

ESCOM Journal

May/June 2021



LIFELONG LEARNING
LIFELONG DOING
LIFELONG
FRIENDSHIPS

ESCOM helps COM students stay on the path to higher education

Photo: Laura Milholland

The ESCOM Council recently elected to make a donation of \$5,000 to the College of Marin's Student Emergency Fund to aid matriculating students who have hit roadblocks to their education. During the Covid pandemic in particular, many students have lost the jobs that allowed them to support their families and/or attend COM. Some did not qualify for unemployment benefits and could no longer pay their rent.

COM's Care Team helped identify the gift's recipients. Made up of various members of the College community, the Team helps students with challenges to their education that range from academic to wellness concerns. The Team supports students and refers them to various programs

and resources at the College, including the Student Assistance Fund.

"The Team's work is confidential and, as so, functions differently than a department that provides day to day operational support for students," said Sadika Sulaiman Hara of COM's Office of Student Activities and Advocacy. "Most students do not know about the Care Team but are always grateful to find that there is somewhere to turn in a time of crisis." One student wrote: *"First of all, I would like to begin with a very big thank you for all the help that you all had provided to me and my family," wrote one student. "As a single mother and unemployed during this difficult time, I can't even find the words to tell you how much*

the stuff provided to me by the college have been helping me and my two children. I am very grateful for everything, and I hope that everyone stays safe and healthy during this Pandemic. "

Noting that many students and their families are struggling now more than ever, College of Marin's President, Dr. David Wain Coon, said the generous gift from ESCOM was terrific news.

"But I'm really not surprised, knowing the hearts and souls of our ESCOM Council members," he said. "The generosity of spirit is greatly appreciated. These funds will touch the lives of many!"

ESCOM JOURNAL REACHES NEW MILESTONE

Sincere thanks to all who have contributed to this version of the ESCOM Journal, which began with the May/June 2018 issue. Back then it was only eight pages, but this issue is our first to reach 16 pages! We hope you will continue to contribute your work so we can continue to expand.

New Member Ups the Ante

For years, long-time College of Marin supporter and proud member of the Class of 1960, Louis Bershad has been sharing his personal story of struggle to achieve a higher education diploma with College of Marin students. He does it as a way of “giving back” to the College that gave him so much, as well as a tribute to the faculty members who helped him build confidence and taught him the value of perseverance.

“Today, when I see students on food stamps and living in their cars,” he said, “I’ve just got to tell them “don’t give up.”

On the eve of attending Yale on a scholarship, an opportunity largely due to Louis’ most supportive COM instructors, his father suddenly died and Louis had to give up the scholarship and remain in San Francisco to close his father’s business.

Yet, Louis is living proof that even the biggest blows in life are often not enough to divert determined



Laura Milholland

persons to succeed – even in a business as tough as the one he has devoted his life to – being a renowned Hollywood agent. He recently shared stories of his professional life with ESCOM’s membership in a virtual event. Shortly after, Louis decided to become a member, even though he lives in Los Angeles and wouldn’t be able to take advantage of most of ESCOM in-person events and other benefits.

When Louis pondered a donation to the newly created ESCOM Annual Fund, he was a little surprised to learn that ESCOM was struggling to reach its first year Annual Fund goal. He thought that since he was a little late in finally joining ESCOM, after having been an enthusiastic COM supporter for many years, he decided to sign up for 100 years of ESCOM membership (multiplying the -- now defunct -- minimum membership dues amount of \$15 by 100) to make a gift of \$1,500.

With this, Louis ushered in ESCOM’s new **Lifetime Membership**.

Naturally, the ESCOM Council was bowled over by Louis’ generosity. In fact, upon thanking Lewis for the gift ESCOM President Luanne Mullin said he quipped, “As I am now a paid up member of ESCOM, I want to take all the members out to dinner, when my *next* dues are due!!”

Though Louis’ promise was in jest, his commitment to ESCOM’s growth wasn’t. So now, in honor of Louis’ generosity, anyone who makes a donation of at least \$1,500 will automatically become a Lifetime Member of ESCOM.

