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Gevirtz Graduate School of Education, University of California at Santa Barbara

PostSCWriP

PAPÁ AMADO: THE STRENGTH OF THE FAMILY

by Rosalva Mendieta ('15)



We called him Papá Amado because he did not want to be called *abuelo*; he preferred the subtle tone of Papá Amado, which was fitting because he was a second dad to my brother and me. We lived with him from the day we were born and had a great relationship with him. Six feet tall, his hands wrinkled from all the hard labor he had done throughout his life, he was a quiet yet humble and caring man who would give up the world for his family. He shared the dream of many people of his time: immigrating to the United States to provide a better future for his family. Papá Amado was quiet, but when he spoke we knew that we had to listen because his words were powerful. Powerful in value. Powerful in wisdom.

He shared many stories with my brother and me as we sat on the burgundy leather couch in the living room of the house that had been his for almost forty years. He told us how he only attended third grade because he had to help his family financially and about picking strawberries and lemons in the often-harsh conditions of the fields.

With his red lunch bag and his gallon of water he would wait outside for his ride to pick him up.

My Papá Amado's family struggled financially, living in the town of Morolón, Guanajuato. Being the oldest of six, he quickly learned that school was not an option for him, just as it wasn't an option for many children at that time. Survival was the choice, and

for Papá Amado survival meant walking three miles with his dad and uncles to a cornfield that provided work to sustain the family. They would toil under the sun for eight hours, bending and squatting, bending and squatting. However, Papá Amado didn't think about this as he worked. He thought of how his contribution would allow his family to have a warm, homemade meal that evening.

"To ease the pain in our feet, my uncles would recount stories of their childhoods, and that made the three-mile walk home less daunting," recalled Papá Amado.

"That is why you should go to school," he would add, "so you can have a better future."

Papá Amado moved from working in the fields of Morolón, Guanajuato to working in the fields of sunny Oxnard, California. Day in and day out, he would wake up in the dusk of dawn to start a new day. With his red lunch bag and his gallon of water he would wait outside for his ride to pick him up. Each day was a new day that would bring him the opportunity he now needed to provide for *his* family of five, the family that he loved, the family that was worth every sacrifice.

"I did it all so my children could have a better future than I did," he would say. He shared his stories, but he never complained of the difficulties of his life. In his voice, we sensed the heartfelt pride for his family. This was my grandfather's legacy to us. Family. Respect. Love. And above all, education.

WORD PLAY by Tim Dewar ('94)



I often use the Director's Message to share some essay-ish thing or news about SCWriP. Not this time. This time I enlisted my family to help me write a story, Exquisite Corpse style.

Exquisite Corpse is a variation of an old parlor game, Consequences. The name comes from the surrealists who popularized it as an art-making technique in the early part of the 20th century. In the game each writer produces a line or two, folds the paper to hide the writing, then passes the page on to the next writer, who does the same until the story is complete.

I had heard of Exquisite Corpse, probably as I nodded off in an art history course back in college, but only recently did I learn the details. While on a plane returning from this year's National Writing Project Annual Meeting and National Council of Teachers of English Annual Convention in Minneapolis, I sorted through the stack of publishers' promotional fliers that I had collected. One of them listed the prompts and instructions for Exquisite Corpse, suggesting it as a classroom activity. I wasn't sure I would go that far, but it did look like fun. So once at home I did a bit more research (OK, I used Wikipedia) and found more information. Armed with that, four pieces of paper and four pencils, I cajoled my family into trying it one night after dinner.

Here are the instructions we used:

1. Adjectives for a person such as "The menacing..." or "The friendly yet alarming..."
2. A person's name
met
3. Adjectives for a person
4. Another person's name
at
5. Where they met
6. What the first person gave the second
7. What the first person said
8. What the second person said
9. What the consequence was ("The consequence was...")
10. What the world said about it ("The world said...")

And now the four examples my family produced:

1. The big fat Carol met the irritating Sally Smith at the Pantages Theater in Los Angeles, California. She gave her a jack-in-the-box.

"I hope it makes you a purple unicorn like it's supposed to," she exclaimed.

"I would thank you, but I am speechless."

And then she was so touched by the wonderful gift that she burst into tears. Other people said, "That's cool!" when they saw the person with the gift.

2. The one-eyed snowman met short Mayhem at the international departure terminal where she gave her new friend a shiny red apple.

"Hope you like this!"

"Oh, that's so kind," came the reply.

The consequence was a general feeling of happiness and warm fuzzies. The world said, "Hallelujah! I'm so glad we worked that one out."

3. The superstitious Woodrow Wilson met the very talkative Paula at a rundown hotel call the Sleep Inn. The first person gave a genuine NBA basketball to the other. He said to his new friend, "I thought you might like to have this. You look kind of hungry."

"Thank you! I love it!"

It sparked joy in her heart. The world said, "Would you look at that? Who would have thought pigs could fly?"

4. The pink clad woman, Thomas the Train, met the three-legged Taylor Swift at the Bronx Zoo in New York. She gave her a partridge in a pear tree.

"I thought you could use this, seeing how you look."

She responded, "Wow, I've never gotten a gift quite like this before. I don't know what to say."

And then she realized the gift was old and squeaky. The general population's response was one of grossed out, utter disbelief. It came with a lot of vomiting.

While certainly not great literature, we did enjoy reading them out. We giggled at the juxtapositions and absurdities. Each child eagerly claimed her lines that produced a laugh, and I'll admit to a bit of pride when my own blind contributions added to the "story" in an interesting way. We played with language.

This also has me thinking a couple of things about writing. First, we are total nerds, and nerds enjoy writing. We accept that, so let's just move on.

Next, I challenge you to identify who wrote which lines. Can you tell the third grade writing from the fifth? Or mine from my wife's? Or ours from our kids'?

It seems to me that in this highly structured form individual differences in skill and life experience flatten out. None of us did our best writing, nor did we do our worst. What might this suggest about the highly scaffolded writing so many students are instructed to do in school?

Finally, for now, I think this says something else about "form-first" writing: It's at best a joke. When teachers try to give line-by-line instructions to writers, the results are laughable. The writing rarely coheres or connects, despite lists of transitional words and phrases. While I think Exquisite Corpse will make it into the rotation of silly family games at my house, I am wondering if I can also add it into my classroom teaching toolbox to help student writers understand how form and structure can't precede audience and purpose. Often it seems that student writers want writing to have a formula, whether it is "Hook – TAG – Thesis" or "They say, I say," when at best there might be a heuristic or rule of thumb.

Remembering broad guidelines is not as easy as completing sentence stems, but it will lead to writing with ideas expressed with voice and clarity. I want my student writers to come to know this without "a lot of vomiting" and this game might help us get there. I'll let you know how it goes.

