

ESCOM Journal

*The creative arts publication of Emeritus Students College of Marin
January/February 2024*



Harvey Abernathey

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

In Memoriam

Eva Long, College of Marin Trustee



Eva Long, a College of Marin trustee and educator, passed away last fall at the age of 81. Ms. Long served on the College of Marin board of trustees for 24 years. She was first elected to the board in 1999 and was board president in 2010 and 2018. She resigned from her seat as trustee, area five, in June. Among Ms. Long's proudest achievements was bringing back the college's Mini-Medical School. The program, which Long designed, developed and conducted in 2015, taught more than 2,200 students about various health topics. Eva was also a teacher, superintendent, UC Berkeley adjunct Faculty and started the Center for Longevity, Transition and Renewal.

I had the enormous honor of knowing and working with Eva for the last 18 years. She led a life devoted to education.

Eva had a special love for ESCOM. She joyfully attended all our parties and was always available to help solve any issues that concerned our organization. Our conversations over the years covered a wide range of topics, which included everything from Emeritus (ESCOM), the College, love, what life is and all about dying. (Many people did not know that Eva spent time with special people she knew, as they were dying, to help them have a peaceful ending.)

Our conversations took many twists and turns and often wound up lasting more than two hours!

I had several conversations with Eva in her last few months of life. They were, as always, filled with the kind of wisdom that could only be gleaned during a life well lived.

Eva ended her last email to me with, "You are my human angel." What a poetic gift she had.

I am incredibly thankful that our paths crossed, and we had some special times together.

Marian Mermel
Past President, ESCOM



Jerry Herman.

From College of Marin's New President



I have had the good fortune to interact with hundreds, if not thousands, of ESCOM members over my 11 years at College of Marin. I've had the even better fortune to know and work with each ESCOM president during that time—individuals whose commitment to service, learning, the College, and our larger community have been inspiring.

As I transition into the role of President at the College, it is not lost on me how lucky we are to have the ESCOM program and its members embedded in the fabric of our institution. As the community's college, COM's mission is to meet the educational needs of all members of our diverse community. ESCOM's programs, events, and gatherings are integral to our ability to achieve that mission. Thank you for your involvement in ESCOM. I look forward to all that comes next as we embark on this new year.

Jonathan Eldridge, Ed.D.
President, College of Marin

Pure Land

I look out my window onto the teeming city streets below
where just a day ago lay soothing white blankets of snow,
transformed now by city grit and tar into a semi-liquid slush
of gray that sticks and stains the soles of shoes and souls of all
who can recall

...the pure white snow as forest base for winter's spruce
and pine, a blanket to embrace a cozy country home, its
archetypal perfection a comforting projection of a
holiday card state of mind

...a pure land without stalled cars, their windows ice-caked
front and rear, without frozen sidewalk shards, no cityscape to
assault the eye save for some few patches of still pure fallen
snow on center meridians beyond human touch that remain
bold white in the busy city mid-day light.

Does what I see trigger my somber mood this noon or is it simply
reflected effect of what I project as gone yet still remains, a
patchwork yearning inside for pure land in my mind where
children laugh and sled over white snow-covered hills
spellbound in that moment, forever fleet

...for soon the sun will transform the frolicsome snow into
wayfaring watery rivulets to return over time, first slow, then
swift into rapids, rivers and seas, past the leaf-bare boxelder
trees held sway by the rhythmic touch of

north winds

...while across this pure land echoes still
the joyful sound of lively children's cries
that harmonize into something like

a hymn

...and just beyond our sight a lone red
cardinal alights from its slow unhurried flight
onto an ice-coated crystal

tree limb

Larry Tolbert



Marilyn Bagshaw



Laura Harrison

First Love

A furry tidal wave
huffs and puffs
across her childhood bed

Launching a tsunami
of lavender breath,
drowning her in joy

My little girl's heart
now tamed still roams free
through the lilac fields
in her father's soul

Her own boy-puppy,
pink and hairless,
consumes our yesterdays
through crimson nipples

While staring into the eyes
who once stared into mine
he sighs, and shudders
breathing orchids
through his eyes

