

# ESCOM Journal

January/February 2021



*Emeritus Students  
College of Marin*

*Lifelong Learning  
Lifelong Doing*

*Lifelong Friendship*

*Photos: Laura Milholland*

## *You keep ESCOM going!*

### Happy New Year!

We would be remiss if we did not acknowledge that the last year was challenging for us all and we hope you and yours are welcoming 2021 in good health and humor.

But it was gratifying to see that during COVID-19 restrictions our members, many of whom have never used a laptop or tablet, nonetheless embraced our “virtual” forms of learning and social interaction.

Programs and clubs we thought would flounder during the pandemic have instead flourished and even expanded beyond our wildest dreams. This is what the ESCOM brand of lifelong learning is all about.

Rest assured that we will continue these programs and add even more online offerings until the COVID-19 restrictions are lifted. Once this occurs, we will eagerly return to our popular in-person events such as member coffees, Solstice parties, our Author Series and the Mini-Medical School.

Though we no longer require a membership fee or yearly membership renewal, we’re asking if you would consider an annual, tax-deductible donation of at least \$15 (the previous annual membership fee).

We are lucky to have a band of dedicated volunteers who lead our clubs, plan and manage our events, staff our offices on both campuses, write and edit our communications and work with College of Marin Community Education to identify courses suited to our needs. And while we are fortunate to have the College’s support in many ways, we still have operating costs like supplies for the ESCOM offices, clubs and events.

The ESCOM Council has set a modest goal of \$10,000, half of our yearly operating costs, for our first annual voluntary donation drive. We hope you will participate.

Since its founding at College of Marin in 1973, ESCOM membership has grown from a few, to more than 2,000 individuals, and we remain an innovative pioneer in finding

ways in which community college resources can be used to enhance the lives of its community with our clubs, discounted classes and performing arts performances, scholarships for COM classes, publication in the ESCOM Journal and our ever-growing roster of member special events that help us all to explore new personal growth and fight social isolation -- in short, *lifelong learning, lifelong doing and lifelong friendships*.

So, please consider a gift toward these efforts. All you need to do to keep our thriving College of Marin Campus-based organization alive is go to <https://igfn.us/form/oAdcbQ> to make a tax-deductible gift of your choice.

Once again, thank you for your continued support and interest. Happy New Year!

-- Luanne Mullin, President

Anne Pearson, Past President

Dick Park, Past President



*Night Heron, Laura Milholland*

### **Cresting Corona**

Amidst the cascading collage of fallen leaves,  
as Autumn segues into Winter's realm,  
we wander through the changes nature  
and nurture have brought upon us:  
a challenge to survive.

Hope, thwarted by despair,  
floats amidst concern and yearning  
for a yesteryear of fearless reach.  
But nature has imposed a challenge  
On planet, Earth.

Let us remember the fiber of our being.  
We spirit the future, knowing ahead  
that grace, hope and courage  
will illuminate our faith, while prompting  
the meter, manner and melody of life.

-- deidre silverman

### **Vladimir Ashkenazy and the Missing Underwear**

Luggage Service Office, Northwest Airlines San Francisco  
International Airport 1995.

A dignified looking man and hysterical woman march into my  
office. He is short; she is tall. He is old; she is young. I am the  
Luggage Service Agent. I am calm.

"Who is in charge here?" the woman demands in a strong  
Eastern European accent. "That would be me," I reply  
confidently. <sup>[SEP]</sup>"Do you know who this is?" she hisses, pointing to  
the professional looking man next to her. "This gentleman is the  
famous pianist and conductor, Vladimir Ashkenazy. And YOU  
have lost one of his suitcases. He is in San Francisco to play  
Davies Symphony Hall tonight!"

The man stands silently beside her. <sup>[SEP]</sup>"Ok," I say. "Can you  
describe the bag and what was inside of it?"

"Oh God! Was it the bag with your TUXEDO?" she shrieks. "Oh  
please, God, say it wasn't."

He shakes his head, no, it wasn't. <sup>[SEP]</sup>She exhales in relief. "It is a  
black roller bag with undergarments and toiletries inside."

But as I start writing, she freaks out again. "Believe me, this is the  
last time we will fly YOUR airline! Do you know how inconvenient  
this is? You are irresponsible! Do you know this man? I guess you  
don't or you wouldn't have lost his bag! What's taking you so  
long to write that report?"

