

ESCOM Journal

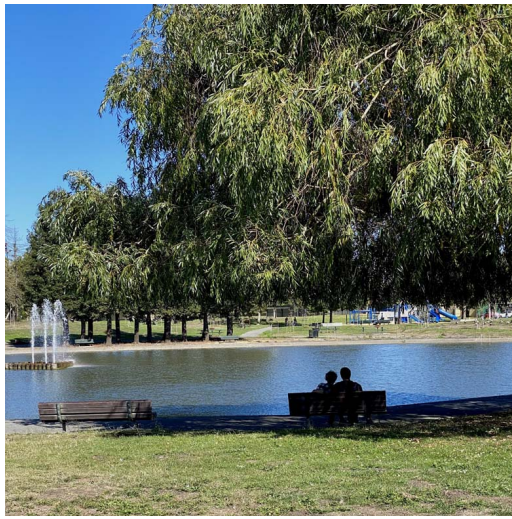
The Literary and Visual Arts Publication of Emeritus Students College of Marin

July/August 2025



Marilyn Bagshaw

INSIDE: *A Rio Nido Summer, Wyoming Pack Trip, The Essence that Abounds and Goats Gone Lavendar*



Nancy Pappas

Fledgling First Day Visible

His walk isn't waddle like the others,
but sleek like his feathers.

His legs are adolescent happy as he learns to
drink from the stainless-steel doggie bowl
where I leave daily clean water.

He nips the wing and cheek of the adult crow
and wants to play along the rim of the bowl.

He bathes in its clear silver water.

Soon he will hunt and I will no
longer recognize him.

But I know he will be alpha
with a deep crow voice.

Joan Taschian

Beach Road

I remember great grandpa's house on Beach Road: dormer windows; hanging boxes bulging with Petunias, third floor rooms with bunk beds where generations of cousins, after days of hide and seek all over the island, or swimming from the beach right into the bay, or venturing to Corinthian Island, slept their dreamless sleeps under quilts stitched by great grandma.

I remember that garden: Mommy and Aunt Jane tending ancient beds of begonias and delphinium, cosmos and golden rayed lilies and excitement when freesias bloomed from their corms and, on Sunday after church, how we had tea parties, under the spicy scented Laurel tree.

In the end, our generation had to sell the tongue-in-groove house great grandpa built in 1916—sell, his dream that it would be our *forever summer house*.

A young couple bought it (all cash) demolishing the day after swapping aged redwood for glass and steel, adorning eight bedrooms with Porthault sheets and French duvets, fitting out the bathrooms with icy marble bidets and a granite Cuisinarted kitchen with twelve burner Wolf stove and temperature constant wine cellar.

Sometimes I drive over to Belvedere, take a walk around the island just to make sure the morning glories and spongy moss on low stone walls, the licorice scented anise and prehistoric ferns yet endure—on Beach Road.

lynn arias bornstein



Harvey Abernathey

One Hundred Summers

July 1950

"I'm 30 years old," said the woman to her sister who sat next to her in the radiology waiting room.
 "I have a daughter to raise alone because her father walked out on us to be with his mistress. And now there's something growing in my stomach that's not supposed to be there. What's next...cancer?"

The younger sister wept silently and grasped more tightly the hand of the much-loved sibling she had known all her life and would soon lose to a disease for which there was no cure.

July 1975

She awakened abruptly in a place she'd never seen before.
 "Where am I?" she asked the person sitting on a chair near her bed.

"This is a place without a name you would understand," came the answer.

"Is my daughter here? She was here when I fell asleep, I think."

"No. You came alone. It was all very peaceful."

"What do you mean...peaceful?"

"Rest now. I'll be back later, and we'll talk."

July 2000

They conferred.

"She's still not ready."

"There's no rush. We'll give her a little more time."

July 2025

"Hello?" She sensed a presence before she saw anything. Someone approached who looked vaguely familiar.

"I feel a lot better," said the woman. "I'd like to go home now."

"You are home," came the response.



Laura Milholland

July 2050

"How long has it been?" asked the mother.

"I don't know. I think I've been here awhile," replied the daughter. "I lived to 98, even though I didn't want to. I wish I'd been able to give you about 20 of my years so you'd have seen your beautiful granddaughter. But life doesn't work that way. There are rules."

"There don't seem to be many rules about death, though. For instance, why am I getting to talk to you now?" asked the woman.

"Who knows? Unfinished business, perhaps?"

The mother looked at the child she had last seen when the girl was eight years old. "Did I give you what you needed to build a life in an uncertain world?" asked the mother. "The thing I feared most about dying was that I hadn't had time to prepare you for your life to come. That my disease meant that I had failed you."

