

ESCOM Journal

July/August 2022



Emeritus Students
College of Marin

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Doing

Lifelong Friendships

Photo: Harvey Abernathey

Welcome New ESCOM Council Members and Officers

Hello ESCOM!

Welcome to the summer semester at College of Marin and ESCOM. New officers and Council members were elected to the ESCOM Council at our May meeting.

Our president of the past three years, Luanne Mullin, is moving to a position on the Council. Luanne has carried us through COVID isolation with the greatest of ease (she just makes it look easy), and we all thank her for keeping us healthy and working together during these strange times.

I have come on as your new president, having served on the Council and the Program and Curriculum Committee for the last year. I took all my accounting classes at COM and then went on to San Francisco State University for my MBA in 1995.

Our new vice-president is Leonard Weingarten. His experience with business and marketing is a definite plus as we move ESCOM out of COVID isolation and into the light of

normal life again. Leonard worked directly with COM on the planning and building of our new Miwok Aquatics Center. Welcome aboard, Leonard.

We are all so grateful for Michael Semler, our outgoing Treasurer, who masterfully updated our accounting system and made it more user friendly. Thank you, Michael.

ESCOM's web editor, Richard Jensen, is our new Treasurer. He understands Michael's financial wizardry and will keep us on course for some time to come.

Our Council has not changed appreciably with this election. We need four more members to properly fill out the Council. I joined the Council last year because I wanted to learn more about ESCOM. It was a fun ride and I hope we can find more members willing to do the same.

I'd be grateful to hear from any of you who may wish to explore becoming an ESCOM Council member.

Meetings are monthly and new friendships abound as we talk about what is important to us in our community.

Now that we are starting to meet in person, more volunteers are needed. We always need help to assist with our social events, committees and marketing and speaker programs. We need you, whether it's to help for just an evening or afternoon, or to lend your expertise to our efforts. Straight out -- We *need you*.

If you have an interest in serving on the ESCOM Council or devoting your talents and energy to any of our committees, just contact me at the one of the emails below. Thank you!

-- Gary Gonser,

President and Program
Committee Chair at
ggonser3@gmail.com or
escom@marin.edu



Marilyn Bagshaw

The Black Keys

Go away from my window
Enter at your own risk
If you must
There is *nothing* here
You who bring nothing
Your life has been sucked out
on a screen
And it is *no dream*

Don't fool me with your fool's gold
And soulless smile

Please play only the black keys
If you must play at all
Because the piano has left the hall

In the middle of a Paris Cafe
I'm in a kind of mauve torpor
Must be channeling
All those existentialists
Between wars

Time disappeared
Then suddenly
A ray of light
showed me how
To walk through walls

But you won't understand
It's all "*misinformation*"
And the latest trend
Once again, war will give you
Another reason to *unfriend*

-Marcia Smith

Help Us Get the Word Out

It's easy, just:

Invite your friends to join you at an ESCOM event or club meeting.

Invite your friends to sign-up and become a member at:
www.marin.edu/escom

Let a member of the ESCOM Council or Membership/Marketing Committee know if you or an interested friend are part of another community or civic organization with which we could explore collaboration opportunities.

Let us know if you are part of a community or civic organization that is looking for a guest speaker, or is hosting a community event where ESCOM could have a display table or post information in each other's newsletter or website.

Ask your friends if they know someone who would be an engaging guest speaker for one of our events.



Penny Hansen

Marvelous and Marin

Mount Tam and Stinson
 Muir Woods and Point Reyes
 hiking and biking
 swimming and surf
 all in a day's ride
 Heaven on earth.

Fog kisses sunshine
 waves hug the shore
 peaks slope to valleys
 hawks and crows soar
 creeks empty and fill
 waves whisper and roar
 the senses are filled
 one can't ask for more.

Cheese, fruit and veggies
 oysters and beer
 crab feeds and barbecue
 music all year
 artists of all sorts creating each day
 so many choices to brighten your stay.

The Fair in July celebrates and displays
 Marin County's bounty for all of five days
 concerts and fireworks, food and rides
 animals, flowers will all be outside.
 from day into evening there's fun to be found
 you'll be Happy Together if you come around.

