

## POETRY CORNER

**Mulberry, Oak, Catalpa**

By Shirley Robinson  
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Mulberry, Oak, Catalpa  
Vaudevillian leaves performing  
Their last song and dance  
Of the summer engagement.  
Floating, lilting pirouettes  
They gather in rake-worthy piles  
Becoming, somehow, the  
Gardeners odd villains.

*Shirley's history in the Applegate goes way back. Her dad was Fred Coffman. His paternal family, the Coffmans, settled up Bishop Creek. His maternal side of the family, the Schumpfs, settled in Jacksonville. Her grandfather, Mert Coffman, mined for gold up many of the gulches in the Applegate. She and her husband lived for 17 years in Jacksonville, then 17 years on Cady Road, and, after a few moves, now live in Merlin, but, she vows, "I'll always be an Applegater."*

**It's Raining at Last**

By Diana Coogle  
diana@applegater.org

It's a good hard, steady rain.  
an honest-to-goodness, how-it-used-to-be, Oregon rain.  
It's a stay-in the-house, knit-by-the-stove rain  
or, if you prefer, an umbrella rain  
a music-in-the-gutters rain  
a beautiful, replenishing  
thank-the-gods  
rain

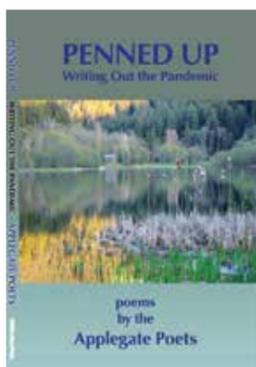
*After growing up in Georgia and studying at Cambridge University as a Marshall Scholar, Diana moved to an Applegate mountainside, taught part-time at Rogue Community College, and wrote commentaries for Jefferson Public Radio (JPR). Diana has published three books of selected JPR commentaries: Fire from the Dragon's Tongue (an Oregon Book Award finalist), Living with All My Senses: 25 Years of Life on the Mountain, and An Explosion of Stars. She has also published Favorite Hikes of the Applegate, with Janeen Sathre; Wisdom of the Heart, with artist Barbara Kostal; and From Friend to Wife to Widow: Six Brief Years, a book of poetry.*

Have a submission for Poetry Corner, either by an Applegate resident or about the Applegate? Email it to *Applegater* poetry editor Paul Tipton at [ptipton4u2c@gmail.com](mailto:ptipton4u2c@gmail.com).

## A poetic way to support the *Applegater*

Those Applegate Poets are at it again. Having written their way through the COVID-19 lock-downs, they have produced a new book of poems, *Penned Up: Writing Out the Pandemic*, just in time for the holidays. The Applegate Poets will donate all proceeds from the sale of this book to the *Applegater*.

The poets (Christin Lore Weber, Joan Peterson, H. Ní Aódagáin, Seth Kaplan, Beate Foit, Diana Coogle, and Lisa E Baldwin) will give a reading at the Applegate Library from 2-4 pm Sunday, December 12. Come to enjoy the poems and buy a copy of *Penned Up*



there, where you can have it signed by the authors. If you can't make it to the reading, copies are available from the contributing poets (listed above) or directly from the publisher, N8tive Run Press; send requests by email to [n8tiverun.enterprises@gmail.com](mailto:n8tiverun.enterprises@gmail.com).

Remember: all donations to the *Applegater* made before December 31—including proceeds from the sale of *Penned Up*—will be matched by the NewsMatch grant, so your book purchase before that date will count double! Donate online at [applegater.org](http://applegater.org), or come to the reading, enjoy the poems, and buy a book.

