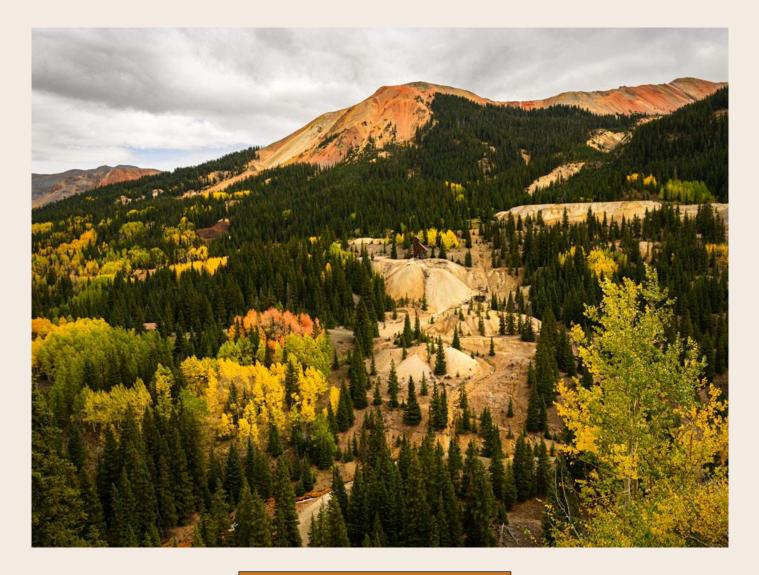
ESCOM Journal

The creative arts publication of Emeritus Students College of Marin September/October 2023



Red Mountain, Harvey Abernathey



Hello ESCOM Members:

ESCOM will mark its 50th Anniversary with a big bash on Saturday, October 14, 2023, from 1:00 - 4:00 pm. The College of Marin President, David Wain Coons, will kick off the event with an address to our membership. Author Ken Dychtwald will be our keynote speaker. Our program also features Bay Area performers Josh Kornbluth and Desiree Goyette entertaining us as only they can. The event will be at the new Jonas Center at IVC (pictured above). Check out the details at <u>www.ESCOM50.com</u>.

ESCOM has been very busy this summer planning this event, as well as partnering with the Marin County Commission on Aging to teach and provide free lectures on computer topics at our centers at Kentfield and IVC. Our first round of lectures focused on computer safety, Internet access, tele-medicine, and cloud storage. After each lecture, we were all relaxed talking about the topics in a comfortable setting. Upcoming lectures are *Ride Sharing Apps, Mobile Health Apps, Messaging Apps,* and *Intro to Heart Rate Monitoring Apps*. The detailed calendar is on our website at: <u>https://escom.marin.edu</u>.

We will have a booth at the new Sept. 7 Senior Fair at the Marin County fairgrounds. After four years off because of COVID, the Senior Fair is coming back full force. ESCOM is right in the middle of the action and needs volunteers to say hello and meet our friends at the Fair. Drop me a note at ggonser3@gmail.com if you are interested in joining the fun. Also, mark your calendar for this event.

New ESCOM clubs will be added this fall, including Mah-jongg, Armchair Travel, Mindfulness and Outdoor Adventures. They will be posted on the website as we move forward. Thank you for being involved and active with ESCOM. We would not be looking at such a bright future without you.

Sincerely,

Gary Gonser President, ESCOM

A Lesson in Barbecue Sauce

It's harvest time and I'm admiring my Rosa Bianca eggplants, creamy white, washed with lavender and pink, the leading ladies in caponata Siciliana. But they'll have to wait till tomorrow for today is barbecue sauce day. I lift a cobalt blue sterilizing kettle, heavy with water, and stagger to a row of four gas burners easing its weight onto the one at the far left. I pause to stir two pots of already simmering sauce releasing a heady aroma of barbecue.

I dance back to the lapis tiled counter, David Grissman and Stephane Grappelli fueling me with their lighthearted rendition of "Tiger Rag." I contemplate a mound of golden onions and white papery garlic while dreaming of a 1934 Paris and a young Stephane Grappelli. Thrilled to be playing The Hotel de France he dazzles the crowd with "Tiger Rag."