"I'll be able to fill out the paperwork faster if you stop shouting,  
but I can't concentrate while you are yelling."

"Well, go ahead then, but let me tell you that your airline will be  
hearing from our lawyers!"

I keep writing. She keeps bellowing. He stands quietly.

"Here you go," I say, handing her the paperwork. "I expect his  
luggage on the next flight. I'll send it on the first shuttle to your  
hotel and he should get it before 5pm."

She harrumphs and they both turn to leave. She keeps going out  
the door. He takes a few steps, turns around, looks at me very  
seriously and says, in a thick accent, "If I don't get my luggage  
before the performance -you and I will be the only two people in  
San Francisco who know that I am playing Davies Symphony Hall  
with no underwear on."

And with a big wink, he walks out the door.

-- Shelley Friedman

## MEMOIR

## Two Longs and Two Shorts

"Mommy, mommy can I go to school today?" "No sweetheart," came the familiar reply, "you're not old enough." Oh, how I longed to stop baking mud pies alone in the hot sun or taking rides into town with Grandpa John in his new Studebaker. I just wanted to play with other children.

It was the spring of 1949 and kindergarten wasn't an option at the one-room Missouri schoolhouse up the graveled road from our house. In fact, the small wooden structure housed only the first grade. A big yellow school bus picked up students living outside the town limits and delivered them to grades two through twelve in the two-story stone building north of town.

At recess time, I could hear the nearby first graders' giggles as they swirled on the metal merry-go-round and flew up in the air "see-sawing." Why couldn't I play with *them*?

Then one bright morning after breakfast Mother took my hand and led me up the road. We arrived just as the children were running out to play and my mother approached Miss Brandenberger, the solitary teacher.

"I know she's not old enough for school, but if she could just play with the children at recess time..." mother gently requested.

"Well perhaps, one or two days a week," Miss Brandenberger sternly offered, "we'll see how she does with older children."

Mother continued, sharing my young abilities, "Diane can already read, knows her numbers, and even how to use the telephone," she confidently informed the angular spinster.

"Two longs and two shorts," I proudly announced. Learning to use a telephone was actually quite easy. You simply picked up the receiver, listened, and if no one was already talking you pressed the black bar on the receiver cradle a little bit for short and longer for long. Since we were on a four-party line any or all families might answer talking and listening at the same time. News in our small Midwest town was rarely a secret.

June arrived sooner than I wanted and school was dismissed leaving me without recess playmates—but it was certain—I was officially enrolled in first grade beginning in September, mother assured me. I could hardly wait!

Wearing a new gingham dress specially made by Grandmother Parker and sporting a new plaid satchel and tin lunch box filled with wax-papered, gooey peanut butter

Harvey Abernathey



sandwiches neatly cut into four squares, celery sticks and a wide-mouthed thermos of whole milk, I gleefully skipped in the door as Miss Brandenberger rang the first bell of my academic career.

What fun everything was! A new box of crayons with 24 different colors, paper with broken lines to help us write upper and lower case letters and a new set of readers called *Dick and Jane*. There was jump rope, "Drop the Handkerchief" and some new friends too.

Fall faded into an early winter forcing us to recess indoors more frequently while at the same time bringing new chores for our teacher. Keeping coal burning in the potbelly stove and later emptying the cinders into a nearby storage room was probably not one of Miss Brandenberger's favorite things to do. The early weeks of January with temperatures dropping into the low teens, she was busier than ever.

I watched as she carefully put on her long gloves, removed the burnt coals now turned to lava-like fragments and carried the familiar black scuttle out to the cinder room while we worked on our "additions." Soon we heard a pained cry for help. We found her lying amongst a pile of old cinders, bright red blood oozing from a deep gash in her leg. Miss Brandenberger couldn't get up. Some of my classmates stood rigid like frozen snowmen, speechless, while others ran around screaming.

It didn't take me long to realize that I must climb the step stool to reach the wooden box on the wall and ring "two longs and two shorts" to seek help. The party line news spread quickly and folks arrived to care for our teacher, including Mr. Benton, the school superintendent, who drove out from town. After sorting out the details, he thanked me for making the call to save my teacher. I didn't understand then why he came all the way out to our school but some years later Mother and I bumped into him and Miss Brandenberger at the county fair and discovered she had changed her name. Now Mrs. Benton thanked me.