I hope the coming months offer you time to play with words, experiment in your classrooms, and spend time with friends and family. Or at least time to read what follows in this issue of PostSCWriP. Better yet, read then write something for the next issue!

The morning's grace
hovers
lingers
in this soft light
I tiptoe around you
shielding shadows of my heart,
like a mother cradling her spry toddler
eager to run
into the wonder.

Audria Culaciati ('15)

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)

Think of this as a big, bountiful holiday package dropped off on your doorstep. It's kind of lopsided and lumpy...hard to tell what's inside...but once you investigate, I think you'll be pleased.

In addition to wise and amusing advice on writing and teaching from SCWriP Director Tim Dewar, Erika Cobain (no relation to Kurt) welcomes you in person or virtually to a monthly writing group she is starting, and Nicole Wald provides an update on ways to participate digitally in the SCWriP community, among them a new website space where you can post your writing, ideas, and links any time, even today.

And we have memoir! Leina Ball takes us along on her journey from Beijing to St. Petersburg, Erika Cobain celebrates the joys of being a free-range kid on two trusty wheels, Rosalva Mendieta presents a loving tribute to her strong and devoted grandfather, Lynn Murray remembers a man from her childhood whose sad life haunts her still, Linda Marie Smith offers the touching story of a heartfelt gift to a troubled brother, and just for fun I relive a moment in the middle of an ordinary day when everything seemed suddenly as wondrous and unlikely as it is.

That's not all. Mary Adler, Nitin Anand, Gabriel Arquilevich, Chella Courington, Audria Culaciati, Matt Demaria, Jennifer Gunner, Miki Holden, Dorothy Gagner Jardin, Ron Hertz, Nancy Masse, and Michael Tapia have contributed poems, each a glinting gift within the gift.

I am genuinely heartened by the fact that so many Fellows took this opportunity to write and share and remember why it matters. It shows a certain spirit and generosity that fortifies and encourages, and God knows we need it. We're all in this together.

PostSCWriP is a biannual publication of the South Coast Writing Project

"Start writing, no matter what. The water does not flow until the faucet is turned on."

Louis L'Amour

TO THE MAN WHO TOLD ME TO PUT MY CELL PHONE AWAY DURING THE STAR TREK MOVIE

by Gabriel Arquilevich ('01)

I snapped the shot of Spock for my wife. She's home,
with one appendix less than she had a couple of days ago,

and I'm six hours away, here, in Fresno, with my son
and his friend. They're outside of Target, smoking

and happy, and I'm happier than I thought I could have been
on this trip to this awful city. You see, my son and I

haven't been getting along: he's seventeen, and the world's
about him: even when she went in, gowned and nervous,

it was Fresno that held him, her pain a cosmic brush-aside,
a universe set against his plans. It was awful, but I had to drive,

the two of us on the 99 without my wife to run interference.
I don't know, man, it's a long life, full of surprises:

in Bakersfield we ate in the shade, we watched the cars,
him with his Monster, me with my Coke and orange chicken,

and then we hit the road, next stop Fresno, an SOS
from the girl every five minutes, my wife on the phone,

happy she didn't burst on the road and that my boy and I
were getting along. And so here we are. You have your story,

I know. You have your reasons: the shine of the tiny screen
must have drawn you from the action sorely, it's true,

but you seemed ready, as though the Starship Enterprise
never held you. You were in this space for another reason.



A HOLIDAY GIFT

by Linda Marie Smith ('96)

I am famous for giving gifts that do not fit, work, connect, or make sense to the recipient. The onset of my reputation occurred when I gave my husband golf-related items that I purchased from a sporting goods store without any knowledge on my part about golf. On Christmas he opened golf shoe spikes when he didn't own golf shoes, wood covers when he didn't own any woods, and a left-handed golf glove when he hits golf balls right handed (to my defense, he writes left handed).

I gave my friend, who had previously been a crazy party guy, *two* really cool flasks before I discovered he no longer chose to party. I gave sweaters in the wrong size to friends who gained/lost weight, music CDs to teens before discovering the songs were rude and violent, and Christmas Bundt cakes to people who were diabetic or had given up gluten. My parents asked me, in the kindest fashion, to stop making gifts for them because they could neither use nor give away the matching Hawaiian shirts, ill-fitting knitted socks, or thematic pillows.

So when my youngest brother, Kirk, called me shortly before Thanksgiving, I daydreamed about what I could send him. While Kirk is much younger than I am, he is still over fifty, and gifts are challenging. Kirk has struggled with addictions and, more recently, anger management. His marriage has ended, his children are at best tolerant of his phone calls and occasional visits, and his family is extremely concerned about his behavior. Do I send him a jacket to keep him warm, a gift certificate that he will not hock for alcohol or drugs, or a box of food that he may need more than anything?

Kirk had recently stayed with our aging mother. He spent time cleaning her mobile home, repairing lights and ovens, and even detailing her car that tends to remain in the driveway. With that said, his trip ended in a storm of Kirk-typical anger during which he yelled profanities and called her a "she-devil" when she told him she could no longer tolerate his anger or unbalanced behavior.

An addict who is not in recovery can be a bottle rocket ready to blast off unexpectedly.

People who have known or lived with addicts understand and can read between the lines. An addict who is not in recovery can be a bottle rocket ready to blast off unexpectedly. I lived for a few months with an addict who had been drinking, unknown to me, before he took my car and went joy riding. Fortunately

nobody was hurt except for the emotional impact on my husband and me. I know addicts who have stumbled blindly down stairs in front of innocent children or important business associates. Passing out, blacking out, stealing, deceptions, lying...the stories are endless, as is the pain.

Kirk did not want to discuss upcoming holidays. He was angry. He was angry about his haphazard history, his sad relationships with almost everyone, and his frustration with his future. He was certain his family hated him, although he had an explanation for everything.

It was not easy to see the gift I could give him. I saw the opportunity but hesitated. Like many addicts, Kirk had been in rehab more than once. I sent him helpful gifts that in hindsight were not helpful at all. Inspirational books, CDs, and alternatives to drugs and alcohol were my typical attempts at letting him know he was loved in spite of his behavior. Kirk needed to know his family loved him even when they had all asked, out of desperation, to have some space away from him.

“Kirk, you called me today because you know I love you. You know I won’t give up on you. And you know I will tell you the truth.”

Kirk groaned sarcastically, knowing what I would soon admit. But I continued. “YOU PISS ME OFF! Your behavior creates great pain for Mom, your brothers, your sisters, your kids, and everyone who loves you. By the way, we don’t think we are better than you...we just want you to know that we love you.”