The onions are easy. I cut off their ends and they slip easily out of their dry slick skins; four slices and their iridescent perfection of layering are ready for the Cuisinart. The pulse button quickly renders them to the state of finely chopped required by the recipe.

The garlic is another matter. I struggle, separating its closely bonded cloves. Even after giving each clove a whack with the flat side of a knife, they refuse to give up their skins. I slice each clove in half and with my smallest sharp knife in hand, attack their outer skins. They give way under this assault and, with a fickle change of heart, are now in love with my fingers, clinging stickily and refusing my brush off. Thinking, "This must surely be enough", I toss them with sadistic relish to the merciless blade of the Cuisinart.

The sweet longing strains of "Misty" catch me with sandy brown sugar on my fingertips. Gazing unseeing out the window I'm on a moonlit beach, soft sand still warm with the days heat sifting with each step over my bare feet. The music fades, a swallowtail flutters into focus, lemon yellow between gold coreopsis and persimmon poppies. A Chinese poppy, its glossy black center eclipsed by scarlet silk petals, has attracted a hummingbird. Poised, seemingly still, it drinks in the addictive nectar, I spy Oh-La-La curled in a shallow bed of leaves, one languid leg extending into this mini garden, his double toed paw, a relaxed catcher's mitt, posing no threat to the hummingbird.

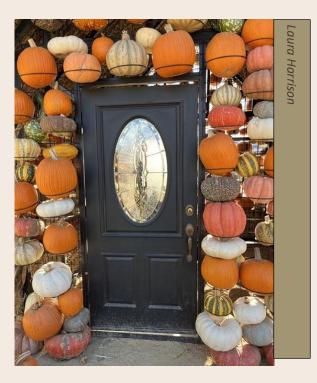
I snap back to "Sweet Georgia Brown" and add chopped green chilies, brewed coffee, Worcestershire sauce, vinegar, cumin, and salt to two large bowls. Voila! Now back to the first batch which has thickened to a rich chocolate brown. Stirring it yet again, I lift the spoon and run my finger over its smooth back licking off sauce glistening with spicy oil. It's time to bottle. I send 12 jars into the inferno of the sterilizer, deal a dozen lids into a shallow pan of simmering water, and give the sauce a final stir. Its' vinegary vapor rises stinging my eyes.

The scent of chilies and cumin hang in the air. David and Stephan are playing wild gypsy jazz and my mind's eye catches glimpses of sweat sheered torsos, bronzed and taut, beneath snowy shirts. Dark eyes flash with captured firelight as the zingaros dance. I stand with the women on the shadowy edge of the fire. Flying sparks illuminate sapphire and ruby threads in our dusty skirts and I long to swoop low and leap high with the whirling men and music.

The timer rings. Reality hits. I place the hot jars on the counter and ladle them full of still simmering sauce. Carefully wiping each jar's lip with a dampened cloth, I lift the lids with stainless tongs from their steaming bath, slide them onto the jars, tightening each down with a pseudo brass band. The filled jars go into the sterilizer for a final 15 minutes.

Hair and clothes permeated with the scent of barbecue I think of throwing myself -- rather than the chicken -- onto the grill for tonight's dinner. Twenty-four pints, fulfill my customer's order. I pull six more jars, our next summer's supply, from their hot water bath, some give satisfying *toks*, indicating they are sealed. I chant over the quiet ones willing them to seal too.

These jars filled with the promise of balmy summer evenings dining alfresco with family and friends also hold the magic and music of a day spent in the kitchen. Susan Connelly



God's Breath*

God's Breath is moving through the trees And waving at me I am three year's old Naked in the sunlight Except for a big brimmed hat I sit in water My bare bottom touching The smooth bottom of a small basin in Which I sit I wave back And dream of digging a hole to Australia. I am a child, alone But not lonely I am delighting in being A novice in Life And bathing in the rhythm of Nature

Cherry Jones * I grew up in England and spent many hours outside playing in the garden with my imaginary friends!