-- Diane Panagotacos



## Indian Summer

arrived last week like a surprise party  
balmy days and sweater-less nights  
flooding this ancient heart with memories  
so sweet and sharp they hurt.

Paroled out of a white-glove world ---  
middies and hockey sticks,  
bluebooks and dance cards I'm freed  
to flee over the hills to North Beach  
stake a claim to unearth myself long buried  
under slag heaps of mid-century *comme il faut*.

Years wind counter clockwise once again  
I'm in a towered villa on Chestnut Street, crossing  
the tiled art school courtyard, circling the Italianate loggia  
to studio nine, breathing scents of turpentine and linseed oil,  
stewed coffee and acrid-sweet smoke of an orphan Gauloise  
burning itself down on the side of a cracked saucer.  
Calves quivering, our city-pale model holds her pose  
(mind on next month's rent and the flirty guy on the bus)  
I labor to decipher form, bone and sinew inside out,  
explore subtle shades of flesh through fresh prisms  
master the power of a single line and the art

of drinking wine from a bota.

Up the hill on Green Street da Vinci and Durer share  
slanted walls in Ron's attic boarding house room.  
Bowls of Spanish olives, smoked oysters in keyed-back  
tins,  
focaccia fresh from Liguria on Stockton Cribari *rotgut*  
'57,



Harvey Abernathey

deceptively cru classe in stemmed crystal.

Red and blue records spin on the hi-fi: Brubeck and  
Mulligan,

Lester Young breaking my heart with "Ghost of a Chance".

Billie Holiday's "Fine and Mellow" played over and over.

Down the hill at Trieste we nurse late night cappuccinos  
talking de Kooning and Rothko and "Howl".

Perched on a high stool at the espresso bar  
angel-face Tadzio-boy, from life drawing class, fingers

Brownie McGhee numbers on his pawn shop Gibson.

In a corner booth, sneering, word slurring, Richard  
Brautigan

argues higher consciousness with pipe-smoking Alan Watts.

Out on Columbus, Ron's lean draftsman's fingers lace mine  
as we prowling the garlic-scented, Genoese-accented, jazz-  
thrumming,

cigarette-smoking, siren-whining, North Beach night  
certain

our love, like Indian Summer, will last forever and winter

will never come.

-- Lynn Arias Bornstein

## We Need Only....

We need only get up  
 leave the TV in the evening  
 open the back door  
 and breathe in the air at dusk

We need only  
 listen to the crickets  
 look up at the waxing moon  
 with Mars glowing nextdoor

We need only  
 pick up a book  
 a novel, a picture book  
 a song book or poetry

We need only take a walk  
 or a swim  
 or lay down on the carpet  
 and stretch  
 twist our knees to one side  
 and then the other  
 and breathe

We need only  
 lay longer on the carpet  
 so a furry friend can nudge up against  
 our hip  
 or toss a day-glow tennis ball  
 for our four-legged pal to chase

We need only smile at one another  
 exchange a few words  
 as we buy our orange juice  
 or order our coffee

We need only call  
 our sister or brother  
 or father or mother  
 or a friend  
 who are all these people

And in between laughing  
 or crying with someone  
 we need only breathe

To work, yes  
 to learn, yes  
 but to learn again to play  
 to learn how to dance  
 to breathe in pine scented air  
 while watching a scarlet wood pecker  
 jack-hammer the bark on a pine

Laura Milholland



And when that is not there  
 we need only....  
 be with what is  
 to let the miracle unfold  
 to know it surrounds us  
 by breathing and looking around us

-- Ayris Hatton

## Owed to Zoom

I'm looking forward to the day, when we can share a room.  
 But meanwhile, let us raise a glass, and drink a toast to Zoom!  
 For most of what we want to do, can come to us online.  
 Our microphones and cameras can deliver it just fine.  
 And with the extra benefit of leaping off in space,  
 Since in an instant we can be in any other place.  
 Now Kentfield is a charming campus, IVC is pretty,  
 But twice a month I meet a person in Mexico City!  
 And Petaluma, Healdsburg, there's no place I can't be found.  
 My iPad is a magic carpet, moving me around.  
 I reconnect with friends in France, with laptop or by phone  
 Old Army buddies; long lost loves, best they be left alone.  
 And no one knows, if you take care  
 You're sitting in your underwear.  
 So I have plans, that on my tomb  
 Engraved in stone, a link to Zoom

-- Jay Conner

## Spirituality

What is spirituality? To me that word conveys the idea of people that believe in things “out of this world.” In that sense, I’m not a “spiritual” person. I believe in living with “eyes wide open” to see the interconnection of all things, and through that understanding to hopefully find joy and transcendence.