Brent MacKinnon



Laura Milholland

Busting Out

Olivia, my oldest sister married John on Valentine's Day, 1959, two weeks after my 13th birthday. My fever broke the morning before the wedding, but my mother refused to let me out of bed to go to the rehearsal and dinner that followed. Instead, she brought me a mug of beef broth she'd let simmer all day. Its aroma, rich and redolent with onions, leeks and bay, had wafted up the stairs all afternoon awaking my dormant appetite. "Billy, you need to gather your strength for tomorrow and you certainly don't need to practice walking down the aisle. I was the youngest groomsman and knew my job. All I had to do was crook my arm and let old ladies grab it and seat them either on my family's side or John's. A piece of cake! Secretly, I was thrilled to be left home alone as I'd wanted to do something that took privacy.

When I heard the car doors slam I swung my legs off the bed and stood up. I walked down the hall to Olivia's room. Her wedding dress hung on a special hanger attached over her closet door. It was a bewitching dress, a dress she had designed and made in her art school's fashion department. She wanted to surprise us with her fait accompli and boy did she. Crimson velvet, not the white we expected, with a full skirt falling gracefully from a fitted bodice. The skirt was appliqued randomly with different sized silk hearts in the same shade as the velvet. They shimmered, catching the light, seemingly to float unattached across the skirt. Olivia laughed at our expressions of surprise and said, "Since I'm getting married on Valentine's Day I thought I should go as The Queen of Hearts."

What I loved most about the dress was its hoop skirt. I put her shoes on first knowing I'd never bend over the hoops to tighten their straps. I walked around the room to get the feel

of them. It was my first time in heels. Next, I pulled off my pajamas and put on her merry widow. Not bothering with the slip, I stepped into the hoop skirt as I'd watched her do. Getting the dress on was tricky but I finally managed. I walked gingerly over to take a look in her bureau mirror but all I could see was the top of the dress. The only way to see myself full length was to go downstairs to mother's dressing room. It had a three paneled mirror where you could see yourself coming and going. I teetered down the hall and carefully started down the stairs.

I don't know what happened. One moment I was taking a step and the next I was launched into air. I hit part way down then proceeded to bounce from stair to stair, each bounce accompanied by the sickening sound of splintering hoops. My ankle slammed into the newel post, and it hurt so bad I thought I'd faint. I struggled up. The skirt of the dress was poked out here and there by the broken hoops. I was terrified to move fearing one of the hoops would tear the fine velvet of the dress. I eased the dress off over my head and started to cry when I saw what a mess I'd made out of the hoops. The only thing I could think of was to get dad's glue and try to glue them back together.

I took off the shoes and climbed out of the ruined hoop skirt and limped to dad's workshop. I got the glue and carried everything back to Olivia's room. I figured if I was lucky I had at least a couple of hours before anyone would come home. But that night wasn't my lucky night. Mom came home between the rehearsal and the dinner to make sure I was all right.

Olivia's and John's wedding went off without a hitch. My mother's hoop skirt worked as well with the dress as the one I mangled. I limped up and down the aisle and stood last in line of the groomsman. In hindsight I realize that day had been my lucky day because my mother and Olivia closed ranks and no one else was told. Olivia had even come in, hugged me goodnight, and said, "Thank you for loving my dress. It means a lot to me." To this day I still love hoop skirts.

Susan Connelly



Paul Milholland

My Life in 2024 in Haiku

What is happiness
Buying gladiolus
Not pita chips? Yes!!!

Karen Arnold



Laura Milholland

Swan Song

She
gracefully
sails over the lake
in the
quiet
break
of day,
pure
white,
alone,
eager
neck
slips
she trumpets a wistful song,
to find a mate. Her tall willowy
undulates smoothly as she silently
in and around the marshy reeds.
Her soulful tune echoes over the lake and thru
the forest long into the day. Then at dusk,
just before the sun sets over the distant
hills, another swan trumpets his
sultry song. And then silence,
followed by the rhythmic sound of two paddlers coming together in the night.
When these two lovers meet
their courtship dance unfolds.
While dipping heads, they preen and
preen, then loudly trumpet, coo and coo,
sail
twirl
beak
as a
in the
hush
of a
cold
dark
night
as two lovers unite
in a swan
song.

