

"We understand the power of having someone to encourage you when you are trying to forge a career."

Fionna Perkins

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The Fionna and Richard Perkins Fund Determination Pays Off

Fionna Perkins, the Poet Laureate of Point Arena, often gets credit for "founding" the Community Foundation, for it was her initial gift of \$500 in 1993 that paid the incorporation expenses for the fledgling Community Foundation.

Fionna is one of the feisty and independent types that characterize our county. Her life story reflects her determination to be a writer and to land a job as the first female "copy boy" of a San Francisco newspaper.

When Fionna was in high school, she went to live with her sister in San Francisco. She remembers, "Because I arrived after the school year had begun, I ended up in the San Francisco Continuation School at 16th and Mission Streets." What initially seemed to be bad luck, turned fortuitous when Fionna found herself in the writing classes of Clarence Pfaffenberger who encouraged Fionna to use her gifts as a writer.

In 1939, after a first marriage in Oregon, Fionna returned to San Francisco, and it was Mr. Pfaffenberger who gave her the names of editors to contact regarding a newspaper job. She was persistent, repeatedly going back to visit the managing editor of the *San Francisco News*. "The editor would always ask, "Has your husband left yet?" He was waiting for my then husband to go into the service." After her husband volunteered for the paratroops in 1942, the editor gave Fionna a job – not writing, but promoting war bonds.

Promoting war bonds required working in the window of the White House Department Store. The store's employees dressed her in the store's fashions every morning, and then she sat in the window with the Teletype. When the news from the war came in, she scanned it to make sure it was not censored, and then posted it in the window of the store. After a month on this job, she became the first female "copy boy" in San Francisco, and was later promoted to reporter.

During this time she went by her given and married names Lois Sinclair Thomas. She and Richard Perkins were married in San Francisco in 1946. After leaving the paper in 1953, she chose Fionna Perkins as her pen name.

Now Fionna and Richard want to "give back" by helping young people who have the spirit for writing and other pursuits, but are lacking the opportunity. Fionna says, "We understand the power of having someone to encourage you when you are trying to forge a career."