-- Anne Mulvaney



Laura Milholland



"Trout," Angela Barlow, watercolor

MEMOIR

The Best of Times

My youngest son, in his inestimable wisdom, reported my husband and myself to the DMV.

He maintains that the last time he visited he looked at our cars and noticed that the fenders were too banged up and decided we needed a refresher course in driving. I maintain he was afraid we were going to be involved in an accident. Nevertheless, we were contacted by the DMV and I was ordered to appear in Petaluma where I was interrogated by an Officer of the Court. I am positive her previous occupation was Head Guard at a Nazi concentration camp. She apparently had access to every one of my physician's records, including every medication I had taken over the last 20 years. In fact, she had knowledge of everything I had done over the last two decades. But I had a clean record. No tickets, No arrests. And I was completely unintimidated.

"Do you see the irony," I asked her, "Of my having an 87-year-old man drive me 50 miles up here?"

She ignored me and assigned me to a driver's test in Corte Madera. By this time it was 3 p.m., so we headed home. When we got to the garage, my husband let me out. Then he made too sharp a turn into the garage and tore the bumper off the car.

"What have you done to my car?" I screamed.

"It's your fault," he screamed.

"How could it be my fault? I wasn't even in the car?"

I took two Librium's, got into bed and went to sleep.

The next day we took my car to my husband's favorite repair shop. He asked for the boss, and an elderly man appeared. There was much patting of shoulders and shaking of hands. This was a relationship I did not understand.

I was escorted to the office and given a cup of excellent coffee and two biscotti. My car was taken to an undisclosed location, but soon returned with the fender in its original condition. Then I was



"Northbeach," Tami Tsark, oil

escorted back to my car like I was the Queen of England.

"How much do we owe you?" my husband asked.

"Nothing."

If the car door weren't securely locked, I would have fallen out in shock. *Nothing? NOTHING?*

My husband opened his wallet, pulled out a few bills and said something to his friend, most of which I could not hear except, "Give your staff a treat," he says.

Then he turns to me with a smug expression. "I told you it was not that bad."

-- Iris Tandler (Posthumously)

911 Uvalde, Texas

911 911 911

She whispered

Door ajar

Shooter here near

We are alive

Alone

Hearts in fear

Cannot speak louder

Shooter with AR-15

Loaded waiting

Death music playing

Nineteen armed officers 2 feet outside

talk walk

Actions needed

Lives at stake

We cannot be

Columbine Sandy Hook Buffalo

Too young inexperienced innocent to
die

Send in the clowns

Breach Breach Breach

No time to screech

We bleed

Death is nigh

Distract Distract Distract

Not ready to die

Salvation please

Classmates teachers blown apart

Laura Milholland



Eyes see only red red red

Shuttered to stop terror

Stop dying

19 minutes spelled our fate

We do not hate

Mother it's too late

We will meet on the other side

Where hate guns never reside

Guns kill like viruses

Need to vaccinate this terror

911 911 911

Please Answer

Bang Bang

Bang Bang Bang

-- Raymond Fay

MEMOIR

Hot For Welding

I'd been painting houses, I hated it. Hated the paint, the ladders. Hated the rig we pulled up on ropes to the top story of a building, and balanced on to paint our way back down to the ground.

So, welding started to sound good to me because it was a refined skill that someone had to teach you. It had a mystique, and let's face it, danger. I'd work with fire and melted metal, and it had special tools. You could go temporarily blind if you didn't wear a welder's helmet. You could get burned, maybe even electrocuted.

I signed up for welding school. A friend took up a collection in the boarding house where she lived, full of merchant seamen. She told them my story and they insisted on giving her money for my helmet, and tuition. Fifty years later I still have that helmet.

I showed up at a large shop where Mr. Killebrew, a gruff father figure, was the instructor. He'd been a pipe welder in Oklahoma, out in the field, where you have to know your stuff. He was a "Certified Welder," which meant his welds passed the x-ray test, the gold standard of welding. The shop had 14 welding booths, each with a machine that could run on 220 volt or 440 volts. Serious equipment.

Killebrew had his experienced students tutor us rookies. Mine picked up the stinger, the handle and the only thing that wouldn't burn you, and clamped a welding electrode into it, flipped down his helmet and lit up. As I watched the fire and electricity, I could see the bright white light reflection in my own helmet. Then he stopped and said, "you try it."