Carol Allen

Valentine for a Stranger

It's midnight, New Year's Eve, 1973. I'm a long way from home or friends in the empty waiting room of a private terminal on the far edge of Love Field, miles from downtown Dallas.

The pilot who let me air-hitch with him from Houston said there'd be a better chance to hitch a flight from here, though he didn't think I'd have much luck tonight. "At least you and your doggie will be warmer than if I leave you out on I-20 trying to catch a semi."

The hard plastic chair is cold through my jeans. I pull my coat collar up under my chin and hug my shoulders. The chair is one of a row of connected chairs facing a two-story high wall of windows. Beyond the windows the Texas night is black over a black and empty runway. Other than a few track lights aimed at flight schedules on the wall behind the counter, the rest of the cavernous space disappears into shadow. My founding puppy, Lucy, lies curled in my lap. I dig my brush out of my backpack and begin brushing my hair. In the window, I watch the vague apparition of my reflection.

The brush through my hair sounds like the ebb and flow of the tide. Though thinking that makes me sad, since I'm a thousand miles from that beach. Dragging the bristles down the nape of my neck comforts me. I stop to change hands, but the sound continues.

I hold my breath, listening. Something with the same rhythmic souging pulses from somewhere behind me. I put my hands firmly around Lucy in case she decides to chase the noise. The sound grows louder, nearer. I tense. But Lucy doesn't, which is unusual.

Peering over my shoulder, I look down a long, dimly lit corridor and see a man's silhouette, tall, but slightly stooped. His back is to me and he's moving in a languid waltz with a dust mop. The mop's wide, flat foot sweeps wall to wall as the man dances slowly backward with it. Lucy's lack of concern reassures me, and I lift the brush to my hair again. I figure if I'm moving, the man will notice me from a distance rather than be startled at close range.

He stops to dust the counter behind me, and I hear him bite into an apple. I watch his reflection in the plate-glass window. He's under one of the spotlights and his face is shiny with perspiration. Then, he notices me. For a moment, we stare at each other's ghostly image in the window. I keep brushing.

Back on the customer side of the counter, he takes the handle of the mop again. He begins dragging it in wide arcs toward



Laura Milholland

me. I smell the astringent sweetness of green apples in the air between us. Even when he stops directly behind me, Lucy only raises her head in casual acknowledgement.

"Scuse me," the man says, in a softer drawl than you'd ever hear from a native Texan.

I turn to face him and see in his eyes a vulnerable, kindred homelessness. I smile, hoping that whatever he's about to say, he recognizes this bond between us, too.

He leans the mop handle against the back of the seat next to mine. "Could I brush your hair?" He extends his hand, palm up, for the brush. When he adds, "I ain't never touched a white woman's hair before," apple scent envelops us.

I lay the brush in his open hand. He steps up close to the back of my chair. When he draws the brush delicately over the crown of my head, it feels like soft rain. Then, he begins to alternate between brushstrokes and smoothing my hair with his other hand, following the same path from the top of my head to my shoulders.

With every stroke, chills ripple down my spine to the arches of my feet. I breathe lightly, hoping to restrain time. For an exquisite, protracted moment, we stay like that, like a Vermeer painting come to life in the half-dark. Finally, he stops and hands me back the brush.

"Thank you, Missy," he says, taking up his dust mop once again.

I shut my eyes, breathe in the last trace of apple, and listen to the retreating sound of the mop. After what seems like only seconds, I turn to thank him, too, but he's gone.

A.T. Lynne

Driving Lesson

It's a white sky morning
high fog drizzles fine mist
veiling her hair like a mantilla.

Top down, pedal to the metal, she pilots
her butter yellow Pontiac, high speed over
steep Scott Street hills to Cow Hollow
radio tuned to KJAZZ
June Christy and Mommy harmonizing
That Old Devil Moon.

Mid-morning sun vacuums the mist,
bluing the sky, as she teaches me
to drive on the road that runs from
the yacht club to the old lighthouse
at the far end of Marina Green.

II.