I could hear Kirk getting angry, but he calmly said, “I heard you. I know what you are saying. I’m just so tired of not knowing how much everyone *hates* me...or not understanding anything.”

At that moment, I tried to visualize every addict and every addict’s parent and loved ones rather than focusing on Kirk’s manipulative words.

“Kirk, imagine how much I love you. I may be the last person willing to pick up the phone and talk to you. If I had to describe it, my love is like a huge pasta pot...the largest pot you have in your kitchen...or a huge bucket. Fill it with water until it is about to overflow. I love you that much. It overwhelms me. At times, my love is truly too much, which is why I get hurt by your actions. But it doesn't change. I love you to the rim.”

I wondered if Kirk was even sober or listening.

“Now think about your mom; the person you think hurt you the most after you did nice things for her is the person you know has been there your entire life. Take an imaginary walk to a restaurant of your choice...any restaurant. Walk into the back kitchen and notice all the huge pots. There are at least ten enormous pots...probably far more. Now start filling them with water until they are almost overflowing. Set them on the floor, because they will not balance anywhere else. Notice all that water? Isn't it overwhelming?”

Kirk was silent. I assumed the worst but continued. “Here is the challenge: Imagine a hundred times that many pots of water. You can't put them on the floor; there are too many. I might be wrong—it might be a *thousand* pots. That's the love your mom has for you. She is relentless in her love.”

“Your closest friend or the last relative who hasn't given up on you has enough love to fill a huge pot. But your mom, or whoever holds that place in your heart—and who you have probably hurt the most--can fill a room of pots to an overflowing state. “

“You have no idea the depth of love that someone may hold for you because there is so much pain in the way. For now, do not focus on the pain you have created. Apologize for it if possible, but worry about the long, hard journey to reestablish trust and cloud the pain.”

Kirk could not respond. He was quietly crying. His response to me was the greatest gift anyone gave me.

“Hey, Sis,” he said. “You are famous for horrible gifts. Not this year.”

THIS ROOM by Miki Holden ('96)

This is the room where we do not choose our fellows, where compatibility is irrelevant. Where we need not agree on politics, on religion, on abortion or the proper place of women. Where some of us have grand houses and happy families and some of us are homeless. Where some of us have no socks and some of us wear two hundred dollar shoes. Where some of us write books and some of us can't read. Where some of the hands shake so badly that it takes two of them to raise a cup of coffee. Where some of us are still fancy on the outside, and where no one is still fancy on the inside. This is the room where we may not turn away.

This is the room where everyone listens. Even if we've heard it all before. Even if it doesn't make sense. Even if we're outraged. Even if it makes us cry. Where we hear about new beginnings and lost homes and sad children, about jail time and freedom from fear and bottles hidden behind clean towels. Where we hear the rattle of shattered dreams and the snap of broken promises. Where we hear about serenity and years of contentment. Where voices are tight with tears and full of laughter. This is the room where we hear what life is.

This is the room where we have to peel away the layers of lies we have used to hide the truth, and then tell it—what it used to be like, what happened, and what it's like now. Where we come back again and again to tell more of it as we dig it out. Where we must acknowledge the distance between who we were going to be and who we became, and keep track of who we are growing into. Where bit by bit and year by year we dissolve the burden of things they must never find out. This is the room where the mirror clears.

This is the room where a net is woven out of truth and pain, out of acceptance and willingness, out of despair and faith. It is braided with the memory of compulsion and also the release from compulsion. It is created out of bearing witness and out of a fierce and disillusioned love. It stretches along the edge of the abyss, and there is no strand that is not necessary. No one's presence here is extra. This is the room where, while we are in it, we are safe.

This is the room where, like Robert Frost's home, "when you have to go there, they have to take you in." No one comes here by choice. This is the room we come to instead of dying.

This is the room where we begin to live.

EURYDICE

by Chella Courington ('03)

Women have cried over my confinement
in hell by a husband who loved me so
he could not turn away
could not abide the caveat.
These long dark days
underground
breathless
I have not lived yearning for him.
I'm fine.

Did you really believe he wanted me
on earth with him?
Orpheus?
The beloved singer?
What would he sing if I were there?
For his song he needed me
buried beneath the crushing ground
star-crossed love that could never vanish
because it never was.
He didn't desire a woman
bloody with menstrual rituals
whose body once luminous would be taken by time.
Orpheus could not accept such a betrayal.
He wanted me as nymph, not crone.

Even more than age
he feared my voice.
Afraid it would rise above his.
What did he know of suffering and forgiveness?
I was the one severed from the sun
shut in subterranean darkness
barely enough oxygen.

He could have joined me the day I descended.
A knife to his throat, a serpent to his breast.
But he did none of these.
Came to me later by other hands.
I have no use for him.

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TO ROBERT BLY

by Dorothy Gagner Jardin ('90)

Searching the sand that was your beach
before John Hage bought it sixteen years ago when he lived
next to my parents and brother John on West Pike Bay, Cass Lake
and now my brother has bought a few houses down from yours.
My Minnesota siblings have never read your poems or *Iron John* or
The Sibling Society but you have been my adopted young uncle
since George Keithley said I should read *Silence in the Snowy Fields*,
my geography before I settled in California.

Your fields reach far, through foreign poetry translated
for people you wouldn't hear from, but I have asked your permission
for Machado lines and you blessed me.
I heard you in Ojai with Jane Hirshfield, brought you a poem and you
kissed me when I said I was packing a poem.
Minnesota had just voted for open carry.

It's October 23, 2015 and I have come back to celebrate my 72nd birthday
with my family, with red leaves, rivers and lakes.
Being a California English teacher, how could I come home in October?
Not a month anyone in my family died or got married.
Hunting season. Crisp light. Maple leaves drifting in the eagle's air.
Eagles now nest in your pines. White swans swim in the blue current,
so close together I think a white boat has anchored.

You've stared across this narrow lake, know the white birches, their erectness and
their leaning into the shadowed gravel roads around the Northern lakes.

I sat on your steps and searched your sand for the right rock—a black granite
with ocher spots, not the usual pink. It's three sided with two triangular ends,
a wedge, rough where it wintered in ice.
I hold it in my left hand, blessed by the work of the earth and its waters
which you studied in order to breathe beyond the shore of a shallow lake
to where an astonishing depth spoke clearly and you silently listened
and wrote without needing to know what would become of the words,
who would try to understand what they were demanding of you.

CIRCLE OF PEACE

by Ron Hertz ('86)

Sometimes miracles happen just as we imagine them,
People appear, just when we need them,
To ease our fear and help us sing our song...

