

ESCOM Journal

January/February 2023



Emeritus Student
College of Marin

Lifelong Learning

Lifelong Doing

Lifelong Friendship

Photos: Laura Harrison

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Dear ESCOM Members:

Welcome to the latest edition of the ESCOM Journal. I'm writing this after a whirlwind three months at ESCOM. The holiday season is here and we are celebrating some time off and a new year. It's time to look at our blessings with cheer and hope.

The "Home for the Holidays" winter membership meeting brought us back to the Kentfield center on December 3, with Lori Friedman and Valerie Marckwordt giving a rousing talk on the meaning of ESCOM, through different interpretations of the initials. Two Continuing Education instructors told us about their work. The party ended with a concert by Mayflower Chorus members.

This followed on the heels of a very successful art exhibit in the Kentfield office. On October 19, seven of Alexandra Bailliere's art students from her 2022 CE *plain art* class at IVC presented their paintings in the exhibit. Some

40 people attended the initial reception to support ESCOM and the artists.

Our "Spotlight Presents" program on October 7th featured a talk by the League of Women Voters of Marin/Sonoma on the November midterm election propositions. We had a record turnout for this ZOOM program of 150 people, which exemplified the importance of our new programs.

Be sure to mark your calendars for October 14, 2023, when we will be celebrating our 50th Anniversary. We are planning an entertaining celebration of our history from 1973. The celebration will be held at the Jonas Center on the IVC campus, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm in the afternoon, with pre-show activities and a post-show reception.

With the flurry of activity for our programs and our golden anniversary celebration, we need volunteers more than ever.

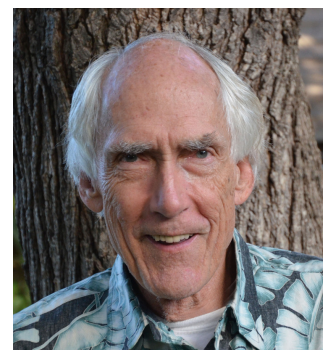
Now is the time to get involved in interesting work with ESCOM

that will carry us through 2023. As we come back to in-person events, we need helping hands and minds to keep us moving forward. If you want to get involved, please send us an email to escom@marin.edu. We will help get you started.

Last but not least, I want to thank every one of you who have made an annual gift to ESCOM so we can continue our programs and celebrate our Golden Anniversary this year. If you haven't yet and would like to you can make your contribution online at: escom.marin.edu/donate

You can also mail or leave a donation to/at either of our ESCOM offices.

-- Gary Gonser, President, ESCOM Council





Laura Milholland

ESCOM Journal Contributor News

An essay by contributor and a long-time COM Continuing Ed student, **Larry Tolbert**, was published in a new anthology. The collection titled *Homeward! Personal Stories on the Search for Belonging*, was published by the Birren Center for Autobiographical Writing in November 2022. Tolbert studied with two teachers trained in the Birren Guided Autobiography ("GAB") method of writing including Melanie Vetter at the College of Marin's Community Education.

The following is an excerpt from Tolbert's essay titled *Grandma and the Country Revival Meeting*:

"Revival meetings were periodic, maybe once a year. Perhaps an updated count of souls yet to be saved is what triggered the arrival of the circuit-riding revivalist preacher. You see, a revival event called for a soul-saving specialist—the regular Sunday minister just wouldn't do."

Homeward is available in the College of Marin libraries or on Amazon at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/1737929627>

ESCOM Journal Editor **Denize Springer** will teach a prose-writing workshop this semester on Zoom. The six-week workshop focusing on short fiction, memoir and personal essay, is partially supported by an Anonymous Fund at the Marin Community Foundation, so the tuition is only \$68! For this reason, the workshop is expected to fill up quickly. For more info and registration go to: <https://marincommunityed.augusoft.net>

YOU CAN HELP...

