



# Stu News Laguna

Laguna Beach's Online Newspaper and Community Forum

Volume 13, Issue 15 | February 19, 2021

## From Laguna With Love: Bluebird Park on a spring afternoon

By Rina Palumbo

I take hold of your hand before we walk across Cress Street. I see you looking both ways and I feel you squeeze my fingers a little tighter when you see a car coming.

You run to the swings. I sit on a low stone wall, still feeling the warmth of your hand, soon to be eclipsed by that of the afternoon sun. I watch you pump your legs, your body taut with effort as you pull yourself higher and higher. You raise one hand and pluck a cloud from the brilliant blue sky, putting it into the pocket of your favorite skirt, a huge smile threatening to reveal your secret. The high branches of the trees murmur with the intermittent breeze, a soft conversation I don't understand, but syncopating with the creaking of the iron chains that hold up the wooden seat of the swing. You come in and out of the dappled shade, shadow and light, rusting iron and new leaves.

I will you to stay in the sunlight, the warmth, the brightness and energy of one point of the pendulum, but you persist in going back into the gray shadows. Back and forth, back and forth, until, in a single moment that seems to broaden and flatten, you launch yourself off the swing, and, laughing, land feet first into the wood chips. You stand straight and look over to me to make sure I am watching and then run with breakneck speed over to the monkey bars which you scale with ease.



*Turtle at Bluebird Park by Michele Taylor*



I want to wave my hand and freeze this moment into amber resin and turn it into an amulet for you to carry, to keep in your pocket with your cloud. You could touch it when fear overwhelms you, when your heart breaks, or when it seems like the swing will not enter the warmth and light again.

Instead, I smile at you.

A woman sits down next to me, plunking down her heavy bag, all the accessories of childhood spilling from the open top, and nudging her little boy from her. She is young, at least much younger than I, and dressed in black workout clothes. I can see shadows under her eyes and small lines starting to form around her mouth that is set with grim intensity until her rummaging through the bag finds a phone which she places, with great relief, to her ear. She stands up quickly and waves her unencumbered arm at another woman who is entering the park pushing a double stroller with a baby and a toddler. She quickly gathers all the spilled over items, places the bag on her shoulder and grabs her son's hand as she marches over to meet the other mother. Her little boy looks back and waves a chubby-fingered goodbye to all the castles and pirate ships and other fabulous creations he has made from the wood chips.



Photo by Mary Hurlbut

### ***Entrance to Bluebird Park***

My daughter has left her high perch and gone exploring. She will return with her pockets full of stones, sticks, flowers, and scraps of things, some forgotten, some meant to have been discarded. She likes to look in the in-between places: between the cement and the grass; the dirt and the fence; in all the areas where one surface turns into another. I see her now walking toward me, smiling, so I know her exploration has been successful.

From her pockets, her stories pour forth. She tells stories that all have a beginning, a middle, and an end, just like all the books I read to her and that she is now beginning to read to me. In her stories, the ones she tells me, the ones created from all her collected treasures, in those stories I see and hear my daughter's heart as it navigates the world.

"Ready to go?" I ask her as I stand up.

"Yes. But I have to do one quick thing."

“Sure.”

My daughter reaches into her pocket and pulls out the cloud, blowing on it until it finds its way upward into the still brilliant sky. She waves at it until it has found a place in the sky.

“Ready. Let’s go home,” she says as she looks up at me in her amber radiance and reaches over to hold my hand.

*Rina Palumbo is Vice President of Third Street Writers. She would like to encourage everyone to submit a personal story for From Laguna With Love.*