

The
Garbage'man's
Daughter



*The Memoirs of
Joelle Steele*

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PREFACE

Writing and editing my family histories was the most important thing I have ever done. It allowed me to assemble a lot of genealogical data and anecdotal material to tell a far greater story that spans generations. It's about taking all that information and then trying to figure out how your ancestors might have thought or felt about the events that somehow shaped their lives. And in the end, it puts into perspective how each person becomes the sum total of the ancestors who lived before them.

Writing a memoir is very different. It's focused only on the self and how the self perceived his or her own life. It's about what the self did and how the ideas, experiences, and choices of the self shaped a life over a single lifetime that has not yet ended. It's the telling of all the details that can never be known by anyone else, the details that are almost always absent from any family history.

But writing one's memoirs is not as easy as it might seem, even for someone like me who is a writer and who was once an avid journaler, keeping diaries from the ages of 7 through 58. All the ramblings of those journals had to be consolidated into something more coherent. And I wanted my memoirs to be at least partially illustrated with photographs from my life. The photographs part was only possible for certain years, as some albums ended up in the hands of significant others from years gone by.

For many years I taught students how to write their family histories and memoirs, and I always said that chronological life stories are the hardest to write. And lo and behold, that was exactly true when I made the first stab at writing about my own life. As a result, I decided it would be best to just write about all the things that happened in my life in a more or less chronological way, but by subject matter, and that's what I've done.

I spent a lot of time going through my older biographical information and did quite a bit of fact-checking along the way, correcting errors whenever I found them, so if there are any variations in dates

or other information in an older version of the family history, this autobiography has corrected them.

As for the title of this book, my father – a garbageman – repeatedly said that I would never amount to anything, that I was stupid and didn't know what I was talking about, and that I was his greatest disappointment. But he was wrong. Very wrong. I'm not stupid – I have an IQ of 186 – and I have found success in many fields, all tied into my career as a writer, artist, and publisher. So this book is about the *real* life of *The Garbageman's Daughter*.

Now the big question: Will anybody ever read my story? After all, I'm just a writer and artist living in semi-rural Washington state, and my life is not very exciting. Well, the answer is that I don't know. I would hope that some of my family members would be interested enough to read it, if nothing else just out of curiosity or to get to know me better. And family genealogists, myself included, are always very interested in reading the memoirs of long gone family members.

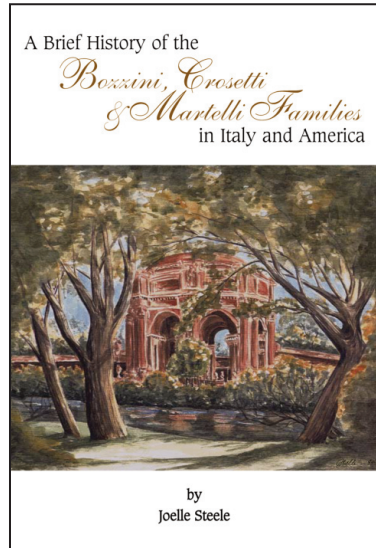
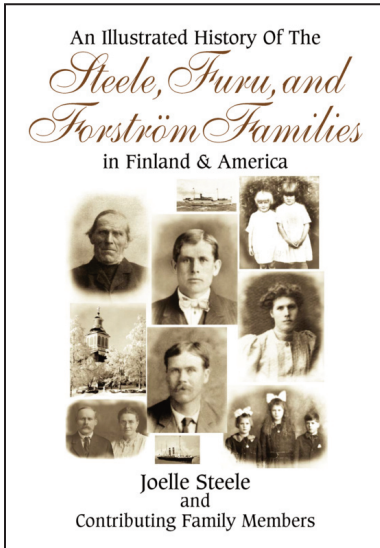
And who knows? Maybe someday I'll be known to more people and maybe they'll be interested too. Right now, I'm thinking I'll be lucky if all this book ever does is remind me of my own life and who I was should dementia ever set in to the point where I can't remember it anymore.

Joelle Steele
March 4, 2026

FAMILY HISTORY

One of the most important things that I've accomplished in my life was my family history. It was very interesting to see how I came to be the product of generations of ancestors. I first became interested in genealogy when my mother returned from her first visit to Finland in the mid-1970s. She brought back lots of photographs and other information.

A few years later, after another visit there, she brought back two books of genealogical records which we used to trace our ancestry. Years later, the collectors of that information from church records, Hasse and Helena Andtbacka, made the data available in CD form. For several years, I worked with them to update and correct errors



in the database. Then, when they visited me in Monterey, they asked me to continue to update the database and make it available to everyone, which I still do since they both passed away.

My father, on the other hand, had visited Italy several times but was unable to obtain much information on either side of his family.

He hired a genealogist who did some research for him, and decades later, I coincidentally hired the son of that same genealogist to update that research.

I had read several books and took classes in genealogy when I decided to tackle the writing of my family histories. After the ancestors were entered into Family Tree Maker software, I started accumulating as much anecdotal material as possible. Then I did further research and also edited (mostly annotated) the writings of other family members. I wrote and edited two family histories, complete with maps, ancestry charts, and photographs, in an 8-1/2" x 11" format: *An Illustrated History of the Steele, Furu, and Forström Families in Finland and America* (232 pages) and *A Brief History of the Bozzini, Crosetti, and Martelli Families in Italy and America* (52 pages). I distributed the first edition for my mother's side of the family to a few family members in print, but as changes were made, I began making it available only as a PDF.

There was quite a bit of genealogical information available for my mother's side because she was a Swedish-Finn and they are experts at recording everything, so that family history is really quite extensive. On my father's side, however, it was impossible to go back as far as I could with my mother's side because records in Italy were kept by the Catholic Church, and they did not or could not do as good a job of preserving church records in the areas where my ancestors originated.

Genealogy

I was the oldest child of Norma Elisabeth Steele and LeRoy Basilio Martelli. My mother's parents, Helny Marie Andersdotter Furu (Helny Anderson) and Anders Joel Sandkulla Ståhl Granö (Joel Steele) were second cousins who came to Rochester, Washington in 1906 and 1907 from Terjärv, Finland, a small farming community. Helny's first husband, Matts Arvid Forsbacka (Arvid Forstrom) was killed in 1917, and they had six children together, three of whom died before they could walk.

Helny married Joel, who had been a boarder in the Forstrom house, in 1919. They had two daughters: my Aunt Lillian and my mother. Helny and Joel's original common ancestors came from

Sweden to settle on the Finnish frontier in the latter half of the 14th century, and my ancestors from my mother's side include Swedish, Norwegian, Finnish, Russian, and indigenous Saami peoples.

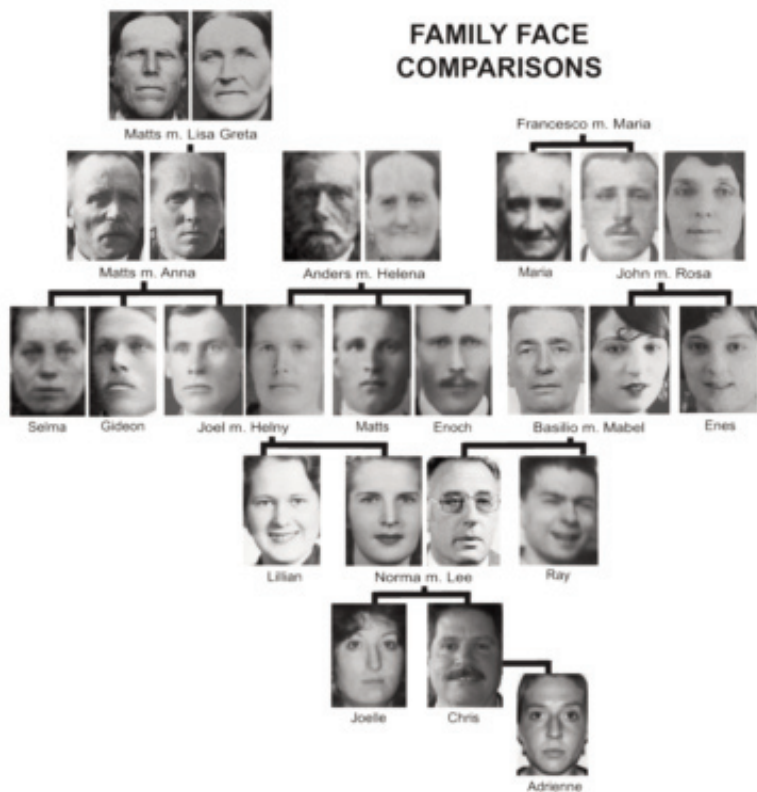
My father's father, Basilio Adamo Martelli, came to San Francisco, California in 1921 from Casteggio in the province of Pavia in the Lombardy region of northern Italy. But most of our Martelli ancestors are from the town of Trivolzio in Pavia, about 20 miles from Casteggio and about 23 miles southwest of Milan. Our earliest Martelli ancestor dates only to the mid-17th century.

My father's mother, Mabel Louise Bozzini (Buzzini), was born in San Francisco to parents from two incredibly tiny hill towns in Italy. Her father, Giovanni Batista "Giambattista" Bozzini (John Buzzini) came from Varni in the Gorreto municipality, in the Genova province of the Liguria region. Her mother, Rosa Maria Crosetti (Rosa Buzzini) came from Bogli in the Ottone municipality, in the Piacenza province, in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy. John and Rosa's ancestors can only be traced back to the late 18th century. Bogli has Roman, Celtic, and French roots, and its Italian dialect has many characteristics of French and Saxon languages. Bogli and Varni are only about 28 miles apart as the crow flies, but it takes an hour and a half by car on a long, winding road.

Genetics

I very much enjoyed working on my family's genealogies and histories. But it didn't end there. In 2014, I became interested in learning about my genetic make-up. Finally, in 2016, I had DNA testing done, as did my brother, Chris, and we each received profiles of our ancestry. Imagine my surprise when I discovered I didn't have any Scandinavian blood in me – the Finns and Saami people are different genetically from the Scandinavians (Swedes, Norwegians, and Danes). So 70% of me is Western and Central European and Finnish/Saami/Siberian. The differences between my brother's and my DNA was a result of the ongoing recombining of DNA throughout time. A person can be carrying any number and/or combination of genes from many generations past, and a sibling can be carrying a different set of those genes.

GENES	JOELLE %	CHRIS %
Neanderthal	1.2	1.1
Western & Central European	40	0
Finland/Saami/Siberia	30	24
Southern European/Italian-French	18	34
Arabic (Mediterranean/Levant)	5	0
Great Britain/Irish (Celtic)	4	13
Jewish Diaspora/Ashkenazi (via Italy)	4	8
Scandinavian	0	19



Family Resemblances

As an anthropometrist who specializes in authenticating the identities of faces in photographs, I decided to create a family tree of photographs to try to see where, if at all, there might be some

family resemblances, because my brother and I don't look that much alike. I found that I resemble my father, his mother, and her father; and my brother resembles our mother's grandfather. When my brother was little, my mother always said she thought he looked like her father, but as an adult he really looks more like her grandfather (her father's father) who she never met. Also, when my brother was little, he looked like our father did as a child.

Name Change

I do not carry my father's last name. When I was in my mid-20s, I wanted to change my first name, but ended up changing my first and last names. This was not some silly whim. I really did not like my name or even the sound of it. It didn't feel like me. When I was little I used to ask my mother if I could be called something else. But my mother said she had named me "Nancy" because it was her father's favorite girl's name, her sisters hadn't named any of their girls Nancy, and she felt she should give me that name. I didn't like my middle name either, which was "Norleen," a combination of my parents' first names.

As an adult, I figured changing my name legally would be a big, expensive, ordeal, so it took me a long time to do it. But I spent a lot of time going through baby name books until I had a list of possible names by the time I was 24. There were about 30 of them at first. I tried to picture myself being called by each name. That quickly narrowed down the list to the final six: Arden, Aria, India, Joan, Jocelyn, and Joelle. I ended up using most of those names as characters in my novels and short stories, but for myself, I decided on Joelle. I picked it because I liked it and it felt right, but I also liked it because my grandfather's name was Joel, and Joelle was the feminine version of that name. I figured I would be honoring my mother's need to honor her father, and at the same time it was a name I liked and that I could see fitting with me and my personality. I could easily picture myself being called Joelle – with the French pronunciation "zho-ell." Unfortunately, only four people have ever pronounced it correctly.

I didn't like the way Joelle sounded with my last name Martelli, so I decided to change my last name to my mother's maiden name,

Steele. If honoring my grandfather with my first name wasn't enough, surely my mother couldn't fault me for taking his last name too. Unfortunately, my mother didn't live long enough to see me change my name, which I did on November 16, 1990, four years after she died. That was when I found out how easy it was to legally change one's name, and I have never once regretted that decision.

(PLEASE PRINT)

Nancy Norleen Martelli

Attorney for _____

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SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
FOR THE COUNTY OF Los Angeles

In the Matter of the Application of
Nancy Norleen Martelli }
for Change of Name }
The application of Nancy Norleen Martelli
for an Order of Court changing her name(s) to Joelle Steele
(his, her or their)

No. SS000606
DECREE CHANGING NAME


In place of her present name(s) _____, came on regularly to be heard in Department 122D of the above-entitled Court, this 16th day of November 1990, and proof having been made to the satisfaction of the Court that notice of hearing was given in the manner and form required by law and order of this Court, and no objections having been filed by any person, and evidence having been produced on behalf of petitioner(s) _____ in support of said application, and the Court being satisfied that there is no reasonable objection to the petitioner(s) _____ assuming the name(s) _____ proposed; and if appearing to the satisfaction of the court that all the allegations of said application are true and that the order prayed for should be granted;

IT IS THEREFORE ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that petitioner(s) _____ name(s) of _____
Nancy Norleen Martelli be and the same
hereby changed to Joelle Steele

The Clerk is ordered to enter this decree.

Dated: Nov 16, 19 90

[Signature]
Judge of the Superior Court

 **CNSB**

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Rev. 7/89

PERSONAL HISTORY

I was born on April 19, 1951 at 9:11 a.m. at St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco, California. My mother had been admitted at 7:21 a.m. the day before, and the doctor who delivered me was Edward Torre. I was a forceps delivery, and according to hospital records, I weighed 7 lbs 9-1/2 oz and my cry was described as “lusty.” My mother and I didn’t go home until a few days later on April 24, 1951. The hospital bill totaled \$165.30.

Octavia Street, San Francisco

When I was born we lived in a flat at 2846 Octavia Street in San Francisco. We moved in December of 1952, but I can actually remember what most of that flat looked like inside.

The kitchen was an eat-in, white with bright red accents in the drawer pulls and checked and ruffled curtains at the two windows. There was a set of oak table and chairs like ones I’ve seen in antique stores many times since then. One door led down the hallway to the front door, past a bisque-tiled bathroom, and on to the living room. The other kitchen door had a toddler gate and led to steep wood outdoor stairs that went I-don’t-know-where. The living room had wide venetian blinds at the windows and flowered curtains that were mostly dark blue and gray on an ivory background. There was a large sofa and matching chair that were a dark blue satin-like embroidered-style fabric, and two wing chairs in a similar fabric in gold next to a round oak table in the bay window. I can also picture the doors ajar to the two bedrooms, but that’s all I remember of the flat and its decor.

East Vista Avenue, Daly City

In December 1952, my parents bought a small 3-bedroom house at 180 East Vista Avenue in Daly City, California. The same furniture came with us to Daly City. I was in an upstairs bedroom overlooking the driveway. When I was three years old, my brother was born, and he got that bedroom and I was moved to a down-



SAINT FRANCIS HOSPITAL
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

A NON-PROFIT
NON-SECTARIAN
ASSOCIATION

This Certifies that

NANCY NORLEEN MARTELLI

was born in THE SAINT FRANCIS HOSPITAL of the
City of San Francisco

on the NINETEENTH day of APRIL A. D., 195 1

IN WITNESS WHEREOF the said Hospital has caused this Certificate to
be signed by its duly authorized officers and its Official Seal to be
hereunto affixed.

Emile P. Meyer
ATTENDING PHYSICIAN

On Loeb
ADMINISTRATOR
Marshall S. Quigg
REGISTRAR



One day old.



Baptism day.

Evaporated Milk	8 oz.
Boiled Water	16 oz.
Dextri Maltose β l	3 tbs.

Boil water 10 minutes.
Measure
Add Dextri Maltose.
Stir.
Add milk.
Heat to boiling point.
Chill rapidly.
Strain.
Bottle.
Cap -- Keep cool.

Offer 2 oz. boiled warm water
at 12 noon and 4 p.m.

Formula from
the doctor.

stairs bedroom. When I was still in the upstairs bedroom, my crib was in front of the window. I remember my father going to work early in the morning as a garbage man, a route boss for Sunset Scavengers. I was old enough to stand up in my crib and look out the window, which was above the garage door, and watch my mother sitting at the steering wheel while my father pushed the car, a dark blue Pontiac Streamliner, onto the street, and then she'd get out and he'd get in and start the car as it coasted down the hill.

I remember the East Vista house really well. I remember the dark maroon paisley carpet in my downstairs bedroom and I recall going upstairs to my parents bedroom early in the morning when my father was gone to work and my mother had gone back to bed and was asleep. I remember playing on the back patio where there were raised flower beds and I "baked" with dirt and some flour my mother gave me. I still remember how that smelled. There was a vegetable garden at the rear of the long narrow yard, and my mother and I used to pick peas and eat them right out of their shells. My father had a model railroad set-up in the lower end of the long garage.

When we lived in Daly City, my mother used to take me with her into San Francisco when she visited her friends there and when I had to have regular allergy shots. We walked down to Mission Boulevard in Daly City, where my mother would buy a Golden Book to read to me when we got on the streetcar or bus. Later we



2846 Octavia Street.



Eight months old, Octavia Street.



In San Francisco, 1951. Left to right: Grandpa Basilio, Uncle Ray, Grandma Nonie, Great Aunt Enes holding me, mother, father.



180 East Vista Avenue.



Halloween, 1953.



Halloween, 1954.



Birthday, 1954.



With Grandpa Basilio, 1951.



One year old.



With my father, in a view from the zoo in San Francisco.



On the swing, 1954.



Daly City, 1954. Left to right: Nonie, Leo, Great Uncle Stanley, mother, Uncle Ray, and Great Aunt Enes holding me.



Waring Street, Christmas 1955.



Lassen Street, 1962.



School pictures: 1956, 1957, and 1959.



Birthday, 1958. Boy with arm around me is Dean Linder or Richard Rule.

would catch a cable car, probably the Powell line which went up and down a very steep grade. My mother would pick me up and jump onto the cable car as it slowly moved along the street. The waiting room at the pediatrician's office in San Francisco had a big wooden blue rabbit surrounded by a very low "fence" of about 10"-12" in height. Inside the fence were lots of toys and kids played in there, and they could also sit on the big rabbit.

Waring Street and Lassen Street, Seaside

In 1954, my parents had begun the process of starting a garbage business in Seaside, California, a place my mother said was "nothing but sand and tumbleweeds" (and it still is a pretty dreary place). In August of 1955, they bought another small 3-bedroom house at 1960 Waring Street (torn down as of early 2002) where we moved a month later and lived for about a year. It was a little ranch-style house with hardwood floors, and my father's office was in the dining room. I remember the sunny foyer, the living room, dining room/office, the big flagstone patio out back, an old dog pen, and the pink iceplant that grew in place of a front lawn. I sat down in that iceplant once and got stung by a bee – the first and only time a bee stung me. My brother and I used to sit on these big stuffed dogs and slide around on them on the floor of the foyer. I don't remember the bedrooms, bathroom, or kitchen at all. But we weren't there long, so that's probably why.

In 1956, my parents bought a 3-bedroom house in an upscale neighborhood at 2080 Lassen Street where we lived for almost ten years. This was your typical 1950s California suburbia, with beautiful green lawns everywhere. It was a fairly new house when my parents bought it. The exterior was pink stucco with maroon wood trim. It had a two-car garage and was considered a "modern" ranch-style tract house at the time. My father built up a corner of the garage, and that became the office for my parents' business, Seaside Disposal Service. The interior of the house had open beam ceilings, and wall-to-wall carpeting that was a grey, ivory, and maroon low-pile loop. In the living room there was a brick fireplace that had a sunburst ornament mounted above it.



School pictures: 1960, 1961, 1962.



School pictures: 1963, 1964, 1965.

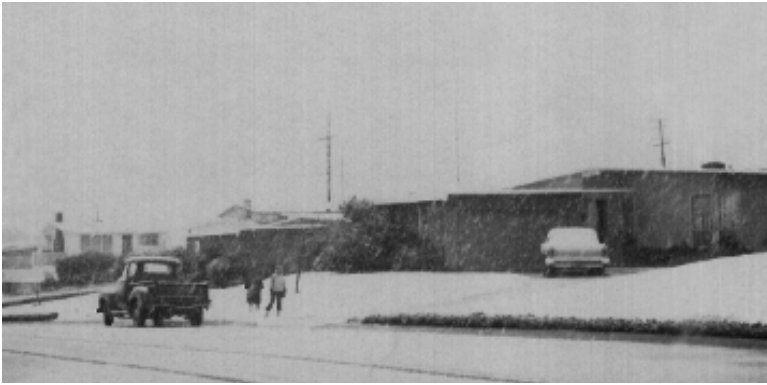


School pictures: 1966, 1967, and a non-school picture from 1967.

Everything in the house was pink. The walls were pale pink, the kitchen counters were a darker pink Formica, the kitchen and bathroom floors pink, dark pink and gray. Even the appliances were pink, as were the sinks, toilets, shower, and bathtub. To this day, I hold the Lassen Street house responsible for my aversion to the color pink. But, my mother loved it. She also liked colonial style furnishings, and that was how most of the house was decorated, and I don't like colonial style either. But decoration aside, I really liked that house as far as the floor plan and the yard were concerned. The house was still standing as of 2015 and was looking better than it ever did (at least on the outside, which is all I could see) with a fresh coat of paint (no more pink!) and a nice landscape in front. Unfortunately, the neighborhood is, for the most part, very run-down and ugly these days.

Seaside was a lousy place to grow up in some ways. It was desolate with few trees, mostly open spaces covered with scrub brush and tumbleweeds, good for hunting blue belly lizards and horned toads, but little else. There was a forest of Eucalyptus trees behind our house when we first moved there, but many of those were cut down when they added a street behind us, and now the entire forest is gone. Seaside was also a military community, being right next to Fort Ord, and this was during the Cold War era (I went with my parents to look at fallout shelters), so there was a lot of activity at Fort Ord, and you could hear the rifles on the firing ranges and bombs exploding as the soldiers practiced their warfare. Also, on the Monterey Peninsula were the Naval Postgraduate School and the Defense Language Institute.

But Seaside also had a very positive aspect to it. It was a very diverse population thanks in large part to all the military influence. Our community was filled with people of all races and from all parts of the United States and the world. We shared our little one-block-long Lassen Street with: an Arabic mayor and his family; a Caucasian Fire Chief; a Jewish accountant and his family; a Jewish-German military family; a retired Austrian couple; a Mexican family; a Norwegian-Spanish military family; a retired couple from Mississippi; a retired couple from England; a bi-racial military couple (Caucasian husband, Korean wife) and their family; an Irish-Scot-



2080 Lassen Street, January 21, 1962, when it snowed in Seaside. That's our Buick in the driveway, the Chevy pickup truck on the street, me and my brother next to the truck, and barely visible by the front door is my mother.

tish family, and another bi-racial military couple (African-American husband, Caucasian German wife) and their family. My circle of friends was equally diverse and included Japanese, African-Americans, Philipinos, Jews, and Hispanics.

My classes at school were also diverse, and the only problem was that the military families moved very frequently. In that way, I did get the benefit of learning about all kinds of people, but I also had to experience all the misery of being a military brat without ever having to pack a suitcase. Every year, sometimes more often, I had a new set of friends.

Back in the 1950s, Seaside and the Monterey Peninsula in general were kind of isolated. There were no freeways in the area, hardly any television stations, not much in the way of family movie theaters, and no major department stores. In downtown Monterey, there was a small JC Penney store and a Montgomery Ward catalog store. The only other department store in the area was Holman's in Pacific Grove, and we went to Salinas to shop at Sears for school clothes in the Fall, and also to browse at Thrifty Drug Store.

We also went to the drive-in movies in Salinas. Near the Sky Drive-In was Mel's Diner on Main Street (now a Burger King) where we frequently ate dinner. You could eat inside or they had car-hop service if you wanted to eat in your car. Teenagers used to cruise Main Street, and it was a time when many men wore cowboy

hats in that farming community. We also went to San Francisco fairly regularly, mostly courtesy of the Del Monte Express passenger train that used to run from Monterey up to The City.

In the garbage business, my parents worked odd hours. My father was up at 5 a.m. to dispatch the trucks. He napped in the afternoons, so we had to be quiet. My mother often worked late into the evening, and in the morning, it was hard to get her to wake up, and so I would give her one last shake before I left for school. She always made my lunches the night before and I loaded them into my lunch box. I fixed my own breakfast – cereal or toast – and when my brother started school I made his breakfast too.

I had to do chores to earn my allowance. In addition to keeping my room picked up, I had to do the dusting, a job I still don't like today. When I was about ten, I was big enough to iron sheets. Back in those days, there was no such thing as permanent press and you hung things outside on a line to dry. The sheets were one big mass of wrinkles if you didn't iron them. At that age I wasn't capable of ironing clothing and it was also very wrinkled.

I also did yard work, but that was because I liked it. My mother and I would weed the flower beds and cut back the geraniums every year. We also grew some herbs, radishes, carrots, and peas.

As a child, my interests were about like those I have today: art, music, reading, writing, cards, word games, movies, and playing in the dirt – nowadays I call that gardening! I loved to play in the sand pile in the back yard on Lassen Street, and before that I always liked to dig around in the flower beds at the previous two houses. I built entire cities out of scraps of wood, geranium stalks, and mud.

When I wasn't playing in the dirt, riding my bicycle, or running around in the eucalyptus tree forest behind the house, I mainly liked to go into our little backyard storage shed, light candles, and sit there and write or draw. I liked stuffed animals, playing with Lincoln logs and Tinker Toys, and I liked to play games like checkers and Chinese checkers, rummy, dominoes, Chutes and Ladders, and most of your standard kid games of that era. Sometimes, I would hang blankets all around the clothesline and make a playhouse out of it, usually pretending to play "office" or "school." I never liked dolls, but people kept giving them to me. I also never



Mel's Drive-In, Main Street, Salinas, 1955.

liked puppets, marionettes, masks, mannequins, or clowns. They give me the creeps. Robots, especially big ones, scare me.

Madison Street, Monterey

In December of 1965, my parents bought a house in Monterey at 877 Madison Street. It was so much prettier in Monterey and so much quieter. In Monterey, all you heard were the squirrels and Nuttall woodpeckers. At night, the raccoons invaded the yard, and because we didn't know any better at the time, we used to feed them. One old mother raccoon who was blind in one eye would come to the front door with her babies and eat right out of your hand.

One night, I had gone to bed and heard something under my bed. My cat Candy was on the bed with me, so it wasn't her. It turned out to be a small opossum that had probably come in through the door to the outside that was in my bedroom and that was kept open on a chain all day for the cats to come and go (I guess pet doors hadn't been invented back then). My mother shooed the opossum out into the yard with a broom.

I was happy to be out of Seaside, a town which I loathe to this day, but I did not like the house in Monterey. From the outside, you could see that the house was in a very beautiful setting with mostly

oaks, pines, and cypress, and a giant redwood tree, and more than a dozen fruit trees. A creek ran through the property and there was a little arched bridge that crossed it near the front porch. The house itself was old, built in 1872, and it had undergone many changes and additions over the years, none of which appeared to have been done with any real forethought. From the outside, it appeared cute, and my mother decorated it nicely inside, but you can't decorate your way out of bad structure. For example, to get to my bedroom, you had to go from the kitchen through a bathroom, and that bathroom had three doors in it. The only room in the house that I liked was the dining room, which was the original living room. The house had forced air heating, but I always felt that it was cold and drafty.

My parents never fixed up that house, so the downstairs bedroom flooded when the creek overflowed during heavy rains. That meant that my parents slept in the living room instead. Slippery moss was left to grow uncontrolled on the brick patios unless I went and scraped it off. You couldn't run very many appliances at the same time or you'd blow a fuse. My bedroom was large, but it was



877 Madison Street, the house in the hole.

mostly windows and closets – three of the latter – and a window seat and two doors. This left very little room for furniture. I made one of the closets into my “office.” It was the size of a coat closet with a door, but it was all shelves and a light with a pull chain. The shelves were deep but they were each made from two boards, so I removed the boards from one shelf so that I could sit on a tall stool at the shelf below them and use it as a desk. I spent many happy hours at that desk doing homework, writing, and making art. Other than that, I didn’t like the house and it never felt like home to me.



Raccoons on the patio at the house on Madison Street.

My Gypsy Years

When I moved away from home at the age of 19, it was to go to college at Cal State Hayward, now Cal State East Bay. This was the start of my “gypsy years.” I lived on campus at the Carlos Bee dorm for six months, but the dorm was very noisy, so I moved with my roommate to an apartment at 458 Berry Avenue in Hayward. When my roommate’s father decided I was a bad influence – I had a telephone and a TV – we both moved out and I moved in with two other women at 781 Fletcher Lane. When two roommates moved within two months to get married, I moved to a townhouse apart-

ment at 25455 Whitman Street, and when that roommate moved to get married, I got another roommate and moved to 1180 E Street.

I later moved across the bay to a studio apartment at 95 Broadway in Millbrae and after I got married in 1973, we lived in Culver City for a few weeks and then in a duplex at 8726 Rose Avenue in Bellflower in southern California before returning to Hayward and living at the Hancock Apartments at 820 Hancock Street.

I left my husband in May of 1975 and moved into my friend Liz' apartment building on McAllister in San Francisco, just off of Stanyon Street, and only a few blocks from the northeast corner of Golden Gate Park. I was there for four months and moved again.

I found a great little apartment at 1452 Bellevue Avenue in Burlingame where I lived until the end of 1977. After that I moved back with my parents in Monterey for a year, and then moved to southern California in late March of 1979. A lot of moving for someone who doesn't like moving at all. I rented a furnished room in a house at 11969 Walnut Lane, in West Los Angeles, just off Bundy and south of Santa Monica Boulevard. Then, I was supposed to move to a triplex on Horizon in Venice Beach, but when that fell through, I ended up living in my car for seven weeks.

Venice Beach

In November of 1980, I got a job and moved to an 18-unit apartment building at 30 Dudley Avenue in Venice, where I lived for almost 17 years, until June of 1997. I lived in three different apartments in that building. The first was a medium-size studio on the first floor near the back door. It was cold, dirty, noisy, and crawling with cockroaches, black widow spiders, earwigs, and flies. There were security bars at the windows, but the louver windows were missing several panes. It was still better than living in my car. Two weeks later I moved to the same-sized apartment but on the third floor (the top floor). It was a much better location and in a better part of the building. It took a lot of work to make it look nicer than it was ever meant to be. In February of 1988, I moved to one of the larger studio units on the third floor next to my old apartment. It had ocean views from every window. I liked living in that building, but I wished it was somewhere other than southern California.



Top left: 458 Berry Avenue.
Top right: 781 Fletcher Lane.
Middle left: Me at Fletcher Lane.
Middle right: 1180 E Street.
Bottom left: 95 Broadway.
Bottom right: 820 Hancock St.
Right: 1452 Bellevue Avenue.





1971, my room at the Carlos Bee dorm, and me with my Sony 9" screen, black and white TV.



Venice Beach was not a good neighborhood at all. In many ways, I don't think there are many good neighborhoods in southern California. My apartments were burgled several times, mostly by street people – drug addicts in particular – who look for small valuables that they can easily sell to buy drugs. They would pry the jamb off the door or just pick the locks to get in.

I hated southern California, and I had never felt like I belonged in California. Actually, I never felt like I belonged in the United States. Hard to tell where I belonged since I had never lived anywhere other than California. By 1989, I was done with all the medical and legal issues that had plagued me and kept me in southern California, and I felt that if I didn't leave soon, I might lose what little seemed to remain of my sanity. But where to go?

I didn't know where I wanted to live. A part of me still had a teenage fantasy of living in Paris, but I didn't have the resources to make such a dramatic move. I had traveled all over North America on business, simultaneously trying to find a good place to live, and with every place I picked, there was some kind of major trade-off.



30 Dudley Avenue, and the Third Floor hallway.



30 Dudley Avenue #16, view of my studio apartment. and me in 1986.



30 Dudley Avenue #15, me on the roof, and view of my kitchen, 1993.

In 1994 I finally decided to leave southern California and move back to the familiarity of the Monterey Peninsula. But it took me another three years to make that happen.

Back to Monterey Bay

In June 1997, age 46, I packed up my three kitties, loaded up a truck, and left southern California forever. We moved to a two-bedroom rental house at 512 9th Street in Pacific Grove, where I lived with a roommate for three years before moving to a house at 518 Casanova Avenue in Monterey where I lived for five years – just about the time that all the landscaping I did myself was starting to grow in!

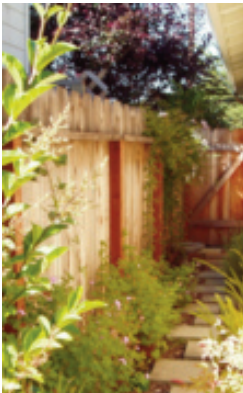
There are not enough words in my vocabulary to adequately explain how overjoyed I was to be gone from that southern sewer of the Golden State, a part of the world that I loathed with every fiber of my being. In the beautiful and peaceful surroundings of Pacific Grove and Monterey, I could think clearly for the first time in many years.

At first, I thought I would be there for the rest of my life, but the area had changed so much and it no longer held the appeal for me that it once did. I had been there for almost five years when I finally realized that it was an excellent transitional place, but a dead end for me in the long run. It did have its value. I finished my bachelor's degree there at the age of 48. I dealt with a lot of very old emotional and psychological baggage. I cleaned house as far as friends were concerned, leaving some behind and making a few new ones. But I was still in California, and something kept nagging at me saying I need to move again.

When I was still in southern California, I had devoted many hours to trying to figure out where I wanted to live. I had read all kinds of books about finding your best place to live and the process of relocation itself and adapting to new environments, etc. I had ultimately created a list of places that I had visited during the course of lecture circuits and attending conferences. I had always liked Washington state, and it had been high on my list of possible places to live in North America. Washington stood out for me mainly because my family lived there – all my cousins and my brother and his family – people I didn't know very well, but with



518 Casanova Avenue, freshly painted, 2004; kitchen freshly painted, 2001; and side and back yards newly landscaped, 2002.



whom I wanted to establish relationships. Finally, in late 2005, after eight years and four months on the Monterey Peninsula, I again packed up my kitties, loaded up a truck, and moved again.

Lacey, Washington

This time I landed in Lacey, Washington, just an hour south of Seattle and two hours north of Portland, Oregon. The move was very hard on me logistically and physically, but it was the best move I ever made. For the first time in my life, I was living away from the ocean but near the Puget Sound, in a ranch house in a beautiful forested neighborhood in a semi-rural environment near my family members.

Washington was green year-round. I was in a place that was far away from the cloudy marine layer and fog banks that covered the West Coast for months on end. Even on the rainiest Washington days there were often sun breaks with blue skies and huge white puffy clouds. Fortunately, I always liked rain. It makes the world so clean and fresh. And I loved being near family, something I didn't have at all growing up in California.

My creative inspiration was back too, almost overnight, and at an all-time high. I was writing and painting immediately. I developed even more product for my websites and I had one idea after another for what I wanted to paint and what I wanted to write. I have never in my life been as creatively inspired as I am in this location.

But, it was a lot of hard work to make the house – a very badly neglected place for more years than I can imagine – livable and presentable. And it wasn't just the house – inside and out – but also the yard which was the biggest weed patch I have ever seen in my life. The entire back yard was wall-to-wall weeds, mostly 3-4' tall with dandelions and wild geraniums growing between them. It took almost ten years to get the yard and the house itself into a functional and reasonably attractive condition and, as of 2022, there is still more to do.



4109 Timberline Drive SE in summer, 2017; me in 2011;
snow in 2017; and the back yard in 2016.



EDUCATION & LEARNING

I love to learn things. No matter how much I know, there always seems to be more that I still want to learn. I like the quote by Isaac Newton: “What we know is a drop; what we don’t know is an ocean.” That pretty much sums up how I feel.

I’m interested in almost everything except sports and politics. I think that when you study and learn things, you have a much better understanding of who you are and how you fit into the world, including historically. And I do think history is extremely important. There is another quote I like, this one by writer and philosopher George Santayana: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” In studying the history of the world, it is easy to see that too many people forget the past and they do indeed repeat their greatest mistakes, resulting in war and other atrocities and man-made disasters. On a personal level, I try to learn from my own experiences and not repeat my mistakes. I’m not always successful at this. But in the long run, learning does make you a better person and helps you avoid the hate and bigotry that springs from ignorance.

As for school, I can’t say that it was a positive experience, and I think I learned a lot more outside of school than I did in the classroom. But while I don’t condemn the educational system outright, I do think that schools are designed to meet the needs of the most mediocre students, and in recent years, it seems that schools and colleges have “dumbed down” even further. When I was editing for first-time writers, most of my clients graduated from high school after 1980 and many of them graduated from college. Some were teachers, yet I was appalled at their inability to think and write coherently, and what abysmal grammar! And social media, which confirms general ignorance for almost anything to do with history, also seems to indicate an incredible inability on the part of most people to communicate in an intelligible manner.



Ord Terrace Elementary School.

