

ESCOM Journal

Sept/Oct 2021



Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Doing

Lifelong Friendships

Photos: Harvey Abernathey

Harnessing the Power of ESCOM

On August 16th, ESCOM participated in the College of Marin Flex-Week, professional staff training event. Our program, Supporting Students and Harnessing the Power of ESCOM: A Formula for Success, was led by a five-member ESCOM team: Luanne Mullin, Anne Pearson, Gloria Dunn Violin, Gary Gosner and Kevin Colgate.

We were joined by three COM guest speakers, Becky Reetz, Director of EOPS, CARE and Flex-Week event was an amazing opportunity to connect with the COM staff to identify specific ways ESCOM members can support student success in and out of the classroom and collaborate on ways

to build strong ESCOM/COM partnerships.

CalWORKs; Dr. Yashica Crawford, Professor of Psychology; and COM Librarian Dave Patterson. We talked about ESCOM's upcoming new initiatives: our Mentoring, Speaker's Bureau and Panel Discussions. Our event was well attended, and we thank all participants for their support.

As an organization of active adults, we are ready and willing to bring a wealth of

professional experience, expertise and wisdom to enhance learning and intergenerational dialog through mentoring, panel discussions, shared programs, and more.

We hope to write more about our initiatives in the coming months and have these programs up and running soon.

--Anne Pearson

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Laura Milholland

Your ESCOM Membership Dollars at Work

COM students stay on the Higher Education Path

As in years past, the ESCOM membership contributed \$4,000 toward COM's Educational Opportunity Program Scholarships. The program helps economically disadvantaged COM students stay on the path to a higher education diploma. This year, 17 students received scholarships of \$500 each.

In response to students who lost their jobs and/or suffered other financial hardship due to Covid closures, the membership made a \$5,000 to the Student Emergency Fund.

Fall Continuing Education classes

will continue mostly online for the Fall 1 and 2 semesters. However, some courses -- from history to art to physical education to hiking -- are hybrid, and will have at least a few meetings outside the Zoom environment. There's still time to register at:

<https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net/>

An application for **scholarships** for these classes is available at:

<https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net/Customers/MarinCommunityEd/files/Fall%202021%20materials/Scholarship%20Application%20Fall%202021%20and%20Fall%202022%202021.pdf>

New ESCOM Clubs!

World War II

Explore newly discovered or little-known stories of WW II, using material from the following courses: *WWII Battlefield Europe*, *WWII The Pacific Theatre* and *WWII Unsung Heroes*.

The club is led by Marianne Rios who was born and raised in Nuremberg, Germany and experienced the war as a child of a German soldier and a very resourceful mother. After marrying a U.S. naval officer and native of Guam she also spent time in Guam and Japan and is well versed on the many books about individuals who lived, fought and had to hide from the Japanese and German forces. Walt Campbell, who leads the Medici Club, assists. The club is off to a fast start with 10 members, but Marianne says new members are welcome. The club meets Fridays on Zoom from 1 to 3 pm. To join contact Marianne at rios4ri@aol.com or 415/883-7139.

Writing Encouragement

Led by ESCOM Council member Bernie Cookson, this club welcomes all writers who want to share their written work (short stories, essays, poetry, memoir) for "honest but gentle critique." It meets every other Wednesday from 1 to 3 pm on Zoom. "I find that I don't write unless I have an occasion to share it with others," said Bernie. "This is a great way to keep writing." For more information, contact Bernie at cooksonlaw@comcast.net or 508/864-6367.



Batman, Harvey Abernethy

Lately I Have Been Wondering

When you hold your breath which hand is it in?

If you are asked to keep a secret
do you keep it in the fridge?

How many beats are in a heartthrob?

Does abstinence constipate the system?

When you age in place is there a place where
you get younger?

What's more I wonder

Does absinthe make the heart grow fonder?

Is heartburn unrequited love or undigested
turnips?

Is gluttony safe for daily use?

If you learn from history who does history learn
from?

And further

If time flies what do flies take? The train?

In an affair of the heart is the heart having
the affair with a cardiologist?