I had an old Mexican guitar, a solid-wood beauty, despite age and cracks;
I'd carried it with me both near and far, my companion and friend, this little old axe.
But I had other newer ones and so I hatched a lovely vision
To find the perfect stranger for this gift—I'd have to trust my intuition.
I knew at least the perfect place for this passing of my chalice—
It would be in the beautiful city of Prague, in middle of bridge called Saint Charles.
I'd heard it was a Cold War scene when tanks were near if people "sinned" —
A place where Beatles could be found and freedom songs could blow in wind.
And when I reached the cherished spot after passing through many other towns,
I questioned the wisdom of my decision and felt my resolve melting down.
In middle of bridge against sculptured saint, I leaned and played "Let It Be" —
People walked by, a few snapped a shot—the morning was grey and frosty.
"Just one more," I said to my wife—I'd play our favorite peace song "One Day" —
As she joined in, a third voice arrived-- beside me, on wall, just a few feet away.
This girl knew well the poignant words and sang with widest smile;
With mocha skin and dark brown eyes, she asked if she could play a while.
Soulfully she sang in German, while her fingers danced along the strings;
Looking at my cracked old comrade, she said, "It's the most beautiful thing!"
I asked if she could use guitar—she said that she'd been starved for one;
In Germany she worked with refugees—with this new friend, she'd sing with them.
We sang Marley's "Redemption Song" and "Imagine," Lennon's ode to peace.
I knew the dream would be carried on—my mind was completely at ease.
We hugged before we parted—she went her way, I went mine.
I felt as if I were walking on air as I glanced at her one last time.

Sometimes miracles happen just as we imagine them.
People appear, just when we need them,
To ease our fear and help us sing our song...

THE IMPLAUSIBILITY OF EVERYTHING

by Cynthia Carbone Ward ('01)



I discovered the album at a garage sale, and I mean *album* literally, a hard-covered book with envelope-pages, each holding a heavy vinyl record to be played at 78 rounds per minute. This one was a Victor Musical Masterpiece collection entitled *Negro Spirituals Sung by Dorothy Maynor with Unaccompanied Male Choir*, and at \$3 it seemed an incredible bargain. Who could have resisted classics like “Go Tell It on the Mountain” or “Nobody Knows the Trouble I’ve Seen” sung by a soprano whose voice was described by Boston Symphony conductor Serge Koussevitzky as a miracle and a musical revelation? Tucked inside was an added bonus: a record of Marian Anderson singing “Deep River”.

I brought the records to campus the following Monday. I was a teacher then at Dunn Middle School, a place largely populated by frisky humans who could not traverse a field without running or dancing, and a handful of odd grown-ups such as science teacher Marc Kummel, who were willing to pause and ponder oak galls, Fibonacci numbers, seldom heard songs of Nina Simone, or whatever curiosities the world presented. Marc was (and is) known for his love of music, his knowledge of flora and fauna, and his unforgettable math and science lessons. My favorite of his talks was one in which he demonstrated that

the probability of everything happening exactly as it is in any given moment is one over infinity, which of course is zero. “Absolutely impossible,” he would say. “And yet here we are.”

I recalled a story Marc had once told about treasure hunting in the back streets of Santa Monica when he was a kid. His best find was a crank-up Victrola record player that he brought home and fixed up. His mother had a collection of old 78s, mostly jazz, and from then on he could play them, and they were a revelation.

Now I saw him standing by the redwood picnic table on campus and I carried *my* 78s to show him. He resembled a wizard as he stroked his white beard and scrolled through some of the song titles. “Hang on a minute,” he said, and he hurried off to his classroom.

“It’s impossible,” he would say. “All of it is basically impossible. And yet here we are.”

All around there was the noisy happy chaos of middle school at recess. Three girls sat in a nearby tree finishing their sandwiches, someone else was bouncing around on a pogo stick, and a couple of students stopped by just to loiter and chat. Marc returned carrying an old Victrola in

his arms, and I don’t know whether it was the very same phonograph he’d found as a kid or a newer acquisition, but it certainly wasn’t conventional classroom equipment. It had a wind-up crank arm and an internal amplifying horn built into its heavy wooden case, and it was apparently ready for action.

He lifted one of the records from its envelope, set it on the turntable, wound up the lever, and gently placed the needle in a groove. Suddenly Marian Anderson was singing “Deep River” as we gathered in the sunshine by a picnic table in a schoolyard. All of the usual playground noise subsided, and Anderson’s rich and resonant voice wafted across the decades, with the scratches and pops somehow adding to the enchantment.

Upon how many separate events and decisions over the years did this implausible moment depend? It was audio time travel, further evidence of the impossibility and possibility of everything...and we were all very late to class, but nobody minded a bit.

HORACE by Lynn Murray ('87)

I don't remember when Horace first came to work at our large house in the D. C. suburbs of Maryland, but he did come once a week, for years, to help clean the inside. His mother was Elizabeth, an old black lady who worked for Mrs. Meier, our next door neighbor. Maybe Mrs. Meier didn't like Horace's work in her house, and that's why we got him; I don't know if that was the case. It wasn't until years later that I learned that Horace had been adopted by Elizabeth and was not her 'real' son. My memories of facts about Horace are vague, as you can see. But some details are crystal clear, and I'd like to get them on paper, so I don't ever lose them to my mind's eye.

Horace was *almost* a real midget; we used to discuss this with our uncles when we were kids. A real midget, we thought, would be small and cute enough to get an actual job, like in the movies or at the Barnum & Bailey Circus that came to Uline Arena in Washington, D. C. every year. But Horace was too big for that, or at least his head was. His head was almost as large as the upper half of his body.

I would peek around a corner at him while he waxed our wood floors, whistling and humming softly in rhythm with the circling swirl of his rag.

He was always most polite: he'd smile and tip his hat: "Mornin', Miz Lynn." He wore a smooth, limp, light-grey tweed cap that he would set aside in the basement before coming upstairs to work. I was embarrassed and shy around Horace. No one ever called me Miz Lynn; I certainly wasn't that special. And I'd been warned not to distract Horace, or any adult, from

what they were doing. So I would disappear, only to peek around a corner at him, especially when he waxed our wood floors. I dared not be a bother, or my grandmother, Mama, who ruled the house during the day while my parents worked, would give me her eagle eye, and I'd hear about it later when my mother came home and asked how the day went.

When I was very young, likely no more than four years old, I used to separate the days by who came to the house. Ashley came on Mondays. He mowed our steep front and back lawns with the push mower, for which he got breakfast, lunch and some money. After his stroke, he came on Fridays, and would mow with only one hand and arm, pulling the mower with enormous strength. He wore a regular kind of grey hat, ruffled, with a band around it. I do not remember his ever speaking, but he always smiled and nodded to me.