"You didn't fail me, Mom. You gave me what I needed—the foundation for a good and productive life, which is what I've had. All through my life I wanted to tell you that."

"All through my time here I've needed to hear that," said the mother.

Two spirits who had been tightly linked in life merged into each other and drifted outward, to Altair, Deneb, and Vega, the stars of the summer sky.

Dianne Hendricks

Ashes

returning
to that
awful
thought

a whole
lifetime
to make
sense

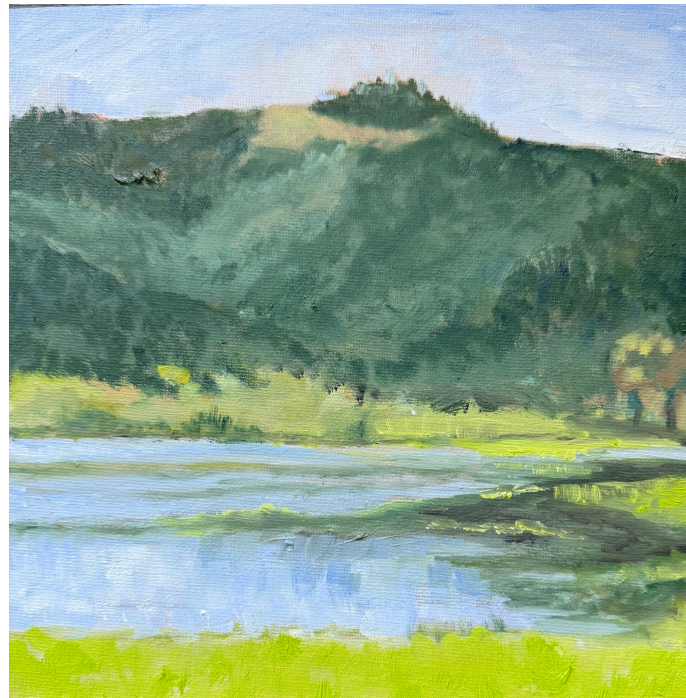
a moment
growing
seems
infinitely
sad

that tiny
bone
left
in a bottle
of ashes
tied with
a blue
ribbon
all that's
left of you

a film
running
backwards
as if we
ever had
privacy

families
at the far
end
of the
beach
still
picnicking

Marcia Taylor Smith



Stafford Lake, Jeff Ross

The Room Where the Aunts Died

As a child of seven, my life was
deeply disturbed by my being sent from
my wonderful Berkeley life.
Leaving my parents and younger brother behind,
I found myself living with my mother's mother,
a woman we called Nana, living in her Oakland home,
Where my mother had lived for most of her life.
Abandoned? A stranger in a strange land?
Perhaps I felt that at first.
Little by little I was loved by my Nana
Who spent hours with me, teaching me to crochet,
Walking to nearby shops,
and a special cereal bowl I have longed to find again.
The main discomfort I had was the bedroom assigned to me
Having shared a bedroom with my brother I was now alone.
At night I felt things moving around the room.
Actually visualizing objects moving on the walls.
My family finally arrived, and apparently my banishment
was the need for my mother to handle one child
while selling our sweet little home, rather than a wild child like me.
Later in life I learned that my room was where the aunts died,
Which is another story yet untold.

Joelle Vossbrink

Harvey Abernathey



The White Hairy Toilet Monster

He creeps into the royal loo with big boo to you who
 He watched the bodies lie and grind to the beat of marching feet.
 His renown shall be amongst the unknown of history.
 Scary hairy I am hiding
 Underneath my blanket covers
 As if waiting for my parents to find me
 Lonely, frightened of toilet monsters.
 Yet through my door not on little cat feet
 As if fairy dust sprinkling the toilet seat
 Where beneath cinnamon scented broom
 An Alcatraz bear is riding
 Sat a king of grace which is royalty's calling.
 Majesty exists my door with toilet paper flowers
 Mom taught the Brownies to make.
 Nothing that isn't an expose'
 Comes to focus in the light of day.
 Duty does as duty does
 Pains of faith.
 My brother dying,
 Without leaving orders
 I recall his last remarks,
 "There has to be a God."

Karen Arnold

Butterfly

The sky is soft and wide

The breeze is on your side.
 Though shadows cloud your way,
 You know they will not stay.

The seed must sleep awhile,
 Then bloom with sun and smile.
 The stream may pause its song—
 But still, it flows along.

The buds will burst in spring,
 And larks again will sing.
 So you will lift your eyes
 And learn again to rise.