Many thanks from the bottom of all our hearts to Louis Bershad and all future Lifetime Members.

-- Denize Springer



Louise Yost

IN MEMORIAM

Iris Tandler

A long-time contributor to ESCOM publications, Iris will be remembered as a chronicler of daily life rendered with a sharp and unique wit. She passed away on March 6 at the age of 91.

The daughter of Russian immigrants, Iris was born and raised in St. Louis, MO. While Iris and her husband, Paul, were raising their three sons there, she earned a degree in Education from the University of Missouri and taught English in St. Louis inner-city schools. She and Paul moved to Tiburon after his retirement and Iris scratched her writing itch until the day she died.

In addition to various ESCOM publications she was published in the *Marin Independent Journal*.

Iris often wrote about the people she most loved and will dearly miss her, including her husband of 71 years, her sons, seven grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



But some of her most endearing writing was about her struggle with aspects of aging.

"I took a bad fall in the bathroom this week," she wrote, explaining that she dreamt she could walk and did so in her sleep, resulting in the fall. *"The paramedics came to help, they were four of the most handsome men I have ever seen. Before they left one of them said to me 'Promise me you won't dream anymore.'"* Summoning the handsome young man closer, she admitted, *"I thought I could walk, but I can't. Only in my dreams."*

In another recent piece giving tribute to her live-in caregivers who nonetheless made her house feel like a "merry-go-round," Iris shared her habit of eating crackers in bed and her surprise after passing out due to an adverse reaction to a new prescribed medication. Coming to in her bed she wrote: *"My husband was holding a glass of water and a heart monitor and Maria (a caregiver) was holding a vacuum cleaner. My husband took my blood pressure and Maria, with a vengeance like I have never seen, vacuumed the entire surrounding area."*

Iris ended this piece like she usually did, expressing her personal gratitude and wishing the best for her readers: *"At the age of 91, with all my aches and pains, life is good. I am one lucky lady. Blessings all."*

-- Denize Springer

How Did We Get Here?

On the path
A nature trail
I see two hefty
sticks
broken
I can tell by the break
they were once
whole
What broke them
lying there
neatly
one piece
atop the other
a hands width
of dirt between them

I walk on

Out of the ground
leaning onto the trunk of
a weakling tree
a
tall
triangular rock
stands alone
beautiful
a sculpture almost
How did it get here?

Focusing on breath
and footsteps
I walk on
trying to calm the
anger
at my wife
who
for her own reasons
disappears
into impossible
arguments.
We
a hands width apart
unable to grow
whole
How did we get here?

-- Fawn Yacker

Pity

You feel it
dropping a couple of bills
in the grime-seamed palms
of a nameless man
stationed at the traffic light
corner of Novato boulevard and 7th street
adding a smile, like a tip, you know,
to show, we're both members
of the human race.

You feel it
for the elfin-faced boy with no hands
who smiles into the camera at half time
on Monday Night Football and says:
"For only sixty-three cents a day, you
can change the life of a kid like me"
and you calculate sixty-three times thirty,
rounding off the check to twenty,
after the game.

You feel it
rescuing a chained-up dog quaking in the snow
@ thirty eight cents a day
purifying putrid drinking water in Yemen
@ forty one cents a day
feeding a Ugandan baby suckling an empty breast
@ sixty three cents a day

Convenient

how cash tempers pity
cheap
at double the price.

-- lynn arias bornstein



"Afternoon Joy," Nancy P. Major

Remembrance

Paths cross so quickly
The thread of friendship
Loosens over time and miles
Only to tighten on remembrance

-- Jean Milstead

Like a Bride from the Fifties

I polished and scrubbed
 Applying the pink Brillo pad
 With extra vigor and zest
 To the copper bottoms
 Of the better than sixty-year-old
 Revereware pots and pans
 Most from a marriage washed
 Away some five decades ago.
 Many a baby bottle they've
 Warmed, soup and stew
 Simmered, savory aromas
 Flavoring the room.

