

ESCOM Journal

*The Literary and Visual Art Publication of the
Emeritus Students College of Marin*



Jeff True

INSIDE THIS ISSUE: Falling into Fall, Running Amok, and Meeting Marge Simpson



Harvey Abernathey

Community Ed Corner

Follow Your Dreams

COM Community Education Instructor Christian Gerike continues his class, ***Dreamwork: An Introduction*** this fall.

“Dreaming is for everyone. We all dream every night, whether we remember them or not,” he maintains. “We will explore the basics of dreamwork: incubating, remembering, recording, presenting and interpreting dreams, as we seek to appreciate dreams for a better understanding of our lives.”

The class will be held on Tuesday afternoons beginning September 2. To register visit: [LINK](#)

Gerike recently gave two presentations in June at the 42nd Annual Conference of the International Association for the Study of Dreams (IASD). Christian presented a paper entitled *California Indigenous Dreaming* on the role that dreaming plays in the life of early Indigenous people of California. As a member of the IASD Social Network Committee he was a panel presenter in the *Dreams & Social Media* workshop.

Unbroken

A poem of encouragement, dedicated to women, for the strength you hold and the courage you carry.

Yes, there are bruises but it’s not broken,
This back that leans from the pressure of time.
I’ve carried a lot on these shoulders.
But they’re not broken.
Small but mighty!
These shoulders that appear so frail to the eye,
Hold the strength of mountains.
These ribs – stressed from life’s blows – yet unbroken,
Still guard the fierceness of a caged lioness.
The weight of difficult years has left its marks.
A bit of damage may be visible.
But I refuse to cover the wounds of my journey.
There are scars that will never heal.
But strong, determined and unbroken,
I wake anew each day to the challenges of my world.
Each day new scars, new marks on a back unbroken.
Standing in the reflecting shadows of time,
I caress each mark with joy – evidence of life well-lived.
Reminder that I’m standing, unbroken.

Lois Merriweather Moore, Ed.D



Marilyn Bagshaw

Exactly What I'd Done and Why

If history has taught us anything, we've
 learned that most folks
 living
 in each new generation aren't really that
 interested in the past, the big events that
 shaped today—and the small—even the
 names that their great-grandparents went by
 much less
 exactly
 what they did and why.
 Don't even get me started on psychology and
 scholarly study of the human mind.
 For all their advances
 they haven't nailed down quite yet just what
 laughter and romance is,
 even though analysts and therapists spend
 weeks on studies and hours on end
 encouraging patients to
 untangle and untie
 exactly
 what they did and why.
 In my life, the lessons that come soon part
 from my mind
 except for those that arise from what I call
 my sawdust memories.
 Which have become the sum of all
 I know for sure. You know them, too
 the poignant ones that stick with you
 through time



Marilyn Bagshaw

like when age seven in an abandoned
 sawmill site with a buddy
 ankle deep in mounds of
 wood chips and dust
 I stepped on a board with exposed
 nail that pierced through
 the sole of my shoe
 and into my foot. I never forgot
 not
 being mindful
 (to use a modern turn of phrase);
 however, in my defense
 I was a kid back then
 having fun with a friend
 casting caution to the wind
 when that rusty steel point struck, and
 unlike many others, and
 still a quite small fry,
 I knew even then
 exactly
 what I'd done and why.

- Larry C. Tolbert



Laura Milholland

Guilty

As two armed and kevlar-vested deputy sheriffs usher us into court, it's obvious the room is too small. Of course, after the final selection of 12 jurors and two alternates, the rest of us will be dismissed. Even so, the windowless room itself, with its low ceiling and dim light, affirms there's no room for justice here.

Once we're seated, the judge says, "Members of the jury, your duty today will be to determine whether the defendant is guilty or not guilty based only on the evidence, the testimony, and the facts presented in this courtroom. And, that determination must be fair and impartial."

I try to listen, but I get distracted by the young woman beside me scrolling through her phone. What the heck? Why did the sheriff say only to silence our phones and not to turn them off? I watch her thumbs scroll past click-bait headlines and lurid photographs, which I can barely glimpse before she swipes them away.

"... then the defendant must be found not guilty." The judge stops there, and I look up. "Do you all understand those directions?"

Everyone else is nodding, so I nod, too.

Taking a paper from the court clerk, the judge says, "I'm going to call twenty of you to sit in the jury box. Names have been chosen at random. When you hear your name, take the seat I assign you."