Cocoon if you must
 Love waits on the other side
 Fly when you see light.

~Ray Fay

Wyoming Pack Trip

*when faces called flowers float out of the ground
and breathing is wishing and wishing is having*
e.e. cummings

Flower faces floating out of muddy meadows, out of dry hillsides, along creeks and in the piney woods greeted us, bowing their heads in the breeze. And we welcomed them like old friends, calling out their names as if presenting them at a ball. *Perry Lousewort, Scarlet Gilia, Lewis Monkeyflower, Silky Phacelia, Rose Pussytoes*, the list is endless, the flowers as colorful and varied as their names.

July 1994 was our groups third year in a row to ride out of Brooks Lodge into Wyoming's Bridger Teton Wilderness. Our destination, once again, Paul and Mary's camp nestled into the pines on the edge of upper Pendergraft meadows. We'd arrived Friday afternoon excited to be back in Jackson Hole. We all knew the drill and after checking into the Antler Motel raced off on our errands, obtaining fishing licenses, beer and soft drinks before a hurried round of shopping among the myriads of outlet stores.

When I was eight years old my heart's desire was to live on a ranch in Wyoming. I'd read Mary O'Hara's books *My Friend Flicka*, *Thunderhead* and *The Green Grass of Wyoming* and I yearned to be where wild horses owned flower carpeted plateaus, where the albino stallion knew secret exits from box canyons and where flash floods filled ravines with torrents after thunderstorms.

Thirty some years of wishing became having when I arrived in Wyoming with my husband Matt, stepdaughter Alexis and our dog Lupine. Sharing this first Wyoming adventure were our friends Jim and Nancy Bundschu and two of their children, Katy and Robbie. We'd driven from California, taking two days, and arrived at Paul and Mary's Dog Creek ranch near Jackson Hole, early in the afternoon on July 1, 1992.

Paul's eyes flashed over our band of nature enthusiasts. Then he shot a stream of tobacco over the log railing of the porch. He was shy and gruff with us on this first meeting, but we hardly noticed because it felt so great finally being freed from our cars into warm sunshine and air fresh and redolent with pine.

"How many of you know how to ride?" He'd shot this question out with another stream of tobacco.

Our group varied from novices to experienced riders, but I instinctively knew Paul would judge us not from our answers but wait and make up his own mind after he saw us



Susan Connelly

in the saddle, or in my case, on my bareback pad.

After making arrangements to meet us early Sunday, he waved us off with, "Maybe I'll see you at the rodeo on Saturday night."

We took up Paul's off-hand invitation to the Saturday night rodeo. Now an annual event, it's a highlight and bonus of our pack trip.

"Matt Connelly, Gilroy is looking for you", booms from the announcer's mic. And suddenly, there's Paul, a wide grin gleaming on his wide face through two days of stubble. Clyde and Lowell, our guides/friends from our last two trips are with him. They whisked us off to the Cowboy Bar where we perched on uncomfortable Mexican saddles that pretended to be bar stools. Clyde grabs my hand and whirls me onto the dance floor for a lesson in the cowboy two step. It's great to be back.

The next day we left Jackson Hole in the dust and drove east crossing the continental divide to Brooks Lodge where we met Paul and his crew. There were new faces among the wranglers saddling our horses and I handed one my bareback pad. He looked at it in askance and began to protest when Paul walked by.

"Just put it on her horse, she knows what she's doing."

Halfway through the six-hour ride to camp we'd stopped and picnicked at an old trapper's cabin. Lowell opened a pannier on one of the pack horses and handed out sandwiches stuffed with roast elk, the roast, gifted to Mary from a fall hunter client. We continued our ride through lodgepole pines, many knobby with tree cancer. The horses were gingerly picking their way up and down through a rough area called the rock garden when Lowell, riding lead, suddenly stopped his horse and pointed to a hill across from us. We trained our binoculars where he pointed to catch a rare sighting of a wolverine. A promising omen for our trip.