Housekeeping's not
 High on my list of likes
 Hike, bird, write much
 More important ways
 To spend my time
 But today when bird song
 Broke my dreams,
 Blue sky beckoned
 Not to the marsh...
 But to the kitchen
 On this first day of spring!

-- Barbara MacDonald



Harvey Abernathey



"Lydia Rounding the Horn," Don Zingale



Curious Otters, Harvey Abernathey

White Suit

Travelers of a future kind will see it there in space,
 From years ago, a call from an ancient troubled race.
 A space suit white hanging all alone, in the cold eternal darkness –
 the blue orb shines below, a globe so bright in quietness.
 Proteins warm and electric storms, life would start anew,
 All the changes and all the years told the man his world was due.
 The earthly goods he claimed as he came down from the trees,
 And now he knew that all was his, the lands and all the seas.
 But other men would think the same, and no one would abide,
 They all said they were chosen, by the gods that were on their
 side.
 So life was ended there – lying crushed beneath the beast,
 from within whose putrid entrails spilled poisons without cease.
 So many years have passed since the ground called earth,
 Became a place from which nothing would give birth.
 The wise cyclopedian yellow eye reflects the nearby star –
 the lender of life no more, once a beacon from afar.
 And yet the planet in quiet turns,
 without the men the orb still burns.
 Who were these beings who lived so long ago?
 They left a message – and that's all we know.
 On the suit, just a few words – a line, a warning, a key:
 "All who were, - they did not hear, and all who saw, - they did not
 see."

-- Julio Burroughs

*The writer is not predicting that these are things that will happen,
 but things that could happen if our species does not change.*

Louise Yost



Kusadasi

Turquoise (or very nearly)
 the Aegean Sea
 full to the brim
 soaks history
 and myth

A pomegranate tree
 erupted from the ruins
 of Ephesus
 branches heavy with fruit
 in the sun

Here I construct
 memories -
 an alternative past -

like a child
 making it all up
 willfully
 splashing color

-- Zeba Hasan Hafeez



Harvey Abernathy

Sun on my Toes

There's a five o'clock sun on my toes
 Orange calendula at my elbow
 Scents of rice stalks, kale and collards over my shoulder
 tattered straw hat I found on the road tips across my nose
 Flushed lizards blush on steamy flagstones

Every day they come closer, perhaps with a question.
 I'm tempted to name them
 But naming is so manageable, orderly and inadequate.
 I'll sit instead with this rich woven moment,
 this ineffable delicacy of laced feet and thumping chest.

Crystal lusters of haunting chimes,
 Sing with Mulberry, Cypress, and Cedar
 Seesawing in and out, call and response
 while shepherds herd the fog from the sea
 then my love slips a blanket over me
 To sooth wind's caressive chill.
 This wouldn't be a bad day to die
 but I'd rather not if that's alright.

For every moment we die a little
 sometimes more than others.
 Tree light slides off branches,
 Calendulas close their petals,
 child and father laugh together.

Our granddaughter picked flowers today
 And gave them to our daughter.
 What more can I ask for?
 These sweet companions of hummingbirds
 and sun on my toes

-- Jeremy Littman

Roadmap

My globe
 travels with me
 I have etched the route
 as I have wandered

Examination in the silver glass
 reveals where I danced avenues
 northward
 and where I trod the
 southbound tracks
 on even more deeply paved boulevards

East to west, the canals tightly hold their secrets
 and concern

This is my roadmap
 penned indelibly
 for all to see
 if only they will look

-- Michele Samuels



Laura Harrison



Photos (top of this page): Laura Milholland



Consider

I ponder here by candlelight
While gazing up into the night
Knowing we are snuggled tight
In the spiral arms of Milky Way.
Seventeen billion Earths could fit
In her expansive arms, and yet,
She is a galaxy among billions
And Earth is but a pin prick
On one of her many spiral arms.
We on Earth are smaller still
Yet we think we are so BIG
And every thought significant.

NOW I say to you, "Consider
That spat we had last night
Over which tablecloth to buy
For the dinner party.
Was it such a big deal?
Let's kiss and make up and
Talk of bigger things
Like climate change."