Horace came on Wednesdays, and I looked forward to his arrival, which was sometime after 9 AM. He didn't get breakfast, but Mama made him lunch. He ate whatever was on his plate, too, and always thanked her. The best Wednesdays were when Horace waxed the floors. I would watch with fascination when I thought he wasn't aware. He waxed the floor without bending his knees, which I thought was a special advantage. He would hum and whistle softly, a tuneless sound to accompany his labor that went in rhythm with the circling swirl of the rag. The sound and motion were calming to me.

Horace's right hand was missing its ring finger and pinky, but apparently it did not hurt for him to use the whole hand, swirling the rag. Every so often he'd look up at me, smile, then go back to the tuned swirl, rocking on his stubby bowed legs, making sure to reach every grain in the wood. It took him hours to do the work; the pungent smell of paste wax permeated the whole house by the time he'd finish the job.

It was not until I was older that it occurred to me that Horace's life was not exactly rosy. My mother used to discuss his plight on the phone with Mrs. Meier. At one point, they apparently got Horace a job with Goodwill, but he couldn't keep it. Elizabeth was apparently Horace's only family, and no one seemed to know what would happen to him when she died. Finally, I figured out what the problem contained: Horace was an alcoholic. He was small, as I've said, so even a little drink would make him very helpless. We hid the liquor, but Horace would find it somehow and be drunk before noon, when Daddy would be called from work to come and take him home. Probably the same thing occurred with Goodwill. The general feeling was, if one were Horace, why not drink?

During the Christmas holidays I used to go with Daddy to southeastern Washington to visit people I hardly knew. In certain places, Daddy would tell me to lock the car doors and stay inside while he went on some errands. I guessed he was delivering food and money as Christmas gifts, although I don't remember seeing any baskets or anything. But this is how we learned what had happened to Ashley. Daddy had gone to his home, where he was not to be found, and a neighbor called out to him and said that he had died during the year. The neighbors knew that a white gentleman came by every Christmas time, but they did not know how to reach my father to give him the news.

I never really knew what finally happened to Horace. I did see him, once, from afar, at a bus stop in Chevy Chase. When his bus came, I watched him place himself last in line to board. When his turn came, he grabbed the chrome rail just inside the front door and swung himself up. The doors swooshed shut. The bus pulled out from the curb.



TOUCHING GOD

by Ron Hertz ('86)

so many afternoons under a roof at Hebrew school,
plus Sabbath and Sunday mornings of required attendance
and yet somehow as far as primal inspiration goes,
(the pulse that bowed ancients in awe and reverence)—
to that personal interaction with divinity,
I was a virgin in an unknown country...
until brother Marty took me to mountains—
(backpacking through Sierras' Kings Canyon)
and for first time this L.A. kid, sixteen,
could see what was always there yet unseen--
countless twinkling stars sprinkling endless sky,
(God confronting me benevolently eye to eye)
making my entire religious education suddenly feel
utterly irrelevant to my spiritual awakening--
and in morning another revelation amazed:
scrawny green shoots sprouting through crumbling corpse
of grandfather-Sequoia-- (death and decay feeding babies)...
I write this as a much-beloved friend named Hal
(in midst of this half-moon night full of stars)
breathes his last breaths and becomes pure soul,
warming those who loved him, as he grows cold

INTUITION by Nancy Masse ('12)

So the ocean told us one day
to go with this current
and then that one.
For the vessel to wear its sails,
for the ship to undress.
Meanwhile, the stars all whispered at night,
Follow. We will guide you.
Eyes of the ancestors
accompanied us on our way.

Salt sprays and stings our faces
waves drench our bodies
winds blow us toward the edge
and we teeter on the line
between life above and life below the blue.
Some fingers grasp for anything solid on deck.
Those on duty grab for the oars.

We envision our destination
and hold firm our desired outcome
as the ocean tells us
to go with this current
and then that one.
For our vessel to wear her sails,
or not.

And we carry on with trust
in the elements that are most alive,
elements that speak without words.

STILL A FRK by Erika Cobain ('13)



Free-range kids play in dirt lots. At fifteen, I certainly did. My new steel Diamondback mountain bike (shocks hadn't been invented yet) took me to dirt playgrounds far from home. We called one spot Fun City, where on dusty bluffs and tabletops overlooking the Pacific, I tried to keep up with the guys. The former construction zone "trails" on the Palos Verdes Peninsula now host a golf club, ritzy homes and an exclusive hotel called Terranea, replacing the long gone aquatic animal park, Marineland. When Fun City fell to developers, our local mountain biking and adventure park days ended. Some of us went to college, and those of us who lugged our beloved bikes to school got lucky by

location: Colorado, California, Washington state...schools with lively mountain biking communities and trails.

The University of California at Santa Cruz, also known as "Uncle Charlie's Summer Camp," accepted my application. I rode through redwoods, brushed tawny grass in the great meadow, and startled deer almost daily. A few times I'd pass through the twin gates near the top of campus, cross Empire Grade Road and find myself bombing hills all the way to the Pacific. At the ranch, which once supplied the Santa Cruz Mission, kept wild by seven generations of Wilders, I found a California State Park, an endless playground for mountain biking with fire roads, single track, steep climbs, technical forest and dusty rock trails.

As an undergrad, I cared about Proust, Cervantes, singletrack, and being a rock jock. Now a veteran teacher and SCWriP fellow, I care about writing, a sustainable world, healthy ecosystems and a life/ work balance. I rode a hundred miles on the Diamondback the summer I attended SCWriP and reconnected with my free-range self.

After that summer, I moved back to Northern California with my family, and rediscovered Wilder, now my grown up dirt lot. The park's hiking, equestrian and mountain bike recreation areas sustain the kid in me. I retired the "steel is real" Diamondback after twenty years and thousands of miles. I graduated to clipless pedals and bought a hardtail Fuji with better gearing, front shocks, and larger wheels. Now I keep up with the guys.

Today the sky is clear, the air crisp. With Monterey Bay behind us, my friend Erick and I race uphill, heaving sides, legs circling, sun, laughter. Near the top, we realize neither of us can win. Slowing down on the level bluff, our granny gear spins, legs spiral faster than our forward motion.

"The Zane Grey Trail?" I offer the challenge, smile. He nods. We turn left to find the single track of white stone and rodeo bumps. There's a fantastic view of ocean. I see it once, before I plunge into focus, finding my line.

