

# POSTSCWRIP

## The Little Library of Yelapa: Bringing the Joy of Books to a Mexican Village *by Aline Shapiro ('91)*



In the course of a trip to Mexico six years ago, I stumbled upon a sleepy fishing village south of Puerto Vallarta that was to become my destiny. You have to travel by boat to get there, and walking is the primary transportation once you arrive, but people also use mules, horses and wheelies to get around on the bumpy dirt roads and narrow cobblestone paths. I was charmed. I had been traveling with my then-boyfriend (now husband) Bill, and the two of us

started taking vacations there every chance we had. We decided that once I retired from teaching we would live in this small island-like pueblo called Yelapa.

Slowly, we embarked upon building an “open-air” house well integrated into the environment, 350 steps above the ocean. There are no walls, just one almost-wall in back to shield us from cool night winds that blow down the hill in winter. All other sides are open to views of pristine ocean, dramatic red “paper” trees, 60-foot high bamboo clusters, and a vista of the jungle where we can spend hours bird watching. We are happily continuing to make our life here in this magical jungle with its abundance of wild animals, scorpions, army ants, and an interesting mix of fabulous people, both gringo and (mostly) Mexican.

But I also wanted to contribute something to the community, and along with Bill’s amazing support, I’ve started a library in the elementary school. It began quite by accident. One day I stumbled upon a room that was piled high with wheelbarrows, cement mixers, bags of cement and a wide variety of construction tools. I learned

that years ago there had been talk of starting a library there, which sort of explained the rusted, inoperable computers piled up against a wall. At that moment a seed was quietly planted in my mind. Maybe we could bring a library to Yelapa.

I spent the last 15 years of my teaching career as a librarian. I knew what a difference it would make if this little village had access to the richness of literature.

I spent the last 15 years of my teaching career as a librarian. I knew what a difference it would make if this little village had access to the richness of literature. I knew, too, that I had lots of work ahead of me to make this happen. The value I place on reading is very different than what I've seen in this and other traditional Mexican communities. While traveling extensively throughout Mexico a decade earlier to write a Fulbright paper on Aztec mythology, I'd

learned that it was rare even to find bookstores unless they were attached to museums in places like Mexico City, and I rarely saw people reading books. (An essay by David Toscana entitled "The Country That Stopped Reading" that appeared last year in *The New York Times* corroborates these observations.)

I realized that important relationships would have to be established here before it would be possible to begin such a venture. Each time we flew down to Mexico, I would leave a few books with the president of the elementary school Parent-Teachers Association. Gradually, I explained my idea to her, and after several years I started to coordinate my efforts with the school director.

Since then I've collected well over 300 Spanish books from teachers and the library of Peabody Charter School. Because bilingual education was taken out of the charter about ten years ago, there were hundreds of Spanish books just sitting on the shelves at Peabody and never being used. With the blessing of the principal, I gathered books from each part of the Dewey Decimal System so that I could model a real library.



Putting together this library and making it successful is by far the hardest job I've ever had in my teaching career, and yet it is by far the most rewarding.

Most of the 95 children in the Yelapa school had never even been inside a library. They were amazed to be in a room full of shiny books with their brightly colored pictures. The idea that they could bring the books home was completely alien at first, but to my delight they grasped it quickly. They were thrilled that they could take a book home one day and return it the next day and get a different one. But actually *reading* the books was not part of the cycle. It became obvious that I would have to gather the children around me for read-alouds to introduce them to the magic of a good story.

Slowly, I developed a schedule with the teachers to bring their classes into the library each week. Now I share folktales, fairytales, books that create a deeper interest in the local flora and fauna, and books that expose them to the variety of opportunities and places that exist in the world. I often start lessons asking them the simple question, "What are you interested in?" I'm not sure that anyone had ever before asked them this, at least not in their structured learning environment. They were truly baffled at first, but this has become the springboard in their search for books that they want to read. Books on art, science, animals, hobbies and crafts are taken from the shelves with great anticipation. Time spent browsing during recess and quietly reading continues to be a welcome treat. Students take off their shoes as they enter the library to avoid kicking up dust and dirt from the roosters and chickens that scramble around their feet as they walk through the playground.

Putting together this library and making it successful is by far the hardest job I've ever had in my teaching career, and yet it is by far the most rewarding. I love the novelty of being able to cross a river while riding my horse to school and speaking Spanish with teachers who have accepted me as one of them. I have also become a conduit for bringing in musicians and artists from elsewhere to share their special talents. Recently, *The Love Choir*, a group of 35 musicians from Sebastapol, gave two awesome assemblies. (You can watch a video and view other events on our website, <http://www.bibliotecayelapa.org/home/>)

The library is only in its second year. I still think of it as an experiment and have no idea how it will evolve in the future. My greatest hope is that gradually, with more parent involvement, this resource and learning center will be sustained for many years to come. These young students are so appreciative and grateful for what has been created. And as for me...I get to see the wonder and awe in their eyes every time I read them a new story.

## A Word From the Editor....

Welcome to a re-imagined PostSCWriP, the online literary journal of the South Coast Writing Project, your space to be a writer. Email has proven an efficient way to dispatch SCWriP news and updates; PostSCWriP will henceforth focus on the prose and poetry of our Fellows, and we hope you will enjoy this bountiful edition.

But here's just one important announcement: on Saturday, March 15, we will hold a Winter Renewal at UCSB. This particular morning of professional collaboration could actually get contentious: we'll be exploring the skills of opinion and argument writing. Come see and share what SCWriP Teacher-Consultants are doing in response to CCSS Writing Standard 1 and the approaching SBAC assessment. We'll also take time to share information about upcoming SCWriP projects. The plan is for coffee at 8:30, program starting at 9, and a noon finish. RSVP (805) 893-4422 or email [4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu).

And now, back to the journal. Wander about, stay a while. You'll find lovely memoir pieces by Gaylene Croker ('07), Tim Dewar ('94), Whitney Paz ('13), Carol Short ('13), and Jennifer Suleiman ('13), each of which deals with the origin of a feeling, evocative smells, and formative moments. Lou Spaventa ('01) and Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01) present essays on the subject of swimming, with all its physical and metaphorical implications. Jack Hobbs ('86) shares his final riff on teaching, and Aline Shapiro ('91) writes about the most rewarding work of her career: bringing a library to a small Mexican village. You can gather a veritable bouquet of poems here too...by Rosemary Cabe ('87), Chella Courington ('03), Gaby Edwards ('85), Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90), Lois Klein ('04), Rob Montgomery ('07), Marolyn Stewart ('91)...and Barry Spacks.

It is to Barry Spacks, who passed away in January, that we dedicate this journal. Barry was Santa Barbara's first poet laureate, long-time UCSB faculty member, and special friend to SCWriP. Many of us fondly remember Barry's Summer Institute poetry presentations, with his unfailingly fruitful "first line-last line" activity, and the belly laughs generated by his reading of the infamous *F\*\*\*-Sayers*. A poet of extraordinary gifts, celebrated painter, and dearly loved mentor, Barry lived his life with wisdom, compassion, exuberance, and humor. Poets Dan Gerber and Lois Klein share remembrances of Barry within, and here and there you'll find a Barry poem.