I grabbed the stinger and.... FROZE. All I could think about was the amount of current flowing through the electrode. Certain death. Couldn't do it.

"I'm scared of it," I finally admitted.

He didn't laugh, just insisted calmly that I try. I finally did and it was wonderful. The sound was like frying bacon, but really loud. The bright light seemed to reflect off my helmet window to the back of my helmet like lightning. I watched through the little darkened lens of my helmet window to see the "puddle," a small, melted area in the weld that my electrode was fusing into, joining one chunk of steel to another.

I learned the difference between 6011 (sixty-eleven)

7018 (seventy-eighteen) electrodes, which required a clean surface. The slag looked like a stack of dimes when it peeled off in one neat scab. I spent four months, five days a week learning.

After that I worked in Santa Monica, Honolulu, and Manhattan. We'd take cars and trucks; widen them to make floats for parades. Think Rose Bowl, St. Patrick's Day. With one company, I was widening truck axles, welding I-beam sections between severed halves. After I flipped up my helmet, I watched the grease from an old truck axle flame and smoke.

Along the way, I had other adventures. I jumped off a towering rock into a secret little pool along the Pali Highway. I will remember this for the rest of my life, especially since I didn't really know how to swim. I went down so far, I thought I would die. When I came to the surface, all the locals were clapping.

There were the two welders who competed against each other, working side by side all day, until they were both blinded from each other's arc, the luminous discharge of electricity between two electrodes. I put out a fire on an acetylene tank. The valve was aflame and the whole shop was staring, just waiting for it to explode. Remembering Mr. Killebrew, I ambled over to it, snuffed the flame with a rag, and shut the valve to cheers.

I once worked with a welder from Texas who dipped Copenhagen snuff. At the end of his shift the ground where he welded was covered in little spits. And there was Ray, a big Hawaiian who welded in flip-flops. When he struck an arc, a shower of sparks and molten slag fell on his feet. He just slowly marched in place flinging the slag. We welded in New York where they told us if we fall into the Hudson, "*seek medical attention immediately.*"

I got married, so my itinerant welding life was over, but I kept it up as a hobby. Eventually, I accumulated welding machines and an oxy-acetylene torch. I have a snapshot of my grinning daughter holding a stinger and electrode with her helmet flipped open.

But nothing lasts forever. Now I live in a condo with no garage. If my neighbors saw the arc-flash they'd flip. Too many trees and no safe place to work. So, I gave my welders to a guy who welds art pieces for Burning Man. I saw a giant Lotus he welded. I think he'll take good care of them.

-- Mike Holland

Ancient Muse

Because you dance with the moon.

Because you are often awarded the female
pronoun

and can make fools of men.

Because you so quickly change mood

Because you are often cold and ruinous
and you kill.

Because you inspired

the ancient Greeks and Romans,

and the *packet barque*,

the *Dutch galliot*, the *dogger*,

the *English lugger*, the *mud-scow*,

not to mention

the wooden leg,

mermaids,

pirates and madness,

the word "leviathan" and

Moby Dick.

Because you sustain the life

of the largest living animal on our planet
as well as the octopus.

Because you can gently nibble at the shore
just as nobly as you rage and roar.



Because you visit my dreams.

Because I can smell you in me.

Because you make me

feel like I -- like you --

could live forever.

-- Denize Springer



Photos this page: Laura Milholland



Laura Harrison

Dry

the land is thirsty,
relentless winds leave it dry
and the sun, that once brought
abundance now like a heartless landlord
has come to collect

yes we are on notice but will notice
be taken... too often it is an indifference
that comes from too many happy endings

we are overdue, the blessings once
bountiful and taken for granted are now
about to be rationed....this the penance
for a civilization founded on excess

always another tomorrow always
another chance
but chance favors the prepared mind
and minds are busy pursuing
excess
in other places

-- Chuck Beisch



Laura Harrison



Laura Harrison

"A little fool lies here"

– Mozart

He was not haughty
Perhaps a bit naughty,
But most likely gay and bright,
Mt starling, my friend, my delight.
I heard him in a pet store window
Mimicking my Concerto Number 17
An impressive feat I cannot contravene.