Are students at MIT prone to addition?

Which leads me to question

How much rope is enough to hang oneself?

If actions speak louder than words
are they barred from libraries

And

Does ambiguous have only one definition?

-- Chuck Beisch

Little Bird's Café

The usual six, are situated
Together in the Little Bird Cafe
Each on his own counter seat
And all the more ready to eat.

Breakfast special is millet and grains.
Each, once again, orders the same.
They are all happily pecking away
When in flies a rude scrub jay and
Asserts his clout with ruckus chits.

The hungry six quickly flee the scene
Giving no thought to the unpaid bill.
The saucy jay takes hold beak and feet
Wings flapping he proceeds to eat
And then blatantly demands a refill.

"You are not welcome here," I said.
I stomped my foot, my face turned red.
He left in a huff but I knew he'd come back
So I needed a plan to throw him off track.
Build a cafe where big bullies are banned.

The little fellows returned next day for treats
Having forgotten the fiasco the night before.
They chit and chattered among themselves
Wondering how to get to their usual seats.
It didn't look like the Little Bird Cafe anymore.

I put wire fencing around the seed feeder
With in between spacing, two inch by three.
The recurrent six entered with caution
Sat on their perches and ate undistracted.
The new cafe had worth they could see.

Scrub jay outside was flapping and scrapping.
Their six little beaks never stopped snapping,
And my heartbeat wouldn't stop clapping.
I was paid for the seeds and graciously tipped
By six happy finches, and happy end to this script.

-- Carol Allen

Kiss Me Baby

I'm perched high atop the A-frame bar of a swing set in a garden apartment complex in Richmond VA. At six years old I know the difference between right and wrong. I soon would do something that was most definitely wrong.

The A-frame bar, the highest point in my climbing career, had been a challenge I'd contemplated for some time. It wasn't something I took on in a spontaneous outburst of bravado. It scared me. It meant maneuvers I wasn't sure of and couldn't quite figure in a step-by-step kind of way. I just had to do it. Today was the day.

First the easy part, grabbing the cross bar between the two triangular poles. From there, shimmying up the rest, seating myself, ever so precariously, on the horizontal top pole that connected the two A's.

At the top, I was feeling the thrill and still scared of falling when the "Kiss Me Baby" boy showed up. I didn't know his real name. We called him "Kiss Me Baby" cause he would run after us girls chanting "Kiss me baby! Kiss me baby!" but he would say it *kish* me baby. He had Down's syndrome. Back then we called it Mongoloid. I probably didn't call it anything; just knew something was wrong with him. He was older and bigger than us, maybe nine but ran much slower and never caught us. Once I let him catch me and kiss me. I was showing off.

Kiss Me Baby came over and leaned on one of the poles. He

looked up at me smiling an innocent smile. I shouted down at him, "Get away! Get out of here!" He kept looking up, then grabbed tight to the pole, saying nothing. "Get out of here! I want to get down!" I knew very well I could have slid down the other pole, or even the one he was leaning on. I knew he'd move if I went that route. I was angling for a fight. I was like that sometimes. I wasn't allowed to start them but could find a way to egg one on.

I began sliding down the pole he was now hugging. As predicted he scrambled away just before I landed square on his head. Face to face now, his smile turned to terror and he began to run.

I followed giving him just enough of a lead to make the hunt exciting and began chanting "Kiss me baby!!, Kiss me baby!!" with unhinged primal fierceness.

I didn't know where he lived and didn't think about where he was going but turns out he was headed home. The chase didn't last all that long. His mom appeared, it seemed, from nowhere. She stopped me in my tracks. Her fierceness met mine and tamped it down to a sputter.

"What are you doing," she said. "How could you be so mean!?" Kiss me baby was now crying, huddled behind her.

I jabbered a defense, "He wouldn't let me down. I was afraid of falling. I asked him to go away. He wouldn't."

Somehow my mother showed up, also from nowhere. I choked out the same excuses to her about

how I was afraid, how he wouldn't move. It was no use. All of us there knew I had no good reason to chase the boy. All of us knew it was mean. I was asked to apologize and I did so with tears and sincere regret.

