



MARIN VILLAGES

Summer Poetry Project

2020

Preface

Heartfelt thanks to all Marin Villages members, volunteers
and donors who continue to work together
to create community,
helping us all remain active, connected and independent
in the place we call home and the community we love—
even in a pandemic!

Cherie Sorokin
President, Marin Villages

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Poet's Lament

I wish I knew how to write poetry.
Where the breaths should be
And
When to use periods.

Valerie Stilson



Outside on my porch
Seeing nature, hearing birds
Who says I'm alone

Cherie Sorokin

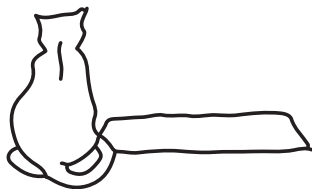
Thought for the Day

Help me please
I have to sneeze
can't bend my knees

Don't touch your face
don't you dare embrace
I am getting fat
where's my yoga mat
Boy I am beat
is it time to eat ?

Don't shake my hand
strike up the band

I've got the Coronavirus Blues.....



Julie Hannon Friedman



Endurance

Buddhist reminder
The final victory comes
To him who endures

Gerald Freedman

Humility

A lifetime of lessons,
Constant reminders.
From the small toe stubs on a ledge
To the in your face billboards:
From “I’ll never live on that street!”
To buying one of the seven houses.

Humility, from humus- earth
Grounds us frequently.
The opposite of pride
Distilling the truth of the moment
Bringing us home.

How strange that it is
Covid 19 that is forcing
Us to clean the air,
Reducing travel
And re-grounding us.

Earth may yet win.

Sue Steele

All I Wanted

All I wanted to do this morning
was get out of bed.
Pick up my old life.

Do my ablutions.
Dress. Make a protein shake.
That's all I wanted.

Jump in the car. Green light my way.
Join yoga classmates.
Pick up my old life.

Grab mat, bolster, blocks, blanket.
Sit cross-legged. Breathe.
Chat, knit together after class.

Order coffee or tea at the bakery.
Share a scone or cinnamon twist.
That's all I wanted to do.

Instead I'm home, alone
in a room with Zoom.
A make-shift imitation of my old life.

A flat screen and thumbnail images.
Om, Namaste in virtual yoga.
Not at all how I expected to spend
these last single-digit years of my life.

Laurel Feigenbaum

Infections

1.

The child guns his bike backward
down Blithedale Avenue
cautiously incautious,
his skin dark as the bark
of trees on either side.
Fearless? Brazen,
as he whips and veers?
I am the color of grubs,
instantly, this child startles me, I startle
the way a lizard darts away
from the least flick of a leaf
or foot kicked gravel.
My mask pillows in, out,
wet with imagined mouthfuls of RNA.



2.

Mine is not a Sundown Town,
Though I come from one.
Depressions, wars, plagues
Had their way with fearful citizens.
Sadie, my six foot Grandmother,
newly married, ran
back to her Idaho home,
where her mother slammed the door on regret,
and sent her back again.
Soon enough her infant girl
hat-pinned her to the home
she would never leave again.

3. Spring 1968

My mother and I stand
beside the chill of the dairy section at the Pantry.
The Deacon of our church roars,
a stone gargoyle raining down on us,
"If he likes them so much,
LET HIM GO LIVE WITH THEM!"
His face ossifies, a skull in front of me.
"The Fair Housing Act," Father Prince's
Sunday sermon echoes now between
cans of Jiffy Whip and churned buttermilk.

4. June 2020

8 pm. The earth shelters
in her own shadow
as the howl draws itself up,
marches through this allée couverte, near sepulchre
of tinderred wildland in the canyon.
One by one a colorless, locked-down town's
angry voice hoots, yells, roars, sick
to death of this shutdown, loneliness, injustice, more.

Luna, my cat, stiffens in my arms,
draws fine red blood lines on my skin.
The ache of sound around us gives way to emptiness, waiting,
waiting for the next 8 o'clock
to flicker up again.

5.

It is the cradle-shaped moon
that falls down over the horizon.
Fog sinks in, licks its way down
drought-parched growth
into leaves, roots, hemlock, sword fern,
the skin of redwoods with their round
belly-burls of hope.

