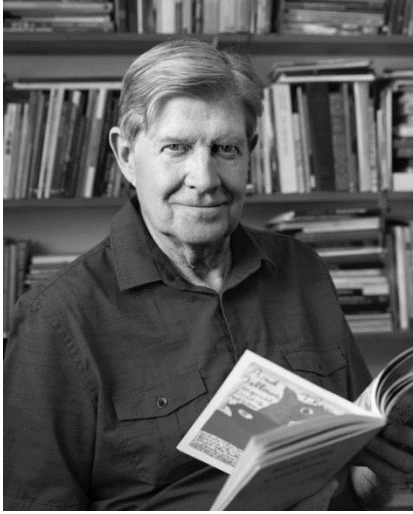


**Gary Thomas**  
Categories #1 & 2



Gary Thomas grew up on a peach farm outside Empire, California. Prior to retirement, he taught eighth grade language arts for thirty-one years, and junior college English for seven—sharing and discussing at least one poem every day with his students. He has presented poetry workshops for statewide organizations, festivals, and conferences. He has had poems published in *In the Grove*, *Time of Singing*, and *The Comstock Review*, among others, and in the anthologies *More Than Soil*, *More Than Sky: The Modesto Poets* and three of the *Collision series*. He is currently vice president of the Modesto-Stanislaus Poetry Center. He has a book, *All the Connecting Lights*, forthcoming from Finishing Line Press.

**Chad Sokolovsky**  
Categories #3 & 4



Chad Sokolovsky has had his poetry published in numerous journals and anthologies since 2002. He was the annual book award winner in 2016 from Quercus Review Press for his first book, *Prophecy Mechanic*. Sokolovsky is an alum of Modesto Junior College and UC Berkeley and is currently a Vice President over wine/spirits for an international retailer. He currently lives in the Seattle area.

**Evie Groch,**  
Categories #5 & 6



Evie Groch, a graduate of UCLA and Postgraduate Degree holder from UC Berkeley and Cal State East Bay, not only enjoys writing poetry, along with short stories and memoirs, but also enjoys publishing opinion pieces and writing letters to the editor on a continual basis. She cannot live without humor and has learned to hone hers in presentations and writing. She also enjoys recipes, cooking, word challenges, and puzzles she completes or creates for others. Some of these challenges have been published in *Games Magazine*. She has used her doctorate in education to imbue professional development for teachers with storytelling, games, and humor, all to

enhance teachable moments for students and keep them engaged.

Her work has appeared in the *New York Times*, *The San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Contra Costa Times*, *The Journal*, and many online venues. Many of her poems are found in published anthologies such as: *Soul Poet Society – Quintessence Anthology*, *My Robot & Me Anthology*, and *My Father Taught Me Anthology*, *Carry the Light Anthology*, and *Touching, Poems of Love Anthology*. Some magazines, journals, and reviews that carry her poems are: *The Wild Word Magazine*, *Whimsical Poet: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry*, *Necroproductions*, *The Pangolin Review*, *Sage Soup Literary Magazine*, *Open Door Poetry Magazine*, *Dyst literary Journal*, *Slant*, a *Journal of Poetry*, *Borders and Boundaries*, *Poems by Finalists*, and *Women’s Federation for World Peace in Canada*. Evie is the current vice president of and has served as the chair of the *Ina Coolbrith Poetry Contest* in northern California, which she immensely enjoyed. Her poetry and travelogues have been published with *Grand Circle Travel*.

The themes of travel, language, immigration, and justice are special for her, and she peppers her writing with words from a variety of world languages, several of which she speaks. She is the author of *What Do You Bring to the Table?*, one of eight authors featured in *The Fault Lines*, and one of ten authors featured in *My Robot & Me* and about to be published poetry book titled *Half the Hurricanes*.

**Charles Mariano**  
Categories #7 & 8



Charles Mariano, born in Merced, CA, graduated from Merced HS in 1970 and moved to Sacramento. He is currently working on his seventh book about growing up in Merced. Earlier works include: *The Whole Enchilada*, *Tio Boogie*, *Heart & Soil* and recently completed book, *Between Here and There*. *Tio Boogie* book was selected for the Chicano Literature class at UC Merced for Fall 2023. He says, “By death or default, I’ve humbly become the voice of many when I write. My family, my town, my generation. I write every day. Keeps me sane.”