Kindergarten

I never went to nursery school or pre-school as they weren't very common back then. I started kindergarten in the Fall of 1956 at Ord Terrace Elementary School in Seaside. I was 5 years old, and according to my mother, on the first day of school she brought me there and I quickly ran off to play with the other children, never showing any indication of being afraid or sad at being separated



from my mother – which was no commentary on my relationship with her since I adored her and we were always very close. I was just very independent – still am.

Kindergarten was the first and only year of my education that I liked and that I recall in detail with fond memories. I especially recall the first reading lesson, using the *Dick & Jane* books. I was already reading a little and knew my ABCs and how to count. But that first reading lesson was so memorable. It was a giant book on an easel, and the first page was a picture of Dick and Jane's younger sister Sally putting on her father's shoe. The first word was "Look."

There were also lots of “little kid” books in the classroom, and I gravitated towards those because we had a lot of books at home and I always enjoyed flipping through them – mostly looking at pictures. We also had a bunch of rhythm instruments and we marched around playing them and singing. I always wanted to play the triangle but usually ended up with the sand blocks.

Every day, we had milk and Graham crackers – my mother wrapped up some coins in a handkerchief each morning to pay for this – and then took a nap on small rugs that we brought from home. My rug was pale blue with pink, white, and yellow flowers in the middle, and years later that rug was covered over when the back patio was made into a family room and a new floor was installed right over the top of it – along with a pair of my tennis shoes!

First Through Sixth

I liked school as far as the learning part was concerned, but I was reading way ahead of the other children almost immediately, and that made school pretty tedious most of the time. The classroom was torture for me. Everything seemed to move at a snail’s pace. While I kept waiting for each year to get more interesting, by the time I was in fourth grade I had read my way through every biography and autobiography of famous people in the Ord Terrace Elementary School library.

In the fall of 5th grade, the assigned reading was *The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew* by Margaret Sidney. I refused to read it. I told the teacher and my parents that it was a “baby book.” I had spent the summer reading *A Tale Of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens, so I was truly not in sync with my grade level.

In 6th grade, they had McGraw-Hill’s SRA Reading Program, in which you read progressively harder writing and answered questions about what you read. I completed the entire series in two months.



The SRA Reading Program.

I was often “teacher’s pet,” which gave me an opportunity to do a lot of things that the rest of the class didn’t get to do, like decorating the classroom walls, and in 6th grade, working with two other students to decorate the showcases in the school administration office. But being a teacher’s pet



County Fair Drawing
of me, 1958.

didn’t exactly win me any popularity contest, that’s for sure. It meant that the other children didn’t like me very much. In my case, I was already about as unpopular as a child could be. I had just about everything working against me: I was overly tall – taller than the tallest boy in the school – 5’8” in 6th grade. I was extremely skinny, wore glasses, and had braces on my teeth.

Add to that the fact that I had an Italian surname and was the garbageman’s daughter, and ... you get the picture. Children can be awfully cruel. I was variously called giraffe, sticks, bone-bag, metal-mouth, four-eyes, smarty-pants, pizza-face, a wop, a dago, and a host of other such endearing names as my classmates could muster. They asked me if I ate spaghetti right out of the garbage truck – that got me for being Italian and the garbageman’s daughter in one fell swoop.

Fitch and Colton Junior Highs

I was very unhappy in school and used to cry a lot about it. My mother swore it would be different, more challenging, when I got into junior high. But she was very, very wrong. I entered 7th grade at Roger S. Fitch Junior High School (now called Seaside Middle School) in the Fall of 1963. I was still gawky, still teacher’s pet, and still not challenged, aside from “new math,” which was withdrawn from the curriculum two years later because even the teachers didn’t understand how to do it.

I was never able to drum up any enthusiasm for school. I liked to learn, but school was just way too easy for me and moved way too slowly. It got to a point where I just didn’t want to be there, and I channeled my need for knowledge into other areas outside of



Roger S. Fitch Junior High School.

school. I think that if my teachers or my parents had really been paying attention, they would have moved me into a different school environment. I'm pretty sure I must have been a gifted child, because as an adult my IQ was tested at 186. This may be, at least in part, due to having an extremely good memory. I can remember in great detail almost anything that I see, hear, smell, or taste. I still remember the basic breakdown of Linnaean taxonomy from Mr. DeWeese's biology class in high school because I can still see it written on the blackboard. In music, I can quickly tell the most subtle differences between two different arrangements or two different recordings of the same song, even when it's recorded by the same individual or the same band. I can bring up a smell in my mind of what the kitchen smelled like in our house in Daly City. I could always memorize a poem or song lyric with ease, and I can still recite poems I learned in grammar school. I think that a more challenging learning environment early on in my life would have been an enormous benefit to me in the long run, as it would probably have prevented me from becoming apathetic about school in general for such a long time.

But back to Fitch. This was a scary place for me. Every morning, I had to walk to school and go through "the gate," a walkway between the fences of two houses that led to a chain link gate that led to Fort Ord where Fitch was located. The gate was where all the tough kids hung out, and when they weren't fighting amongst

themselves, sometimes with knives, they were picking on the kids who were on their way to school. There was no security guard or parent on duty to protect the kids. And then, when I was in the 8th grade, there was a misunderstanding between me and a student who sat behind me in science class. She challenged me to a fight at the gate and I didn't even know why. I was afraid to go to school at all. Fortunately, another student who I didn't even know very well, intervened and the situation was resolved without any violence.

When we moved to Monterey in December of 1965, I was halfway through 9th grade. My new school was Walter Colton



Walter Colton Junior High (now Walter Colton Middle School).

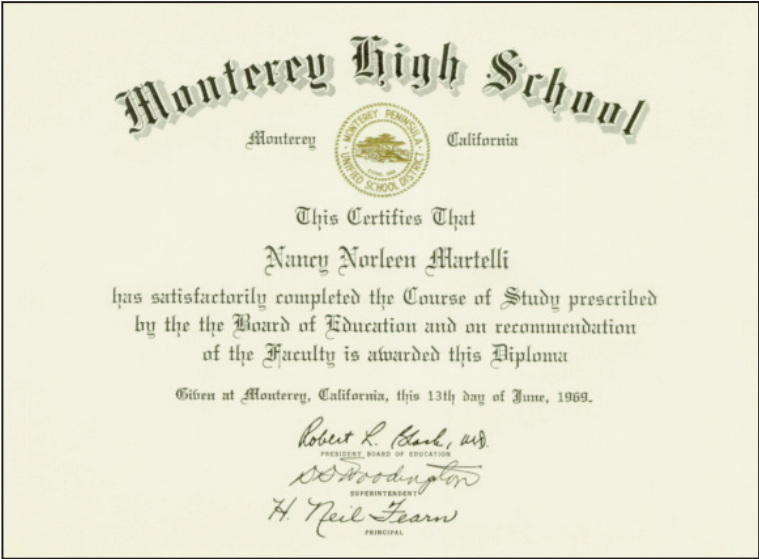
Junior High (now Walter Colton Middle School). It was a 45-minute walk in the morning, all uphill. There was a shortcut through the woods that only took 15 minutes, but my parents didn't want me making that walk by myself, and I only made it a few times with a fellow student. The children at Colton were a lot nicer than the ones at Fitch, but things were not looking up academically. I was placed in an advanced English class but it was still under my reading level. I was put in a remedial math class because I was way behind in math due to only having had "new math" at Fitch (which was not taught at Colton). The remedial math class was one in which you worked at your own speed, so I blazed through two years of math and was caught up before the end of the school year. But on the whole, I was bored, and since I never much

cared about grades as long as I passed, my performance was probably viewed as mediocre at best.

The one good thing that came out of Fitch/Colton was learning to touch-type, the most important skill any writer can have. My first



Monterey High School, quad where I used to hang out at the entrance to the library building, and below is my diploma.



year in high school, I took a second year of typing where they emphasized speed and typing the number keys by touch. Touch typing is definitely one of the most useful things I have ever learned.

Monterey High School

Monterey High School was right down the hill from where we lived. A 10-minute walk at most. It was a beautiful campus back then, with its Spanish-style stucco buildings and tile roofs. Lovely library. In 2003, which was the last time I walked that campus, it was an enormous disappointment. It was so run-down and neglected, as if no one was maintaining it at all.

High school was not any different than junior high or elementary school. Slow-moving, unchallenging. Again, I was bored. I didn't cut class or anything, and I always did my homework, but I didn't really apply myself to any of it. I just didn't care. I didn't even care much about art or English classes, even World Literature, which I took in my senior year. I had already read almost everything that was required in the World Lit class. Art was okay, but I had been taking private lessons since I was 9 years old, so this was nothing new for me and nothing I much wanted to do.

Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies



Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies.

MHS Honors, Awards

<p>Monterey High School students received honors and awards at the school's annual recognition program held last week. Both graduating students and lower classmen were honored.</p> <p>Among the scholarships and awards were:</p> <p>Monterey Savings and Loan Association scholarship and watch Richard Hever, who also won the Carmel Republican Women's Club book scholarship.</p> <p>National Merit Scholarship—Bertha Ingram.</p> <p>Future Homemakers Club Ruth Dighello and Jean Lew; Future Teachers of America—Jacqueline Weeldridge; Press Club—Michael Borasich;</p>	<p>Les Grands Occurs grants—Janis Scruggs and Stephen Tracy; Peninsula Board of Teachers—Helen Vandicht; Monterey City Employees Association—Henrietta Rubin.</p> <p>H&I Supply Co.—Soteria Karamanlis; Monterey High School PTA—Patricia Ponder; Monterey Bay Teachers Association—Marilyn Schumack.</p> <p>California School Employees Association—William Priest; Schuman Award—Alan Nebel; UC Alumni—Warren Liang; Monterey Elks Lodge 1228—Robert Cardina; Tau Mu fraternity—Carolyn Bonalco; Fort Ord MCO Wives Club—Herbert Shoemaker; Monterey Kiwanis Club</p>	<p>Stephen Peterson, Janis Scruggs, Esther Torres, Ann Yant, Bausch and Lomb—Mark Chappell.</p> <p>Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies—David Adams, Frances Caballo, Nancy Martelli, Vickie McDonald; Stanford—Irene Salcar; University of Redlands—Janis Scruggs; Pikes College—Michael Whipple; MLL—Michael Ellis.</p> <p>In addition, outstanding students and scholars were presented plaques and awards, and certificates of merit. The music, drama, art, mechanics, home economics, speech and madle writing departments made special awards.</p>
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I enjoyed taking French at Monterey High, and when I graduated in June of 1969, I was awarded a scholarship for an 8-week summer session in accelerated and intensive French at the Monterey Institute of Foreign Studies (later called the Monterey Institute of International Studies, and now called the Middlebury Institute of International Studies). Classes were daily, Monday through Friday, for eight hours each day, during which only French was spoken.

College

All through high school, my father constantly nagged me and lectured me about college. I didn't want to go to a four-year college. I wanted to go to the San Francisco Art Institute on Russian Hill in San Francisco. That's what I dreamed of doing.

My teenage dream was to go to the Art Institute, then move to Paris, get married, have a couple of kids, paint, maybe teach art as the kids got older, and maybe have my own work shown in galleries or maybe own my own gallery. I wanted to live blissfully and artfully ever after.

None of that happened. My father ultimately wore me down and I agreed to go to a four-year college. I applied to three: UC Berkeley, UCSF, and Cal State Hayward (now Cal State East Bay). I was accepted at all three and ended up first going to Monterey

Peninsula College, and then to Cal State Hayward, as that was where my father wanted me to go.

As I look back on this period of my life, I can clearly see that I could have ignored my father and gone to the Art Institute, possibly with the help of a student loan or by working my way through the way I ultimately did at Cal State. Hindsight is always 20-20.



Above, The Dream, San Francisco Art Institute.
Below, The Reality, Monterey Peninsula College.



I enrolled at Monterey Peninsula College for the Fall of 1969 and attended for three semesters taking general education requirements. During that time, I continued to live with my parents, worked part-time at my father's office, and paid for my own tuition and books.

I enrolled at Cal State Hayward for Winter 1971. I was living at the Carlos Bee Dormitory on campus with a very nice roommate



Cal State University, Hayward (now East Bay) with the monolithic Warren Hall, demolished in 2013.

named Lynn. When I arrived at Cal State, the campus was still under construction, in particular, the administration building, later named Warren Hall. This was a giant 13-story building that could be seen from all over the Bay Area. It was not completed until 1972.

Lynn and I took bag lunches up to the campus one Sunday morning and went into the building. The doors were open everywhere, tools and construction materials littered the floors. No one was around at all. We walked up the stairs to the roof and ate our lunches there, admiring the extensive view of the Bay Area. Years later, it was determined that Warren Hall was the least earthquake-safe building in the Cal State system, and in 2013, only forty years after it was completed, it was demolished.

While I was at Cal State, my father was paying for books, tuition, and the dorm. But the dorm was very noisy and the food

was pretty bad. After two quarters, my roommate and I moved to an apartment. My father immediately withdrew all financial support, including books and tuition, which was ridiculous since it cost considerably less for me to live in the apartment. Fortunately, I got a part-time job and was able to continue school.

In the Fall of 1972, I was “dual matriculating” at Cal State and at UC Berkeley. But I had to drop out of UC Berkeley because there



University of California, Berkeley,
Sather Gate and Sather Campanile.

was rioting going on when the school engineers went on strike and the teachers walked out in support of them. I kept going to classes that were never held and no one showed up, and I don't like paying for something I'm not getting. I demanded my money back and they refunded it in full.

But that Fall was doomed with more problems. In late November I got sick with mononucleosis and couldn't attend classes. Most of the instructors were understanding and so I was able to

make up the work and get a decent grade. But that was the end of Cal State for me at the time, as I ended up dropping out, getting married, and moving to southern California.

Back in those days, a four-year college was the realm of people from about the age of 18 to 21. You simply did not see any older students in the classroom the way you do today. If you dropped out for any reason, you were shunned and it was next to impossible to get back in. You were considered to be not serious about your education if you dropped out and wanted back in. So, when I tried to return to school in 1974, I was refused entry.

When I was living in southern California in the 1970s, I earned a vocational certificate in Interior Design with emphases in Color and



San Jose State University.



Space Planning. Back in the San Francisco Bay Area, also in the 1970s, I earned a vocational certificate in Ornamental Horticulture. I don't like cooking at all, but I took quite a few cooking classes during the 1970s and I am only short 9 units from a vocational certificate in Culinary Arts. I also audited three classes in forensic anthropology, cranio-facial anatomy, and human anatomy.

I also did regular course work towards my four-year degree and took several adult education classes. I was now a little more motivated to do well in school, and colleges were now accepting older students. Times were changing. By Spring 1990, I had enough units to get an AA in Liberal Arts from Santa Monica College, but I didn't apply for that degree until June of 1994, because I had thought that when you finished the required classes you were automatically graduated. I found out this wasn't the case when I tried to apply to the new distance learning program at Cal State Hayward and needed to send them my transcripts.

When I was at Cal State in the early 1970s, I had begun a special major in Language Arts. It was an inter-departmental major that



was essentially a double major in English and Linguistics. It took me three years to convince them I could complete it long distance.

I had barely moved back to the Monterey area from southern California when I was finally accepted into the program for Fall 1997. I only needed some upper division G.E. units and electives and two lower division courses, the latter of which I completed at Monterey Peninsula College. I challenged several classes, took others long distance, and graduated in September of 1999 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Language Arts, essentially a double major in English and Linguistics. The distance learning was great for me because I could work at my own speed and breezed through those last two years.



Continuing Education

For me, formal schooling was a means to an end and nothing more. I didn't participate in any clubs or go to sporting events or dances or anything at all. I didn't want to waste my time doing those things when all I wanted to do was my art, reading, writing, etc. I desperately wanted school to end so that I could go out and build a life for myself. I have never attended a class reunion for any

school or kept in touch with any former classmates. But, I'm a firm believer in continuing education in all forms.

Throughout the course of my life I have taken many an adult education class and regular college course, usually at a community college. I believe that education should not stop when you graduate from high school or college. I'm always learning new things, studying new things, expanding my mind. To me, education is the key to understanding the world we live in. You simply cannot learn enough, and when you start learning, you develop a thirst for more knowledge, because the more you learn, the more questions you have, and studying one thing almost always leads you to learning about something else. Education is like a drug, and it is a healthy addiction that can last your entire life. As I write this, I'm 67 years old, and I don't have enough hours in the day or years left in my life to study all the things I want to – and I'm pretty diligent at applying myself to learning!

I'm interested in a lot of things, and my interests are, and have always been, very eclectic. In addition to art, writing, reading, anthropometry, astrology, horticulture, and graphology, one of my biggest interests is in history. I especially like to learn about how people lived their daily lives at different times in history.

I also like almost anything to do with health and medical topics. I'm interested in human and animal anatomy, diseases and disorders, deformities and anomalies, traditional and alternative medicine, pharmaceuticals, homeopathics, herbal medicine, acupuncture, surgery, genetic inheritance, and in particular, anything and everything related to the human brain. After I had a brain injury due to an automobile accident 1980, I spent literally hundreds of hours studying the human brain alone, mostly at the Biomedical Library at UCLA. I needed to understand what I was experiencing as a result of that injury, but while studying the brain and traumatic brain injury, I was also led to studying many other interesting health and medical topics, including herbal medicine.

That's typical of studying. It's not unusual to be studying one thing and have it lead you to study something else that you never would have expected was even related. But it is. The more you learn, the more you see how the world is a complex pattern, how



The Biomedical Library at UCLA.

all its elements are intricately connected from the earliest prehistoric eras all the way through to the present.

Influential Teachers

During my education, there were three teachers who made a huge impact on me in many ways. The earliest was my 4th grade teacher, Miss Mills. She had polio as a child and she walked with two canes. She played the piano and liked to sing, and I loved singing in that class more than anything else. Like all teachers in those days, she read aloud to us, and I always enjoyed listening to how she read because she showed enthusiasm for what she was reading. She made reading exciting. What I remember most about her was that she didn't feel sorry for herself because of her disability. She just continued living her life. I didn't know how important this would be to me until I was seriously injured in a car accident when I was 29.

Another early influence, and definitely the biggest for me, was my 7th grade homeroom social studies teacher, Mr. Stallings. He taught me about self-respect, respect for all people, doing the right thing, never giving up, being honest with yourself and with others,

always working hard for what you want in life, and standing up for those who can't stand up for themselves. I never learned these things at home, not because my parents couldn't have done so, but simply because the subjects never seemed to come up in conversation. So, the things I learned from Mr. Stallings have always been what I consider to be the foundation for what it takes to be a good person, and I try to live up to that standard.

When I was in college in the 1970s, one of my instructors, Mr. Custred, helped shape my world view. He taught linguistics and anthropology, I took three courses from him, and he was one of the three advisors for my special major in Language Arts. He taught me the importance of understanding and respecting people from other cultures, how those people are influenced and shaped by their cultures, and how every culture and its people have value and play an important role in the world. This basically was an academic confirmation and reinforcement of what I had learned as a child growing up around the diversified population of a military community.

THE BIG BRAIN THEORY

I'm a high IQ polymath (a polymath is someone who is an expert in many fields or disciplines). My IQ is 186, measured post-1980 brain injury. This means that I'm in the top one-tenth of a percentile IQ-wise. I had my IQ tested three times between 1972 and 1994, and while the numbers varied slightly, I was always in that top one-tenth. I used to belong to three high-IQ societies, so I have met a lot of other high-IQ people, and I have learned a lot about IQ and IQ testing, and people with high IQs. Here's what I learned.

First, having a high IQ, even a super-high IQ like mine, does not make a person the least bit better than anyone else. The many high-IQ people I've met in Mensa (top two percent or 98th percentile), the International League of Intelligence (a.k.a. "Intertel" – top one percent or 99th percentile), and the International Society for Philosophical Enquiry (a.k.a. "The Thousand" – top one-tenth of a percent or 99.9th percentile) have proven to me, without a single doubt, that intellect has nothing to do with the quality of a per-



son as a human being. High-IQ groups have just as many truly kind and loving members and out-and-out assholes as you would find in any other segment of the population of the world.

Second, IQ does not guarantee any form of success in life, even if you are exercising your “superior” intellect daily. IQ is merely a guideline used to measure knowledge and how you use it. That alone will not help you in this world. Hard work is far more likely to bring you success, in whatever form you conceive success to be.

Third, being a know-it-all and trying to prove you have all the answers all the time will not endear you to anyone. I learned this from doing all kinds of research as a writer and just through the studying I’ve done in various subjects. Studying and research are great as far as expanding your mind. But no matter how much I learn, all I ever know is how unbelievably little I know, and how I can never know everything.

We should avoid becoming so sure what we think is right that we condemn those who don’t think or believe what we do. I think we always have to remember that we only know what we know as of today. Tomorrow, a new discovery could be made that revolutionizes our knowledge and makes us think differently about everything. I think, in particular, that scientists need to put aside the self-righteous notions they so often have towards anything that they can’t immediately prove with empirical studies. It’s been only a little more than 50 years since we began proving the parentage of a child using anything other than blood types, and it’s only since 1983 that we’ve been using a DNA testing method that is 99.99% accurate.

We have to keep learning, keep searching for the truth, and not assume we already have all the answers. The more you know, the greater the thirst for more knowledge, and knowledge changes with time. What you learned in high school, what you learned last week, what you think you know, is always subject to change. I could probably write a book just about how knowledge changes over relatively short periods of time, and I could probably base the entire book on the things I have personally come across while researching things in the sciences, the arts, history, politics, and the law.

Learning is dynamic. It forms your opinions and ideas, and if you are always learning, your opinions and ideas will inevitably be modified or shift and change completely as the world changes around you and new information is discovered and becomes available. You have to keep learning to keep current with that world. In many instances you'll find out that you were wrong about something. And you should never be afraid to admit that you were wrong or to change your mind. It is only the ignorant who cling to their old, outdated opinions and ideas. The opinions of the educated and informed will always be evolving over time, and they are the ones who will ultimately foster progress in their own lives as well as in the world at large.

Ambidexterity

I first realized that I was ambidextrous when I was in the second grade and broke my left wrist. I didn't know what it was called at the time, but I had always done things with both hands. Now that I had a broken left wrist, I had to write with my right hand too, and that's when I discovered I could also write just as well with my right hand.

Over the years, I found that I could even do mirror writing with my left hand, and I have better fine motor control with my left hand. So, if I want my handwriting to be really pretty, I use my left hand, and in painting, I do the same, using my left hand for the finer details. This kind of distinction between hand use flows into almost everything I do.

I can use a hammer, a screw driver, and almost any tool equally well with both hands, including scissors. But, when I need strength, my right hand is the one I use, and there are some things that always require that strength. I play guitar left-handed because my right hand can hold down the strings better to chord, but my left hand can pluck better. Oddly, I once tried out a boyfriend's violin and immediately realized that if I played violin, I would have to play it right-handed, because more fingering is done with the left hand when it's played right-handed.

But then there's baseball in which I bat left and pitch right, for no reason in particular, and I don't know if I can bat right at all

because it has never come up, but since I can sweep and rake left- or right-handed, I assume I can also bat right-handed equally well. I can play tennis with a racket in either hand. I can work a ten-key calculator by touch with either hand.

I can also do some things with both hands simultaneously, like painting and running a hand-held hair dryer (to dry the paint) at the same time that I'm manipulating that paint. Or I might be painting with a brush in one hand and working a palette knife or sponge in the other. The one place where being ambidextrous has paid off best for me is in working the mouse with my right hand while making notes on paper with my left hand.

Statistically, only ten percent of all people are left-handed and only one percent of people who are ambidextrous can write equally well with either hand. There is also a greater incidence of high intellect in ambidextrous and left-handed people. Paul McCartney and Leonardo Da Vinci are two famous ambidextrous people.

Back in the 1980s when I was having my brain analyzed again and again after a traumatic brain injury in a car accident, I ended up for a short time in a brain study of people who are ambidextrous. The brain was scanned while you were solving certain kinds of problems or answering 50 very different kinds of questions. The questions were designed with more than one correct answer, and how you answered indicated what part of the brain you used to solve the problem or formulate your answer in each question. In the end, I got the following evaluation:

Right hemisphere: responses, 3; Left hemisphere responses, 2; Integrated responses, 45. Your brain evidences very strong integrated hemisphere activity that gives you the ability to equally employ analytical/scientific and intuitional/creative approaches to problem solving. You can switch seamlessly from one to the other. You excel in daily activities because you can easily grasp the central issues in problems and you can plan detailed steps to reach goals. You are sensitive to both verbal and spatial relationships which allows you to develop and synthesize ideas. Your thinking and learning skills are extremely well integrated.

I think that being ambidextrous and having a more symmetric or integrated brain may be the reason why I find it so easy to do

things in both the arts and the sciences equally well and to shift back and forth between those two kinds of thinking, as I do in writing fiction and non-fiction.

Synesthesia

The hemispheres of the brains of ambidextrous people (and lefties) are almost symmetric, which is the same as it is for people with synesthesia. But among synesthetes, ambidexterity is higher than in the general population.

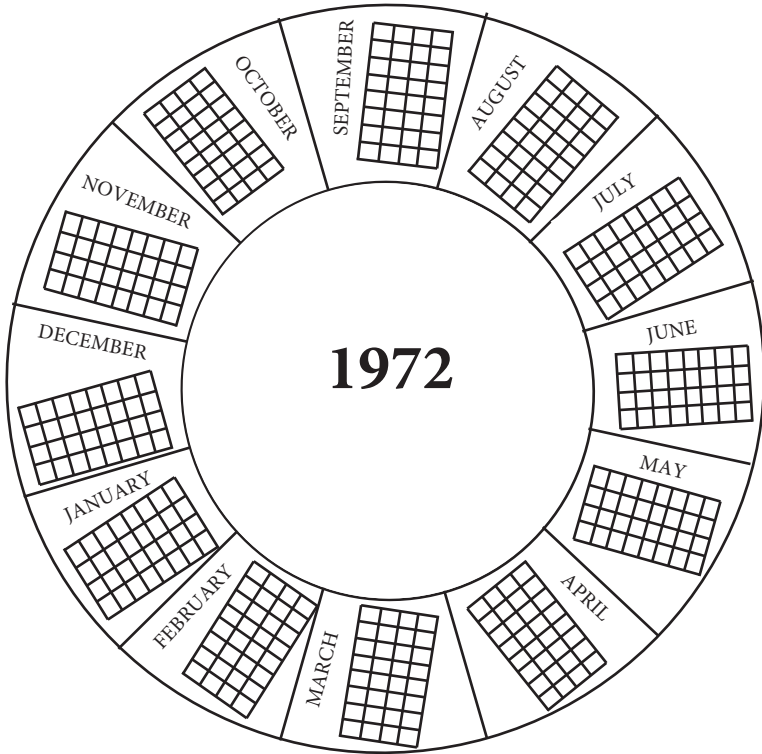
I didn't even know what synesthesia was until about 1998. I thought everyone's brain worked like mine did, that they had these cross-sensory perceptions. My form of synesthesia, like my brother's, is spacial sequence synesthesia. We have calendars in our heads, although they look different. I have two kinds of calendars, one for the year and another that shows decades and centuries. I can open up a decade and look at individual years, and many of those years have specific events listed on them that I apparently felt were worthy of remembering. I made drawings of what they look like and how they work.

This type of synesthesia is linked with, but not the same as being eidetic. A synesthete can generally reference their spatial visualization to remember things, as I do with my in-head calendars that highlights historic events. This type of synesthesia is related to having an extremely good memory, which I have.

Eidetic Memory

Eidetic memory is often confused with photographic memory, but the two are not the same and both are much debated topics in the scientific community. Photographic memory is defined as being able to take a brief look at a page of text and then later recall and repeat that text without seeing it in one's mind. Eidetic memory, on the other hand, is defined similarly but it comes with both visual and auditory memories.

I'm fairly eidetic, but not photographic. I tend to remember what things look like in books I've read, and sometimes I do recall specific details. I also remember things I've seen written on blackboards from kindergarten through college. To this day, I remember



My in-head calendar for a year (minus details which I don't have time to create for this graphic). Each month can be enlarged to see the details

the scientific classifications of Linnaeus by merely “looking” at my tenth grade science teacher’s list on the blackboard in my head. I can see everything else on the blackboard too, and can also see most of the front part of the classroom.

I can also see, with great clarity, what people and places looked like at any point in time if I was once there at that time. And, when I’m putting my grocery list together, I’m walking down the aisles of the store in my mind. And once I’m at the store, I look inside my refrigerator in my mind to see if I’m out of anything I may have forgotten to include on my list. This doesn’t always work perfectly, since despite my best efforts at picturing one of my cupboards, I once ended up with five bottles of Thai Peanut Sauce.

1500	1510	1520	1530	1540	1550	1560	90
1600	1610	1620	1630	1640	1650	1660	90
1700	1710	1720	1730	1740	1750	1760	90
1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	90
1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	90
2000	2010	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	90

1961 JFK is new president
1961 Peace Corps founded
1962 Snowed in Seaside
1962 Telstar launched
1962 Cuban Missile Crisis
1962 Looking at fallout shelters
1963 Start junior high school
1963 First heard Beatles music
1963 Zip codes introduced
1963 MLK I Have A Dream
1963 JFK assassination
1964 Surgery for polyps
1964 Beatles on Ed Sullivan
1964 Beatles concert in SF
1964 Jeopardy! debuts on TV
1965 Beatles concert in SF
1965 Move to Monterey
1966 Start high school
1967 Monterey Pop Festival
1968 Went Washington DC
1968 MLK assassination
1968 Grandma Steele dies
1968 First date
1968 RFK assassination
1969 Graduation from MHS
1969 French at MIIS
1969 Start college at MPC

The 1960s in my in-head calendar. My calendar lets me open up a decade or a particular year in a "fly-out" menu style, similarly to those found on websites.

When I worked for a landscape contractor, he had everyone write down phone messages in a yellow paper spiral notebook. When he would be looking for a particular message and couldn't find it, I could usually find it right away because I remembered what the page looked like and what other messages were next to it.

I think that my eidetic memory may be related to music too, but not to any musical ability. Whenever I want to memorize song lyrics, I just write them down or type them up, and then when I sing the song, I look at the typed-up lyrics in my mind.

I can also recognize the most subtle differences in a song that has been re-recorded or re-mastered. I can spot key changes, and subtle changes in how an instrument or an instrumental passage is played in the newer or different version. I think this is because I can hear a song in my head, down to its tiniest details, the way it was originally recorded. This is a totally useless ability, by the way. I can't think of a single application for it in the real world.

Autobiographical Memory

Since this is a memoir that I'm writing, it should be clear to anyone who reads this that I have a good autobiographical memory. Part of this is probably because I have been doing astrology and genealogy for many years, and both rely heavily on documenting life events. But my life events are also fully documented on the aforementioned in-head calendars. I can look back to any year and know what happened to me or in the world (at least what was important in the world to me). In the reverse, I can think of almost any event in my life and know what year it happened.

HEALTH

As a child, I seemed to have something wrong with me all the time. I guess I should probably consider myself lucky that I'm a very hardy person and when it comes to contagious diseases I rarely get so much as a cold. I have no digestive problems at all, although I have had salmonella poisoning six times in my life. I'm also not prone to headaches. In fact, on the very rare occasions on which I have had a headache, I was sure it was a brain tumor forming. That's how rare headaches are for me.

Allergies

As a baby, I coughed all the time, and when I was 18 months old, my tonsils were removed because they were believed to be the cause of all the coughing. But, it turned out that I continued to cough, eventually adding sneezing and red eyes to the problem. I underwent a lot of testing for allergies, and sure enough I had a lot of them, many to foods. After that, my mother took me for regular allergy shots at Dr. Thomas W. Cornwall's office on Post Street in San Francisco. Long after I graduated from high school my mother still had the original type-written list of the foods I was not supposed to eat taped on the inside of a kitchen cabinet door at our house in Monterey.

Over the years my allergies shifted. I seemed to be allergic to more than just foods. Hives was becoming a way of life. I was allergic to just about everything, or so it seemed. Over the years I've had allergy testing and shots again and again as I tried to find out what was an allergy and what was a sensitivity. But it doesn't matter, as the end result is the same. I'm allergic to pollens, grasses, trees, foods, spices, additives, drugs of all kinds, including penicillin. I'm also allergic to latex, elastic, adhesives, and Lycra-Spandex. It has become increasingly difficult to find things I'm not allergic to. Luckily, I'm not allergic to cats, dogs, chocolate, peanut butter, wool, or cotton.

Diseases & Disorders

One lucky thing about my childhood was that while I got measles, mumps, and chicken pox, they were extremely mild cases. With measles I had a light rash, with mumps I had a slight swelling behind my left ear, and with chicken pox I had only two on my body. The main way that my mother could tell what I had was by my brother's horrendous outbreaks of these same diseases a few days later.

In my entire life I have only had a cold three times (1967, 1985, and 1997), and flu twice. The first time I had flu was in 1987 and it lasted for four months. It was Philippine flu and it lingered until it turned into a bronchial infection followed by pneumonia. I was just about to be put in the hospital for it when my neighbor brought me a jar of a Chinese medicine compound called Minor Blue Dragon. It dried up everything and I was much improved in 24 hours and fully back on my feet after 48 hours. When I had flu again in 2009, it was nothing more than annoying, and I had Minor Blue Dragon on hand, just in case I needed it.

In the Fall of my senior year in high school, I was diagnosed as hypoglycemic with a protein deficiency. This diagnosis was made after I fainted in class several times. It was not altogether unexpected since I ate sugary junk food like it was going out of style and shunned anything that even looked like it might be healthy for me. Getting off sugar and eating protein fixed the problem immediately and it has never recurred.

When I was 20 years old and a student at Cal State, I got a whopping case of mononucleosis (due to the Epstein Barr virus). I was very tired, was running a fever, had a sore throat and a terrible headache. I tried over-the-counter medications and none of them helped me. After a week, I went to the college health center and they told me "you just have the flu, you can keep going to class, here's a prescription for ampicillin." So, I kept going to school and took the medication.

After another couple weeks, I was becoming weaker and weaker until I couldn't get out of bed and couldn't eat. I developed a rash all over my upper body. My roommate was becoming increasingly worried about me. In another two weeks, after I had lost almost 30

pounds, I had an out-of-body experience and then I lost consciousness. My roommate could not revive me, so she and her boyfriend took me to a hospital emergency room where I was admitted and woke up three days later with a variety of tubes running in and out of me. I have only once had a minor recurrence of mono, and that was in 1986, probably induced by the stress I was undergoing that year.

In the 1970s, I was diagnosed as hypothyroid and was put on medication. But, by the early 1980s, I was told I was not hypothyroid and was taken off medication. I almost immediately felt unwell, and had most of the symptoms of hypothyroidism. Those symptoms have continued and worsened over the years, but every test for thyroid disease has been negative.

In December of 1989, I had a benign lump the size of a golf ball removed from my left breast. It could be felt with considerable effort, but it did not show up on a mammogram or sonogram. The removal was outpatient surgery and it was very painful. I have had shooting pains in that breast ever since.

As of 2015, I have high blood pressure for which I take medication, My cholesterol is a little high, but I try to control that with diet. And in 2019, I was diagnosed with type 2 diabetes.

Vision

In the 3rd grade, I started to have vision problems. They were discovered because I couldn't read the blackboard and I apparently complained that my eyes hurt when I read. I was taken to an eye doctor and got glasses which I eventually needed to wear all the time, and I have been doing so ever since.

For awhile I had contact lenses, starting with the hard kind, then getting the soft ones, then the disposable ones, then the extended wear ones. But when I was 45 years old, my vision changed to the point that I needed a tri-focal, and while they made contacts for that purposes, I found them inefficient, and so I went back to wearing glasses with progressive lenses, and those lenses are great. My prescription changes about every three years or so, and usually I can tell I need a change, but sometimes I don't notice it until I get the new lenses and realize how much better I see with them.

Dental

My teeth were always an issue. They used to hurt all the time, just kind of aching and sometimes sharp pangs. It got even worse when I had braces. And braces were a waste of my parents' money. Basically, my mouth is too small for my teeth. I had braces twice, and I still have crooked teeth. The braces were so tight that they cracked some of my teeth which were very fragile and then had to be removed. The pain from the braces was excruciating. If either orthodontist had simply pulled a couple teeth in the first place, I'm sure that the braces would have worked.

As a child, going to the dentist was very unpleasant as he didn't use novocaine or any other kind of anesthetic when he drilled, and I'm not so old that those drugs weren't readily available.

In 1958, just before my seventh birthday, I had my first dental surgery, to remove an impacted molar. In 1968, I had my lower wisdom teeth removed, and that was a nightmare, as they had to remove more than 50% of my jaw bone in the process, and then I got infections ("dry sockets"), and so it was three months before my mouth was back to normal. My upper wisdom teeth are securely packed into my gums, where I suspect they will remain to the day I die.

Over the years I've had a few root canals, crowns, and a beautiful bridge installed that many a dentist has seen and called a work of art. In 1999, I had all my amalgam fillings replaced with composite resin – 51 surfaces – and I had it all done in two three-hour sittings during which I did not experience any pain at all. And, to my great surprise, after the fillings were replaced, and after decades of pain, I no longer had any pain in my teeth at all.

For ten years my teeth seemed fine, and then in 2009 one of my upper molars cracked and required a root canal and crown. It was only a year and a half later that a nerve died in one of the teeth in my "beautiful bridge," and the pain of it dying was the worst I have ever experienced in my life. It lasted for 19 hours straight and nothing helped it. Once it stopped, I went to the dentist and they did a root canal through the top of the bridge. This only lasted until 2023, after it failed, and the bridge was gone and so was the tooth, replaced by a crown.

