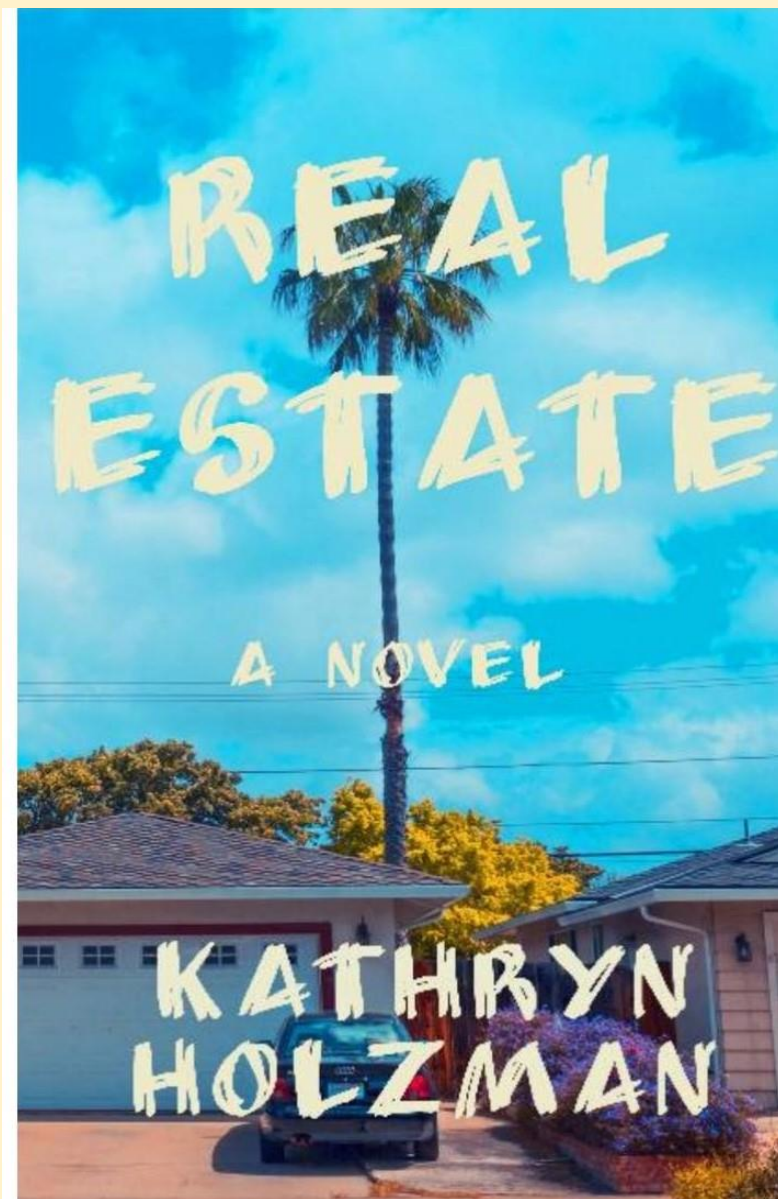
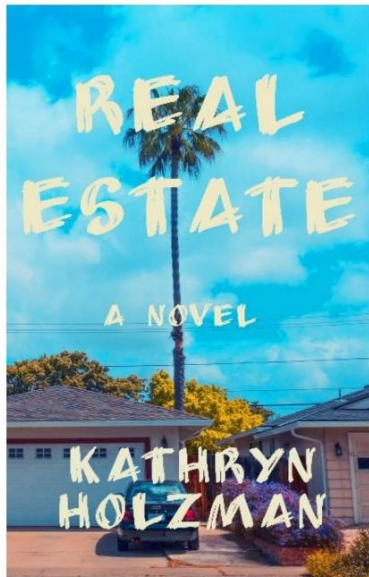


BOOK CLUB KIT





*Available at your favorite
bookstore & direct from
the Publisher*

www.visitourbookstore.com

*Released 11.27.2020
by Propertius Press*

COMING OF AGE IN THE TURBULENT 1960s

Introducing
REAL ESTATE
A Novel by Kathryn Holzman

Ebook ISBN: 978-1-005-23640-3 Print ISBN: 978-1-716-46618-2

Set in the Santa Clara Valley during the turbulent sixties and seventies, **REAL ESTATE** is the story of how a bucolic agricultural valley is transformed into the iconic Silicon Valley.

As acres of apricot orchards are converted into suburban subdivisions, families flock to the area. Air Force pilot Joe Jackson moves his family to Sunnyvale soon after the Hopkins build their dream house. Harriet Jackson, her father's eyes and ears, finds herself living next door to Bobby Hopkins, aspiring circus performer and math whiz.

They share a side-yard fence, but the worlds they live in differ radically. A shared love of the Beatles and the loss of the inspiring young President Kennedy bring them together in an unlikely friendship, but their family's differences soon tear them apart. While Harriet struggles to fulfill her family obligations, Bobby builds a computer in his garage.

They meet again as adults, but by then everything has changed. In the electric valley, both Harriet and Bobby learn that family is not always destiny and houses are sometimes more than home.

After attending Stanford University and NYU, Kathryn Holzman worked with public inebriates, dentists, urologists, and cardiologists. When the right side of her brain rebelled against endless databases and balance sheets, she returned to her first passion—fiction. Her short fiction has appeared in over twenty online literary magazines and print anthologies. She is the author of a collection of short fiction, **FLATLANDERS**, Shire Press 2019. She won grand prize in the 2020 Eyelands International Short Story Contest. Links to her work can be found at kathrynholzman.com.