New Leaders for ESCOM Clubs set the time and day for meetings, lead the meetings and keep the ESCOM Council informed about their clubs, are needed for the following clubs:

Spanish Club

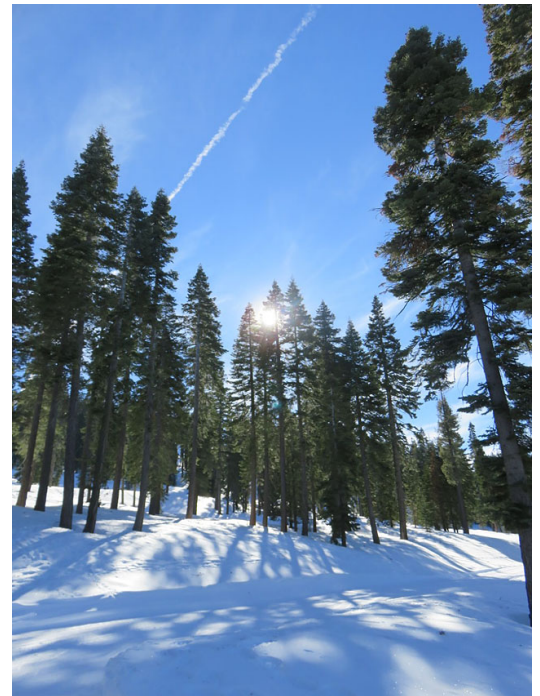
Humanities assistant

Hiking/Outdoors

Please contact Ellen Braezeale for more information at breazeales@comcast.net or 415/892-6546.

We ALSO need **volunteers at the Kentfield office** These volunteers will answer phone calls, welcome anyone coming in to the office and provide ESCOM materials and keep the room a welcoming place will serve one 4 hour shift a week and get free parking. Please email us at escom@marin.edu

Laura Harrison



And Don't forget...

... to mark your calendars:

March 31 and April 28: ESCOM and Book Passage Author's Series

Oct. 14: ESCOM's 50th Anniversary Celebration

Boss Man Ed

Long ago I worked for Ed. He was a man other men loved to be around. He was big, loud, had eyebrows like a cave man, had a gravelly baritone voice. He laughed and joked all day, and would talk to anybody. He'd been in the Army, pre-Vietnam, and had stories about "backpack nukes." He had a friend, a six-foot-plus, Chinese/Irish guy from Boston, named Peter O'Bannion. He was a boxer, who liked to show off his uppercut on the bag. Story was, he'd killed a man in a bar fight back East. One of Ed's many admirers.

Ed was a licensed painting contractor. I'd go with him to the wholesaler to get paint for a job. We'd load 20 or 30 gallons on his truck. Sometimes on the way back he'd just keep driving past the job. Once we walked into an Irish bar on Geary at 11:00am. The bartender greeted us with "Ahh, a couple o' tersty men," and set us up. Kept us there most of the afternoon. Ed repeated the bartender's greeting fghor years. I don't remember much else from that day.

We were ducking work, sitting in his truck one day up on Diamond Heights, looking down at the City, each with a six pack, guzzling and laughing like a couple of chimpanzees. Ed, tears in his eyes, turned and vomited his beer out the window and without missing a heartbeat, turned back to me still laughing. Ed might be telling a story, smiling and looking right at you. In the middle of that without breaking stride or taking his gaze off you, he might grab his white painter's hat and scratch his head with both hands simultaneously. Still looking right at you, laughing, telling the story. I'd think, "never seen that before," but he thought nothing of it.

One weekend three of us drove up to a remote area outside Garberville to visit a friend. He lived on an old ranch with a family cemetery so we all, of course, walked out to see it. The four of us were standing, talking in a circle about ten feet across as people do. We heard a hissing noise, only to see Ed was standing right there at his place in the circle. Taking a leak. Sober. He was the most unselfconscious person I ever met. Looked surprised at everybody backing away from him.

Ed had an impact on my future as well. We were working on a paintjob in Colma: Everyone knew a visit to *Historical Old Molloy's* was a required stop. Almost every funeral party returning from the cemetery had been stopping there since 1927 to toast the departed. It was a pub where we felt comfortable. We ate lunch, then lingered drinking beer all afternoon. My girlfriend had said we should get married but I wasn't sure. I asked Ed for an opinion. "Go ahead and marry her."

OH, IT'S ON!