-- Fawn Yacker



Laura Harrison

Games People Play

Taming of the Shrew?

World War Two

Iwo Jima

What's a Sestina?

Walt Whitman

Who are the Minutemen?

The Bubonic Plague

"A Teutonic sage"

The King of France

And

Shall We Dance?

He's a historian

She's a librarian

So winning is moot

In Trivial Pursuit

-- Denize Springer

IN MEMORIAM

Barbara Faye Tarasoff

Former ESCOM president passed away Tuesday July 20, after a brief and valiant battle with cancer. She was a loving, bright, talented educator, artist and Renaissance woman, who lived 95 years, packed with accomplishments.

Barbara graduated high school at 16, and went on to USC, always proud that she did so on scholarships, where she became a physical therapist, working on the shoulder of the future president Reagan, and other film celebrities, at County General Hospital. She also modeled and acted in community theatre, while studying for several graduate degrees, from counseling to administration.

From physical therapy, Barbara moved to education, teaching both special education students and middle and elementary school classes with a mix of students. She worked at Head Start in 1967, and became one of the first female administrators at the County level for the Marin County Office of Education, overseeing a number of programs, including Juvenile Hall. Her tenure as Principal of Marindale School was well-regarded. She brought many wonderful changes to the school and helped the students there enormously.

Working there was her pride and joy.

"Hearing about Barbara brings much sadness, said former ESCOM president Marian Mermel.

"She brought me into ESCOM and I got to know what a wonderful women she was. She brought such joy and energy to all. Her dedication to us and her love for all our members and for the College of Marin was always like a ray of sunshine. Stepping into her President Shoes was no easy task. She was so loved by all of us and was a great model of leadership. I know we all hold her gently in our hearts."

Barbara's effervescent and bubbly nature was rooted in her deep positivity, and the belief that no matter how rough circumstances got, better times lay ahead. Her sense of humor was well regarded, and she maintained it up to the end, eliciting laughs from her caregivers, family and close family friends who visited.

Barbara was predeceased by



Laura Milholland

her husband, Dr. George J. Tarasoff. She is survived by her daughter Georganne Brumbaugh (Stuart), several nieces and a nephew, as well as many, many friends who loved and admired her dearly.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Marin Humane Society or Sutter Santa Rosa Hospice. There will be a private Celebration of Life upcoming.



Harvey Abernethy



Laura Milholland

SAMMY

Sammy was an orange tabby. Run of the mill cat. I didn't really spend a lot of time with him, getting a divorce as I was. I had a German Shepherd, whose father was a working sheepdog in Germany. Handsome as hell. Almost as big as a wolf. I spent a minute talking to Sam here and there, but the dog was always smiling in that doggy way, watching me, alert for only he knew what. I had an unbidden fantasy that should my soon-to-be ex-wife start yelling at me again, Frankie might just bite her. It was only a fantasy.

Sammy was a little too sweet for me then, a three year-old kitty left behind by a wife who'd moved out. He walked around with his kitty concerns: food, and a little mousey on a string that brought out his murderous streak, like cats have. Mostly I fed him and ignored him. Two out of three of my kids had moved out of that big house: four bedrooms, three baths, a family sized kitchen and a big, big front room. It had, not a fireplace, but a hearth right in the middle of the room that I could ride a bicycle around. It roared when stacked with wood.

I loved that house; bought it for my kids. Put a big down payment on it. I looked at it as an investment that the kids could

either live in or sell when I was dead. Now because of the divorce we *would* sell it. So I had my big dog and that was all I could handle, emotionally. Life as I'd known it for 28 years was kaput.

Soon, my last daughter moved out to a place she got with her boyfriend, who later manifested adult-onset problems. She kindly took Sammy with her, kept him through another move, to an attic in Petaluma while she went back to school for two years, then met another boyfriend, a real solid, loving guy, and moved in with him. She kept that cat with her the whole time.