In this dark
my heart clatters wrong in dead stops
and speed-bump bursts
in my throat.
Four pink ribbons unfurl,
my mask droops to the floor.
Head tilted back, my mouth opens, unhinged,
the endless snowdrift seculae
of dead and dying stars, galaxies, universes
silently molting in.

Christina McKinley

Life in No Ordinary Time

I manage to get through each day
in my helter-skelter way pulled
one direction and another.

To-do lists ignored,
phone calls, text messages,
streaming/screaming TV, e-mails,
videos sometimes entertaining
sometimes enlightening. Frightening.

On the dark web, deep state traitors
plot against the president; Democrats
run child-sex trafficking rings; the virus
a hoax/not a hoax; mask/unmask.

A neighbor's friend's doctor warns:
Can't be too careful, symptoms or not.
Shower while brushing teeth
with strong mint-flavored paste.
Somehow the virus is mint averse!

On a video: groceries untouched
left three days before a gloved hand
wipes each exterior. Tonic water
declared curative, microwaved
mail protective, 5g mobile networks
causative.

We live actual/virtual lives. Wait
to draw the Get Out of Jail Free
card— in the midst of a pandemic-
inspired Infodemic: A surfeit
of information as a detriment
to solution of a problem.



Laurel Feigenbaum

Lullaby

Your arms barely circle my neck,
your body against mine so slight and vulnerable.
Yet the heart that beats inside this tiny frame
has the power of growth and transformation,
a transformation I may never experience.
But in this moment,
molecules of love dance between us,
our cells in flawless synchronization.
No missed signals, wild mutants,
only the unlikely perfection of two bodies meeting,
one at the beginning of years, one near their end,
a merging like the confluence of two rivers
that should be moving in opposite directions.

Paula Weinberger





The Blue and White Cream Pitcher

My friend gave me sweet Daphne in a blue and white cream pitcher.

"I will keep the flowers", I say, "and give you back the cream pitcher."

"Don't you like it?" she wonders.

"Oh yes, I love it. But, what will happen to it when I die? I have so much here to get rid of.

You should keep it. Give it to someone who will have a longer life."

She asks, "Does it bring you joy?"

"My dearest friend, you and your blue and white cream pitcher filled with sweet fragrance of Daphne bring me joy."

She sighs, "Then let the cream pitcher stay here with you. If you die before me I will ask for it back. If I die before you, you will still have it. Either way, the little blue and white cream pitcher, with memories of sweet Daphne will bring joy.

Valerie Stilson

A Conversation with my Grandson

Once, a long, long time ago,
your father was a baby.
Then, a small boy just like you.

Did he think about me?
Ask about me?

Back then, he didn't know about you. You weren't born yet.

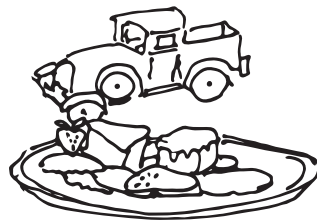
Where was I? How did he find me?
Did my father have a mother?

I'm his mother. He was my little boy
just like you are your mother's and
father's little boy.

But how can you be his mother? You're too old.

I was younger then. I was as young
as your mother.

Paula Weinberger





Coronavirus Kindness

A friend brings rolls of toilet paper, a bottle of Purell.
Calls out as she leaves, *Gold Baby!* No hugs or kisses
only gestures that mimic *thanks, love, appreciation.*

I'm buried in boxes of paper products—
Kleenex, paper towels, napkins, wipes.
Drowning in cases of water, Lysol, alcohol.

A friend or neighbor knocks on the door
or calls, *Do you need anything?*
I'm doing errands. Going to the store.

Six feet apart visits from a grandson or daughter
bearing gifts. A handmade plaid mask, books,
banana bread, ice cream, chicken soup, leftovers—

Along with admonitions of do's and don'ts.
Isolate, stay home, disinfect. My grandson says,
I'll bring whatever you need ASAP!

No risk taking, I want my children to know you.
His tender caring, warms me
as I think but don't say, *You'd better hurry.*

Laurel Feigenbaum



On Cookies

My mother told me
I spoke in full sentences at 8 months.
I didn't believe her.
But she probably told the truth,
since she seldom spoke at all.

What could I have said at 8 months old?
I want cookie?
Very likely, since I've been saying it ever since.
I guess it was my way of introducing myself
as a kid who wants what she wants.