Pick up the ebook or paperback online and wherever books are sold



**PROPERTIUS
PRESS**



PO Box 3506
Martinsville, VA 24115
www.propertiuspress.com

A Conversation with Kathryn Holzman:

(More of this conversation can be found at the Podcast *Hear Us Roar*, hosted by Maggie Smith and sponsored by the Women's Fiction Writers Association)



MS: Welcome everybody to the Podcast. Our guest is Kathryn Holzman, and her book *Real Estate* was published in November 2020 by Propertius Press. Welcome to the Podcast.

KH: *Thank you for inviting me. I'm delighted to be here.*

MS: First, we'd like to hear what *Real Estate* is all about.

KH: *Real Estate is the story of two families who live side-by-side in the Santa Clara Valley in the 1960s and 1970s when that valley morphed from a lush agricultural valley into what we now know as Silicon Valley. It views this change through two very different protagonists' eyes. One is Harriet, the daughter of a Japanese war bride with a Navy pilot father. The other is her next-door neighbor Bobby, a science whiz who can do no wrong. They have a brief flirtation, but their parents come between them. The novel follows their lives and how the change in the Valley affects them. Later they meet again, but by then everything has changed.*

MS: That's a rich time in history to be delving into. Was that history that you knew from your parents, from your own experience, or did you just do research?

KH: *I love to do research. I did a lot of research, but I was raised in the Santa Clara Valley, so I have a real view of how those changes affected various families that I knew. Then, I drew other characters to follow it through.*

MS: And I'm assuming Bobby as a computer whiz probably gets involved in Silicon Valley from the computer end of it. Does he found the company or...?

KH: *My older brother, who was also a science whiz, attended a lot of science fairs with Steve Wozniak. They were competitive all the way through high school. I come from a family of engineers, so I felt I had a window on the engineering personality. So, that's where I started.*

MS: And then you have an interesting thing with the Japanese bride and the serviceman as the parents. Was that also something that you knew about, or you just invented?

KH: *That was a meld of people I knew. As a matter of fact, when I sent the book to my brother and my sister-in-law, she said he opened the package and said, "She's written a book about our family's life." But then she came back and said, "I can see you combined people." And I did. I took bits and pieces of interesting people and then my characters came to life, and I just followed them.*

MS: Well, let's hear a little about you as a writer.

KH: *I spend my summers in a wonderful, rural town in Southern Vermont. One of my chapbooks is about all the quirky people there. The highlight of my writing so far was when I read at the public library there and all the locals showed up. I looked at them and I thought: "What have I gotten myself into?" And they loved it.*

MS: Were they looking at each other and saying, "I think that sounds like you."

KH: *It was more like. "I know who that is." It was lots of fun.*

MS: Do you write every day? Are you one of these people who has a set routine, a set time, a set place.

KH: *At the end of my career, I was one of those lucky people working from home. I really had to fight to get that arrangement. I moved up from the city and worked another ten years up here. I would wake up in the morning and say to my dog, "Come on, we have to go upstairs and go to work." So, when I retired, I still said to the dog "Come upstairs," and I would write every morning.*

MS: It's funny to me to think of the 1960s as being historical fiction, because I usually think of history as 1900 or something. When I think of the technology, even from the 1960s when there were no computers, it's hard to imagine what that was like, even though it doesn't really feel like it was that long ago.

KH: *I had to be sure I got my technology dates right. What stage were computers in? What were they building? One of things I realized was that things evolved slowly. It was really the 90s before we all lived on the internet, long after this story ends.*

MS: What is the name of your next book, or the next two books you are working on?

KH: *The next one which I hope will come out in the next year or two is *The Cost of Electricity*, and the third one which is undergoing a complete transformation is called *Granted*.*

MS: *The Cost of Electricity*. What time period is that set in?

KH: *Oregon in 1904, at the inception of electricity. *Granted* is set in Nova Scotia in the 1760s.*

MS: Oh, way back. That's interesting. Well, thank you so much for being on the podcast. It was a pleasure talking to you.

Discussion Questions:

1) Real Estate begins with two families moving to a Santa Clara subdivision built on a former apricot orchard. How does this move differ for the two families?



2) How do history, location, and family expectations shape our lives. How has your upbringing shaped yours?

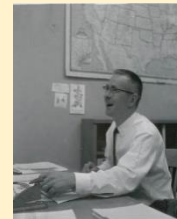
3) What hardship does Harriet have to overcome? How is she different at the beginning of the novel from the end of the novel?



4) Harriet's mother was one of 50,000 war brides who immigrated to the United States after World War Two. How did this experience affect her? How did it affect Harriet?

5) Joe Jackson asks Harriet to be his eyes and ears. Was this a reasonable expectation?

6) Bobby's father says he is a cyberneticist. How does he explain his job to his family? How do his family's expectations differ from those of the Jacksons?



7) How do their parents react when Bobby and Harriet become friends? Were their reactions shaped by their backgrounds and expectations?

8) Was there a character in this book that you found difficult to understand? Did you agree with the decisions this character made? How might they have reacted differently?



9) The character of Bobby was inspired by the real life of Steve Wozniak, now a Silicon Valley celebrity. Did you sympathize with his difficulties in spite of his success and wealth?

10) In addition to location, both the military and Aikido play important roles in shaping the characters in this book. What disciplines have been passed down in your family? How have current events affected your decisions and goals?

Recommended reading:

The Santa Clara Valley's "Appointment with Destiny"

APF FELLOW 1971 Leonard Downie

<https://aliciapatterson.org/stories/santa-clara-valley%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9CAppointment-destiny%E2%80%9D>

The Washington Post: The Untold Story of Japanese War Brides

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2016/09/22/from-hiroko-to-susie-the-untold-stories-of-japanese-war-brides/>

More on Steve Wozniak

The Baltimore Sun: A Conversation with Steve Wozniak

<https://www.baltimoresun.com/bal-mac060503-column.html>