*Cynthia Carbone Ward*



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Tim Dewar, Director  
(805)893-4422

[4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu)

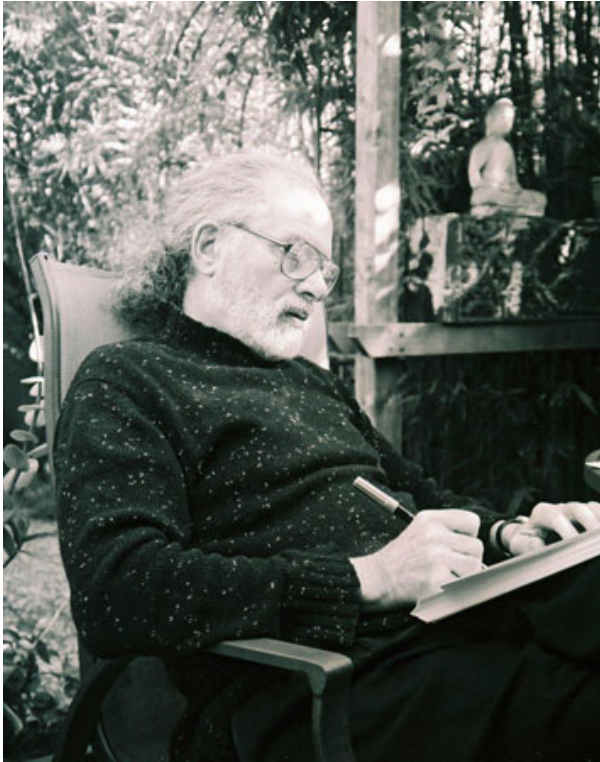
REPORT by Barry Spacks

The seas surge, the lions roar,  
the sun and the subways pound and the  
miracles  
miracle. Mainly the people sigh.



# Our Unique and Indelible Barry

by Dan Gerber



*Note: What follows is excerpted from a kind of eulogy I read at The Poetry Boys Memorial Lunch for Barry Spacks, a gathering of Barry's family and several of Barry and Kimberley's closest friends, held on what would have been Barry's 83<sup>rd</sup> birthday, February 21, 2014, at The Arts and Letters Café in Santa Barbara.*

A few months after my wife and I moved to Santa Ynez, 15 years ago, I picked up a new issue of *Poetry* magazine and read a poem that left me with a thunk deep in my chest and made me aware of the hairs on the back of my neck—in short, the real thing:

## AH LA

I'm walking State Street when this bare-armed girl comes fetching up beside me at a light, a lovely Oriental-looking letter tattoo'd on her fine arm below the shoulder.

I ask her if the tattoo'd mark is Sanskrit—"Arabic." (We're crossing.) "It's for Ah la!" which brings a smile, until I hear her: "Allah." "It's beautiful," I offer from the heart.

"Thank you" —there's a tremor to her voice—"thank you...very much." Her tall young life is filled with every grace, and yet it seems she hasn't heard of beauty near enough.

I turn, I nod and smile and wave goodbye letting the distance lengthen then between us as one who'd chanced to pay a passing reverence, and she uncertain, in her glory days.

I was curious about the author, Barry Spacks, a name familiar to me from the world of poetry, but only as a name. I knew nothing about the man and, as for his work, knew only this poem. But I noted “State Street” in the first line—Chicago, or Santa Barbara, I wondered, but it seemed more Santa Barbara. So I wrote a letter to this Barry Spacks and sent it to him in care of The English Department at UCSB, thinking that if it were Santa Barbara in the poem, he might likely be there, or, if not, someone there would likely know him and see that it got into his hands.

Then, a week later, my instinct was validated. I received a letter from Barry, and it was the beginning of a very special friendship. I had a totally unique relationship with Barry Spacks. But I suspect that everyone who knew him had a very special, totally unique relationship with Barry Spacks. He was never going to be just another acquaintance in anyone’s life.

We were all—in our own ways—enlivened, deepened, and calmed by his presence....

His name itself is unique, like the man, a snappy, dapper, slightly dazzling name that would have perfectly fit any one of the uncles in a seersucker suit and brown and white wing-tip shoes we know from Barry’s eponymous poem about them.

And we just could never get enough of his presence. We just couldn’t get enough of Barry.

He lived a reasonably long life—as lives go—but he was, in my experience, one of those people who never made me weary. He was elegant and courtly—a perfect uncle—and so smart, so funny, so aware, and so caring, I always felt that he saw the inside of all our outward experiences.

We were all—in our own ways—enlivened, deepened, and calmed by his company—though Kimberley, living with him every day, may have a more nuanced translation of what I just said—which is another way of saying that Barry was just as human as he was divine.

For each of us there is one unique and indelible Barry, the one we’re all, and each, here today to celebrate. Like Nelson Mandela, Barry seemed to know that thinking too well of other people often allowed them to behave better than they otherwise would.

Barry saw the best in each of us, and in his presence, and often in one of his poems or his paintings, his clear seeing enabled us to see it too and to be better, more loving, and compassionate people than we ever would have been without him.

Thoreau wrote that when we lose someone dear to us we take on the responsibility of a kind of double living, of fulfilling and furthering the potential of their life in our own. So I'd like to propose a toast to all of us Barry-ites—all of us who loved him and were made so much larger and more human by the gift of our doing so.

Barry was, himself, a punster, and so I know he'll forgive me if I propose a toast to the Barry best in all of us.



WHITEWATER VISION by Barry Spacks

Like everyone else I've served my time  
lying under the weight of a mountain,  
breathing stones...yet always my blood,  
like leveling water, knows where it's wanted.

Once I had a whitewater vision:  
beneath the rage of the rapids I sensed  
the undersound to the river's sound...  
indistinguishable from silence.

Who am I? Not a solving...a seeing.  
I view the storm through eyes of calm.  
I speak to say  
where the silence is.

On days when it seems the food for the journey  
is clay, not bread, and the spirit famished,  
as dusk transfigures everything  
I pause, near silence: listening.

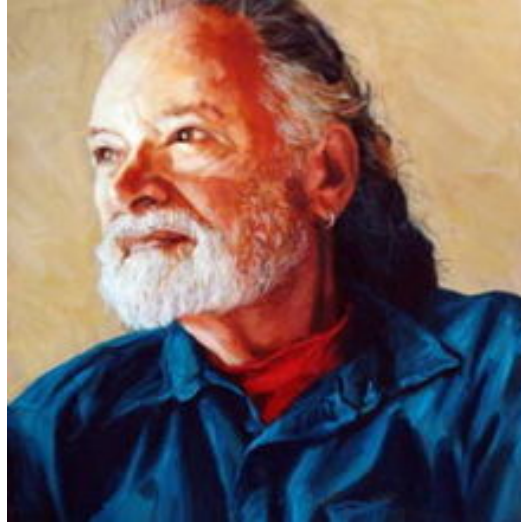




# Very Old But Shining

## Remembering Barry Spacks

By Lois Klein ('04)



Barry's caring for all poetic endeavors and his huge heart in doing so are shown in his response to a haiku by a third grade student I met during one of my *California Poets in the Schools* visits. She had written:

Haiku

In the loneliness  
Maybe I can find a moon  
In the darkened sky.

I sent it to Barry. He wrote back (under the heading ABSOLUTELY REMARKABLE):

For Fanny

The moon will always join you  
To brighten your night.

Signed: Barry Spacks, Very Old but Shining

Barry was an enduring mentor and friend to me throughout my years as a poet. He was a constant source of encouragement and wisdom, and a guiding hand and eye in the publication of my three books. His kindness was the proverbial "spoonful of sugar" I needed to forge on. He also inspired me to begin hosting the Santa Barbara monthly Favorite Poems Project six years ago, still going strong. Barry's generosity of spirit was a gift to all who were warmed by his "Very Old but Shining" light.

# The Memory of a Feeling

*by Tim Dewar ('94)*

In kindergarten my classmates and I made a cookbook. I came across it recently in a box of childhood mementos, layered between a toddler-sized cowboy outfit and elementary school class pictures. I don't recall what my teacher did to teach us about cookbooks, recipes, and what we needed to do. I vaguely recall cutting, assembling, and stapling the mimeographed sheets with everyone's recipes. We each decorated our cover and took them home as a Mother's Day gift.