My parents didn’t discuss “spirituality,” but we understood that what really matters was how you lived your life, and how you interacted with others. My parents found meaning and joy in the here and now. They valued family, food, music, travel and nature, the beauty of small things, and a society that supports the common good. They modeled ethical and moral behavior. Through their friends, I became aware of yoga, and, at my sweet 16, I received a book of Buddha’s teachings. As a teen “junior beatnik” with long hair and homemade dark paisley shifts, I sang folk songs calling for peace, justice, and the need to create a better world.

Moving to Berkeley in 1966, I delved into existential philosophy and eastern religions. I embraced the counterculture values of the 60’s, pressing for justice, protesting the war in Vietnam, and explored the spiritual practices of yoga, and meditation.

Moving to San Francisco, I led a happy “alternative lifestyle. “Teaching preschool part time, I made my own clothes or scouted thrift shops, cooked “health” food and tried to move away from consumer culture. Joining a women’s consciousness raising group, I appreciated feminist perspectives. I practiced Yoga, and cast the *I Ching* to gain insight into everyday actions and decisions. I embraced environmentalism, the natural extension of the values my parents espoused. I joined the Sierra Club, and with a tribe of friends hiked the trails of Marin and backpacked in the Sierra where we resided with nature.

Living on my own, I continued Yoga practice at the Integral Yoga Institute

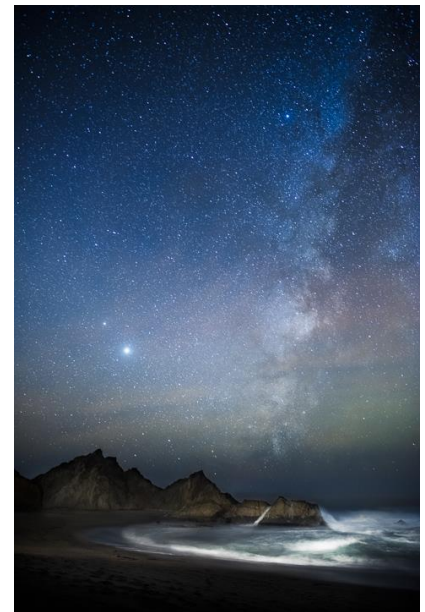
and found comfort at the San Francisco Zen Center. I sat Zazen in the early morning in the basement Zendo, looking at a wall with eyes wide open, following breath and settling into the present, watching “mind weeds” drift by. Sundays at Green Gulch, in the dark, quiet Zendo, I would sit Zazen, prompted by the rhythm of bells and gongs, the smell of incense and chants that shape the meditation practice.

Sitting in stillness helps me acknowledge my small being as part of nature and change. I understand that our existence is ephemeral. This message from “The Five Remembrances” rings true to me: *“All that is dear to me, and everyone I love are of the nature to change. There is no way to escape being separated from them. I cannot keep anything. I come here empty-handed, and I go empty-handed. My actions are my only true belongings. I cannot escape the consequences of my actions. My actions are the ground on which I stand.”*

How can I keep this awareness through daily life and relationships? Luckily my various livelihoods and pursuits have had nurturing at their core: working with children, and working harmoniously with community and workmates to improve the open spaces of San Francisco. The way or “The dharma” is also present in my musical community, through my love of the natural world, and in political activism. Transcendence comes through focus and immersion.

Yoga practice, through the “spirit of repetition” lays down a skill to settle mind and body, and abide, albeit briefly, in the present, experiencing *santosha* – contentment. Over the past 18 years that I’ve taught yoga, I try to create that space for my students, and we have formed a supportive community. Despite my inclinations as an introvert, I’ve been working with a small group of remarkable women, creating an organization of a thousand to “Get Out The Vote” and thereby support understanding and the common good.

The greatest challenge is to bring connection, awareness, mutual



Harvey Abernathey

communication, and joy into everyday actions and relationships. This ongoing process, sometimes has me stumped, but I continue to try.