I imagine I told my brothers,
I want cookie,
which they no doubt ignored.

And one day I'm sure, with cookie in hand,
I was pushed to the floor by one of them
who ran off with my cookie.

No way could I understand what happened.
After all a cookie was a thing given,
not taken away.
But what did I know? I was born yesterday.

That was many cookies ago.
Now, as an adult, I'm less healthy
and must eat gluten-free cookies.
But recently, my doctor said,
Those things are chock-full of sugar.
No more cookies, not even gluten-free!

I'm a senior citizen now,
and I'm fucking tired
of being a good sport.

C. Marilyn King

Picture Project – 1990

Balanced against the wall your boxes bulge
aimlessly from useless tape
frayed with age.
Your albums, thin and new with plastic wrap,
intersect with frames that flash
metal and lucite.

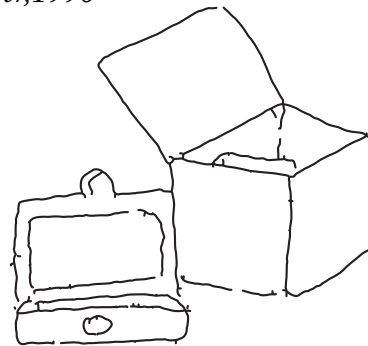
You peer
across a rug sunny with metrics.
You wear
accessories with indifference,
envelopes and snapshots tarnished
as baubles from a grandmother's trunk.

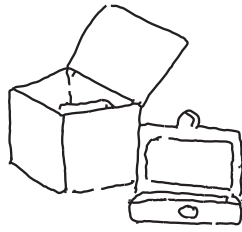
At night, from the shadows,
you lure me
to your claim.
You own my youth.

One day I shall tend to you,
one day when I have become
numbed,
or nourished,

and reconciled.

Loulie Hyde Sutro – November, 1990





Picture Project – 2020

Two closets and a cupboard claim you now.
You are dressed the same
and you have grown, but
out of sight, you do not haunt me
anymore.

But you scare me!
How will I deal with you now that there's time?
I'm not numbed.
Am I nourished – or merely reconciled?

Empty time lures me
to your Pandora's box.
I must open you now – or else never.

Your powers provoke fear.
Fifty-three years of old family photos!
You have a searing weapon I
don't really comprehend.

But I shall win!
Conquering you will conquer
empty time,
and you may even become my friend.

Loulie Hyde Sutro – May, 2020

I Think It Started with C

What was I thinking a moment ago?
It was here, and now it's not.

When I was young, I once lost a word:
profound.
It was a tough loss since I'd grown
enamored of it.
Every thought with an iota of gravitas was
profound.

But it was solid gone and remained so
despite serious sleuthing
for maybe a decade when,
capricious and unbidden,
it flew back to perch in my heady attic.
To this day I overuse it,
making sure it's embedded.

But today's loss wasn't a word;
it was the reason I entered this room.
Something I was about to do.
But alas, it too has flown
the cranial coop.

Here's one for you to ponder:
Sometimes I can't tell if I'm remembering
just having completed an action
or if I'm perceiving all similar past actions
as a single, current one. Whether I took
that vitamin at breakfast today
can get scrambled together with remembrance
of all vitamins from all breakfasts past.
They're all recall—recent or distant,
singular or cumulative--
but so disjointed time-wise, how can they feel
precisely the same to my memory?

C. Marilyn King

Living with Eighty

Still, it would be marvelous to
climb a tree again, wrap my fingers
into chestnut bark, straddle
a bending aspen from a height

guaranteed to bring pride.
I wish that once again, I could
ride the frothy waves
on my boogie board, yellow

and black like a bumble bee,
remembering that last time
when the combers rose high
and revealed their 'bellies'

filled with large volleyball-like
jellyfish, But the tidal pull
and shifting sand now keep
my rebelling knees on shore.

