



# FirstWords

A publication of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego

## Millard Owen Sheets

By Nancy Fisk



Several of the paintings in the Owen-Towle gallery are by Millard Owen Sheets, the father of Carolyn Owen-Towle, the minister emeritus at

First Church. Known as an American regional artist, Millard painted some 6,000 paintings over his lifetime.

Millard Sheets was born in 1907. His mother died from uremic poisoning, 10 days after his birth, and his father, in his grief, allowed Millard to be raised by his grandparents. His grandfather raised horses on a ranch, and Millard learned to ride them when he was very young. Horses appear as a subject in many of his paintings. Millard loved the beauty and the motion of horses. It became his signature.

He began painting at a young age, and it was recognized very early on that he had talent. He won a contest at 12 at the LA County Fair, where he entered a painting that he had copied and won first prize. A man stood next to him while Millard admired the ribbon he won and when he told the man it was his painting, the man said, "I don't ever want you to copy again! ...Go outdoors and paint what you see." That man was Theodore Modra, a well-known painter and art director of the LA County Fair. He would go on to mentor Millard in his art.

In high school he entered a juried exhibition in Laguna, and again a man asked "Did you paint that?" And that man also became a mentor. Millard was steered toward art school even though he'd gotten into Pomona College on a scholarship. After graduating from Pomona High School, he went to school at Chouinard Art School in Los Angeles. He was hired at 21 to work at Scripps College in Claremont.

He was an incredibly busy and sought after artist and art professor. He traveled in Europe and then taught at Chouinard until 1934 and again in 1948. He was an art director and professor at Scripps College from 1932-1955. After this, he spent 6 years as art director of Otis Art Institute, in Los Angeles.

In 1953, he created a studio called Millard Sheets Designs Inc.

The studio employed between twenty-five and thirty artisans and architects, working on large projects such as the "Touchdown Jesus" at Notre Dame, as seen from the end zone of the football field, and the rainbow mural on either side of the Hilton Hotel in Honolulu. He also created many murals for Home bank buildings.



When Millard Sheets retired, he bought a home in Gualala, California, a community an hour south of Mendocino. There he continued painting the coast of California, and entertaining his children and grandchildren.

Millard Sheets died in 1989. Several years earlier, Carolyn spent three months audiotaping him describing his memories and accomplishments. She later wrote a biography of her father called "Damngorgeous: A daughter's memoir of Millard Owen Sheets." She finished it in time for a retrospective of his work at the Oceanside Museum of Art in 2009.

When asked what his greatest accomplishment was, Carolyn replied, "He was a wonderful human being. A documentary is being created about him and how supportive he was of the art community in Claremont. His generous way of supporting people was his greatest human gift. "

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## Arvid's Arcana

By Rev Dr Arvid Straube, Lead Minister

### Three Jobs Of Spiritual Growth

Buddhist meditation teacher Shinzen Young says that there are three jobs we need to do in the lifelong quest for spiritual growth. They are jobs that you do concurrently, not consecutively and they are synergistic. Working at one will help you make progress on the other two.

The first job is "Understand The Self." This is ancient advice from at least the time of ancient Greece where the Temple of Apollo in Delphi is inscribed with the words, "Know Thyself." We do this by observing ourselves and our relationship with life. By understanding our basic nature. By knowing our strengths and vulnerabilities and managing them to increase positive outcomes for ourselves and others and limiting negative one. By listening to feedback about ourselves, positive and critical, from people we trust. By learning from our experiences and trying not to make the same mistakes over and over.

The second job is to "Get Over The Self." We do this by any means that lets us realize, deep down, that we are not the center of the universe and that we are profoundly connected to other people, society and nature. We do this by giving freely of our time and money, thus learning that it is better to give than to receive, By serving others and our community. By deferring to other people's needs before our own from time to time. By trying to see the world from the perspective of other people, even especially those with whom we most disagree. By meditating, praying and spending time in nature. By cultivating loving friendliness for everyone we meet. By any means that wakes us up from the illusion of separateness.

The third job is to "Improve The Self." We do this by patiently nurturing positive habits and eliminating negative ones. We do this by learning new skills and seeking new knowledge. By cultivating a sound body and a healthy mind. By setting good priorities.

## September Sermon Messages

### Celebration Times:

**Hillcrest Campus:** Sunday, 9:30a (Traditional) and 11:30a (Contemporary)

**South Bay Campus:** Sunday, 9:30a (Intergenerational, Bi-lingual [Spanish, English])

The September **Transformational Theme** is **Acceptance, Tolerance, and Respect.**

### Sunday, September 1:

- Hillcrest Services—"You Could Be Next: Why Labor Justice Matters," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).
  - 9:30 Music: Director of Music/Organist Ken Herman plays his transcription of noted Brazilian composer Ernesto Nazareth's tango "Rebolico".
  - 11:30 Music: Woody Guthrie's "This Land Is Your Land." The 1940 lyrics were set to an existing melody, in critical response to Irving Berlin's "God Bless America", which Guthrie considered unrealistic and complacent.
- South Bay Service—"Wrestling with Tradition," Debut Sermon, Elizabeth Bukey, Intern Minister (live). Coffee conversation.