October Wedding

Another wedding The bride wore black And the groom white

On the bar, a sign, in the shape of a coffin Nikki & Jason 'til death....

Pick your Poison: The Shining, The Fog, The Ritual And a Mezcal Smoking Gun

They're from the outer Sunset And the DJ's playing a kind of a country western disco

Even as a poet I'm at a loss for words

But after the past couple of years On this hot rolling rock I suppose anything goes

And as someone once said If anything goes there's no meaning anymore

What do I know about tradition? Anyone can make it up now

The problem arises from the lack Of shared anything Techno babble goes mainstreaming And the minnows follow

There's a photo booth downstairs With deer masks and antlers A giant eye and a wig made of snakes

The bride's dad is dancing in saddle shoes Everyone's partying like they've been let out of cage Because they have Maskless and free again— for now.

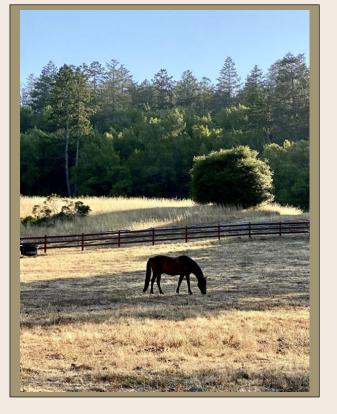
Marcia Smith





Laura Milholland

Nancy Pappas



Now You Don't See It, Now You Do

There it was, the monthly email from ESCOM reminding me that this was last call for submitting an entry for possible publication in next month's Journal. Reading further, I learn the theme is summer. Who doesn't love summer? For many people it's probably their favorite time of year. Greedy for the goodies that warm weather gives us, we throw off the shackles of wintertime drudgery and head for the sun, sand, and surf. Open the windows, forget about the office or the classroom, it's time to sink into the balm of long, languid days, loosen the boundaries, the rules, and maybe even do nothing at all. The light, the freedom could anything make you feel more alive?

Rousing myself from my reverie, I continue to read the email. There are several kinds of entries accepted: prose, poetry, photography and artwork. My eye goes to prose, where examples are given: "general news/info, obituaries, reviews, flash fiction and memoir." Wait — did I read that right? *Obituaries*? It's like finding a pebble in your favorite strawberry jam: what's that doing here? Into this sweet, delicious concoction of summer comes — death?

I'm stymied and mystified. No, it wasn't a mistake as I'm certain the editor of the Journal proofreads everything that is published over her signature. Though my vision is far from perfect, I know I read it right. That leaves me with two choices: walk away scratching my head or find a connection. Is there a cloud dimming that effervescent sunshine? More broadly, is there a sub-theme to this theme?

As I've gotten older, one thing I've realized is that things —- by which I mean events, statements, people, actions — are generally more complex than is immediately apparent. The grumpy response of the person you accidentally bumped into on the street, that looks like pure unpleasantness, may actually be a delayed reaction to a moment earlier in the day, when his boss criticized his work on a project. The teenager who belittles another student for no apparent reason may actually be envious of that other person's home life, which is far more stable and loving than his own. What you see on the surface is often not what's really happening.

Recently I was speaking with a friend, and we were discussing possible trips. Some places seemed to be on every "must see" list for the year; others, less talked about but somehow more appealing, beckoned strongly. We weren't making progress. At one point, my friend asserted that we need to differentiate between a "want" and a "should." Should we go where everyone said to go, or listen to the voice inside telling us our own truth? Initially I thought, what a great decision tool! It's one or the other, just understand which one you're choosing. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that what seemed so simple was actually too simple, and not that productive, because it was erasing the "wants" nesting within the "shoulds," and vice versa. To see things in binary terms is not seeing reality. I might never have wanted to go to Morocco, but it was currently trendy. About to cross it off the list, I suddenly remembered I'd always dreamed of spending a night in the Sahara. If I'd just dismissed Morocco as a "should," I never would have had that magical experience. It was a mix: both a "should" and a "want."