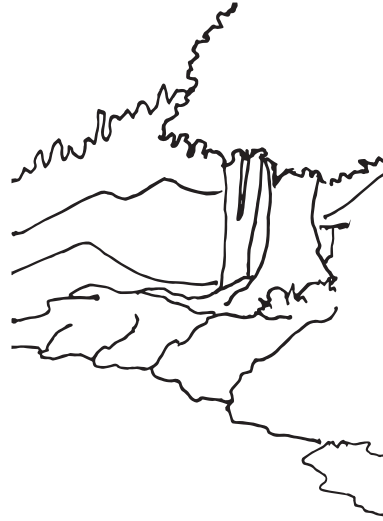
I'd love to see the wild giraffes
again, before they slip into
a distant passing, and another
moss-backed sloth, startled alert

by the call of a harpy eagle.
It would be a joy to gluttonize
on chocolate, or pizza, or drink
a beer to its very bottom, and

kick the can in the half light
of fireflies; the murmur, once again,
of parents rocking on the back porch;
to play sardines wedged into

the linen closet with the sweaty boy
I once loved; to sled down the swoop
of winter hills, my nose red and cold
Reckless, laughing, and still twelve.

Carolyn Follett



She is always with me
Floating around in my brain
Like fog in the redwoods...cold, grey, beautiful
Other times a lump in my throat that can't be removed
Except by tears

But I don't want to cry today
Nor do I want her
Gone.

Roberta Dixon

ME, OH MY!

Verse 1:

Always study. Get those straight A's.
Never enough. Giddy up. Giddy up.
Frantic, restless, manic, senseless.
School is a bitch but gotta get rich.

Pre chorus:

Ay, Ay, Ay! Do you ever stop and cry?
Cry! Cry! Cry!

Chorus:

Racing and chasing, life sneaks by you.
Writhing and striving, oh, so high.
Faster, still faster. Don't stop trying.
Never arriving. Me, oh my.

Verse 2:

Take dope, drink booze, get fucked, don't snooze.
Earn ten degrees, Giddy up. Giddy up.
Offspring, houses, Porsches, spouses.
Still on the go, I make CEO.

Pre chorus:

Ah, Ah, Ah, Do you ever wonder why?
Why? Why? Why?

Chorus 2:

Racing and chasing, life sneaks by you.
Writhing and striving, oh, so high.
Faster, still faster. Don't stop trying.
Never arriving. Me, oh my.

Bridge:

What if I could stop right now,
Feel a touch, taste a kiss?
What if I could dance my waltz,
Sing my song, Feel my bliss?

Final chorus:

Racing and chasing, life sneaks by you.
Writhing and striving, oh, so high.
Faster, still faster. Just stop trying.
Finally arriving, finally arriving, finally arriving!
Me, oh my!

Patricia Stamm

Words

Words crowd my head,
Like gulls to bread on the beach.

I love my words,
Seeking voice through pen to page.

But there is so much
I know to say, and
So little time.

How, pray tell,
Can I possibly
Be 69?

Suzanne Selby Grenager



anxious to please,
a morning glory
climbs the bird bath
and waits to charm
the blue jay.

Gloria Potter



Meditation

Gratitude and prayer
Do not come easily
To this old bird of prey
That is my mind.

The best I can often do is
Sit and sigh, and
Let down my hair, one straggly
Strand, or two, at a time.

The good news is
There is probably less to
Unravel here than I think.

Suzanne Selby Grenager

Act III

Garnished with crusty old contents,
tarnished with age, the gold and silver
salt and pepper shakers went to Goodwill today.
They made a showing on my table maybe twice
as I played Susie Homemaker, one pair each
per china place setting. In the fifty years since
they've littered the silverware drawer.

I can't say I enjoyed entertaining dinner guests,
and now, as a senior, I see the effort
as inauthentic, all that gathering and doing,
the having and having to.
Seldom was I doing what I wanted to,
and it's taken all these years to figure out
what that is:

Nothing.
I want to do nothing.

Joy is an empty date book.
I want to go nowhere and do nothing
but be, stare out my large windows,
always open onto the trees.
Notice sunlight through the bee's wings.
Let bee do the gathering;
I'll honor her labor with my seeing.

When the cool breeze through the leaves
brushes my cheek, my body, it sets me to flight.
I've never lifted off doing the dishes,
but this morning my heart soared with the squirrel
running his balancing act across a wire
30 feet above concrete, entrusting foolhardy daring
to masterful sure-footedness.
For that show, I get up early.

Be, do, have.
The greatest of these
is just to be
free to do nothing
but see.