ESCOM Journal's Annual New Year Challenge

Writers, artists and photographers, here's your chance to recharge your creativity for the New Year while helping to usher in ESCOM's 50th year and Golden Anniversary!

Our theme for this year's challenge is *GROWTH, MATURITY and/or GOLDEN.*

The submission process for the next issue will be the same (please see revised submission guidelines on the last page of this issue), but preference will go to all entries that address this theme and/or the season of spring. Selected entries will appear in the March/April 2023 issue.

Later I asked another friend, Monty, who quoted Khalil Gibran: "if you love someone let them go. If they come back it was meant to be." I decided to tell her I wanted to break it off, and arranged to meet her at The Cliff House. I tipped the greeter \$10 and we got a window table. The tide was in, surf crashing, sea lions barking, sun going down. Beautiful. I opened my mouth to tell her the bad news and instead what came out was "So, you wanna get married?"

Years later I had pretty much lost track of Ed, but saw him at a mutual friend's house. I drove him home and it was just like the old days. Eight months later I got a call that he was in the hospital with a stroke. I went to visit him that afternoon. He looked bad. I took his hand and asked him if he recognized me: "Hey Eddie, it's the dog!" a take on *The Howlin Dog*, my CB radio handle. When Ed had found that out, I was forever *The Dog* at work.

Ed scowled at me, like he'd never seen me before. I stayed awhile with him, his wife and their three sons. He died two days later.

At his memorial there were at least 300 people in a large auditorium. His four brothers and a sister came up from L.A. Lots of people got up and told stories about him. Lots of laughter.

Ed really was one of a kind, I was lucky to have known him.

Mike Holland



Laura Milholland

If We Only Knew

"In 2021, 117,000 doctors left the profession."

San Francisco Chronicle, November 21, 2022

*"If we only knew
Why doctors are quitting..."*

They work 48-hour shifts, lacking Covid protections,
Deal with angry patients waiting in the ER for 12-18 hours,
Undressed, exposed, fear and abandonment in their hearts.

Hostile environment. No overtime benefits.
No corporate redress. No professional complaints accepted.
Medical heroes with sleepless nights, feel rage and conflict.

The U.S. is the wealthiest country in the world, with the most
And best vaccines. And yet we have had over three million dead,
The worst death toll in the world. This is untenable.

Once doctors quit—ethics, conscience and hard work violated,
They will never return. Is it too late for a change? *We know*
Why doctors are quitting. The question is, do we really care?

-- Ray Fay, M.D.

Ants

I sincerely want to love
all creatures great and small
but find I'm having trouble
with the smallest of them all.

Ants invade my kitchen
the tiniest I've seen
I'm told they're Argentinian
why did they have to leave?
I'm sure in Argentina
there's work for them to do
but no, they're in my cat's dish
and in the pantry too.

I kill them with abandon
using sprays and wipes and fingers
they seem to go away
but then come back to linger
I wish they'd stay outside
to do the job of cleanup
instead they randomly appear
inside my favorite teacup.

I'm trying to contain myself
I'm trying not to rant
I want to love all creatures
But when it comes to ants-I can't.

-- Anne Mulvaney

What Would Calliope Do?

I

Maybe have a tequila
More likely an ouzo

Because she just can't
Take it anymore

This human world
Not even demi-gods
Are behaving

She thought she taught them well
Now they act out like spoiled brats
More head than heart

What happened?
Uranus is apparently out of control
Just like Pluto

Now everyone is acting like a Siren
Without a song

Gaia was told she no longer mattered
Driverless cars tack about
Like ship's without a sail
With a couple of bodies in the back
Afraid to look out the window

Now, the machine is more important than anything
And the pale glazed faces glued to them
Never look up