-- Carol Allen

McClures Beach, Harvey Abernathy



Hawai'i

AAAA - EEEE - IIII - OOOO - UUUU

Alohaaaa

Peleeee

Lomi lomiiii

Ho'oponoponoooo

Honoluluuuu

in her hair a fresh flower

her graceful hands

his legs stamp out the dance

her bottom warmed

by the depths of the Earth

having faltered

in the crater's center

the roiling volcano

pink crystals sparkle in the sun

I taste the salt

Alohaaaa

Peleeee

Lomi lomiiii

Ho'oponoponoooo

Honoluluuuu

Mahalo Hawai'i

-Anouk Bekker

Laura Milholland



In Anticipation

You'll need to invent a new language. You'll need to find replacements for every time you've opened your mouth.

- Dara Wier

I was told I was being untoward, which I took to mean that what I chose to say at that moment was not meeting my audience where they lived. Fair enough, but with all due respect, I don't see the point in trying to tell people what they already know. Not useful to them, not interesting to me. Are even the most ordinary of moments not fraught with mystery?

Take, for example, these two butterflies—one golden, the other black. Notice how intransigently the sunlight bears down upon them, how the surrounding silence gives shape to their ephemerality. How lucky it is that we can be instructed in this manner, one incidental incarnation after another. How else could we sustain the hope that every captive soul at last will find release? Look over there: seven dark angels riding hard in our direction. You'll never guess what's coming next.

-- Bruce Schauble

Let Us Paint a Picture

Grasp the brush, bent stick, a child's pinky finger
or the broad thumb of cave-dwelling man

and make with me your boldest marks
across the stretching canvas of our days.

Splash a dot, a dab, a violent spill of bright
splattered seeds, from which we'll grow a world.

Spread out across the wide horizon, strokes
that sunder earth from heaven, day from night,

slicing space from time and the still-life
bowl and peaches from the velvet drapes.

Part, like lovers, the soft-edge breast and hip
from the wrinkled sheets sprawling on the floor.



Laura Milholland

Here is where the truest art begins,
where life and death are born and borne.

So clean your brush and dip again,
note the colors that you favor.

Call them: Blue! Black! Gold! Then call again
their proper names: Rue and Grief, and Hope.

Remember those fuchsia days, the blood-red nights,
our violet joy, before the raw umber, the Payne's
gray—

Swirl them with a sable brush, blend your hues
with mine on a fresh palette. So, when we meet again,

we recall not the pictures, but the painting—
all that rough canvas smoothed by a shared brush.

-- Bonnie Carasso



Dark-eyed Junco, Harvey Abernathy

Here in June

A gate is something
 that won't keep thought out
 I hold a shell with the sound
 of ocean that pours through the gate
 What scares me is thought itself
 if I could be anywhere
 I would be here in June
 among the hum of plants
 Down in the yard
 with their vermillion generosity
 and rusty wheelbarrow
 full of holes
 It is in the openness of holes
 I find solace
 As time recedes
 like the tide
 I exhale
 and rise
 like a water spirit
 catching her breath

-- Marcia Smith



JOIN ESCOM'S LEADERSHIP TEAM!

We Need You!

If you want a voice in ESCOM's future, NOW is your opportunity.

ESCOM's Council has just completed a Strategic Plan to guide our organization through the next several years. We are working toward new goals and looking for help in marketing, use of technology, including database and online event management, and in developing new programs for our members. Committees are forming in these areas with opportunities for you to contribute your skills, knowledge and ideas to our leadership team.

We also anticipate that there will be openings for both at-large and officer positions on the ESCOM Council for appointment in June.

So, if you want to be part of ESCOM's dynamic leadership team, help guide us through transitioning to a post-zoom era and achieve our new goals, please email ESCOM Council President Luanne Mullin at Luanne.Mullin@comcast.net.

Thank You!



Elaine Thornton

Bedtime

It's three in the morning, little guy, time for you to be asleep. Look at you, big yawn, tiny hands. Okay, okay, I'll rock you some more. Your mother needs some rest.