Finding that cookbook in the box brought back a memory of a feeling I still can't quite name.

Wrapped in tissue paper, it made a suitable gift from a six-year-old, I thought. That was until, curled in my mom's lap, we began to look through it. There were recipes for County Fair award-winning pies, late-60s gourmet appetizers featuring sour cream and dry onion soup mix, and the Old Country family tomato sauce from Nicky Cardoza. My recipe was for root beer floats. My list of ingredients was three items long (some root beer, some ice cream, a glass), and the steps were few (scoop, pour). To make matters worse, I had mostly copied my recipe out of a Peanuts comic book. Only one other recipe, my best friend's, Nathan Troutner's, looked like mine. His was for toast.

Finding that cookbook in the box brought back a memory of a feeling I still can't quite name. It is not exactly shame or embarrassment, though I think those are neighboring emotions. It is not exactly pride or satisfaction, but those are neighbors, too. While my recipe didn't measure up in some ways, in others I felt it surpassed all the rest. Well, except maybe Nathan's. Those other recipes were the moms', but Nathan and I had made our own. Okay, his was original; I had plagiarized Snoopy.

Re-experiencing that cookbook started to shed light on something I've been watching and wondering about my own daughters. My older daughter, Malaika, has set herself the task this summer of learning how to do the laundry. Not just hers, but the entire family's, from sorting to loading to transferring it to the dryer. She isn't too keen about folding yet, but she is happy to put it away (and remind her younger sister that she needs to do the same). My younger daughter, Amani, who just finished her own kindergarten year, wants to help wash the dishes. Whether up to her elbows in suds or rinsing and stacking, she delights in standing beside her mom or me at the kitchen sink after dinner. And they both look forward to Saturday mornings when they can watch cartoons. Most kids do, but watching TV in our house requires navigating two remote controls, a wireless router, and Netflix. This has become Amani's job. While she is doing this, Malaika is making

breakfast, by which I mean, she is heating up organic “Pop Tarts” in the toaster oven. They call back and forth from living room to kitchen, updating each other on their progress, assuring perfectly timed food and TV. After a couple of episodes of “The Backyardigans,” they drop their plates in the sink and fight over who gets to use the handy vac to suck up the crumbs on the couch.

Don’t misunderstand; these aren’t stories of perfect angels or some miraculous child rearing secrets. Cleanup time at night usually requires escalating harangues from my wife and me to get them to pick up their dirty clothes, brush their teeth, and get to bed. And getting everyone into the car to go someplace can be a 30-minute ordeal, 20 minutes of which are full-blown meltdown. My kids are just kids, but their recent efforts to master households chores reveals something, I think, about kids and learning.

They take pleasure in these tasks in part because they chose them. While it is great to have pint-sized domestic help, my wife and I weren’t looking to raise a couple of minions. We didn’t assign them these tasks. They conceived of the need to learn these simple tasks themselves. They came to us to ask how. And while they have certainly seen us perform these tasks countless times, we’ve never given them instructions much more detailed than “First you sort the dirty clothes into piles.” It was Malaika’s idea to do that right in the middle of the kitchen floor.

This helps me see another source of their pleasure in these mundane tasks. The tasks are a series of small problems that they can solve. When they don’t know what to do, they try stuff. Can’t reach the sink? Grab the footstool. Can’t reach the washer knob? Sit on the dryer. They marshal whatever resources are available to them to address the task at hand. If there is an insurmountable challenge, they ask Mom or Dad. We can provide a bigger boost.

And now I’m getting a better understanding of my six-year-old self. Assigned to bring in the instructions for making food, why didn’t I ask for help? I thought I could do it myself. Need a recipe? Find Snoopy’s for Red Baron Root Beer Floats in the *Peanuts’ Cookbook*. I drew upon available resources and solved my problem. And I’m getting a better understanding of those mixed feelings, too. Pride: I did it myself. Embarrassment: I should have found a better cookbook. Maybe this is the feeling of learning.

Forty-odd years later, I still feel it. Maybe the cookbook was just a Mother’s Day custom, but for me it was a chance to master a little corner of the universe. The dishes and the laundry are other chances. Who wouldn’t want to master the universe, however small?

# One Whiff and It's All There

*by Gaylene Croker ('07)*

I know better than to smell a Granny Smith apple in public. To me, they are not just apples, but little green bombs of emotion. One strong whiff sends sensations of memories careening through the corridors of my brain, connecting me directly to a fall afternoon sitting with my Grandma Bessie at her kitchen table, her paring knife in her one hand, a Granny Smith in the other.

She cuts the apple down the middle. With one turn of the knife, she scoops out the core and then hands that half to me. I breathe in the apple, and see her smiling face, and remember how solid I felt sitting there across from her.



Whenever I smell a Granny Smith, I remember how much I loved her and how much I miss her and, depending on the day, I can be a mess in about two seconds. I don't take any chances in public. I still buy the apples, but I judge them on sight alone and hold them at arm's length in the store, waiting until I get home to take one, breathe in its scent, and let the emotions come.

Without thinking, I opened the package and put his hat directly to my nose. The sensation nearly knocked me to the ground. That was my father.

Smells are like that, aren't they? They have the ability to connect so immediately to a scene, a feeling, a story. They are so individualized. While we all experience this connection, it is rare that we share the same reaction. To some, the smell of vinegar means a mother's angry cleaning rampage, to others it means standing beside a favorite aunt at pickling time, to another it smells like pastel colors, like Easter.

I was out of the country when my father died and so I did not attend his funeral. I cried when I heard the news, but I don't think I grieved. About a year after his passing, I realized I did not have any material item of his and I asked my mother to send me something. She sent me one of his old hats. Without thinking, I opened the package when it came and put the hat directly to my nose. The sensation nearly knocked me to the ground. That was him. That was his distinct scent. It was then I was able to truly grieve.

I was a farm kid, allowed to get my driver's license at the age of 14. The law was that I could only use it only for farm errands. After a few weeks of driving with my dad, I begged him to let me go into town by myself to get some feed. He said yes. On the way to town I was too nervous to feel anything, but coming home, I was more confident. I rolled down the window, felt that wind, and the wheels beneath me, and smiled at the road ahead. The bag of feed bounced gently in the back seat, sending puffs of the scent that would forever connect me to that sunny day and that feeling of freedom.

A city girl now, I am not around feed very often, but whenever I go to Costco and see bags of feed, I have an irresistible urge to throw myself atop them.

Just one deep breath and 41 years disappear.

One breath and it's all there—the car, the wind, the road. I am 14 again and feel like I can fly.

## Barefoot *by Jennifer Suleimann ('13)*

Being barefoot takes me back to being three again, at the tiny green house on Voleyn Street. That's also where I go whenever I hear lawn mowers and smell cut grass and honeysuckle. I am walking on the warm...no, hot...concrete, holding my mother's hand as we make our way down to Ethyl's house. I love Ethyl, and she loves me, and I can remember having milk and cookies and popsicles on her front porch. When you're three, popsicles always end up a melted, drippy, sticky mess of sugared orange liquid running down hands and arms to elbows before pooling on the concrete near your feet.

Next to Ethyl's house was an enormous fig tree, and you could smell the fruit, ripe and sweet, in the oppressive Sacramento heat. I have a fig tree in my own backyard now and one of the silly things I do is stand as close as I can when the figs are ripe and take a deep, measured breath. That takes me back to being barefoot at the Voleyn house.