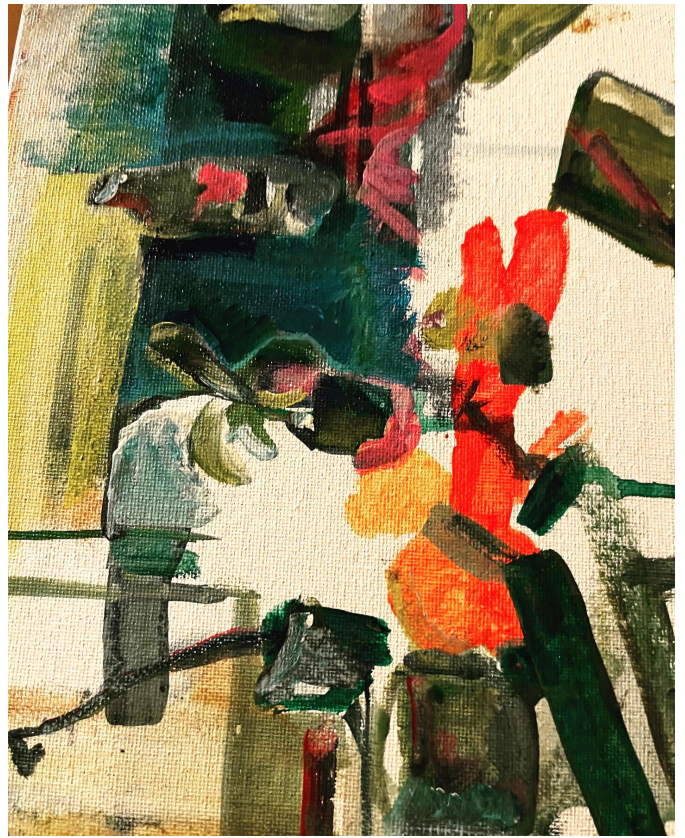
II

And what happened to Homer in the end?
Has paradise been lost forever
Ovid's gone to dust, maybe starlight
Didn't I teach them anything?

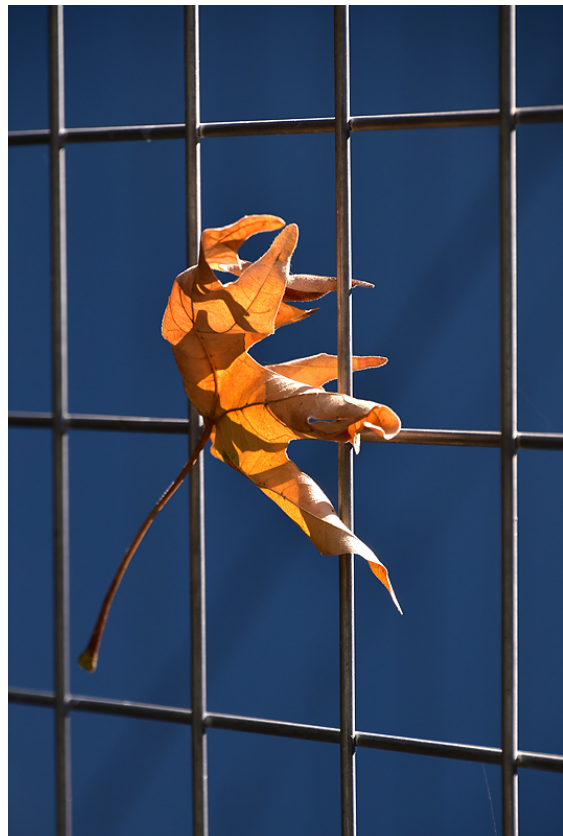
III

At least there is the Calliope
That strange rolling instrument
Happy circus sounds—like laughter
Music to my ears.

-- Marcia Smith



"Abstraction After RD," Mixed Media, Tami Tsark



Laura Milholland



"Nevada Desert Rainbow," Oil, Ronnie Bogart

Excuse Me, I Need to Be There

(Cowbird song)

My eggs are coming fast
They need a place to hatch
I suppose I should have asked
For space aside your batch

Just get used to it I say
Make room, my eggs plan to stay
White with spots brown and grey
Had to toss some of yours away

But I'll bow deeply and sing
Spread my feathers, tail and wing
Be sentry while you raise my brood
With no thanks at all for their food.

My hatchlings are big they grow fast
Most likely some of yours will be trashed
There is no point in you looking aghast
Just remember only the fittest will last.

-- Carol Allen

My Desk

Another move. Another floor plan. Measure the windows. Check to see how the light angles in. These autumn afternoons, the shafts of light are yellow and long. What will they be like in winter? In spring? In summer?