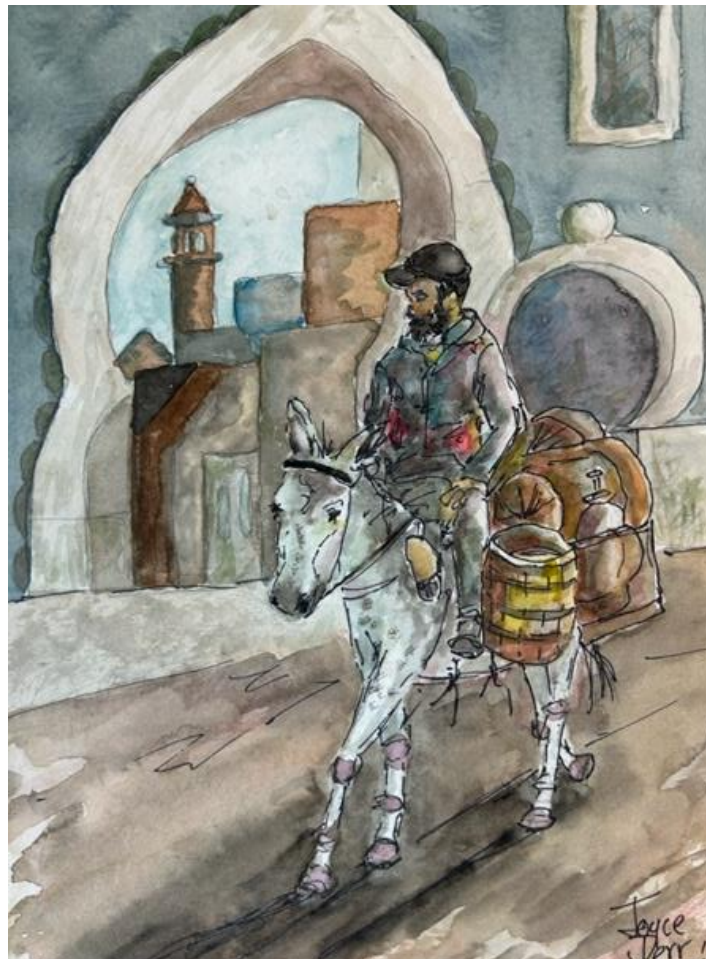
It's a gray sky morning
gunmetal clouds hang heavy over Cow Hollow.
Daddy, behind the wheel of his Buick sedan,
leads the cortege, tailing the hearse,
from the quaint old church on Green Street
'cross town to the beach and Great Highway.

In sync we think of her
bedded down
impossibly young at fifty-one
in the timeless silence of a cherry wood casket
passenger in alien transport motoring to Colma
at twelve miles an hour.

lynn arias bornstein



Jeff True



Joyce Vogt Derr

Children Dare to Dream Freedom

We dream of bombs, and rockets rain fires in the night skies,
smoke rises from shattered hospitals. Body parts mixed with
cement rubble falls into open craters in front of their eyes.

White phosphorus excoriates our skin, fires burn our bones,
blind our eyes and suck the air out of our lungs.
Help is not on the way. Nowhere to run or turn.

Our mothers abort, newborn siblings die, wrapped in aluminum foil.
No oxygen, no warm; bundled bodies lying side-by-side.
Our hearts fill with fear and abandonment. Nowhere to hide.

Endless tears flow, our lives shatter, homes broken into shards.
Who will champion our despair? Who will rescue and heal
our wounded bodies, hearts, and minds?

Can we survive and dream of freedom?

ray fay

Dream Deferred but not Forgotten

In the fall of 1970 at the age of 24, I drove from San Francisco to Amherst to begin my graduate studies in the history department at the University of Massachusetts. I ended up loving living in New England including all the snow and even the ice storms, although the summer humidity I could do without! I enjoyed my classes, both fall and spring semesters and did well.

And then suddenly, at the beginning of June 1971 I went blind. Ultimately, I was diagnosed with optic neuritis and my parents were told I would not see again. To the surprise of all, after a month, a smidge of vision returned in one eye. I spent the following 6 months recuperating and learning how to be blind out in the world. In January of 1972 I resumed my studies.

Soon I discovered insurmountable barriers. Computers with special software for blind students were non-existent at that time. I soon discovered, as blind, I had neither the tools nor the experience to do the research, note-taking, and paper-writing required which hitherto had been easy for me. The frustration turned to depression, and I was stymied. Ultimately, I completed all my requirements for my Masters with the exception of three incompletes in my last semester. I returned to San Francisco feeling defeated and ashamed, my dream of teaching history in community colleges gone.