I had a white playhouse in the backyard under the canopy of the cherry tree, and my mother sewed curtains for it, green with blue butterflies. I would stay back there for hours with Brian and Darcy, playing house and hide and seek, or being explorers, traipsing through the grass back to the blackberry bushes. Those bushes are connected to the first memory of my mother getting mad at me. It was my birthday and I was dressed up in a fancy white party dress with embroidered strawberries on the front. I wore lacy socks and red patent leather shoes to round

out the look. As usual, Mom dressed me too early and I wandered out to the backyard. Before long I had kicked off the confines of the patent leather. The socks were difficult for my chubby fingers, but finally, they too, relented. I rambled out to the blackberry bushes thinking, "M-m-m, blackberries would make a mighty fine snack right now..." and ever so carefully, I made my way back. Barefoot.

## A Better Monument *by Marolyn Stewart ('91)*

Dust from sixteen years has settled  
    on my father's boots  
    that stand in the back of the closet.  
Once they must have been shiny and new,  
    but just as my dad was in life,  
    the boots are tough, leathery, and scuffed.  
Marks and creases rent long ago by barbwire and sandburs  
    parallel the lines that mapped his face  
    as he squinted against the Oklahoma sun and wind.  
My dad stood tall in his boots  
    and even taller in my mind.  
I picture him leaning against his old black truck,  
    a Roi Tan cigar clinched in the side of his mouth,  
    his vintage Stetson pulled low over his eyes  
    the heel of one boot cocked onto the running board.  
Outwardly motionless, he is counting,  
    noting which of the cows (his "girls")  
    have wandered out of the scrub oak for feeding  
    and which are missing.  
He scans the sky for buzzards  
    harbingers of doom.  
Although not particularly a gentle man,  
    he can walk among his herd from the open range  
    and place large hands on trusting backs.  
His boots stand empty now,  
    a far better monument to my father  
    than the granite stone that marks his grave.



# Shabani Incident

*by Carol Short ('13)*

Shabani wasn't the first or the last of the little mining towns we stayed in, but I was five years old by the time we came to live there, so I remember more of it. It was an asbestos mine that was tucked away in the scrubby bush of southeastern Southern Rhodesia. My father was a mining surveyor who contracted with mines when jobs became available.

The mining community there was typical of all of them: tin-roofed homes, a community clubhouse that was the heart and soul of the town, and a general sense of comfort felt by the townspeople who knew that right then, in the flourishing 1950's, times were good. The veins of the subterranean rocks were bursting with gold, asbestos, and chrome.

So as the country flourished from the fruits of its mineral ores, the children were left to be carefree and somewhat footloose while the parents played tennis or ensconced themselves on a barstool in the clubhouse. There was plenty of playground for us kids. The surrounding hills, nearby dam, and water reservoir were natural settings for our sense of exploration and curiosity, and my older brother and sister could often be found in such places.

I dutifully sat on the rock, staring out over the bushy hill, and in the quiet of that thick, still afternoon, I waited.

On one of the days when we were at home, underfoot, my mother asked Marion and Neville, my two older siblings, to take me with them as they went out to play. I remember the pained look on their faces: "She is only five years old," they whined. "She can't keep up or do the things that we do!" My mother would hear none of it; they were saddled with me. Neville wanted to go up to the reservoir, which sat perched upon a "kopje" or small hill, so the three of us duly trudged up in the direction of the grey concrete tank. When we got up to the top, you could see all of Shabani below: the lights of the mining rigs, green tin roofs, patches of garden with their flame lilies and red hot poker aloes.

Neville then sat me on a rock and told me that I was to stay there until he or Marion got back. My sister had actually joined some other friends by now, so Neville was eager to get rid of me in order that he could do the same.

I dutifully sat on the rock, staring out over the bushy hill. In the quiet of that thick, still afternoon, the acacia trees hardly murmured. Red ants crawled over nearby stones while lazy flies buzzed in and through the mopane tree. Time did

not move as I waited patiently for Neville to return. The rays of the afternoon sun warmed my cheeks and I looked down the hill again wondering if anybody was down there. The njiva birds cooed mournfully as the sun steadily sank over the Shabani rooftops. The wind began to slowly, gently pick up my hair and I rubbed my legs anxiously...the air had chilled and lights were coming on in the houses down below. Thin spires of smoke arose from chimneys and the clouds overhead took on a greyish-orange hue.

I could not see so clearly now, and for the first time, fear started to creep into me. Am I going to stay on this kopje forever? The birds seemed to congregate sympathetically in the nearby tree as I continued to stare gloomily into the cavernous town below. They had abandoned me, I thought. I was going to be on that hilltop all night and maybe for the rest of my life. Darkness clung to me like cobwebs till I could not see trees, birds, bushes....it was just a girl and the moon and the lights below.

The heaviness of the night compelled my timid voice to call out: "Neville!" but nothing stirred.

"Carol!"

From behind me, a figure burst out of the trees and ran toward me. My mother scooped me up and my head fell into the warm comforting smell of her cotton dress.



"I'm so sorry, baby. So sorry..."

I later found out that Neville had gone off with his friends and had forgotten that he had left me. When he finally showed up at home, and my mother asked where I was, he threw his hand over his mouth in horror.

It's funny how that feeling of abandonment has a way of hanging around. As an adult, I pride myself on being independent, unafraid of risk, comfortable with solitude. Yet, I have this one little idiosyncrasy. If my husband goes to bed early and I am left alone in the living room, that somehow cracks open a little kernel of fear in me. The incident in Shabani created a scar, and the slightest sense of abandonment scratches that scar. Even though I have long been out of Zimbabwe, the green tin roofs and twinkling lights are not that far away after all.

# Music Teachers

by Whitney Paz ('13)



My earliest memory of learning about music comes from crazy-haired Mrs. Jensen at Creekside Elementary. She would enter the classroom with a clanking cart full of instruments, including a white bucket of recorders soaking in antiseptic.

Mrs. Jensen set up shop by plunking her giant keyboard down to face us. Each music period began with a greeting we all sang: "Hello Mrs. Jensen". She played the greeting notes on the keyboard with one hand and sliced them in the air with the other.

Her presence commanded our attention and demanded that we sing strongly and with gusto. Sometimes one of those memorable songs comes to mind while I'm in the shower or cooking dinner, and I can't help but sing "Three Chartreuse Buzzards", "Don Gato", or "Alouette" to myself.

Mrs. Jensen's song choices were light-hearted and often silly. I fondly remember that part of my childhood for learning to just enjoy music rather than analyze it. Through her booming example, Mrs. Jensen taught us to not be afraid to show enthusiasm. Her joy for singing was infectious; it stays with me to this day.

Dr. Wolfgang Fetsch, on the other hand, was quite serious about learning the right way to play music. This stern German man became my piano teacher senior year of high school after beloved Mrs. Linton moved away.

At first I didn't feel intimidated by the short, retired professor of music. Mrs. Linton's loving piano instruction for 9 years gave me no reason to suspect my next teacher would be any different. However, the first lesson with Dr. Fetsch showed me the vast differences in teaching styles.

He did not mince words about what I must fix in my playing, but delivered comments with a thick accent and little kindness. I felt stung after having been accustomed to Mrs. Linton's gentle and patient reminders.

I left his front porch, fighting back the tears, as I made my way to my mom's parked car. "I don't know if I want to take piano lessons anymore!" I burst out. Even as a high school senior, I was very sensitive to criticism.

My parents' encouragement emboldened me to mention my anxieties to Dr. Fetsch at the next lesson. "Um, I don't plan to become a concert pianist after this," I stammered out. I just wanted to keep playing the piano and growing in my abilities. To my relief, Dr. Fetsch was actually very understanding and quickly changed his teaching style to suit me. He softened his critiques, and I like to think I developed a slightly thicker skin. Maybe.