Each person makes a choice how we live in this world. At our best our actions and interactions can present mindfulness and compassion. Our effectiveness can be stretched by taking collective action with those who personify and model this awareness and connection – A connection that can bring peace and healing to the earth and to those around us.

-- Deb Learner

## Scholarships for Older Adults

Awards of up to \$120 (\$60 per quarter) for use on any EC-designated or Community Education class. For more info, visit the “Scholarships/Grants page at [marincommunityed.com](https://marincommunityed.com)

See the class list at: <https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net/>

### Without the Strings of Gravity

*(For Sheila and all the other losses, past, present and future.)*

Yes, you have disappeared but

how, when, where?

Why is it, for so many years,

we shared love

and now you are silent?

I envision you awakened to a new life

in a land at least as beautiful as this one,

with a heart and soul of passion

much like before.

Why the silence, when we have always shared?

I have done nothing to deserve this emptiness,

except live as I have been told.

("Why hath thou forsaken me?")

What makes you so inert, that you cannot speak?

What has come over you that you cannot reach me in my  
sorrow?

How dare you make me love you and care for you and then,

One day, there is no way

to reach you.

Is this part of your love,

to teach me to let go of what I hold dear,

without reason or rhyme?

Must I be god-like in this body,

To love without holding dear?

Who would do that?

Who would ask a mother to hold her baby, conditionally?

Or a lover to abandon her beloved?

It is cruel, this deal.

To love only to be forsaken.

You may be silent, now, but I can still speak,

and I will, as if you are in another

unspeakably beautiful world.

And you love me and I, you,

Without the strings of gravity,

With just One voice.

-- Deirdre Fennessy

Elaine Thornton



### SOMEDAY

Unknowing,

we went about our lives

Until,

the realness of IT descended upon us

A red blanket covering all the world's people

Smothering, choking, gasping, dying.

Until,

we remembered:

Hope, Light, Oneness, Unity

The covering changed from a shroud to gossamer

That, someday, will float away

Someday

-- Cathy Fox



## MEMBER PERSPECTIVES

### South Pacific

Last month Michael Sachs (ESCOM Opera Club), “Zoomed” the musical “South Pacific” to the lucky members of the Opera and Beyond Club. It was a real “remember when” experience for me.

I saw “South Pacific” on Broadway in New York City when I was a college student. I went by myself. I felt very naughty to be going to see it since I was cutting class to go. I remember that Mary Martin was playing the lead and that the show was very popular. Indeed, my ticket was “standing room only.”

I was ten years old in 1941 when the US entered WWII and, of course, the next 4 years had everyone very conscious of that war. We had maps of the world pinned to our walls at home and we listened to the radio to find out where the troops were. For most of us the islands in the Pacific were first introduced to us through the island-hopping battles. We had to get out the Atlas to discover where Pearl Harbor, Hawaii was. Hawaii wasn’t a state then. It was a territory.

When I saw “South Pacific” as a student in 1951, it was wonderful and it was also a review of recent life. I have since seen the film several times over the years, but somehow seeing it last month on Zoom made me feel differently about the musical.

This time, I realized that this musical reflected the extreme boredom suffered by the “CB’s” left on the islands until the troops and the battles arrived. Also, WWII is the first time these young people had ever been away from home, encountering different cultures – Tonkinese, French plantation owners as well as people from disparate parts of the US. “South Pacific” pointed this out, too. It tries to show up the prejudices that existed, even then, in the US. “South Pacific” is a cultural snapshot of that time, not just a story.

And I was also reminded that for most Americans, the West Coast seemed like the end of the world because the servicemen were shipped out to the Pacific war from seaports on the Pacific coast. As a result, after the war people began moving out to California, Oregon and Washington State because they saw what a great place it was and still is.

-- Tatiana Yates

### New Member, New Thoughts

On Saturday, Dec. 5, 2020 I attended the ESCOM virtual get-together. I was happy to have recently discovered ESCOM and joined right away. Additionally, I signed up for a College of Marin writing class and I may join some of those students in a follow up group for the purpose of critiquing each other’s work.

I have never been very social, but during 2020 and throughout the pandemic I was able to broaden my horizons and make more friends than I have had in many years. I also have begun to maintain regular weekly discussions with my son and his family, which was not a routine prior to 2020.

The ESCOM clubs prompted me to apply for ESCOM Council membership. My acceptance as a member through June of 2021 makes me look forward to more ESCOM engagements in 2021. I belong to several support groups and I often tout my membership in ESCOM as one of the 2020 pandemic year benefits.