## BOOK REVIEW

**Always Coming Home**

Ursula K. LeGuin  
Harper & Row  
New York 1985

BY CHRISTIN LORE WEBER

*"The people in this book might be going to have lived a long, long time from now in Northern California."*

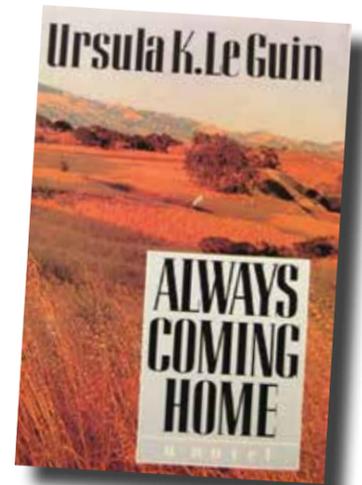
Oregon's premier novelist and one of the nation's most distinguished writers, winner of the National Book Award as well as the Nebula and Hugo awards for science fiction, is Ursula K. LeGuin. Her book, *Always Coming Home*, was urged upon me in the late 1980s by a remarkable child, a savant when it came to science fiction and fantasy of even the most complex sort. She sent me home with her own copy of the book, just to make sure I wouldn't miss reading it!

Years later when I lived in Port Townsend, Washington, LeGuin gave a lecture at the annual Writers' Workshop at Fort Worden. I attended with my copy of her book, hoping she would sign it. After standing in line for what seemed a long time, I was face-to-face with her. She took the rather tattered book from my hands, smiled, and said: "Oh my. *Always Coming Home*. This is my favorite book, but very few readers responded to it. I'm so glad to see it and so glad to meet you—someone who must have recognized the possible world of the future I hoped to have envisioned and recorded on its pages." She signed it, and as she returned it to my hands, she said, "If you can, try to find the boxed edition with the audio tape. All the songs of the Kesh are there. A group of us, such creative people, enjoyed composing those songs and recording them."

Now I own that boxed edition and have read it once again as a tribute to the author who made her passage from Oregon and this earth in 2018.

The book is structured as a collection of archeological notes: maps, stories, poems and songs, rituals, historical records, descriptions of categories of people (not just human), names of places and the paths and roads that connect them. As I read, I attempted to identify places with those that now exist in Northern California and the Pacific Northwest. I studied the maps, which were more than just a little skewed from present geological patterns. The only recognizable place name was Crater Lake.

The narrative that connects all the archeological artifacts and anthropological descriptions is told by a young girl whose



last name is Stone Telling. Through her the reader is introduced to essentially different experiences of time, relationships to place, organization of community, and so many other components of human life. Although the world of the Kesh seemed almost medieval, elements of it were also futuristic. At the time LeGuin wrote the book, we had computer technology but virtually no internet accessible to regular folks. Despite this, LeGuin's world that *might be going to have been a long time from now* has a sort of "Cloud" computer network storing all the data of the entire history of the planet. Universities exist in which scholars spend their lives studying this endless data. It reminded me of medieval monastic universities where the same devotion to scholarship was evident, and it is hard to ignore the parallels between LeGuin's computer in the Cloud and the monastic God in the heavens.

Reading this book is like setting out on an archeological dig in a world that is and isn't an evolution of the one we occupy now. It is a novel, but, unlike LeGuin's other novels, which contain some of the same themes, exquisite writing, and a more traditional structure, this one is unique.

My favorite among her other works is *The EarthSea Cycle*. The first three volumes are complete in themselves and profoundly moving. I actually listened to them on Audible. The skill of the reader delivered such a dramatic presentation that he carried me right out of my kitchen where I was cutting up zucchini for relish and set me down on the wings of a dragon.

Winter is a perfect time to let an author with genius carry our imaginations into an alternate reality where hope becomes possible again.

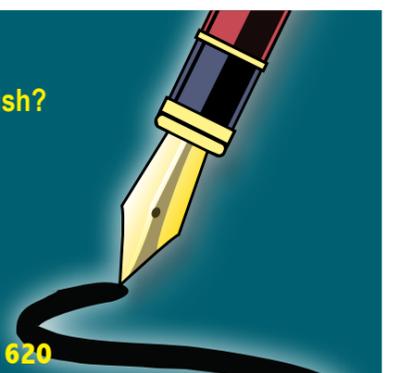
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