"Um, I don't  
plan to become  
a concert pianist  
after this," I  
stammered.

As piano teacher and piano student, we adapted to each other's preferences. I was challenged to express myself more in playing a piece while still following the necessary technicalities. I'm thankful that Dr. Fetsch pushed me beyond my comfort zone with music, and I hope I taught him that students don't always need harsh criticism to grow.

Either way, we forged a grandfather-granddaughter-type bond. Dr. Fetsch and I exchanged a few letters during college. He even asked me to be the "page-turner" for his recital one summer, a coveted honor.

Now a teacher myself, I reflect on both music teachers and wonder if I at all emulate their examples with my own students. How do I inspire students to enthusiastically embrace a subject, as Mrs. Jensen did? And how do my students and I meet each other somewhere in the middle, as Dr. Fetsch and I attempted to do? Can I move beyond what my students need to learn and connect with them where they actually are? I am grateful to both Mrs. Jensen and Dr. Fetsch for their lingering presences in my life. I strive to follow in their different-sized footsteps as I find my own path.

This is the miracle that happens every time to those who really love:  
the more they give, the more they possess.

Rainer Maria Rilke

# Swimming

by Lou Spaventa ('01)



The dawn arises gray and purple, washed like an artist's brush in a jar of watercolors. The air temperature is cold enough to raise the hair on bare legs and bare arms, to put a blush on the cheek and a spring in one's step. Serene Mortensen pushes her walker into the lobby of the pool and pulls her battered blue swim ticket from an old nylon purse. She is ready to swim, back and forth, up and then down the slow lane in the outdoor pool; her body moving to a primordial rhythm of stroke, kick, and glide.

How like the womb  
is the pool! How it  
encompasses life!

Behind her in line, impatiently waving her blue ticket, is Susie Ramirez-Silver. Her skin is olive brown and her hair is a streaked sky blond. Her face is smooth. Her eyes are silver blue and clear as polished crystal. Susie had a baby girl not six months ago. She never missed a day in the pool through her whole pregnancy. When she was in the water at seven, eight and nine months, she was round, smooth as a seal. Her stomach and breasts were full and buoyant. She felt the water penetrate her, an enveloping lover, more intimate and closer to her than her husband. As Serene pushed her walker into the women's locker room, Susie thrust her ticket in the half moon slot of the ticket window. She grinned at Blaire, a twenty-year-old lifeguard whose skin was darker than Susie's, and whose hair was blonder and more bleached by the sun. They shared a smile as Blaire passed Susie's punched ticket back to her.

"Have a good one, Susie."

"You bet I will."

"What's the temperature today?"

"81° as usual. Air temp is 65."

"Getting cold, no?"

"Yeah, you oughta try sitting out on that deck when the masters swim at 6."

"No, thanks."

"Have a good swim, Susie."

"Thanks, Blaire."

And on it goes. Old and older march into the lobby, holding out their tickets like a Sunday offering. Into the locker room, off with the sweat clothes, on with the Speedo, out on the deck, into the water. The lanes are divided so each person can find the one that suits his speed, but no one pays much attention to that in the morning. It's more or less to equal out the numbers in each lane. Find the most space and go for it.

Off in lane two, where the swimmers are supposed to be the fastest in the pool, Brad and Zander share a conspiratorial conversation, glance down at a laminated swim chart that describes each split, how many laps, at what speed. Then they begin. First the tall blond Brad, clipped moustache, tiny myopic eyes, nearly helpless without glasses, his face framed by clear, colorless goggles, his head bisected by a rubber swim cap, "La Onda Swim Club, Los Gatos." He reaches far out in front of him with his long

The swim cap and goggles hide the expressiveness of the human face as well as they prevent water from getting into one's hair and eyes.

smooth arm and pushes back the water, first with the left arm, then with the right. His hands are cupped, each scooping water, pushing it behind him. His arm comes down through the water in an S shape, finishing near his buttocks. He lifts one arm out, then the other, repeats and repeats the sequence.

Behind him, Zander gives a quarter length for comfort. Then he springs off the tiled side of the pool, gliding past the flags that mark proximity to the pool wall. Emerging, he breathes in deeply and follows the same motion that his partner, Brad, began. They are synchronized. They know each other well. They are lovers and their physical knowledge of each other's body is reflected in the easy swimming rhythm that they fall into. They are good swimmers, but not the best. During the noontime swim when the triathletes take over the fast lanes, Brad and



Zander could never keep pace. But in the mornings, they are among the fastest swimmers in the pool.

In the next lane, the first one, which abuts the pool side, swim the very old, those who can just manage to get up and down the length of the pool, whose bones, joints, and muscles are just strong enough to keep them going, oh so slowly, but going still. They pat the water. They can't stroke. They wiggle their feet. They can't kick. But they fall into rhythm, the old men with folded skin on their upper bodies, moles, freckles, blood spots, scars, but moving, moving through the clear water, and breathing in a rhythm that recalls for them the first breaths they drew in life. How like the womb is the pool! How it encompasses life!

Here is Serene. She used the pool ladder to get in down at the deep end. She puts on a pair of short red rubber fins, fins made for lap swimming, not ocean diving. Her bathing cap covers most of her head, and her dark goggles take up the rest. There is very little of Serene to make contact with. Unless she breaks into a grin or says something, you'd have no idea what she was thinking or feeling. The swim cap and goggles hide the expressiveness of the human face as well as they prevent water from getting into one's hair and eyes. Serene's suit is black, a one-piece. She starts in the deep end. For five minutes, she treads water. Then she puts on a pair of plastic paddles, flat hydrodynamic paddles attached to the handle by rubber loops. Half rubber, half flesh, Serene makes her way down to the shallow end of the pool. She stops there, stands up, looks around. She waits a beat...1,2,3, and then back up toward the deep end.

He swims up and back at a slow rate of speed, unwilling to see the obvious. He is a moving obstacle in the water.

Three lanes down are the medium speed swimmers. Jose-Antonio from Lima, Peru wears a blue rubber bathing cap perched atop his head, not snug around it. His ponytail dangles behind as he swims. He is short, and not particularly powerful in the upper body. So he swims at a slow to medium pace. Two young women, one with long red hair shoved under a white cap, wearing a two piece white swim suit, and the other with a squat catcher's body and broad shoulders, move past Jose-Antonio every fifth lap. They stroke hard when they are close behind him and then look up ahead to see if the lane is clear.

Then they accelerate, taking long, athletic strokes to move past him and back into the safety of the out lane. Ordinarily, they wouldn't be too much faster than Jose-Antonio, but they have on fins and paddles. These give them a big edge over mere hand and foot.

Once in a while, Claude, a French cyclist who has dreams of the triathlon, swims in this medium lane as well. He wears diver's fins and a diver's mask - something true blue swimmers would eschew. Even with those, he doesn't move that well.

Jose-Antonio swims slightly faster than Claude, who's just there to explore the possibility.

When the fast lane gets going, it cooks. Gerry Aroyian swims in the fast lane most weekday mornings. He stands about 6'2" and weighs around 170 pounds. There's not much fat on his swimmer's body, even at 38 years old. He moves through the water as if through air. There seems to be no resistance to his strokes, and with each one, he glides a body length. He swims so smoothly and so gracefully that one doesn't notice the sheer speed of his movement. His back, arms and chest are covered with dark hair. He doesn't wear a mask, so his shoulder length hair plasters itself to his neck when he emerges from the wall turn. After a couple of thousand meters, he begins to play in the water. He butterflies up the length of the pool, then hits the wall and swims underwater for half a length. He is the king of the sea lions, the sleekest seal in the morning pool.