I’ve found that ESCOM members have vastly different opinions, but allow for discussion in a very civil atmosphere. Unlike some folks in our country who seem to be divided so badly that they no longer want to talk to each other, ESCOM groups are always open to frank discussions even if they do not change anyone’s position. These free exchanges of ideas serve to educate me and inspire me to hone my ability to express my point of view in a positive manner. Sometimes, we even end up joking about our own perspectives.

Maybe, if we could export this sociable interaction to the rest of the U.S. we could probably get much more done toward the advancement of the people of America and the world. We are all on this planet together so we might as well do the best that we can to preserve and advance what we have built so far for the benefit of our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Throughout the pandemic, many of us have struggled with the problems that arise in physical isolation, but hopefully, the 2021 vaccines will eventually eliminate this. Nonetheless, I hope we can all continue our Internet Zoom interactions mixed with occasional in-person meetings in 2021. As a new ESCOM Council member, I look forward to helping to advance the benefits of ESCOM and to include more people in this unique social and educational environment.

-- Bernard F. Cookson



## A Night in the Bayview

It's one a.m. on a weekday night and I'm the Animal Control Officer on duty for the City & County of San Francisco. I punch in at ten, and I go home at 7am. My dispatcher is Central Fire Alarm; when he relays a call for service from a private citizen, or the SFPD, or the Coroner's Investigator, instead of the common 10-4, I always answer on the radio with an E.T.A.: "Fifteen minutes or less, "eight minutes or less," etc. I've had the job for three years and have a good reputation. No one, though, gives any indication they know how afraid of aggressive dogs I really am. But no one has to know.

"Animal Control, Central Fire Alarm." comes the call on the radio. "Woman out on Hudson Avenue with a pit bull tied to her back fence, requests a callback". He gives me the number, I call her.

"Honey," she says, "there's a pit-bull, belongs to some drug dealer, tied outside my back fence, barking, and you know, I'm a Sheriff's Deputy and I have to go to work tomorrow!"

Hudson is a long uphill street. At that time, young men traveled from Third Street up over the hill to housing projects at Westpoint and Middlepoint, booming and roaring in their big Oldsmobiles and Buicks.

I ask the woman if the drug dealers are around, and if I can get in and out quick with the dog. She tells me to call her when I arrive and she will cover me with her service pistol from the yard. All told, the situation sounds like it's doable without a police escort.

I tear out of the Shelter and onto 101 Southbound

Southbound, driving hard to get out there before the situation changes. I have the usual thoughts, *what the hell am I doing, going to confront a possibly dangerous dog, at night?* But by the time I get to the call, I've convinced myself I'm going to make this happen. And, I'll get that dog into my van without hurting him.

I park on Hudson, which has no sidewalk. Half on the street at the foot of the retaining wall made of small boulders. I forget about calling the Deputy to tell her I'm here, because I see the dog and he sees me, and I'm thinking, *why prolong the suspense?* So, it's straight up the boulders I go. I have a *come along*, otherwise known as a rabies pole. It's a 40-inch metal tube with a loop on the business end, and a thick plastic sleeve to keep the dog from breaking his teeth if he bites it. On my end is a cable I can tighten or loosen it as needed.

The dog is a mix of Rhodesian Ridgeback and pit bull. As I close in with the *come along* I feel my fear in waves. He's tied with a seatbelt, which is all that's keeping him from jumping downhill, then he'd have me. He's lunging against his tether, showing his teeth, tail straight up, ears flat, staring me in the eye, straining, furious to attack. If the drug dealers show up now, I am truly screwed. Close enough to get whiff of his breath, I put the loop over his head and tighten it just-so: not too tight, but enough.

Holding the come along with my left I use a flick-knife with my right to cut the seat belt and it's off to the rodeo we go, him jumping and twisting, not trying to get away, but trying to dominate and bite me. We reach equilibrium and start down the hill, me knowing if I fall or catch a foot on the boulders, it's all over. A couple

cars pass by on Hudson as we descend, but nobody seems to notice.

I load the dog into the van and zip down the hill to the safety of Third Street. Ten minutes later we're back at the Shelter. I get the dog from the van into a warm, clean run with food and water, and all that's left is the paperwork. I'm thinking, "I don't want to do that again." But I'm stuck on the excitement and do it for five more years.