The second she says, "Josey," I flinch in alarm. I stand up, but then my legs go limp, and I grab the railing in front of me. The bailiff standing nearby steps over and takes my arm, "Are you okay?" I nod, and he guides me to the back row. He repeats what the judge had said, "Seat number seven."

Sitting down, I try to breathe away the anxiety. I box breathe--four-counts in, hold for four counts, four counts out, hold for four counts. A bead of sweat trickles from my throat. I press

my hand against my chest. The bodice of my silk blouse is damp.

After the twenty jurors are seated, the judge clasps her hands together and leans forward. "I'm going to give you a quick overview of this case. Mr. Forbes, the defendant, seated to the right of defense attorney Stanford, is accused of having threatened three teenage boys while holding a gun. The gun was legally registered to Mr. Forbes. Exhibiting a gun in a threatening manner is a misdemeanor. However, verbally threatening to cause great bodily harm is a felony in the state of California. Therefore, Mr. Forbes is charged with three misdemeanor counts of brandishing a weapon and three felony counts of criminal threat."

I look toward the defendant's chair, but I no longer see the elderly man with a bad crew cut. I see myself thirty years earlier, fury-blind and deadly dangerous, in the living room of my former home. My husband stands in the doorway in his work clothes, the door, still open behind him. He's holding his hands out away from his sides, palms facing me. His gaze is steady, but his eyes are splayed open, his mouth gaping. He swallows hard and says, "What are you doing Josey?"

"I told you! Don't bring guns into our house!"

"Put it down."

"No! I warned you!"

"I understand."

"You don't understand a damn thing, Frank." My hands are slippery with sweat, the heavy gun wobbles in my grip.

"You don't want to...."

"Don't tell me what I don't want to do!"

When I pull the trigger, the gun slips. The bullet misses Frank's head, streaks out the door, and exhausts itself somewhere beyond the neighbor's pasture.

My eyes refocus. I again see Mr. Forbes, rigid and tight jawed, squinting at the jury of his peers. My husband didn't report my crime, but I know it's me who should be sitting there.

The judge scans our faces, "Do any of you feel you couldn't be impartial and fair in this trial?"

My hand shoots up.

"Juror number seven?"

"Your Honor, I..." I stammer, "I can't be impartial."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean, I hate guns! I couldn't..." I look at Mr. Forbes. "I couldn't give him the benefit of the doubt."

"Bailiff, excuse juror number seven."

In my car, I thumb through my contacts until I find his name, my old name. We haven't spoken in years. "Thank you," is way overdue.

A.T. Lynne



Carol Allen

A Cecropia, WOW

Largest moth native to North America

Look at you attached to my window frame
holding on with your fuzzy orange legs.
All day you hide out in a bush or a tree,
and you are courting at night,
so you're a rare site to see.

So handsome in your suit of reddish brown
surrounded by bands of white, red and tan.
Two crescent-like shapes adorn your wings,
a type of white armor befitting for kings.
Two feathery antennae as on a knight's plume,
to sniff out a female moth's musky perfume.

Looks like you're set for a night on the town.
Born with no mouth so you can't talk or eat
You're sole purpose on earth is to procreate
so get out there and search for a suitable mate.
Spread your seven-inch wings, scour the skies.

Those spots on your wings that look like eyes
will scare off mischievous mammals or birds
So don't waste your manhood sitting on a sill,
your short stay on Earth is to do God's will.

Carol Allen

Hyacinths & Daisies

We are dreaming autumn now:

hyacinths & daisies

brushing the sky,

swayed by swirling gusts,

watched by finches

tamping in circles, raking

seed

from soil.

Hyacinths & daisies

brushing the sky,

painting in sweeps,

stretched by gusts smelling

of Autumn.

Roses & wild-blooming dogwood

unfolding flavored silks of petals & colors

and deep reddened berries

displaying beauty

at its crest through winter.

The Emperor Moth readying its

domain of feast on the dogwood.

We are dreaming autumn.

Joan Taschian



Laura Harrison



Laura Mitholland

A Better Place

"When the autumn weather turns the leaves to flames...These precious days I'll spend with you"
Kurt Weil, *September Song*

Willie Nelson's unmistakable voice was wafting from my parents' house when I arrived to visit. Mom was playing his *Stardust Album*. It was the first time I had heard *September Song*.

