



The 9th annual Rossmoor Fiction Writing Contest

By Cathy Larson

Another crop of Rossmoor stories hit the RHA inbox last month, and they didn't disappoint. If you thought you enjoyed last year's stories of Rossmoor, just wait until you see the creativity born from our residents this year.

And the winner is ... not so fast. Let's first take a gander at what this year's batch of tales had to offer.

Do you love anything Disney? Then this story "2nd Happiest Place on Earth" is for you. Take a meandering trip down memory lane in this Rossmoor-inspired adventure about Walt's early location scouting for Disneyland, uniquely carved custom spikes, antique doorknockers, and a reinterpretation of the "Happiest Place on Earth." Kevin Cimarusti takes us all on adventure that, as he says, awakens "a little Indiana Jones" in us all. Think you know all there is to know about Walt Disney and his Disneyland dreams? Think again.

We've all found our dream home in Rossmoor, so Ron Kirkpatrick's short story titled "A Tale of Love Lost and Love Gained" will ring true to everyone. It's a short story reminiscent of our own love of this neighborhood we all call home. Unfortunately, the character in this story loses his family and finds himself exploring Rossmoor from the outside in — on rooftops, through the trenches of homes undergoing remodels, and with neighborhood friends. Not until the end does this character's adventure come to an surprising and unexpected conclusion — one you don't want to miss.

Are you a history fan? Maybe even a history buff who can't be beat at Jeopardy? Ever wonder how "Abe Lincoln, Mayor of Rossmoor" earned this unprecedented position? Then you don't want to miss Mark and Holli Weitz's story of how our unincorporated neighborhood came to have its own mayor. It's a story with well developed characters and setting. A story full of love and loss. A story with a point of view that pulls the reader in immediately. Read the Weitz's story for a nostalgic glimpse of war, family, and community.

"Fourth of July" by Diane Wood reminds of what buying in Rossmoor meant back in the 1950's. It meant modern appliances, bigger bedrooms, neighborhood schools, open parks. It's a story that reminds us that families are built in Rossmoor. That families stay in Rossmoor. And plant roots in Rossmoor. Even the story itself uses the phrase "idyllic times" that takes us back to the days of old Model A's and 4th of July parades. Thank you, Diane, for capturing the sentiment that a family planted in Rossmoor, grows in Rossmoor — potentially laying roots for over one hundred years.

The shortest of our short stories this year came from the imagination of Greg Atkins in “The Heavy Heart,” but it is not short on unique, fun, and imaginative figurative language and humor. Greg takes us back to a time when carving your initials into a tree was romantic and when parks were where memories were made. With an expert hand that takes life and parallels it with nature, he reminds us that when we are faced with events that scar us on the outside, it is the heart that helps us heal.

For first time in our fiction writing contest history, one of our returning writers also returns with a continuation — a part two — to last year’s story “The Puff Pall.” It was a story full of magic that forced us to ask ourselves, *How well do we really know the people living right next door?* This year, Lisa Lanier doesn’t disappoint with her sequel “The Review.” This year’s story uses dialogue to pull us back into Agatha and Ophelia’s dilemma of the conjured shade tree, but it introduces a twist — the arrival of an inspector on report of Magic Noticed. You’ll have to read this year’s installment to see how it all ends. Or does it?

If one paranormal short story isn’t enough for you, then you’re in for a real treat this year with Victor Carfi’s “The Yellowtail Horror.” This story is full of a soul-consuming blackness, terrifying voices, and “hideous demons” that torment Rossmoor residents. Hold on tight to your lazy-boy when you read Victor’s story of an unmeasurably-deep pit in Rossmoor hidden behind innocuous signage. Be sure to read this one carefully — so you know which property to avoid when walking your dogs on our seemingly peaceful streets.

Hungry for stories of young sailors in the South Pacific? Four years after the end of World War II? Who yearn for a family and a home and a neighborhood to call their own? Then you don’t want to miss Roy Roudine’s short story titled “The Young Sailor Yearns.” This is a heart-felt, realistic fiction piece about duty, patriotism, love, and family — on our very own corner of Shakespeare and Baskerville.

No year would be complete without humor, and Lisa Quemodo-Torres delivers with her piece “The Wishing Well.” With a nod to what makes Rossmoor Rossmoor, Lisa begins her story with references to fall leaves, the scent of jasmine, and a luminous moon — images that ring true for us all. But the hilarity ensues when she captures beautifully the antics of our octagenarian neighbors. With imaginative imagery and characterization, the neighborhood come to life. You’ll find yourself laughing out loud amidst the touching tale of a lost daughter in this story that ends with a poignant poem, bringing Lisa’s piece to a masterful close.

Writer’s Celebration

On August 24th, after all entries had been received and judged, the RHA Board hosted a Writer’s Celebration for everyone to come together and celebrate. We noshed on appetizers, enjoyed great wine, and made new friends. The winners were announced, and everyone was given time to share the details and the inspiration behind his or her short short. With this great evening of friends and family, everyone walked away feeling empowered by this small neighborhood we all call home.

Reminder

Keep an eye out for the publication of the rest of our entries over the next few issues of *OurRossmoor*. If you just can’t wait, you can always binge read them all on the Our Rossmoor website at <https://OurRossmoor.com/contest>.

The drum roll, please ...

- This year's winner is Victor Carfi for "The Yellowtail Horror." He received a \$200 Visa Gift Card. His story is published in this issue of *Our Rossmoor*.
- Second place goes to Lisa Lanier for "The Review," winning a \$100 Fish Company Gift Card. Her story will be published in the next issue of *Our Rossmoor* -- stayed tuned!
- Third place, and a \$50 Panera Gift Card, goes to Greg Atkins for "The Heavy Heart." His story will be published in an upcoming issue of *Our Rossmoor*.

Congratulations to all our winners and "thank you" to all who participated.

Keep an eye out for next summer's Fiction Writing Contest. We can't wait to see where your imagination takes us in 2020!