Accidents

I've had a lot of accidents in my life, and it comes from being active as well as just living in the world. My first accident was in 1958 when I ran through the sliding glass door at the house on Lassen Street, and I still have a few scars on my left arm and hands from that incident. Then in the Spring of 1959, I fell and broke my wrist at school. I got reckless and tried to play on the ring bars that were designed for the bigger kids.

In 1960 or 1961, my step-grandfather Leo took me and my brother to Fisherman's Wharf by cable car, probably the Powell-Hyde line. The cable car derailed as we arrived at the turnaround. I don't remember much about it except that my knees were very badly bruised and my brother broke a finger.

When I was little, and also as an adult, I had a tendency to injure my hands a lot. I often got cuts and bruises to them, as well as several minor infections. This was because I was always digging in the dirt or making things with my hands, and I should have been more careful. As recently as 2015, I almost severed the top of my left index finger when I was framing an etching. I learned how to treat wounds early on in my life. And by the time I was a teenager I knew what required stitches and what didn't, and I knew how to stitch up my own wounds – something I do to this day when necessary.

I have had a number of problems with my feet and ankles. I had plantar fasciitis several times until my cousin Ken's wife Linda showed me an exercise that has eliminated the problem completely. I have sprained my ankles many times. The first time was in 1961 when I sprained my left ankle while running through the tumbleweeds across the street from school. In 1967 I sprained my right ankle in our back yard when I sort of slid down the hillside. It wasn't until 1985 that I again sprained my ankle, this time the left one, when I fell off a neighbor's porch. In 1989, I sprained both ankles when I was pushed down a flight of stairs by a man. In 1999, I sprained my left ankle, and in 2003 I sprained the right one. I also sprained both my knees and elbows one foggy night in 2005 when I slipped on the loading ramp of my rental truck. The elbows were fine in about three weeks, but it took about six years for the knees to heal sufficiently that they were not a problem to me.

I have also fallen many times. Usually I was running or hiking, but one time I jumped out of the way of a car that was running a red light and really did a number on my achilles tendon. And now that tendon really is my “Achille’s heel.” It is very sensitive and subject to becoming sore if I overdo. In 2016, I had physical therapy on my feet and ankles, and it helped a lot.

I fell twice 1978. Once when I was hiking and the rocks gave way and I fell down a small ravine. And again when I was ice skating at a rink and fell backwards. After I moved to the house in Washington state, I fell several times, three times inside the house (2009, 2013, and 2014) because of the badly-laid carpeting; three times in the yard (2007, 2009, and 2013) because of the uneven ground covered with 4’ tall weeds as well as dandelions; and once (in 2012) when I was going out the front door and a cat (not mine) was on the welcome mat and I stumbled over it and lunged forward landing partly on the concrete path and partly into a pile of rocks and decorative bark.

Then there are the bicycling accidents. In 1994, I rode over what I thought was just a patch of grass but it was a pothole and I was thrown off my bike. Then in 1997, a car hit my bicycle and that threw me into some brush by the side of the road. And in 2001, something got caught between the front fender and wheel of my bicycle and I was thrown over the handlebars. That last bicycle accident left me with two puncture wounds, one of which bled like crazy, and also a very big scuff on my elbow that happened through two layers of sweatshirt and left a huge scar.

And as if all this is not enough, there are all the times I have been rear-ended, in every case while I was stopped at a light or a stop sign. The first was in 1976, and while it damaged my bumper, I was fine. The second was in 1980, when I was hit by a truck into another truck in front of me. Since then I have been rear-ended in 2010 and 2016, both times with no injuries to anything other than my car. And in 2008, I was hit in the front left fender while stopped at a stop sign. But it was the accident on the morning of January 3, 1980, that permanently changed my life.

I was stopped behind a General Telephone truck that was stopped behind a car that was stopped at a stop sign. We were all

waiting for a break in traffic to make a turn onto a busy street. Suddenly, I was rear-ended by another General Telephone truck and pushed into the one in front of me. That seemingly minor accident sent my life into a tailspin that lasted for many years. I sustained major head and back injuries.

I had a herniated disk, which was bad enough given the amount of pain I was in. But what was far worse was the head injury. I had frontal, occipital, and temporal lobe damage. The worst was the temporal lobe damage. I suffered from grand mal seizures and amnesiac blackouts.

The first time I suddenly didn't know where I was, happened when I came out of a drug store in Santa Monica, and did not know where I was, who I was, what I was doing, etc. It lasted for about 20 minutes. Another similar episode happened in Culver City when I was walking to my car and, again, didn't know who I was or where I was, etc. Actually, I didn't know *when* I was either. I was on an old-fashioned, tree-lined street, and an old pickup truck went by with the radio playing Chuck Berry's "Maybelline." I didn't know what decade I was in.

The blackouts were frightening, not while they were happening because I don't know what I did during the blackouts, but afterwards when I realized I had lost time and "woken" up somewhere other than where I had been last. I once woke up on an RTD bus heading back to the west side from downtown Los Angeles. Another time, I went into a restroom at a temp job and didn't come out for three hours, yet nobody saw me in there. One time I missed a doctor's appointment while I apparently sat for a few hours eating deli food in a park.

One of the worst blackouts lasted for a few days. I came home from work on a Wednesday afternoon at about 3:30 p.m. I sat down on the edge of my bed to take my shoes off. The next thing I knew, I was behind the wheel of my car on the freeway going northbound through Encinitas in north San Diego County. It was Saturday morning, 11:45 a.m. I was very nicely dressed and I have no idea where I was or what I did. I did not spend any money or use my credit cards. When I got home, there were numerous messages from my mother and from my employer trying to find out if I was okay.

I later found out I had been given the wrong medication and it took four years to get a correct diagnosis and proper treatment. The amnesic blackouts gradually became shorter and less frequent until they stopped completely in 1984, shortly before my personal injury lawsuit with General Telephone went to court. I won, but after four years, the jury didn't think I looked all that injured, and they did not fully comprehend the ramifications of my head injury – which I have found is a common problem for most people with that type of injury.

By the time all the medical bills up to that time were paid, along with the legal fees and costs, I got a check for a little less than \$5,000. I used it to have back surgery six months later in August of 1984. It was laser surgery, and it eliminated the severe pain I was having. It did not completely eliminate all the pain I had, but it made what chronic pain remained more bearable and manageable. I still had numbness in my right leg when I was standing for any length of time. I was later told this was “meralgia paresthetica,” the injury of the lateral cutaneous nerve of the thigh (also called the lateral femoral cutaneous nerve) that extends from the spine to the thigh. And my neck continued to cause me discomfort as well.

The improvement after my 1984 back surgery was good until about 1996, when my stenosis became worse. This could have been in part due to the enormous amount of weight I put on during an 18-month period from October 1991 to June 1993 during which NOTHING in my life, my lifestyle, my diet, etc., changed. I simply started this rapid weight gain and I went to several doctors who said nothing was wrong and that I had to be doing some serious overeating, which was not the case at all. I was a strict vegetarian. I went from 185 lbs – I'm thin at that weight – to 435 lbs.

I began a major exercise routine during which I bicycled daily for a minimum of 200 miles per week, often doubling this by taking three or more long-distance treks to the Los Angeles County Art Museum, Olvera Street, Chinatown, Long Beach, and Pasadena. I managed to lose 145 lbs over a period of one year. I continued to bicycle at the same rate until I injured my knees during my relocation to Washington state in 2005. In Washington, several years later in 2026, I had somehow managed to get down to 250 pounds.

My knees are much better, but now my feet and legs are not so good because of neuropathy from my diabetes.

In 2013, I saw an orthopedist who said that my back and other joint problems were due to a hereditary condition called “ligamentous laxity,” or “loose ligaments.” This condition can make any injured joints fail to stay in place. But since this condition was not permanent, that was the end of that. I went to a grostic chiropractic, and after a few visits, I was fine.

Skin Problems

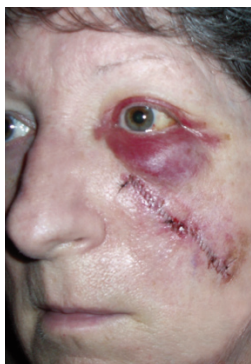
As a teenager, I didn’t have acne, just a small pimple once a year or so. My complexion was very clear with the exception of a handful of freckles. My mother got me in the habit of wearing sunscreen and long sleeves early on in life because my skin was so fair.

When I was 16, I had my first skin problem. It was a large fuzzy brown mole that was about the size of an elongated quarter, and it was situated right next to the outer edge of my left eye. My mother took me to the dermatologist and he said he couldn’t remove it because it was so close to my eye and that it would grow back anyway. He said I could cover it with makeup. That was not the response I was looking for. A few days later, I took a razor blade and gently peeled the mole off my face. It left me with a nasty scab that was gone within a week, and it never grew back.

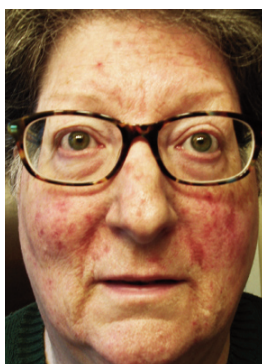
As a young adult, I always took very good care of my skin, and I used to regularly go to the aesthetician for facials to keep my skin looking good. But in 1974, I started having dark, irregularly-shaped moles growing on my arms and legs. I went to a dermatologist and he removed them – the old fashioned way with a local anesthetic and a cauterizing iron. I now have round scars where all those moles were, and it looks like someone tortured me with a lit cigarette.

But that was not the end of my skin problems. Far from it. In 1993, a red, scaly patch was growing on my lower right cheek, down near my jawline. After several visits to the dermatologist, they excised it with a curette. There was quite a bit of surgical trauma from that which left me with lots of red capillaries in that area. Another dermatologist zapped them all and they never came back. But in 1994, two more of these red, scaly patches showed up on the

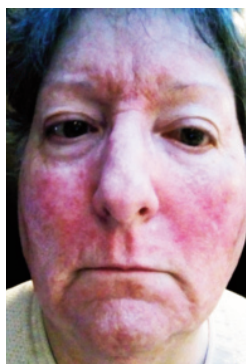
right top and side of my nose and on my left cheek. Again, I went to the dermatologist several times, then switched and went to another dermatologist, again for several visits. Finally, they used the curette again and removed both of these growths. In 1999, both growths were back and were again curetted. In 2006, they again came back and after several visits were curetted. For about two years they seemed to be gone, and then they started to grow again, only a little bit on the nose, but the one on my left cheek was getting very big. It looked like a small volcano, complete with a hole on top of it.



2013, three days after Mohs surgery.



2015, week two on Floururacil cream.



2017, week two after Levulan Kerastick.

Back to the dermatologist. They again curetted the one on my nose and after several unsuccessful liquid nitrogen treatments on my cheek, curetted it again in 2011. It started to grow back within a year, and after several more unsuccessful liquid nitrogen treatments, it grew back again, bigger than ever. By 2013, it was clear that this growth on my cheek needed more than liquid nitrogen and curettage. I went to a different dermatologist and they recommended Mohs surgery, which I had. It left me with a two and a half inch scar on my cheek (24 stitches inside, 36 stitches outside), but the growth was a squamous cell carcinoma, so removing it was a necessity.

A year and a half later, there was a red, scaly patch right where the Mohs scar was. The next form of treatment was a drug called Floururacil, a chemotherapy lotion that targets precancerous cells. They had me do this therapy five times over a three-year period. The red, scaly patch remained.

Then in 2017, the dermatologist recommended something called the Levulan Kerastick Blu-U treatment. I had the treatment and it was horribly painful. My face burned like it was on fire for almost a week, it was swollen, and I had blisters and pustules, as well as chills. In addition, the corner of my left eye was bright red for almost three weeks. And the red, scaly patch? Still there. The saga continues.

And in between all of this, there were a multitude of other unwanted growths on my face and other parts of my body that were removed, but fortunately all of those failed to return. And now, I'm back to visiting the aesthetician again, hoping to have some normalcy back in my face while I keep an eye on my cheek to see if it decides to grow into something other than the red, scaly patch I've come to know so well. And it did. So now they tried a treatment for my cheek that I have so far been unable to use.

Reproductive System

About midway through the 8th grade, on January 14, 1965, when I was 13 years old, I developed what turned out to be polyps in my uterus and I had to have surgery (a D&C) to have them removed. I don't remember this as being particularly painful or traumatic, and my life went on as usual afterwards. But the uterus problem reared its ugly head later in 1979, when I found out that I was sterile. I knew it had to be me because I had been in a couple of relationships, had tried to get pregnant, and nothing happened.

The source of my infertility was discovered when I was living in southern California. I became ill, and after a variety of tests, one of which was a gastrografin enema that left me sick for two weeks, I had an exploratory laparotomy. It turned out that I had a severe case of endometriosis. During the surgery it was revealed that I was sterile due to a birth defect in which my uterus was torqued (twisted) and one of my ovaries had failed to develop and was wrapped into the fold of the uterus. While I was recovering from surgery, I was put on a medication called Danazol, for nine months. It suppressed estrogen to prevent further tumor growth.

But, in the fall of 1981, my endometriosis recurred. I opted for an ovario-hysterectomy to put an end to it once and for all since I couldn't take the Danazol again to suppress the tumors and I was

already sterile. I had surgery on December 14, 1981. They took my uterus, my ovaries, and my cervix. I have had no ill effects of any kind from the hysterectomy, except for hot flashes that occurred about fifteen years later and eventually went away.

Nutrition

In 1970, I moved away from home for the first time and lived at the dorm on campus, where the food was okay, but not what I was used to. Eventually, I moved to a series of apartments, and in one of them, one of my roommates commented that I ate an unhealthy diet. She started teaching me how to cook vegetables.

I had never liked vegetables because my mother overcooked them and salted them heavily. They were these mushy green things that tasted of salt, and I avoided them at all costs. But my roommate told me that you could cook them so that they were crisp and flavorful without all the salt. And, you could eat them raw! I had no idea you could eat raw broccoli and that it would taste so good.

I learned to make salads from all kinds of greens, avoiding bib lettuce and romaine, which contain a lot of water but not much in the way of nutrients. I found that you could put almost anything into a salad or a pasta or rice dish, and I found that I really enjoyed food for the first time in my life. This is when I first started taking cooking classes and at the same time I also started eliminating a lot of foods from my diet. I still had a Coca-Cola addiction, but at least the rest of my daily fare was healthful. I became very picky about what I ate, and from 1981 until 1997 I was a vegetarian, and for ten of those years I was also a vegan.

After 1997, I added fish (salmon and tuna) and occasional meat and fowl to my diet, but I still eat mainly fresh fruits, vegetables, nuts, and grains. I do my best to avoid most processed foods, especially junk foods, as I think they are all filled with too many additives that no one needs to ingest. So I rarely eat anything that comes out of a can, a jar, or a box. In general, I try to avoid any foods with a lot of sugar or salt in them. I also avoid caffeine products such as coffee and my beloved Coca-Cola (which I now reserve for special occasions only), and I never drink alcohol of any kind.

Health Care and Health Insurance

Health care and health insurance in the United States are horrible. I cannot begin to describe how inadequate and overpriced they are. Medical care in general is way too expensive. Most of the time you're lucky if you get a full 15 minutes with a doctor, and in the end they charge you a small fortune for that visit during which they did not help you at all and instead referred you to a specialist.

And if you have to have multiple surgeries the way I did, the catastrophic benefits ran from January 1 to December 31. You have to actually plan your illness in order to get that coverage. I ended up going to Mexico for two of my surgeries, and when I did, I paid about half for the two entire surgeries combined than I did for the co-payments on a single surgery in the United States. Also, when I was in the hospital in the United States, I was on a medication that cost \$9 for a month's supply, but they charged me \$2.50 per pill and I had to take four per day – that's a dollar more than an entire month's supply! Highway robbery. And, as a side note to that, I could buy a full month's supply of that exact same medication in Mexico, over the counter, for \$2.50.

I also discovered that I had to actually read my multi-paged hospital bills item by item, because I found all kinds of things that I never got and they were charging my insurance (and me) for them. This was not just a cotton ball here and there. One hospital charged me for three days of physical therapy that I never had, and another charged me for several medications that I did not receive.

Insurance companies are also bandits. After I was done with all my various surgeries, I was paying my monthly premiums and they cost me more per year than I actually would have paid for the medical services I got each year. The rates for insurance kept going up, and I felt like I could just as well flush my money down the toilet. I finally cancelled my insurance and just paid for services rendered for more than 15 years, after which time I signed up for Washington State's Basic Health insurance plan. Then when the Affordable Care Act (the ACA or "Obamacare") was enacted, I paid affordable insurance premiums for a year and a half before I aged into Medicare, which costs a little less than the premiums I was paying under the ACA.

As for doctors, I think they are often nothing more than witch doctors. They don't seem to want to work too hard at diagnosing the problem with a patient unless they have some kind of lab tests that say you have a particular thing wrong with you. And there are way too many specialists who waste a patient's time because they only know one part of the body and are virtually ignorant of the rest of it. They don't know how to look at the patient as a person, an entire biological machine, with all the parts fully integrated. "Oh, the ankle bone's connected to the shin bone, the shin bone's connected to the thigh bone, the thigh bone's ..." I miss the days when you went to a doctor and they did everything right there in the office – X-rays, blood tests, set your broken arm, stitch the cut on your hand, etc. None of this running around from one place to another trying to get the simplest thing diagnosed and fixed, or worse yet, having to go to the emergency room for petty stuff.

Hospital Experiences

I'm also not too keen on hospital care. In particular, I had three very negative experiences that always come to mind. The first was being catheterized at the old Daniel Freeman Hospital in Inglewood, California in 1979. I arrived at that hospital feeling reasonably calm considering the fact that I was having a major exploratory surgery. But then two nurses tried to unsuccessfully insert a catheter in me about six times, causing me an extraordinary amount of pain, before another nurse came in and told them that they were using a catheter that was three sizes too large. I ended up with a terrible bladder infection, and in the middle of the night a nurse was attempting to give me penicillin – to which I'm allergic and which was noted in my chart – before I woke up and caught her in the act. From that point on, I refused catheterization in all my surgeries.

The second negative experience I had was at a hospital I can't name in print because I signed a non-disclosure agreement. It was just a few weeks before my back surgery in 1984, I went there to have a myelogram, a test in which they inject dye in the spine in order to examine the spinal cord. Afterwards, you have to lay in bed with your head at a minimum of a 45-degree angle. When they injected the dye, I had to be on my stomach, which caused me a lot of pain.

When I was returned to my room, the pain did not go away and was getting even worse. My doctor had told me that if I needed anything he would be right down the hall and that he had told the nurses where he was. So, I tried the call button to get a nurse and it didn't work. Turned out it was broken. Finally, a nurse showed up and I told her what was wrong and she said she'd tell my doctor. This happened several times. In between, I found out that the phone was also not working.

After five hours, my doctor had not shown up. I was crying and hysterical with pain. I was also scared. I got up, limped over to the closet, and got dressed. I walked out of the hospital and no one even paid attention to me. I phoned my doctor's office from a pay phone in front of the hospital to tell them I had left and why.

I took a bus home, had a horrible headache, and called my doctor. He was shocked and said no one had come to tell him I was in pain. I wrote a letter to the hospital telling them what happened, and I didn't threaten to sue them, but they offered me \$5,000 in settlement on the condition that I didn't disclose what happened. I accepted the agreement with a host of conditions that the hospital had to agree to do to avoid having anything like this happen to someone else.

My third negative experience was when I had a bad reaction to a pain medication in a hospital following surgery. At first, I thought it was just a minor thing, and I don't like to ring for a nurse unless it's an emergency. I'm also a kind of wait-and-see person, but after about a half-hour, I was having trouble breathing and my pulse was very weak. I rang for a nurse. No one came. I still thought it would go away, but it got worse. I rang again, no nurse. My vision started to blur and I started to feel faint and had an aura like I used to get when I had a seizure. But I was on medication for seizures, so I didn't know what was going on. I was in the room alone and I started ringing the call button like crazy. I lost consciousness and when I awoke there was an entire crew of doctors and nurses working on me. I filed a lawsuit against this hospital, and after dragging their feet for a year, they finally settled with me out of court, again with conditions to avoid a repeat of the problem with someone else.

PSYCHOLOGY & PSYCHOTHERAPY

Throughout my adult life, I found myself in need of occasional help to deal with my emotional and mental baggage. At one time I had enough of it to fill a warehouse. I had problems related to my basic personality, to my brain injury, to living with chronic pain, to chronic depression, and to ongoing losses in my life, such as sterility and deaths of friends, family members, and pets. But, at the base of most of my problems were those related to my father.

Daddy Issues

My father's treatment of me was great when I was very little and was the only child. As soon as my brother was born, I was basically cast aside and ignored or treated like dirt. His relationship with his parents, whatever it was, was no excuse for his behavior towards me. The fact that he did not get help for his own demons – he believed all psychologists were crazy – did not justify his abuse of me.

And yes, it was abuse. Did he ever hit me or sexually abuse me? No, never. But aside from earning a living and keeping food on the table, he was never there for me, was emotionally unavailable as well. He never came to a single school event, not one of the nine art shows I was in when in school. He never once said he loved me. He said I was stupid, that I was a loser, that I would never amount to anything, that I was his greatest disappointment, and that he would die a pauper before he would leave me one cent.

My father lied like most people breathe. He lied about himself, about things he did, and he lied to other people about me. His lies ranged from exaggeration to white lies to lies of omission to outright pants-on-fire lies. He said he went to college and said how important education was, but while doing genealogical research I contacted the college he said he went to and also looked at where he was during the time he said he was in college, etc., and he only attended for half a semester before dropping out, and there is no way he could have gone to any other college before or after that time.

A family friend related to me that when she and my father came back from visiting Italy they had lunch with another couple. She said that my father was telling them about something that happened on the trip, and she said he made up almost the entire story. Afterwards, she confronted him, asking “Why did you lie like that?” She said he responded, “It made the story more interesting.” Imagine, he had the nerve to lie right in front of someone who knew he was lying! Incredible.

The biggest lie he repeatedly told was about the garbage business. He always bragged about how successful he was in that business and how much money he made in it. Not true. My mother was a former bookkeeper with ten years experience, and she handled the receivables for the garbage business. She said that the garbage business only did well during the years it had military contracts (eight years total), and that my father was frequently behind in paying bills and that over the years several creditors, including the cities he had contracts with, threatened to sue him for non-payment.

I believe this is completely true because: 1) we shopped at Good Will for school clothes on numerous occasions; 2) I had worked in the office over the years and I heard all the talk about how much money my father owed and how little money was coming in and how many times he barely made payroll; 3) I heard both my mother and my father making excuses to creditors over the phone; 4) when I was accepted at UC Berkeley, my father said he preferred I go to Cal State Hayward as it was less expensive; and 5) as late as 1980, my mother and father both were still saying to not answer the phone because it might be a creditor calling.

Hiding from creditors was something my mother was very good at. When she and I would go downtown and she saw someone they owed money to, she would duck into the nearest store so that they wouldn't see her. She maintained – and I later verified this through genealogical research – that my father made far more money through four large inheritances (from his grandfather, his father, his aunt, and his mother) and several substantial monetary gifts from his mother, than he ever made during the entire time he owned (and sold) the garbage business.

Lies he told about me to others? Too many to list, but here are a few. He said that I was failing in high school. Not true. I was a high B student. For many years he told people that he gave me a car on the condition that I stay in college and that when I dropped out, he was out the money on the car. Not true. I paid him back the entire cost of the car in three large payments within a period of one year. He said that he wouldn't give me money or leave me money because I was irresponsible with money. His primary example of this was that I once pawned a perfectly good camera. Not true. Never pawned anything in my life. But if I had, that would certainly not have been proof of financial irresponsibility. He, on the other hand, bought my mother expensive jewelry and took trips to Europe when he should have been paying his creditors.

To this day, I do not understand why my father lied. I especially don't understand why he would say untrue negative things about me, his only daughter, when I had done nothing to deserve it. Most parents want to brag about their kids and hide any bad things about them. But I wasn't a bad kid at all. I was a good kid. I was never in any kind of trouble at school, didn't cut class, never in trouble with the law, never got pregnant out of wedlock, didn't smoke, drink, or drug. What was it about me that he found so terrible that he had to lie to make me look bad to others? I will never have the answer to that question.

Compounding the lies was the fact that my father never once ever admitted that he did anything wrong or that he hurt anyone, and he never once apologized for any of those things. When I last saw him in 2006, he was suffering from dementia but was still relatively lucid. But he looked at me as if he didn't know me, so I said, "Do you know who I am?" and he replied, "Yes, I know who you are. I just don't know what you've done for me lately."

And that was rather typical of him. He seemed to expect me to bow and scrape for him. And, although he never acknowledged the things I actually did do for him, I spent every year of my life from 1966 to 1986 (when my mother died), taking care of things at the house on Madison Street. I got up on the roof and swept it off at least twice a year, pulled weeds and genesta (yellow broom) from the hillside, trimmed trees and plants, vacuumed the house, washed

the windows, polished the silver, and shopped for a Christmas tree every year and put the lights on it, among other things. When Bob and I visited together, he made a number of repairs throughout the house (my mother kept a “to do” list for him) and even to my father’s pickup trucks and cars.

My father never thanked me or Bob for anything. My mother always made excuses for him, and once said to me, “Well, at least he doesn’t beat me.” But I disagree. I think my father beat me, my mother, and who knows how many other people, emotionally and psychologically. Up until I was about 35 years old, his words rang in my ears no matter what I did, and his negative words influenced almost every aspect of my life. I was in and out of therapy, and therapy always meant dealing with something he said or did even when I was sure I was in therapy for something else entirely. He was always at the root of most of my problems.

And when he wasn’t at the root of my problems, he was certainly not there to offer any form of emotional or financial support. After being seriously injured in an automobile accident and then losing my apartment, I ended up living in my car on the streets of Los Angeles. My parents were in Europe when this happened, and when they returned two weeks later, I drove up to Monterey. I hoped my parents would help me, but my father’s reaction was: “You decided to move to L.A. You made your bed, now lie in it.”

When my mother died in 1986, I estranged myself from my father in order to get free of the emotional stranglehold he had over me. It was the best thing I could ever have done. For almost 14 years, I had no contact with him at all. This gave me a chance to live my life without his interference and continued negative programming, and it gave me a chance to become myself. It didn’t mean I forgot the things he said, but I was able to distance myself from them. I could talk about them without being upset.

When I moved from Los Angeles to Monterey in 1997, I had to spend a good deal of time “clearing my name,” with people who knew my father. When I moved to Washington in 2005, I had to go through that same process again. The degree of lying and misrepresentation of me by my father was unbelievable. When he died in 2013, I felt relieved, like that chapter of my life had finally closed.

Trauma Aftermath

Living in my car was the most frightening experience of my life. Try getting to any job and be presentable when you don't even have a bathroom. Try doing it when you are severely ill. I was mugged twice at knifepoint, was showering at the open-air showers at the beach in cold water at 6 a.m., and was also once harassed by a gang who pounded and bounced on my car with me in it. When I tried to park my car in a nicer, safer neighborhood for the night, the police came and asked me to move on. I have never forgotten how it felt to be so alone, so vulnerable, and feeling so abandoned by my parents.

But the greater trauma was the aftermath of living in my car, the years of living in Los Angeles, where I felt abandoned, unwanted, thrown away, cast aside by my father, and to some extent my mother, because she always went along with whatever he said or did. I was trapped in the medical and legal turmoil of the aftermath of the automobile accident. And I was trapped in a place where I was lost in a giant crowd, overwhelmed by the size of Los Angeles, the noise, the traffic, the crime, and the constant turnover in the population.

In time, I became hardened to it all. When a homeless man threatened me with a knife in the stairwell of the building I lived in, I didn't even flinch. I just held my ground until he backed down. But all I wanted to do was go to sleep and never wake up. I was just so, so very tired of trying to put on a happy face and lead something that resembled a normal life. The only things that made me happy were my cats, my friends, and Bob – but even that relationship came to an end.

Today, when I think too long or too deeply about my daily life in Los Angeles, I remember the reality of where I've been and what it felt like. Was it all bad? No. I made friends, I worked, I made a life for myself despite being in the worst place I could even begin to imagine. Today, I'm extremely grateful that I finally found a way to leave Los Angeles and go to Monterey where I could at least partly recover from all the trauma of living for 17 years in that hell hole. But today, living happily in Lacey, Washington, I still can't forget where I've been.

Winning The Depression Battle

At the time that my mother died, I had been depressed for six years. I was working like a dog – I was a hamster on a wheel. I tried to enjoy things, but most of the time I just couldn't seem to pull myself out of my depressed state. I didn't talk about it to anyone because I didn't know what to say. I felt dead inside, period. I thought it was a result of my brain injury from the car accident in 1980. But then 1986 arrived and things went from bad to worse.

In February, my kitty Puff died of a heart attack. In early March, my best friend Ellie died of a recurrence of breast cancer at the age of 38. In May, my friend Iris died in her sleep of “natural causes” at the age of 36. My mother died in August of pancreatic cancer at the age of 64. Our family cat Lucky died in September, as did my mother's best friend and family friend Agnes, followed by another family friend, Dee, a few weeks later in October, and my friend George died of a heart attack in December.

As 1987 rolled along, I was still trying to deal with all the deaths of the previous year, especially my mother's. I seemed to be crying all the time. It seemed that no matter where I went or what I did, there was always something that reminded me of her, and every time I was reminded of her, every time I thought of her, I would cry. I could barely pull my sorry ass out of bed every morning. This went on for three years, and then something great happened, something that changed my life forever.

I was at the library in Santa Monica, California, not far from where I lived in Venice Beach, and a woman I barely knew came up and said hello. We got to talking, and I was always pretty good at smiling and chatting and in all ways faking being happy and normal. But somehow I ended up telling her how I really felt and, bless her heart, she reached into her purse and pulled out a business card for a psychotherapist in West Los Angeles who specialized in treating chronic depression.

I was pretty sure I was too far gone at this point because almost nothing in my life was going in any positive direction whatsoever. I had to work to support myself, and even though I worked round the clock, I felt dull and lethargic. All I really wanted to do was

sleep, and sometimes I slept away entire weekends with no relief. I'm not saying I didn't ever do anything that was fun, but it didn't always feel like fun used to feel. I always felt like I shouldn't even try to enjoy myself because something bad was bound to happen. I guess I was always waiting for the other shoe to drop.

But I went to the therapist. Instead of a lot of "how does that make you feel?" crap, I got an education in fighting depression that pulled me out of that misery vortex and has prevented me from getting sucked down it again, and that was thirty years ago. I wrote several articles about it and how I was able to overcome this chronic depression and prevent it from recurring. It was a complex process that took me two years to master, and it has made all the difference in the world for me.

The main thing I learned was how the brain is programmed from the day you are born and how you are, in fact, programming it yourself. And, most importantly, I learned how to reverse that programming, to install a new program. It doesn't mean I never get sad, but I have learned how to live my life in a better way so that I'm less likely to drift back into some of the bad habits that brought me into the depths of despair for such a long time.

Avoiding Drugs & Alcohol

I have never turned to drugs or alcohol to get me through the difficult times in my life. In the very early 1970s, long before my 1980 brain injury, I discovered that I got very drunk with only a small amount of alcohol. I made a complete ass of myself on more than one occasion, but the end of my one-year drinking career came when I passed out drunk in a gutter in front of a bar and in front of about 15 co-workers. I haven't touched a drop of alcohol since. Life is hard enough without being affected by or addicted to a substance. I don't miss alcohol at all and no one has ever tried to encourage me to drink it. In social situations I just drink Coca-Cola, which I really love, but I don't drink more than about a cup of it a few times a week because of the sugar and caffeine content, plus the lack of nutritional value.

Losses

Now, did all of this therapy eliminate my need for a therapist? No, no such luck. Things still happen – though far less frequently – and I still sometimes need input from someone else when they do. I especially run into a need to talk to someone when it comes to death. I have had so many deaths in my life, people and cats. But in some instances, I had a difficult time getting over my grief.

The first loss that really impacted me this way was my Great-Aunt Enes, my father's aunt. She died suddenly in 1968, when I was 17 years old, and I really adored her. My mother's mother had died five months earlier, but I didn't feel the same way. It wasn't because I didn't love my grandmother, but I had a much stronger bond with Enes. When I think of the people who passed away, it seems that the bond is the important part that holds me back from letting go right away when someone dies. My father forced me to go to Enes' funeral, and that experience upset me even more. I have not gone to a funeral ever since.

When I was 24, I began living with a widower, Rich, and his son Sebastian, who died 22 months later after just turning four in late 1977. I was devastated. I had taken care of him for two years and he was gone in an instant. I felt like he was my own child, and it was a profound loss for me. My father's mother had died eight months earlier and I didn't have the strong bond with her, so her loss didn't impact me.

But the greatest loss for me was that of my mother in 1986. She was my strongest bond. I cried for three years and never thought I would get over that grief. But my cat Twinkle was also a major loss for me in 1993, and I cried over that cat for more than a year. And when my friend Susy took her own life in 2009, I was shocked and in a state of disbelief that lasted for almost two years before I was finally able to put it to rest in my mind. When my father died in 2013, I didn't feel anything at all – no bond there to speak of. But when my cousin Carol died in 2015, I was quite sad for a year.

All the other deaths – and there have been more than 30 of them – have all been ones where it was not particularly difficult for me and I felt bad for a week or so, and then I simply moved on. I didn't forget them, I just didn't feel that heavy grief.

Losses from death are not the only kind I've had to deal with. I have also had to deal with the loss of activities that I used to enjoy before all my joints seemed to lock up on me. I had to give up running after the accident in 1980, and since then I have gradually given up other activities too, including bicycling, camping, hiking, long walks, and almost all gardening. I have lots of energy, but my body just doesn't seem to cooperate.

Another great loss for me was finding out in 1979 that I was sterile and not being able to adopt. I had always liked children, and I had always assumed I would have them. I wasn't quite ready to do that as of 1979, but it was still something I looked forward to. When I found out I couldn't have my own biological child, I assumed I would end up adopting. Well, that didn't happen.

I had no idea how difficult it was to adopt a child, especially as an unmarried parent. A poverty-stricken woman could have a child out of wedlock, but to adopt you had to meet income and housing requirements, etc., that are far beyond what most people ever have in this life. It was utterly ridiculous. I eventually got to an age where I realized it was probably not even practical to continue to try to adopt. I wasn't getting anywhere with my efforts, and so I have no children.

Cognitive Problems

Another issue involving psychotherapy for me is that of having cognitive impairment from my 1980 brain injury. I take comfort in the fact that more than 5 million people in the U.S. are living with the permanent results of their brain injuries too. But most people don't know this. They don't realize that traumatic brain injuries can result in problems you can't see. It just all sounds so ridiculous, so impossible, so crazy, especially when many of the symptoms sound just like things that almost everyone has experienced at one time or another. The difference is that I experience those things all day long every day of the week. But don't get me wrong. I have long adjusted to the ins and outs of my brain injury, and I don't spend much time thinking about it because it's just a part of who I am and how I function. If I were to sit around and dwell on it, I'd have no life, and as I said, I overcame chronic depression and I

don't plan to fall down that rabbit hole again. I try to be as proactive as possible in dealing with issues as they come up in my life.

My brain injury left me with a multi-perceptual disorder with moderate short-term memory impairment – a combination of cognitive (thinking and memory) and sensory (hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling) problems. The cognitive ones require the most management. I was absolutely disorganized and disoriented a lot of the time in the beginning. But, I found that I could overcome those problems if I kept a detailed calendar, lots of lists and notes, a detailed “to do” list, and basically just all my pertinent information written down or in the computer. Years of experience have helped me manage the cognitive issues to the point that they don't have much impact on my life at all.

The sensory problems were pretty bad in the beginning, but now they are mostly just mildly annoying. My senses are overly heightened, and are also distorted. I hear everything and it is always much louder than anyone else would perceive it to be. At the same time, I have very little discriminatory hearing (can't distinguish sounds or voices when the water is running or there is machinery running – even at a low hum), have very loud chronic tinnitus, and I hear things outside the range of normal human hearing, such as light bulbs when they are about to burn out. I also experience phantom sounds – sounds that are not really there. Not voices, just a wide range of sounds like high-pitched whistling, buzzing, pounding, whining, low-pitched humming, etc. Also, if I hear a real sound and then that sound stops, I often keep hearing it in my head repeated again and again for about two or three minutes before it stops.

I also see things that aren't there, like shadows and shapes out of the corner of my eyes that I sometimes mistake for someone being in the room with me or someone walking past me on the street. But sometimes I can't see things that are right in front of my face, like a pen or a stapler that is sitting right smack dab in the middle of my desk. To avoid shopping for things that are already in the refrigerator or kitchen cabinet that I can't see, I keep everything right out to the front edge where it can't get blocked out in the back.

I also smell things very acutely, things that are only very mild odors or scents. But, again, I also smell things that aren't there, often acrid, unpleasant smells, but sometimes very sweet fragrances, and they last for only a few seconds, which is how I know whether or not they are real. These smells most often consist of pipe tobacco, coffee brewing, electrical wires burning, gardenias, and a smell that is some kind of cereal grain I can't identify.

I think that a sense of humor is probably the best medicine when it comes to the idiosyncracies of my brain, but I have also managed to come up with a lot of shortcuts, workarounds, and an assortment of helpful little tricks to improve my mental functionality. So while some of these things are still moderately annoying, they don't interfere with my life.

Fitting In

I have some relatively minor issues that I have never quite been able to resolve completely, even with therapy. Fortunately, while they involve my inability to fit in with other people, I'm very much an independent loner and happy to be that way, so fitting in is more about me being curious and sometimes concerned as to why I'm so independent and so content to be alone. Again, fortunately, these thoughts occupy less than 1% of my time, but here they are in black and white.