C. Marilyn King

longer?
As red leaves fell, they mentioned
Fall as their enabler. But why tell
me?
*'You have the tendency to blame us
when it's not our fault. There's no*

*alternative. You can't arrange to hold
on to the tree when seasons change.'*
they
said to me. The sunlight glints in
waves. I see. I take the hint but

think, might not Fall favor *some*
red leaves? and let them linger
a little

Gloria Potter



When We Learned We Could Not Fly

When we learned we could not fly,
much as we watched birds of every kind
lift with such abandon, we chose instead
to dance, to explore every part of the body,
to uncover its capacities and secrets.
How high would the leg climb?
How many spirals could the neck make?
We tested the body's elasticity,
its capacity to bend and sway.
We found our own kind of magic,
in the body's manic movements
as it lifted us off the ground,
though the ground hovered near.
Our limbs grew spaces,
reservoirs, running rivers.
We leaped, arms raised and flapping,
and then in the silences,
we heard the body sing, so gently and sweetly.
Did the birds halt and peer down in mid-flight?
Did they wonder, even covet the fantastic
flow, the exuberance of a body in motion?

Paula Weinberger

Tears in the Garden

As years float by...

Doing everything I did,
Accomplishing what I could,
And some of what I wanted,
Meeting all those it was intended that I meet.

And now...
Here in the Garden,
All the tears wait for me.

Tears for the tender moments,
Tears for the moments I missed,
Tears for those precious ones I loved,
Tears for those I haven't yet found

All await me...
Here in the Garden.

Tears for the things I wanted to do, but didn't,
Tears for the ideas that came and went,
Tears for the trees, flowers and creatures that surround me,
Tears for the love I've found right here in the Garden.

A Garden, such a lovely place to end or begin

Anything Anew...

Robin Ava Laury-Gill



How can my experience
Of profound happiness
Coexist with a
Hateful death and
Ongoing virus risk?
It is a
Mystery

Sue Steele.

Love's Way

Clean air, water and food disappear
Love? Replaced by fear
Phones, tvs and computers abound
Touching moments? Seldom found
Homeless humans fill the street
Little chance a love you'll meet
Filling prisons is the answer
Empty hearts can't find a dancer
Wives and children work for money
No one home to call you "Honey"
Sex and drugs, easy to get
Joys and wonders, we forget
We each become a stranger
Love's beginnings are in danger
Few walk, talk, and play
Love can hardly find its way.

Manuel Dominguez





Praise for the Welcome Mat

Let me praise the welcome mat
always at the door
Inviting in a stranger.

It stands alone outside the door.
Let me praise its aloneness,
marked by strange footsteps
Blurring the word LOVE.

Let me praise the welcome mat
which has earned its own history
One step in each moment,
always inviting in the stranger.

Could I praise the welcome mat
Which admits me as a stranger
Unknown inside my body
So readily passed by within?

Let me praise that welcome mat.

Ginni Saunders

Am I Blue

Bless our men and women in blue
who serve our communities with pride
Bless our men and women in blue
who serve our communities and died
Bless this land America i cried
keep us safe from the enemy inside

Bless us all, show the world how we
stand.....

" Together side by side
hand in hand"

Julie Hannon Friedman

Oriental Wisdom

He told them to embrace their anger
And I didn't understand

I think I get it now.

If you run from it, it can catch you.
If you hate it, your heart aches
And your strength is drained from your body.

But if you turn and
Face it,
Respect it,
Confront it,
Perhaps like a sumo wrestler,
Who "embraces" his opponent
You can lift it out of your circle.

You can triumph even if it outweighs you.
You can win even if it throws you
Out of the circle.

Gerald Freedman



Devotion

My cats watch my hands from their home on the window ledge
Weaving like presses, hypnotic motions that weave
Across the printer and finally rest.
Like aging women who gather for gossip and prayer
We are born to this work, to love to set words loose
Upon the world, to give life to bodies
We are catchers of the common life
And the uncommon lie

Gloria Chertock



Hatred is so human
How odd it both defines
and divides us

Cherie Sorokin

2020 Vortex

"The mind is a dangerous neighborhood. Don't go in alone."

Who will go in with me?
Is it you? Is it anyone?
I am going in there now, alone...

How do I feel? Anxious, that's how.
Sputtering, stuttering, knees buckling
Unable to take even a single step
For fear of falling.

My head is becoming hot, energy rising
burning a hole into my brain.

I am abandoned, isolated.
My body breaks out in an explosion
Of words, of tears, of screams.