In the fall of 2022, I read a book that stunned me. Each chapter was written by a woman historian who had taken an unconventional path toward obtaining her advanced degrees after having to leave academia due to illness, finances, family, putting a spouse through college, or choosing to work in a compelling social justice movement and so forth. Suddenly, a rusty old door creaked open just a bit. With great trepidation I got in touch with the History Department of U Mass. I wrote an eight-page proposal requesting my Masters on the basis of the classwork and orals I had completed 50 years before, along with five decades of work taking classes/trainings/doing presentations/publishing my memoir/processing and preserving archival collections, and keeping my “hands in history.”

On March 3, 2023, during Women’s History Month, I was notified by the graduate committee of the History Department that they had approved my proposal for a Masters! They concluded that my commitment to community history and activism more than satisfied the requirement for the three incompletes, even though I had not been in an academic community for five decades.

On August 4, 2023, at the age of 77 ½ I received my diploma, with tears of joy. Finally, I can call myself a historian and continue doing the work I love, consulting and archiving, working with individuals and organizations. At the moment, I’m processing collections for Bay Area Lesbian Archives (BALA).

What’s important to me about this story is that other old folks who may have had to defer their dreams for one reason or another, can revisit their thwarted ambitions, and may be able to negotiate a happy resolution on their own terms. I gratefully acknowledge and give credit to the University of Massachusetts for considering that an unconventional pathway for an advanced degree can be valid, and for recognizing that decades of non-academic work may still fulfill the requirements of a degree. I also give myself credit for being audacious!

Laura Bock



Nancy Pappas

Imagined Dialogue: The Earth

Me: "I'm planning a trip to Australia next year, you know, on the other side of the world."

You: "Whoa, I would never do something like that."

Me: "Why not?"

You: "Well, some people say that the Earth is flat and I don't want to fall off the underside."

Me: Actually, the Earth is round, like a bowling ball, and gravity holds you down on the surface no matter where you are."

You: "Ah, so YOU say, but I believe the Earth is flat and the Flat Earth Society says so too."

Me: "It's not a matter of belief. It's about accepting scientific facts and observations over hundreds, perhaps thousands of years."

You: "But your so-called facts are influenced by your beliefs and opinions."

Me: "Absolutely not. Facts are based solely on observations known to be true and accepted by all without question. Hypotheses and theories may be subject to change if they do not account for all the facts. There are many, many facts that support the idea that the Earth is round, like a ball. For example, photos of Earth taken from the moon, which is also ball-shaped."

You: "Well, I don't accept your facts and I know what I believe. I also believe your scientists are biased against me because I have different opinions."

Me: "Facts are based on the concept of truth, not on opinions, beliefs, or emotions."

You: "Well, if I believe the Earth is flat, I have a constitutional right to my opinion."

Me: "You have a right to hold an opinion, but in this world you can't call it the truth."

You: "I also have a right to live in my own special world with my very own facts that I consider to be true."

Me: OK, but if you ever decide to run for public office, please do not try to impose your opinions and beliefs on the rest of us living in the real world."

Jeff Lemontt



"Angry Manzanita" Marilyn Bagshaw

Winter Tomato

Who do you think you fool?
Hard, juiceless knob, you
shape like the Real McCoy
under pale-orange anemic skin

Never gonna drip down anyone's chin
not the same saucy compliment
to bacon-lettuce-mayo
no stand-in for
the actual delicate marvel of sunshine
thick skinned to fend off
the border bug's bite

not so unlike the foxy lure
of half-true news

One whiff
a slight squeeze
and even a curious kindergartener
sees right through
your tomato-mocking masquerade
you, flagrant impersonator, you.

