Special Events

NOTE: All special events are free and open to everyone in the community unless otherwise specified (no memberships needed or gender excluded). The Sitting Room is located at 2025 Curtis Drive, just off Petaluma Hill Rd., south of E. Cotati Ave, near Sonoma State University – we are next door to the Church of Christ. Map and parking advice on our website: sittingroom.org. You can also reach us via Sonoma County Transit. Line 44 drops you right at our doorstep (Curtis Drive) and it is just .7 miles from Sonoma State, which is served by lines 10, 12 and 14. Check http://sctransit.com/ for details. All of these events are FREE and no reservations are needed, but if you have any questions, telephone 707-795-9028 or email: sittingroomlibrary@gmail.com

READERS WITHOUT BORDERS
Saturday, September 21, 2–4 p.m.
CALLING ALL READERS WHO WANT TO TRAVEL VIA BOOKS INTO THE LIVES OF WOMEN FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES! Come roam with Karen Petersen, Sharon Bard, Barbara Lesch McCaffrey and J.J. Wilson through the Sitting Room’s rich collection of International fiction by women. Much of it is in translation – and happily there are more and more of these available – but all of it gives glimpses beyond the veil and beyond the stereotypes. All participants will walk away with one book under their arms; all participants will be asked to write a page or so on who and what they have been introduced to in their books that enlarged their view of women’s lives in that culture. Africa, South America, China, Russia, Iran and Iraq are not enough represented yet. All of your writings will be added to the Sitting Room’s “Readers Without Borders”, enriching it. Your mini-essay is due on or before March 1. This workshop is free, but do email J.J. at boxcar@sonic.net to reserve your place. Phone her at 795-9028 if you have any questions about this preparation session. And yes, of course people can write for the publication without coming to this particular event. See excerpts from essays already received, here on page 2 which each fill the bill in its own way. Have a look.

TRIBUTE TO TONI (WOFFORD) MORRISON Sat., Sept 28, 2–4 p.m.
Let us gather to celebrate and honor one of the greatest writers of our lifetime. Bring your memories and one of your favorite passages to share.

ARCHIVE CRAWL/OPEN HOUSE
Saturday, October 5, 9 a.m.–6 p.m.
WHO KNEW? October is National Archives Month, which is the inspiration for the first ever Sonoma County ARCHIVE CRAWL, designed to celebrate local archives —so says Steve Lovejoy, one of the organizers of this primo event, in his invitation to The Sitting Room to participate. Of course, the Sitting Room jumped at the opportunity to show off its unique Archives in this national and county-wide context. We will be sharing a table with the Women’s Suffrage Celebration committee at the Forum Room of the Santa Rosa Public Library which is an honor, of course, but we are excited also to be holding an OPEN HOUSE right here at The Sitting Room, from 10 to 6. Come by if you want to help out or just to enjoy the Archives + some tea and scones. Eloise van Tassel and Mara Patino have updated (literally, with dates for each author) the list of our holdings to hand out to all interested.

INTRODUCTION TO ANCIENT EGYPT
with Jacqueline Thurston Sunday, October 13, 2–4 p.m.
Jacqueline Thurston’s presentation will be drawn from the ideas and images in her book, “Sacred Deities of Ancient Egypt” and will be illustrated with her photographs, many of which have never before been reproduced. She will explore themes from her book such as “Ferocity and the Feminine” and include anecdotes about this project, which took on a life of its own, as such pursuits often do. Copies of her beautiful book will be for sale and for signing. All are welcome; no RSVP needed. Our thanks to Meredith Sabini for setting this up.

FANFARE FOR “THE TRUMPET LESSON” with Diane Romain Saturday, October 19, 4–6 p.m.
Professor Emerita of Philosophy, Sonoma State University, Diane Romain retired to live in Guanajuato, Mexico. She enjoys teaching beginning Lindy Hop, taming the four scaredy-cats that scramble over her garden wall, and walking hillside goat trails. Even more, she has used her experiences to write her novel, The Trumpet Lesson, just published. Kirkus Reviews deems it “An arresting novel about tightly wound secrets and the art of letting go of them.” Let’s give her a special welcome as she returns to Sonoma County to discuss her book and the process of creating it.

TRAVEL TALES, Potluck and Reading Thurs., October 24, 6 p.m.
What travelers these Sitting Room denizens are! More tales, some told with the aid of photos and some not, each teller allotted about 15 minutes each. We’ve already signed up two or three, (two of them who went to Japan on very different trips,) and would welcome another three or four even if to less exotic places. Email J.J. Wilson at boxcar@sonic.net, if you want to come prepared to present or if you want to be part of the audience. First at 6 p.m. we eat, of course, international dishes featured; stories begin 7p.m.