I am haunted...
There is no villain, I am the enemy...

So much energy available in the brain,
The mind distorts with relentless criticism...
And pain.



Ginni Saunders

You Might as Well Dance

There is no need to be still, fast,
Or keep silence.
You might as well dance, feast
And sing.

Sooner or later, God
Will find you anyway.

If you are looking for an austere God,
Then go ahead and practice austerity.
But if you want joy,
Be joyful.

Eat, drink and be merry
Sounds about right to me.

Suzanne Selby Grenager

Black Rage

The fiery hot red of her words
Contrast vividly with my white hair.
Their fabric drapes a searing shawl
Over my shoulders, burning embers
Fall to our feet.
"Oh, I'm sorry" she blurts
"You were...you were just
In my way."
Her hand reaches out
Clasping mine.
Together
We
Stamp out
The flames.

Valerie Stilson



Empathy

Sharing suffering,
Community brings healing.
Redemption follows.

Gerald Freedman

Love Wins



Soft in the rain
A wind twirling through the trees
Whispering to us all
Be still, listen, & remember
Love Wins!

A strange moment in time,
A miraculous one as most 'Shelter in Place'
Like the slow motion of the earth turning,
While we rest in this gift of grace
Love Wins!

A time for tender care of our closest ones (human & pet)
And hopefully, kindness to all others.
An unusual moment where we slow down, look around,
Renew knowledge, foundational knowledge
Love Wins!

Now, we see our world & each other more clearly,
We see what we have created, what works and does not,
All one, a human race, a single planet, a single universe
Spinning, and we know that it is not power or money, it is...
Love that Wins!

Robin Ava Laury-Gill



Threes and Fours?

Perhaps it is true bad things
come in threes:
Pandemic,
Economic chaos,
Racial unrest.
But maybe good things
come in fours?
Reconnection,
Reflection,
Enlightenment,
Change.

Cherie Sorokin

We Treasure

Escape the torment
Desire a dance in the rain
May it come sooner

To clean out, clear out
Lies and manipulations
A state of real shame

Free those we capture
Treasure together as one
Each other & our world

Robin Ava Laury-Gill



Rosie the Riveter in the Pandemic

Once a chaperoned boilermaker union member
Receiving equal pay for equal work
Needing to prove I could weld anything the men could
I could and I did

Sent home at War's end
To marriage and later six kids
To forget all about war if I could
I could and I did

Later, an activist and campaigner
No pay and daunting work
Added my voice to other Rosies because
I could and I did



In truth, the War could not have been won
Without the help of millions of Rosies
We needed to get recognition if we could
We could and we did

We're honored now in a national park
And celebrated on Rosie Days each March
Keeping faith when others could not
I could and I did

Now 98, sheltered in place with time running out
Rosie Memorial plaques are what I'm about
One each on the ubiquitous statues honoring just men
I'm still working on honoring Rosies while I can
I can and I will!

Special Poem

Ross Valley Village member Phyliss Gould, one of the original Rosie the Riveters at the Kaiser Shipyards in Richmond, CA submitted a wonderful handwritten letter about her life. This poem, created by your editors, is based on her prose and story.

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To those who contributed their work
to this volume and to those who also worked
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Poets from Marin Villages

Gloria Chertok--San Rafael Village

Roberta Dixon--Novato Village

Manuel Dominguez—Deceased

Submitted by Judy Key Dominquez, Mill Valley Village

Carolyn Follet--Mill Valley Village

Suzanne Selby Grenager--Mill Valley Village

Julie Hannon Friedman--Tiburon Peninsula Village

C. Marilyn King--Novato Village

Laurel Feigenbaum--Twin Cities Village

Gerald Freeman--Mill Valley Village

Robin Ava Laury-Gill--Ross Valley Village

Christina McKinley--Mill Valley Village

Gloria Potter--San Rafael Village

Ginni Saunders--San Rafael Village

Cherie Sorokin--Tiburon Peninsula Village

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Sue Steele--Mill Valley Village

Valerie Stilson--San Rafael Village

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Thanks, Everyone!

Marin Villages is simply the best
We can say it with absolute zest
To the office and great volunteers
Hip hip hooray and more cheers
For helping us all be less stressed!

Cherie Sorokin
President, Marin Villages
Summer 2020

**MARIN
VILLAGES**



Our Paths - Our Choices