Susan Connelly

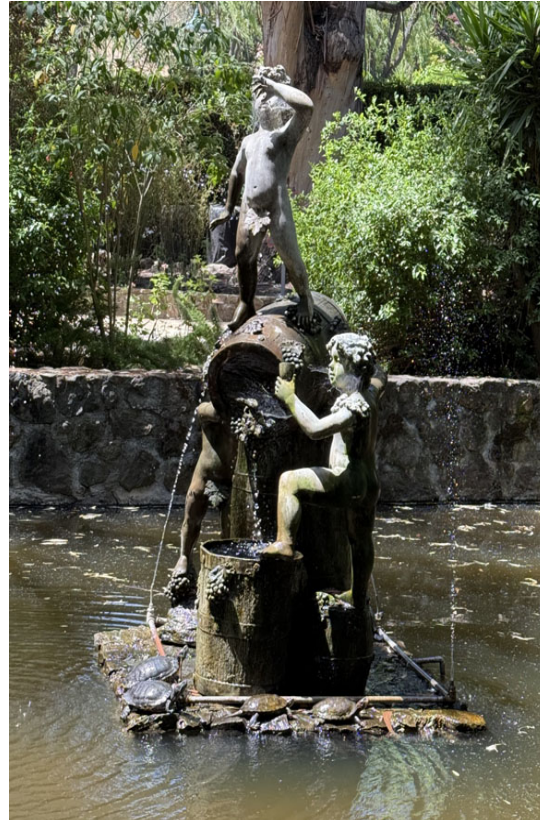
Metamorphosis

There are Monarchs in the garden
I caught one resting
among the lavender and roses
taking time to stop awhile
among the fragrant blooms
the black and orange colors
perfect for the season.

A pair often fly together
soaring high into the air
they look like small specks dancing
to music only they can hear.

I think of how they started
tiny eggs clinging to a leaf
do caterpillars dream of flying?

Members of the butterfly brigade
were out this morning checking-
eggs, caterpillars, chrysalises
resting, crawling, hanging
on or near the milkweed
planted in the Spring-



Nancy Outenreath

hoping for more Monarchs to emerge.

The garden is now habitat
for endangered treasure
whose existence is imperiled-
joining others on a mission
to restore a small part
of our ecosystem
let the metamorphosis begin!

Anne Mulvaney



Marilyn Bagshaw

Thing by Thing

Your home office is cluttered with
things from the past, things you neither
need nor use, says my wife,
give them away and save precious few
things old for you for others are new.
(And even I could see
giving up pieces of what
I once was makes way
for what's yet to be.)
I start with the books piled
ceiling to floor stretching back
to 1960's college days
Books I'll not read again
that shaped what I believe
and how I perceive who I am.

May my giving ripple out
into salaries and skills for
those who work at Goodwill
stir readers' souls as they once did
mine while I live this new life some
impolitely call over the hill.
These books are but the start
of things I know must depart
bit by bit, one by one, from this room
mosaic pieces of mine and me
a cobbled together identity
of the life I'm passing through
I now pass along thing by thing
out the door and into the hands
of another someone new.

Larry Tolbert



Tom Cannon

Sunday Mornings at Tree Tops Our Rio Nido Summer Cabin

bacon sizzling in the cast iron pan
 mom whisking eggs from
 the outdoor icebox in the
 brown stoneware mixing bowl
 blackberries dad had gathered
 swimming in ivy patterned
 bowls toasted sour dough set
 on the redwood picnic table.

Edwardian rocker daybed couch

French doors open to the deck

after breakfast we ambled

down the hill to St. Helen's

for mass where teens

convened outside to gossip

about Saturday night

and dancing to Dick Crest*

who'da thought the boy

chatting me up would be

the father of my children Barbara McDonald

**Dick Crest led a small orchestra at Rio Nido's outdoor concerts and dances in the fifties.*



Blood Orange, Tami Tsark

The Essence that Abounds

A slender break within the pavement:
 Nature has found life.

Small, green shoots springing forth
 reaching up for warmth and light.
 Perhaps a weed with naught import
 yet one responding to the urge and
 prompt which Earth promotes.

Far and wide within this planet,
 we reach and grow:

the essence of miracles
 surrounds us, simply as part
 of the daily process.

Let's not ignore the constancy
 of life which abounds, surrounds
 and fulfills with creative realization.

For within us is that reach to know
 to learn and savor
 the uniqueness of all forms of life,
 as together we live, grow and evolve.

deidre silverman

Beyond Borders

(Dedicated to Dave)

Boarding boredom shut down and shallow

Hovering hauntingly however it happens

Sitting silently searching for a clue

Innocently sudden reaching for the truth

Lastly but not least hearts shudder and shake

It is only the wind winding down the path with snowflakes

Thank you for guiding the searching softly footsteps I take

I only wanted to be near you in the face of someone real not fake

Forever that is where I want to be

in your arms lightly folded in on me

I know it is there you stir the flames burning hot in my heart

Certainly passion for truth will be with you wherever you start

Time inches on in moments of bliss

Thankfully I can reach for you with another kiss

Graven is the image that takes you away

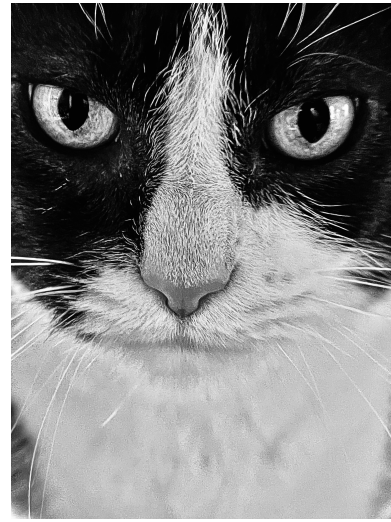
Haunted is my mind that limits the length of your sway