-- Mike Holland

## Haiku

### Garage Clean-out

Folding bamboo chairs,

Holiday Decorations

No more big parties

### SIP Routine

The Journal, Decaf

Then Stimulus Package talk

Morning Ends at Ten

### Milestone

He died three years ago

At midnight Pearl Harbor Day

Still here in my head

-- Ellen Brazeale

### The Up Side

It's easy to anthropomorphize a tree—  
branches like arms twisted and turned,  
knobby knees, elephant arthritic toes,  
needles like Mohawk spikes, blistered bark,  
wrinkled with age.

I notice these things as I hadn't before—  
my daily stroll walking or resting on a bench  
bordering the creek and bike path.  
I think of it as the upside to our restricted living,  
this near confinement to quarters.

Eyes closed there's bird song, rustle of wind,  
walkers on the path— stompers, shufflers, fleet footed,  
bikers calling left or right, whirl of a helicopter.  
Eyes open to pushed strollers, cell phones, pets,  
a mallard or two at water's edge, an egret overhead.

Overshadowed by oaks, a weeping birch—  
graceful, seemingly light-hearted,  
but for the peeled gray bark revealing a life-sized  
skeleton foresha, outlined,  
like a Halloween decoration or diagram on a doctor's  
wall.  
  
Pink ice plant and grass still green grow near the bank.  
Along the front edge of the bench where I sit someone  
has painted in yellow—*Robin says heroin sucks!*

-- Laurel Feigenbaum

### "I'd Like to Paint the Way a Bird Sings"

(Claude Monet)

I'd Let my Brush fly like a White Tailed Kite  
Stop mid air and hover over a canvas  
Search for the perfect place to land  
I'd Fill my brush with rich burnt sienna  
And nosedive onto the white linen before me  
Spatter the surface with a shock of earth color  
Then fly off and dip it into a forest green  
Take a moment to rest on a wooden mahal  
And with the song of the Kite as inspiration  
  
Chit chit, chit, chit  
  
I'd Let my brush dance on around the canvas  
Along with brushes of cobalt blue and white  
Then I'd dip my brush into rich brownish black  
Paint long narrow strokes, like wings and a tail  
Let it fly free in a crisp autumn blue sky

-- Carol Allen

### Untitled

January stormy downbursts squall  
February cold snaps doldrums call  
March came on like a bluster  
April wasn't quite up to muster  
May was a goddess in garlands  
June burst forth like New Orleans  
July is a watermelon split  
August is a sonnet coyly writ  
September/s sweet melon salivates  
October's crisp mornings activate  
November darkens souls stealing light  
December's cold gripped knuckles grasping tight  
A dozen portraits painted all in rhyme  
splashing vivid colors seasoning time

--Louise Potter Yost



Laura Milholland



Laura Harrison

### My Mother's Hand

I awoke this morning  
and there they were  
hanging off my arms,  
my mother's hands.  
I can't believe my eyes,  
are they deceiving me?  
Did I not see the surgeon  
who severed my youth?  
I continue to stare in unappreciated  
acceptance at the spots,  
the veins,  
the smallness,  
the fragility,  
the bruises,  
my mother's hands.

-- Nora Monfredini

### Blue Glory

It was a day I wanted  
To keep walking  
A day like September  
not December  
Cool, crisp,  
Tang of burning oak  
In the air  
Red, yellow, brown,  
Leaves drifted down  
Egret hushed along the creek  
Poised to catch prey  
Bluebirds, pieces of sky flying by  
Crows cawed at me,  
I cawed back  
Oh, what a day!  
Then I passed a house  
A week before  
Naked  
Stripped of dignity  
Sad, forlorn  
Trash piled high  
Now a house reveling  
In blue glory  
Looking like it belonged  
In an Argentine pueblo  
A glowing cobalt blue  
Ready to tango  
Ready for a new family  
Oh, what a day!

-- Barbara McDonald



## Did you know...



...that the mating season of the Northern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga angustirostris*) usually climaxes on February 14<sup>th</sup>?  
**Happy Valentines Day!**

Photo: Laura Harrison

## CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL

### NEXT DEADLINE IS FEBRUARY 15!

Send your best work to [denizespringer@gmail.com](mailto: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 any documents. **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 must be 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) If your poem must be centered, please 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 Journal

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