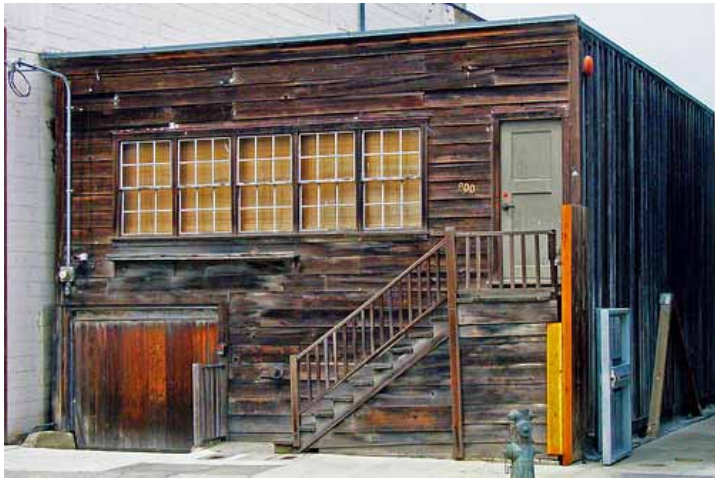


Keynote Lecture – Wednesday, October 30, 2008
An Enlightening Journey into Steinbeck's Cannery Row
Prof. Susan Shillinglaw and Taelen Thomas



Susan Shillinglaw is considered the world's foremost expert on the life and works of John Steinbeck. She is the Scholar in Residence at the National Steinbeck Center in Salinas and Professor of English at San Jose State University. She has written introductions to some of Steinbeck's greatest works, including *Cannery Row* and *Winter of our Discontent*. Susan's highly-acclaimed *A Journey into Steinbeck's California* examines the relationship between this iconic American writer and the area he loved and featured so prominently in his works. She has also consulted for Oprah's Book Club and Good Morning America.

Susan's presentation to the Western Section AUA will focus on the fictional and real Cannery Row. During the 1930s and 40s, Ed Rickett's Biological Supply Laboratory on Cannery Row was a mecca for artists and writers and scientists. Joseph Campbell, Burgess Meridith, and Henry Miller all spent time at Ricketts' Lab. That wooden shack still stands today next to the Monterey Bay Aquarium and draws visitors from around the world.



Then and now, Cannery Row's true focal point was the man who owned the lab, Ed "Doc" Ricketts. He was a superb marine biologist, an ecologist ahead of his time, and a man in love with ideas. He was also the most influential person in Steinbeck's life and career - in nearly every book Steinbeck wrote there is a character with Ricketts' broad understanding and acceptance. Friends who visited "Doc" shed their dutiful selves and allowed good values to emerge.



John Steinbeck

Susan will be joined by Taelen Thomas as Steinbeck. Taelen Thomas is a unique teacher, entertainer, orator, actor, poet, and impersonator. He was a middleweight boxer in the mid-1960's before receiving degrees in Philosophy from Stanford University and the University of Hawaii; he has portrayed Steinbeck for 15 years worldwide. Taelen Thomas's performance as John Steinbeck is powerful and includes entertaining and inspired brief monologues.



Ed "Doc" Ricketts

After experiencing Susan's presentation and Taelen's ghost of Steinbeck, you will be drawn away from your television sets and computers and to Steinbeck's books or to "participate in the intertidal," as Ed might suggest. And you will be gently reminded of the need for all of us to share each other's stories, philosophies, and ideas in our own "labs" or living rooms. And heed the words of Steinbeck: In Doc's presence people became the best of selves, if tales told are true. And leavening it all, as Doc observed on another occasion, was always the commitment to a good time: "People who are concerned with the eternal verities would do well to remember that fun is one of them."