



J'aime Rubio holds the location of Anna Corbin's grave close to her heart so that her memory isn't further sullied.

duced by Ron Howard, falsely told viewers that Preston had been "an insane asylum." A forthcoming horror movie entitled "Preston Castle" claims to be inspired by the true murder of an "inmate" who was beaten to death in the school's cemetery in 1950. No documentation exists in Amador County or the state of California to support this claim, and no witnesses interviewed by Rubio or other journalists that worked at Preston School of Industry during the 1950s have heard of such an incident.

Rubio is now focused on bringing forth an entire history of the Preston School of Industry, one based on verifiable facts and solid interviews with surviving wards and employees. Her ongoing research has found both social triumphs around the facility's criminal rehabilitation and disturbing moments of disgrace. During late-night hours, Rubio labors at prose that celebrates the school's rescuing boys as young 12 from prisons where they might have served sentences alongside hardened rapists and murderers. Instead they were sent back into the

world with vocational skills to find new paths. Other sections she pens before midnight take an unflinching look at legal affidavits she has uncovered connected to the unexplained deaths of wards, as well as testimony about child abuse and neglect under "tyrannical" school superintendents.

"My grandfather was a reporter at the Orange County Register," she says. "He always pushed me to investigate the truth – to always dig further for it. I'm like a pit bull; I bite on something and don't let go. Also, I'm at a point in my life when I'm realizing how important it is for people in my generation to do what we can to keep history alive. You do that by making it interesting and fun. Otherwise, I worry local history could end with us."

Rubio's blogs are at jaimerubiowriter.com. Her forthcoming book, "Behind These Walls," is tentatively due out Dec. 7.

But for all of the various life stories Rubio now collects, it's the soft, matronly image of Anna Corbin that is never far from her thoughts. Rubio makes frequent visits to Corbin's gravesite, a lonely and bleak anonymous ending point that has yet to be discovered by salivating television producers. A quiet keeper of Corbin's only material secret – her gravesite – Rubio doesn't think she can ever stop looking for answers as to what happened on that bloody afternoon in 1950.

"I've found things that just don't seem right, so I have to keep digging," she said, "because I would want someone to do that for me. Even if we can never find the truth of what happened, if it were me, I would want someone to keep trying."

It has long been said that "History is written by the victors," but even the less powerful shades of those who came before us never dissipate. They are still here, sleeping in the shadows, waiting for visitors from the future to seek them, to converse with them, to interrogate them – to mine their meanings back from the abyss with a steady combination of fortitude and heart.

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of essays and poetry, *Dreaming Casually*. Her posts on Corbin attracted considerable attention. However, it wasn't long before Rubio saw yet another reckless portrayal of the castle on national television. TNT's show "The Great Escape," pro-

November comes with food for thought

Thanksgiving usually invokes a certain seriousness and generosity in the area; and if that's the case, then I'm in grave need of shifting gears, as I'm still lost in a lingering, carnival-like October haze.

Of course, it doesn't help that I write this column the day after surviving yet another annual Freaker's Ball in Stateline, Nev., which has left my mind a burning wasteland of images that include photographing the Abominable Snowman, ducking between life-sized Rock 'em Sock 'em Robots and dancing under the 7-foot tall hairy goat legs of a red, winged demon. I'd made my way through an ocean of sultry pixies and pirates dressed as Marc Antony; and not the glorious Roman-era Antony, but the bottomed-out and debauched Egyptian Marc Antony who forsook his Roman heritage in order to be Cleopatra's lapdog.

And so I woke up this morning with a throbbing skull, someone's gold glitter cemented to my skin and a new appreciation for how hard it is to remove a pharaoh's black eyeliner. Mind you, while great actors have portrayed Antony in films – from Marlon Brando to Richard Burton – my costume was specifically based on James Purefoy's take on the fallen general in the HBO series, "Rome." Stumbling up to a

Food for Thought

WHEN: 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Friday and Saturday

WHERE: Well Read Books, 12070 Industrial Blvd., Martell

COST: Free to attend

MORE INFO: 304-0077

mirror with shaking hands and flaming eyes, I was reminded that in Purefoy's rendition of Antony's famous death scene, he glances at Cleopatra's suicide note, listens to the Roman legions gathering outside, then aims his sword at his own chest and mumbles, "Well, anything to get rid of this damn hangover."

I realized I had metaphysically become one with my Halloween costume.

Of course, I didn't have Antony's way out of the torture; my centurion sword was made of plastic. So I was



forced to go back to work and steady myself to cover the upcoming holiday season.

One thing that set my mind back on track was learning that Well Read Books in Martell plans to host its first Food for Thought

event to benefit Amador's Interfaith Food Bank.

According to Well Read Books owner Kate Dowden, the food drive involves her store giving 50 percent off on one used book for any customer who brings in a non-perishable food item on Friday or Saturday. The first 20 customers each day will also receive a free new book. All collected food goes to the county's food bank, which is on the front line of assuring families in need don't fail to have their own Thanksgiving dinners. Well Read Books is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. both days.

For Dowden, being surrounded by books each day makes it hard to escape your sense of social responsibility.

"I recently read 'The Heart and the Fist' by Eric Greitens, and I can easily say it was one of the most influential books I've ever come across," Dowden told me. "Greitens is inspiring and makes his readers want to be better people and more active in improving the world around them. He brings awareness to how great the numbers are of those in need."

Dowden has found the same message in many tomes that tower above her, especially the novels of Charles Dickens. She has also heard

Scott Thomas Anderson

Amador in Action



the stories of hunger from more personal sources.

"I try to learn from history and not just know it," Dowden said. "My great-grandmother was a young adult during the Great Depression and she knew what it meant to go hungry. The effects of hunger are lifelong; for the rest of her days, my granny would save every tiny bit of leftovers, even if it was just a spoonful. That's stayed with me. We want to help stock the food bank and remind people that we are in the season to give thanks for the blessings bestowed upon us and to pay it forward."

So, while I fight off the brain-burning ramifications of revelry, drink and overindulgence, there are others in my hometown – a place that never fails to make me proud when it comes to generosity – who are already pushing the spirit of Thanksgiving into full swing. That's something that can take the edge off even the worst hangover.

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