### Sunday, September 8:

- Hillcrest Services—"Go Ahead and Forgive Them: You Deserve It," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).
  - 9:30 Music: To honor Jewish Days of Awe, Daniel Ratelle leads the Chalice Choir in Naplan's "Al Shlosha D'varim". Soprano Lynn Mendoza-Khan sings Mark Hayes' jazzy spiritual "Joshua Fit the Battle of Jericho".
  - 11:30 Music: Offertory - India Arie's "Wings of Forgiveness." Arie is a Grammy Award-winning American singer-songwriter, musician, and record producer whose songs feature themes of spirituality and social justice.
- South Bay Service—"The Journey Begins ...," Rev Kathleen Owens (live).

### Sunday, September 15:

- Hillcrest Services—"Foolish Things Smart People Do", Rev Dr Arvid Straube (live).
  - 9:30 Music: The Women's Chorus, directed by Lynn Mendoza-Khan, sings Ricky Ian Gordon's contemporary ballad "A Horse with Wings".
  - 11:30 Music—Jazz Sunday with Victor Young and Ned Washington's "My Foolish Heart." Published in 1949 the song was introduced by the singer Martha Mears in the 1949 film of the same name.
- South Bay Service—"Go Ahead and Forgive Them: You Deserve It," Rev Dr Arvid Straube (pre-recorded).

### Sunday, September 22:

- Hillcrest Service—"Living on The Side of Love", Elizabeth Bukey, Intern Minister (live).
  - 9:30 Music: The JUUL Tones sing, directed by Andrea Newall.
  - 11:30 Music: "What the World Needs Now is Love" a popular song written in 1965 with lyrics by Hal David and music composed by Burt Bacharach.
- South Bay Service—"In the Midst of a Supreme and Noble Effort", Rev Kathleen Owens (live). Coffee conversation

### Sunday, September 29:

- Hillcrest Service—"In the Midst of a Supreme and Noble Effort", Rev Kathleen Owens (live).
  - 9:30 Music: Daniel Ratelle directs the Chalice Choir in the 12<sup>th</sup> C. Hungarian composer László Halmos' motet "Cantate Domino".
  - 11:30 Music—offertory is Dana Decker's "We Are A River" from his 2008 CD "When We Sing".
- South Bay Service— with Rev Jim Grant (live).

## How To Grow Life-long UUs

By Käthe Larick, Youth Programs Coordinator

I think that when most people in our congregation are asked if they want our children and youth to become lifelong Unitarian Universalists, the answer would be a resounding "Yes!" But how important is our youth program or Camp de Benneville Pines or involvement in district YRUU events to this important process? How do these programs aid in the faith development of our youth? I offer you the following information about our youth program here at First UU.

All three of our programs, the 9:30 Channeling the Spirit Group and the 11:30 Junior and Senior High youth groups have at their core the six components that our denomination deems necessary to have a balanced youth program: community building, worship, learning, social action, leadership, and youth-adult relations. These key elements work in harmony to create a program that I hope is fun, engaging and spiritually fulfilling for our youth. They generate worship experiences and discussions that help facilitate a clearer understanding of each individual's personal faith and values and then encourages them to express their faith to the world around them by living and acting on their values to help heal the world. Sound familiar? If you think this sounds like our church mission statement, you're absolutely right!

Going to district events and camps only strengthens the bonds of community and connection to our UU faith. Just as in our church youth program, at camps and "cons" the youth enjoy program activities and worship services that are designed by youth themselves; youth who have been selected by their peers for particular roles. These youth leaders know that they can count on the support and, if needed, the help of their adult advisors.

And speaking of youth leaders, did you know that at the most recent Senior High Summer Camp, three youth from our youth program were elected to district leadership positions on our PSWD YRUU Board? Jeremy Sleeter is the new Youth Representative to the PSWD Camping Ministries Board, Carolyn Kravitz is the new Communications Director, and Athena Halsema-Fernandez is the new Understudy for the Spirituality Coordinator. By being active participants in a loving and accepting YRUU community, they have been fed spiritually and encouraged to continue to develop and hone their leadership skills.

Here's what a couple of our youth have to say on the subject. Hannah Maycock, who is one of our congregation's recently trained worship associates says: "As Unitarian Universalism is such a small religion you can often feel pretty alone. By attending camp we get a chance to talk to others who share our values. It makes you feel just a little bit less isolated." Athena Halsema-Fernandez adds, "I was never a particularly spiritually focused person, being a UU, I felt as if I didn't have to be. But after my first camp, I was so motivated by the youth lead worships that I applied for a staff position, and now, about a year later, I have coordinated Worships for camp, and I am currently the Spirituality Understudy for the PSWD YRUU Board. Camp gave me a new way to look at my own religion, and rather than telling me what I needed to do to become a spiritually conscious entity, it showed me that reaching spiritual enlightenment is something I have to do for myself, in my own time, on my own terms. But the true glory of it all is that I know I will always have people there to help me along the way."

