

# Local author's debut novel 'A River of Stars' Annual Las Trampas

By Lou Fancher



Author Vanessa Hua Photos Andria Lo

Orinda writer Vanessa Hua's debut novel, "A River of Stars" (Ballantine), tells the story of Scarlett Chen, a young woman eight months pregnant. Sent from China by her married lover to a secret maternity center in the United States to gain advantageous citizenship for her soon-to-be-born baby, Scarlett and Daisy, a volatile teenager and fellow "inmate" in Mama Fang's mothers-to-be prison, escape captivity in a stolen van. Venturing from Los Angeles to San Francisco's Chinatown, the two women confront first-time motherhood, poverty and hardscrabble life in America—Scarlett, as an immigrant with only a temporary visa. With time, intelligence and fierce mother-love, they forge connections having nothing to do with blood relatives or nationality to create families, secure improved fortune and establish newfound identities.

Hua is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle and author of the short story collection, "Deceit and Other Possibilities." Her work has appeared in The New York Times, The Atlantic, The Washington Post, and more. Winner of a number of awards and fellowships, Hua writes most often about Chinese-American immigrants, social justice, citizenship outside of the dominant narratives and the cultural and economic forces operating in disenfranchised or emerging communities worldwide.

At a literary luncheon Aug. 27 at Orinda Books, approximately 40 people enjoyed a meal prepared by bookstore owner Maria Roden while listening to Hua's presentation and book reading. A Q&A allowed readers to gain insight into the backstory behind the longtime journalist's first novel.

Hua, who attended Wagner Ranch Elementary School and Miramonte High School, was born in 1975, the year her parents moved from China to California. During childhood, she was an avid reader, especially of books with "feisty girls who wanted to be writers," like the protagonists in Little Women and Anne of Green Gables. "I would read after lights out, but get busted by my dad because he'd come back and check the lamp and find it was warm," she said. A story she wrote in second grade was selected as class favorite, but she overheard a classmate say she'd only voted for it because it was the longest story. Demonstrating a light sense of humor and thick-

skin sensibility that prevails in the characters and stories she creates, Hua said, "I got used to thoughtless reviews early on."

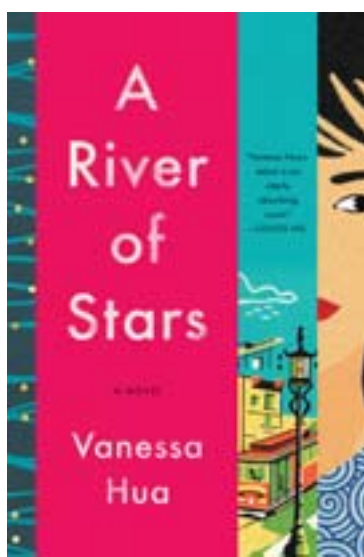
After completing her short story collection in 2004, Hua found herself making small talk with a colleague about wanting to write a novel. "Go do it then," the woman said. Encouraged, challenged, an MFA from UC Riverside in hand, she pursued the long-held goal. Appreciating the mix of journalism's sprint-like pace and a fiction writer's marathon journeys, she allowed her natural curiosity full reign while researching "River of Stars" topics: women's reproductive choices in China, motherhood—Hua was "hugely pregnant with twins" during the writing process—and the vitality of San Francisco's Chinatown.

Her book, she said, was written with purpose. "To deny a story is to deny humanity. I write to inspire action, change thinking. Literary fiction fosters empathy because it puts you deep in the hearts of others." Fiction, she said later, "flourishes where the official record ends (in contrast to journalism). I have license to make it up and amend the facts."

People asked Hua the usual questions about writing workshops, agents and getting published. She said the value of attending workshops varies depending on classmates and instructors, but having a support group helps a writer during times

of struggle or success. Her initial attempt at writing a novel—a book about Chairman Mao's teenage lover who was into swing dancing—failed to sell in her first outing. "It came close with my first agent but didn't sell," she said, adding a joke: "Close only matters in horseshoes and grenades, right?" Actually, Hua was both right and wrong about that: her second, current agent has recently sold the Mao/dancing book.

Asked about Hollywood and the potential for film adaptations of "River of Stars," Hua was visibly animated. "One can dream. I know a movie like the current hit, 'Crazy Rich Asians,' does open the possibilities. You never know what might make something happen. Asian Americans are the fastest growing group in America."



## 'Walk n' Roll' event scheduled Sept. 22

Submitted by Suzanne Pestal



Photos provided

Walk, roll or run for one mile on the streets of Lafayette during the 9th Annual Las Trampas Walk n' Roll event from 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Sept. 22 and join participants for a fun celebration at the end the event at the Lafayette Plaza Park – all to benefit a great cause. Since 1958, Las Trampas has helped individuals with developmental disabilities to discover their capabilities and to lead fuller lives in their homes, at work and in the community. Every dollar goes directly to client programs and

makes a difference in the lives of those with developmental disabilities.

Registration begins at Las Trampas, 3460 Lana Lane in Lafayette. The fee of \$25 (\$30 the day of the event) includes: T-shirt, raffle, Whole Foods bag, music and games by KKDV with brunch, Three Twins Ice Cream and live entertainment by the Jen Googan Group sponsored by Bread & Roses. You can also register online at [www.lastrampas.org](http://www.lastrampas.org).

### When I say "good," you say "neighbor."

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# Type 2 or Pre-Diabetes?