And so it goes, the yin and the yang, the oftentimes paradoxical pairings of things we instinctively feel don't belong together: exhilaration and fear, confidence and self-doubt, appreciation and envy, summer and sadness. While they look like unlikely bedfellows, they are often found nestling quite comfortably together. Sometimes, we just have to put on our sleuthing gear, pick up our spades, and start digging, remembering, of course, to bring a bar of bittersweet chocolate along for the journey.

Bobbie Steger

Wormhole	the once upon a time when all lived happily ever after
I am convinced I have fallen through a wormhole	I think it was probably a television sitcom or a film by Frank Capra
and now living in an alternate reality	remember the Truman show and not the one who was president?
created by Ray Bradbury and directed by Stanley Kubrick	Whoever put this all together must be familiar with George Orwell
unless I am plugged into the Matrix	because double speak is now everywhere, especially on social media
or dead and this is hell	which is very anti-social most of the time as far as I can tell
but hold out hope it's only purgatory	and lots of faceless people in front of keyboards make all kinds
so I'm not stuck here for all eternity.	of claims and threats and critiques and reports that often contradict each other
Some people blame where we are on COVID	
others on the "vaccine" and/or masks	while others say there are no such things as objective truth and facts
the former tend to be liberal and the latter conservative	or maybe there's alternative facts
whatever that means now since nothing is as it once was	educated in the 20th century with a heavy emphasis on liberal arts
those speaking philosophically will say change is a constant	I can't wrap my head around such claims.
and certainty isyou know, those two things	I'm trying all kinds of prayers, dances, rituals
the first nobody wants to happen to them and the second	like closing my eyes and clicking my heels together
too many people and corporations, apparently, don't pay.	repeating "there's no place like home"
The first I understand being an elder the second I don't	since I don't have red sparkling high heels
living in a purported civilization generates expenses.	It doesn't seem to be working.
perhaps in this new world things get done magically	Perhaps this IS home now a possibility I must ponder.
like CGI and virtual stuff in front of green screens	although I think I will take some time out
maybe some new form of currency foots the bill	to eat chocolate and drink red wine.
while some people seem to believe there was a perfect time	Anne Mulvaney

Zinfandel for Tanagers

The aesthetic vineyard

once again laden with juiced

garnets, every intention of contacting

that man you often speak of

who could turn our meager harvest

into 8 or 9 bottles,

yet they continue to wait,

to raisin, to sustain my backyard

aviary which I secretly adore,

their pungent September scent

wraps us in the truth

of another summers dissolve.

If only you made time for

this hobby to be complete,

if only you continue to forget,

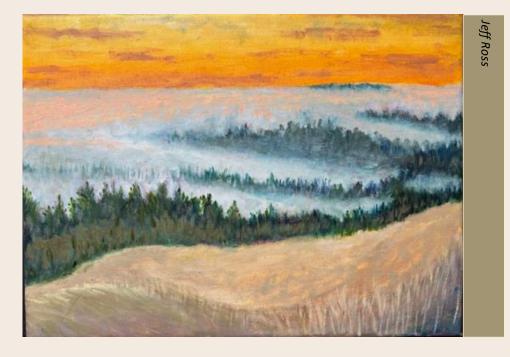
that is where the happiness lies.

Margie Heckelman





Joyce Voge Derr







Tami Tsark

<< Harvey Abernathey





Laura Milholland

<< Harvey Abernathey

Harvey Abernathey





Nancy Pappas

Nong Son Village, Vietnam, Fall, 1967

"Can you hear me, Mac? Nod your head. Good."

The sound of rain. A waterfall slid off the roof of my hut and poured down over cobblestones running to the river raging below. My fever burned hot and the medic from Echo Company shook his head, his distant voice fighting with the sound of the storm outside. "Mac, I can't get the temperature down. Only thing for that in my kit is aspirin. You gotta drink as much water as you can."

I said nothing. I couldn't.

"We need medivac, but a no-fly order is in effect until this storm lets up. I gotta get back up the hill before dark or they might shoot me coming in. Hate to leave you here alone."