Your consciousness leaves the world to wonder what it said

To make you go to work and stick with it all in your head

I admire your goodness and sweet devotion too

I admire your goodness and sweet devotion too



Wisdom, Sharon Fusco

A Rose So Fair

Can you shine any brighter,
smile any wider?
Like a little girl with a secret
you just can't hold inside,
blurt it out, girl,
tell it, to the whole world
before your petals fall off.
Tell us of your journey
from a tiny bud
to full blown bloom.
Were you always so fair,
or has age faded your petals?
Was it a struggle to get this far
or were you blessed with sunshine
and just the right amount of rain?
No matter your story,
you have grown to full beauty.
I see you smiling even as your petals fall.

Carol Allen

I trust in your level headedness to continue with what you do

Perhaps there is a vision ahead for us to ring in the charms

There I will be more than grateful that I landed in your arms

Cynthia Rovero

Mother's Other Name

In the winter of 1956, I was six years old coughing & wheezing so bad I was sent by ambulance to Children's Hospital in Denver with pneumonia. I was a skinny waif of a child with gaunt blue eyes lying in bed encased in a plastic bag surrounding me that was known as an 'oxygen tent'.

Penicillin shots were used to fight pneumonia for children like me who couldn't breathe. Back in the 1950's there were a few limited hours a day a parent could visit their child in isolation, not like it is today's visiting hours are longer in hospitals.

When it was time to leave the ward as the visiting hours had ended it was difficult to watch my mother or father leave me. I'd cry coughing but not for very long because it hurt my lungs. It was a long, lonely stretch of time being sick & frail seeing few people except for the doctors and nurses. But I missed my parents and my home.

After four months, I finally got strong enough to be able go home. While happy to be back in the bosom of my family I had to face going back to school. Missing that much of school, I could barely read and had to reacquaint myself with my classmates.

After a brief stint at home, it was time to go back to school; so my mother held my hand walked me down the long hallway to Miss Burkey's first grade classroom & there she was able to get permission to stay for a while to see how I'd adjust back in school. Not to draw attention to herself, my mother sat in the back of the classroom while up at the front, Miss Burkey started class.

After we all recited, The Pledge of Allegiance, I was called to come forward to the teacher's desk. Miss Burkey asked me to introduce my mother to the class. This was awkward for me, but I pointed to my mother sitting at the back of the class, and as the children turned around, I said, 'This is my mother.' Moving away from the teacher to return to my seat as this short performance was over, or so I thought, Miss Burkey pulled me back to her desk and said to me, 'No. You did not introduce your mother properly to the class. Debbie, can you think of another name used for your mother to introduce her?'

I hadn't learned yet the sophisticated form of etiquette introductions, but I would learn as a teenager, as I was supposed to say, 'I would like to introduce you, to my mother, Mrs. Dow.'

Being put on the spot nervously I was searching my mind to recall another name for my mother?

With all I could muster, I quickly blurted out the only other word for my mother used in our household was, 'My father calls her, 'Honey!'

While all the kids were laughing at my response I was looking at mother at the back of the class she had a twinkle in her eye, I believed she was proud of me at that moment. She said it was the best spontaneous answer a child could give on a moment's notice.

Mother said, Miss Burkey's face turned beet red though not happy with my response, my mission was accomplished as I returned to my seat. We kids called her 'Miss Turkey' behind her back.

Of course I'd forgotten this little episode as a child. Years later I was my mother's caregiver at a retirement community, and there she relayed the story to me just as fresh as she had witnessed it yesterday, after which we both laughed savoring the moment. My father's term of endearment calling her 'Honey' was apt because he loved her and so did all of her four children.

Deborah J. Dow



Wood Puzzle, Linda Patek



ESCOM

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NEXT DEADLINE IS AUGUST 15

Please send your **FINAL** draft to

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PLEASE ADHERE TO THESE SPECIFICATIONS

Submit only one piece of final, proofed work. Changes, unless 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.