In Gerry's lane, there is an aging sea lion, rubber-finned, rubber-capped, plastic paddles on his hands. He swims up and back at a slow rate of speed, unwilling to see the obvious, that his old muscles cannot propel him at anywhere near the speed of the fast swimmers. He is a moving obstacle in the water. His movements are silent and slow, as if time moves slower for him than for the other swimmers. He dares swim the fast lane only in the mornings. Three hours later the lane is filled with wiry, muscled athletes who move up and back at twice his speed. He would drown in their wake. But in the mornings, with few people in the pool, and only Gerry qualifying as an athlete, he can pretend he is among the strongest swimmers. The pool allows him this hubris.

HERE *by Barry Spacks*

Miseries, clean your habits out,  
abandon plea and alibi.

The salmon return, tuned beyond error.  
Darkness shines, like an underground river.

How good to be us! Each moment dances  
its overwhelming exactitude

on billions of footprint-sized  
islands.

# Smooth in the Water

by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)



We'll get this straight from the start. I do not know how to swim. Somehow I just found myself all grown up one day never having learned. People are always appalled when they discover this, as though I have been concealing some embarrassing deficiency that causes them to view me differently. Many, in fact, offer to correct it. I confessed my inability to a four-year-old boy named Troy once as I was tucking him into bed. He immediately sat up to show me how, paddling with his hands in the air above his bed and meticulously explaining the whole process. "So do you get it now?" he asked, leaning back against his pillows, touchingly pleased to have helped me. I didn't have the heart to say no.

I had attempted more traditional classes over the years—a few aborted sessions in a cold YMCA swimming pool in Chicago, and various lessons later on taught by robust athletic amphibians in Southern California. I never progressed much beyond pushing off from the side and propelling myself a few feet through the water. At some point I would inevitably freak out, thrash around, and swallow water, emerging with gasps and sputters. Fear was a stronger force than the occasional flicker of hope my miniscule successes engendered. Eventually the possibility of my becoming a swimmer seemed so remote I could no longer imagine it.

And then, just a few months ago, having resolved to grow and challenge myself, I decided to give it one more try. I signed up for lessons with a woman who teaches

all the toddlers in the Santa Ynez Valley. I bought a bathing suit for the first time in decades – a modest black one, of course, the kind that’s supposed to make you look ten pounds thinner but never does, and I padded out in flip-flops and sat watching in awe as a little girl in a pink bathing suit concluded her lesson by retrieving rings from the bottom of the pool, a stunt which inspired neither confidence nor enthusiasm in me. Her proud mom wrapped her in a towel and I watched the little show-off happily skip away, knowing I would not leave giggling.

Now it was my turn. I strapped on a pair of goggles that cut into the bridge of my nose, and immersed myself tentatively. It was exactly as I remembered it – an alien and inhospitable environment that smelled of chlorine and danger. The instructor was patient and kind, trying initially to get a sense of my level of comfort or discomfort in the water. Wanting to please her, I immediately demonstrated my very best trick, the one where I push off from the side, extend my body, bravely put my face in the water, and sail across the width of the pool. I think it’s fairly impressive, and I wish we could have left it at that. But then there predictably came the business of blowing bubbles. Things always deteriorate from the bubble-blowing point.

Last night I dreamed I was in a gray foamy sea, and for the first time ever, I could feel that the water wasn’t just pulling me down, it was pushing me up, rendering me buoyant.

I endured two sessions of tedious kicking, of breathing exercises that usually morphed into hyperventilation, and of gliding toward the deep end of the pool on a kickboard straight into panic. I discovered again how much I hate holding my breath, and how little faith I place in liquid. I remembered how confused I get when I have to coordinate physical movements, especially with the fluster factor of knowing that to fail is to

drown. I recognized, above all, how much I love the feel of ground beneath my feet, and I resolved to henceforth tread attentively and appreciatively on the earth. I reminded myself that no one was forcing me to do this, and hadn’t I gotten along fine so far watching from the shore and avoiding small boats? I had given it a bit of a try, got my feet wet, so to speak. Now I quit. I hadn’t even made it to minnow.

Naturally, I promptly turned this into a statement about my failure as a human being. Once again, I had started something and dropped the ball. It’s a pattern that has worried me for years. And I’m pretty sure this was the last swimming class I will ever attempt; I cannot—and never will—swim.

But my friend Steve, who knows me well said, “You don’t give a crap about swimming. Why pretend?”

This was a liberating thought, and possibly true.

Ironically, the swimming instructor called me a few days later and said, "I don't know what's going on inside your head, Cynthia, but you would be a beautiful swimmer! You were smooth in the water. Smooth." Well, that's a new one for me.



The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard wrote: "The call of water demands a total offering, an inner offering. Water needs an inhabitant. It summons like a fatherland."

I too have heard its call and been swept along by its currents. Last night I dreamed I was in a gray foamy sea, and for the first time ever, I could feel that the water wasn't just pulling me down, it was pushing me up, rendering me buoyant. The ocean was vast, but I stayed horizontal and rose with the swell, breathing the sky, smooth in the water.

So I'll swim through my dreams, and perhaps that's good enough. Maybe maturity is accepting what we cannot do and inhabiting that reality, not with resignation but contentment.

**WARNING** by *Rosemary Cabe* ('87)

"My mother died with deep regret,"  
a friend announced as I handed her a cup of tea.  
"About what?" my curiosity required.  
"For all the things she never had," her sad voice answered,  
quivering like the china cup that trembled on its saucer.  
And I thought of the women I have known  
Who felt that life withheld from them  
the treasures they'd been promised.  
"How unfortunate," I said  
to the head she bowed low over her teacup.  
"She could have died with such deep gratitude  
for having a daughter as kind as you."  
My young friend sighed as she sipped her tea  
and I wanted to warn her  
against wrapping herself in the shawl of regret.

# Tell Us What You Really Think, Jack

*Final Comments Made to the San Marcos High School Staff*

*by retiring teacher, Jack Hobbs ('86)*

I want to tell you all the story of a great high school. An exceptional high school. I want to remind you how this school, San Marcos, got to be such an exceptional school. There are going to be a lot of people you don't know in these stories, so you're going to be tempted to check your text messages, shoot out an email, make a call under the table. Go ahead.

I've given up on trying to interfere with anyone's right to pay more attention to their devices than me. I fought against the tide for years, but I knew I was fighting a losing battle when, at back-to-school nights, parents started texting as I talked about the sorts of writing we were doing in English class. Many students have been lost to cyberspace, but administrators and parents aren't immune either.

I've given up on trying to interfere with anyone's right to pay more attention to their devices than me.

I knew it was all over when I saw a former principal onstage, right here on this stage, at a meeting of the National Honor Society, reading his emails onstage as the NHS president was giving a heart-felt speech about the qualities of leadership and character. I just shook my head.

I saw it coming at a parent-teacher conference; the busy parent was teleconferenced into the meeting and she kept fading in and out of cell range, yet she insisted that we repeat everything twice. What are we doing? Are we really ready to accept that a smart phone on the table is the same as a parent in the room?

Anyway, I digress...this exceptionally great high school didn't suddenly become great overnight. And we didn't become great when we got fiber-optic cable installed, or when the Wi-Fi network got upgraded. We weren't made great by Scholastic, Inc., Microsoft, or Apple. The greatness of this school is to be found in the people who work here and have worked here in the past, not the exterior physical condition of the edifices, or the status of our computer labs. We have to keep in mind that we all stand on the shoulders of giants, which is why we can reach so high.

We don't have a great theater program because of the new stage renovations. We have a great performing arts program because of David Holmes, who stands on the shoulders of the great Marjorie Luke. Do you think we would have the phenomenal band program we have without the incredibly energetic Michael Kiyou, who's following in the footsteps of former band director Dan Garske, both of them award-winning drum majors? Would have the kind of



singing talent and vibrant musical spirit of our vocal music groups without Ms. Teraoka-Brady?

