August 11, 2016

Dear Friends,

It is so hard for me to write this… I must bring you the sad news that Benicia’s first and most beloved Poet Laureate, Joel Fallon, died this morning at the age of 85. Joel was a wonderful poet and mentor to many, who gave so much of his wisdom and energy to our community. He will be missed beyond words, and his absence will be greatly felt.

Joel’s family plans to be present at our Poets’ Picnic in the City Park this Sunday, August 14th, 1-4 pm. This was an event that Joel started as first Poet Laureate. Please come and bring your poetry, or bring one of Joel’s poems to read. He would want us to have a good time and celebrate life, and our love of poetry.

A memorial planned by the family will take place in December. I will let you know when the details are in place.

Sincerely,

Johanna

Johanna Ely,
Poet Laureate of Benicia, 2016-2018

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My Town...

My town is a river town at the edge of land, where Sierra water, tired from working in rice fields, meets the Pacific – then swirls off in current, fog and cloud.

My town’s front yard is three miles wide with fishing boats and deep draft tankers. Seals play here, barking and calling at night, each to each. That sound sweetens the silence.

The arsenal of my river town supplied rifles and cannon for skirmishes along the Snake and Feather rivers and Guadalcanal, and Yong Dong Po.

In its time, an Army town, a ship building town with whores and hooligans, a town of rough edges, not yet all smoothed down.

My river town is quieter now and almost all the silvery shopping carts return to nest outside the grocery stores at night – when streetlights drip buttery pools onto the tilty sidewalks.

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