Then Sally got married and they bought a house. Kept the cat. At any point she could have said the cat was too much and found him another home. But she loved him and soon her husband did too. They played with him, talked to him. She took him out in her garden and he found a place under a bushy shrub where he waited in ambush for a mouse that never materialized. He's lay in the sun and she could hear him purring as she walked by. She'd wake up in the morning and find him sharing her pillow. She had him for 14 years and he never scratched her once.

They discovered he was hiding under the furniture all day, took him to the vet and found out he was in pain. All his teeth needed to be pulled. Together they decided to spend \$4,000 to have them out. They both felt he was part of their family.

On another visit the vet told them to expect kidney failure in the future but didn't say when. They nursed him along, bought special food for him, took him out in the yard more, loved him. Her husband came home from work and dandled him, crooning. Sam hung there, relaxed. They had a whole routine.

The last week Sally noticed him hiding around the house again. Lethargic. Peeing a lot, little bits at a time. She took him to the vet who said this was it, he had less than a week left. Aggressive treatment might help, but would be uncomfortable. They decided not to put him through that and took him home. They spent every second with him, but he didn't have anything left. That night they could see he was dying. So they took him right back to the vet for their last act of kindness.

The vet anesthetized Sam and brought him out to the waiting room on a little kitty bed and set him down on both their laps. They spent time gently and lovingly saying goodbye. They told him they loved him so much and that it was going to be ok. Then they held him in both their laps as the vet gently gave Sam a last injection, and he went to kitty heaven, peacefully, lovingly, the same way he had lived.

-- Mike Holland

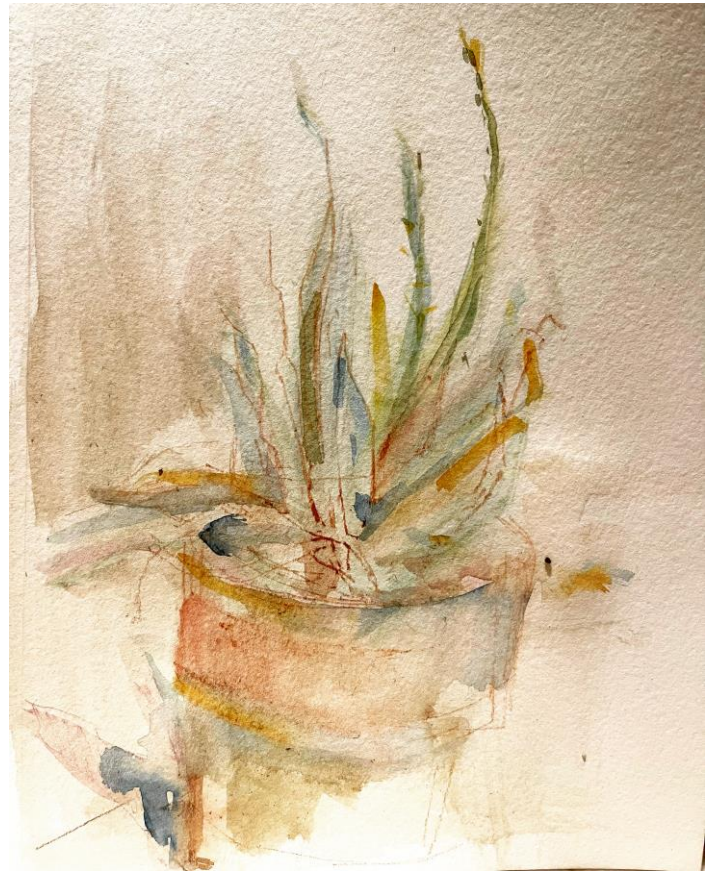
HOPE

Little lights are everywhere
 Breaking through darkness
 Illuminating murky dim
 Sometimes appearing suddenly
 A surprise, like an unexpected smile
 Other times slowly
 Like a giggle
 That bubbles up from within.

When it's really dark
 Deep in a forest, high on a mountain
 When the power is out and
 All the switches are OFF
 We can observe the countless stars
 Shining and twinkling
 Reminding us that even if we can't always see
 the light
 It is there. -- Anne Mulvaney



Laura Milholland



As the Leaves Turn, watercolor and pencil, Tami Tsark

Puzzles

After my two-mile morning walk, I do the newspaper puzzles—my brain calisthenics, so I tell myself—the Jumble, the Cryptogram, the *NYT* Spelling Bee, the *NYT* Letter Boxed. An hour or more may slip away, but I'm retired, so what's "an hour or more" anyway?