Behind him, four or five of my students stood against the back wall.

The security team leader stuck his head through the broken window. "Gotta go, Doc. Captain says now."

"See you tomorrow Mac." I felt someone pat my shoulder.

Motion. Whispers. Silence.

Cracks and patches in the ceiling plaster floated and danced above me in beautiful patterns sketching a map of my long journey from Los Angeles to Nong Son, Vietnam.

"We help you, Tai." An elder pulled off my tee shirt and fatigue pants. Naked, and dizzy, I could only lay exhausted, unable even to wonder if my shorts were clean.

Over the river, thunder boomed. Two of the younger men stood me up. "We help, Tai."

I leaned on them as they pulled and hugged me through the front doorway and into the monsoon. And there we stood. Under a torrent of water, two five-foot human crutches supporting a sixfoot white ghost.

In just a few minutes, my temperature began to **drop**. Clarity returned and in a flash of lightening, I saw the smiling faces of my two saviors staring up at me. After fifteen minutes of

Vietnamese hydrotherapy, we returned to my room and old Quang dried me off before the three of them laid me back down. He covered me with a dry sheet, tucked me in, and gently wiped my face.

He smiled. "Drink chai. Good." Hot tea stank of rotten roots and dark earth. He folded his arms across his chest and stood like a statue of a midget gunnery sergeant in pajamas.

Quang turned down the lamp, gathered spectators, and left the room. Yet I felt the presence of another, softer energy somewhere nearby. Gradually the ceiling stopped crawling and I began to dream....

...An elderly woman with white hair sat cross-legged at the foot of my bed. In front of her, a charcoal brazier supported and heated a pot of tea. The dancing red glow of coals cast her shadow upon the wall as she chanted and rubbed a string of wooden beads back and forth between wrinkled and ancient hands. I slept the Sleep of the Dead.

A streak of sunlight splashed across the ceiling. Our monsoon had gone as quickly as it had arrived and taken my fever with it. I felt renewed, born again, lighter in body and spirit. The aftertaste of terrible tea from the night before filled my mouth, accompanied by a raging hunger.

Quang leaned against a post in the open doorway, smiling. He nodded in the direction of the far corner, and I twisted around to look. The old woman from my dream smiled back as she sliced vegetables, making Pho.

Something strange and wonderful was happening to me. The tough combat veteran, now a helpless patient ten thousand miles from home, won over by the hearts and minds of peasants in a remote Vietnamese village.

As a Marine, I was no good after that. The thought of shooting someone, anyone, belonged to a self who no longer existed. I had been recruited and initiated into the human race. I now knew the real mission: To do as much good for the village in what time I may have left to live.

Something had transformed me from within and now charged with purpose and meaning, I was full of energy. My days became fully alive and my body vibrated with urgency and purpose. I didn't want to go to sleep. I knew this new life, this new feeling could end at any moment. I didn't want to miss anything.

Brent MacKinnon

Admonitions for Walking Meditation

Practice your skills.

Appreciate joy and inner peace.

Consider them lifetime drills.

Challenge the beginner's mind:

Surgeons' fingers tying square knots and pianists tinkling musical scales.

Never perfect, but muscle memories soon take over in kind.

Listen to that heartbeat that wakes your daily passions:

To be a teacher, nurse, butcher, artist

Architect, lawyer, engineer, fireman, and accountant.

Wake and commit to your lifetime dreams.

Mistakes are necessary to develop

understanding, empathy, and compassion

Now you are ready. Take a deep breath.

Walk slow and steadfast with humility along this eddy.

Wisdom comes slowly day by day.

ray fay



Nancy Pappas



Haight and Buchanan

It's 1992, almost ten o'clock on a Tuesday swing shift, and I'm flogging the van up the four or five steep blocks of Gough Street out of the Marina, leveling out around Clay Street, getting ready to descend through Sacramento, Bush, down past Eddy, all the way to Market Street. I can "ride down on compression" as my Dad used to say, drop down into second gear and coast. Don't really have to use the brake at all if you time the signals right. A good half mile downhill through City streets without touching the pedals. It's the end of a slow night working for Animal Control, and I'm off in thirty minutes.