"Blooming," Paula Hammons, watercolor

He hopped up on my shoulder,
Couldn't have beem much bolder,
Full of mischief, a playful little soldier.
Of course I brought him home with me
And introduced him to my family
He entertained us night and day
In his musical, playful startling way.



"Bridge, Pt Reyes," Kathi V. Stewart

He was with us only three short years.
His death left me in sorrowful tears.
His whistles, burbles, chortles and cheeps
I brought alive in *A Musical Joke*,
A satirical divertimento I wrote,
Of humorous whistles and squeaks
Played by two horns and string quartet,
A tribute to Star, my whimsical, pet.

-- Carol Allen



Laura Milholland



"Civic Center with a Twist," Marilyn Bagshaw

The Passage

The hallway's dark now, empty, silent,
Still, as though its time has passed
Left to usher in but remnants
Of a life that did not last.
Cornshade walls that once had brightened
Pictures hung along its length
And embraced the warm and laughter
Emanating from its space
Now look weary, cold, confining
Sterile echoes crush my heart.
In a hallway built for passage
I am trapped before I start.

—Loryn Sweet-Winer



Louise Potter Yost



Allan Smorra

The Things We Leave Behind

Newscopy: 1953 March 18: "*LEFT BEHIND—When a man, tentatively identified as Ezra Bourland, of Larkspur, leaped to his death from the Golden Gate Bridge today, he left his car parked on the span. In the back of his 1950 Chevrolet coupe were these items: a pair of work shoes, a bottle of port wine, a paper-bound book called, 'I Should Have Stayed Home'.*" —San Francisco Public Library, Historical Photograph Collection

I worked in the Electric Shop at the Golden Gate Bridge for fifteen years and I have seen my share of things that were left behind. Backpacks, briefcases, bags, and personal items of clothing left on the sidewalk, or over the rail on the upper chord, serve as evidence that someone was once here and is now gone.

An inscription scribbled on the brim of a sunhat with a magic marker—*Today I am 1,000 months old*—stirs interest into a life that ended in suicide a few months shy of 84 years. A torn fragment of a paper bag with a rambling warning about the Diamond Project was left under a windshield wiper on a parked car. Its self-destructive author part of a growing number of lost, suffering, and misunderstood people.

A shopping bag full of shredded financial documents discovered over the rail at midspan. The only personal item: broken pieces of a hand-held, battery-operated, souvenir fan from the Exploratorium.

The most thought-provoking item that I found on the bridge is a very simple faux-pearl earring. It is nondescript except for three tiny, raised numbers—925—stamped on the side of the ear wire. Jeweler-speak to indicate that it is Sterling Silver.

I found this item one day when I climbed over the sidewalk rail to take measurements for a run of conduit that we planned to install. One earring, midspan. I looked around to see what else—who else—might be nearby. Apart from the passersby on the sidewalk above me, I was alone. Why one earring? How did it get there? Did someone accidentally drop it from the sidewalk? Was it left



Laura Milholland

behind by a suicidal subject? Some questions beg to be answered and sometimes we are better off not asking. I put the earring in my pocket and when I got back to the shop, I notified the Sergeant's Office about what I found. Nobody had reported a missing earring and they noted in the log that I had it in the shop for safekeeping. It remained unclaimed and, years later when I retired, I brought it home with me. I keep it as a reminder that some questions have no answers. Over the years this earring has become my bellwether: On a good day I look at it and envision someone absentmindedly running a hand through their hair, unaware that they had dislodged the earring from their ear lobe. On days when I'm not feeling spiritually fit, I can imagine a tale of heartache, pain, one where the only thing left in someone's life was to leave a memento, then jump.

Is the glass half-empty or half-full? The good news is that the glass is refillable. We have a choice and, if necessary, we can shift our point-of-view multiple times throughout the day. If life becomes overwhelming for you, remember that you are not alone.

Help is available 24/7: National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

-- Al Smorra

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

NEXT DEADLINE IS AUGUST 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 College of Marin. Founded in 1973, ESCOM provides diverse opportunities for lifelong learning, lifelong doing, and lifelong friendships.

ESCOM Journal

Editor, Denize Springer

Web Content Manager, Richard Jensen

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