Ever since I was a kid, I saw lots of things as puzzles. In high school, studying Latin was like doing a puzzle, translating each word and its case or its conjugation linearly and then solving the puzzle, revealing not just what words the author wrote but also what the author meant.

Some puzzles are hard to solve, though, terribly hard, no matter how much brain calisthenics I've done. What then shall I do? How then shall I live? If only those questions were in some divine crossword puzzle, and writing in answers like "faith," "grace," "hope," "love" would solve it all. But the questions aren't, and the answers don't.

-- Judith Goff

Any Given Day

I've been retired from the nursing profession for fifteen years. It was fulfilling work that I enjoyed and it gave me a sense of achievement. The daily repetitive nature of housework isn't as gratifying to me, even though it is a lot of work. For one thing, it is utterly repetitive: folding the clothes when I pull them out of the dryer, so the wrinkles won't set, ironing the clothes that wrinkle anyway, shopping, then chopping the vegetables, standing over the stove, stirring things, waiting for the water to boil, the chicken to brown, and then washing the dishes. Though, to be honest, my husband usually does that. It's not easy to maintain a well-run household and it requires a lot of management skills, including planning, cooking, organizing, and mediation skills, just to mention a few, which are rarely acknowledged.

It's not that I hate the work. After all, we have to eat, and put on clean clothes, might as well do a good job of it, try to make it creative, if possible. It's just that housework gives me only the brief satisfaction of progress, of moving forward. The food is eaten, the clothes are dirty again, and the dust returns. There's nothing lasting I can point to, like my husband can, after he's built a house, or even a bookcase.

"Come look at this," he'll say to me. "How do you like it?"

And I praise him, as always, because he does do good work. He's a craftsman. But who

would point proudly to a pile of folded laundry? It seems to me almost like a childish accomplishment.

Sometimes I ask myself, *is there nothing more important for me to do now that I'm retired and my children are grown?* Thankfully, I do have my dear family and friends, my desire to write, my volunteer work, and my health. I am lucky.

I've worked hard most of my life. Why can't I be content to rest on my laurels, so to speak. I definitely don't have the energy, or the fire in my belly, which I used to have. I guess I'm missing the meaning and purpose of being in the exhilarating center of my family and professional life that I took for granted when I was younger.

Or maybe, what I'm really missing, is my younger self.

I recently came across a quote by Wendell Barry that comforted and inspired me: "When we no longer know which way to go, we have

just begun our real journey. The mind that is not baffled is not employed."

So, do I really need to start a new journey? I want to, but it sounds like a lot of work, but, maybe it's worth it to keep moving forward because life is precious and It is what you make of it.

-- Judy Baldassari

Attic Cat, watercolor, Tami Tsark



Untitled

"We are such stuff as dreams are made of"
and liken unto a dream
we soon disappear
like the dependable moon rising and finally falling
but should not this body of work called life
be only a dream in the end
then let our revelry reveal
a mirror held up to soul
and let soul reveal the depths of wonder
found in dreams turned to vision
and let vision be our muse, our goddess, our hope
that our revels may end in contentment
that our dreams may dissolve into the Milky Way's Glowly charm

-- Louise Potter Yost

Let Us Eat Light

Let us eat light
 Like trees
 Instead of cake
 Like the 24 perfect cakes
 Baked by Sylvia Plath
 One for every hour of the day
 A way to make order out of chaos

Trees deepen us
 The quiet they exude
 Their strength in stormy weather
 They stand tall and bend
 Like a river over rocks
 Have you ever seen a tree that
 looks like an upside-down person?
 The head buried in the earth
 Perhaps the roots are hair burrowing in a long sleep
 The limbs, akimbo, split at the groin
 Like a young girl's holy triangle
 The branches rise up as if to say
 You can count on us to blossom
 Life does return with its sweet fruit
 Before it drops to feed the worms
 Eden is here for the taking