When I'm at home alone I feel safe, secure, and like I can be myself. No one is there, so I'm not even aware of how different I am from everyone else, and I don't feel awkward or like I have to act or talk differently in order to fit in. When I'm alone in a city of strangers I feel free to be myself. No one knows me and I don't have to interact with them much or at all, so I don't have to be anyone but me. When I'm speaking or teaching a class, I can be myself. No one knows me, but they are there because we have some interest in common and they want to hear what I have to say, so I feel accepted and comfortable, like I fit in.

But, when I'm with a group of family or friends or, worse yet, at a party (unless I'm the hostess), I often feel awkward and out of place because I'm so different. I don't totally fit, and I can't be myself. I feel like I have to act and speak differently so that I will fit

in, even though I'm acutely aware that I don't, and I'm sure most of the time that no matter how hard I try, I will never fit in.

So, in the end, it is far easier for me to just live my life like the independent loner that I am. I'm certainly a lot happier that way. I like certain people and enjoy their company, but I am equally happy being alone, and I have never been lonely.

LIFE PHILOSOPHY

Thinking is an important part of my life. I spend a significant amount of time in contemplation, whether I'm meditating or simply day-dreaming. I'm an emotional person, but I'm also very logical, and this shapes my thinking to the extent that I make feeling and informed opinions and decisions.

I'm neither an optimist nor a pessimist. I'm a realist and most often an idealist. These would seem to put my thoughts into constant conflict, but instead they allow me to see what could be and how to make it so. The frustration arises when I'm faced with people who are so locked into their antiquated beliefs that they fail to see beyond those beliefs, and that means that they ultimately lack sufficient flexibility of thought to effect positive change and progress.

Speaking My Mind

I'm not afraid to speak my mind when given the opportunity. I talk and I write letters to the editor. I live in a country with free speech. I don't try to make other people agree with me or think like I do, and if they think differently, I defend their right to voice their beliefs and thoughts. It is their right, and I respect that right, even if I think they are wrong or downright ridiculous.

I consider voting to be a form of speaking my mind, of making my opinion count. But I struggle when it comes time to vote. I'm a pretty sharp cookie, but the issues that arise in political elections are often incredibly complex and I spend an awful lot of time trying to get a handle on the situation.

I have long noticed that most people don't look at the big picture when it comes to voting. They're preoccupied with their own agendas and don't look at what is best for their country. When I vote, I know I'm not the only person who is going to be affected by what *my* candidate does if elected. So I look at what things are the most important issues impacting the lives of the greatest number of people, and cast my vote accordingly – I never vote a straight ticket.

Life Experience

In addition to learning in school and by reading, I also think it is important – maybe even the most important – to learn from your own experiences, to look critically at what you do in life and see if there are ways that you can fix a problem or do something better to improve your life in general. In other words, learn from your mistakes as quickly as you can and figure out how to avoid repeating them. I have learned a lot of things this way, and many of those things have formed a very strong basis for my values and beliefs, as well as my work and my lifestyle.

In particular, I have learned a lot about money and things. I learned early on in life to buy only what I need and only what I love and use. I have learned to shop around and wait for sales before I buy. I only buy what is of value and that will last for a long time. I have learned to avoid buying from point-of-purchase displays. I have learned to buy in bulk and on sale those things that I use over and over again, such as toilet paper, soaps, and certain foods. I have learned to buy used whenever possible, because “new” does not always mean “good.” So many new things being made today are expensive yet of the worst quality in materials and workmanship.

And, because I’m the garbageman’s daughter, I have learned to never waste anything. I try whenever possible to avoid buying things that aren’t re-usable or recyclable. For example, I normally buy cat litter in recyclable cardboard boxes, but for awhile I bought it in plastic buckets because I needed and still regularly use those buckets.

And if I do end up buying something that I can’t use or used for awhile and no longer use, I either sell it or donate it immediately. I refuse to become a hoarder. As for food, it is truly amazing how much money people waste on food by not thinking about what it is they plan to cook and how many people what they cook will serve. If you aren’t going to eat leftovers, don’t make so much to begin with.

I also learned to take good care of what I own. I maintain everything very well. That includes my computer, my electronic gadgets, my gardening tools, my art supplies, my clothes, and my furniture (exclusive of upholstered stuff which I buy dirt cheap, often used, and replace regularly). I have mechanical pencils that are more than 40

years old and paintbrushes that are even older than that. I've met people who throw away a perfectly good knife or scissors when sharpening is all that's needed. And it certainly doesn't take a genius to sharpen a knife. I have three different garden clippers that I have had since 1972 and they work perfectly. I just sharpen and oil them once a year, along with my shovels and other garden tools. Since I was 16 years old, I have used my grand-



mother's scissors for everything and they are now more than 100 years old. I only need to sharpen them about every ten years or so.

My late client, Mark – who had a PhD in finance and owned several apartment buildings in southern California – once told me that when people don't take care of what they own it's a reflection of how little value they place on what they did to earn the money they used to buy their things. And he was absolutely correct. When you buy anything you should take care of it, because you went out and worked to make the money you used to buy it, and those hours you worked should not be undervalued and wasted.

In this same thread, I also learned that there are some things that you should not spend money on regularly, and eating out is at the top of that list. It is the single biggest waste of money and for many people it does nothing but contribute to their credit card debt. Think about how much some people waste buying coffee on their way to work. Buy a thermos and fill it at home. If you buy coffee even once every work day at \$4/day, that's \$1,40 per year! Some people spend \$7/day. That's \$1,820 per year! What an incredible waste of money.

And one last word on this entire topic: I learned to avoid using credit cards for anything other than an emergency. Credit cards are the single biggest waste of money in the entire world. I don't even have any. I closed them all out about 20 years ago. That interest just grows and grows as you spend and spend. I've known people who owed more than \$100,000 in credit card debt, all from spending beyond their means and buying things they don't even need.

Doing the Right Thing

I have a few basic philosophies that form the central basis for everything I do in life: be kind, be honest, keep an open mind, and always do the right thing. The first three parts are not difficult to adhere to. Doing the right thing is another story.

I could write a book about what it's like to live your life always doing the right thing, or at least *trying* to do so. It can be, at times, extremely challenging. It means doing things that are very often far outside of one's comfort zone, of what is considered acceptable or popular; doing things that can force you to take risks and make significant personal sacrifices; doing things that may impact on those in your family or circle of friends; and doing things that may even cause you physical, financial, and/or emotional loss or harm.

For me, doing the right thing is often a matter of speaking my mind, and in most cases I sometimes feel that when I do that I'm the only one who is acting as a voice of reason. And being able to divorce your emotions from a situation and look at it from both sides and try to bring peace or understanding to a misunderstanding or conflict can be essential. Over the years, I have written many short articles and letters to the editor, trying to stop people from acting like idiots and see the reality of a situation.

I'm especially driven to support animal rights and the rights of all human beings – including people of various ethnicities, religions, gender preference, homeless, mentally ill, etc. So, when I see that someone has been arrested for mistreating an animal, I see red, and I want that person ordered to therapy and/or in jail and at the very least prohibited from having an animal again. And when it comes to homeless people, I have tried repeatedly to explain who these people are and the multitude of reasons why they are living on the street.

I also try to define terms, when people take things out of context or try to make something fit in a category where it probably doesn't belong. I think that taking action against wrong-doing of any kind is important, and for me that mainly means speaking up and speaking out in defense of those who can't or are afraid to speak up for themselves. Being a writer has been a great platform in which I can do this, can do the right thing.

So why live that way? Because it means acting for the greater good, even if it's only in a small way, because sometimes the smallest of actions make the biggest difference for those who are not otherwise getting the help and support they need in this world.

Doing the right thing is difficult, and it can really rub people the wrong way at times. But it is also easy, mainly because you simply know it's right and you are in a convenient position to do it. And after all is said and done, there is a very big upside to this entire philosophy: I always go to bed at night with a clear and clean, guilt-free conscience.

Living in the Present Tense

I get easily fed up with some people whose personalities are reflective of the online posts I see so often about how sad it is that they don't teach cursive handwriting in school anymore, and what a shame it is that kids don't dress up for school anymore, and blah, blah, blah. Of course things have changed! Nothing sad about any of these kinds of things. Times change. I don't want to get stuck "back there" with these people who are constantly mourning the passage of time. You can't live in the past and you don't want to get trapped in the nostalgic idea that those were the good old days.

We are living the good old days RIGHT NOW. Every day is a gift, and it's a potential good old day in the making. If you focus on the past, you can't enjoy what's right in front of you today. And I find something to enjoy in every single day. I'm fine with *talking* about the past, but I don't want to *live* in it or go around wishing it was 1968 again or only listening to oldies from the 1950s or 60s or whenever. I'm happy right where I am, whenever that is.

I especially wouldn't want to be 15 or 25 or 35 again – although I wouldn't mind having the body of a 25 year-old again! But life is so much easier as you get older. You know who and what you are. You know what you want out of life. You've learned from your mistakes. You know what's important, what really matters. And you have the best understanding of how the world works. And there's always something new happening to learn about and enjoy. I say we should be living in the present tense. Live for TODAY and the promise of TOMORROW.

LAW & ORDER

If I ruled the world, it would be a very different place. Of course, it would mean that people would have to change their minds and actions. I would require that everyone take more personal responsibility for their lives and living conditions to achieve this, which by itself would, in my opinion, foster widespread change, which could take at least two generations to succeed.

It's a big bad world out there. I know what it's like to live in that world, the real world where people are struggling to provide for themselves or their sick children, where criminals walk the streets seeking their next victims, where veterans live on the streets, and where politicians are too remote from the general population to understand what is at the root of these and other societal problems and how to solve them.

I have been poor. I have lived with the poor. I have worked with the poor. I have been middle class. I have had the rich and famous for clients. I've seen how people live in Beverly Hills and how they live in the ghettos of Los Angeles County. I've also seen how people live in urban and rural Mexico, Central America, the Caribbean, and all parts of the United States. We are indeed a world of "haves" and "have nots." We are a world filled with fearless criminals and unwitting victims. The criminals are not just street thugs. Many are wealthy corporate leaders. The unwitting victims are not just the poor. Victims come in all colors, religions, and socio-economic levels. The criminals seek out victims and the victims are often nothing more than sitting ducks.

Grow a Backbone

I used to walk through the skid row area when I went to the flower market at 3:00 a.m. in downtown Los Angeles. I became accustomed to being panhandled by homeless people during my 18 years in southern California. I was twice mugged at knife-point when I was living in my car. My apartments in Venice Beach were

burgled five times. I was living in Los Angeles during the time of the Rodney King Riots and the Northridge Earthquake. I've been stalked twice.

We live in a dangerous world, a dangerous planet. I know that even now, in my little neighborhood in semi-rural Washington state, I'm not completely free of danger. I woke up one night to the sounds of someone coming over my back fence, and when I yelled at him he ran across my backyard and over another fence. One afternoon, I went to the grocery store, and when I came home, there was a strange beat-up car idling in my driveway and there was a man trying to take the screen off the window next to my front door. I stopped my car, honked my horn several times in a row, and the man ran away from the front porch and got into the car where another man drove them away.

The important thing is to protect yourself the best that you can without becoming paranoid about it. If you don't want to be a victim, stop acting like one. Take basic safety measures such as locking your doors. Then go out and live your life. When I leave my house and am gone for an entire day, I always take my external hard drive with me, because if someone manages to break in and take my computer, I won't lose what's on it, and I have tens of thousands of files that I can't recreate.

Another important thing is to grow a backbone. Stop expecting someone else to fix your problems or those of your friends and family and society in general. Step up and do something. I once pulled a mugger off an elderly little Asian woman in West L.A. and on more than one occasion I have mediated disputes between my neighbors and the tenants in the properties I managed in the San Francisco Bay Area and in Los Angeles County.

Don't just stand there, DO SOMETHING. Stop being such a coward and at least *try* to make a difference. You don't have to be a crime stopper, but you can at least let the police know when something is going on in your neighborhood or your place of business/employment that is illegal or dangerous. Volunteer your time to help others in need, even when you are not any better off than they are. You, the individual, are the key to fixing what's wrong in the world.

Education Cures Problems

Lack of education is at the root of almost every one of society's problems. Ignorance and illiteracy are the primary causes of most crimes, of unemployment and poverty, and of racial and religious prejudice. Want to make any nation great? Provide a more diversified educational system that focuses on getting people employed.

The basic Kindergarten through 12th grade system is weak and ineffective. It has been on a steady decline for more than 30 years. It needs to become far more rigorous for those who are going to go to college, and it needs to have a wide variety of skills classes for those who are going on to trade schools. I would recommend getting rid of the 11th and 12th grades for the latter and making two years of trade school mandatory instead.

Parents have lost control over their children in many cases. They have failed them miserably. They have not taught them basic life skills, including how to work, manage money, cook, clean, interview for jobs, and plan their lives. Every student should be required to take a life skills class from someone who actually knows these things. Other classes that should be required include health and nutrition, basic law, comparative religions, and cultural studies. These are classes that should be taken by all students in the 10th grade at the latest.

Every parent wants their child to be happy. But being happy when you are a child is not necessarily a recipe for happiness as an adult. I cannot begin to describe how grateful I am that my parents instilled the work ethic in me at a very young age, and that I learned all my basic life skills from them. Having chores to do and having part-time jobs before I was out of high school have made me a more productive member of society. As a result, I have never received any kind of government aid, not even unemployment insurance. The longest I have ever been unemployed is three weeks when I was extremely ill. Whenever I needed work, I made looking for work a full-time effort. When I wanted a better-paying job, I re-educated myself by studying at the library or taking a class.

Education is a necessity and it has to be made better and it has to be affordable to everyone. And it has to be ongoing. We have to keep up with changes in technology or become unemployed.

Unemployment Insurance

This is a system that is badly abused. I can't even begin to tell you how many people I have known who use unemployment insurance to take a vacation from working. I think that unemployment insurance should be limited to only two weeks.

Welfare

Again, we have a system that is badly abused. Too many people are living on welfare who should be working. Disabled? Unless you are in a coma or are a complete vegetable, you should be capable of doing some form of work. I have met disabled people who are perfectly capable of working who use their disability as an excuse for not working, and I have met some severely disabled people who are *always* working.

I don't know all the ins and outs of the welfare system, but I believe that welfare should be an individualized amount of money or food stamps for people who are working but are unable to make it on their wages alone. This would include welfare assistance in the form of child care for any parent who cannot work because he/she has a young child. I also believe that if a person is receiving welfare because they lack work skills that they should be in mandatory training in order to receive their welfare benefits. And, I believe those welfare benefits should be limited to increments of only one month at a time, after which they must be reviewed before they are resumed for an additional month.

Social Security

This is a program that has evolved very poorly into nothing but individual retirement funds for people who are fully capable of working but simply choose not to. It was originally supposed to be a program to help people during their time of disability or old age, when men (the wage earners of the time) were not expected to live beyond the age of 62. It was also meant to help widows with young children, at a time in history when women lacked skills other than those of wives and mothers. I think we should go back to when this was only a program to help people. If someone wants a retirement

fund, they should invest a portion of their earnings themselves and then retire whenever they want to.

In general, I think that Welfare and Social Security organizations should be combined into a single entity. This would make helping people and getting them into the workplace a lot more streamlined and easier to monitor and manage.

Taxes

The Internal Revenue Service is nothing more than a ridiculous waste of taxpayer money. Their operating budget is roughly \$18 billion per year, and it is estimated that compliance with their idiotic forms costs taxpayers an estimated \$300-\$500 billion annually.

This is clearly a system that should be abolished. It is a travesty. For years, I have kept track of the approximate amount of tax dollars I paid the IRS based on my fluctuating income levels. In every case, I paid 7-9% of my gross earnings every year. I think that every person, no matter what their income level, should pay a flat percentage rate every year, whether they are employed or self-employed. I think that businesses should do the same, possibly at a different flat percentage rate.

Also, I think that no one and no entity, should be exempt from taxes. I think that the tax exemption for all churches and other non-profits should be abolished and they should pay taxes just like every other entity does, preferably at a flat percentage rate.

Health Insurance

I think I have stated elsewhere in this memoir what my feelings are about the health care system in general. It sucks. Period. The Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) is not enough to make it work. And if you’ve ever had to fill out the IRS form for it, that alone would help explain the cost of tax compliance. It is utterly ridiculous. I loved Obama, but this was just not the way to help people in the long run. A single payer insurance is the way to go. And guess what? We already have one. It’s called Medicare. Revise it to make it available and affordable for everyone. And make it simple when it comes to what it covers so that people always know what they are expected to pay in premiums as well as a set percentage for co-payments.

Also, I think that Medicare should cover all things related to health, including dentistry and vision. People who can't afford to go to a dentist can develop gum diseases that result in widespread infections – some affecting the heart – that then must be paid for by health insurance. Make sure that Medicare pays for the most basic things that will prevent major medical expenses later.

Abortion

I am anti-abortion. I don't give a shit about a woman's body and her right to have an abortion. Life starts when the cell divides. This is a scientific fact. Cell division equals life. Abortion is murder. You don't want to get pregnant now, or maybe ever? You have options: 1) celibacy, 2) use birth control pills *and* prophylactics, 3) get your tubes tied and have your spouse/partner get a vasectomy. Seriously, women don't get pregnant by accident. They get pregnant because they are irresponsible or just plain ignorant. The only time an abortion should be allowed is in instances of rape, incest, or a problem that damages the fetus and/or endangers the mother.

Crime & Punishment

Another system that has failed miserably. Crime can be reduced drastically by improvements to the education system. But crime will always exist. What doesn't exist right now is a prison system that rehabilitates criminals in order to reduce recidivism. We simply warehouse criminals and then release them back into society. And we spend upwards of \$1 TRILLION dollars per year doing this. In what universe does this make sense? We are so obviously doing something wrong, and yet we keep on doing it again and again.

In 1981, Narcotics Anonymous published a pamphlet which stated: "Insanity is repeating the same mistakes and expecting different results." These same words, stated differently at many times in history, would tend to indicate that we are indeed an insane country. We need to rehabilitate prisoners. We need to educate them, to give them the knowledge they didn't get in school. At the very least, we need to teach them skills and trades. They should be working and educating themselves in prison, and the prisons should be self-supporting.

Victims

I have a real ax to grind when it comes to some of the things on the news lately about women coming forth after 10, 20, or 30 years to accuse someone of a sexual crime. I think that when a woman (or a man) doesn't report that crime when it happens, she (or he) should be found guilty of abetting. If a victim doesn't report a crime, they are allowing the criminal to continue committing the same crime against another woman (or man). I hold all of these women in the current "me too" movement responsible for all the other crimes the men committed after the victims were too gutless to stand up and put a stop to it when it first happened. My mother taught me how to handle sexual advances from men in power when I was about 12 years old! Since when do women allow this kind of abuse to go unchecked? Like I said earlier: Grow a backbone!

Political Parties

The founding fathers of the United States were concerned about bi-partisanship. Washington was worried about it and wrote extensively about his concerns. John Adams said it more succinctly: "There is nothing which I dread so much as a division of the republic into two great parties, each arranged under its leader, and concerting measures in opposition to each other. This, in my humble apprehension, is to be dreaded as the greatest political evil under our Constitution."

Yeah, I hear ya, Johnny. I am sick and tired of two parties duking it out in Congress, leading the rest of the country to likewise stand divided. And what is getting done? We pay these politicians to act on our behalf, and they are instead acting only on behalf of their constituents and the people who voted for them. Congress is supposed to be making laws for the entire population, not just their little percentage of it. What happened to working towards the greater good, to making compromises, the give and take of negotiation?

Voting has become a joke. It doesn't really matter who you vote for anymore because they aren't really working for America anyway. They are only working for their fat salaries and the people who voted for them. And, they behave like immature bickering brats.

Older But Not Old

Many people my age seem very preoccupied with their age. They are concerned about dying and how little time they have left, etc., and many of them don't seem to want to do anything with their lives except sleep, eat, play, and watch TV. No life purpose at all. It's like they just gave up on contributing to the world. It's a very typically American approach to life.

I'm not interested in old age stuff, and I don't relate to myself as being a person of a specific age. It's my body that's getting older, not me. I want to keep up with the times and keep doing things I love. Nobody knows when they're going to die. The human body doesn't come with an expiration date stamped on its butt.

I've lost good friends who died when they were in their 30s. I'm 66 right now, and I could easily live another 20 years or more, depending on my health. Or I could walk out the front door and have a giant fir tree fall on me and put an end to me in this life. We don't know when our time is up, so I'm not going to just stop living and idle away, wasting time, waiting to die. That is not me.

Many people my age also talk about having a "bucket list," the things they want to do before they "kick the bucket," meaning before they die. There is nothing in my life left undone or that I want to do. I would have liked to live in Paris and travel down the Nile, but world political situations have prevented me from pursuing these things for more than 20 years, so they would not be on a bucket list even if I had one.

No Regrets

I have no secrets, nothing to be ashamed of, and nothing I regret. I'm an open book for anyone who wants to read it – and you're reading it right now! I don't live my life for anyone else, I don't try to please others, and I don't try to make people like me. If they do, fine. If they don't, that's fine too. I don't try to be better than anyone else. I just try to be the best that I can be and to find joy in whatever I do.

I don't equate money with success or happiness. Money doesn't buy any of the things that really matter in life, like love, joy, respect – the intangibles. And in the end, things and money are what you

leave behind. You can't take it with you, as the saying goes. I would rather be remembered for being a decent human being than for being rich.

Every now and then someone says something to me or about me that confirms that I'm probably a decent human being. Shortly before I left southern California to move to Monterey, one of my clients said he would really miss me because I was a "jewel in a sea of glass." That said, I know that I'm nothing but a speck of dust in the universe. There are others who do far more for the world than I will ever do or ever want to do. But, I'm a very happy person, and I feel confident that I will feel that way until I die.

While I may not have any regrets about myself and my life, I do regret how the world is unfolding. It seems to be filling up with hate and war, ignorance and bigotry, and a complete lack of tolerance and unconditional acceptance. Things seem to take precedence over people. Money rules while love gets swept under the rug. It's such a beautiful world, but it's deteriorating, like a bright shiny red apple rotting and being consumed by worms.

SPIRITUALITY & REINCARNATION

My mother was a Lutheran and my father was a Catholic. I was originally baptized Lutheran, but before I was seven years old, I was re-baptized Catholic and sent to catechism classes, took first communion in 1959 at the age of 8, and was confirmed in 1964 at the age of 13. My father took my brother and me to church on Sundays, and this was when the mass was in Latin. I did everything you're supposed to in church, but I never believed in a god. It just never seemed to make sense to me, even when I was a small child.

I believe that when you are a child, you should never be indoctrinated into the religious beliefs of your parents. It's like letting a child believe in Santa Claus forever. It's too hard to break free from those beliefs and to think independently as you grow up. Instead, I think that children should be raised with a lot of exposure to many different beliefs so that they can get a better understanding of what theories exist in the world. I think that would help to make people less judgmental, more tolerant, more accepting, and more appreciative of the differences between and among all people.

I think that this is particularly important when you look at the things that are going on with the fundamentalist religions that believe in their religions as they were founded hundreds or thousands of years ago when the world was a very different place. The outdated beliefs of the fundamentalist sects of Christians and Muslims alone are horrifying. And these people are raising their children in these religious beliefs. As their populations grow, so does the hate and violence that they foster in their members.

People & Their Beliefs

I believe that people are inherently good and that we are innately loving individuals. I believe we have an inborn knowledge of the difference between right and wrong. In other words, our ethics are more or less hard-wired in us. Maybe that is why children are so

accepting of others and can tell right from wrong early on. I don't think anyone is ever completely good or completely bad. And I don't think that evil is a good adjective for a person, even though a person can certainly do evil things. Why do they do evil things? I think there are many reasons: ignorance, mental illness, brainwashing, desperation, and even stupidity. Some people know better but they act badly because they just can't make a logical choice between the right or wrong thing to do.

When it comes to being "good," many believe this means you should always walk the straight and narrow, never hurt anyone, never even think of doing a bad or wrong thing, and do as you're told. I see this a lot with people who belong to religions in which strict obedience to a particular set of church laws and beliefs is a requirement. In this regard, otherwise good people could easily become unwitting victims of brainwashing by an individual who does not always do good things and may, in fact, do evil things.

But what about the middle ground between "good" and "bad"? What about all those shades of gray? What about the person who must sacrifice helping one person in need for another who they believe needs that help more? What about someone who steals a loaf of bread



Above: First Communion.
Right: Confirmation.



because they are starving and have no money? What about someone who kills the person who has been abusing them or their child?

I have real questions about this when it comes to justice. Under certain circumstances, people can and do commit crimes, but how desperate were they? We're not talking about career criminals, but rather people who walk a thin line between good and bad for reasons that we may never be able to comprehend. I think we have to always remember that jails are filled with people who profess to be Christians yet have committed heinous crimes.

A Spiritual Path

As a teenager, I read books about comparative religions, and then religion made even less sense to me. I was also reading histories that covered the many wars waged by various religions against each other. History should have taught us that organized religions are the bane of our very existence. Look at all the hatred, persecution, violence, and wars that have been perpetrated on others due to organized religions and their leaders trying to force their beliefs on others.

There have been literally hundreds of religious wars. You can go back to ancient times, when the Egyptian pharaoh Akhenaten tried to force his new monotheistic religion on people who, for thousands of years, had been adhering to a complex religion replete with more than 1,000 gods that governed almost every aspect of life. Despite his heavy-handed tactics, he was unsuccessful at forcing a conversion, because when he died the Egyptians went right back to practicing their previous beliefs.

Then you have the Crusades from 1095-1481. That's roughly 1.5 million deaths. In the 16th and 17th centuries, you've got wars in Europe in the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, including wars between Catholics and Protestants, and during the 16th century you've got wars started by Martin Luther's followers that resulted in 100,000 dead, and in Antwerp 6,000 dead when Catholic Spain sacked the Calvinist city. From 1524 to 1658, there were more than 6,000,000 people killed in religious wars in Europe alone, either due to battles or as a result of famine and disease due to war. Some estimates of these death tolls are far higher.

Add to all of this the Inquisition (approximately 5,000 sentenced to death); the Holocaust (at least 4,000,000 Jewish deaths plus 2,700,000 deaths of Christian Poles); and the wars in Ireland and North Ireland (often disputed as sectarian rather than religious). And there are many, many, many other such religious wars. And if you add in ethnic cleansing and genocide, both of which, more often than not have some degree of religious underpinnings, you're looking at close to a billion deaths.

I fail to see how so many religions could purport to believe in all these great gods and living a godly life, yet they seemed to find it so easy to kill people who don't believe as they did. I understand that a lot of it is due to state religions, but either way, these religious zealots seem incapable of living in peace.

I believe in total acceptance of any religions. Tolerance is not enough. I still find it offensive to listen to so-called "born again" Christians describing how Jesus is their savior and yet they treat people like dirt. I have read the entire Christian Bible, both Old and New Testaments, and so I know about Jesus and what Jesus taught, and while I don't believe he is the son of a god, I do believe he was a virtuous and well-intentioned man who taught many important lessons to his followers. How could someone claim to be a Christian and not even *try* to be Christ-like?

I experimented with various religions in the early part of my life. I joined different churches and tried to see if someone could somehow convince me that there was a god or that their religion had something to offer that I could not get anywhere else or in any other way. I found the Unitarians to be the best, but they were inconsistent in their beliefs and teachings according to which one of their churches you attend. I found the Mormons and Baptists to be suffocating, and the Episcopalians to be way too similar to Catholics. However, in the early 1980s, I was invited by a friend to attend services at St. Augustine's in Santa Monica, and I attended that church off and on for about two years because I very much enjoyed the inspirational and uplifting sermons of the late Episcopalian minister and author Malcolm Boyd.

It would be a lot easier to say what I believed in if I could simply attach those beliefs to a particular religion, but I can't. I'm a

gleaner. I see good in the teachings of Jesus and Buddha, but I don't believe in organized religion at all. And as a teenager, I began looking outside of religion for answers, and came up with a variety of books that have influenced me ever since. My quest to shape my beliefs began at this early time of my life when I was first trying to figure out the world.

By the time I was 16, I believed most strongly in the power of the mind and of positive thinking, so I read *The Power of Positive Thinking* by Norman Vincent Peale. This book was about 50% useful and the rest was utter hogwash – positive thinking taken to an extreme that didn't seem normal or healthy to me, even as a teenager. Then I became interested in meditation, and so I read *The Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, which in turn led me to read *Science of Being and Art of Living: Transcendental Meditation* by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Because I believed strongly in the power of the mind over the body, I delved into Christian Science, reading Mary Baker Eddy's book, *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures*. I found it believable and tenable in many ways, but not in those that involved a belief in a god.

Then I got interested in the Rosicrucians. I probably studied more about their teachings than any other philosophy or religion. I read most of their books, and while I didn't join – I rarely join anything – I found it the most interesting of anything I'd ever read, and it drove me to learn more about the esoteric teachings of the ancient world. But it didn't really do anything for me in terms of helping me improve or better understand myself and the world.

My next step was reading two books by Dale Carnegie: *How to Stop Worrying and Start Living* and *How to Win Friends and Influence People*. His primary theory was that you could change the behavior of others by changing your own behavior towards them. I agreed completely with that and still do when it comes to business relationships, but it tends to fall apart when it comes to close personal relationships. I also briefly studied Theosophy but found it to be derivative of so many other theories, in particular Buddhism. Then I read several books by L. Ron Hubbard on Dianetics and Scientology, and found most of them to also be derivatives of a variety of other beliefs, even though I agreed with most of what he wrote.

When someone asks me what my religion is, I always respond that I'm a spiritual agnostic. I believe that we are all connected, and that we may not know what the glue is that is holding us together, but that it is there nevertheless. I believe we do not *have* souls, but rather that we *are* souls, spirits inhabiting biological bodies. I also believe in reincarnation, and I hope I lead a good enough life that I don't come back as a cockroach!

Reincarnation

I fully embrace the idea of reincarnation. This is the most fascinating thing I have ever experienced, and my mother always said that it dated back to my early childhood. She recalled that when I was about four years old, we were walking down Van Ness Avenue in San Francisco, when I pointed out a restaurant and said "I used to live there." I remember that quite clearly, and I remember that life quite clearly too. It was in the 1930s-40s. I was the oldest of five children, and we lived above a delicatessen. I remember working in the deli with my parents, and I remember cleaning tables, washing dishes, sweeping the floors, and watching my younger siblings. I also remember that I was engaged to a young man in the military, and I remember that I became ill with some kind of lung problem. It could have been anything from pneumonia to tuberculosis, and it was what ended my life at a very early age, probably around 19 or 20.

I remember a lot of other past lives too. I can't always date them accurately, but I think I come pretty close. Prior to the life above in San Francisco, I remember one that began in Paris, France – probably why I have such an affinity for that place. I was born in a nice old house on the outskirts of Paris, probably around 1880 or so. My father was a musician and my mother was a housewife. I had a younger sister to whom I was close. I also had twin younger brothers who died when they were about 8 and 10 years old. My sister and I played piano, and she went on to play professionally. I did very fine needlework (which I do not do at all in my current life). I got married to a printer when I was about 22 years old, and we lived above the shop in what I believe was the Montmartre area.

We did not have any children, and we were only married a few years when my husband died, and I ran the print shop on my own

for about seven or eight years before I remarried. My second husband was an American widower, quite a bit older than me, with a son and daughter, both under the age of ten. We did not have any children together. My husband was somehow involved in railroading – which could in part explain my affinity for trains and train travel to this day. We left Paris just before the beginning of World War I, and went to live for a short time in Africa in a very small house near somewhere that a railroad was being built. We weren't there long, and then we came to the United States and lived in San



Hildegarde in stained glass portrait.

Francisco and later somewhere south of there, probably in the area of Hillsborough or maybe Palo Alto. My husband was gone a lot for long periods of time.

I remember both places fairly clearly. The one in the city was a large brownstone with a black wrought iron fence around it, and we lived on the top floor. The house on the peninsula was on a hill. It was white and resembled Greco-Revival architecture. It had a

rose garden off of a library on the first floor. I had a maid who made lace for my dresses. I remember having coffee/tea in a small solarium-type room with other women. I remember that the house was cold and drafty upstairs and that going into the city was a major trip.

I also have quite a few rather vague memories of lives that must have been fairly short, and all were in Europe. One in particular seems like it was maybe in the late 17th century. I have no idea where this was. I was married to (or maybe just living with) the owner of a tavern on a coach route in a rural area. He was a brutal man. I worked in the tavern, mostly cooking and occasionally waiting tables, and he treated me like a slave. I had three children, and I almost died giving birth to the last one, a boy who didn't live long. My husband beat me and on one of those occasions, he hit me on

the side of my head with a hot metal skillet. I was deaf and blind on one side of my head from then on, probably scarred too. The last I remember of that life was being with my children, still adolescents, at a church service – possibly for my husband.

Another past life I remember is one that I'm extremely curious about, because it resembles that of a famous woman named (Saint) Hildegarde von Bingen. I had never heard of Hildegarde until I was in my late 40s, and I have never been able to determine how many other women lived the same kind of life that she did, so I have no idea if this was a life that just happened to be like hers or if it was hers. Like me she was a polymath, a writer, an artist, a composer, and a teacher who went on preaching tours. She was the founder of natural history science in Germany. She wrote poetry and she also wrote extensively about botany, herbs, and medicine – all things I'm interested in and have studied and written about.

This past life took place during the Middle Ages. I vaguely remember my childhood from that time. I recall playing under a very big table in a large kitchen with a stone floor. I don't know if this was my parents' house or if they were servants there. I also remember playing outside and that it was a very cold and damp rural area, even when it was summer. I played by a stream/creek and I seemed to be mostly alone a lot of the time, but there were a lot of other kids around, either siblings or neighbors.

When I was about 10 years old, I was sent to live at a convent (in my current life I thought of being a non-god-fearing nun until I was about 12). I was very devoted and I was very active in the church. I wrote essays, songs, poems, music, and possibly books. I did a lot of traveling by foot. I preached. I was an avid student of scripture as well as the arts and sciences. I also milked cows and goats, and I worked in a large herb garden and I knew a lot about medicine and medicinal herbs. I remember treating sick people. I did not cure people by the laying on of hands or anything like that, but I was clairvoyant. At some point I became an abbess. I have extremely detailed memories of this life, and they do parallel what little I later learned of Hildegarde. But, as I said, I will never know for sure, since I don't even know what century this was. But, there are many parallels between her life and my past and present lives.

Ghosts

Now, as for believing that we are spirits in material bodies, I never believed in ghosts when I was growing up. I always thought they were make-believe things in stories, in movies and on TV. But in 1971, I had an experience that changed my mind. I even wrote about it in one of my books, *Shades*, in which I attributed it to my main character, a ghost hunter. I was taking photographs in a very old abandoned farmhouse on the outskirts of Sacramento. I was in a bedroom with an old rusty metal bed frame with naked box springs. It was very early morning, and I took photos of the room and of the pond outside from the room's window. As I finished my roll of film, I heard a voice say "Leave!" I felt a chill throughout my entire body. Then the voice said "My house!" I spun around and saw a gray miasma that was the figure of an old man sitting up in the bed. He had a long, scraggly, gray beard and his face was riddled with a road map of deep wrinkles. He appeared to be wearing long underwear, a much-worn union suit. His face and torso were the clearest and most visible, and the rest of his body faded out into a clear but rippling mist. He spoke again, saying "Leave now!" – and I did. Never looked back and never told anyone the story until many, many years later. And I never saw a ghost again. Once was probably quite enough.

Throughout my life I often took workshops in learning how to use one's psychic ability, and I'm pretty good at doing psychometry readings (readings on a piece of jewelry or something unseen in an envelope, etc.). But I wanted to learn how to shut off my psychic perceptions, and I eventually was able to do it at will. And that may explain why I never saw a ghost again. Perhaps I simply blocked them from my mind. But I did go on to write about ghosts in some of my novels, so I think there has always been a part of me that can't quite let go of psychic ability or the belief in ghosts.

Psychic Ability

Another thing I want to comment on is psychic ability. I seem to have it and so did my mother. My mother would know who was calling when the phone rang and she knew when someone was

going to visit and she was never wrong. She was so accurate that she would actually go to the store and shop for food to feed these unconfirmed visitors, usually my grandparents from San Francisco.

I also had very strong psychic reactions to people, often knowing things about them when I had only just met them and had never heard of them before. This happened on so many occasions that it is impossible for me to even relate a few of them without feeling like I was leaving out so much more.

Back in the 1980s, I was having a lot of brain testing that led me to participate in a test for how you used your brain to solve problems. This same testing group also did an optional test on psychic ability. One of the tests used two clock faces in which the numbers were covered on one face and you had to intuit which of the 12 numbers on a clock's face had a red dot on the middle of them by circling the numbers on the other clock face. This test was repeated several times and on each I got a minimum of four out of six correct, with some being five out of six. The other test was with playing cards. The cards were dealt at random and you got ten in front of you and you had to again intuit what they were, both number and suit. This was done ten times. I got six, seven, and eight out of ten. The final result on this was that I scored in the top 99th percentile for psychic ability.

Dreams

When I'm in bed, I enter another world, the dream world, and that is a very, very busy place for me. My dreams come mainly in four categories: dreams about numbers and words; dreams about a world where the sky is green; dreams about houses and buildings; and dreams about treks or quests. As for the ones about numbers and words, these are about solving very complex mathematical formulas that are not even remotely within my knowledge or abilities. The dreams about words are actually about editing that is not real editing, but is instead a lot of recombining of words again and again for no particular reason.