The first thing to decide is where to put my desk. Does feng shui matter? Must it face the entryway, so no one can sneak up on me from behind? Actually, that's secondary. The big problem about finding a spot for it in the floor plan is that the desk is gigantic. It takes up as much space as a three-cushion sofa. Friends say, "You're moving to a smaller place—get a smaller desk." I can't. I can't let it go.

It's absolutely simple—no drawers, no carving, no finials, just built like a box with one side open. The well-worn wood is solid cherry with a clear varnish. When I rest my bare arm on it to write, it feels warm, almost soft, and very smooth, except for the spots where I dragged something across it and made light scratches and that one spot where I accidentally let a cigarette burn the surface back in the days when I was smoking. I've had it for 25 years. It's where I worked at home on nights and weekends and drafted all those speeches, planned all those projects, edited all those papers, wrote all those memos. It's where I did all my personal writing—greeting cards and bank checks and to-do lists and what-to-pack lists and journal entries trying to figure out what to do or how to do or who I am and love letters that I sent or tore up and rewrote or tore up and tossed; it's where I signed official documents—mortgage refis, car leases, contracts with repair people, divorce papers. It's where I started trying to write again—a bit of memoir, some flash, a few poems, a few stories.

I can't let it go. It's home.

-- Judith Goff

The New Not-So-Merry Minuet

They are rioting in Washington, do doodle doodle do,
 There's war in Ukraine. do doodle doodle do.
 It really doesn't seem like fun, do doodle doodle do.
 And, California needs rain.

The whole world is on the edge, we can't seem to agree.
 The Reds and the Blues and the new Bourgeoisie.

We're drowning in plastic waste, with prices sky high.
 The market is jumpy, should we sell or should we buy?

They'll be shivering in Germany, when they shut off all the
 gas.

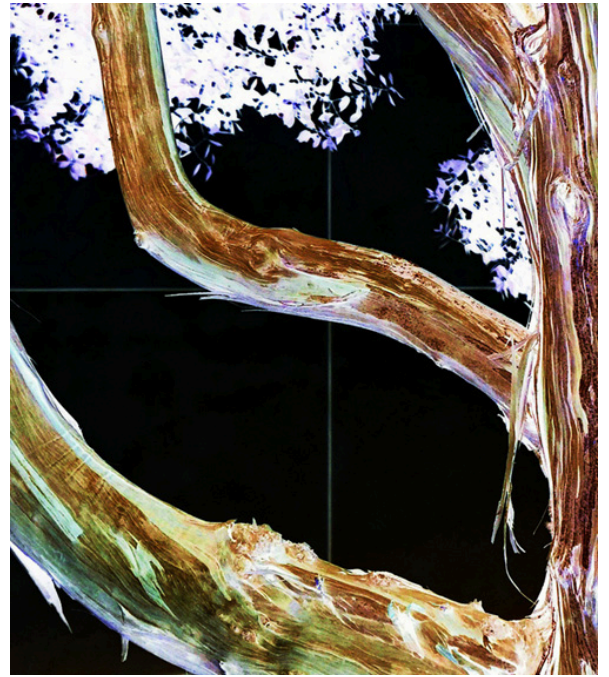
And here's to all the politicians: Kiss my _ _ _.

Look back in history, and, what all do we see?
 It's a Merry-Go-Round, but, we still can't break free.

And, yet we seem hopeful and thankful and proud.
 With screens in our pockets, we can live in the cloud.

But we know for certain that some lovely day,
 Someone will switch the power off
 And we will have to find another way.

-- Jeff Lemontt



"Twisted," Marilyn Bagshaw



"Shadows," Marilyn Bagshaw



"My Secret Trees," Watercolor, Patty Young



Laura Milholland



Laura Milholland

Modern

Microsoft took my memory
Facebook stole my friends
Mac stole my lap
Google snatched my search
Twitter locked me out
YouTube just pretends
Every time I think a thought
You take it for your own
Every time I make a buck
You take ten
Just how free are you
My friend?