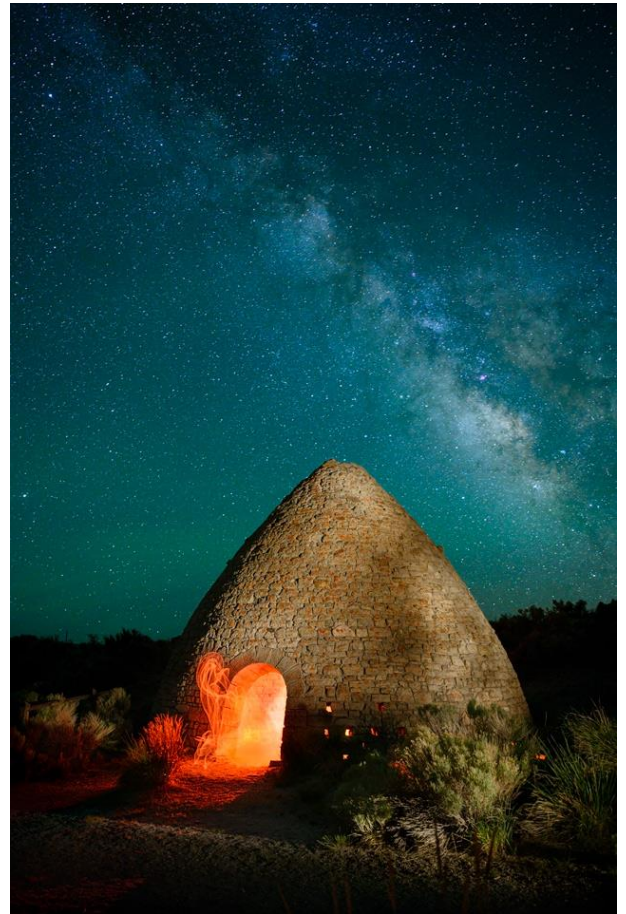
So let us eat light again & be happy

Two Norfolk pines wave together in the wind
 Under the big black walnut
 Teeming with crow's black chatter

Neighbors complain the tree blocks their view
 Don't trees have views too?
 Let them eat cake

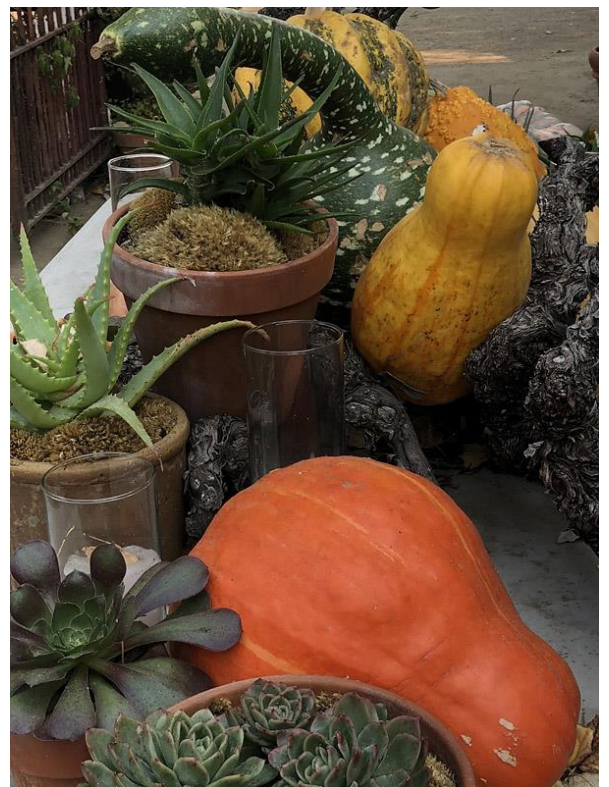
And let them eat light
 Let us eat light
 Let trees be
 Let us be

-- Marcia Smith



Harvey Abernathey

Laura Harrison





Marilyn Bagshaw

Quarantine

San Francisco, 1948,
I learn this word and live it.
I'm 5 and excited for weeks

to dance in the Temoff recital.
My fairy costume a pale blue
gauze dress embroidered with
silver circles, crinolines,
a star tipped wand and
ballet slippers.