The "green sky dreams" are about me walking around and exploring a place that is earth-like but not quite earth. The sky is pale green; the air is extremely humid; there are insects buzzing all

around me; there are very few people; the streets are dirt or gravel; people wearing long burlap-type robes are working in muddy fields; and when anyone sees me, they immediately tell everyone around them and start pointing at me. I'm not in any danger and no one is hostile towards me, but they see that I don't belong there. In these same dreams, I'm also consulted by various people, known and unknown to me, sometimes famous people, and they ask me how to handle problems in their lives. In the waking world, solving other people's problems has been a common thread in my life.

Not belonging is often a theme in my dreams of houses/apartments and office buildings. I consulted a dream analyst to confirm what I thought these dreams might mean, and my brother offered a very similar analysis. Dreams about houses and buildings are about the framework of the self. In these dreams I live in apartments or houses that are falling apart, have holes in the walls, don't have furnishings, or they are overly small and crammed so full of stuff that I can't walk around in them. I often live with a whole bunch of other people, sometimes as many as 20, and I don't seem to know any of them and they don't even realize I'm there.

I frequently live on a stairwell landing with all my stuff piled around me, including my cats, and people are going up the stairs, completely ignoring me, and I'm just stuck on the landing. Sometimes it's a bathroom I'm living in instead, and bathrooms in dreams symbolize cleaning up your life and making a fresh start.

My dreams about office buildings are similar. The walls are always cinder block. no windows, a few desks, and I'm working at one of them. There are lots of people all around me and they ignore me. When I leave that room, I go into other rooms that are normal office spaces but with no furnishings. These dreams are simply reflective of some of the things I talked about earlier regarding my independent loner status and my inability to fit in.

As for the dreams about treks and quests, I have no idea what these are about because they seem quite aimless. I'm frequently walking alone or in a large group of 50-100 people. I'm almost always walking in the same places, and they don't look at all familiar to me, but I dream about these same places all the time. There are big sand dunes; large tide pools in the sand (but no visible

ocean); old houses (many nothing more than shacks); a long road or pathway: and big growing fields (some with crops growing in them). I don't know the people, where we are going, or why we are going wherever we're going. I have occasionally been on these treks with my father, my friend Annette, and my former client, Mark.

I also have just your normal, run-of-the-mill nonsense dreams. When I was sick in the 1980s, I frequently dreamed of being chased but not by anything or anyone that I could see; of trying to dial a number on an old dial pay phone and my fingers just kept slipping out of the holes and I'd have to re-dial again and again; and about being in elevators that ran really fast in all directions – the latter probably relating to all of the business activities I was pursuing back then.

I should also probably mention that in almost every dream, I have my cats with me. Not always the same cats that I have when I'm having the dream, but some combination of cats I've had in my life and an occasional unknown cat. I have even had dreams where I've been flying (without a plane) and I've got a cat tucked under each arm or they're in pillowcases that I'm holding while I fly.

I find dreams extremely interesting. I have heard that there are some tribal and ancient cultures that believe that the dream life is your spirit's real life and that the waking life is just sustenance for the physical body. I think I'd prefer to stick to my waking life!

Meditation

I started meditating, off and on, in the mid-1980s. As time went by, I found it more necessary to my well-being. So, I now meditate daily. It is a great way to connect with my inner self and the collective consciousness of the outer world. It helps me organize my thoughts, to not be so overwhelmed by whatever stressors are impacting my daily life, or that impact on the world and therefore on my life as a human being living in the world. Meditation also helps me to focus on what is important while it simultaneously calms my mind. I meditate for about 10-15 minutes in the morning and at night.

CATS & OTHER ANIMALS

I love all animals. I love wild and domestic animals, including dogs, rabbits, horses, cows, and goats. I enjoy living in an environment where I can look out my window and see deer, squirrels, raccoons, birds, and all kinds of creatures that share their world with me.

I have rescued many an animal in need. I even used to administer first aid to cats and dogs in Venice Beach whose owners couldn't afford to take them to the vet. And, on one occasion in Monterey, my mother and I rescued a pelican that we found at Otter Point while we were eating lunch there. The pelican had a can of soda in its pouch and the can was still attached to the plastic rings, and the rings were wrapped around the pelican's upper beak. I tried to get it off the bird, but it was struggling, even though it was pretty debilitated. I finally got it into the trunk of my car and we drove to the Monterey Aquarium, where they removed the can and the rings, and then put the bird into a place where it could be fed until it recovered. Afterwards, they took us on a tour of the business end of the aquarium where the animals are treated for diseases or are nurtured after being abandoned by their mothers, etc.

There has always been a part of me that wanted to be a veterinarian, and I studied animals, particularly cats, in depth, learning about their physiology and diseases, etc. But I think it would be torture to see all their pain and suffering daily. No matter how noble such a calling may be for some, I'm afraid it's not for me.

During my childhood, I had a variety of pets that included two guinea pigs named Penny and Benny; tropical fish that included goldfish, guppies, Siamese betas, and tetras; and a variety of parakeets, canaries, and finches. I loved birds, but I didn't find out that I was allergic to them until I was an adult. Fortunately, I wasn't allergic to cats, because there is nothing I love more or that is more important to me than my cats. Of all the animals in the world, I love cats most of all. I cannot even imagine living in a world without cats, and to date, I never have.



Me and some of my kitties. Left to right: Pandora, Candy, Puff, Whisper, Muffin, Timmy, and Twinkle.

Chipper (1954-1955)

When I was a toddler we lived in Daly City. Right around my third birthday in April of 1954, a neighbor boy threw a kitten over the fence and into our yard. My mother caught him doing it and he said his parents had told him to get rid of it. This was to become our first cat, Chipper. He grew to be a big, brown, friendly tabby, and I really loved him. He followed me around the yard when I played and he slept with me at night.

Unfortunately, Chipper didn't live very long. In the summer of 1955, he didn't come inside at the end of the day the way he usually did. The next day, late in the afternoon, I saw him on the back yard lawn, and he was missing half of his tail, was covered with blood, and wouldn't come to me or my mother like he usually did. My mother and I found him dying in the vegetable garden early the next morning, and we sat with him until he died. My mother always said she thought he must have been attacked by a dog or a coyote.



Candy (1959-1973)

In 1958, just before my seventh birthday, I had to have dental surgery. My parents promised me a white angora kitten if I was good. I didn't get the kitten right away, but a year later my father brought home a long-haired kitten, not white and not an angora.



She was gray and white and I got her about a month after my eighth birthday. I named her Candy. Back in those days, there was not the emphasis on spaying cats, and Candy got knocked up right away. She only had one kitten, it was very large, and it was stillborn. Immediately afterwards, my parents had her spayed.

Candy was my baby. I adored that cat. I used to drag her around, dangling her, and she never scratched me. She slept in bed right next to me at



night. Candy was docile with me, but not so much with anyone else. She scratched my mother more than once, and my mother hadn't done anything to deserve it. Candy was a tough little cat. There was a bully of a cat that used to stop by and try to get into the house, probably for

food. He was a very aggressive cat. One hiss from Candy and he was dispatched from our yard. Candy died of intestinal cancer in May of 1973. I cried a river, and so did my mother, who buried Candy. She said she shed many tears as she dug her grave. Today, I have Candy's grave marker as a door stop to my bedroom.

Choo-Choo & Nipper

We had another cat named Choo-Choo, who was all white. This was probably when I was about ten years old. He was sick from the start, didn't live long, and I don't know what happened to him and don't have a picture of him. And, for a very short time we had a cat named Nipper. He was a large striped cat and he was a very nice cat, and like Choo-Choo, he was not my personal cat, and I don't remember what happened to him, but he died in 1965. I remember that he swam across our neighbor's decorative pond, he liked to sit on the roof of the house, and he walked so heavily that you could hear him walking.



Chris with Nipper.

Lucky (1967-1986)

In 1967, we got Lucky, my brother's cat. He was quite a cat. He was a gray tabby, smallish, with a wiry build. He was a hunter and would sit over a gopher hole for hours, waiting for his prey to come out. And when it did, he would catch it and try to bring it into the house. We could hear him coming whenever he had a catch because he would be meowing to us with his mouth full of whatever he caught. Once he caught a green garter snake and carried it home, alive and wriggling in his mouth.



Lucky liked turkey, and on holidays he would sit on the mantle of the fireplace in the dining room, hovering over us, waiting for someone to give him a piece. We kept the kitchen door shut so he couldn't get to the rest of the turkey.

One time my grandmother went into the kitchen to get something, and he slipped through the kitchen door. Shortly afterwards, we heard something fall to the kitchen floor. Lucky brought the turkey carcass down to the floor and was busily eating it. Lucky lived to be 19 years old, and died in September of 1986.

Pandora (1968-1977)

In the summer of 1968, I was working at my father's office in Sand City and found a kitten running around under the trucks. She was filthy with fleas. I scooped her up and brought her home and named her Pandora. After she was bathed, she turned out to be quite pretty, with a lot of gold color mingled throughout her dark stripes. She got along well with Candy and Lucky.

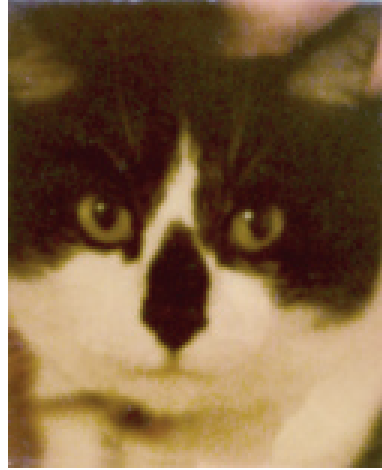


Pandora became ill in February 1977, and I had to take her to the vet to be euthanized. This was the first time I had to have a cat euthanized. It was a very sad day. Pandora was a sweet little cat. Today they would probably have medications or other treatments to help her, but veterinary medicine was in the dark ages back then.

Puff (1973-1986) & Whisper (1973-1989)

When I got married in July of 1973, Candy had been gone for a year, and I wanted a cat. My husband Ken had never had pets, so he was not crazy about the idea but went along with it. I got an adorable little white female kitten named Puff. A few days later, Ken said "I think we should get her a friend," and so I got a little black and white male kitten named Whisper, or Whisper for short.

They were so sweet together, two adorable little baby cats. Puff was the more dominant one, and Whisper was always kind of timid and shy. When I left Ken I took the cats with me. They were indoors when they lived with me, but when we went and stayed with my parents, they were indoor-outdoor, and they got along just fine with Lucky and Pandora.



When Puff was three years old, she became very ill with feline pneumonitis (now known as feline chlamydiosis). It turned into pneumonia and she came close to dying from it. She could barely breathe, was damp from running a fever, didn't eat, lost weight, and the vet had run out of antibiotic choices to treat her. Finally, after two shots of B-12 vitamins, she seemed to shake it off and recovered fully. Ten years later, in 1986, she died of a heart attack at the age of 13 at my parents' house. Whisper was always healthy, but he died in 1989 at the age of 16, also at my parents' house where he and Puff had been living since 1978.



Twinkle (1976-1993)

In the spring of 1976, I was outside dumping my trash when my neighbor, Jim, called me over to his garage and said that there was an abandoned litter of kittens stuck between his house and the fence. He had put on heavy gloves and got a box and was going to try to get them out but needed someone to hold the box. I was that someone.



There were four 10 day-old kittens, and I took them upstairs to take care of them. Two of them died of distemper within twenty-four hours. The other two survived, but one of them, Charlie, died at the age of eight weeks because he had cystitis and the vet didn't have a catheter small enough to relieve his pain. (Remember this is 1976 and veterinarian medicine has improved significantly since that time.)



The remaining kitten was a little gray and white tabby. I named her Twinkle. My little girl Puff was not crazy about Twinkle at first, but my little boy Whisper took to her and her littermate Charlie immediately, and he washed them and was very gentle with them. Eventually, Puff and Twinkle became friends too.

Twinkle was a health nightmare from the start. Like her littermate who died as a result of cystitis, Twinkle also had this problem. It took three years of going to different vets and giving her all kinds of medications that didn't work before I finally found a vet who said "She probably has stones in her bladder that just don't show up on an X-ray." The stones were removed, and her bladder was fine. One stone was the size of a pea and the other the size of a long grain of puffy rice.

But Twinkle had other problems in her life. Her adult teeth only partially came in, and so she only had a few teeth in her

mouth and she couldn't eat much other than the paté cat foods. When she was about 8, she became incontinent, and I was beside myself trying to clean up after her. Turned out it was an inflamed disc in her back, and a shot of cortisone remedied it permanently.

When she was about 11, she was diagnosed as hyperthyroid and so she was put on Tapazole twice a day for the rest of her life. And when she was about 12, she had somehow developed a bone spur in her left rear hip and was dragging that leg. She had surgery to repair it and after that she was fine except that she couldn't jump up. So, I set up a bunch of things for her to step up onto the sofa and the big window sill next to my desk, and I put a ramp at the foot of the bed.

Twinkle was very friendly and very photogenic. Her pictures were used in cat and pet magazines to illustrate my articles about cats and cat care. She was also a good traveler. I took her everywhere with me, and she was fine being in the car. I had a grass-weave bag lined with cotton and it had leather handles. Twinkle would just walk into the bag and I would carry her around in it. I took her to stores, the library, on the bus, to the vet, to the park, and pretty much anywhere.

For her entire life, she slept under the covers with me, her little head nestled under my chin. The saddest day in my life was March 15, 1993, when I had to have her euthanized after her kidneys failed for the last time. She was almost eighteen years old. I miss her to this day, and there is almost no day that I don't think about her. I loved her so dearly.



Me and Twinkle in Big Sur.



Zanzi (1976-1979)



In early 1977, one of my neighbors moved and abandoned her cat, Zanzibar. He was a really beautiful white cat with orange markings that looked like watermelon rind. He had pale green eyes and a very pretty face. He was barely a year old. My parents had seen him before and thought he was really pretty, and my mother found someone who was willing to take him after he was abandoned. But he was injured, and when the person who was going to take him found out, they decided they “didn’t want a sick cat.”

My mother was furious. She nursed that little guy, now named Zanzi, back to health. That cat adored my mother, and obviously with good reason. He got along well with Lucky and Pandora and my cats Puff, Whisper, and Twinkle.

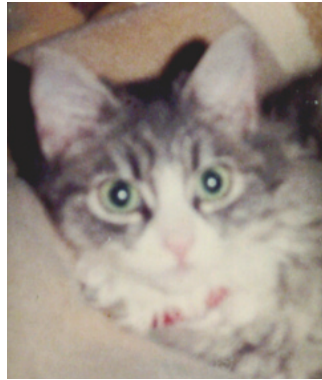
Sadly, on Christmas Eve day in 1979, he disappeared. My mother was devastated. I was visiting and we responded to ads in the newspapers, put up flyers, and visited the animal shelter several times. I walked all over the hillside and forest behind our house and knocked on doors trying to find him, but he never showed up. He was not only pretty, but was very friendly, and he may have been taken by someone, which I suppose is better than if he was run over by a car or eaten by a raccoon.

My mother never really got over that. She had never had a cat of her own. That was, in part, why I never took back Puff and Whisper after I had settled in southern California. My mother had bonded closely with Whisper and was also very fond of Puff.

Misty (1985-1985)

In May of 1985, I adopted Misty, a darling little long-haired California Ragdoll who looked a lot like Twinkle in coloration. She was six months old, was abandoned by her owner who decided she didn’t want a cat and just locked her out of her apartment. I had seen this little girl before and I thought she was a beautiful cat, so when I found out she was abandoned, I took her in.

Misty and Twinkle got along beautifully. But, unknown to me, Misty had feline leukemia – this was in the pre-vaccine era – and she died in August of 1985 at the age of nine months. I cried so hard and I was so mad because the woman who had Misty before me left her outside to be subjected to that terrible disease.



Muffin (1985-2004)

Just a few weeks after Misty died, my neighbor brought me a little gray and white tabby, only six weeks old. She was the runt of her litter and the owner was afraid she might not make it. I took her in and I named her Muffin. She looked a little like Twinkle in coloration, but she had a cinnamon nose. Her eyes were blue, then shortly after they turned orange. They looked quite spectacular. Then when she was about a year old, they turned gold. Still very gorgeous. But two years later, they changed again, this time to green, and they stayed green for the rest of her life.



Like all my other cats, Muffin got along fine with Twinkle and with Lucky, Puff, and Whisper at my parents' house. She also got along well with some of the other cats who lived down the hall from me. She was a sweet little cat and she was sensitive to earthquakes. Before the Northridge Quake, there were two 3.0 quakes centered in Santa Monica Bay. For a week before those quakes, she burrowed under the covers and wouldn't come out. After those two small quakes, she came out, and then went back under the covers again until the Big One struck.

Muffin's only health problem was that she was hyperthyroid by the time she was about twelve and, like Twinkle, she was on Tapa-

zole twice a day for the rest of her life. She died in May of 2004, just a few months shy of 19, peacefully in bed beside me after several bouts of kidney failure.

Timmy (1987-2005)



In June of 1987, I adopted another kitten, Timmy. He was Muffin's cousin (their mothers were sisters). He was 13 weeks old, and I had watched him being born, the first of his litter. I wanted him the minute I laid eyes on him. His mother cat, Midget, lived next door to me, and I watched the other kittens going to homes, but no one had taken him yet, and so I decided he must be for me, and I adopted him. He got along perfectly with Twinkle and Muffin from the start.

Timmy was a big, beautiful, black and white cat. He had a tall, long, lean body, and he was very agile. He walked elegantly. He was the cat that every other cat should aspire to be, sort of a "cat's cat."

Timmy had more friends than most people. His best friend was Maxie. She lived next door and they had play dates. Her father would come and knock on my door, and Timmy knew his footfall and would run to the front door. When I opened it, he would run out and directly into my neighbor's apartment to spend a few hours with his friend.

Timmy saw his mother, Midget, regularly. He babysat kittens and liked everyone's cats. He tolerated dogs, but wasn't overly fond of them. He liked people, and greeted them at the door. If he had



Timmy meets my niece Adrienne.

been a human, he would have been the kind of guy who says "Hi, good to see you, come on in, make yourself at home, can I get you anything?" He truly was that friendly.

When Timmy was still a small kitten, I was out of town and my neighbor was babysitting him. I called to check my messages and she left one saying that Timmy had fallen out of a window (we lived on the third floor) but he was okay. I was stunned. The people who lived below me later said he came cruising by their window, scrambling along and clinging to the building and window screen, at about 5:30 a.m. He was completely uninjured.

When Timmy was 12 years old, he started having digestive problems and diarrhea that led to several emergency room visits for kidney failure. I took him to numerous vets and they couldn't figure out what was wrong with him.

Finally, one told me to put him on a bland diet. I did and he improved. But a cat can't live on a bland diet, and it was impossible to feed him separately from Muffin and Izzy, so I learned to make cat food. After that, Timmy was fine until his death at age 18 in 2005.



Izzy (1987-2005)

In 1993, I adopted a six year-old street cat who I named Isabelle, or Izzy for short. I first met her when I was weeding in the front of the building I lived in and managed in Venice Beach. She wouldn't come up to me, but instead kept her distance and hung out with me while I worked, and I talked to her. I often saw her sitting on the wall outside the building. She was full-grown but small, and she had a collar, so I figured she belonged to someone. Then, one day, when I was squatting down and weeding, she came over to me and crawled into my lap and went to sleep!



That is when I saw what a mess she was. She was filthy, had fleas, ear mites, two teeth that were loose, runny eyes, and a big lump on her nose. Worst of all, the collar was embedded in the flesh of her neck. I scooped her up and took her into a vacant unit where I gave her a flea bath, cleaned out her eyes, cleaned out her ears and put oil in them to kill the mites, and then pulled two of her teeth. And then I turned my attention to soaking the collar off of her neck. It took almost a month before her neck looked normal again.

Izzy had a story that a neighbor told me. He said he fed strays and she always wanted to be an indoor cat, but he had birds that he let fly loose in his house, so a cat was not possible. He said she had been a dump off with some other kittens – a typical occurrence in Venice Beach. She was then adopted by a man who really doted on her. When he had to relocate, he gave her to two women who said they would take care of her, but when they moved, they left her on the street. She was three then, and stray for three years after that.

She was quite a little rascal and very smart. She was thrilled to be an indoor cat. In fact, she avoided the front door at all times. She was aggressive at first, wanting to be the alpha cat, a job that belonged to Muffin who had no intention of giving up that status. Eventually, she and Muffin agreed to give each other some distance. Izzy wasn't friendly to Timmy either, but he was insistent on being friends with her, and as they aged together, they became like an old married couple, and they slept curled up around each other.

Izzy went blind in her left eye at 15, which didn't seem to bother her at all. But when she was 18, in 2005, she suffered a series of strokes over the course of a 24-hour period and did not survive.

Hedy (1981-1997)

In 1994, I took in another stray cat, Hedy. She had belonged to a woman in the house next door who had died. I thought Hedy had been adopted by the same people who adopted the other cat that belonged to the same woman. But she wasn't. As far as I could tell at the time, she had to have been at least 14 years old when I took her in. She had probably been living on the streets of Venice Beach for at least four years when I found out she was stray.

Like Izzy, Hedy was delighted to be indoors and loved being an indoor cat. She got along well with the other cats, and bonded especially well with Muffin. She was a very affectionate cat.

But Hedy was very weak and debilitated by the time I took her in. The vet said she had either inflammatory bowel disease or bowel cancer and that she would not live for more than a couple of months. But Hedy survived for two and a half *years* being indoors and well-cared-for. She died a couple weeks before I moved to Monterey.



T'ai (2002-2018)

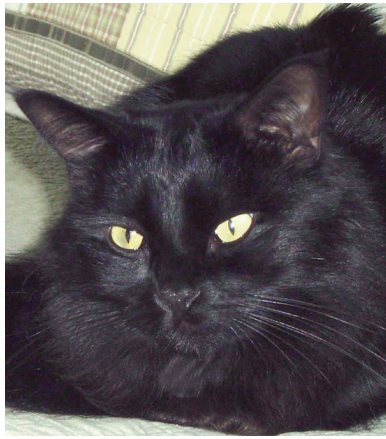
In June 2002, my handyman brought me an abandoned four and a half week-old black Persian-type kitten. It was love at first sight and I named him T'ai, a Chinese word that means "regal bearing," and T'ai always seemed to think he was king of the known universe. He was so adorable and tiny. He could sleep on my computer's mouse pad and I still had room to move the mouse. He was not weaned and so he sucked his toe. It was cute, but also very annoying at night when I was trying to sleep and this little kitten who was lying right next to me was slurping away at his toe. The vet told me to gently remove the toe from his mouth whenever he did it, and after a few tries he stopped doing it.

My other three cats took to T'ai right away, with Timmy washing him and letting T'ai play with his tail. He would even bring T'ai pieces of homemade cat food from the dish and give it to him to eat. T'ai was always a very feisty cat and smart as a whip. He was also very strong. Even as a kitten he could open any door, including the heavy closet doors in the master bedroom that I had trouble opening myself. He was a very curious little guy too, and he thoroughly explored all the kitchen cupboards.

One day, he got into some trouble when he was exploring. I hadn't seen him for awhile, so I went looking for him. In the kitchen, I thought I heard him crying but even after searching with a flashlight



into the backs of the cupboards, I didn't see him. Then I realized the sound was coming from the stove. There he was, this tiny little kitten, sitting in the middle of the broiler pan. He had crawled in there from a tiny opening in the back of the stove. I used to go into the kitchen and make tostadas, and I would just flip on the broiler. He was very lucky I didn't want a tostada that day!



I trained T'ai to wear a harness, stay on a tether, and walk on a leash starting when he was about six months old. He took to it right away and he walked on a leash just like a dog.

T'ai liked to dig, and he could really dig some major holes. His tether allowed him to get as far as the neighbor's fence but he couldn't see through to her side, so he dug holes right under the fence, just big enough for him to crawl into and see what was going on in her yard. When we moved to Washington, he continued to do this under a fence and

T'ai liked to dig, and he could really dig some major holes. His tether allowed him



T'ai with my cousin Pat's visiting kitty Poikka.

gate in the back yard until I had that fence and gate moved up to the front part of the house.

Healthwise, T'ai had his share of problems. When I first got him the vet said he thought T'ai would be blind some day because he had congenital cataracts in both eyes. But T'ai didn't seem to be seriously impaired by this. He began developing melanosis in his left eye when he was about 10 years old, and by the time he was 15 there was no visible iris in that eye. There was a veterinary ophthalmologist in Olympia, and she monitored his cataracts and the melanosis in particular, to make sure it didn't develop into melanoma.



When T'ai was about three months old, he tried to jump up onto my desk and missed. He didn't get up at first, and then when he did he was dragging his rear legs. I was absolutely horrified. I was so afraid that he was paralyzed and would have to be put down. I rushed him over to the vet and they X-rayed him and said he hadn't broken anything and to wait for 24 hours or so to see if he started walking again. The next day, he was walking again as if nothing had happened. It was a huge relief.

Only a couple months later, it was time to get him neutered. This was an ordeal. One of his testicles didn't come down, and it was another two months until one of them emerged. He was eight months old at this point, and he was anxious to go sow his wild oats. So, he required major surgery to find and remove that stray testicle, which they found up near his heart. He came home from the vet with a giant z-shaped scar on his abdomen.

In 2014, T'ai developed digestive problems and eventually was vomiting daily. He normally weighed around 12-13 pounds, and he lost half his body weight. He was extremely weak and couldn't even warm his own body. After consulting six vets, I was getting nowhere. I remembered how Timmy had responded to homemade cat food, but I really didn't want to go through all that cooking again. I finally found a food he could eat without throwing up.

The food sensitivity turned out to be a symptom of mast cell cancer, and in 2017 he went through chemotherapy, handled it very well, and then was on several types of medication to help him keep the mast cell cancer under control. It was in remission in 2018 when he was diagnosed with a more aggressive cancer that was already in his heart and lungs.

On April 13, 2018, after a three month decline, I had to take my beloved little boy to the vet to have him euthanized. I didn't want to make him suffer by waiting any longer. I cried the entire day. T'ai was a truly fine cats and I absolutely adored him. I miss him to this day.

Tansy (2004- 2022)

In 2004, only a few weeks after my beloved cat Muffin died, a neighbor brought me a four month-old gray and white, Angora-type



tabby kitten. I was only supposed to take care of her for the weekend until my neighbor could find her a home. But T'ai, who had always lived with three senior kitties, bonded with the little youngster in a matter of minutes, and so I kept her.

Tansy was very friendly and playful, but she didn't like me very much. She bonded instead with a roommate I had at the time. When the roommate was gone, Tansy was not all that interested in me, although she eventually bonded with me and became a little more affectionate over time.

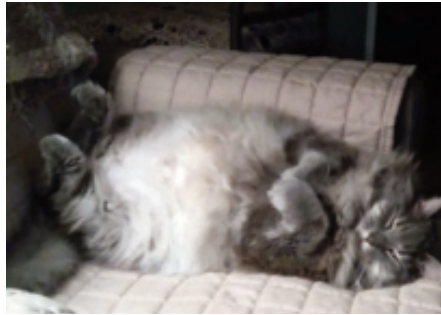


Tansy was not a bad cat, but she was erratic in her behavior and sometimes drove me crazy. Cute goes a long way when it comes to cats, but she could be outright annoying. Like

T'ai, I trained her to a harness and tether, but she never fully got the hang of the leash. She just couldn't seem to understand that

there was a person attached to the other end of the leash.

Healthwise, Tansy's main problems were a tumor on her thyroid gland (removed when she was 15) and her teeth (which deteriorated at the



gum line). Keeping on top of her dental work was always an important health issue. At age 17, she had kidney disease and got subcutaneous fluids every other day for a year until she died at age 18 yrs 8 mos old..

Callie (2003-2019)

Callie was 13 years old when I adopted her in 2018. We loved each other instantly. But she had never lived with other cats, so she and Tansy didn't fight, but they were never friends. She's the only cat I ever had that wouldn't sleep on the bed with me because she was trained to stay off the bed and was afraid to be put on the bed. But she spent her days right in the middle of my desk while I was working. She liked to play with toys and at night she would go into the toy baskets and take out the toy mice one at a time and carry them down the hall to my ensuite bathroom where she left them on the rug in front of the sink. She had a sweet personality and I was so sad when she died of metastasized mammary cancer on May 18, 2019.



Callie's mouse toys.

Pharaoh (2017-)



The photo that made me fall in love with Pharaoh.



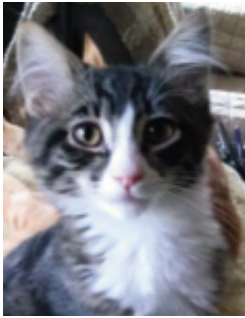
then a mouse, a baby possum, a baby rabbit, and a full-grown squirrel — all over the course of about two months. He brought them to the back door. So, he became an indoor cat again.

Just when I thought I would never have any more cats in my life — I never liked the idea of adopting a cat that might outlive me — my friend texted me a photo of a young cat she had found. She had been unable to find his owner and she said he was a really nice cat and needed a good home. Well, he was a cute cat, and so I took him. And what a sweetheart

he turned out to be. Pharaoh, king of the house, was about a year and a half when I adopted him in June of 2019. He was a big orange tabby who got even bigger when he reached his full adult size of 14.8 pounds! And by 3 years he had developed little freckles on his nose and mouth. Gorgeous cat, great disposition, playful, affectionate, and adventurous. All in all, he's a wonderful boy. He immediately bonded with me and with Tansy. But Pharaoh wanted to go outdoors and I have always wanted my cats indoors. I eventually relented and he was allowed out for an hour or so in the morning after which he came in, usually on his own, but also when called. But, he was a hunter. It started with a junco,



Oliver (2019-)



While Pharaoh and I were waiting at the vet, one of the women at the front desk had a tiny kitten. I took one look at him and I thought to myself, “That’s my cat.” I don’t know why, but I felt like he was mine. When the woman told me she already had people interested in adopting him, I emphatically said “I really want this kitten.” I was holding him and I carried him over to Pharaoh and



said, “This is your baby brother.” Three weeks later, the woman called and asked if I still wanted him, and I said yes. She said she thought I would make the best mother for him since I took such good care of my cats.

Oliver was born in June 2019. I’d only had him for about two months when he had fever and chills and was shivering. The vet said it could have been from a spider bite. He got amoxicillin for four days and was fine.



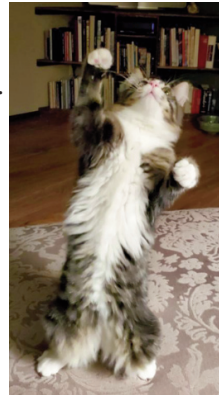
Oliver is one of the most adorable little cats. And he really is little. He is only about 7 pounds and is fully grown. Like his big brother Pharaoh, he is super sweet, affectionate, and very gentle. He and Pharaoh bonded immediately. They play together well despite the fact that

Pharaoh is more than twice Oliver’s weight.

When Oliver was a kitten he had short hair. By the time he was two years old, he had a huge bushy tail, a mane, and a coat that had gone from gray stripe to brown stripe. He has big olive-gold eyes and his ears are large with very acute hearing.

When he was about a year old, he suddenly became quite skitish for no apparent reason. He hid in the underwear basket in my closet if there was a lot of noise or activity in the house. He liked to play, but as a young adult cat he was not very coordinated and often fell over when pawing at a dangling toy.

I worried about adopting such a young cat, when I had already adopted Pharaoh. But he is so sweet. He sleeps with me or with my husband. He's gentle and friendly with Pharaoh and also with Felix. Unlike Pharaoh, he has never shown any interest in the great outdoors. He prefers to stay inside or on a leash outside.



Felix (2025-)



I was at the animal rescue place where I was paying for my cat licenses. I casually asked if they had any older adult cats that needed a home. They directed me to the room where all the cats were in lock-up, waiting to be rescued. But all the people who were interested in cats were looking at all the many kittens they had. There were three black cats. I looked at the first two and then looked at the third, Felix. He looked me straight in the eye, got up, and let me pick him up.

But there was a problem. Felix was born on May 15, 2025, and was only a little over a year old. He had been dumped TWICE during that time. I was astounded. I picked him up and immediately felt sorry for him. And, of course, I adopted him.

He is a very sweet cat, and as I write this, he's been with us for almost a year. My husband calls him 'Trip Hazard.' He follows us around very closely!

He was a short-haired cat when I adopted him. Now he has long hairs in his ears and long hair, well, everywhere!



FRIENDS & LOVERS

I'm not the least bit shy, inhibited, or insecure. I'm confident and comfortable with myself. I have no problem admitting when I'm wrong or make a mistake. I always speak my mind and will readily defend myself and the rights of others. I'm self-reliant and self-contained as a person. I'm not the least bit self-conscious. I don't trust most people, but at the same time, I try to give them the benefit of the doubt. I have always found it easy to meet people, even though, in the long run, I prefer to be alone.



Del Monte Beach, Monterey, 1964: The Beatlemaniacs, left to right: Suzanne R., Suzanne C., me (back), Ellen T., Francis C., and Denise M.

I'm not at all nervous being in front of a large group of people. I have addressed audiences of all sizes, some in theaters filled with 900 to 2,000 people, and I have sung with a band at fundraisers with more than 1,000 people in attendance. It's not like I'm filling an arena, but I would feel comfortable in front of a giant crowd too. And I was a panelist on a call-in radio show for two years in Los Angeles, and that was a pretty big audience, especially during drive

time. But despite all of this, I'm not that good at *connecting* with people in close personal relationships.

I always know that every relationship is ultimately going to end, some sooner than later. Growing up in a military community taught me that. I had a new set of friends at least once a year. I learned early to make friends quickly and detach from them just as fast. In some



With high school friends in San Francisco, 1969.

ways, I'm still like that as an adult. However, that military community exposure early in my life was important because it taught me that the diversity of the world is always at my doorstep, and that everyone has something great to offer as a person, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, etc.

And so throughout my life I have had friends from all walks of life: African-American, Libyan, West Indian, Japanese, Australian, British, French, Italian, Hungarian, Mexican, Spanish, Native American, and plain old Caucasian white folks. Included are those of many different religious persuasions, including Jews, Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus, atheists, agnostics, and a very wide variety of Christians, including Catholics and Born-again.

The one thing that I know for sure is that people are people, and you can't ever resort to stereotyping because it just doesn't hold up under even the weakest lens. No two Black people are any more alike than any two White people. The same holds for Jews, Mexicans, etc. People who are racists and bigots are simply ignorant. They don't

have enough diversity in their own communities to experience what the rest of the world is really like. And that is a very sad thing and a tremendous loss for them.

As for me, being an independent loner means that if I spend any time with someone it is because I really, really like them a lot. I would always rather be alone than in bad company, so I'm extremely picky about who I befriend. My friends (and lovers) have always been people who are active, busy people who don't cling to me. I can't stand clingy, needy people. A co-dependent relationship is not now and has never been on my list of requirements for a relationship of any kind. I also don't like controlling, manipulative people or anyone who tries to use me.

Most of the time I'm a good judge of character, but there have still been many times where my judgment has failed me miserably. And, truth be told, I'm sure that I have not always been the ideal friend or lover either. I'm not mean or cruel or vicious or anything of that nature. But, as I said, I'm independent and a loner, and that can make me very selfish without even being aware of it. I tend to be quite self-absorbed in my work, and so I like people who are likewise self-absorbed in their own work so that they don't demand my full attention all day, every day, because they will never get it.

My friends have come and gone over the years. We moved, we outgrew each other, we fell out, and they died, quite a few when they were very young. I move on quickly because I know that loss is a part of life, one that is often filled with sadness, but that can't be avoided. I try really hard to be a good friend, but I realize that being an independent loner can at times make me unavailable physically and emotionally. I do genuinely like people, but I don't think they always like me, and sometimes one of us likes the other but the feeling isn't mutual. And then there are those who I like and they like me but neither of us really wants to be that close – and that actually works pretty well for me.

This brings me to long-distance friends and lovers. I seem to have had a lot of these in my life, and in the long run I can see that the people at the greatest distance from me physically often make the best friends. I see them infrequently, talk to them infrequently, and correspond (usually by email) fairly regularly. I feel connected without feeling suffocated. And I'm easily suffocated by some people.



Great friends lost through moving away or passing away:
Kathi, Dick, John, and Susy.

I can be very happily alone (save for my kitties) for days on end, never talking to anyone (other than the kitties), and not being in touch with any other human being. If I live with someone and get along with them, that's great. But, if I'm all by myself, I'm happy that way too. I don't care whether I live alone or with a roommate or boyfriend/spouse. I have no preference either way. If I do live with someone, I'm pretty easygoing and have only a handful of house "rules": no smoking, no substance abuse, lids down on the toilets (because of the kitties), and don't let the cats outside.

I like myself, my life, and the things I do. I get easily immersed in writing and painting and reading, and the seconds tick by, the hours quickly fly, and before I know it I'm in bed with a good book, never once giving a thought to anyone I know in the entire world. But, if a friend needs me, you can be sure that I will be there, because I'm nothing if not extremely reliable. I will drop anything for a friend in need. As long as they are not using me or are just repeating their same old drama over and over again. I have dumped people for those reasons on several occasions. And I don't want any people in my life who are not supportive of me. If I can't rely on them as a friend, what's the point?

I've had many friends, lovers, and acquaintances, and I regularly clean house friends-wise. I start by evaluating my friends and trying to determine which ones I really like and enjoy being with, which ones I'd like to be closer to, and which ones are just plain wearing me out mentally and are not moving forward with their own lives, always trying to drag me down into their ancient past dramas again and again. There are only so many times I want to hear about something bad that happened way back when and how it has ruined their

life, etc. Everybody has problems. See a shrink, deal with it, put it behind you, and please, please, Shut Up and Move On! You can't have a life if you're too busy dwelling in the past or on the past.