Kitty Baker

The Fly

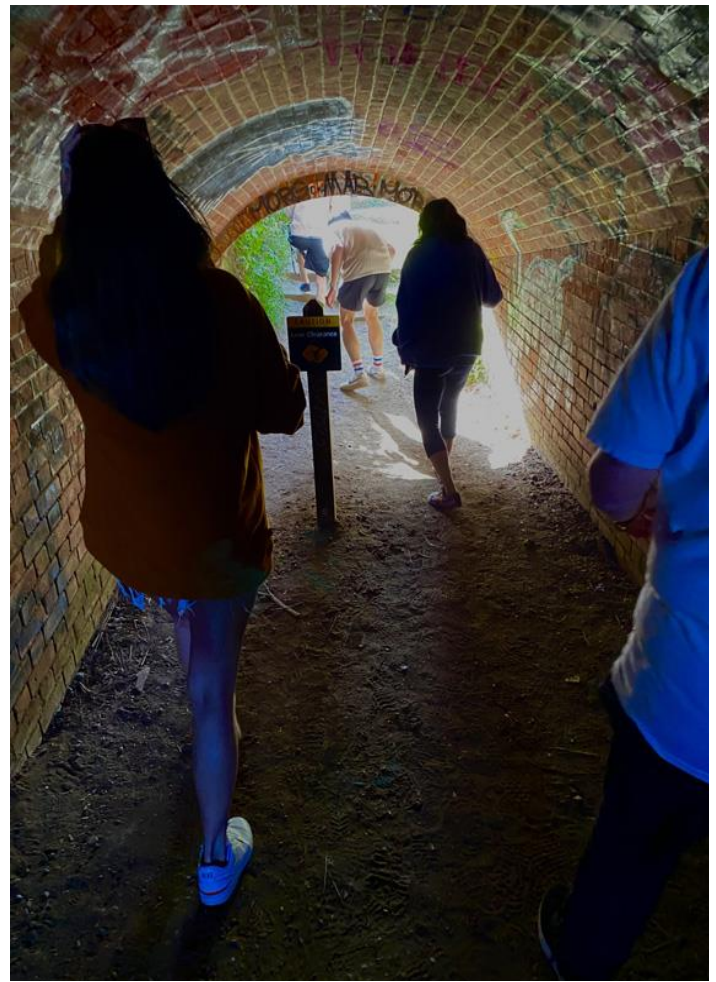
For the past week or so, there's been a fly that lived in my house. He, or she, flew all over the place. Into all the rooms, rarely landing on food, but I rarely leave food out. Anyway, you know when you see a fly your instinct is to kill The F__ king Fly. That's what we usually called them, as in: "that F__ king Fly landed right on the potato salad!" or "that f__ king Fly is trying to fly into my ear!"

You know what I mean. Everybody hates flies. But here's the thing. That fly – the one that lived in my house -- well, I started to feel like that fly was nice. Kind of like a nice roommate. The first day whenever I saw it I tried to smack him, or her, with a magazine. But I missed. Day two, there he, or she, was again. Day three. Day four. Same thing. Pretty soon I started talking to him, or her. 'Hello Fly. How's your day been? Found anything to eat or drink?' I mean how long can a fly live if there's nothing for him, or her, for nourishment?

And did you know that flies can't chew? They can't. They have this tube thing that they suck stuff through. Like juice, or really, runny pulp. Anyway, this fly wasn't one of those huge black things that make you mad just to look at them. No. It was more delicate. Of course! It was a girl fly! A medium grey color, rather petite. And not noisy. Those flies that sound like dive bombers are really annoying.

No, this fly really wasn't very annoying at all. She seemed like a really nice fly. I tried talking to her. I explained that I was sure that she would be much happier out in the real world, instead of being cooped up indoors. That there would be flowers out there, and rotting food, and animal poop. All the stuff that she would really like. I opened the screen door for a while, but she stayed inside. Finally, I realized that I, a person, couldn't really have a relationship with a fly, and that if anybody found out about our one-sided conversations, or my lectures on habitat, they'd probably have me committed. So, one day, I decided to take action.

She was just sitting on my bedroom window, looking out at the real world. Pensive. I could tell she was thinking that she would really like to be out there, instead of stuck in here. So, I took a plastic container and a piece of 8-1/2 x 11-inch white paper and approached the window, all the while talking to her, telling her that she was probably going to feel traumatized for the couple of minutes it would take me to capture and transport her, but that she would thank me in the end. A classic conversation, to be sure.