-- Marcia Smith

Laura Harrison

I Walk the Mountain

I walk the mountain
 To breathe through the pain
 To sort through my thoughts
 And to call out my name
 To forget who I was
 And to guess who I'll be
 And the mountain's right there
 To watch over me
 And the mountain's right there
 To watch over me.

I walk the mountain
 To push through the loss
 To slip past the shadows
 And pry off the moss
 To access my spirit
 That's hidden away
 And to give it a chance
 To come see a new day
 And the mountain's right there
 To watch over me
 And the mountain's right there
 To watch over me.

I walk the mountain
 To absorb its sheer essence
 To inhale its beauty
 And to melt in its presence



"Mt. Tam from Las Gallinas," Jeff Ross

To become a small part of
 The mountain's own soul
 And the mountain's right there
 To help make me whole
 And the mountain's right there
 To help make me whole.

—Loryn Sweet-Winer

Resolutions

This year, we faced the unimaginable.
 We felt fear unlike anything we felt before
 Drew on courage we didn't know we had
 Tolerated unbearable loneliness
 Learned to keep our dreams inside and
 When we ran out of hope, we endured.

Let us vow to celebrate ourselves.
 May the coming year bring us
 good health, joy and dreams that thrive.

-- Katherine Bonenti



Kathi V. Stewart

The Alchemy of Mercy

The cool, young *Welcome Back Cotter* type teachers were rare at my high school. Louis Clapps was bald, fat and wore old glasses through which, we were all sure, he had personally witnessed the Middle Ages.

He would always start his chemistry class the same way. He'd light the Bunson burner, strike a wooden match and hold it over his head. The din of our bitching about teachers and parents eventually went silent and rapt as each of us watched and waited for him to burn his finger or blow up the lab. Somehow he knew we'd all settle down before either occurred.

I was failing chemistry my senior year mainly because I spent every waking moment acting, singing and dancing in school and community plays. And the possibility that I wouldn't graduate with kids I'd known since kindergarten took my breath away.

Always the dreamer, however, I convinced myself that if I studied hard enough, I could pass the final. But my approach was no different than my midterm. I guessed at the answers and simply hoped enough of them would be correct. When I put down my pencil, I knew my situation was hopeless.

Clapps stood at the door to collect our tests as we left his classroom for the last time.

"I know you have a bright future ahead of you," he said to everyone but me. When he got to me, he

asked, "How do you think you did?"

"Okay," I lied.

"Hey," I saw you in the play last week. "You were pretty good."

I nodded. It was all I could manage. I was numb. I would have to tell my parents I wouldn't graduate and take what came with that.

"Tell me," he said, "What do you plan to do after you graduate?"

"Huh?"

"Do you plan to go on the stage?"

All I really wanted to do was run to the Girl's Room and puke, but when I looked at his face I froze.

"I tell you what," he said with a smile so angelic it was hard to look away. "If you promise to use your God-given talent on the stage, I'll pass you."

I could hardly believe what I heard, but I managed another shaky nod and rushed off before Clapps had any time to change his mind.

He kept his promise. But I didn't keep mine. Instead, I applied my talents to a career writing for charitable organizations. Clapps had shown me that adding some mercy to a cloudy formula of failure might produce a little gold.

-- Denize Springer



Laura Milholland

Eulogy for My Friend Bob

Bob and I met at a 3:00 PM weekday happy hour about two years ago. We were both too old to stay out after dark. We had to hurry home when it was not daylight savings time. Bob was a wine drinker while I was a beer drinker, he paid by credit card, I paid with cash, and so we did have a difference or two.

President Trump was in office, and I had a lot to say about him since he was not my favorite President. I think Bob voted for him because he defended him like a brother. Our discussion was civilized, even if it was political, and we were drinking alcohol. These types of discussions could end up in a bar fight, but we were too mellow and intelligent for that endeavor. It would have been amusing if we had a bar fight, remember no hits that might make us bleed since we both take aspirin and other drugs that cause bruising and bleeding without the bar fight. As indicated, we were smart enough to remain civilized, and cling to our bar stools which had backs to hold us up. I think I remember bar stools without backs, very dangerous now at our age.

We loved our discussions but both of us had some medical issues that were going to kill us, a typical old person problem, and we both had some history of hospital stays. Bob seemed to be hospitalized a little more often than I was, but he was usually out in a few days.