"Ah, Animal Control, Ah, Central Fire Alarm, SFPD requesting your response at Haight and Buchanan. What's your ETA?" Shit. I know this won't be a ten-minute call, and Mary, my graveyard relief, isn't at the Animal Shelter till 10 p.m. She would tear right out of the garage up to the call if she were here, (Mary went on to work as a Firefighter and she WOULD drag you out of a burning building).

"Ten or less." I keep the Motorola's mic next to my mouth after I answer. I want to tell Dispatch I'm supposed to be going home, and I'm not ready to go over to Buchanan Street, to the old housing projects, where the first time I went in, the cops told me to always stay close to the walls. "They'll throw old TVs and microwaves down on ya from the catwalks." Of course, most of the folks in the projects are good people, single moms and old folks, all just caught up in poverty. But there are a few young men who set a tone for this place.

Some of those guys fight pitbulls for money. The cops say some have women turning tricks for them down in the Tenderloin, they say they've been shot at as they drive by the back of the projects on Page Street. I just would rather not go there at the end of my shift. I pull up behind several police cars in my white Chevy Astro van with a blue logo of a dog, a cat, and a bird on its side, the van not exactly a power symbol; actually kind of a weenie symbol in this company. On the sidewalk there are two distinct groups of men: about a dozen young Black men quietly joking, arms folded; a few feet away seven or eight Police officers arms folded, quietly joking. Except the two groups aren't joking with each other. A sergeant steps out and tells the story, "Pitbull and a raccoon got into it, raccoon's in that little tree." I grab my rabies pole and a "squeeze cage" used by veterinarians to hold an animal so it can be tranquilized and treated.

Everybody is watching me as I walk over to the tree: I am high entertainment for both groups. "Okay" I think, "I'll do my job and get this raccoon to the vet." I loop the critter around the armpits, flip up the top of the cage with my foot, and gently lower him into the cage. The next part is always tricky. The animal is in the cage, but the loop and pole are still on him and the top, of course, won't close till I get the loop off. To do this I have to finesse the cable off him, all the while balancing on one foot, delicately holding the top down with the other foot. All of a sudden he rockets straight up, free of the pole, the cage, knocking me over right on my ass. The gallery erupts. The Brothers and the Cops united at last, whooping and laughing, all having a genuine good time except me who sees the raccoon start to climb straight up some sort of conduit, right up the side of a two-story Victorian. I run up the stairs with my come along. The resident shoos the raccoon and it shinnies backwards down toward the street. I run back down the stairs in time to loop him again just before he reaches the ground. This time I'm more careful. Get him in the van and want more than anything in the world to get the hell out of there, which I do. All those guys probably still laugh about it to this day.

Mike Holland

Laughter

It started with a text: "Hey! Are you back? Was it fabulous? I need ALL the details! OXOXOX, Connie" – "Yes, it was fabulous. Maybe it's time for a little Italiano? Bets "— "Great! Let me know what's good for you. I'm (unfortunately) pretty clear next week – you're the busy one! OX Connie" – "How about 1:00 on Thursday at The Stinking Rose?" -- "See you there! OXOXOX"

The Stinking Rose, San Francisco, USA. Since the early 90s the restaurant has hosted everyone from bums to furred ladies and tuxed gentlemen fresh from the Opera. It was The Lunch Place for Connie and Betsy, who really hadn't been friends all that long.

Connie was waiting inside when Betsy arrived. "Wasn't parking easy! I found a place right away." "Actually," said Betsy, "Robert dropped me off. I just didn't feel like driving and my ankle is killing me. Did I tell you I sprained it?"

You know the rest of that beginning. We learn about the sprain, hear about Robert's health, Connie's trip. They order their Chianti and meals – the specials, of course, and then it's time to share their photo albums.

"Come on! You first," said Connie. "I'm dying to see your photos."