Nancy Pappas

Zap! I pushed the plastic container against the window, and Voila!!! Success. Still talking, still placating, still explaining, I got the piece of paper under the edge of the container and maneuvered it so that the fly was between the plastic and the paper. Walking out of my bedroom, through the living room to the slider onto my patio, I just kept talking, reassuring her that everything was going to be all right. Then I let her go.

The fly kind of dropped for a second or two, and I feared for the worst, but then she righted herself and flew away. I'm not ashamed to say that I got a little teary as I said goodbye to my roomie. But here's what I wonder. Will that fly ever come back to visit? To see how I am? I would like that so much.

Susan Little

Sacrament

She waits
 watching, watching
 looking through walls-
 bricks, plaster, cement
 wooden splinters get in her eyes
 she blinks and sees a star
 coming towards her
 bright, shiny
 disappearing in her cup of wine.

She clasps her floured covered hands
 the kneaded dough rises
 in the bowl on the table
 lifting the cloth that covers
 it like a veil.
 What offering shall she make
 to the heavens
 that will allow her
 to live her dream?

How she longs to go outside the walls
 to a clearing and look up at the heavens
 finding the spot where the star once shone
 before it descended
 before she realized

how much more there was
 to be found and known
 to be felt and seen
 to be.

Anne Mulvaney



Nancy Outenreath

T'is the Season

Let's come together; feel the joy
 the warmth and bond of friendship.
 Reach forth with love, ignore the roar.
 Let's glow with light and fellowship.

The night-light shimmers through the maze
 of brightening stars, all glistening.
 As stardust fills the air on high
 with eager souls all listening.

I'll reach to hold your hand in mine
 a warm communication.
 This is the season to rejoice
 with love and celebration.

deidre silverman



Tom Gannon



Elaine Thornton



ESCOM

Emeritus Students
College of Marin

ESCOM Journal

Editor, Denize Springer
Web Content Manager, Richard Jensen

The ESCOM Journal is published on alternate months online at www.marin.edu/escom. A limited number of printed copies are available in the ESCOM offices on the College of Marin Kentfield and Indian Valley campuses. ESCOM members are invited to submit news items, or creative works, such as original art, photography, poetry, memoir and fiction. Consult the submission specifications on this page before submission. The deadline for each issue is the 15th of the prior month. Please send submissions or questions to the editor at denizespringer@gmail.com. Production of the ESCOM Journal is supported by the Joan Hopper Trust.

ESCOM Council

President, Gary Gonser; Vice President, Leonard Weingarten; Treasurer, Richard Jensen

Ellen Braezeale, Gloria Dunn-Violin, Nancy P. Major, Luanne Mullin, Lois St.Sure, Larry Tolbert

ESCOM Centers

Indian Valley campus: 1800 Ignacio Blvd., Bldg. 10 Rm. 40, Novato, CA 94949 415/457-8811, x 8322

Kentfield Campus: 835 College Ave., Kentfield, CA 94904 (ESCOM office is temporarily occupying the Deedy Lounge in the Student Services bldg.) 415/485-9652 or escom@marin.edu

www.marin.edu/escom

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

NEXT DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 15

Please send your **FINAL** draft to
denizespringer@gmail.com

PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE SPECIFICATIONS

Submit only one piece of final, proofed work. Changes, unless absolutely necessary, will not be accepted after submission.

Include your name in the file name and on the page of your document. **You must be an ESCOM member. Membership is free but is no longer automatic with class registration. To join, go to:**
<http://escom.marin.edu/join-escom>

WRITTEN WORK (750 words MAX): must be single spaced, left margin oriented, and ATTACHED as a Word doc. Do not submit PDFs of written work (as these cannot be properly transferred or edited). **Please submit only one piece per issue.**

ART and PHOTOGRAPHY: Borderless images only in file size no larger than 300 kb and attached to the email in the .pdf or jpeg format (not imbedded in email message). **Images larger than 300 kb or saved as a tif file cannot be considered.**

POEMS: (50 lines MAX including the spaces between stanzas) If your poem must be centered, please note this.

Misspellings, grammatical errors and erroneous line breaks could be mistaken as the author's intent and not corrected. Proof your copy before sending it in.

Information for "In Memoriam" must be verified with an obituary that appears in an official resource such as a newspaper.