**Almost 50% Of The US Population Is Living With Either Type 2, or Pre-Diabetes... And Most Don't Even Know It. If You Think You're Safe, Think Again! – THIS MAY BE THE MOST IMPORTANT INFORMATION YOU HAVE EVER READ IN YOUR LIFE!**

**Your doctor** orders a lab test blood for you every 6 months, and other than talking to you about your high cholesterol, says nothing to you about your slightly elevated fasting blood glucose number. Does that sound familiar? You should be safe, right? Well depending on the lab, your insurance company, and your doctor, you may not even be told that your glucose levels are abnormally high until it is time for your doctor to recommend medication. And remember, we are talking about a reversible condition.

Abnormally high glucose numbers (fasting) begin at 100 mg/dL, but testing only 2 times a year results in a huge number of people being left in the dark, and keeping them in a pre-diabetic state commonly for decades. The easiest time to turn Type 2 Diabetes around is before diagnosis and prescription medication.

**"On Average, Type 2 Diabetes Takes Decades To Develop, And The Complications Of Elevated Glucose Levels Have Been Shown To Begin With Pre-Diabetes"**

Do you remember what your doctor said to you when he/she gave you the news that you had type 2 diabetes? "You are going to have to make changes in the area of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_." (You fill in the blanks)

You most likely filled in the blanks with diet and exercise. Right? Why do doctors tell their patients this phrase, even to the extent that we know it by memory? **Because it's true!** But what is commonly the action of the doctor immediately after suggesting this lifestyle change? Typically, something like this, "I am going to prescribe you 500 mg. of Metformin which should help lower your glucose numbers."

This is what is clear to almost everyone I talk to who has type 2 diabetes or Pre-Diabetes...Even though there is acknowledgement that type 2 diabetes can be reversed through very specific changes in the way a person eats and exercises, that is clearly not the focus within the insurance environment of today's healthcare.

The focus seems to be on managing the symptoms (high glucose levels) through medication, instead of addressing the cause of this chronic and inflammatory condition, allowing it to progress, which results in devastating complications like kidney failure, heart disease, loss of balance, amputation, blindness...etc.

#### ENVIRONMENT MAKES THE DIFFERENCE!

Everyone has heard a story of someone within their circle of friends or colleagues reversing Type 2 Diabetes. Scientific literature clearly states that Type 2 Diabetes is reversible. Intuitively most people with Type 2 Diabetes know there is a way to lower high glucose numbers, and sustain them. So, where and how is this taking place?

I am glad you asked. For the last decade, I have had a laser-like focus within my clinical practice of helping people with Pre and Type 2 Diabetes learn to understand how the human body responds to different food. Macronutrients specifically (Proteins, fats, and carbohydrates). Successfully, this focus returns glucose levels to a normal and healthy range. When normal fasting glucose levels are attained, prescribing doctors typically reduce and/or eliminate medications.

Let me say this...I am not saying that everyone is ready to make the changes required to exit a Type 2 diabetic state. I don't even know if you qualify for my Balancing Blood Sugar Program. That is yet to be determined, and requires a proper history and examination. And I know that you've been overwhelmed with information which seems to contradict what you read the day before about reversing T2D.

**That is why I'm offering you a seat at my next live presentation, this coming Saturday Here's you'll get:**

- **A CLEAR and SIMPLE description of the fundamental causes Type 2 Diabetes.**
- **Exactly what it takes to lower glucose levels (Naturally), and keep them there.**
- **How and Why Type 2 diabetes creates Kidney Failure, Peripheral Neuropathy, Heart Disease and Loss of Balance.**
- **Personal examples of several of my patients who have completely turned Type 2 Diabetes around, NATURALLY!**

The information that you will receive during this presentation has been described as, **"...unlike any conversation taking place during your typical HMO/PPO doctors office visit."** These principles of exiting the state of Type 2 Diabetes are simply not what insurance-based healthcare is focused on.

I don't have the space to go into more details here, which is why I am inviting you to a 60 minute, live presentation. The old-fashioned kind where a you can relax, sit and listen to a knowledgeable, practicing doctor, feeling comfortable enough to ask any question



**The word Doctor literally means Teacher (in Latin).**

Why hasn't your doctor told you about this approach? Because it doesn't fit into the model of "Let me give you a medication to cover up the problem". This is a functional approach to correct the problem, not unnaturally lower sugar numbers.

**Here's What To Do Now**  
**This Saturday morning, September 8<sup>th</sup>, at 11am, Harvest House Natural Foods in Concord.**  
is Dr. Thomason's only scheduled talk on "How To Exit The State Of Type 2 Diabetes" on calendar for this year. There is no cost to attend. Call **925-407-0888** today and we can reserve a seat for you and a loved one.

Our office is located on Olympic Boulevard in Walnut Creek; just a few minutes from you.

When you call, tell the receptionist you'd like to attend the **Type 2 Diabetes Presentation** so she can reserve your seat. You will also be provided a delicious and healthy lunch following the presentation at no charge.

Sincerely,

**Dr. Brian E. Thomason, D.NMSc, BCIM, D.C.**



**PRESENTING DOCTOR: Brian E. Thomason, D.NMSc, BCIM, DC, CAFNI.** Dr. Thomason has post-graduate training in functional neurology, blood chemistry analysis, neurotransmitters, and functional endocrinology. He has been helping people both locally and internationally return glucose numbers to normal for the past 23 years. If you have been diagnosed Type 2 Diabetes or Pre-Diabetes and medications are not working for you, there is hope, there are answers.

**To Reserve a seat at this Saturday, September 8th, 2018's informative and entertaining presentation... Call (925)-407-0888** (Attendance is Free, but seating is limited to the first 26 who register)

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