

## Light the Way

—A Book Review by Juanita J. Martin

*Light the Way*, a poetry collection, is authored by Barbara Toboni, a seasoned writer in the Napa Valley. Cover to cover this book is elegant in literary style and execution. Barb weaves imagery well; her spectacular use of light is evident in “Points of Light” and “Dear Walmart Girl.” The reader can relate to every poem as Barbara spins words into gifts of literary illumination. She brings you into her world with a deep exploration of humanness and universality.

Barbara turns short pieces of ordinary into extraordinary, with dazzling details of life, love. Each line comes alive with blended colors, flavors that leave a lasting taste like rich slices of carrot cake, lathered with gooey cream cheese frosting. Such poems are “From my C Street Window”, “Hugging You” and “Oh, Orange.”

“Daisies Lie” is a poem of unsettling expectation and sharp disappointment. Barbara writes, “Where were they when my parents divorced, when I divorced, nowhere to be found.” Daises indicate a promise of love, a promise of forever sandwiched between passion and hope.

“The Party,” is a quick four-liner that comes to the point, says exactly what you would expect; just as in life, you have your highs, lows, a little fizz, and in the end you go flat-line.

In the poem “Dusting Mother after She’s Gone,” Barbara pays a sweet tribute and honor to her mother. Barbara is remembering as she moves the cloth, touching dust on the glass, dust of her mother’s soul; “Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” is what you hear in the last stanza; a gentle transformation of life and death.

In the poem “Blessed” freckles and spots are badges of honor to Barb, treasures to remind us of life; we are connected to them, and them to us, an inheritance of living.

“Red Jacket” is a poem that symbolizes style and dress. It is a poem that speaks of transformative freedom and expression for the woman who wears the jacket. As Barb says, “Will she give Red a try? Be empowered, a chic beauty; Will I try it again?”

In “Lady: Dog by the Creek”, Barbara brings this poem alive about the love of her dog, a black Labrador Retriever, in a poignant recollection of memories; Lady in better times. Barb writes, “Ears perked to twittering birds, cadence of water rippling; she licked one arthritic paw, as if to heal old age.” Now in Lady’s final resting place, a place of solace and healing, for her and for Barbara.

“My Gold-toned Darling” is a delightful romp about a beloved car that brought much happiness and adventure to Barb’s family. Barbara writes about teenage driving, going over speed bumps, driving fast, taking out curbs as well as the trashcan. With its mismatched handle, the old car calls attention to itself in the end. Love and tears are obvious, like saying goodbye to a dear family member. No apology necessary.

*Light the Way* is an easy read. Barbara’s down-to-earth delivery brings the poetry enthusiast out of us all. Some of these award-winning poems also appear in anthologies of Redwood Writers and Napa Valley Writers, of which Barb is a longtime member. Barbara is also a member of Society of Children’s Book Writers & Illustrators. Barbara Toboni is the author of two other poetry collections, *Undertow* and *Water over Time*. Besides being a talented writer of poetry books, Barb also authored *The Bunny Poets*, a children’s book. Barbara is a widely published author with numerous stories and poems to her credit. Check out Barbara Toboni’s work at [www.barbaratoboni.com](http://www.barbaratoboni.com)