In general, I feel that when a relationship of any kind is ending, whether I'm dumping someone or they're dumping me, it is probably because that relationship has served its purpose and run its course. But, I still want to tell the other person why it is ending if I'm dumping them, and I want them to tell me the same if they're dumping me. I always want to at least apologize for whatever I might have done that may have hurt or offended them. And if they don't tell me what went wrong but I know I did something wrong and I know what I did, I always make every attempt possible to apologize, because I would never deliberately want to hurt anyone, and if I do, or even if they just find me incredibly annoying, I do want to let them know that I'm truly sorry. I can't promise I would never do it again, but since the friendship is over, that is not the point. I just want to end it with full closure and disclosure for both of us.

Unfortunately, I have had three people dump me who did not tell me why, so those friendships will just have to remain an unsolved mystery. Fortunately, once a relationship is over, I move on very quickly and don't dwell on it past a brief assessment of it and the possible causes of its demise, after which I close that door and don't look back.

One last thing. If I don't like a person for any reason, there is absolutely no power on earth that will make me spend any time with them at all. I am all about shades of gray when it comes to people in general. But, when it comes to friends, I am all about black and white. I either like them or I don't. Nothing in between.

Bobby

When I was in my junior year of high school I met my first boyfriend. His name was Bobby, and he was the first boy I had ever been interested in or who was interested in me. He was a year ahead of me in school, and I had been introduced to him the year before by one of his cousins. And in my junior year, he was sitting right across the table from me in art class.

We hit it off immediately. We could talk about anything and eventually we would talk on the phone for hours at a time. Bobby was about the same height as me, was cute and very popular with all the

girls. I was homely and nerdy and not popular at all. I didn't think he would ever be interested in me when he could have his pick of any girl in school, and they certainly hovered around him, all vying for his attention. But he asked me out and we dated for almost two years.



We used to go to art galleries and we would go out and sketch or paint in various places on the Monterey Peninsula. When I graduated from high school we split up, but we remained friends and I introduced him to a girl who I knew liked him and who I knew he would like, and they got married just a couple months after I did. They lived near me and my husband when we

lived in southern California, and years later after I was divorced, I saw them on occasion when I was again living in southern California. They remained married until his death from pancreatic cancer at the age of 60. He was a really great guy, and after he died, his wife thanked me for introducing them and said that he had been the love of her life.

Ken

One of the men I was dating while at Cal State Hayward was Ken, my first ex-husband-to-be. He was three years older than me and had already graduated. Ken was a husky guy, 5'9" tall, and he was very popular, especially with women. We were both dating other people for quite awhile before we decided to get married in the Fall of 1972. We got married in the fog in Carmel, on the terrace at Highlands Inn.

Ken and I then lived in southern California in Bellflower, a horrible place, worse than Hayward, but not as bad as Venice, where I would later live. To me, southern California was – and still is – a filthy, polluted, noisy, ugly, and crowded place. The only good things that ever came out of Bellflower were my two cats, Puff and Whisper. In the Fall of 1974, Ken and I moved back to Hayward.

I was unhappy in this marriage, almost from the start. I felt trapped and I wanted out. I tried to be a good wife and stay married, but things had so badly deteriorated for me that I was trying to figure out how to leave Ken, which I finally did with the help of my friend Liz. I took the two cats with me and moved first to San Francisco (in order to live rent-free in Liz' old apartment and save enough money to get a place of my own) and then four months later, with a full-time job about to start, I moved to an apartment in Burlingame. The divorce was final on December 31, 1975.



Rich

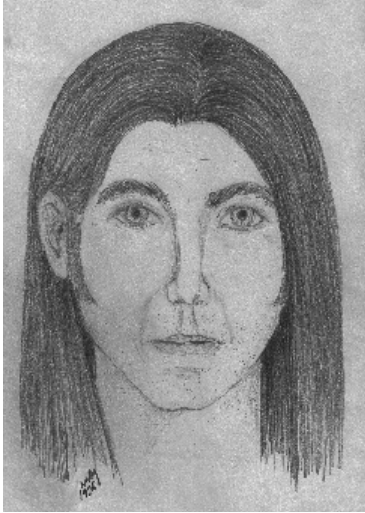
It was in June of 1975 that I first met Rich and his two year-old son Sebastian while I was eating my lunch on the lawn at the Legion of Honor Fine Arts Museum in San Francisco where I had gone to see the French Impressionists exhibit. Sebastian was playing with a ball that rolled over towards me. I kind of rolled it back towards him and then Rich came over and started talking to me.

Rich was nine years older than me. He was about my height, he had long black hair, a light olive complexion, grey eyes, and a hawk-like nose. The sketch I did of him does not do him justice because he was a very good-looking man, but I don't have a photograph, so the sketch will have to do, and for the most part it does resemble him.

Rich was also smart, funny, well-read, and spoke seven languages. He was a professional violinist, raised in Hungary and Italy, and he had attended the Sorbonne in Paris and then worked as a musician in New York City. He could play almost any instrument with strings, and he had an extensive collection of stringed instruments from all over the world. He played classical music and also country and blues fiddle. He would play and I would sing along. He lost his wife to a drunk driver who hit her head-on and killed her on impact while he

drove down the wrong side of the freeway. Sebastian was released from the hospital uninjured.

Rich and I hit it off immediately and we began dating, casually, since I was still dating other men at the time. But by June 1976, we were dating exclusively, and in late September, Rich and Sebastian moved in with me.



It was a bit cramped because I was in a small one-bedroom apartment, but we were planning to move into the three-bedroom apartment upstairs, so we were just biding our time waiting for the tenants there to move to their new homes. My busy life was even busier because I was taking care of a child. He was a lovely little boy and his father was a really great guy too.

Our schedules were kind of in conflict at times because he had rehearsals in the afternoons followed by live performances in the evenings. Rich's mother – a witch if there ever was one – lived in Daly City. I couldn't stand her and Rich wasn't all that fond of her either, but, she took very good care of Sebastian on days when neither of us could look after him.

I was very happy in my life with Rich. We were very compatible. But he and my father were not compatible at all, and I never found out why, but they had a falling out in my apartment the very first time they met, and Rich refused to ever see him again. But Rich got along really well with my mother and she visited us in Burlingame, so we saw her that way.

But things were not all rosy in our lives. We were stuck in my little apartment a lot longer than we planned because the people upstairs were not ready to move as the house they were building was having a series of construction delays. But we were dealing with the situation as best we could. But then the worst happened.

One Sunday morning in November 1977, Rich and I woke up at about 5 a.m. We thought we heard Sebastian make a sound, but we

glanced into the bedroom and he was asleep, so Rich and I went back to sleep. Later, around 8:30 a.m., we both woke up, surprised that Sebastian hadn't woken us up earlier while he watched cartoons on TV the way he usually did. We went into the bedroom and Sebastian had died during the night. It turned out that he had died from a heart attack due to a ruptured aortic aneurysm that the coroner believed occurred due to previously undiagnosed damage to the aorta that had likely happened during the car accident that killed his mother.

Rich was all but catatonic. The last time I saw him was at the morgue where he was sitting on a bench rocking himself. I tried to comfort him and talk to him, but he wouldn't respond. I said I was going to get the car, and when I returned to get him he was gone. I was very upset myself because I thought of Sebastian as my own son. I had been taking care of him for almost two years, and I loved him. I was horrified that he had died. He was barely four years old and was an adorable little boy.

I took off a week from work, and three days after I returned to work, and while I was at work, Rich's mother showed up at my apartment and emptied it out, taking some of my belongings too, including some of my clothes and two of my photograph albums, which is why I only have a sketch I did of Rich and no photograph. I was never able to find out what happened to Rich, and his best friend (who Rich never contacted again) and I hired a detective to try to find him, but to no avail. In retrospect, I guess I was a reminder to Rich of what had happened and that he just wanted to put Sebastian's death and me and everyone else behind him.

Bob

Only a couple of months before the day that Rich's mother emptied my apartment, I had already met my second ex-husband-to-be, Bob. I wanted an equalizer in the days when they didn't come with stereo systems. I had been going to stereo stores trying to find one, but the only thing I was told was that I had to buy one like the one we had in the recording studio I co-owned, and that was miles out of my budget. One stereo store clerk told me to try this place that sold an assortment of "odd stereo components." So, I finally got around to going there, and Bob was the store's co-owner and he waited on me.

I liked Bob immediately, but not as a date. We talked audio, and I quickly realized that I was an oddity, a woman in a store that catered to a male clientele of audiophiles. No wonder he liked talking to me! I was a woman who could talk audio. And, he had a used and restored equalizer that was well within my budget. I bought it and went home to hook it up, and I couldn't get it to work and couldn't figure out why.

I have always been good with technical stuff, so this really baffled me. I called Bob. He said he could stop by a couple nights later after work and that he would get it working for me. He showed up around



6 p.m. It turned out that two of the cords were not the right ones and he replaced them. Then we sat and talked for about an hour, then we ordered pizza, then we talked, and talked, and talked, and then he left around midnight.

A couple days later he called to ask how I liked the equalizer and to tell me that he'd like to see me again in the form of a date. I declined for two reasons. First, I was still not over Rich, and second, I thought Bob was a little too crazy-looking for me. I was never exactly conservative in dress, but his dress code was literally off the wall – although I didn't tell him that. He had hair in a ponytail all the way past his waist. He had a long scraggly beard and wore a long-sleeved pink T-shirt with dragonflies on it, and jeans with holes at the knees, and black and white checked boots. He was an Australian and he was thirteen years older than me. He was also shorter than me – 5'9" like Ken – but that didn't bother me. It's hard enough to find someone with whom you're compatible, so any height difference is not relevant.

Anyway, we ended up talking again, for about five hours straight on the phone. Then about two weeks later I had to go back to his store because when I first went there I had seen a tape deck that I liked, but he was still working on restoring it. It was now done, and

so I went and bought it. I went there after work and we sat outside on a bench under some trees and talked for about three hours and then we went to a nearby coffee shop and had dinner. He asked me out on a date again, and I said no again. But eventually, after numerous long, long phone conversations, he asked me out around my birthday in April, and I said yes.

I had never met anyone like Bob or who I could relate to as well. We enjoyed all the same things and we had very similar lifestyles, beliefs, and value systems. I liked his friends and he liked mine. We



liked hiking, camping, art, music, reading, antiques, and history.

We were in sync in all ways. A great match. But ...

We had two very big obstacles in our relationship. First, Bob was married. He told me this the night he fixed the equalizer. He hadn't seen her for two years when I met him. They had been together for 13 years when she decided to move back to Ireland. She wouldn't give him a divorce because she didn't want to be a divorced woman living in Catholic Ireland.

Second, about nine months after we met, I lost my job with the publisher when they merged with a publisher in Chicago. I was one of four people asked to relocate to Chicago, but I declined. I moved in with my parents in Monterey for a year and then I moved to southern California for what was supposed to be only six months.

When I became ill and ended up staying in southern California, we became locked in a long-distance relationship. After five years, we amicably split and each of us ended up in relationships that lasted almost three years.

Those relationships ended about the same time and we got back together and worked out our long-distance issues. His wife eventually

decided she wanted to remarry and she agreed to an annulment in late 1991. We got married about three months later, on February 28, 1992, in Rincón de la Vieja, Costa Rica. We split our time between Venice Beach and Menlo Park. I moved a lot of my stuff to his place because I was planning to move there permanently. But then things went south in our relationship.



Bob became depressed after all of his family members and his best friend and business partner passed away within a period of two and a half years. He somehow decided drinking was the way to numb himself from all the sadness. I tried to be supportive, and I was tolerant of the drinking at first. Bob was a very sad drunk, crying and waxing nostalgic about the good old days. After almost two years, I left him, absolutely positive that he would stop drinking, but he didn't. We stayed in touch for many years, and he was still drinking first thing in the morning as late as 2009 when I asked him to stop contacting me.



In 2017, I divorced him “in absentia” because he had disappeared and could not be located. It was a sad thing to do, but it had finally sunk in for me that he was not going to stop drinking and that we were truly over. I thought he was the love of my life at the time.

John

After I left Bob I had only been dating occasionally until late 2000. I was living in Monterey and had gone to a conference. I met John in the airport coming back. He was reading a book that I had

read and I asked him how he liked it and we ended up talking and before we landed he asked for my number. I never thought he would call, but he did, and we dated for almost two years. John was a really great guy. He was my height, dark hair, hazel eyes, and half-Italian on his mother's side. He was 12 years younger than me, and very well-educated. We shared many interests in common, and there was nothing wrong with the relationship at all except that I was still married to Bob and, again, I was still hoping he would sober up and we'd be back together. But, I also wanted to move to Washington state, and John was firmly entrenched in Monterey. I tried to get him to consider moving with me, but he said no. He felt I had led him on, but I really didn't think I'd ever be able to move to Washington. So, this relationship ended, and two and a half years later I moved.

Richard

When I first met Richard in September 1975, I was still married to Ken but in the process of a divorce. Richard was working at a place that sold magazines, and I was looking at the photography section. He came up to me and picked up an annual of best photos of the year and handed it to me saying, "You should get this." I did, and as I paid for it and a couple other magazines, he asked for my phone number and I gave it to him.

I dated Richard off and on over a period of about six or seven months. He was almost four years younger than me and he was interested in photography and art. He had taken some classes in film studies at College of San Mateo, his father owned an art gallery and taught art, and his mother was a librarian and owned an antique store. My fondest memory of Richard is of him sitting on the edge of my bed and feeding my orphaned kitten Twinkle with a bottle.

I really liked Richard and we were sleeping together. But when he told me that he was also sleeping with someone else, I ended it because I don't share. I wasn't mad at him because it was the 1970s, and people did sleep with more than one partner, but that just wasn't for me. The last time I saw him was on August 24, 1978 when we went to the ELO spaceship concert at the Oakland Colosseum.

But hold on, that wasn't the end of Richard. Fastforward to about 2007, and I was looking up people online who I used to know to see whatever happened to them. I found Richard's photography page. I



wrote him an email just saying I liked his work, was glad he was still taking photos, and telling him I had changed my name. One of us, I don't remember who, sent the other a friend request on Facebook.

Over the years we liked each other's Facebook posts. Then, out of the blue on July 29, 2019, he messaged me. This began a long series of daily texts, video chats, phone calls, and emails. Bottom line, he moved in with me in Washington state. As I write this, it's 2026, and we have been married since December 8, 2023.

Bad Men

I have always been fairly trusting of men and my ability to judge their characters early on. I could usually tell when a man was not for me, either because we didn't have anything in common, or because I felt uncomfortable around him. Fortunately, my mother always taught me how to tactfully dump a man, and it usually worked. But there was one time when it didn't work, when I was stalked, and here's that story, followed by another kind of stalking.

Paul. After I left Ken, I was not interested in getting married right away, if at all. I was dating any guy who asked me out. For nine months, I was dating five men: three Bobs, a Rich, and a Richard. Then there was my worst nightmare, a guy named Paul. I met him at a place where I was temping, and when he asked me out I said yes. But after going out with him a couple of times, I just didn't really like him at all. I dumped him very tactfully, explaining that I wasn't ready to be in a serious relationship because my divorce wasn't even final. I thought that would end it. But he kept calling me.

It was 1975, so there were no answering machines. I paid \$3 per month for an answering service. I was entitled to 30 messages. Paul called so often that he sent me over my message limit and all the calls after that were 25c each. This was at a time when a loaf of bread was 18c, so this guy was costing me money. I had to have the answering service refuse his messages, which were all essentially the same: he missed me, he wanted to see me, he thought we really had something going, etc.

Shortly after I moved from San Francisco to Burlingame, I came home late one night and Paul was inside the apartment building, sitting on the stairs. Someone had apparently let him inside the building. I didn't even know how he knew I lived there because when I dated him I was living in San Francisco. I immediately thought that he must have followed me home from my temp job in Foster City.

He was drunk and I tried to get him to leave, but he followed me to my door, tried to take my keys away from me, and then got mad and hit me in the solar plexus. I fell against my neighbor's door, and he came out and not-so-gently escorted Paul out of the building.

That was the last time I saw Paul, but it wasn't the end of him. By this time I was working full time for a book publisher and I also co-owned a recording studio. And I was painting and was getting ready to exhibit in an art show. I thought that I was becoming forgetful because I was so busy.

One day I came home from work to find my cat Puff out of the apartment and roaming around in the stairwell. I could not believe how careless I was to let her get out. I have always been very careful about checking where my cats are whenever I leave home, just to be sure they aren't locked in a closet or something. Anyway, poor Puff had been there since I left for work at about 8 a.m. with no food or water – or access to her litter box. I brought her inside the apartment and made up my mind to never let that happen again. I figured I was obviously just frazzled and stressed from being so busy and doing so many things.

Over the next two months, I found that I was being more and more forgetful. I left lights on, towels on the bathroom floor, clothes on the bed, the bed unmade, records on the turntable, milk on the kitchen counter, the newspaper spread out on the table, the piano lid up, windows open, the sliding glass door open (and both cats outside the building as a result), and the air shaft window in the bathroom open, once with Puff stuck in it twelve feet down, which required the intervention of the fire department to get her out.

It was driving me crazy. I'm not compulsively neat, but I do tidy up after myself. And I didn't remember leaving these messes. I was also constantly running out of food. I had to shop more frequently or buy more food each time I went to the grocery store. I couldn't even remember from one day to the next what I was eating, or what I was

doing, or where I was supposed to be. I was so busy that it was not altogether unthinkable that I could be this erratic in my daily habits. I just kept telling myself to be more aware of what I was doing.

Then one day when I had to take my car in to have a replacement part custom built for it, U gad ti keave ut fir three days. One of my co-workers said she and her husband could pick me up on their way in to work. On the last day that they drove me, her husband remarked that he was surprised that I hadn't hitched a ride with my neighbor. I didn't know what he was talking about. He explained that he saw a turquoise and white T-bird hardtop parked on my street and that the same car was also parked across from where I worked. I recall that I felt kind of sick when he said that because it also sounded just like the car that Paul drove. But, back in those days it was not unusual to see the now-classic little 1956-era hardtop T-birds with the round windows on the sides. I let it go.

After I got my car back, it ran better and everything else continued in my life at the usual hectic pace. By this time, I had settled on dating only one man, Rich, who I had been dating for almost five months, exclusively for almost two.

It was late fall and I was sweeping the leaves out of the carports at the apartment building where I lived and was the manager. My next door neighbor, Jim, was in his garage playing his piano. I swept as he played, and when we were both done we ended up standing near the rear of my building which was also next to the stairs to his apartment. We began chatting and he asked me something about my boyfriend.

Rich had only been to my apartment a couple of times, so I couldn't figure out how my neighbor even knew I was dating anyone. He insisted that he saw him all the time. He said that his girlfriend saw him in my kitchen when she was leaving for work in the mornings (my kitchen window faced their front door). I emphatically stated that he was mistaken because I knew for an absolute fact that Rich had never spent the night in my apartment and he did not have a key and was never in my apartment when I was not home.

At that moment, Jim's girlfriend came downstairs and joined the conversation. She described the man she had seen so many times in my apartment. It was Paul. The sense of panic and dread I felt was indescribable. I was absolutely horrified and actually broke out in a cold sweat, the hairs standing up all over my body. I explained to my

neighbors what was happening and I said I was going to call the police. Jim stopped me and said to let him take care of it for me. I didn't know what that meant exactly, but his girlfriend agreed and said that the police would never help and I should let Jim take care of Paul. I agreed and I assumed he would get a good beating – which, sadly, was actually okay with me – but I was not sure if that would be enough to keep him away.

I went upstairs and immediately called the closest locksmith who was right down the street. He came over immediately and said, “I was just here not long ago.” I blanched. I said that he must be mistaken because if anyone in the building had needed a locksmith, I would have known about it since I was the building manager. But he not only insisted he had been there just a couple months earlier, but that “Your husband locked himself out.” He went on to explain that my so-called husband – his description perfectly matched Paul – had called him from a pay phone saying that he was out jogging and had lost his keys somewhere and was locked out. Without asking for any identification, and seeing that Paul was in his running clothes, the locksmith opened the door and let him in. Paul paid him in cash and tipped him for coming so quickly.

I can only assume that Paul then found one of my spare keys and had it duplicated. I had the locksmith change my locks and install an additional deadbolt and a new lock on the sliding glass door as well. While he worked, I furiously lectured him on the importance of getting ID, something he should have learned in locksmith school or wherever it was that he learned his trade. My life went back to normal, and my apartment was no longer in a disarray with cats getting out. I don't know whatever happened to Paul – don't really care – and I never saw or heard from him again.

Dennis the Dentist. I was phone-stalked in 1984. I came home from work one afternoon and the phone was ringing. I answered it and some guy told me that he liked the blouse I was wearing and said “yellow looks good on you.” I asked who it was, and he said, “don't you recognize my voice?” I didn't, and I hung up.

He called me almost daily for two weeks at all hours of the day and night, and some of the calls were obscene. I had called the police and they merely suggested that I change my number and get an

unlisted one, which I did. That seemed to end the calls, until about six months later when the calls started again. I knew it had to be someone who had access to my phone number, but I couldn't figure out who it was and I didn't recognize the voice at all.

I contacted the police again, and I told them that this was not some random person, that he had access to my unlisted number, that he knew where I lived, and he was watching me. This time they didn't suggest that I change my number. They tapped my phone, and the phone stalker turned out to be Dennis the Dentist, *my* dentist. They arrested him and that was the end of that.

I had never felt uncomfortable with my dentist at all, but when I looked at the dates I visited his office, I saw that they corresponded almost exactly with the times when the phone calls started. I have often wondered how many other women he may have called.

Roommates

I have had a lot of roommates over the years. The first one was at the dorm at Cal State Hayward. She was a slob, she smelled, and she was very unfriendly. The second also lived at the dorm and was unhappy with her roommate, so we asked if we could move in to an empty room together, and we did, and then we later moved to an apartment. We got along very well, but her father didn't like me because I was a bad influence: I had a telephone and a TV set. I was nothing short of the anti-Christ in his eyes.

I moved in with two other girls from the dorm and we got along well, but one moved out with her fiancé, and then I moved to a quieter apartment with another student I knew. When she left to get married, I found another roommate and we got along well, and we moved together to a smaller place to save on rent, and then I moved into Ken's studio apartment in Millbrae after he moved out. I didn't have a roommate again until I moved back to Monterey in 1997 with a neighbor from the apartment building where I lived in Venice.

She and I got along up to a point. She was not particularly helpful around the house and she was a complainer. I got tired of hearing her complain about her life and a host of other things, so I asked her to leave. Almost immediately after that, my insane landlord served me with notice because her brother was going to move in.

A few years after I moved to a house in Monterey, my next roommate was a woman I knew through some of the clients we had in common. She needed a place to stay, and I told her she could stay at my house for a couple weeks. She stayed for a year and a half until I moved to Washington state.

In Washington, I had my own house (finally). My last roommate from Monterey, Helen, moved in with me for about two years. When she moved out, about a year later, I had Adam living with me for almost three years. After Adam, I was alone for a few years. Then I had a female roommate for about a year and a half. After she moved out, it was just me again until 2019, when I re-met Richard Robles.

CAREER & WORK

I have always loved to work and be productive. I'm not the kind of person who can sit around and do nothing. Even when I'm watching TV I have to be doing something aside from just sitting there staring at the tube. As I write this, I'm 66 years old, and I still work and I have no intention of retiring. To me, retiring is like leaving the world. You're no longer contributing to anything but yourself, and that is just not me at all. I realize I'm generalizing as I'm sure there are some highly productive retirees out there, but if I were to retire, what would I do? The answer is I'd do what I love, and I'm already doing that when I work. If I didn't love what I do, I'd find another kind of work that I do love and do that instead. And I've known a lot of people who did just that. But I can't see myself withdrawing from the world just because I reach a certain age. The idea of retirement is a 20th century construct that I just can't get behind.

As far as doing what you love is concerned, I think that a lot of people do a piss-poor job of deciding what to do as far as work and careers are concerned. They tend to settle for a job that they think their parents would approve of or that they think will make the most money, and then they are stressed and unhappy at that job, sometimes for the rest of their life. Many people also assume that the only jobs that they would enjoy are the ones that pay high wages or low wages. But that's simply not true. There is a job, a career, out there that is just right for you and it pays the bills. You just have to look for it.

Everyone has a whole battery of latent talents and skills just waiting to be developed, and it's amazing the kinds of well-paying careers they pursue that others might not enjoy at all. My friend Liz' father was an underground utilities inspector who loved his job and he talked about it constantly. The daughter of a friend of mine had a fascination with teeth as a child, even collects them, and while her parents wanted her to go to college, she became a dental lab technician, and in four years owned her own dental lab.

I have about a dozen friends and acquaintances who have degrees in business, four with masters in finance and economics. These are certainly the most flexible kinds of degrees that can take you into almost any trade, industry, or career field you like, and these people have found great careers that they love: working on behalf of children in Third World countries: as a CPA tutoring kids in math; as the owner of a travel agency taking advantage of the travel that goes with the job; as a real estate broker and owner of income properties: as a make-up artist with her own line of stage cosmetics; as the owner of a business breeding, training, and boarding horses, teaching riding, and running a horse rescue facility; as chefs and owners of a restaurant; as a tennis pro and later a trainer of professional tennis players.

To me, picking a career that is right for you is one of the many secrets to happiness. The right career allows you to be your own true self, the person you are meant to be. Why in the world would anyone ever want to quit doing that?

With my own work and career, I view myself as a creative person. I have since I was a small child. And I express that creativity through whatever medium I choose. This is what makes it appear to some people that my career and work experience are erratic when they are definitely not. If you look at what I've done throughout my life, you can easily see that there has always been a very clear connection among all the things I do.

In particular, there are two common career threads I've woven to fuse everything together quite seamlessly. First, there's writing (which includes editing and publishing); and second is art (which includes illustration, photography, and graphic design). These are the things I love to do most in the world, and I have managed to tie them in with several other pursuits I love and enjoy along the way.

I'm interested in many different kinds of work, and as a writer and artist I get to write about and do illustration and photography about those pursuits as well. I consider being an artist and writer as my career, and I consider my other businesses (astrology, anthropometry, graphology, landscaping, teaching, and property management) as work – and I'm not using the word “work” in a negative way, because I have enjoyed all of those jobs equally well.

However, there have been times when I had to do work that I didn't particularly like in order to make my life happen, even when I worked for people who made the workplace miserable. I think that on the whole, and over the years, I have done a pretty good job of supporting myself with my career, even though there were some lean times when it was touch-and-go financially.

Work History

When I was growing up, my parents' garbage business was home-based, although some of it overflowed into the family room where my father had a desk. We had a secretary who came and worked in the office each day. We had different secretaries over the years, most of them military wives. I think that growing up with a business in the house is probably why I have found it so normal to work out of my home for most of my adult life.



I started work early in life, and I'm grateful for having had the work ethic instilled in me when I was so young. The first job I ever had was when I was eight years old. I made deliveries for a drugstore owned by my godfather. I did it after school on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. I rode my bicycle around Seaside, California, bringing people their prescriptions. I did this for about a year.

My next job, which lasted until I moved away to go to college, was doing a variety of things in my parents' garbage business. Before I even took a typing class I typed up forms on an old Royal typewriter for the credit bureau with the names and addresses of the people who owed the business money. I also typed names and addresses on stencils and later on metal plates, both of which were used in addressing machines that were used for mailing out the quarterly bills. And in early evenings, I helped my mother open the mail and list the bank numbers from the checks onto long deposit slips. Sometimes a single deposit would require ten or more long deposit slips because there were so many customers.

I learned a lot from working in the garbage company office. But the most significant thing I learned was the importance of moving with the times and taking the bull by the horns. This was because my father, for all his faults as a parent, was very progressive as a business man. He embraced technology, such as it was at the time.

In the early 1960s, there were no mobile phones, but there was a big radio antenna on top of the house that allowed us to get in touch with my father in his pickup truck or the driver of our front-end loader. I remember calling my father: "KMK 372, Base to Mobile One." We also didn't have answering machines back then, but we had a big open reel recorder, and I have no idea how it was connected to the phone. It didn't allow a caller to leave a message, but it had an outgoing message that my mother recorded: "Hello, this is Seaside Disposal Service. Our office is closed. Please call us Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m."

In the early 1970s, my father bought an IBM Systems 32 computer to replace an Addressograph system that was modified for use in sending out bills. The computer was huge, shaped like a desk, with a small monitor and a floppy disk drive. When my father couldn't find someone to program it the way he wanted, he bought books and taught himself how to program it himself.

My father also embraced new products and systems for garbage collection. He was one of the first companies in the United States to test Rubbermaid's garbage bins on wheels. They weren't picked up with an arm the way they are today, but the bins were rolled to the back of the truck and tipped into it to empty their contents. Another thing he did was have pickup trucks with forks where the bed would

normally be so that a pickup truck could be used instead of a garbage truck to deliver a dumpster to a new customer or to pick up a full dumpster that was missed on service day or that was used in a residential area for a one-time cleanup.

While my father's business originally did a lot of cardboard recycling in the 1950s, many big companies were buying their own paper bailers, so that service was discontinued. But, by the 1960s, recycling of other items was becoming a trend. He planned to start a recycling station but ended up creating a transfer station where people could dump their garbage instead of trekking all the way out to the dump, which was way past Marina on the road to Castroville.

The transfer station was located on Tioga Street in Sand City where the garbage trucks were parked. In 1965, the office was moved



My father's office on Tioga Street in Sand City. California.

out of our house and into an old building moved to Tioga Street from Fort Ord. While I was in high school, I went to that office after school on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and worked there daily in the summers. During that time, I was answering phones, posting payments, and doing skip tracing. The summer after I graduated from high school, I could drive, and so I did route checks in the outlying areas where garbage service was mandatory but where some people had not yet signed up for service. My job was to knock on the doors of non-customers, introduce myself, and give them a flyer about the service

available in their neighborhood. After I enrolled at the local community college, I worked Monday through Friday after class, and full-time during the summer.

My Show Business Careers

In 1971, I became a model via an acquaintance who knew I had taken the John Robert Powers course. I did a Fall fashion show at Macy's in San Francisco two years in a row. Modeling was boring to me, as there was an enormous amount of time spent standing around and waiting or having your clothes sewed or pinned to you before you walked out in them. Not for me.

In June of 1975, my career as an actress in movies began – and ended. Well, actually it started when I was in fifth grade and played a witch in a school play. Then at 19 I was in a student film called *Mana Mana*, named after a song that was popular at the time, a crazy romp around town doing silly things. Anyway, I was at Henry Africa's, a bar in San Francisco at Polk and Broadway, talking to a graduate student who was making a short movie. He asked me if I'd like to participate in it. I thought he meant he wanted me to help with a script or something since I had told him I was a writer. No, he wanted me for the role of "Natalie," otherwise known as "girl at the bar." I laughed and told him I wasn't an actress, and he said that the part had very few lines and would I at least consider it. And he was going to pay me for it! Bottom line, I was Natalie in a 48-minute film called *Boys Night Out* (originally called *Friday Nights*), filmed at Henry Africa's. Like modeling, acting was not for me. End of show biz careers.

Temping, Part-Time Work, & Clients

Making the movie was fun, but I had to find interim work until my job with a book publisher started. I went through the newspapers and solicited companies that were running ads for full- or part-time jobs I could do and I offered to work doing a variety of temp work, including statistical typing, which I could do and which paid much better than ordinary typing jobs. I got a part-time job at a law office and got several clients for whom I temped, including an advertising newspaper, a land developer, and an optical company. I enjoyed working for all these different kinds of businesses, and in the process, I designed two award-winning multi-part NCR forms for two of the

companies I worked for. One completely eliminated the need for multi-page billings, and the other consolidated seven different forms into one.

When I moved in with my parents for a year in 1978, I again temped, and I was always working, even though I worked for only four companies throughout the year. In early 1979 I moved to West Los Angeles to help my former partner in the recording studio start his new business. But there were delays on his end, so I started temping. This time, however, I didn't just solicit ads in the newspaper. I also sent out resumes and flyers and registered with two temp agencies.

Not only did I get some very interesting and unusual temp work, I also got several clients and part-time jobs that lasted for more than ten years. I did computerized typesetting and rewrite editing for a recording industry journal; computerized mailing list management for a company that sold microfiched data to libraries throughout the world; and a social security tax audit job for a multi-national corporation.

In 1997, I moved back to Monterey. I had planned to take a month off of work and then I was supposed to start a full-time job at a newspaper. But just before that job was supposed to start, the company was sold and they were laying off people and not hiring. Summer is always the worst time of year to be looking for a job, and I had only enough money to last me for two months without working.

Once again, desperate times called for desperate measures. I decided to clean yards and garages, and I made up some business cards and dropped them off at houses with overgrown yards in Pacific Grove, the town where I was living. Instant work! It was a killer for my back, but it was plenty of income to sustain me until fall when I could start looking for work indoors.

When fall came, I was finally back in college again, doing distance learning at Cal State Hayward. I needed a stable part-time job with regular hours, so I distributed flyers for a variety of part-time and temp office work services, and several companies hired me to temp. One of them was a law office that hired me part-time. It was a relatively simple job, but it was absolutely the worst job and the worst place I have ever worked in my life. In fact, I quit at one point and a month later they asked me back and I foolishly returned. Every



Joelle Steele

Yard Cleanups
Garage Organization

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morning I would look in the mirror and try to hype myself up, to convince myself that I could go to work there. After all, it was only five hours. But after two and a half years there, I just couldn't take it anymore. One day, I walked off the job. I immediately knew I would never have to set foot in that place again, and it proved to be an incredible relief. I had my bachelor's degree and I didn't have to rely on that horrible job anymore.

It was a Thursday in March 2000 when I quit, and the next day I sent out cover letters and resumes to more than one-hundred local businesses. By Tuesday, I had two part-time jobs and more than a dozen clients, mostly publishers.

I have learned a lot from working so many temp, part-time, and client jobs. I estimate that I worked in at least 60 different offices in California before I moved to Washington state in late 2005. I learned about working with and for a lot of very diverse people in many different work environments.

The first thing I learned was that you can't lump people together as being a certain way because of their race, religion, education level, or socio-economic status. Every segment of the population has its own share of people who are smart, stupid, rude, friendly, helpful, crude, inefficient, impulsive, organized, supportive, or downright crazy. One of the best clients I ever had was a Black Jewish man. The worst I had was a White German Jew. Why they were the best and the worst had nothing to do with their origins. They were simply who they were as people.

I also learned how different office environments can be based on the owners of businesses and the kinds of people they hire. There was

absolutely no correlation between the kind of business and the state of their offices or the kinds of people working there. I worked in executive offices that were filthy and disorganized. I worked in factory offices that were clean and efficient. And vice versa to all of those. No logic except that the people in charge were as dirty and disorganized or as clean and efficient as their offices. And whenever I had to work in a cubicle, I just about went crazy. I don't know how anyone can work in such isolation with no view to the outside world.

Computers & Websites

Computers have been the greatest work tools for me. I got my first one in 1983. It was a used KayPro II and its operating system was CP/M, a predecessor of DOS. It had a small, built-in 9" monitor (amber, not color), and it didn't have a hard drive, just two large floppy disk drives, one for the software program, and one for your work files. The bundled software that came with it was called Perfect Software (no relation to Word Perfect), and it included Perfect Writer, Perfect Filer, and Perfect Calc. It also came with M Basic software. It was relatively easy to operate, but it was not even close to what we now refer to as "user-friendly."

A couple years later I got a computer with a hard drive – 40 MB (hard to believe that nowadays I have digital photos that are bigger than that). I then got another two computers, a second IBM clone and a Mac/Apple. This was at a time when publishing and other creative things were done on the Mac and the IBM systems were for business only, so I had to have both, and I needed a second IBM for the office. Around that time is when I started building my own computers. I continued doing that until Windows XP, after which I started having them custom-built for me, and I have continued doing that ever since.

As of 2017, I got my 13th computer. Still have it, with upgrades, in 2022. I had it built to accommodate all my memory-hogging software. So, I have 16GB of RAM and a solid state drive. If I need to upgrade this machine in the future, I will probably just replace whatever is old and not working like it should. The one thing I won't get is a laptop, since they are not ergonomically correct, don't last long, are difficult to upgrade, and I have no need for portability.

As for software, I am proficient in all operating system software

from CP/M and DOS through Windows 10, as well as Classic Mac OS through Mac OS X 10.2. I have also been proficient in many different kinds of software programs, including Wordstar, Xywrite, Word Perfect, and Word for word processing; PageMaker, Publisher, QuarkXPress, and InDesign (which I don't like) for publishing; Corel Photo House, Photoshop Elements, Photoshop, Adobe Acrobat, Illustrator, Corel Draw, Font House, and Adobe Type Manager, all accessory graphic design and publishing-related programs; and BBedit, FrontPage, Expression Web, Dreamweaver, and other HTML editors. I can program in dBase and am fluent in HTML, XHTML, XML, CSS, and RSS. I have taken classes in M Basic and C++, but I never had occasion to use the latter. About the only thing I'm not fluent in is javascript, but since I can download routines that do what I want or need, I have no plans to learn it.

I learned a lot about computers from several different computer consultants over the years. I then did computer and website consulting and that helped me learn even more. I can still easily solve about 99% of all computer-related problems on my own. But for those instances where I can't fix something entirely, I have computer consultants who can intervene.