Did you know, son, that my birth, too, was no accident. I don't know why the discovery of that should have pleased me so much, but it did. It was a curious thing to have learned at a funeral.

A glorious spring day and there we were at St. Peter and Paul Church, a rococo San Francisco landmark of stained glass and marble angels. A Wednesday morning service and the number of mourners who had taken time from work to pay their respects was a testimonial to the number of lives that my Uncle Joe had touched. We arrived early but were still lucky to get seats together.

Your mother sat to my right. Your Grami and Grandpa sat to my left. I may have been grown and married, but Grami still wanted to hold my hand. Your mother understood and put her head on my shoulder. I thought of the richness of my parents' long marriage, their excitement for new adventures in their retirement, and was mindful of how short life could be. I said a prayer that your mother and I would be just as close after forty years together.

As we waited for the memorial service to start, your mother nudged me and nodded toward Grami. I looked over and was startled to see her radiantly

happy but with tears streaking her face. She made no attempt to wipe them away, just wore her tears like diamonds.

I leaned over and asked if she was okay.

"Yes," she sniffed and squeezed my hand. "I love you so much."

"And I love you, too."

"Before you were born, Dad and I lived just a few blocks away from here. This is where we came to church."

"Yes, we know, Mom, you've told us before."

She said to me, but looked at your mother, "Well, did I ever tell you this is where I decided it was time to make you."

Her statement took me by surprise, not by its directness, that is her way, but by the fact she knew the exact time and place she decided to make a baby.

There we were in church saying good-bye to the man who was my godfather, and I was finding out about my own conception. The symmetry pleased me.

I didn't need to look; I knew that Dad was smiling. Then I felt your mother reaching into my jacket pocket for the handkerchief she had stashed there and, as she lifted her chin to whisper her news in my ear, her smile mirrored my mother's.

And that, Joey, my little man, is your story. Now can I go back to bed?

-- Erik Cederblom



Egret, Dave Moss

Backpacks Full of Stone

After the goat incident we all had to go to a session with a psychologist for counseling. Some of my coworkers were pretty upset, even though, only about a third of the goats died.

A semi had taken a turn too fast in the Canal District and flipped over onto its side near the frontage road. The goats, stuffed together on two decks like a cruise ship, had piled on each other, suffocating the ones on the bottom. CHP was first to arrive and declared opening the rear trailer doors a traffic hazard because Highway 101 was a block away.

When Humane arrived, two of our officers crawled through a hatch into the trailer to hand out the goats one by one. I'd brought our stock trailer, which would take thirty to forty of the animals. My boss had somehow got three veterinarians to show up. We set up a reverse bucket brigade: good ones to our stock trailer, injured ones to the vets, and the dead in a pile.

In the time it takes to freeze up and feel empathy for these goats, two or three could die. So I moved. *Why else was I there?* We located a pasture in Tiburon we could trailer them to.

One of my coworkers, though, was particularly upset. She was new to the job and this was the worst thing she'd ever seen. Afterward, she got jittery. Cried when she talked about it. I was afraid to tell her how much worse events like these could get.

The psychologist who ran the group was a 28-year veteran of the San Raphael Police Dept., who had gone to school during off hours to earn a degree in psychology. Relaxed, low key; he was from a time when you never heard of cops shooting a "knife-wielding assailant." In his day cops *fought* guys like that hand-to-hand.

When he told the one about how he let someone else respond to a man who'd blown his head off with a shotgun because he'd already been to that kind of call a bunch of times, I knew we had a live wire. He'd been to worse places than us. He had this idea that things like the goat incident leave an impression on us whether we acknowledge it or not. Like a backpack, he said, with rocks inside. Big ones, little ones; we take them with us from job to job and slowly their weight affects the bearer.



Harvey Abernathey

It started me thinking about what I'd seen in the previous eight years at another animal agency in San Francisco. When I started that job, I'd come home and tell my wife about animals that died of starvation, or were beaten to death and dogs with flaps of skin hanging off from fighting -- and more. But after awhile, we agreed that she didn't need to hear it, I'd trade "worse ones" with my coworkers: *Are you ready for a new low?* It was just our job to see stuff.