Our next happy hour topic was global warming; he didn't believe in it, he said it was just another dinosaur thing. We discussed the fires in California, he was a fireman in his earlier life, and so I was at a little disadvantage there. I mentioned more and stronger hurricanes, excessive heat in various parts of the country, warming ocean waters, etc. Bob said it was all just weather and I was just being an alarmist.

Trump did something that was really stupid, Senator Romney called him on it and Bob was coming around to well maybe Trump really isn't so great. I jumped right on this opening and told him I voted for Mitt Romney to be governor of Massachusetts, Mitt did a good job, and I should be considered a sometimes Republican. I do not think Bob agreed with me being a Republican part, but he was happy I voted for Governor Romney.

Bob was always reading cookbooks, so we started talking about food. He was the chef even if I was the person with the son of a "cook" name. He did the scratch cooking, and I did the microwave cooking. Bob would not acknowledge that what I was doing was called cooking. Bob truly could not understand how I could live on microwaved food, but he would listen to my recipes. I described cutting up hot dogs, adding them to a can of soup and a can of milk, then slaving over the hot microwave for 2 or 3 minutes. Bob developed this amazing look like how I could do such a thing and dare call it cooking.

I recently watched a Julia Child special on CNN and I wish I could have talked to Bob about her. I hated her show when it was on many, many years ago but I bet Bob loved her. It would have been a great happy hour conversation. Julia was not into health food since she often used multiple sticks of butter. I told Bob about me using a frying pan since I do like hamburgers. I told him I had a caste iron frying pan, he was impressed, I added that I used butter in the pan to keep the meat from sticking, he was no longer impressed. I then told him I cleaned the frying pan with a Brillo Pad, I totally lost him. This was my only real cooking, and he did not like it.

After happy hour we would both often end up in Safeway on the way home. Bob was gathering stuff to cook while I was gathering stuff to wave (we could not call it cooking). Bob would have fresh salmon while I would have a can of salmon. Bob would have real potatoes for mashing while I had instant mashed potatoes in a cardboard container. I told him they only took 2 minutes in the wave machine. I do not think I convinced him to buy any. I do remember my mother peeling potatoes, cutting them up, boiling them and mashing them with milk and butter. The potatoes were always lumpy because she would never use a mixer on them. We did not have an electric mixer. But we did have a hand-operated eggbeater, which she could have used. Peeling and mashing real potatoes is way too much work, my days go by too fast already. I did tell Bob that I still use milk and butter in the instant mashed potatoes, so they are like real food. Bob did not agree.

Bob was a restaurant aficionado. I was a convenience food restaurant attendee, not fast food, but convenience food like a Denny's, which closed in Corte Madera. Anyway. Bob knew the better restaurants. Bob brought me to a Chinese restaurant on Geary Street in San Francisco for lunch. He said he used to live in the neighborhood. The food was delicious, and one time Bob noted that we seemed to be the only white people in the restaurant. We looked around and agreed which is when I told him that he really knew what he was doing when he brought me there.

We had another lunch date for what Bob called a great Czech restaurant. Bob went to the hospital again and we never made it to the Czech restaurant. We chatted about it a few times on the phone, but Bob could not talk very long since he said he was very tired. Bob is sleeping in heaven now.

I keep thinking I will go to the Czech restaurant for lunch, but I know I will probably cry for Bob during the lunch, so I keep putting it off. I will go to happy hour instead and have a beer for my friend Bob.

Bernard F. Cookson

WANT TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE JOURNAL?

NEXT DEADLINE IS February 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

*The ESCOM Journal, a publication of the Emeritus Students College of Marin, is published on alternate months online at **www.marin.edu/escom**. A limited number of printed copies are available in the ESCOM offices on the College of Marin Kentfield and Indian Valley campuses. ESCOM members are invited to submit news items, or creative works, such as original art, photography, poetry, memoir and fiction (please consult the submission specifications on this page before submitting. The deadline for each issue is the 15th of the prior month. Please send submissions or questions to denizespringer@gmail.com*

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www.marin.edu/escom