Erick rides ahead, and I blink against the dirt cloud of his passing. I race down the dust, hands feathering the brakes, crouch low on my pedals, feel my quads burning. Leaning into a bay leaf strewn curve, I am distracted by the thought, "I love...*hmmph!* *Arrrgh!*" Tires slide, and over the handlebars I fly. Gravity check. Yep, it works.

Thunk, on the hard sand, the breath knocked out of me, my heart pumping adrenaline. Tingling without pain, I'm confused by the gash in my knee. Does this blood belong to me? Oh! This is why in cartoons birds fly around people's heads. Dazed, I assess my injuries: can I feel and move everything?

Lying horizontally across the trail, handlebars twisted into my ribs, I'm pinned under with my right foot free, the left still clipped in. The thought had spilled me, turned my world over and knocked me dizzy. I shake my head. Zone out. What was I thinking? I shake out my wrists, unclip, reposition the bike upright, re-clip. I glance at my derailleur. It still looks solid. I dust myself off, position my jersey back to normal. What happened? Washout.

I stuff down the fear and tighten my helmet. Protection. Where would I be without it? It's the buffer between me and the ground, between a love of mountain biking and a rash thought. Falls mean loss of confidence. Get back on the horse, I tell myself. I let my bike roll me down the hill.

Erick stands astride at the next bend, "Did you fall?"

"Nope."

He looks at the leaves in my helmet, the sand on my black shorts, the blood on my knee, "I heard you, cuss."



I grin. "You must be imagining things."

"How many fingers am I holding up?"

"Three."

"What is your wife's name?"

"Dara," I shake my head; that took a millisecond longer than normal.

"You're okay." He knocks my helmet. The birds chirp.

"Yep." I take the fire road a little more cautiously, enjoying the view and the breeze off the ocean. Blood drips from my knee and leaves a trail in the dust. I love that I am still a free-range kid.

THIRTY-TWO by Jennifer Gunner ('11)

At thirty-two I sloughed the skin
of thirty-one; each day
another ebb away,
leaving me behind in a sea of younger voices.

And thirty-two will soon become
a distant voice; sweet advice
from thirty-three guides me,
a buoy bouncing out of current's reach.

When frail and subtle moments pass
today, my futures say
how different things are then;
how slight the strongest storm will seem

At thirty-three,
at forty-four,
at eighty-nine,
and how the fondest memories will keep us all afloat.

So I whisper now and then
to thirty-one; my younger friend
asks questions of the view
from the horizon only I have seen, just beyond the tide.

Thirty thinks about thirty, and sleep, and time,
while twenty stares at a screen and a latte
making alchemy in the middle of the night
with nineteen bellowing behind me.

Seventeen wonders if he'll come back home again, and fourteen scowls and hides under matted hair. Ten gleefully dances to same music that eight and nine composed and hum at all times.

Seven mourns the friends I lack.
Four doesn't know how to look back.

And the skins under thirty-two -
Thirty-three, forty-nine, seventy-eight,
light slight candles for the steps ahead.
Don't think about that so much.
It turns out fine in the end.
Hold his hand longer; take another kiss
in passing; how I wish I still could.
Listen for the music of four, six, fourteen...
Keep the beat.

FATHER EUCALYPTUS

by Matt Demaria ('04)

Eucalyptus,
you are mighty.
Your humble strength
rises above this leafy ravine
with a simple majesty
that even kings would admire.

What is it about your milky, blue-green leaves
and massive, curling trunk
that exude such assurance?...such a resolve
that all will be right
in the world?
....not just in this quiet, peaceful grove,
but beyond it....
this soft haven of yours
extending to the far reaches
of the earth.

Towering above us,
your purple-brown limbs
reach out,
blessing
all who pass....
a father
restoring confidence
in the hearts
of his
children.

CRESCENT

by Nitin Anand ('10)

I want one thing
from you

the story of the scar
that arcs
across your shoulder

the one half-hidden
by the narrow blue strap of your dress

comet's course
orbital bow

I want to hear you
tell it

as I watch the space
between your eyebrows
as you decide
what to hide

FISH BONES

by Nitin Anand ('10)

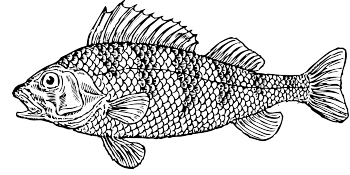
they punctuate my mornings
these small, folded pins
punched and tensioned steel, waved and capped
flung into the world by the millions, invisible and forgotten

until they pile by my window
along the lip of the sink
in the dusty right angles where bed meets floor

they alight
the small and large, all subtly glistening shades of straw
of earth and cave-dark

after you leave
after coffee cupped in your hands
and sheets still-warm and smelling of you

they find each other
and clumsily, slowly
form a nest
in the high center of my chest



ELEGY

by Miki Holden ('96)

Always he has done as did his fathers
Casting out his nets
Drawing in the ocean's gifting
Shining silver.

Sleeping ashore in a bamboo house
His true home the thin blue line
Drawn between sea and sky
Far and away.

He casts with balanced grace
And endless hope
But the fish don't come
As in his grandfather's time.

Each year the tides come in a little higher
The storms rise further up against
The stilted homes, tearing away
Pieces of a way of life.

He goes out all alone
Standing in the fragile rocking boat
As much a part of his place as the gulls
That wheel and call above.

Yet sometimes he lifts his face
Breathes the salt wind
Feels the ebb of history
As if already remembering.



TRACKS: RIDING THE TRANS-MONGOLIAN TRAIN FROM BEIJING TO ST. PETERSBURG

by Leina Ball ('07)

After clearing customs, we purchase our first subway tickets on the Beijing subway, transferring at Dongzhimen Station and riding three more stops to Guloudajie. I am twenty-hours-en-route mentally incoherent, but Dave navigates our way through an old world *hutong* (alley) near the Bell and Drum Towers, 13th century timekeeping monuments. We have five days to shake the jet lag and explore the city before our 5,000-plus mile train adventure begins.

People are carrying things on bicycles, even an aquarium with a few inches of water housing a turtle, and around another corner a man is cooking on a street grill while warming the topside with a hairdryer. Birds I don't recognize chirp at sunrise, and even though we've flown half way around the world, Dave is as regular as ever. A printed sign next to our toilet asks us not to put TP in the toilet; the plumbing is much as it was during the time of the Kublai Khan.

We have booked a guided tour, which ends up being private, to hike a quiet section of the Great Wall of China from Simatai West to Jinshanling, and we learn many things about China from our guide Cheyney. After the Cultural Revolution, the government told the Chinese people to take bricks from The Wall to build homes for themselves. Entire villages still standing today are built of those bricks, but The Wall is now protected as a World Heritage site and some sections have been restored. Quiet green mountains surround us and it's too hazy for good pictures, but it's surreal just standing there seeing The Wall and the guard towers snaking along the ridge tops.

