 1<sup>st</sup> place**



**Lili Bazargan**

**The Portrait of our Lives**

In the between the clouds and the sea  
Live our deepest fantasies  
Everyone looks at the sky  
And sees a different image through their eyes

Our perceptions differ  
Yet the horizons we paint are the same  
We are all watching the same sunrise  
Just through a different frame

It's interesting to see how every hand  
Paints a picture in a different way  
Maybe that is why we are all unique  
Maybe that is why no two people are the same

Our lives are a canvas  
And we add to them everyday  
But every painting will turn out different  
Because we all go through life in different ways

But some things are universal  
The Earth still revolves around the sun  
If by the end of our lives, we have spread love  
We can add our finishing touches and know, that our painting  
is done

**Sixth – Eighth Grade: 2<sup>nd</sup> place**



**Elise Chen**  
Reaching

Between the clouds and sea  
Are my dreams waiting to be found  
If only I choose the courage to say, “I will,” not “I wish”  
Turning those milky white clouds  
between me and my island of possibilities  
Into air, sky, and sun

Here, the shimmering azure sea dances  
in the light of one thousand mirrors  
Reflecting my swelling heart

I dance in a cloud of marigolds that are waiting to bloom  
And taste my sweet dreams’ delight

As the cool breeze lightly brushes my skin like a starling's  
wing

And I scrunch warm, smooth sand seeping between my toes  
Joyous that I chose "I will."



**Sixth – Eighth Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup> place**



**Natalia Calef**  
Dancing Clouds

I look at the clouds over the deep blue sea  
They paint a picture of our interlaced journeys

The clouds paint a picture of me and my friends  
Which will be by my side forever, till the end

Friends are important, they are supportive and kind  
If you ever feel lonely, you know who to find!

They are with you through the worst and the best  
If you have a friend you are truly blessed

I look at the clouds drifting over the sea  
I see me and my friends making memories

**Third – Fifth Grade: 1<sup>st</sup> place**



**Ava Hulett**  
Precipitation

Cumulonimbus

I think that rain is coming

Sweet, refreshing rain

**Third – Fifth Grade: 2<sup>nd</sup> place**



**Barrett Purko**  
Summer Fun

Sitting on the beach

Content as can be

Holding a treasure

Found from the sea

Saltwater skin

Warm glistening sun

Two best friends

Share summer fun

**Third – Fifth Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup> place**



**Ava Boussaa**  
Splish, splash, Ocean

Between the Clouds and the sea

I wonder what is in there...I dive to see

Splash, swing, Sway

Fish

Scampering, pinching, crawling

Crab

Pumping, playing, hiding

Octopus

Spiky, sharp, sticking

Barnacle

Playful, singing, swimming free

Dolphin

The giant of the sea, the king, the protector

Whale

I swim to the surface when the sun goes down and all of my memories will stay planted deep in my mind like a tattoo for life

**Preschool – Second Grade: 1<sup>st</sup> place**



**Andrew Zingale**  
Dinosaurs

Pteranodon flies above the ocean

Waves of blue water

Mosasaurus

Long neck and giant body

Sharp teeth, fins and a long tail

Catching a pteranodon wing

Eating it for a snack

**Preschool – Second Grade: 2<sup>nd</sup> place**



**Cyrus Martin Akbarzadeh**  
About the World

Above the sea were clouds

Above the clouds were space

Above space there was a galaxy

Under the sea there was a whale

Under the whale was a jellyfish

Under the jellyfish was a submarine

In the middle was a boat

In the middle of the boat was a chair

In the middle of the chair was me.

**Preschool – Second Grade: 3<sup>rd</sup> place**



**Nele Veaser**  
the sky

running in the sky  
is fun  
after school is done  
waves splashing below your feet  
and birds tweating  
next to you  
If you fly  
you can touch the birds



The Annual John Gardiner Poetry Contest  
is made possible through the generosity of:

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*We look forward to your participation  
in next year's  
24th Annual John Gardiner  
Community Poetry Contest.*

*Next year's theme is*

***“This Fragile Life”***



Booklet and Prizes  
Courtesy of  
Friends of the Laguna Beach Library

2021

