

# Life in LAMORINDA

## October's Sweet Thursday Goes to the Dogs

By Moya Stone

To celebrate October Adopt-A-Dog month the Lafayette Library has planned a very special event. On October 28th as part of the Lafayette Library's Sweet Thursday literary salon, local journalist and author Steven Winn will join Los Angeles based screenwriter and novelist Bruce Cameron at 7:30pm in the Community Meeting Room to discuss their compelling books about dogs.

Sweet Thursday features local authors discussing their books and the craft of writing. Usually held on the third or fourth Thursday of every month, Sweet Thursday is supported by the Friends of Lafayette Library.

Readers may recall in the San Francisco Chronicle Steven Winn's humorous tales of his dog Como, a scruffy terrier mix who proved to be the challenge of a lifetime. Como was rescued from a shelter by the Winn family and immediately he made it clear that Winn was persona non grata. While Winn's wife and young daughter were favored, Winn himself was anything but.

In his popular book, *Come Back Como: Winning the Heart of a Reluctant Dog*, the author shares his troubled relationship with Como and how he came to appreciate what this little white terror

could teach him about patience, relationships and humility. Winn says of the initial rejection that he tried not to take it personally, but he did consider how he might return Como to the shelter, including claiming he was allergic to the dog. However, his daughter Phoebe would have none of that.

In addition to Como's story, Winn says this book is also about his family. "Our daughter was 12 when we got Como and now she's in college," says Winn. "The dog is really an arc of our daughter growing up."

It is the family elements of Winn's book that Susan Weaver, Lafayette Senior Community Library Manager particularly liked. "It's about loving your child so much that you're willing to make it work," says Weaver, "and along the way, something happens and you realize that your life is richer and better because of your efforts."

Bruce Cameron is the author of the successful book, *8 Simple Rules for Dating my Daughter*, which became a hit television show starring John Ritter. As a young boy Cameron enjoyed a special bond with his first dog, whose intense gaze inspired his most recent novel, *A Dog's Purpose*. The story is narrated by Bailey, a dog who, when he realizes he has been rein-

carated, sets out to discover the purpose of his multiple lives.

As a dog lover and a writer, Cameron had been pondering the concept of this story for quite some time. "I was seized with the notion of what if your dog never dies." He knew the story had to be told from the dog's perspective and Cameron wanted the voice to be realistic. "That was the challenge," he says.

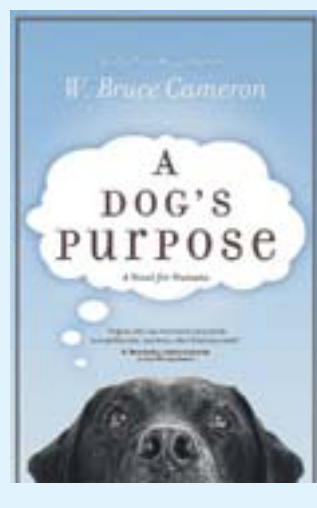
According to Lafayette's Maya Michon, Cameron's twelve-year-old niece, her uncle got it just right. "My favorite thing about the book is how the author writes in the dog's voice," she says. "I like it because it's funny and I think that he really sounded like a dog."

*A Dog's Purpose* is on the New York Times Best Seller List and has over 12,000 Facebook fans. Twelve-year-old Brooke Lennox, also from Lafayette, can understand why. She says she would recommend *A Dog's Purpose* to both kids and adults and anyone who likes dogs. "It was fun to see what the author thought a dog's perspective is."

In addition to the discussion, the evening will include a book sale, sponsored by the Bay Area Book Mobile, and signing of the authors' books. Event producer Maria Hjelm has also invited therapy dogs from Tony La Russa's

Animal Rescue Foundation. Twenty percent of the proceeds from the book sale will go to ARF.

### Book Covers



## The Best of Blasphemy

By Sophie Braccini



Ann Callicrate in her recording studio

Photo Sophie Braccini

Ann Callicrate is a cheerful labor and delivery nurse who, at first glance, does not smack of heresy. But beware of the mischievous light that sometimes sparkles in her eyes. She revels in creating provocative humor. Her first album, *The Best of Blasphemy*, is a work that, according to Callicrate, is not picking a bone with The Big Creator, but pokes fun at the most judgmental aspects of organized religion.

Callicrate's album is a compilation of work of 'religious humor,' with the addition of four original songs created by Callicrate and her husband, Neil Jay Young. "There is no Catholic over 40 years old who does not know the *Vatican Rag* song by the legendary Tom Lehrer," she says, "I was inspired to gather together, in the name of comedy, songs that poke fun at religion; as it has never been done before." Other titles on the CD include *Sister Josephine*, by Jake Thackray; *Creation Science 101*, by Roy Zimmerman; and *Praise The Lord And Send Me The Money*, by Hugh Moffatt. Country music dominates the album's mood, with the addition of 50's rock and roll, gentle jazz, and a sea shanty, most appropriate for *If Jesus was a Pirate*, Callicrate's original creation. The entire album was created in the couple's professional studio at their Canyon home.

Callicrate wrote her first two songs for the album. "I have a lot of silly things in my mind," she says. She attributes some of it to her upbringing. She was raised Catholic in Salem, Oregon, in a family with 11 children. She went to Catholic school until she was 13. She remembers that there were a lot of things she had to struggle with. "Confessionals were always frightening to me, it looked like a dark wooden box," she remembers.

But there were a lot of things she loved, too, "I loved sacred music, the liturgy, the art, the colors. And in the middle of all the grandeur, there was always laughter," she recalls.

When she had a serious car accident on Moraga Road, two years ago, she had to stop work for a while—that's when the idea of the CD really took off. "I was doing something good and of value to me," says Callicrate, "my defense mechanism has always been humor."

"I am against people who point fingers or are judgmental (like in the song *Jesus Loves Me*

*But He Can't Stand You*)," she says, "there are many fun religious songs, and who has never told a religious joke?"

The songs will probably not amuse the most conservative in Lamorinda; *Start the Apocalypse Now* is more a political song than a religious one. There is some colorful language here and there, so a PG-13 rating might be appropriate, but the selections are intended to amuse rather than shock. The mostly country music style roots the album in an American tradition of cabaret and humor. For more information go to [www.thebestofblasphemy.com](http://www.thebestofblasphemy.com).

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