I was standing behind Elizabeth, reading the menu posted outside of Hither, when she started to sway. I'd wrapped my arms around her, hugging her to my body until she recovered from her faint, then helped her to a shaded table. Her Parkinson's disease had progressed and caused fluctuations in her blood pressure. I ordered our breakfasts and brought out our coffees, (decaf for her) and water. Hither was our favorite breakfast cafe in Ashland, and we loved sitting outside in the dappled shade so reminiscent of a French village restaurant shaded by plane trees.

Elizabeth almost always had the Biscuit. It was light and flakey, topped with a fried egg, ham or bacon, roasted pepper aioli and cheddar. I generally opted for the herbed eggs. She had a good appetite, and I always watched with amusement as the server placed her substantial breakfast down, doubt showing on their face that such a thin person would be able to eat more than a few bites. The Parkinson's unrelenting tremors had rendered her once lithesome figure skeletal.

That morning, halfway through our meal she said, "I've finally decided on the date. I checked with Doctor Bill and he is available October 4th."

I had promptly burst into tears then said, "I'm sorry, that wasn't very supportive."

She had continued, "The disease is starting to affect my organs, and I don't want to be left helpless after a stroke or heart attack. I can't bear the thought of that."

It was late June. My immediate thought had been, at least we have a few more months.

Elizabeth and her husband Peter had moved to a house a mile up and across the river from our cabin. They came knocking on a hot summer day, wanting to meet their neighbors. It was 1995, I was 47, Matt 51, Elizabeth 52, and Peter 60. It was an auspicious day for all, the beginning of a 27-year friendship. About a year after we met Elizabeth said,

"I never thought I would meet another heart friend at this time of my life."

Elizabeth was a horticulturist and surrounded their home with exquisite beds of flowers. Peter, an accomplished orchardist, planted fruit trees, built a grape arbor and tended a fertile vegetable garden. Peter had been a college librarian, and he was googling before goggle! If I ever had a question about anything, he had the answer.

Both Elizabeth and I loved to cook, and we all shared many wonderful meals through the years. One summer evening, sitting on our porch overlooking the river, they'd broken the news that Elizabeth had been diagnosed with Parkinson's. To lighten their workload, they'd moved the following year to Ashland.

Peter had irregular blood pressure that his doctor couldn't get under control. He died peacefully in 2020, listening to a book with their sweet poodle, Serena, in his lap.

That fateful day at Hither I'd asked, "Would you like me to come and stay with you?"

She'd said, "Yes please come the week before."

Elizabeth's granddaughter was coming on October first, so we left the guest room for her and I stayed at an Inn. I'd arrive with coffees and pastries each morning and not leave until I tucked her in bed. Betsy Shuteroff and Susan Brouwer also arrived October first. Elizabeth was surrounded by loved ones in her last days. We cooked meals, Elizabeth showing her granddaughter Rachel, how to cut basil into a Chiffonade for my tomato salad, the knife shaking in her hand.

She bestowed her treasures on us. Her mother's graceful soup ladle to me, turquoise earrings to Betsy, silk scarves to Susan. Rachel had already received what was precious to her on her last visit.

She came to the breakfast table the morning of the 4th, dressed immaculate as always. It was surreal. Doctor Bill arrived, and he and Betsy poured the Seconal from the capsules into a glass. He showed the glass to Elizabeth saying, "You can change your mind, we won't mix it with the apple juice until you're ready."

She said, "I'm ready, I'm going to a better place, unless it's a hoax."

We all gathered around her.

Susan Connelly

Beston vs Thoreau

While Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, published in 1854, is considered a seminal piece on New England's natural world, I prefer Henry Beston's book, *The Outermost House*, published in 1928. While both books tackle the challenges of living simple lives in isolation, I think Beston had better raw material than Thoreau.

Walden pond is a quiet and tranquil spot located in central Massachusetts. But Beston took up the challenge of living on Cape Cod's Great Beach. From his vantage point Beston was also able to observe the local flora and fauna, but his tale also includes maritime lore such as shipwrecks and rescues at sea.

The ornithological record that Henry Beston created is something that scientists could utilize today as an early data set for the area. Beston writes extensively about the birds of Cape Cod all the while cataloguing the seasonal species' abundance and distribution. Data could still be used to value, evaluate and compare the health of today's populations.

I enjoy Beston's writing because it is delicately poetic yet portrays a more turbulent environment. He employed a wonderful literary device in which he adeptly time travels and takes the unsuspecting reader to a different place and time so seamlessly that the reader barely notices. His word choices are eloquent, inspiring and thought provoking.