The goat incident didn't bother me because I'd experienced my own worst one. In my first year I got a call about a cat attacked by a dog. Driving hard, I got there in less than ten minutes. It was public housing, dirt instead of grass, all races, all poor. Folks with that *I don't want no trouble and I don't know nothing* attitude. Someone had restrained a kitten so that a dog could easily attack it. The kitten was still alive as I freed it, but it died right there. Like I said, you can't be emotional in this job. You'd be ineffective. But I never forgot that poor little guy.

Meanwhile, I was just starting to figure out what to do next -- how to get this kitten its revenge -- when a brindle pit bull came running up to me, tail wagging. I was still new enough so that the wagging tail made me hesitate. Then it bit me on the thigh. I looked up and was suddenly aware of all the people watching the show from a distance.

The carnage of goats on a frontage road in Marin County, even though they undoubtedly suffered, didn't quite add up to the past horrors I'd experienced, now as hard and heavy as stone in my backpack.

-- Mike Holland



Laura Milholland

The Eyes Have It

With that mask on, I can only see
your eyes

But how lovely those

Blue - like coral lagoon in Hawaii
travel photos

Chestnut brown reminds of anejo
tequila

Green, who could ever find in artist's
palette?

Eyebrows - dark and bold

Gray and bushy, or none at all

Put together, a half-face you show

Which can make a smile all your own

-- Nate Nealley

Welcoming the Grass

I wonder
if each new blade of grass
remembers
her predecessor?
like a song laid gently
in the soil
waiting to be found
when the green awakens...

Here is the story, one would say:

of the sunlight
the loamy or silty soil,
the water
the sound of the lake edges
lapping persistently
ripples uplifting
reassurance through the night
while each seed is sleeping

Oh, and family!

you will see so many of us arise
and face the sunlight
yearning and leaning together,
breathing in
and out
together,
windblown and rain soaked

Together

You will feel delicious warmth
and blessings of mist
anointing your faces
birdsong and buzzing of insects'
wings,
a chorus of frogs singing you to
sleep
becoming each a signal of Spring
to be guardians of wildflowers,
to be a bed for deer

And now, a velvet blanket of gentle
promise,

your gift is vividly emerging

the song, it foretold of such
sweetness

of being,

and breathing,

and resting

all together

like this

Me, I am surrounded now

by soft sunlit sprouts

and I can almost hear

the song,

singing its wisdom

as I sit

upon the grass

--Jess Lerner

New Club with Lots of Drama

Do you remember the last play you saw in the COM theatre or on Broadway? The lights come up and the story unfolds with the first actors' performances. Of course the printed script is the beginning of the story.

Reading Great Plays is a new club at ESCOM that allows club members to read plays as they were intended to be read, by the characters themselves. Members will each take a printed script and read their parts to bring the play to life. Initial plays are "I Hate Hamlet" and "Picasso at the Lapin Agile. The club meets every 3rd Tuesday of the month at 1:30 pm. For more information, contact Gary Gonser at ggonser3@gmail."



How about volunteering your expertise?

ESCOM needs volunteers with professional experience in the following areas:

- + writing and editing,
- + HTML and Web design,
- + managing on-line meetings,
- + event planning and management

If you'd like to help out please let us know at escom@marin.edu

P.S.: If you have expertise in other areas that you would like to share with ESCOM, do let us know. Thanks!

Marcia Summers



Photos (top and left) Laura Milholland

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

NEXT DEADLINE IS JUNE 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 will not be considered.**

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

NOTE: 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.

ESCOM (Emeritus Students College of Marin) is a student organization of active adults affiliated with the Community Education Department of College of Marin. Founded in 1973, ESCOM provides diverse opportunities for lifelong learning, lifelong doing, and lifelong friends.

ESCOM Journal

Editor, Denize Springer

Web Content Manager, Richard Jensen

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