



# EXETER PUBLISHING

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## JILL OCOONE

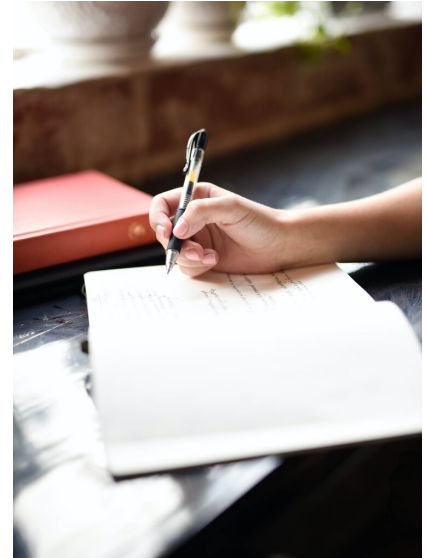
Jill Ocone's piece, "Boro Kids" was featured in our [first anthology](#), *From the Soil*. It was an absolute pleasure to interview her about her writing process and to catch up with what she's been working on.

Right now, she's writing three articles as well as providing editorial work for the spring issue of Jersey Shore Magazine, which should be released in mid-March. Readers will learn about The Stephen Crane House in Asbury Park, Allaire Community Farm in Wall Township, and the history of selected maritime artifacts and memorials that can be found throughout the Jersey Shore area.

Make sure to be on the lookout for it!

### **Q: Tell us about where you grew up.**

I grew up in Point Pleasant Boro, New Jersey, which is located along the Jersey Shore. The Manasquan River, the Point Pleasant Canal, the Metedeconk River, Beaver Dam Creek, and Barnegat Bay all either surround or pass through my hometown with the Atlantic Ocean less than a mile to the east. Growing up alongside the water, waves were always on my mind and sand was always between my toes.



*Photo by Hannah Olinger*

**Q: Did your hometown influence your writing as you matured?**

When I would read issues of “Jersey Shore Magazine,” I longed to write about the places I love and wished to see my name in print someday in the magazine. That wish came true in 2014 when I penned my first article for the Spring 2014 issue. I am now a senior writer and editor for the magazine, and I also assist with editing the publication’s seasonal guidebooks.

**Q: What aspect of your hometown did you focus on the most while writing your piece? Was there a specific moment you were thinking of when penning your poems?**

I originally wrote “Boro Kids” as a tribute to a childhood friend who passed away from cancer in 2015. I tried to capture the laid-back vibe of our carefree childhood and teenage years as we grew up in a town where everyone had each other’s backs, and thirty some-odd years later, still do. I printed it out, framed it, and gave it to his wife, who ended up sharing it among the Boro Kids she knew. It resonated with them, and a lot of people asked me for copies. I revised it for publication in *From the Soil*.

**Q: What is the best writing advice you have received?**

There’s two quotes I write in the front of every notebook and planner I use. One is, “Shut your eyes and see.” by James Joyce, which guides me to see with my mind then describe what I see with my words. The second is, “You can always edit a bad page. You can’t edit a blank page.” by Jodi Picoult, which is a reminder to keep writing, no matter what.

**Q: Why do you write?**

I write to lose myself, to find myself, and to be myself. I write to survive, to thrive, and to live.

**Q: Do you write primarily for yourself, or is there a certain audience you are hoping to reach?**

I primarily write for myself, with hopes that my words will speak to others.

**Q: What is your writing process? Do you have any quirks?**

I usually begin with an idea and let it develop and flow where it may.

**Q: Who is your favorite author and why?**

I have many favorite authors, but when I was young, S.E. Hinton's "The Outsiders" is what most inspired me to become a writer.

**Q: What are you currently reading?**

"The Authenticity Project" by Clare Pooley and "To The Lighthouse" by Virginia Woolf.

**Q: When you were growing up, did you have dreams of being an author or was there something else you wanted to do?**

I created a little book called “Greta and the Lemonade” when I was in second grade, complete with a story I wrote and pictures I drew. I tried to sell copies to my classmates for a quarter each, but my operation was shut down after my teacher, Mrs. Wilson, got wind of it. Instead of punishing me, she bought a copy and read it to the class. While I might not have admitted it, in my heart I always wanted to be an author.

**Q: When did you start writing?**

See above answer.

**Q: Do you have a favorite indie author?**

No, I do not.

**Q: What advice would you give to emerging authors?**

If you want to write, write. Don't doubt yourself or think you aren't good enough. Don't argue with yourself or give up. Just write.

**Q: What is the best thing you've been told about your writing?**

Several people have told me that they can hear my voice through my writing, if that makes sense. Their ability to hear my actual voice through my written words validates my intention for authenticity.

**Q: Would you rather write: poetry, a novel, or a short story?**

I enjoy writing both poetry and novels. I have notebooks full of poetry, mostly free-verse with varying levels of completeness from scribbles to polished. I am currently querying my first novel and have two additional half-finished manuscripts I hope to complete this year.

**Q: Revising: love or hate?**

Love it! It's extremely satisfying to improve and transform my words into their finest form.

**Q: Do you have a favorite quote? If so, what is it and why is this your favorite?**

“Because you are good.” My nephew, Isaac, said those four words to me a few years ago when he was almost three years old, and I'll never forget that moment. His simple statement changed my life because it helped me to see my worth at a time when I didn't feel like there was anything good about me. But you know what? He was right, and I AM good, indeed.

**Q: Do you believe poetry holds a certain power in today's world?**

Poetry definitely holds power in today's world. Poetry has always provided me with an outlet to express my feelings and a way to relate to life, but even more so over the past year. We are experiencing a pandemic and a social justice movement with, in my opinion, too much acrimony and too little compassion for others. Poetry is one way I am able to cope with this bizarre and disheartened reality we are all experiencing. Words give me hope, and without hope, I'd be lost.

**Q: Do you have other work published that you would like to share with us?**

A list of my published writing can be found on my [website](#).

Jill Ocone is a high school journalism/writing teacher and senior writer for *Jersey Shore Magazine*. Her work has appeared in *American Writers Review* ('20 & '19), *Art in the Time of COVID-19*, *Everywhere* magazine, among others. Visit Jill online at [jillocone.com](http://jillocone.com), on Instagram/Facebook at @jillocone, and on Twitter at @jill\_ocone.

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