We learn that blue skies in Beijing are now called APEC-blue, since the 2014 Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation conference when Obama came to Beijing with other world leaders and the Chinese government shut down all factories within a 200-kilometer radius for six days. (Is this pollution the price of our cheap, made in China,

crap-tacular consumer lifestyle?) Cheyney explains that getting license plates for one's car is done by lottery. Each month there are a million applicants, and only 2,000 receive plates. If you get a plate you may only drive on the days when numbers on your plate are not banned.

I discover that the long-tailed bird I've been admiring is the Chinese Magpie, and for lunch I eat the most amazing *aubergine* dish of my life. At Tiananmen Square I use my telephoto lens to take close ups of strangers, since to do so openly is unacceptable. I feel like a stalker, but when I get home they are among my favorite pictures. Once inside the Forbidden City, I find the over-the-top opulence used to stage the façade of the emperor's godliness to be staggering and saddening.

On day five we board our first of four trains en route to St. Petersburg. At the border crossing from China to Mongolia each carriage is jacked up to change out the bogies (wheels) for the Russian gauge tracks ahead. I awake to two-hump camels and horses outside my window and I sip tea while gazing at round white yurts alongside colorful tin roofs. We pass abandoned Soviet-era block style structures and see one building about ten stories tall with a small forest growing on the roof.



Our next stop is rugged and beautiful Ulaanbaatar, the northernmost capital city in the world, home to half of Mongolia's population. Its temperatures span nearly 150 degrees—Mongolians are a tough people, especially compared to Californians. Dave is deciphering the Mongolian Cyrillic, which has more characters than Russian Cyrillic and adds a further challenge with multiple versions of

spelling a single word. Our guidebook warns of taxi scams, so we stubbornly walk an hour from the train station with our large packs on our backs and smaller daypacks in front. I stagger forth despite heat exhaustion, and eventually we arrive at the luxurious Kempinski Hotel Khan Palace, alarmingly red faced and delirious. Dave later dubs this our Ulaanbaatar Death March and of course it's accompanied by a bloodletting, but I won't get into that; the bidet with jets and blow dryer in our room help restore my spirits.

We further rally at an amazing breakfast buffet that would prepare a Mongolian Warrior for battle, and I fall in love with sea buckthorn juice. Then we visit the Gandantegchinlen Monastery. The name translates to "the great place of complete joy." We spin all the prayer wheels, beckon the incense smoke toward us, and spot a monk texting while chanting. Later I buy a purse for 79,999 Tugrik, or about thirty U.S. dollars.

We spin all the prayer wheels, beckon the incense smoke toward us, and spot a monk texting while chanting.

On train number two, crossing into Russia, the border guards, puffed up with authority, bark demands we do not understand. One acrobatic female guard in combat boots deftly climbs around our cabin and removes every screw of every panel to check behind the walls, ceiling and floor, presumably

for stowaways, but never asks to see inside our backpacks. It is a wonder the train stays together in spite of her and the un-replaced screws that now roll loose on the floor in her wake. I wonder if these crossings would feel less intimidating if it wasn't also the middle of the night?

This is not the snowy barren Siberia of Hollywood; it is summer with blue skies, rolling hills, trees and greenery. Our route follows the Selenga River Valley. The view of Lake Baikal from the train is spectacular. I had never heard of it before, but this lake holds 20% of the world's fresh water and is the deepest in the world. Our first Russian city, and our next stop, is Irkutsk, the capitol of Siberia, where tree fuzz fills the air and our nostrils. At our hotel, staff refers to Dave as *Mr. Dave Ball* and me as *lady*. We see stoic, deliberately unsmiling Russians out for a Sunday stroll and savoring ice cream everywhere. I am a smiler, but our guidebook tells us that Russians consider excessive smiling insincere or dim-witted, so I try to be sparing. Lacking language, I'm reduced to pointing, smiling and saying *spasibo*, by which I mean thank you for accommodating me with only one word of Russian and an idiotic grin.

On to Moscow: all trains in Russia run on Mockba (Moscow) Time. If we rode the train non-stop from Vladivostok to Moscow it would average 43.5 mph and take seven days, spanning seven time zones. At rural stations we see local food vendors with wire hangers full of whole *omul* (smoked whitefish), fresh strawberries that I must not eat since I cannot peel them, and of course, ice cream. Outside it is twenty-six degrees Celsius, whatever that means. Damn the failed attempt to convert the US to metric.

We approach the 110-year-old Metropol Hotel off Red Square like two humped camels with our double backpacks, dusty boots, and four days un-showered stench, in stark unwelcome contrast to our surroundings. Our tour of five-star hotel breakfast buffets does not disappoint and includes live harp music and gold cherubs leaping out of a marble fountain under sparkling crystal chandeliers, not to mention the food spread, and staff offering to make me an Americano or cappuccino every time I look up.

We may hail from the land of the supersized, but it is inside the Kremlin that we see the world's largest bell, which in fact is too heavy to hang and sits on the ground, chipped. Nearby we see the Tsar's cannon, another "world's largest" whose functional limit was exceeded with balls too big to fire. Each metro station in Moscow features a

different artistic theme and medium, including marble scenes from Dostoevsky novels, glass mosaics of Russian cities, and bronze statues. In a marble-lined underground street crossing we come upon musicians playing two violins and a cello with unbelievable acoustics.

When we tour the splendor of the Kremlin Armory and all the gifts given to various czars, I cannot help but wonder what favors these garnered. We view a vast array, including ceremonially decorated guns and swords, a gold-plated nautilus shell gunpowder purse, coronation gowns, bejeweled horse tackle, and children's gold carriages that were drawn by ponies and had midgets running alongside them. I am disturbed by the gap between the haves and the have-nots, this idea that not all lives are equal, this reminder of all that is still in place around the world protecting the status quo.

The attraction of Lenin's Mausoleum fails to draw me in, but I learn that one can pay \$300,000 to get mummified. I wonder if that includes the price of eternal storage? I am surprised by the prevalence in each city of American music, and English words on t-shirts that do not appear to be understood.

For our last leg on the train to St. Petersburg, we take the high speed Sapsan, which averages 135 mph. The scenery zips by three times faster than before, and since this trip is a celebration of Dave turning fifty, it seems an appropriate metaphor for how life seems to speed up in middle age. In St. Petersburg we have tickets at the Marinsky Theatre to see *The Marriage of Figaro* in Italian with Russian subtitles. Our cab driver offers to pick us up afterwards and says we can just pay him then; I am amazed.