On the big day, *infection*,
I awaken with a high fever.
It hurts to move: mumps - viral
meningitis. I'm put in a windowed
room at the hospital. See my
parents outside standing next
to the doctor wrapped in green
before I lose consciousness.

When I come to, there is a nurse who
brings food, pills, fresh sheets, takes off
her rubber gloves to bathe me with
hands like mother's--long slim fingers
nails polished red and imagine
her face, really beautiful. Feel so safe

with this gentle masked woman
who brings family messages with
gifts of books, stuffed animals, a shiny
red patent leather purse. Finally, it's time
to go home, but everything must be left
behind. I remember tears at having to leave
that red purse and tears for my nurse.

Remember surprise at her unremarkable
unmasked face, on this---the first day of
knowledge, that beauty is an inside job.

—Melanie Maier



Allan Smorra

Those Days

My childhood was the best of times. A day was endless and summers were long. A year was a year, not pages of a calendar hanging on the wall torn off one by one and gone.

Summer evenings were like another day. The garden was watered by our gardener Agha Bala, who came to our family when I was one year-old. I remember the lawn and his shovel digging in the soil. It is a frame in my mind so near as if it was today. Once, my *binky* fell on the loose soil. He pointed to a brown earthworm twisting around the pacifier and timidly said in his low voice that never rose in his lifetime, “Look, *joo joo kermeh* is eating your dummy” and after that I never put one in my mouth again and he got credit for it. He stayed with us until he died of cancer, before we left for America.

There was a fountain in the middle of a big pool in our garden. On occasions, such as my third birthday party, which took place on the second floor of our big house, the fountain was streaming high. I don’t remember anything of the feast or the cake, but there were fireworks, which were amazing. I had not seen anything like it before. My grandma held me up to watch before they took me to bed. The pile of presents was later arranged in a closet but only a few were opened and given to me. I think that party was not for me but only in my name.

The garden was arranged in a symmetrical pattern around the

pool. Each section had its own character and we called each a *bagh cheh*, or small garden. Around the *bagh chehs* there were lawns with a spectacular array of flowers that my mother chose each season and the gardener planted. In one of these we had apricot, plum, peach, and sour and sweet cherry trees. In the another *bagh cheh*, on the other side of the pool, apple, pear and pomegranate trees were planted. Paths wide enough to walk separated the *bagh chehs*. Water passing under the garden’s wall travelled in gutters to feed the older trees with thick trunks shading the garden and housing crows announcing every dawn and dusk with their loud caws.

In a smaller square *bagh cheh*, different from the four rectangular ones surrounding the pool, stood a special rose tree that looked like a bouquet. This unique rose was trimmed by one of the king’s gardeners who worked with Agha Bala for a while, trained him and left the work to him. The king’s palace, called Kakh Marmar, meaning marble palace, was about two blocks from our house. My childhood coincided with the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi who, as history says, sat on the throne after the coup orchestrated by CIA, toppling the democrat prime minister Mohammad Mosadegh. This was 1953. I was three years and two months old.

I have a vague picture of that day in my mind. I was playing with my red tricycle when unfamiliar loud noises broke the silence of our quiet



Harvey Abernathy

neighborhood, thus attracting my attention and curiosity. I ran to the door and opened it. Suddenly, I saw a river of angry men, swarming as if all were one unit of voice, shouting and moving down the alley. The presence of Agha Bala, our gardener, at that moment saved me from the stampede that could have crushed me under their heavy feet. He pulled me inside and closed the door.

Later on I learned the connection between that day and the coup that brought the Shah to power. I can truly say I witnessed history unfold!

Mitra Pourmehr

The author was born in Tehran and immigrated to the U.S. in 1996.

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

NEXT DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 15

Please send your final draft to
denizespringer@gmail.com

PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE SPECIFICATIONS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

ESCOM Journal

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www.marin.edu/escom

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