LEARN TO WRITE OBITUARIES Sat. Oct. 26, 1–5 p.m. FREE
Write your own obituary! It’s fun and easy when you remember your story, organize its chapters, and communicate what makes you wonderful. Learn the form, then forget it if you like—or—make the whole thing up and imagine a life as yet undiscovered. More seriously, this is also a practical occasion to prepare for the inevitable. In time for All Hallows and Dia de los Muertos meditations, The Sitting Room’s annual Obituary Workshop will unfold Saturday, October 26, from 1 to 5 p.m. Led by Marie Thomas McNaughton. FREE! To reserve your space, email J.J. Wilson at boxcar@sonic.net before Oct. 15, 2019.
OUR ANNUAL HARVEST DINNER
BENEFITTING THE LIVING ROOM
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 6:00 P.M.

Always the same and yet always different – this year featuring Karen Fitzgerald’s famous enchiladas on the menu and for the After Dinner Treat, Rim and Rassan Zahra will read from their newly published translations from the Arabic of Ghada Samman, described by Etel Adnan as turning to poetry “in order to follow the thread of her life, to seek light in chaos.” Copies of the book will be available for sale and signing.

And Cindy Pasko, the new ED at the Living Room, will update us on some of their new developments. Checks made out to the Living Room are requested, but do consult their website for other pressing needs such as motel cosmetics, diapers, socks, etc. Space is, of course, limited even though the Living Room needs are not — so sign up right away and make a donation even if you don’t get to come to dinner.

Please RSVP to J.J., boxcar@sonic.net or 707.795.9028 to reserve your place at the table.

2020 SITTING ROOM PUBLICATION
READERS WITHOUT BORDERS

As many of you already know, the planned-for 2019 publication devoted to this topic was delayed, in order to “cover the map more” — in 2020 we will bring out a substantial volume of these unusual essays. Please contribute to it.

Full details on our website, http://www.sittingroom.org/publish.html
Any questions, call JJ Wilson at 707 795-9028.

Here are just a few excerpts from essays already received for “Readers Without Borders”, to give you the flavor of the diversity, though often what starts out as a study of differences in cultures ends up with the startled recognition of how alike our inner if not our outer lives are.

For example: “Some elements of our families are similar — Kathryn’s mother and an aunt had women lovers; later in life, I did too. Lesbians on both sides, disdained in her family, embraced in mine, and as with mine, someone is always taking pictures.” (Henri Bensusson)

Terry Ehret and her team, in translating from Spanish the poetry of Ululume Gonzales de Leon, were a bit thrown by the poet’s daughter requesting they be more “explicitly sexual” which they had thought risky. “Was this the poet’s intention? Would our readers find it inappropriate, even vulgar?”

Several writers learned to feel the unease of immigrants and exiles. As Linda Lampson writes poignantly: “…are the memories and rituals of making a home enough if you cannot claim the land as your own?”

Here’s a vivid description, from Ginnie Kirsch, of what these readings feel like for most of the writers: “Armchair travelers to the lands of Salaga need no visa. Entering is like parachuting into an unknown terrain with unfamiliar time frame, language, behaviors, and cultural expectations. Travelers will need an open mind, open heart and patience to explore this story of Ghanaian land, history and customs.”

Krista Anandakuttan, reading the stories of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, finds herself in many settings, “like a house crowded with tenants in New Dehli, a tasteless mansion in Mumbai, an apartment in New York. I feel I have been shown into their living rooms at the most embarrassing moments of their lives. Only some of Jhabwalla’s people age gracefully; some experiment, some hurt others, or lose their dignity. All are wonderfully flawed.”

And Julia Hawkins, who writes historical novels, tracked down the 15th century writer Christine de Pizan whose “City of Ladies” is imagined as a sanctuary “for all women who seek to develop their potential and would live honorably with intellectual freedom. The city will be founded on reason, fortified by rectitude, and roofed with justice.”

Jonah Raskin, writing about the Southern Rhodesian born author, Doris Lessing, found time to generalize about the topic assigned: “Lessing takes me into a world without borders, except the borders imposed by words themselves, by print, and the physical confines of a book […] That’s what happens at The Sitting Room. Readers make literary maps, build walls, and transcend them with imagination.”

THE SITTING ROOM - 2019 BOOKMARK

Books are the mind’s ballast, for so many of us — the cargo that makes us what we are, a freight that is ephemeral and indelible, half forgotten but leaving an imprint.

Penelope Lively, Dancing Fish and Amonmites

BEYOND THE FIRES
with Maya Khosla
Saturday, November 16, 2-4 p.m.

Maya’s presentation will feature excerpts from her new writing about wildfire and the latest wave of biomass energy production that is proposed to use our forests as fuel in energy plants, a new 10-minute clip from Firewise, and a rough cut that is developing into one of the Legacy Project films that is a part of her poet laureate project.

Firewise is led by scientists and retired firefighters Tim Ingalsbee and Rich Fairbanks, organic farmer Lisa Bjorn (previously firefighters), scientist Chad Hanson, and others. The clip will reveal the story of fires across the west through the current science and the personal narratives of the main characters, the world of fire as seen through their eyes and the real dos and don’ts in an age of climate change.
Dates and Details on the Recovering Rumer Godden Project

All are welcome to attend any of these, no RSVP needed.
See the website for additional information: www.sittingroom.org/rumer-godden

Sunday, Sept 22, 2 to 4: Salon on RG’s India-themed novels, led by Rosemary Manchester, who invites us to wear saris and bangles and prepare to celebrate.