Kids Helping Kids, the AP Econ class project that has earned hundreds of thousands of dollars for local charities over the years, is great, but it should be titled Jamie Devries Helping Kids Figure Out How to Help Kids. The AAPLE leadership academy would not exist, except for Erik Nielsen; our award-winning automotive technology program would be nothing without Russ Granger; the King's Page, the SMHS Yearbook, the championship Mock Trial team are non-entities without Luke Ohrn, Lara Wilbanks, and Eric Burrows. And that incredible social studies department is founded on the legacy of people like Curtis Ridling, who was always the insightful voice of the economist asking the tough questions at faculty meetings and restructuring committee meetings. Remember actual faculty meetings? Most of you probably don't. These were open forums where vibrant discussions and sometimes contentious debates occurred around school challenges we faced, not just power point sessions about our test scores.

It's nice for us to have an expensive new turf field and track, or a renovated gym or pool...but that in itself is not a guarantee of athletic success without coaches like Chuckie Roth, Roger Kunz, Anthony Linebaugh, Marilyn Hantgin and Laurence Steimeier, who all stand on the shoulders of past coaches like Sut Puloa, John Stoney, Bob Archer, and John Lee who came before them.

Our science department, that produces most of the County Science Fair winners each year, is truly exceptional, but would it be without the influence of past teachers Peter Gillespie, Vorakan Chanyanovich, and Fred Tunnecliffe? The incredibly successful Health Academy, which has given many of our students head start into careers in medicine, would not exist without all of the hard work put in by Marcene Newman, but how many remember that Sue Dachenhaus is the one who wrote the grant, made the connections with Cottage Hospital and City College to get it all started?

And of course, in my case, I stood for years on the shoulders of my mentor, Jack Phreaner who is to this day in my mind the best model for teaching and building school community. Without Jack's guidance, encouragement, support over the years I doubt that I would be standing here today celebrating thirty years in the profession.

Ed Behrens is an incredibly dedicated administrator, and he has given much of himself over the years to make this school exceptional. But he has to admit that much of his success has been because of all the great principals who came before - people like John Boettner, Bob Ferguson, Moe Claydon, and Craig Morgan, from whom Ed borrowed his signature sign-off, "GO ROYALS".

And there have been countless parents and community members who have come and gone over the years, each contributing their part to make our school exceptional. I would like to mention just one who I believe has never been publically recognized for her contributions: Judy Meisel, a survivor of the Holocaust and promoter of understanding and tolerance, has never turned down an invitation to come and speak with our students about her experiences. I would like to thank her for all of the inspiration she has given our students over the years.

We have already allowed the intrusion of corporate interests to take over too much of what we're about.

The whole restructured school program that we all now benefit from here at San Marcos – not just the block schedule we have, but the academies, the community service program, the career center - is thanks to the visionary zeal of giants like Bob Gray, Cliff Purcell, Candy Short, Tracy Thompson and Frank Stevens, names that most here have probably never even heard. Many who still work here with us, like Melanie Jacobson, David Holmes, Susan Kipp and Kirk Taylor were key players in reforming our school.

And as our demographics have changed over the years, many have stepped up to meet the challenges. Vicki Hanes, who has successfully guided the AVID Program over the years, has helped thousands navigate the path to higher education. Our counselor, Sergio Castellanos, has been an integral advocate for underrepresented students in many ways, such as starting the Royal University Club which supports those who may not have considered college as part of their future.

It's people like these, and the many others that I am leaving out, who make this school great. We know this. But money and gadgets, and new the creeping consumerism that is infecting our whole social network (and I'm speaking about the real social network, not the one that is promoted by Facebook and Twitter™) is now moving into our schools. We need to go cautiously into this new world. We can easily find ourselves and our entire educational enterprise reduced to a screen on a wall or a hand-held device. It's happening to every other human enterprise around us, why do we think we're immune?

I worry that, in these times of tough annual cutbacks, which seem to be the new normal in school funding, we will sell our exceptionalism to the highest bidders. We have already allowed the intrusion of corporate interests to take over too much of what we're about. I know what Apple, Google, McGraw Hill, Pearson, and the other corporate interests connected with the Smarter Balance Consortium want. They want an employable labor force, and they want more value for their shareholders. That's what corporations do; it's why they exist.

And do we, the people in the classrooms day in and day out, get to participate in these decisions? Participation by teachers in school decision-making has been reduced to submitting responses online via SurveyMonkey.com. Very efficient. For example, it was recently decided that we will be giving a national bank space to set up shop on our campus, space that once served as a teacher workstation. Were teachers involved in this decision? We were only asked to give input to where we wanted to move the teacher workstation/copy room to.

Who do you think cares more about having children succeed academically: teachers, who work day in and day out with students, or corporate enterprises whose number one priority is by nature creating value in the form of profits for their shareholders? It would seem to be obvious, but look at the state of things the way they currently are. Teachers have been kept out of the decision-making loop regarding educational reform for the last decade. We are kept much too busy to even notice.

I teach at this great high school. But greatness, as Curtis Ridling would say, comes with a price. It involves long hours, dedication, know-how, vision and drive. It cannot be bought. It has to be created from within. We are a school built on a history of hard work, innovative thinking, collaboration and human interaction, which is often messy, inefficient and time-consuming. You can't evaluate the important aspects of what we do in the classroom with the push of a few buttons on a smart phone...you can't call a mandated agenda a PLC session, and you can't keep a school exceptional through technological innovations.

Let's remember that our exceptionally great school is what it is because of the exceptional *people* who have all left their contributions over the years.

Now don't get me wrong - I am not anti-technology. I'm not a Luddite - I know change in education is inevitably coming. But we can and must control the direction of those changes in any way that we can. Luckily, we have two incredible people on our staff - Craig Schneider and Helen Murdoch - two of the best teachers who've taught in these hallowed halls - to help guide us through the coming technological transitions.

Let's be cautious and let's stay skeptical. Let's remember that our exceptionally great school is what it is because of the exceptional people who have all left their contributions over the years. And this school will remain exceptional thanks to all of you who, if you are permitted, will continue to add your great ideas, innovative approaches and energy. This is what will keep San Marcos moving forward as a school that honors the expertise and wisdom of its teachers, respects the needs and talents of its students and embraces a spirit of collaboration and consensus-building in facing the challenges ahead.

WHILE I WATCH ACTORS RECEIVE THE APPLAUSE I WISH I WAS RECEIVING  
*by Rob Montgomery ('07)*

And I start wondering, how can I capture  
in teaching the instant gratification I felt in acting?  
Would it be too much to ask  
for my students to applaud at the end of each class?  
I could even step out of the room briefly,  
as though the curtain had just dropped,  
and then re-enter at a jog, bow deeply at the waist,  
hands clasped at my chest, a smile on my face that says,  
"Oh surely not, but thank you anyway."  
If it would help, maybe I could deck out the room  
with some lighting, a pin spot to bring out my eyes,  
some backlighting to make me look thinner and taller than I am.

But why stop there?

I could find an orchestra to provide mood music for today's lesson.  
An up-tempo ditty when I speak about the joys of teaching,  
a minor key dirge when I touch on standards or Jane Shaffer.  
Okay. Maybe an orchestra is taking this one step too far.  
At a push, I think a humble string quartet would suffice.  
I could bow, gesture my thanks, blow them a kiss,  
and feel the waves of approbation wash from the rear of the room  
to crash around me,  
pools of thanks,  
a riptide of joy,  
gratitude at high tide.