St. Petersburg was built by Peter the Great and modeled after Venice. We tour it by boat, as one must, but we are surprised by the prevalence of graffiti. In our room at the Hermitage we browse the spa menu where I discover I can order an hour-long lymphangiogenesis massage, "a treatment that aims to normalize natural circulation, disturbed as a consequence of improper way of life and lymph nourishment, fulfills detoxification function, body fluid redistribution and food cleavage products transports" for 4,200 rubles. I am fascinated, but they are booked.

The idle time of contemplation on the train reminded me how much I value down time. Back home I am happily reunited with what I've missed: drinkable tap water, the ease of understanding written and spoken language, salads and strawberries. But now I'm also missing what I've left behind and marveling at my good fortune to have trekked across Asia and experienced so much.

One's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things.

Henry Miller

TO DONNA (AND TO ALL THE OTHER DONNAS)

In response to your letter to the editor.

You would be happy if
The immigrants (legal or not) would just
Go back to their homeland.

No more drain on health and welfare.
No more bilingual education.
No more multiculturalism.

You'd be pleased if
The gays would just
Go back in the closet.

No more gays in the military.
No more "special" rights.
No more AIDS.

You'd be delighted if
Women would just
Go back to their homes and children.

No more careers
No more competition with men
No more need for equal pay

You'd be content if
Minorities would just
Go back to their proper station.

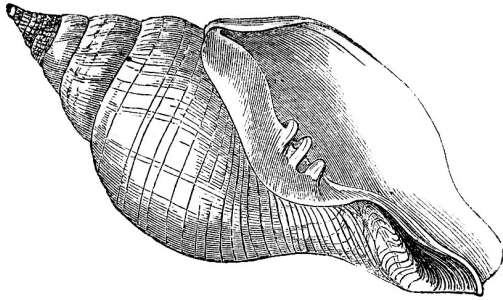
No more affirmative action
No more "reverse discrimination"
No more need for racial equality

You'd be jubilant if
You could go back

To another time.
A "simpler" time when
There were
"Standards",
"Decency"
"Morals" and
"Order".

Nobody's going back anywhere, Donna.

by Michael Tapia ('94)



LOW TIDE by Nancy Masse ('12)

freedom, freedom
is the taste of the sea
but what does it taste like? how can that be?
it's the taste of the marshmallow cloud in the sky
that follows me down to the sand where I lie.

freedom, freedom
is the feel of the space
that offers its hands to my body and face
as I dive through the blue
and come back up for air
it cleanses my soul and adds crunch to my hair.

beauty and lightness are the sounds that I sip
when I listen to pelicans taking their dip
the breath I take in carries all that I see
and now I am one- with the beauty that's me!

independence and truth
are the themes of my song
that I hum to the ripples while I step along
it's another sweet day
I'm along for the ride
perfection is daybreak, at shoreline, low tide.

GOING HOME AGAIN

by Mary Adler ('14)

Go hungry if you must but never go homeless. (Afghan Proverb)

She is the last to depart, after the children have moved out, her husband carried out, the dogs playing in the yard, the house still and waiting. But when we come to take her, she has already gone back to a better time.

A choice between life and life, we choose life, while she talks with St. Francis of Assisi at 4 o'clock in the morning. The nurses shush, circling like white draped nuns on the fringe of a hurricane.

We go home to clean. Flannel lined table covers and gold chargers and napkin rings, wrapping years of menus of crown roasts of pork with soufflé potatoes and peas with pearl onions...the sturdy gravy boat sailing the set table of despair.

ARE YOU CONNECTED TO THE SCWRIP COMMUNITY?

by Nicole Wald ('09)

There are lots of ways to interact with SCWriP. In addition to renewals, e-blasts, and PostSCWriP, here are a few places you can plug in digitally to SCWriP:

SCWriPFellows.wordpress.com

Would you like a place to share your practice, or to be inspired by others in the SCWriP community? We built this website for this purpose, and it could use your participation. Some sections are still under construction, but this is a living site, so ideally that will be a permanent state of affairs. Please take a moment to peruse what's there now, and think about how what you are doing could contribute to our SCWriP community conversation. Here are some ideas:

- If you already have your own blog or website with your work, we can add this as a link for others to use as inspiration.
- Have a lesson you'd love to share? Add it to our Teacher Resources page.
- Join our latest book group or writing group...or create your own and we'll post it here for all to get involved!

All fellows are invited to be authors on this site. Simply email nicole@education.ucsb.edu and she'll take thirty seconds to get you set up.

[Facebook.com/SCWriP](https://www.facebook.com/SCWriP) Look for announcements, inspiration, and news to show up here.

[Twitter.com/SCWriP](https://twitter.com/SCWriP) This is another spot for announcements, inspiration, and news.

NO BAD SUNDAYS

by Erika Cobain ('13)

As some of you know, I am taking a year off from teaching to write full time, inspired by my time in the South Coast Writing Project (SCWriP) and the San Jose Area Writing Project (SJAWP) summer institutes. Writing is a solitary endeavor made better by collaboration and conversation and for many of us, coffee.

I'd like to invite you to be part of my writing group this year, meeting once a month. You can participate in all or some, one or none (just send good thoughts via text or FB). You can become part of the conversation in person or virtually with Skype, Facetime, or even a conference call. I'll start up one session as a Google hangout if there is interest.

The group will meet in various locations in San Jose, Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley, (I am open to more suggestions) and held on the third Sunday of every month except December and March, when the dates are different*. The group is called "No Bad Sundays" in honor of a conversation from the Southern California Writing Project where our writing group collaboration with fellow teachers, writers, creative people on Sunday afternoon throughout the school year invigorates us for the week and month to come.

The format is as follows:

Begin with 30 minutes of unedited free-writing, followed by share aloud time for each person, to share something they just wrote or to ask for editing feedback on a piece they are working on. This can be provided before to all group members as hard or soft copies. We have a shared folder on Google Drive I can open for you. This feedback part may take about 30 minutes to an hour and 30 minutes depending on the number of people.

Tentative dates are as follows (other locations TBA):

December 13*	January 31	February 28
March 20*	April 24	May 29
June 26	July 31	August 28

The purpose of No Bad Sundays is to create an encouraging place for new writers, experienced writers, and teachers of writing to write and explore the craft of writing. The group provides support for writing projects and each writer's goals. Feedback is positive and constructive: type of feedback requested by the writer may range from the simple- *I just need you to hear this, what are some golden lines?* to more complex- *what is strong/working?* to more detailed line by line editing work.

I hope you will join us and make this a year of No Bad Sundays. If you are interested, just contact me at: etc.erika@gmail.com. If you want to invite a friend, please do so.