Thanks guys – I think that says it all!



**First Unitarian Universalist Church of San Diego**

**2nd Annual • 2013**

# **Boogie Ball**

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Casual Dress, 21+ only

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# A WARM WELCOME TO OUR NEW INTERN: ELIZABETH BUKEY

BY THE INTERN MINISTER COMMITTEE

We are so pleased to welcome Elizabeth Bukey as our ministerial intern next year. Elizabeth is a recent graduate of Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, where she also helped coordinate worship for the institution's students and faculty. A lifelong UU, Elizabeth grew up attending University Unitarian Church in Seattle.

While in seminary, Elizabeth discovered an interest in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures as well as a passion for immigrant rights. She traveled to the Texas-Mexico Borderlands with a seminary group, and was profoundly moved by attending Justice GA in Phoenix last summer. She interned at Middle Collegiate Church, a culturally diverse, inclusive and growing community of faith in New York City that is known for the creativity it employs in its worship practices. Serving as the summer preacher at the UU Congregation in Blacksburg, VA, as well as providing pastoral care in a Seattle-area hospital are additional experiences she brings to the job. Elizabeth has facilitated OWL for adults and young adults and enjoys preaching about sexuality and spirituality.

Her work experience before seminary includes a stint at the UUA's Washington Office for Advocacy where she advocated for policy changes in LGBT equality and civil liberties, as well as wrote for the UUA's organizational blog. She then spent a few years working in the labor movement, including serving as president of a workplace bargaining unit, while nurturing her spiritual side as an enthusiastic member of All Souls Unitarian Church in D.C.

Elizabeth loves to sing, to dance, and to spend time with her beloved dog, Lyuba. We anticipate her time at First UU will be a close fit with her gifts and goals, and look forward to her providing special focus on work with our South Bay campus. Please be sure to give her a warm UU welcome.







## MILLY THIELKE

By NANCY FISK, EDITOR

Milly Thielke is a long time member of First Church. Her family has attended since 1958, the year First Church moved to its present location on Front Street.

Milly was brought up Catholic in Waltham, Massachusetts, because her parents were devout French-Canadian Catholics. She went to parochial school until the 8th grade and then switched over to public school. She says about public school, "I was smart and used to memorizing facts. For the first time, I had to think about what I was writing."

Milly came to San Diego in 1950 because her first husband had muscle ataxia and needed to live in a warm, dry place. Taxed with caring for her husband, Milly did not want any more children, but when consulting with her Catholic priest about this, he was adamant that sex was for procreation, not pleasure.

She began to question her beliefs, the virgin birth being one of them. The Catholic Church had a wonderful code of ethics, but she decided "any religion has a code of ethics." And, "Once you question something, you find a lot of holes, a lot of myths." Milly and her husband shopped for churches for a year. The last church they visited was First Church. In a sermon she was told that " 'Unitarians think. You have to work out your own religion.' I fell for that like a ton of bricks and my husband too."

She thinks that sermons are important, because they reveal who the minister really is. She enjoyed John Ruskin-Clark, and thought he was more of an "old-time Unitarian." Arvid and Tom are more worldly to her and more willing to work with other faiths to do good in the community. However, she did admire John Ruskin Clark for going to Alabama to protest during the civil rights movement.

After her first husband died, she met her second husband, Paul Thielke, in the Balboa Park club, where they enjoyed international folk dancing. They married in 1980. When Paul, a mechanical engineer for the United States government, was assigned to Europe, they lived and worked in Spain and Germany for five years and then returned to San Diego. Paul died last year after a brief illness.

She has a Master's in Counseling, and first got a job with the city in their Social Services department. She took the exam to be a probation officer, which is where she retired from. She has three children, Nancy, Jim and Ronald. Nancy and Ron live in San Diego, and Jim is an attorney in Sunnyside.

What she likes most about Unitarian Universalism is the freedom to question and the ability to choose what she wants to believe. She appreciates that UUs have a covenantal church, where "they band together in a community of like-minded souls who freely choose to believe whatever they've worked out about religion." Also, she likes that there is "No dogma, no creed that I have to believe, but I do have to be nice to people. And I have the freedom to question, because in the Catholic Church, you can't question. I'm a Unitarian because I can make up my own mind. I don't have to believe what my parents believe."

She would like to see more people of color at First Church, although she appreciates the diversity that has been encouraged, such as in the LGBT community. She also likes that we are able to give away the Sunday donation to causes that further the mission on First Church.

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