SERENDIPITY  
by Barry Spacks

A student queries the spelling  
of master poet Rumi's name --  
"Roomy?" Well, yes, in a way.



PAPER COVERS ROCK by *Chella Courington* ('03)

I

I can't stop buying scissors. I walk into Home Depot for geraniums & lilies, leave with gardening shears, green ergonomic handles. Gelson's for halibut. Shiny poultry shears. At a garage sale I find a pair of hedge clippers. By December paper cutters, pinking shears, hair trimmers—any blades you want are boxed in the kitchen pantry.

II

Saturday he takes his 14 clubs & disappears. In hot water, I clean scissors. Prop them on the counter before drying with muslin. Each blade I shine with baking soda. In high school I hung with cutters. They used whatever worked—broken glass, coat hangars, paper. Arms tracked with violet scars like stretch marks, hidden under long-sleeve shirts.

III

Reflections in a Golden Eye: Mrs. Langdon uses garden shears to clip her nipples when she loses her baby. Snip snip—easy as pinching off deadheads. Sunday in January, I hold my left nipple between the blades of barber shears. Warm steel triggers goose bumps. Is a nipple like a finger? Can they sew it back on?

IV

Recurrent dream: blades-down, scissors drop from the ceiling, rattling & hissing. Impale the cherry nightstand, down comforter, my Land's End bathrobe. I crouch in the tub, rocking to the sound of hail. Open my thigh—blood a rusty penny melting on my tongue.

V

I get an Alabama divorce. He signs the papers & hauls his Titliest clubs, La-Z-Boy, & mahogany desk back to Illinois. Parting words: The cat stays with you. I keep Moot, the crystal, & the condo. Start selling the scissors on E-Bay, box by box.

## Dinner Parties Where Place Cards Leave No Choice in Seating *by Chella Courington ('03)*

If she felt his leg brush against hers, should she ignore it, commenting on the arugula with pine nuts, "Strong tastes for champagne." Or should she stand, dropping the linen napkin as if she must go to the powder room? And would he instantly rise, "May I be of service?" Or should she cross her legs? Let him feel her resistance, know she meant no when the steamed lobster was placed before her. Should she tell him that in March she dove for lobster in the Florida Keys, catching as many as twelve on a single afternoon? Would he crack the shell, marveling that a woman, a slight woman like her, could be so adept with a tickle stick and net? Or would he say nothing? No, he must not be indifferent to her past if he wanted to play in her present. Would he dare touch her silk pants while raising the chardonnay to his lips? She crossed her legs. Was it a hand brushing against her thigh? How could he think her available amid clanking of glasses and dropping of vowels? What had she said? Or did he assume anyone seated next to him ought to be interested? What could she do if his fingers paused? She once read in a novel that a heroine, flushed by her brother's college friend, stabbed him with a salad fork. Where, she wasn't sure, maybe his forearm. "And what do you do with a dozen lobsters? Throw dinner parties like this?" She heard him, his eyes never looking up from the plate. Should she uncross her legs now or survey her choice of forks?

CALIFORNIA CHILDHOOD by Gaby Edwards ('85)

*California has but two seasons: spring and summer.*  
John Muir

Spring around my mother's house was  
delicate as a sweet concerto  
flowering orchards afloat above  
a haze of yellow mustard  
sky towering over tender land

Summers it was my father's house  
orchards alive with the grind of tractors  
the voices of invisible pickers calling  
to each other through thick leaves  
as he bit into a cold dawn peach

## HAVE A DAY by Lois Klein

of endearing nonsense  
all your *A's* and *A+'s*  
out the window  
your *shoulds* fallen  
into heaps  
giggling in the grass  
your *musts* riding  
a see-saw  
with your *can'ts*

Have a day following  
the blue dragonfly  
up the creek, spreading  
your own gossamer  
wings, a day recalling  
the puppy piles of your childhood  
the no-care sliding down  
bannisters,  
taking stairs by three's,  
letting your voice  
test its echoing

Have a day diving into  
heaps of autumn leaves  
stomping your feet  
in muddy puddles, painting  
your toenails purple

What I mean to say is  
*Have a day!*





### THE HARD PART by Lois Klein

Into the newly dug furrows:  
Heritage Mix—wisps of lettuce seeds  
light as dust, so small  
they disappear when scattered.  
I follow the directions on the packet—  
cover with fine soil, pat down  
mist the dark loam until it glistens.

Now the hard part—to stay the course  
of everyday chores—dishes washed  
floors swept, sinks wiped—all the while  
watching for new life  
still dreaming its own green secrets—  
underground, invisible.

### ONLY SONG by Lois Klein

Beyond this desk where words  
sag under the weight of expectation,  
beyond my window, spring  
is tossing out its quiet wildness.

It happens overnight—  
green nubs from bare branches,  
pale pink buds on apricot and plum.  
Even the ground so fertile  
as though to step on it

I, too, will burst into bloom.  
I want to take my words outside,  
transform them into the notes of birds  
arrived from places south  
speaking the language of spring  
which is no words, only song.

### MANNA by Lois Klein

Deep in me  
around the silent core  
words grow  
ripen like fruit

sustained  
by sun and storm

to become, perhaps  
a plum  
sweet and juicy  
or a tangerine  
citrus and sharp



## TILL NOW by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90)

Nobody told me I am a lake  
thought I was the sunbather on the dock the ice skater  
the fishermen the canoe paddler

not the depth the water  
but the minnow the loon the reflected pine trees

only thought I was the thinker thinking about  
water lilies a school of perch  
a muskie in the reeds

not sure now is different  
knowing I am not a subject  
studying studied not an object  
direct indirect following a preposition

now no current to be feared no wind to resist  
no shimmer to reach for

now being wide empty full of wiggle and quiet

ripples on the sandy bottom a mirror of the surface

rain returning to where it's risen.



CHANTEUSE ON THE TRAMPOLINE by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90)

Little girl in pink skirt stripped blue socks  
Tingri jumping and singing full-bodied heart deep

*My Fish Died*  
*I Love Fall*  
*Tiger in the Trees*  
*Arm Muscles*  
*Sun Moon Stars*

hand movements to match head gestures eyes aimed to the tallest branches  
legs scissored a marble pedestal a crazy asymmetry

five-year-old September songs  
grandmother's receptive face full attention her arms dancing  
in the same rhythm same power

grandfather laughing on the outdoor couch under the umbrella  
utterly amazed delighted  
Goldie the dog sniffing rabbits in the yuccas  
the sun setting beyond a Los Angeles hill the yurt hammock  
the burgundy cottage ripe strawberries in the garden with succulents  
and rocks to perch little people for stories of right now and could be

Tingri's words streaming in high and low pitches sad praising  
tough silly every weighted foot the trampoline springs back higher  
the next verse a repetition a variation to the finish

a pause half a minute a new song wiggles its way into words  
eyebrows lowered chin pointed west hands soaring wings

*Oh the Birds*  
*Oh the Peppertrees*

head shaking in wonder endless seeing to name connect adore



POEM by Barry Spacks

Will it come again like this?  
Will we ever get it right?  
It is always as it is,  
And it passes.

Never as it was,  
Yet always somehow bright,  
Always somehow sweet  
In its changes.

We will never get it right.  
It will come again, but not like this.  
It is always as it is,  
And it changes.



South Coast Writing Project  
Gevirtz Graduate School of Education  
University of California  
Santa Barbara, CA 93106

(805)893-4422

[4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu](mailto:4scwrip@education.ucsb.edu)

Director: Tim Dewar

Randi Browning, Co-Director, College Educators  
Heidi Craine, Co-Director, Elementary Educators  
Amy McMillan, Co-Director, Summer Institute  
Nicole Schon, Co-Director, SCWriPTech & YWC  
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