The Outermost House functions as a historical archive of the means and methods of life on the Cape at that time. For example, the author describes the Coast Guard surfmen who patrol the beach at night on foot. In particular, he paints a picture of a surfman's feet firmly planted at the water's edge in a storm to light a red flare to signal a ship offshore that it must stand off from the coast or risk wreck and ruin. I imagine that a skipper of the ship posted crew on watch to keep a lookout for such critical signals.

Many years ago, I also kept such a watch on a boat. The vessel was the Seastar, a 73-foot steel hulled vessel. Five of us crewmen were far out to sea plying the waters for offshore lobsters or *bugs* as we called them. This boat was out of Hyannis harbor, and we kept watch, not necessarily toward the shore.

Our boat had all the latest navigation charts and long-range radio navigation. With these tools we knew exactly where we were, and we could easily watch for all the other boats at night.



Tom Gannon

In our live/work arrangement the *live* part consisted of meals and sleeping in bunkbeds. The *work* part consisted of grueling 18-hour days wrestling heavy lobster gear around on the deck. The crew rotated a nightly watch to ensure that we did not collide with any of the vessels working in the area. At night we also left the deck lights on so each working vessel in the area showed up like a bright shining beacon against the dark horizon offering some comfort to the crew knowing that we were not alone and isolated so far offshore. One time we got caught in a storm with sustained 50 mile an hour winds and gusts north of 60. It kept on for three days and all we could do was hold on. We had to point the boat directly into the storm, put it on auto pilot and slowly move forward with the goal of keeping the boat in one spot so as not to be blown further out to sea or blown inland and risk wrecking.

My favorite passages from Beston's book relates to how on his little stretch of beach he observed how a larger predator fish would chase smaller fish into the heavy surf, which then cast these fish up onto the beach, gasping and flopping, so folks passing by could simply pick them, frequently cod and sole, up for dinner.

Haddock was once known among commercial fishermen as *Gods Fish*. They have unique markings as if a giant thumb and index finger we're dipped in black ink and then this giant hand pinched both sides of the fish's head leaving behind what appears to be fingerprints.

The Outermost House is often credited with raising the awareness of the beauty and splendor of the area and this heightened awareness eventually led to the creation of the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Scott McMorrow

Winged Migration

Autumn has just begun
the day is sunny
a slight coolness in the air
the sky blue and cloudless
the trees blowing in the breeze.

Slowly they come into view
at first there is only one
flying and circling
then more appear
pumping their wings
flocking together
effortlessly traversing the expanse
of blue.

It is a serene scene-comforting
reminded of stories of angels
I wonder
if they unfurl their wings
while gliding across the sky
to the heavenly realm.

Gradually the geese fly out of view
on their journey to winter habitat
it's migration time
keep an eye on the sky.

Anne Mulvaney



Nancy Outenreath

Into the flow I plunge
striving to cast away
self-imposed anxiety
—the old malaise.

Treading salty waves,
cleaved by fresh water current,
I listen for guidance—wisdom
of the river goddess Melusine.

From a tidal bore she rises,
mother of oracles and queens,
singing her ancient song
silvery in the shell of my ear:

*Peace lies not in my domain, daughter,
rather within your own element
move free on shore
embrace the earth—claim yourself.*

Clad in phosphorescence, I sprint
across the dampened sand, savoring
silky grains between my toes.
Sunrise slips over the horizon

I am one with the world.

lynn arias bornstein

Night in the Estuary

At odds with the world
I search release in
ocean swells—merging
with rivers born of rainfall.



Harvey Abernathy

Reframe: Breath-Space

*"Between stimulus and response there is a space.
In that space is our power to choose our response."
Victor Frankl (1946)*

Between the noise, a beat you barely hear—
not silence, but a rhythm, soft and slow.
The world throws punches, sharp with blame or fear,
but you can spin, not strike—you choose the flow.

This gap, this breath, this hush before reply,
is space to pivot, turn the tempo down.
No need to mirror rage or match the cry,
just move with grace and don't let anger drown.

You own this space—reshape it how you will,
a quiet step, a softer word, a gentle lift.
Where hate would slam, let kindness start to fill
your heart with light, a slow and sacred shift.

So let it out. Be love. Let joy restart.
This breath you hold—its freedom dressed in art.

Ray Fay, M.D.