"I know, I know. It was really amazing – Thailand, Europe. So much *cultcha*. I just <u>had</u> to do something to soften the impact, you know? So, I brought along Barbie."

"Barbie?"

"Barbie." Wait'll you see. It was kind of silly, but...well...here." And Betsy brought out her album. There were 30 or so photos. All of Barbie in different places. Waterside in Bangkok, on a bench in front of the Eiffel Tower, on the shady side at the corrida in Seville. In the middle of a group of people obviously enamored of her in...well, you really couldn't tell from the photo.

Connie finished looking. "What a great idea! I bet it was fun!!" And Betsy allowed that it *was* fun, silly fun, but what the heck, and Connie laughed. They ordered another Chianti after the soup course and prepared for the pasta. "I'm already full!" said Connie.

"You can't be full yet. We still have two courses to go!"

"I know, I know. I'll manage somehow." More giggles. After the pasta course, Connie brought out her album. It was one of those that you could write in. The photos were in chronological order, starting with Frankfurt, then Seville, then Morocco, the photo she took of her shadow on the sand seated on the camel that carried her into the desert, then a little Madrid. They were I-went-here, look-at-this, isn'tthis-interesting?, I-won't-forget-this one photos. Betsy looked at every picture. "Well!" she said after she'd finished the album. "What a great trip you had!"

"Oh, it was wonderful," said Connie. "Even though I would have enjoyed it more, I think, if I'd not gone by myself. But what the hell!" she added brightly. "What other 62-year-old woman do you know who traveled by herself all over Spain and Morocco?"

"Oh God. I know!" said Betsy. "You are a really brave woman. Amazing! Good for you!"

The meat course came. The same Asian waiter who waited on them the last time they'd been there, about six months ago. He was still taciturn. "Friendly as usual," said Connie. "Just so he brings our Chianti when we order it!" said Betsy. Laughter.

"And Robert?" asked Connie.

"He's wonderful as usual. Playing a lot of bridge, cooking up a storm. He's decided to make this year a Thai year. We really fell in love with Thai food when we were there. Robert has dedicated himself to really understanding the cuisine. He's determined to make everything we tasted or even saw on our trip. And you! What have you been up to?"

"Oh, same old, same old. Still trying to figure out what I want to be when I grow up."

And Betsy laughed, and so did Connie, and they ordered tiramisu for dessert, even though Connie didn't really like it. But Betsy did. "I just think the tiramasu here is the best in The City, don't you? asked Betsy. And Connie said yes, she sure did.

Connie dropped Betsy off back at her apartment house. "Let's get together again soon," she said. "Oh, we will," said Betsy. "We're off to Australia until January, but when we're back again...well, we will have given up this apartment and all, but I'm *sure* we'll think of some way to at least have lunch again."

"I'm sure we will," said Connie. Laughter.

Susan LIttle



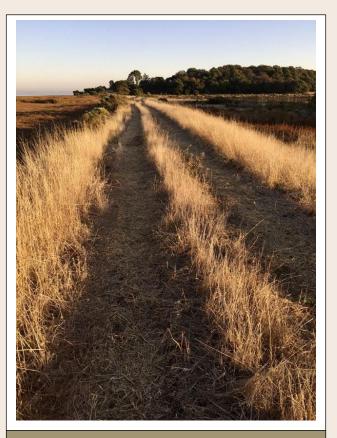


Karen Laffey





Nancy Outenreach



Nancy Pappas



ESCOM Emeritus Students College of Marin

ESCOM Journal

Editor, Denize Springer; Web Content Manager, Richard Jensen

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WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

NEXT DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 15

Please send your <u>final</u> draft to <u>denizespringer@gmail.com</u>

PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE SPECIFICATIONS

Submit <u>only one piece</u> of <u>final</u>, 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: <u>http://escom.marin.edu/join-escom</u>

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). <u>Please</u> <u>submit only one piece per issue</u>.

ART and PHOTOGRAPHY: <u>Borderless</u> images only in file size no larger than 300 kb and <u>attached</u> 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. <u>Proof your copy before sending it in.</u>

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