

**Everyone has at least one good story to tell**  
by Richard H. Meeker

**An Introduction to Write Around Portland's 34<sup>th</sup> anthology, Look Out On Your City/Mira tu ciudad**



Richard H. Meeker is publisher of [Willamette Week](#), Portland's weekly newspaper. A graduate of the University of Oregon School of Law, he has lived in Portland since 1974. He's married to Ellen Rosenblum, a judge on the Oregon Court of Appeals. They have two grown children, Cate and Will. *Willamette Week* is the only weekly newspaper ever to win a Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting. For the past seven years the paper has also produced an annual [Give!Guide](#) to raise funds for local nonprofits. Richard is extremely proud to count Write Around Portland among this year's [Give!Guide](#) participants.

Everyone has at least one good story to tell. Just as important, everyone can summon the will to write that story down—and the voice to tell it effectively. More important still, each of these stories has meaning and can take readers to places and thoughts they would not—could not experience otherwise.

I learned these lessons when I fell under the spell of written words as a teenager and found myself drawn to lives worlds apart from my own: *Our Lady of the Flowers*, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, *The Words*, *Invisible Man*, *For the Union Dead* and *North Toward Home*. These were sophisticated works, and I wasn't a sophisticated reader. Even so, I couldn't miss the human electricity that gave them their arc.

I relearned these lessons during my time as editor of *Willamette Week* in the late 1970s, when all manner of Portlanders brought us their stories. They helped me see the city with fresh eyes and from new vantages. Always lurking behind the page was a sense of hopefulness—that by telling their stories the writers were doing more than exposing themselves and their city; they were putting forth the almost tangible sense that lives can improve, that cities can be made better—and this can happen through the use of words.

I learned this lesson yet again the first day of November, when I joined a roomful of Write Around Portland volunteers to select some of the pieces in this anthology. Our assignment was to choose one piece by each of the writers whose work we had soaked up that evening. In the end, our likes were all over the map, but the quality of what we'd read, combined with the genuineness of the authors' voices, inspired a spirit of community that lent joy rather than disagreeableness to our task.

I hope everyone who reads this anthology will share the respect we felt in Write Around Portland's offices that rainy fall evening for these writers and their words. Without saying so, we all seemed to understand that what we had before us was genuine treasure—the building blocks of human existence shaped into clear, meaningful expression.

To think this is the thirty-fourth of Write Around Portland's anthologies—and to know how many workshops go into the creation of each of them—is to appreciate the breadth and scope of Write Around Portland's aspirations. To read this anthology is to appreciate Write Around Portland's unique contribution to our lives.