Traveler or Tourist

on this long journey
longer than I ever expected
I wonder
have I been a traveler or a tourist?
did I blend in like I belonged
attempt the native tongue
experiment with exotic dishes
mix with the natives or
or just stay with the pack?

at home which was I?
kind to the other
include those who were different
listen to the alternative
leave my comfort zone
not afraid to jump in
through my long life I hope
I searched beyond the familiar
risked the unknown
trusted my instincts
owned my mistakes
then I have lived

Barbara McDonald



Marilyn Bagshaw



Nancy Pappas

Running Amok

The trees are calling out to the birds, flee the confusion
 No, this is not an illusion
 The waters are soaring to push people to the brink
 They will either swim or sink
 The gentle breezes are the foreplay to storms plenty
 Where they are headed could turn not so pretty
 The ground is drying up in search of feeding
 Why must people leave each place to the greedy?

Cynthia Rovero



Elaine Thornton

Burning Anxiety

We afraid of fire in forests
 Camping must include eyes vigorous
 About fire before us

Or anxiety our bear
 Comes out from where
 And so he'll scare

Sleeping at night
 Our fire of camp still a sight
 The bear had the fright

So he sneaks in
 While he leaks from his bottom skin
 Puts out the fire with urine

Yet he leaves all around
 Clutters of poop on the ground
 Wakes all with a growling sound

Just a dream of no desires
 The fire was extinguished after camp song choirs
 Remember we can prevent forest fires.

Housewares of ours won't burn like a hot bush's root
 In one appliance no clutter or soot
 Let's ask Maz if this poetry computes.

Karen Arnold



Cat in a Tree, Ray Shanahan



Golden Gate, Kramer Herzog

Bear

"Stutz Bear Cat" was his proper name, after the car, but we soon shortened it to "Bear." Incredibly handsome, he was round of body and of eye. A regal "British Blue" by heritage, so called because of his metallic blue-gray fur coat that surely was a gift from God to confirm his regal heritage. Indeed, he was king of our castle. Even as a kitten, he insisted on being princely. He seldom mingled with the other cats, and the others never wished to come near enough to try his patience. If angered, his lemon-yellow eyes would hood; he'd wait, however, to flick his paw in the direction of the annoyance; even the grown cats would back off.

As Bear grew into 15 pounds of majestic adulthood, the family recognized that we were lucky enough to harbor royalty. We treated him accordingly. Occasionally we let him out to do battle with the neighborhood warlords. He'd come home with minor injuries, a torn ear or sore paw. These would bring major vet bills. Despite costly repairs, we never considered keeping Bear in. He was in no way a domestic plaything. He needed space - a territory - and he needed freedom.

Bear repaid us by loving us more than any other cat we'd ever had. He never slept alone. He always put one of us to bed, and somehow, he knew which one of the family needed most the comfort of his presence. Settling at the foot of the bed, heavy and warm, he would soon be snoring loudly while dreaming of stalking prey. The sounds proved soporific, and even the most sleepless of us would be lulled into silence.

Bear was particularly fond of Harry. While Harry would lie in bed, watching the football games, head propped up by a soft down pillow, Bear would gingerly climb his length from toe to chest, sniff under Harry's chin and around his neck, then plop purposefully on his chest and snuggle his nose in the most

comfortable cranny he could find. If Bear *really* felt loving, both paws would find their way on either side of Harry's neck, and he would fall into a delicious sleep. Of course, television watching would then be out of the question, since no one ever disturbed Bear when he was sleeping soundly. Harry never really seemed to mind; he was so taken by Bear's audacious display of affection.

Bear is gone now. We all miss him terribly. I had kept him in for a week to recuperate from his latest battle. The vet had given me antibiotics to feed him twice daily, and he had to wear a silly plastic ruff to keep him from irritating his stitches. \$383.00 and Dr. Reilly's acknowledgement of Bear's resiliency made me feel OK with letting him roam his land just once more. Besides, it was just too much to ignore the imperious stares of the elegant Bear as he stood patiently every day by the front door waiting to be released. We all agreed. It was OK....but of course it wasn't really... because this time.... he would never come home. Even kings run out of lives, it seems.

Marcy Hamilton



Meet Marge Simpson, Tami Tsark



ESCOM

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Editor/Designer, Denize Springer

Web Content Manager, Richard Jensen

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ESCOM Centers

Indian Valley campus: 1800 Ignacio Blvd., Bldg. 10 Rm. 40,
Novato, CA 94949 415/457-8811, x 8322

Kentfield Campus: 835 College Ave., Kentfield, CA 94904
(ESCOM office is temporarily occupying the Deedy Lounge in
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NEXT DEADLINE IS OCTOBER 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.**

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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.**