

You may not have met or seen Cathy Warner around Union, but if you read the *Mason County Journal*, you likely have seen her fantastic photographs of the night sky (see on at the end of this story). She became a photographer when moving to Washington from California about 15 years ago. First, with a point and shoot camera, taking pictures of the mountains. During COVID, with a new digital camera and multiple lenses, she had the time and the opportunity to expand her learning.



Comet Neowise, appearing in the summer of 2020, was her first foray into night sky photography. Living on the Skokomish Delta, with the water just feet from her front deck and an unobstructed view of the Canal and Olympics to the north and west, her artistic work took off! And through connections with Washington astrophotographers, she discovered the northern lights could sometimes be seen in our area and captured onscreen. She was fascinated... “What the camera can see in the dark that our eyes cannot!”

But I’m getting ahead of the story a bit. Cathy and her husband Kevin moved to Union eight years ago. After working in Silicon Valley, Kevin decided his next career would be home renovation, through his company, Yellow Ribbon Homes. You may have heard of it as he has had a number of clients in our area. Since moving to Washington in late 2011 they had lived in a series of fixer-upper homes, remodeling them and moving on to the next. That was their intent when they bought the house on Highway 106, but they fell in love with it—its view, the changing seasons, and the intimacy they shared with the local wildlife. “They’re the neighbors we know,” Cathy said of the seals populating the floating platform she’s dubbed *seal dock*. “They use it. We don’t.” With family living nearby and always wishing for property on the water, they realized they didn’t want to leave Hood Canal. “It felt like the right place to land.”

The combination of her learning, the new equipment, and her location on the Skokomish fed Cathy’s love of nighttime photography. “It has its challenges,” she laughed, “most of my night sky work is done on my balcony in my pajamas.” She recognizes how fortunate we are in Union to have the dark sky and wants to share the experience with people who don’t. She has created and published an annual calendar of the photography for the last few years, proceeds benefitting the Salmon Center in Belfair and St. David’s in Shelton, where she is a lay preacher and worship leader. She’s also involved with the Upper Room’s Greater NW Academy for Spiritual Formation, a group offering week-long retreats in the area every couple of years.

Let's talk about Cathy's other love, writing poetry. For thirty years she's been creating poems and writing short fiction and personal essays for literary journals. She has a Master of Arts in creative writing, graduating in 2011 at age 50, having been in college at the same time as her two daughters. Her first book was one of poetry, and she now publishes books herself, including anthologies featuring local and regional poets that also include her photographs, most recently *More Poemographs for Peace* with proceeds donated to the ACLU and World Central Kitchen relief in Gaza. "These are my ways of being in community with people," she says. *You can find Cathy's photography and books at her website (cathywarner.com) and the most recent book through Amazon:* <https://www.amazon.com/More-Poemographs-Peace-poetry-anthology/dp/B0H3H8MF5W>

Family is another important part of Cathy's life. There have been a number of times when she and Kevin have had family living with them. At present, it is her mother who recently moved from California to their house in Union. And her brother-in-law, poet Sterling Warner, lives less than a mile away down Highway 106. He started the Union of Poets in 2019 meeting monthly at The Union Square Deli on Dalby Road with seven or eight participants. Who would have thought little Union, population about 600, had a gathering of poets? Then came COVID and the Union of Poets turned to Zoom for its meetings. It continues on Zoom to this day with 16 to 24 poets from across the U.S. and around the world regularly taking part in the monthly sessions, reading their works to each other.

Cathy's upcoming plans? April through September is Milky Way season, so she and Kevin will be off in their travel trailer on new moon weekends camping in dark sky areas of Washington, crossing their fingers for cooperative weather.

Studies in Shadow and Light by Cathy Warner

Amid melting glaciers basalt
bastions appear unchanging

Yet every glimpse out the window
offers a glimmering a gleaning

A new illumination
a nuanced noticing

May you who stand so steadfastly
beside me never become

So familiar that I fail to see
your epic and intricate striations



Aurora and a meteor over Annas Bay in Union at 1:30 a.m. June 11th