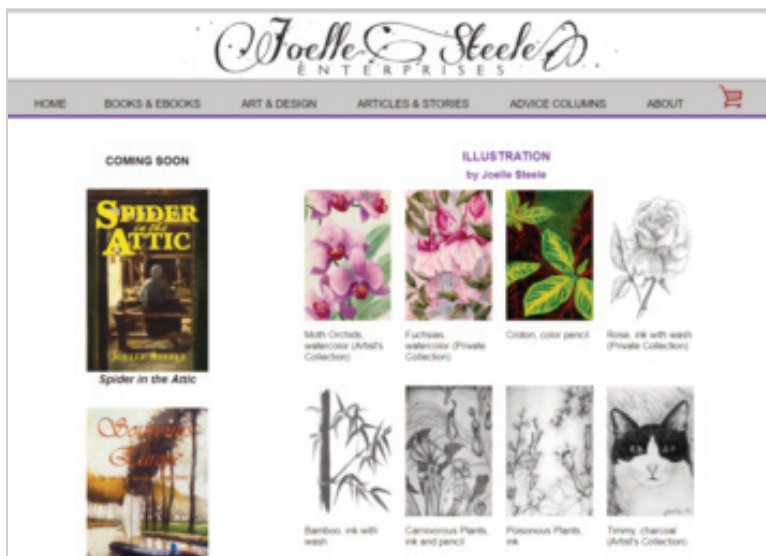
I first began surfing the net when there wasn't much of anything to surf. That was in 1987 when everything was "dial-up." Talk about slow and unreliable. Trying to stay connected to the Internet over a



telephone line was challenging. I can remember trying to upload my web pages and losing the connection as many as ten times before the connection lasted long enough to get the tiny files uploaded. Eventually, I got DSL (Digital Subscriber Line). It was still slow to upload files, but the connection was more reliable since this type of phone service filtered voice and data on the same line. Since late 2005 I've had cable modem service with Wi-Fi (wireless) access.

In 1987, I had E-mail but I only knew two other people in the world who had it, one being an employee at UCLA and the other a guy at a "think tank" in Scotland. By 1991, I was already a "member" of American Online (later known as AOL), using it for Internet access, E-mail, and for the social media of its time, the chat rooms. And in 1992, I had my first website, www.joellesteele.com, which I still have today, albeit with a great many changes.

That first website was for my writing and editing services, and the contract forms I made for the landscape and contracting trades. Then I also added pages for my illustration and graphic design work as well as my commissioned paintings. I added lots of pages for the landscape industry, including ones where people could buy my books. And I also made pages for my astrology, photography (landscape portfolios and head shots for wanna-be actors), and my forensic work in face anthropometry and forgery detection. I was ulti-



mately able to sell a greater variety of my services and products to a much wider audience as a result of my website.

In 2000, I separated joellesteele.com into several different websites for each service or product I sold. Over the years, I have had a total of nineteen different websites, many simultaneously, including: contractkingdom.com, greenindustrypubs.com, horticapublications.com, hortica.com, photorestorics.com, esoterica-publications.com, felineinsights.com, manyhatspublications.com, manzanitabooks.com, graphorensics.com, swedishfinn.com, postalpeddler.com, facecomparisons.com, webtechtrain.com, and writingwriteaway.com. I don't remember the names of all of them.

I enjoyed making websites for myself and others too. I also wrote and search-engine-optimized (SEO) websites, and taught introductory website design classes. And for a year I was one of the webmasters for the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove.

By 2015, website design was becoming increasingly tedious and the fun was going out of it for me. So, I re-consolidated most of the websites and have only six as of 2022, one of which is just a payment portal. I got help in converting two sites to WordPress sites in 2020. Big mistake. Really crappy software and it's all online. And I lost all my high ranking with search engines. Time will tell of my Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn posts will ever refer enough business to me.

The screenshot shows the Contract Kingdom website. At the top, the logo reads "CONTRACT KINGDOM" in a stylized font, with the tagline "The Very Best in Small Business Contracts Since 1993" below it. A navigation bar contains links for HOME, CONTRACTS A to D, CONTRACTS E to I, CONTRACTS J to O, CONTRACTS P to Z, MORE ITEMS, and ABOUT, along with a shopping cart icon. The main content area features a "LANDSCAPE DESIGN-BUILD CONTRACT TEMPLATE FORM" with a scale icon and a testimonial from Jeremy Teal, New York, NY, who states: "I can't believe how fast your service was. I had my contract in less than five minutes. By the way, my lawyer agreed that it was very comprehensive." Below this, there are more testimonials and a list of contract features including scope of work, title to material, approval of prior tasks, and termination. An important note at the bottom states: "IMPORTANT: Buy this contract only if you do your own designs from schematics (working drawings, sketches, materials lists), or if you have a designer or architect."

FACE COMPARISONS
 JOELLE STEELE ENTERPRISES

HOME FACE ANALYSIS ADVICE ARTICLES BOOK ABOUT

"Thank you for helping us identify all the 'rogues' in our family gallery. I can't believe we were going to throw away all those wonderful family pictures!"
 -- Gene M., Denver, CO

"I am so glad that the woman in the three photos I sent you turned out to be my grandmother. I have all her pictures of her."
 -- G.H., San Francisco, CA

"I am an investigator and I thought I was good with faces, but I have learned a lot from this. Thanks for such a valuable learning experience."
 -- Barry D., Los Angeles, CA

FACE TO FACE
 Analysis and Comparison of Facial Features to Authenticate Identities of People in Photographs
 by Joelle Steele
 2013 (Print), 1st ed., 182 pgs, 5.5" x 8.5"
 ISBN# 978-1-940388-00-7
 2014 (eBook)
 ISBN# 978-1-940388-20-5

If you have questions about who's who in a photograph or who signed it, you'll find the answer and more in *Face to Face*, a unique book written by facial features expert Joelle Steele, who shares her 30+ years of knowledge and experience in the analysis of facial features for the purposes of identifying people in photos. *Face to Face* is an expanded version of Steele's 1992 short book, *Anthropometry and the Human Face in Photographs*, now out of print. She wrote *Face to Face* for those who want to learn how to analyze faces and identify people in photographs, including genealogists, historians, museums, libraries, auction house appraisers, criminal attorneys, law enforcement, private investigators, publishers, and documentary producers. *Face to Face* contains 274 B&W photos and illustrations, an extensive bibliography and glossary, and the print version is indexed. *Face to Face* covers the basics of anthropometry and biometrics as adapted for use in the

About Being Self-Employed and Freelancing

I've been a freelancer since 1975, and I've been a home-based business since 1983. I don't know if it's because I grew up in a home-based business or if it's just that I like working where I live, but either way, I love working at home. I've worked many different temp and part-time jobs, many from home, but for me, I'm most productive and most satisfied with the home work environment.

The things that have helped me most in business are my basic personality traits. I'm self-motivated, self-disciplined, reliable, goal-directed, adaptable, flexible, persistent, and open to change, growth, and progress.

I have read many books and attended various presentations on how to set goals, evaluate goals, revise goals, and achieve goals. I have always been very good at making plans and carrying them out, and every year I take some time to look at my plans and revise them as needed. I have a "master" plan or set of goals, and then a bunch of smaller goals and plans to keep myself focused on achieving the big-ger goals.

When it comes to applying all of this, my persistence generally pays off because I don't give up. If something isn't working the way I want it to, I just try doing it another way. And I keep on trying until I get it right. And I always try to keep up with what's going on in the world as it relates to my work. I love to work and I want to work in

the best way that I can so that I get the most enjoyment out of what I do. If I fail at something, I just see it as a learning lesson and move on from there, looking at what went wrong, how to fix it and not repeat it, re-adjusting my goals, and tweaking my plans until I'm back on track.

Do I ever give up? Sure do. But not on a whim. If I give up on doing a particular thing, there's got to be a really good reason. For example, I have had a couple of book projects I abandoned because they just weren't developing quite the way I had envisioned, and after much careful and intense consideration and evaluation of each book, I determined that my original idea and plan were flawed or ill-conceived in some way and that nothing I could do would fix the problem, at least not to my satisfaction.

I also give up on some things if I'm no longer interested in them or the world is not interested in them. I have done this with certain services I used to provide such as astrology and handwriting analysis. Astrology has been reduced to a giant glut of websites written by people who don't know enough about it to fill a thimble. And as for graphology (handwriting analysis), I always specialized in forgery detection, and nowadays few people hold onto original documents, and scans and photocopies can't be properly analyzed because they lack certain details found only in originals. And I have given up landscape design, not because I don't love to do it, but because my mobility issues have made it too difficult for me to navigate most job sites I encounter here in Washington state. I gave up property management when I moved to Monterey because I never liked it that much. It was something I was really good at, but I only liked the re-vamping of apartments and old houses in Venice Beach, and not the management of rental properties.

I embrace change and progress, especially in technology. When I can find a new device or piece of software that helps me do things more efficiently, I get it and learn to use it. I depend heavily on my computer, so I make sure I have the best system to run my software, and then I keep my essential software upgraded. I stay away from gadgets that do clever things but don't help me in any way.

I maintain my computer and my peripherals (scanner, printer, etc.), and I use the best virus control, keep my files very organized, and I back up everything once a week, no exceptions, and often I

back up more frequently if I'm working on a book and don't want to lose what I've done if for some reason my computer fails – which is extremely rare. I also run a paperless office, scanning everything and then storing it in files on the computer. I also started paying my bills online about 20 years ago, which is a time-saver.

I'm also very reliable. I always deliver. I meet my own deadlines and those of my clients. I do what I say I'm going to do. This has allowed me to get repeat business and keep clients for many years. As for my own projects, I may experience occasional delays, but I always finish them. For example, I'm a year behind with writing a book, but in my defense, I wrote three other books during that same year.

My friends and clients have described me as productive and industrious. My friend Patrick calls me “a one-woman factory,” because I do and create so many things. People often ask me how I find time to do all those things, and the answer is that I'm very organized and I don't do anything that's a waste of my time. I keep my office and desk very clean and neat, no clutter distractions.

When I was self-employed in Venice Beach, I had a great assistant, a partner for one business, and as many as 35 employees. That is one way to get lots of things done. But on my own, I'm still very productive. I manage to be so productive because I've learned the most efficient ways to work.

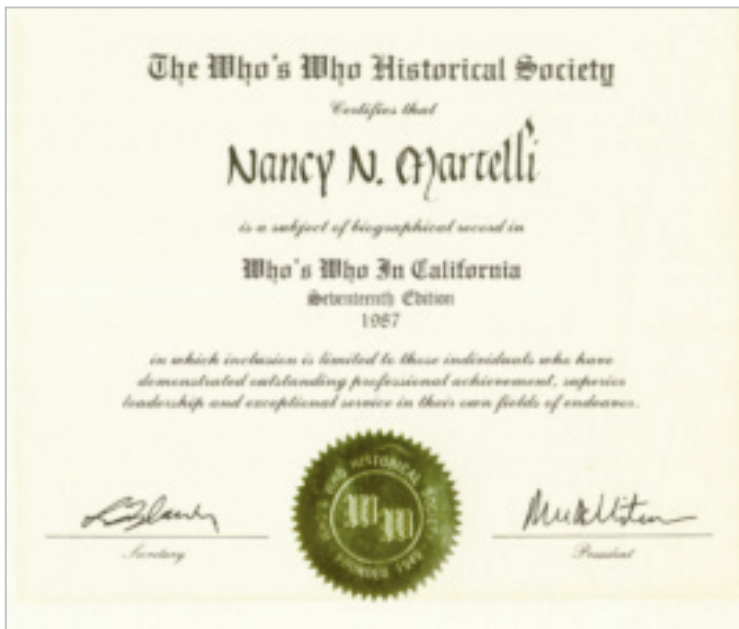
To begin with, I prioritize my personal and business activities. I do a lot of things, so I keep a detailed “to do” list, and I pick and choose from that list what I want and need to do, and I then put things in a detailed daily calendar which also includes my appointments as well as tasks I need to do each day or each week, such as laundry and checking the post office box. I also put reminders in my calendar about what projects I should be working on, whether it's social media marketing or research for a book or writing a book or doing a cover design, etc. That way, I always know what to do.

I also don't waste time, not even a half-hour here and there. The way I see things, every person has a limited amount of time to spend on this earth, and I want to make the best of whatever time I have, so I don't want to spend it doing nothing, idling away my days or even my minutes. For example, if I have fifteen minutes to spare before I leave to have lunch with someone or to go to the dentist, I sit down at the computer and I work for those fifteen minutes or I clean the

ner of my eye. And I definitely don't like it running in the background of my life as I feel the subliminal influences of TV – news and commercials in particular – should be avoided. For the most part, if I want entertainment, I'd much rather read a book or listen to music, or both.

One thing that amazes me about being a freelancer, being self-employed, or engaging in some joint venture or other business enterprise, is that I have had only one bad check and one non-payment, for a grand total of only \$124. However, I did have to go to court six times when I wasn't getting paid. Five times to Small Claims Court and once to Superior Court. I always represented myself, won, and was paid in full.

As a property manager, I only four times had to serve notice on a tenant. But I had to go to Superior Court on six occasions on behalf of my landlord clients, and only one of those times was eviction-related, and it was a nuisance complaint that the judge threw out of court before I could even ask him to do it. I won each time and got my clients paid in full. I was also involved in three lawsuits involving previous contractors who had done damage to a property. I again represented my landlords and won every time.



Measuring Success

Am I successful? Well, that depends on how you define success. If you think success is all about money, then no, I'm probably not successful at all. But I've met and known a lot of people who have a boatload of money, and they still have the exact same problems that



plague people who barely scrape by. They have problems involving marriage, children, illness, accidents, and even employment and financial problems.

I think a better question is, am I happy? And the answer to that is yes, definitely, and happiness

My first home office in Venice Beach, 1984, complete with Kaypro II computer. And, my second home office, also in Venice Beach, in 1988.



is how I measure and define success. Would I be happier if I had more money? No, but more money might make some things easier. Am I happy all the time? Of course not. No one is. But I'm happy at least 95% of the time. So, again, am I successful? Yes, because I'm happy. Happy with myself, happy with my choices in life, and happy with my life.



My home office in Monterey, 2005, complete with Izzy, my feline assistant. And, my home office in Lacey, Washington in 2012, still looking pretty much the way it did five years ago.



I think one reason I'm happy in my life is that I don't compare myself to others. I don't care at all what they do in their careers or personal lives. I'm not competitive. I don't aspire to be like them or to be better than they are. I try to be the best I can be. I'm not jealous of some famous artist or best-selling novelist. I just keep trying to do better than what I've already done. I try to improve myself, but within my own parameters of what that means, not somebody else's. In other words, I don't aspire to create art like someone else's or write books like some other author's.

I also rarely enter contests. Why? Because awards are fleeting. You win one or two, and then a few years later you're not winning anything, and then you win another. What does any of that prove? And who judges those competitions? What is their criteria for deciding who wins? It's all so subjective and so often politicized. I would much rather be the judge of my own work and be happy and content with the things I did well and learn to do better next time around with the things I didn't do as well. I don't want to gauge my success or happiness based on someone else's criteria for what is "best."

I don't define my successes based on what I do but rather on how well I do what I do and the kind of person I am. I don't worry about failure because everyone fails at something. I see a failure as a learning experience. I don't dwell on it. And if I do something and it doesn't work out, I re-do it to make it work, or I move on to something else. Failing at one thing doesn't mean you will fail at everything else. You have to learn to shift gears, move on, and keep trying. And you have to learn to keep up with the times and adapt to the changes in the world around you so that you don't fail simply because you fell behind.

Chart of My Businesses

I owned and operated several businesses, many of which overlapped each other in certain ways. I founded most of them myself, but some I purchased. Some I closed and some I sold.

JOELLE STEELE ENTERPRISES (formerly Nancy Martelli Enterprises)

Editorial & Publishing

1984-pres. Contract Templates (Star Legal Forms)
1973-pres. Editorial & Publishing Services
1983-2016. Many Hats Publications (now JSE)
1983-2014. Hortica Publications (now JSE)
1988-2010. Esoterica Publications (now JSE)
1997-2002. Folio Magazine for Writers (closed)
1994-2001. California Astrologer (closed)
1988-1997. Interior Plantscaper (Joint Venture, closed)
1988-1994. Libra Moon Publishing (now JSE)
1983-1994. Landscape Pro Newsletter (sold)
1983-1994. New Leaf Press Newsletter (sold)
1983-1994. Manzanita Books (now JSE)
1987-1992. Golden Opportunities (bought, sold)
1986-1991. River Life Magazine (bought, sold)
1985-1991. Songsmith Magazine (bought, sold)

Services-Products-Teaching

1980-pres. Facial Features Analysis & Comparison
1977-pres. Astrological Services
1975-pres. Art and Graphic Design Services
1994-2016. Digital Photo Restoration (closed)
1983-2016. Adult Education Instruction (closed)
1983-2016. Public Speaking (closed)
1997-2010. Joelle Steele Landscape Design (closed)
1987-2010. Graphoanalysis Services (closed)
1983-2007. Plantscapers Referral Service (closed)
1983-1997. H & S Landscaping (H & M Landscaping) (sold)
1983-1997. Joelle Steele Property Management (closed)
1983-1997. Landscape Industry Consulting (closed)
1985-1995. Hollywood Hot Shots (photography) (closed)
1983-1995. Lecture Circuits & Workshops (closed)
1980-1988. Private Art Instruction (closed)
1983-1985. Independent Quality Control Service (sold)
1980-1984. Vintage Charms (beaded jewelry) (closed)
1980-1982. Decorated Clothing (closed)

WRITING, EDITING, & PUBLISHING

I love to write and I feel extremely confident about being able to express myself in writing in whatever type of writing I do. I think if I had to struggle to write, if I had to battle writer's block, or if I didn't have a firm grasp on the English language, that it would indicate that I had chosen the wrong career. And I can write anything, any genre, novels, short stories, poetry, non-fiction, catalogue descriptions, city reports, letters of all kinds, news stories, movie reviews, music reviews, contracts, press releases, etc. The list is literally endless for me when it comes to writing and writing for hire.

As with art, I share my mother's ancestors who distinguished themselves in creative pursuits. My very distant fourth cousin four times removed was Johan Ludvig Runeberg, a newspaper editor, essayist, award-winning poet, and the writer of the lyrics to the Finnish national anthem. He is the recognized Finnish National Poet and the Runeberg prize for literature has been awarded in his name since 1986. His birthday, February 5, is celebrated as Runeberg Day in Finland. His son Walter was a well-known sculptor.

My mother was an excellent writer. She always said she wanted to write a book about things that went on in the garbage business. She was going to call it *Bread and Butter to Me*, from the expression "it may be garbage to you but it's bread and butter to me." Unfortunately, she died at age 64 and never pursued writing that book or any other. She did, however, write a fair amount of poetry, and it was often quite humorous. She once wrote a poem to accompany a birthday gift she sent me, and she said it was written to be sung to the tune of the *Triumphal March* from Verdi's opera *Aida*.

According to my mother and some of my cousins, the apple didn't fall far from the tree. Apparently my mother's father, Joel Steele, also wrote poetry (and built birdhouses), so perhaps he was her inspiration and she was mine.

Like art, my writing career began early in my life. I wrote all kinds of little stories (extremely short ones) and when I was in 5th grade, my teacher had me, along with two classmates, write a play based on a

book called *Little Witch* by Anna Elizabeth Bennett, a book that is still popular with children today. After we wrote the play, it was performed



by us and other students. One of the children's mothers did theatrical makeup, so we all looked great. I played the little witch's evil witch mother, and my biggest line was directed at the little witch: "Lazy! Good for nothing! Pray tell, what did you do with your time last night?" That was actually the end of any potential acting career as I have never had any interest in acting since then, although I did do a couple of student films in my late teens and early 20s.

I started writing in earnest when I was 14. I wrote a play about migrant farm workers in Salinas called *Francie*. At 16, I wrote a short novel called *My Name Is Aniak*, an attempt at science fiction that actually had potential, but I just hadn't learned to write well enough to define my characters and construct successful plot lines. At 18, I did only a little bit better with my next novel, *The Dressmaker's Daughter*. I also wrote a lot of your typical, garden variety, self-indulgent, teenage poetry.

During the very early 1970s when I was a student at Cal State Hayward, I wrote a novel that I thought was really good. I had finally managed to develop my characters and construct really good plots and subplots. The novel was called *Hidden*. Unfortunately, it never saw the light of day. The story was about a conscientious objector who runs off to Canada and a couple years later sneaks back into the United States and tries to live there without being caught. It never occurred to me that one president, let alone two presidents, would grant amnesty to draft dodgers. But, in 1974, Gerald Ford granted them conditional amnesty, and just a few years later in 1977, Jimmy Carter granted unconditional amnesty to all but military deserters. The entire premise of my book was flushed down the White House toilet.

While working as an illustrator at an advertising agency in 1971, I had an opportunity to write several jingles, and several years later, I wrote two that aired nationally. The lyrics for this one were for Stanley Residential Security and ran nationally in 1980:

It's a big bad world out there. (It is!)
But Stanley's on your side. (We are!)
We make the world a safer place
One house at a time. (Yes!)

My first article was published in 1973, and for five years I wrote articles about art, photography, and music.

In 1975, while I was temping and waiting for a job at a book publisher to start, I was staying temporarily at my friend Liz' apartment in San Francisco. It was only a couple blocks away from the northeast corner of Golden Gate park where I read my poems on a few occasions. Poetry readings were fairly common back in the 1970s, and on one of those days in 1975, I went to City Lights bookstore afterwards and I met the poet Allen Ginsberg (co-found of the bookstore). He had heard me read in the park earlier and said that my imagery was "distinct" but I should "not be such a slave to rhyme." I wrote in free verse from that day on. That same day, I also met the publisher of my first illustrated chapbook of poetry, *Under A Weeping Sky* (1976).

In 1988, I wrote *Live to Tell*, an account of my experiences when I was ill and living in my car for seven weeks on the streets of L.A. I didn't try to sell this book to a publisher and I didn't feel like publishing it myself. It just seemed like it was more of a cathartic experience. In 2008, when I was doing a routine cleaning out of old files on my computer, I didn't hesitate to delete it.

Best Job Ever

My job as a creative director for a small book publisher started in August of 1975. I got that job with no effort whatsoever. One morning I was in Burlingame. I ran into a man I knew who referred me to the company, co-owned by his aunt. He said they were looking for someone, but he didn't know what the job was. I called his aunt from his office, we spoke briefly, and she said to come by in an hour. I was still married and living in Hayward and I didn't have time to go home to change clothes and get my résumé, but she said to come in anyway, so I did. We talked for about three hours and she gave me a tour of their offices and then introduced me to her partner. They hired me on the spot. The position was a new one that would be created when another position was vacated and then split into two. In the meantime, they wanted me to come in periodically for training.

My job as creative director for the publishing company was the best job I have ever had. It was a job that was a perfect match for my personality and for all of my skills. I absolutely loved working there and couldn't wait to go to the office every morning. I oversaw the editorial, art production, and marketing departments. This involved overseeing the work of 36 creatives – it took so many people to do then what a handful of computers can do today.

This was a huge job for someone my age, with no previous experience, and who was a woman in an industry that was, at the time, dominated by men. But it was great in every way. I got to work on covers, advertisements, and even got my feet wet doing basic editing. And I loved working with other creative people.

But, it's apparently true when they say that all good things must end. In late 1977, the publisher was purchased by a company in Chicago. I was one of four people asked to come to Chicago, but I didn't want to live there, and so I declined the offer. For a long time I used to wonder what my life might have been like had I accepted that offer. But I think Chicago would never have worked out for me. I have always liked visiting there, but I can't imagine myself living there.

I moved in with my parents in Monterey for a year and was temping again. I was also doing a lot of writing, both articles and books. I found a publisher for a novel I had finished writing called *The Rosary Bed* (1980), and I signed a three-book deal with them. The second book, *Devil's Garden* (1982) was one that I re-published in 2025, along with many changes, and with a complementary book by my fictitious author, Mariah Arden King, entitled *Devil's Garden: An Encyclopedia of Toxic and Poisonous Plants*. I never finished the third book because I was ill.

The 1970s marked the beginning of my career as a writer, artist, and publisher. I provided almost every kind of publishing service there was: writer, editor, creative director, illustrator, photographer, typesetter, proofreader, publisher.

I had many articles in print about music and art, and I met a lot of creative and interesting people because I interviewed them for articles I wrote in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

I interviewed record producers Bones Howe, Arif Mardin, and David Rubenstein; singer/songwriters Paul Anka, Carole King, Al Stewart, Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and John Phillips; musicians

Nicky Hopkins (who played piano with groups like Jefferson Airplane/Starship), and Herb Alpert (trumpet player and founder of Tijuana Brass and co-founder of A&M Records). I also interviewed Les Garland, then programming director for RKO Radio and later a co-founder of MTV and VH1; Leo Fender, a luthier and inventor of Fender guitars, such as the famous Stratocaster; and Bill Graham, the rock promoter who founded Bill Graham Presents and opened the doors to Winterland, the Avalon Ballroom, and the Fillmore West in San Francisco for rock concerts and also produced a series of outdoor Concerts on the Green.

In 1983, I had been working for a landscape contractor for four years. I kept working there for another year and simultaneously started my own part-time business providing services to the horticultural industry. By 1984, I needed to find better ways to promote what I did, so I started writing and publishing a monthly newsletter, *The New Leaf Press Newsletter for Interiorscapers*, that was eventually put into magazine format after it grew larger and was internationally-circulated. I then started a small press magazine called *Landscape Pro*. I also joint-ventured in writing a newsletter that was custom-made for interior landscape companies, *The Interior Plantscaper Newsletter*. I additionally sold audiotapes of my speaking presentations, which I advertised as “reels on wheels” as they were designed to be listened to while people were driving around on their plant maintenance routes. And, I wrote columns and feature articles for almost every gardening magazine and horticultural trade journal in the English language.

My publishing business was growing. I was publishing six periodicals as well as occasional books for others, and I was also writing books myself, many for the landscape industry. I wrote several books during this time: *Get the Job and Make A Profit* (1985), *The Human Resource Guide and Policy Manual* (1985), *Successful Employee Management for the Horticultural Service Business* (1985), *How to Start Your Own Interior Landscape Business* (1986), *Thursday’s Child* (1987), *Soils and Nutrients for Indoor Plants* (1988), and *The Physics of Love* (1989). I updated and republished most of these over the years, and I also made some of them into ebooks in 2014.

I was doing most of the creative and editorial work on the periodicals I published, and I had interns and part-timers to help with other aspects of the publishing. I also took on failing small press periodicals

and turned them around financially and then sold them back to their original owners. I mostly did this by simply changing the manner in which they handled their advertising.

Usually just a slight change in the pricing structure combined with adding pages for classified ads and marketplace ads can make a world of difference to a small press periodical. You could generally fit upwards of 50 classifieds on a page, for a total of about \$2,000 per page. In some of the periodicals I worked on, a full-page display ad – which is much harder to sell – would be about \$1,250, which was a very good price back then. But most sales reps want to see those big ads because they work on commission, and they don't pay attention to selling the smaller ads, like the display ads which make up the most ads in your average small press periodical. I focused on getting more of those smaller ads and I also gave much deeper incentives for paying six or twelve months in advance for display ads, and committing to a six or twelve month run paid in advance which was required for all classified and marketplace ads.

From the very beginning, I had far more business than I could handle all by myself. I had an office in my small studio apartment, and later rented an even smaller studio apartment in the back of the building on the first floor for my office employees. But I really needed some serious help for myself. Between being out of the office to go to job sites and being on the road doing lecture circuits every year, I didn't have enough hours to do what was required of me. My bookkeeper, Gisela, was great, but she had signed on for only two half-days per week. And she was good at what she did, but what I needed was an assistant.

Every person I interviewed for that job was pitifully under-qualified, partly because my budget for office help was limited and the job was part-time. One day, Gisela recommended a friend and former co-



worker of hers who had been working as an executive assistant at Trammell Crow Company and had to quit because her much-older husband was ill.

That was Grace, and she was incredibly over-qualified for the job. I couldn't believe she was willing to work for me. But she missed working, wanted to get out of the house, and was available for a half-day five days a week with flex time. She was just what I needed to keep me organized and to take some of the responsibilities off my shoulders. Within one year I had thirty-five employees (between publishing, landscaping, and property management). Most of them were full-time, but also several part-timers. Grace showed up in the nick of time in May of 1984.

Things took a downturn for me in February of 1987 when Grace had to take a long leave of absence to take care of her husband full-time because he was in the final stages of heart failure and lung cancer. I needed to find someone to take her place, and I hired a woman who did a great job but also committed credit card fraud with my credit cards. She was definitely the exception to the rule as far as my employees were concerned.

In the 1990s, I was writing more articles for magazines other than my own. I was already writing for almost every horticulture or land-

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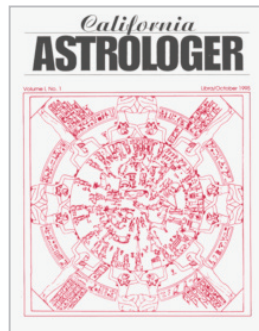


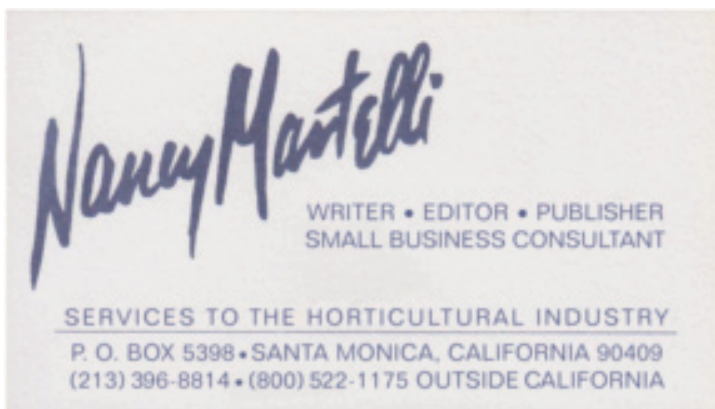
scape magazine in existence at the time. Now I was expanding my writing to include articles about cats and cat care, astrology, graphology, photography, and face comparisons.

During the same time, I also wrote quite a few more books: *Indoor Watering Techniques* (1992), *The Interior Landscape Dictionary* (1992), *Anthropometry and the Human Face in Photographs* (1992), *The Astrological Prediction of Earthquakes and Seismic Data Collection* (1994), *How to Select and Work With An Astrologer* (1995), *How to Market Your Astrological Services* (1995), *How to Market Your Horticultural Services* (1998), *The ABCs of Indoor Palm Trees* (1998), and *Researching and Writing Your Family History* (1998/2025).

In 1994, in anticipation of my move to the Monterey Peninsula, I stopped publishing periodicals. I sold five and disbanded two. That was when I saw what the future would bring for the publishing industry due to the expanding Internet and the World Wide Web.

By early 2000, I was well on my way to running a business that






included all of my various pursuits. I took out listings in the Yellow Pages in phone books from Monterey to San Francisco, and they appeared a couple months later. I ran ads for astrology, handwriting analysis, writing, editing, illustration, and publishing. I had more business than I would ever have expected. I was doing a lot of editing (which I still don't like), mainly for first-time authors, but also for college students, including ones at the Naval Postgraduate School, where I also edited theses selected by the Navy for publication each year.

Also in Monterey, I updated and expanded some of my older books and wrote new books: *A Tapestry of Eden* (2000), *Graphology: An Introduction to Handwriting Analysis and Personnel Selection* (2001), *Cooking for Fluffy* (2003), *How to Market Your Small Business* (2003), *The ABCs of Indoor Ferns* (2004), *The ABCs of Indoor Dracaenas* (2004), *Grandma Helny's Old-Fashioned Swede-Finn Recipes* (2004), *Unblocked* (2004) (which I also translated into Spanish), *Living and Breathing* (2004), *An Illustrated History of the Steele, Furu, and Forstrom Families* (2005), *How to Create A Successful Website for Your Horticultural Business* (2005), *Contract Basics* (2005), and *Plantscaper's Guide* (2005).

I was successful in all my work pursuits on the Monterey Peninsula, but business did fall off after 9/11 for many businesses in that area, especially those that relied heavily on the tourist trade. This didn't impact on me at all. However, when the U.S. entered into a conflict with Iraq a year or so later, business for me went into a deep slump, as many of my clients closed their doors. That was the final impetus for my leaving California.

After I moved to Washington state in late 2005, I began writing more books, some of which had been in progress for many years. That's kind of the way it is with me. I have a lot of irons in the fire at any given time, and most of them are books, some of which are always being updated and expanded to include whatever the latest


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technology is. I had already finished the history of my mother's family and so I turned my attention to my father's side and, with some help from my brother, I wrote *A Brief History of the Buzzini, Crosetti, and Martelli Families* (2008).

Later, I worked with my Cuban-American friend Susy on a translation of *Plantscaper's Guide* into Spanish, *Guía Para Plantscapers* (2008). That was a grueling task, but I learned a lot about the problems of translating books, especially technical books. Next, I turned my attention to a book I had published in 1992, *Anthropometry and the Human Face in Photographs*. I now had all the tools necessary to make that book into what I really wanted it to be. So, I expanded the original into a much more comprehensive illustrated work with a new title, *Face to Face: Analysis and Comparison of Facial Features to Authenticate Identities of People in Photographs* (2013). That same year, I updated and

expanded another previously published book, *How to Create A Successful Website for Your Horticultural Business*. I greatly expanded it, made it generic, and re-titled it *The Small Business Webmaster* (2013).

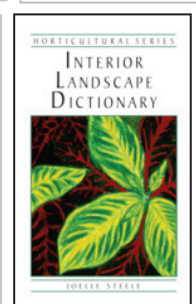
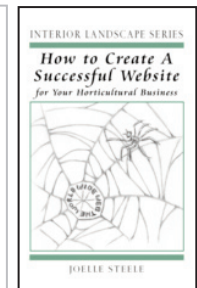
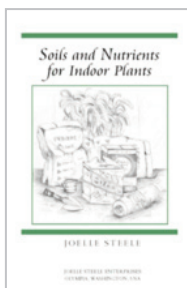
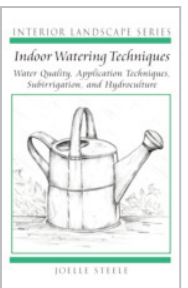
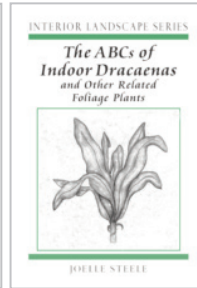
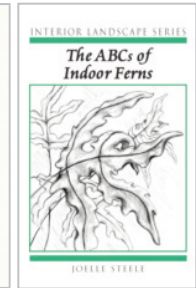
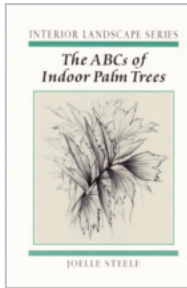
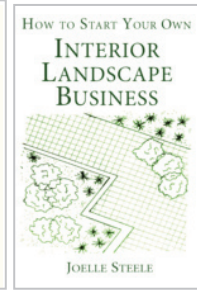
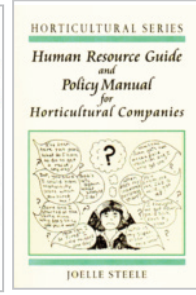
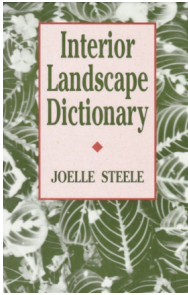
In 2013, I re-worked the draft of a short novel, originally titled *The Glamour of Redthorn Hall*. I renamed it *Shades* (2014) and published it in print, ebook, and audiobook editions. I also published a compilation of all my poetry to date, *Perceptions, Passions, and Paradoxes* (2014), which I released as an ebook. I then edited, updated, and expanded 13 of my earlier books and converted them into ebooks. I went on to write and publish two more novels, *Delusions* (2015) and *Reflections* (2016), both in print, ebook, and audiobook editions.

In 2018, I finished writing and typesetting a heavily illustrated art book I had been working on for several years about the kinds of etchings I collect: *Souvenirs of Europe: Decorative Landscape Etchings 1900-1949*. That same year, I wrote and published *The External Ear: Anthropometry, Biometrics, Anatomy, Development, Measurement, Analysis, Forensics, and Authentication of Human Identities*.

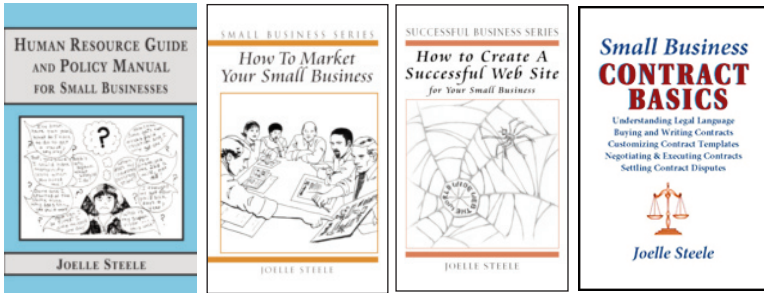
As of early 2022 I had written and published two more novels, *Spider in the Attic* (2019) and *Buried in the Peat* (2022) (which I made into an ebook only, and later translated into French). I also wrote more non-fiction books: *What Did They Really Look Like?* (2018), *The Quick Guide to Comparing Faces in Photographs* (2019), *Identification Dilemma: The Effects of Decomposition on the Human Face* (2021), and *Sign Here: Detecting Forgery in Handwritten Signatures* (2021). In 2020, I did a rewrite and update of *The Astrological Prediction of Earthquakes and Seismic Data Collection*.

At no time in my life have I ever stopped writing or publishing. These have always been a constant in my life, just like art and design. I edited hundreds of articles and more than 100 books for first-time authors, but since I have never liked editing, I stopped doing it in 2010. But with writing, I have extensive published credits that, as of 2025, include more than 58 books, 800+ articles, 50+ short stories, 100+ contracts, and a wide variety of poems, contributing chapters, web pages, brochures, advertising jingles, marketing letters, illustrations, catalogues, directories, and countless works for hire. I also wrote advice columns for almost everything I do. I have also written 40 books for my genealogy clients about their families. And, there are an awful lot of things I've written that I don't even remember.