Saturday, Oct. 12, 2 to 4: Salon on other (Italy, France, England etc.) books by RG, including her famous children’s books (led in dance by J.J. Wilson).

Wednesday, Oct. 16, Book Group will be discussing RG’s “The River” – all are welcome.

Sunday, Oct. 20, 2 to 4: Salon on Godden’s books showing her fascination with women’s monastic orders (led by Meredith Sabini, who instigated the RG project).

This project will be further illuminated by two films based on her novels being featured at the Sonoma Film Institute at Sonoma State University: “Black Narcissus” on Fri., Oct. 25 at 7 p.m. and Sun., Oct. 27 at 4 p.m.; “The River” on Fri., Nov. 1 at 7 p.m. and Sun., Nov. 3, at 4 p.m.. The Sonoma Film Institute is no longer selling tickets for film screenings. Suggested donation is $5 and all donations are tax deductible. Check the SFI website for details of location, parking, etc. + to see Eleanor Nichols’ fine fall film program www.sfi.sonoma.edu.

Sonoma County Women 2020

Sonoma County 2020 Women’s Suffrage Project is a chapter of CA 2020 Women’s Suffrage Project - celebrating 100 years of Women’s Right to Vote and committed to programming that explores the complex and long history of the fight for inclusion of all women. The Sitting Room plans to participate in countynwide programming and we would like you to join us. Take a look at their website, www.facebook.com/SoCoWomen2020/ and drop us a line, sittingroom.library@gmail.com

LGBTQI History Class with Tina Dungan

The Older Adults Program at Santa Rosa Junior College is offering a FREE class in LGBTQI history in Sonoma County. Explore community building, cultural and social change and how our history can inform our future. Details at www.older-adults.santarosa.edu or call 707.527-4533.

NOTA Bene

The Sitting Room hosted a surprising number of events over the summer and early fall: Patti Trimble’s “Penelope Poems” performance; Krista Anandakuttan’s “Summer Nature Journals”; Sharon Bard’s “Gleaning From the Gut” workshop; Sara Valerio’s “Moving Words” on Sept 14; River Lamoreaux’s “Inner Geographies” on Sept 15. As these wonderful events come up between the Fall and Spring mailings of our newsletter, they are publicized on the Sitting Room website so PLEASE DO KEEP AN EYE ON OUR WEBMISTRESS CLARICE STAZ’S WONDERFUL UPDATES, www.SittingRoom.org

Workshop with Terry Ehret

Late-breaking news tells us that her one Sitting Room workshop this Fall has already filled to capacity, but write her if you want to get on Terry’s waiting list for early notifications. tehret99@comcast.net.

The Sitting Room Book Group

Meets the third Wednesday of every month from 2 to 4 pm. Alice McDermott’s novel, The Ninth House is scheduled for September 18 to be followed by Rumer Godden’s classic tale of India, The River, on October 16 (part of our Rumer Godden Salon series). Book Group updates are always posted on the website, www.SittingRoom.org. Email Joanne Page, jpage@sonic.net if you wish to receive reminders of the meetings and readings. All are welcome to attend, no fee of course.

Changes & Staying in Touch

We are now open Monday-Saturday, 9 am to 5 pm, and by appointment. Be sure to check our website for up-to-date info on book groups, events and publications, www.SittingRoom.org. You can also “follow” us on Facebook, www.facebook.com/thesittingroomlibrary. If you would like to receive email reminders of events at the Sitting Room and regionally, or if you would like to schedule a tour, please contact sittingroombibliography@gmail.com

Volunteers Lauded/Volunteers Needed

Friday afternoons at the Sitting Room have developed into quite jolly times for the volunteers to gather to work on various projects. (I think we are drawn by the magnetic power of “The Librarians” – Raye Lynn Thomas and Karen Petersen – who by their very demeanor encourage ideas and action.)

Lindamay (who works with the obituary collection) usually arrives first and then Karen, Raye Lynn, Eloise, Joyce, JJ, Krista, and our wonderful summer intern, Mara usually turn up. Tea time can stretch out a bit if there is good Vitamin G, (i.e. gossip, a necessary component of any diet), but pretty soon everyone gets down to work. There is a kind of BUZZ in the usually quiet Sitting Room.

Mind you, other volunteers show up at other times during the week – for example, Vickie Scott who works during the day, but sometimes donates one of her vacation days to working on the Irish lit Archives or putting in order the useful collection of How to Write books or…. The point being that The Sitting Room can always use an extra pair of hands (+ brain). If interested, please do give J.J. Wilson a ring at 707.795.9028.
Perhaps enticed to nest here by this Welcome sign the neighbors gave The Sitting Room, a family of flycatchers settled in this summer, raising two babies in the tiny pot hanging from the roof of the front porch. We all got used to tiptoeing around to the back door for the duration.

The photo was taken by Maya Khosla with her Canon camera zoom.