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Biblio File: New collection of short stories from a Chico writer

By Dan Barnett

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Rob Davidson teaches American literature and creative writing at Chico State University. Born in Duluth, Minnesota, he studied at Beloit College and Purdue University, then traveled to the Eastern Caribbean to serve with the U.S. Peace Corps. His new collection of short stories, "The Farther Shore" (\$16 in paperback from Bear Star Press in Cohasset, bearstarpress.com), takes its inspiration from the sayings of the Buddha: "Go beyond / This way or that way, / To the farther shore / Where the world dissolves / And everything becomes clear."

The nine stories in the book, beautifully designed by Bear Star's Beth Spencer, bring their central characters to a place that threatens dissolution. They are stories of men and women sometimes willfully unaware of the darker undercurrents of domestic life until a moment arrives that changes, or threatens to change, everything. An unintended pregnancy, or an intended one with complications. A kid, facing a bully who is also his best friend. A college professor fearing a tenure decision at his school and in his marriage.

Lyon Books in Chico will be hosting a book signing this Thursday, March 15, at 7 p.m. An interview with the author, conducted by Nancy Wiegman for Nancy's Bookshelf on KCHO (Northstate Public Radio, 91.7 FM) is available at kchofm.podbean.com.

Some of the tales are set in Chico. In "Tell Me Where You Are," Charlie Peterson has rats eating through his house even as his marriage is unraveling. "He parked in front of the

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- 8:15 a.m. update: Driver of allegedly stolen vehicle shot at Paradise gas station
- Warrant issued for former Chico church staff member for child sex abuse
- Man shot after fleeing from police, crashing into vehicles
- Officer who suffered career-ending injury in Chico riot dies in Willows
- Northern California water leaders say habitat, water storage linked
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Presbyterian Church on First Street. He left Rachel sleeping in the locked van and stepped into the downtown city streets, damp with a light drizzle." His daughter is safe but where is his wife?

The stories seem to grow darker, more complicated, with deep sexual currents, as the book progresses, concluding with "Criminals," which won the 2009 Camber Press Fiction award. Gerald Prescott Carter is an American living on the island of Carriacou, drinking heavily and working on a book about seashells, collecting rainwater in cisterns and terribly annoyed when a local boy, "Soup," attempts to steal some of the water. Carter is a deliciously unreliable narrator, concerned with his own sad dignity while life and death play out before him. Clarity? Here, not so much.

Dan Barnett teaches philosophy at Butte College. To submit review copies of published books, please send e-mail to dbarnett99@me.com. Columns are archived on the Musable blog, http://dielbee.blogspot.com.

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