Since 1984, I have written everything on one of my many incarnations of desktop computers, as they make for the fastest and easiest way to get anything done in the way of writing. I feel that computers



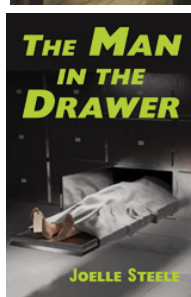
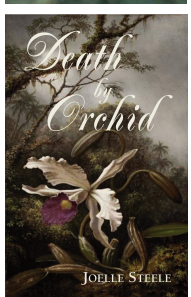
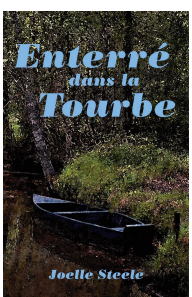
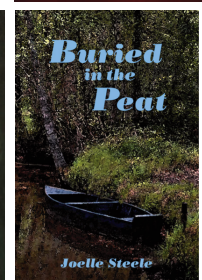
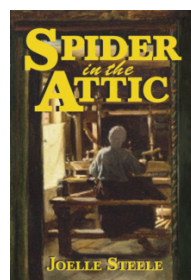
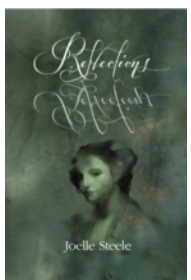
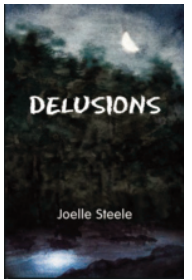
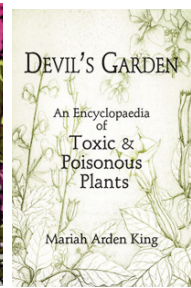
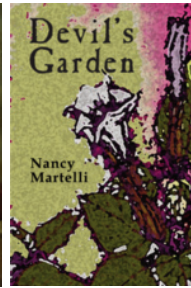
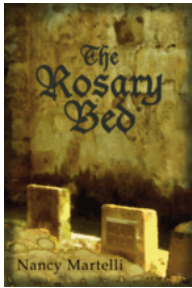
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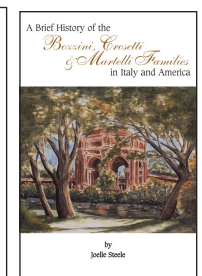
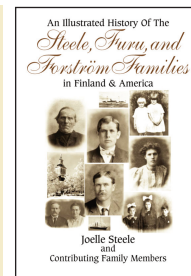
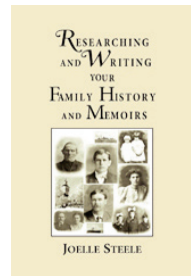
BOOKS FOR SMALL BUSINESS



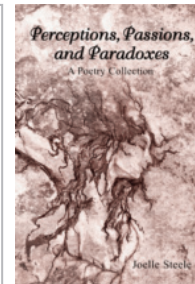
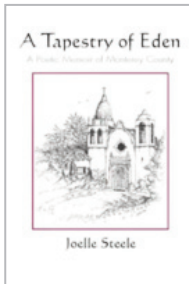
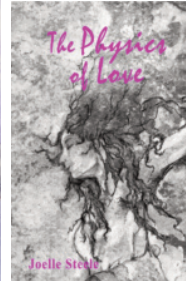
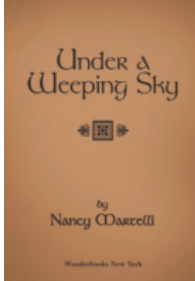
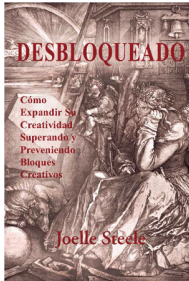
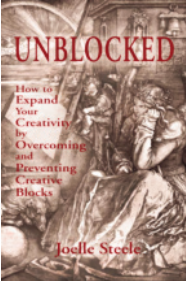
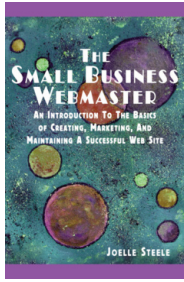
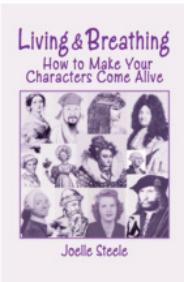
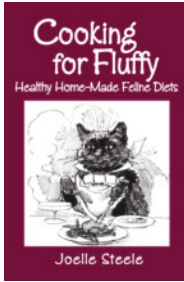
ART, ASTROLOGY, AND FORENSICS



NOVELS



GENEALOGY



POETRY AND MISCELLANEOUS

have made me a much better writer because it is so easy to re-organize what I write by using cut and paste, something I once had to do with scissors and tape, after which I had to re-type everything. Just another reason why I don't romanticize the so-called "good old days." Give me the digital age any day!

One asset for any writer is the gift of language. I am very glad that I got my degree in Language Arts, as it gave me an opportunity to learn English to the fullest and to also learn some basics of language in general and certain languages in particular. I studied Spanish, French, Italian, Latin, and Swedish. I'm good at Spanish, fairly good at French, and just have a rudimentary knowledge of the other three.

Legal Writing

When I became self-employed in 1983, I began writing contracts for the landscape industry. I had some previous legal experience from working at a small law firm where I was a part-time office manager and legal assistant to two trial attorneys. That was where I first learned about contracts as I edited and customized existing contracts for attorney approval. I never intended to write contracts and sell them. But, as it turned out, I found a reason to write them after I was asked to be an expert witness for an interior landscape company that was being sued by a hotel in the early 1980s.

I discovered a variety of things that were missing from the contract that the interior landscaper had with the hotel, and it was generated by the interior landscaping company, not the hotel. I began to research what kinds of other contracts the interior/exterior landscape companies were using.

I collected a bunch of these contracts and took them to an attorney friend of mine who specialized in business law. He told me, as I suspected, that none of those contracts would hold up if challenged. I hired him to write two types of contracts for me, one for products and one for services, and I began writing a variety of contracts for the horticultural industry, with him reviewing each of them for me.

I wanted to be more self-sufficient with writing contracts, so I took a class on the Constitution, one on torts, and two on legal writing. I still had the attorney review things, but now I had a much better understanding of what was behind contract law.

I ultimately had some of my contracts published by forms houses, then published them myself, offering them for sale via ads in my

periodicals and later in 1992 on my first website. I made them in three-part forms and offered customized logos for an additional fee. I shipped them all over the United States and Canada. I also started writing contracts for other kinds of small businesses until I had about 60 contract forms. By 2002, most small businesses had computers, and so I converted all of the contracts into Word documents and began attaching them to E-mails instead, something I still do. Unfortunately, I don't sell nearly as many as I once did since so many other people have jumped on that bandwagon.

Writing Process

I get an endless number of ideas from everywhere. These ideas are a product of my imagination and are worthless until they are developed into an article, web page, marketing letters, novel, etc.

Everything I write begins the same: I have an idea, and then I research it. To me, research is where my ideas take shape, and I try very hard to avoid being derivative, stale, repetitious, or stereotypical in my writing by doing extensive research. In particular, with novels, research leads me to more original story concepts that I might not otherwise have even considered because I simply didn't know of their existence.



I write all the time, every day, no matter what, at least 20 hours per week. When I'm not writing, I'm thinking about what I'm writing or what I plan to write. In general, I'm usually working on at least ten or more books that are in various stages of completion. I pick one to concentrate on until I finish it, but that doesn't stop me from working on the others every now and again, especially when I suddenly get an idea for how to write a particular segment of a book or I figure out how to make something happen in the story. And, I'm not always writing books. I also have to work on writing articles and contract templates, and I do art and design, as well as face and ear analysis and comparison.

Despite doing other work, I usually get my books done relatively quickly by simply writing a little every single day of the week. That

way I don't make the mistake that so many of my writing students have told me about, where they wait until they have a vacation coming and then they try to write their book in that one- or two-week period and can't get it done. That is just plain insane. All those would-be writers end up doing is talking about writing a book rather than actually sitting down and writing it.

I set realistic goals for what I can achieve each day. If I know I can write two pages that day, I write two pages. If I can write for 30 minutes,



I write for 30 minutes. I also type about 90 to 100 WPM, which allows for greater output in less time. Typing fast is a writer's greatest tool besides a command of the English language.

I write on paper when I'm not at my desk and have an idea. I have something to write on with me and next to me almost all the time. I write mostly on my computer in my home office, but back in the 1980s and 90s when I was traveling for business (and occasionally for pleasure) I wrote in other countries, in planes and airports, trains and train stations, buses and bus stations, hotels, campers and campgrounds, and at the homes of friends and family.

When I used to do lecture circuits, I wrote my articles and books in spiral-bound notebooks and then later typed them up, either on a typewriter or computer. I only print out my work when I'm going to do the final edit, and again when I proof it. I typically edit and rewrite a book at least four or five times before I'm done.

For my novels, I do a lot of charts and maps to help me visualize where things are or how people are related. Each book shares at least one mention of a character from another book, and there is always one character from the fictitious Arden family. I keep the Arden family tree in my genealogy software and print out the part of the family that pertains to the story I'm writing. Then I scribble all over it, making notes everywhere. In most cases, the charts are almost completely unreadable by the time I'm done writing the book. Same with maps and other notes. A student in one of my writing classes commented on seeing some of these charts and maps that it was "an insight into your mind." I'm not sure if that's a good

thing or a bad thing. I included some of my visual aids at the end of this chapter so you the reader can decide.

I first invented the Arden family around 1975, but I didn't write the first Arden novel until *The Rosary Bed* (1980) and *Devil's Garden* (1982) two years later. I had already written a short draft of *Shades* (before I wrote *Devil's Garden*), and I had six other Arden novels outlined or in some partially-started form.

It wasn't until 1998 that I entered all 400 of the Ardens and their extended families in Europe and the United States into my genealogy software. That's when I again started working on the novel that would become *Shades*. But, I had to put it aside for years to work on other books and works for hire.

In 2013, I picked up again on *Shades* (2014), finished it, and released it, followed by *Delusions*, *Reflections*, *Spider in the Attic*, *Buried in the Peat* (which I also translated into French), *Death by Orchid*, *Man in the Drawer*, and *The Bones of Creed Howlett*. I also completed a re-do of *Devil's Garden* along with the book that originally went with it, *Devil's Garden: An Encyclopaedia of Toxic and Poisonous Plants*.

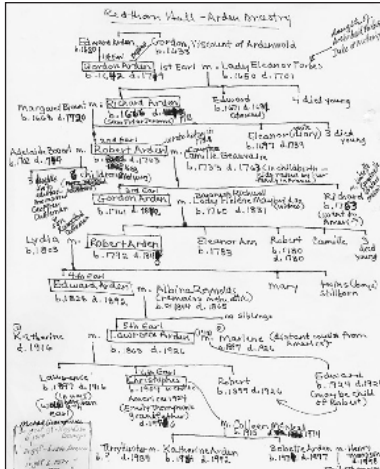
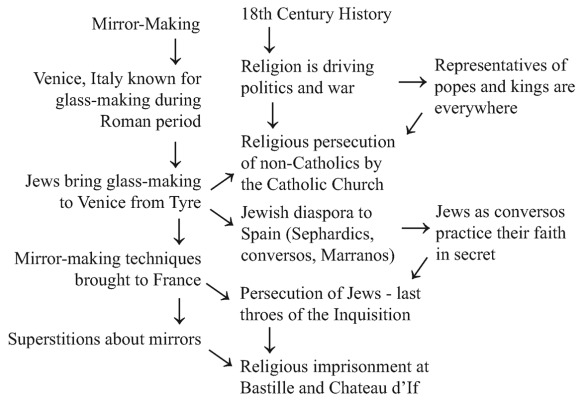
I'm never blocked, not even for a second. I'm never bored or tired of writing. I never run out of things to write. I shift back and forth from one project to another based on which one I either want or need to finish first or that I have time to work on long enough to make headway on it. I don't like to let more than one day pass without working on a project as I feel the flow of the work kind of lapses and it can be difficult to get it back if it does.

I keep computer files for research and ideas. My "idea files" have info for titles, character names, subjects to write about, plot ideas, etc. I also have many potential projects that are partly researched and outlined, some with a few chapter drafts. I periodically purge my files to get rid of things that are good ideas but probably not for me.

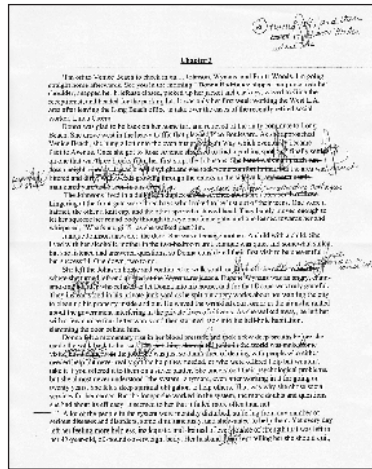
I almost never fail to complete a project because once I start an article or a book, I have already invested in sufficient research and planning to know that it will work. That said, I have twice had a book fall apart to the extent that I had to abandon it entirely. In one instance, with a novel titled *Avenging Angel* (the follow up to *Devil's Garden* and *Rosary Bed*), I became ill, and by the time I was well again, four years had gone by and I just couldn't recapture the gist of the story, despite having a detailed outline and a publisher. In another instance, I was

working on an Arden novel called *Bird Lady*. I loved the idea for it, I was very happy with my progress on it, and then it all fell apart when I realized I had made a very small yet fundamental plot error, and while I tried off and on for months to find a solution, I simply could not fix it. I kept several parts of the manuscript and I have been using them in one of my Arden novels in progress.

A chart about 18th century history that I made when I was in the planning stages of writing "Reflections," the most complicated book I've written so far.



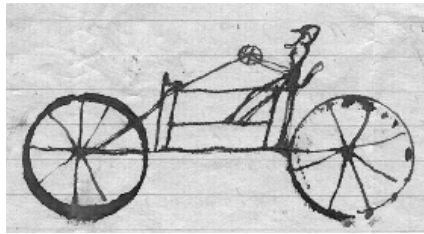
The European branch of the Arden family used in "Shades."



An edited page from the final draft of "Delusions."

ART, DESIGN, & ILLUSTRATION

I love art. I may have inherited the “art” gene in my family – and we really have one dating back several hundred years on my mother’s Swedish-Finn side. Creativity is very strong in that family. The most famous artist was my very, very distant eighth cousin once removed, Tapio Wirkkala. He was one of the most decorated artists in Finland, known for his glass work and also as the first artist to bring international acclaim to Finland’s glassware by winning the 1951 Milan Triennale awards – among many other awards for his works. He also designed cutlery, sculptures, and jewelry, as well as airline food service trays. My grandfather on my mother’s side was a logger and occasional farmer who liked to build birdhouses and he also drew some weird cartoons. That’s supposed to be him on his tractor, and the horse reminds me a little of Native American or primitive cave art.



I’m not a cartoonist like my grandfather, but I have spent my entire life making art. In addition to my other creative pursuits, I like to look at art, read about art, and make art – painting in particular. Despite the fact that I don’t have a degree in art, it has always felt completely natural to me, and I’m happiest when I have a paintbrush in my hand.

My Mother’s Influence

My earliest art-related memories date back to Daly City where my father had a model railroad layout in the back of our garage. My mother and I used to sit at the kitchen table and paint little buildings and fences, and make trees and other things for that miniature world. Later, in Seaside, my earliest art memory is of my mother and I sitting at a

table in the living room on a very rainy day with a tin of watercolors and a glass of water, each with a brush in hand. We painted together like this often. Back in those days, the newspaper comic strip pages



Mom's doodles.



were printed in black and white, and my mother would cut the pages apart into the individual comic strips and we'd color them in with gouache watercolors, sometimes with crayons (which I loved) or colored pencils. My mother taped these colorful funnies to the refrigerator door.

Most of my earliest art influences were courtesy of my mother and her artist friends. My mother could draw really well, as evidenced by her doodles of women. She also drew flowers really well, but I don't have any of those drawings. She taught me some of the basics of drawing when I was little. She was also a very good seamstress, crocheted moderately well (her mother was a master crocheter), and was an expert at counted cross stitchery – talents I did not inherit from her!

My mother also enjoyed doing crafts. We always had a bunch of little projects to do, such as mosaics and pebble art, weaving and knitting projects, embroidery and needlepoint, pyrography (wood-burning graphics), and paint-by-numbers sets. In other words, I was never short of something “artsy” to do. I remember that when I was a teenager my mother and I painted pictures and designs on rocks, and I still have a rock I did with a dragon on it. We also tried our hands at macramé – she was good at it, but not me.

My mother was a do-it-yourself type of person, and she definitely passed that on to me. We used to walk by a store window and see something we liked, and one of us would inevitably say, “We could make that.” And we often did. When it came to clothes, my mother was good

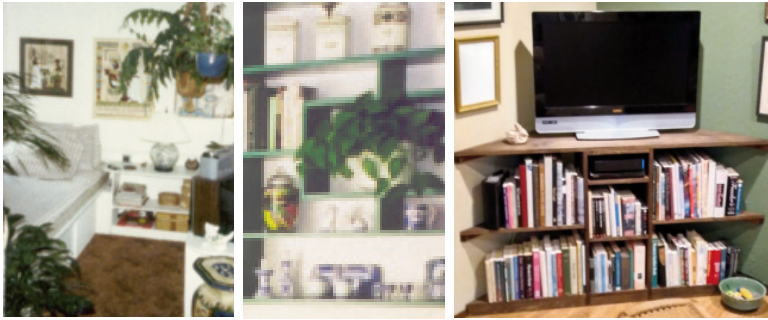
at sewing and I was good at designing things or altering patterns to make them uniquely mine. I was also good at re-designing and re-purposing clothes that my mother would then sew for me. So we made a great team. I was never the seamstress that she was, but I was always really good at making curtains, pillows, pillow shams, purses, tote bags, and even a quilt. I made one dress and it was wearable. It had a mandarin collar and bell sleeves, and was made of cotton in a brown and gold print. I also knitted a few sweaters over the years, including one for Bob that had one sleeve slightly longer, though not noticeably so, which he actually used to wear!



I learned to do a lot of other do-it-yourself projects from my mother, including re-covering chair seats, which I have done numerous times. I also learned how to refinish and paint old furniture in order to breathe new life into it. I learned how to design furniture and built-in cabinetry, skills that came in very handy when I was remodeling houses during the 1980s. I began by designing a shelf to hold my mother's bird figurines, and she had it built. I have since designed many shelves, shelving units, bookcases, and desks – including desks for several of my home offices.

When I was living in studio apartments in Venice Beach, I designed built-in shelves, desks, a platform to hold my bed (with storage under it), a shelving unit next to the bed, and shelves (again with storage under them) to hold my TV. Later, when I was living in Monterey, I designed more shelving for my office, kitchen, and bedroom. And in Lacey, I designed closet shelving and a corner cabinet to hold my TV. I hired out almost all of this work.

My mother's artist friends visited from time to time or we visited them, and I got to watch them painting or just listened to them talking about art. My mother's friend and half-fifth cousin, Dua, was a commercial artist who lived in Port Angeles, Washington. Dua once did a watercolor of our house on Lassen Street in Seaside, California, and I have a watercolor she did as a teenager of my grandmother's house on



A small sampling of some of the built-in units I designed and had built, starting with the sleeping area in my studio apartment in Venice Beach, my kitchen in Monterey, and my den in Lacey.

Independence Road in Rochester, Washington, and a small oil painting on canvas of a yellow rose.

My mother also grew up with and kept in touch with a classmate named John H. Holm, the creator of *Woody's World* cartoons. Some of my mother's other friends were art patrons or were artistically creative. This ongoing exposure to art and artists led me to realize that art could be more than just a simple hobby.

Leo's Influence

By the time I was three years old, both of my grandfathers had died, and my father's mother married Leo, a classically-trained artist from a small town in the commune of Framura, Italy. He became the only grandfather I ever really knew and loved. He and my grandmother lived in the Marina District of San Francisco, and there was a little area off their kitchen where his art table and supplies were located. Right next to it was a sunroom where his oil paintings were drying. As a little girl and later as a teenager, I loved to watch him paint whenever we visited or when he and my grandmother visited us.

As early as grammar school, I knew that art was going to be significant in my life, and Leo encouraged that interest by taking me to museums and art galleries in San Francisco and Carmel, where he taught me about art and artists, the techniques they used, the various art movements, and how to look at, understand, and appreciate art in all its forms and genres. By understanding and seeing art, I could appreciate something from almost every artist and every style.

Thanks largely to Leo, my tastes in art are very broad and extremely

eclectic. I enjoy equally the works of Kandinsky, Chagall, Monet, Turner, Constable, Peter Max, Innes, Vermeer, Mucha, Klimt, van Gogh, Mucha, and many, many others. I love the French impressionists, the California impressionists, Hudson River School, Barbizons, Bauhaus Movement, art nouveau, and more.

There was always a certain amount of time allotted to art instruction at public school, but never at the level I needed. However, Leo was always there, even if I didn't see him that often. He would take me with him when he went out to sketch or paint and I, of course, brought my own little sketch pad and pencils with me so that I could sketch too. Leo taught me how to select the focal point of my drawing or painting, to determine the best angle and composition. He taught me how to mix colors, how to use color to create depth or emphasis, and how to see the color of ambient light and accurately replicate that effect with paint. He taught me about perspective, drawing lines all over some of my drawings to illustrate where the vanishing points should be. When it came to art, Leo never treated me like a child. He didn't hesitate to tell me what I was doing wrong or how I could improve.

When I was about ten years old, Leo gave me a set of paints - Yasutomo watercolors. They became my favorites, and I've replaced them many times over the years. He also gave me some of his old art supplies, including watercolor brushes, some of which I still use to this day, along with a little plastic watercolor palette he bought for me at Oliver's Art Store in Monterey in 1968. In the summer of 1975, he gave me his old art table, which I used for almost twenty years, until the poor rickety thing was damaged beyond repair in the Northridge Earthquake of 1994. I also have a small oil painting he did, a still life with chrysanthemums, that he painted for me at Christmas of 1967 in Monterey. It has always been hung in a prominent place wherever I live.

Art Instruction

When I was nine years old, my mother decided that I might enjoy and benefit from art lessons. She knew a woman named Inez who offered private art lessons in Carmel. My mother didn't drive and it was way too far to walk, so my Saturday mornings for the next eight years were consumed by catching a bus to Monterey, then changing

buses and going to Carmel, where I learned all the basic techniques of drawing and painting.

For about a year of that time, my mother switched me to a teacher who had me learning to paint in oils. She told me that she wanted me to know how to work in oils because she thought that was what “real” artists did. I can’t say I didn’t learn anything from that year of training, but I didn’t exactly enjoy the experience which, in retrospect, I think was mainly because I didn’t like the instructor. As for the other seven years, they were absolutely great.

Over the years, I dabbled in and took instruction in various media – acrylics, oils, pastels, colored pencil, felt tips – but I always came back to ink, charcoal, and painting, either watercolors or acrylics. I attended many art workshops, mostly in painting, either watercolors or acrylics on canvas. Most of these were taught by local artists in California or artists who were visiting California and offering workshops there or who were having a workshop somewhere that I was visiting. I especially enjoyed certain art workshops I attended: two with multi-media artist Anne Bagby, one with watercolorist Tom Lynch, and one with Gary Jenkins.

Art in Public School

Art was taught in the public school system throughout my childhood. I have a lot of great memories of art from kindergarten, especially of finger painting and drawing on the blackboard with colored chalk. In fact, I was very attracted to colored chalks and my parents got me a large, two-sided, standing blackboard so that I could draw on it. As I look back on this, I find it interesting that my interest in chalk never led me to work with pastels, since that would seem to be a natural progression. But I always preferred painting. To this day, whenever I see those little cases of watercolors in a store, I always get a very nostalgic feeling, remembering my childhood adventures in painting. But I also liked drawing with colored Lindy ballpoint pens. I had lots of them in all colors, so I also get nostalgic when I see any kind of colored pens – roller balls, felt tips, etc., and there are so many different colors today, including gold and silver metallic shades.

In the first grade my teacher hung sheets of colored construction paper above the blackboard with the names of colors on them. I memorized them in order and still remember them to this day: red, blue,

yellow, green, gray, purple, pink, orange, brown, white, black. I remember making daffodils out of construction paper and holiday decorations out of Styrofoam balls and glitter, decorating classroom walls and one of the display cases in the administration office, painting scenery for a play, and drawing and painting pictures of houses and farms and farm animals.

I also remember hanging my own paintings and those of other students on the cafeteria walls for an art show. I had my art displayed in three county-wide student art shows before I was 10 years old. I vividly remember the three pieces: a watercolor of a barn on a hillside with a black and white cow in front of it, a charcoal drawing of my cat Candy, and a pen and ink drawing of some fuchsias from our backyard. I liked to draw animals, buildings, trees, and flowers from an early age. That artistic theme for illustration has followed me into my adulthood.

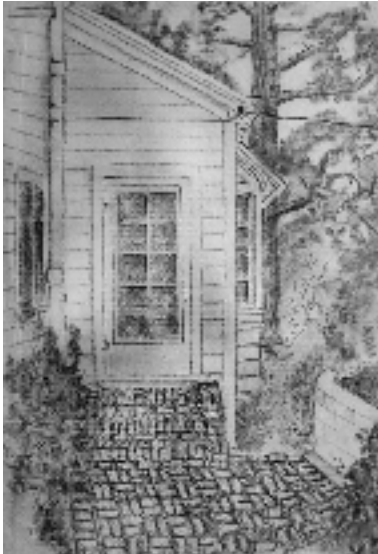


During the day, whenever I wasn't in school, I went into the little tool shed in the back yard, lit candles, and wrote or drew pictures. I also loved to play in the dirt. Sometimes I think I may have had a burgeoning talent for architecture since I have always enjoyed drawing buildings. But back in my childhood days, I liked to build not only houses, but entire cities in the backyard sand pile, using small scraps of wood, geranium stalks, and mud. The hours – days – that I spent in that sand pile are among my most vivid and happy childhood memories.

Making Art

By the time I entered junior high, I had become fairly proficient at my art. I could draw almost anything, was competent with my tools and materials, and was constantly drawing and painting in my spare time. After we moved to Monterey in late 1965, I was even more motivated to make art than before. I was very inspired by the beautiful landscape and

nature of the area: the pine trees, the oaks, the squirrels, the birds, the fishing boats, the rocky coastline. It was such a dramatic change from the barren sand dunes and tumbleweeds that characterized my former nearby neighborhood in Seaside.



Monterey was also closer to the bus system, so I had greater access to Carmel and other areas. I was also older, so I was able to spend more time on my own going to the art galleries in Carmel after my Saturday art classes. I could also go sketching on my own after school, although our backyard was not without things to draw and paint. I still have an old charcoal drawing of the living room back door and porch of our house that I did back then.



Sketching outdoors was different back then. The Monterey area was less touristy. It was a more Bohemian atmosphere and you saw people painting by the side of the road a lot. I felt right at home in this environment and I was thriving artistically. By the time I was 15, I saw art as my main focus in life. I came home from school each day, did my homework as fast as I could, and then drew and painted for hours. I enjoyed fashion, architecture, and landscape. I especially liked drawing in pen and ink, and I was good with charcoal as well. But, my real talent was in paint-

ing, and I was doing a lot of impressionistic and abstract art during that time.

This was the time in my life when I saw exactly what my artistic focus was. I guess I always knew, but this was when I formalized it in my mind, gave it some structure, so to speak. And it was as I had always suspected: I drew and painted (and wrote about) the things that were of interest to me. So it was only natural that when it came to both fine art and illustration, I was inspired by and focused my creative skills on plants, animals, nature, landscapes, and architecture. As for my abstracts, they were actually, in part, inspired by those same things, but often with more of a science fiction or fantasy touch to them, sometimes an archaeological-type theme.

While I did experiment with many different art forms, it always came back to painting for me. I love to write, but not nearly as much as I love to paint or as much as I love art. It's no wonder so many of my articles were accompanied by my own illustrations and photography. I often found it hard to do one without the other, although I did manage to make that happen.

Art Techniques

The following is some background on the kinds of tools, supplies, and materials I use to make art and, in general, how I work.

Canvases. I have no preference for any particular brand of canvas. I buy medium-weight, gallery-wrap, and pre-primed, about 3/4" to 1-1/2" deep, in a variety of sizes and dimensions. I particularly like doing diptychs and triptychs, so when I buy canvases, I generally look for sizes that will allow me to do some of those grouped works.

Paints & Gels. I have used many different brands of acrylic (polymer) paint and I have found them all to be pretty much the same as far as color is concerned, but I prefer Liquitex because it never cracks. My second choices for acrylic paints are Golden or Grumbacher. I also paint in watercolors, and use mostly Winsor & Newton and Cotman. I use gel medium in a variety of textures and sometimes use flow enhancer.

Inks & Pens. I first used Higgins India ink back in the 1960s when it was made from organic substances such as squid ink. Those old inks had a dark and shiny look to them when they dried. The Higgins inks I've bought in more recent years do not seem to be nearly as dark and dense as their predecessors and look more like gouache watercolor. So, I don't do as much ink work anymore.



When I do draw with ink, I use Higgins, or else Pelikan or Speedball inks. I use mostly dip pens and I have many different kinds and sizes of nibs. I have also worked with Koh-I-Noor Rapidograph technical pens in the past, and they were great tools. But, despite my best efforts to keep them clean and unclogged, they tended to dry out if I wasn't using one of them every day.

Brushes. I have lots of brushes and no preferences for any one type or brand except for the ones I use on large canvases when applying my first washes or blocking in. In that case I prefer 2"- and 4"-wide Purdy house-painting brushes. Otherwise, I use flats and brights, usually natural fur bristles, and I also use several different sized riggers. For varnishing I use a 1-1/2" or 3" soft flat.

Palettes. I have three watercolor palettes, but for acrylics I prefer Pyrex clear glass pie plates and custard cups to hold and mix my paints, as their transparency allows me to hold them over the canvas and check the color against the painting.

Easels. I don't use an easel very often. I can't find one that inclines the way I want it too, so I prefer to paint flat on my kitchen counter top when possible, where I have both a skylight and pot lights for illumination. I protect the counter top with a 9' square painter's canvas drop cloth.

Storage. Because I work in my kitchen, I don't want my stuff in the way of food prep. So, I have two rolling carts for all my supplies. One

has shelves and holds bigger items loose and in baskets; the other has drawers. I store my brushes, knives, pencils, pens, etc., in antique pottery vases and pitchers on top of the carts. I store completed and unused canvases in a large shelving unit in a back bedroom and closet, and I dry my paintings there once I'm finished working on them.

Other Tools. I use old toothbrushes and straws for spattering. I keep a spray bottle of water on hand to moisten the canvas if it's drying out too quickly, although I also use retarder for that purpose if I want extended blending time. I use crumpled plastic wrap, foil, and waxed paper to press onto paint for texturing when gel medium would be too thick. I also paint with my fingers and with a variety of painting knives and sea sponges. I always have Q-tips around for touch-ups, and I use old dish towels and rags for cleanup. Almost anything can be a tool depending on what you are trying to accomplish and what you have on hand.



Clothing. I wear old clothes and a denim apron when painting. I wear disposable gloves when sponging or painting with my fingers.

Sketches. I have an active dream life and some of my ideas for my art come from those dreams, so I always have a million ideas. I sketch a few thumbnails and make notes about colors, canvas sizes, and any gels or special tools I might want to use. When I do a commissioned piece, I take my inspiration from the designer or the individual who requests the painting, make several sketches and value studies, and ultimately incorporate some of my own style into the work.

Background. Whether I'm painting a landscape or an abstract, I always put a great deal of effort into the primary washes and layers of paint that form the background for each piece. If they are not done correctly, nothing else I do from that point on will work. I think this probably stems from all of the landscapes I have painted over the

years and the importance I always placed on getting the sky right in each of them.

With my abstracts, I start with about three colors to which I add water or gel medium — sometimes both — or flow enhancer to thin them, depending on how much translucency I want to achieve. I use a 2” or 4” brush and work very quickly at this point, working wet-on-wet and blending the colors together, but not allowing them to mix entirely or become murky. As they begin to dry, I work with a wet sea sponge to further shape the swirls and waves that make up my backgrounds.



After allowing the painting to dry very thoroughly, I work with a 1” flat brush and add undiluted colors to enhance the existing washes. I then work those colors further with a

damp sea sponge to achieve greater depth in the background. After the painting is again fully dried, I repeat this process, often as many as three or more times until I’m satisfied. With landscapes and still lifes, I work similarly but with a less “wild” approach to the background, and a more controlled application of paint.

Foreground. I wait until the background is completely dry (usually overnight). I then apply paint with palette knives of varying shapes, and with whatever brushes work best for the piece, including everything from stiff-bristled brights to soft, miniature riggers. Any paint splattering is done either right after the background has dried, or as the final touch when the rest of the painting is otherwise completed, depending on the effect I’m going for. I either blow the paint through a straw or I use an old toothbrush along with my thumb or a palette knife, sometimes adding more speckles and dots with a tiny size 00 round brush. Lastly, I sign the piece and paint the canvas edges.

Finishing Up. I let the painting dry thoroughly for at least three days (often as long as a week). I then photograph it. Afterwards, I apply gloss varnish, usually two to three coats, waiting about six hours or so between coats.

Works in Progress. Because there is a substantial amount of drying time in my acrylic painting process, I'm usually working on at least three canvases at any given time so that while one is drying, I'm completing another, doing backgrounds for new ones, varnishing completed canvases, etc.

Painting with Both Hands. I'm ambidextrous, which gives me a significant advantage when painting. I can paint equally well with either hand, and often work a brush with one hand and a sponge or palette knife with the other, almost simultaneously. This served me



especially well when I did illustration work in watercolor because I could paint with one hand and use a hand-held hair dryer in the other to speed up the drying process when glazing.

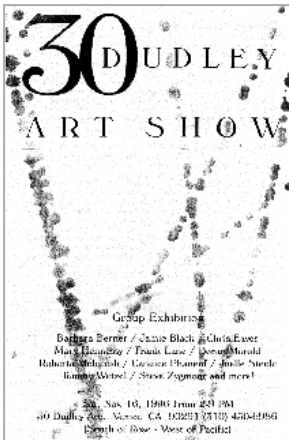
General Work Habits. I'm very neat and organized when I work, and I take good care of all my tools and supplies. I'm especially picky with cleaning my brushes, since some are rather expensive. I have some brushes that are more than 30 years old that I use regularly and they are in near-perfect condition. I keep a clean work area too. I learned long ago that if you are sloppy or careless, you will inevitably spill or smudge or in some way damage your work, or you will destroy the tools of your trade. Disorganization is especially costly, whether you're painting for fun or being paid by the project. Time is money, no matter what you are doing with that time.

Art Exhibits

Throughout elementary, junior high, and high school, I had my work displayed at a total of nine different local and county student art shows. One of my intricate ink drawings – an Indian brass bell – was selected for inclusion in a county-wide student art show.

By the time I was in my 20s, I was living in and managing an apartment building in Burlingame. It had an unused room that had a door to the outside and two large windows covered with vines. It was originally supposed to be part of an apartment, but failed to be permitted, so I asked the owner if I could rent it as a room to paint in. He said he couldn't rent it to me, but if I wanted to use it I could, and so I did.

It made a really good studio because I was painting in oils and I didn't want the smell in my tiny apartment. I was able to create several oils on canvas that were 6-feet tall. I



wasn't even looking for a gallery when I simply wandered into one and ended up having my watercolors exhibited at a co-op show and a year later had a solo show of my oils, the latter being very well received and therefore giving me a significant incentive to pursue my art further.

I enjoyed participating in art shows in southern California, and I was the coordinator and participant in a couple art shows in Venice in 1995 and 1996. I

didn't participate in most shows because they were juried, and I don't believe art should be judged. It's too subjective, and I saw how that played out more than once. I was a judge for an art show, and I sat with several people who were artists and members of the local art world, many of whom had been judges at other shows for other organizations. We looked at the submitted works and I was very disturbed by the almost complete lack of hard criteria used by the committee. It was really about personal taste and the organization's political agenda than it was about the art itself.

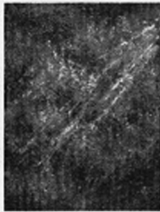
That was an eye-opening experience for me, and I knew at once that I would not be entering, much less judging, a juried art show again. I never entered art contests either – or any other kinds of art

Bay Arts Guide

Burlingame Artist Opens at The Lorton

Louis Friedstadt

Known for its eclectic mix of art and artists, The Lorton is featuring a new local talent, abstract impressionist Nancy Martelli. Martelli, age 25, is also a published author and illustrator of a poetry chapbook, "Under A Weeping Sky." She works in oil on canvas and is a rare find amid a culture that continues to indiscriminately build art on the foundations



"Garden Cathedral,"
72" h x 42" w, oil on canvas.

of the psychodebic era. Her landscapes and plant imagery convey a brilliance of color, yet their stark quality lends a piercing subtlety to this young artist's collection. In short, Martelli has found her own unique style, and it shines with perspicacity and sophistication.

"Golden Grass," "Oaken Palace," and "Salt Flats" reflect the dry, desolate summer scenery of the East Bay. Martelli's former residence while a student at Cal State Hayward. The amount

of detail in the brush strokes is nothing less than impressive when viewed at close range: from a few feet distance, they merge to form a soft, shadowy, wave-like effect. The same observation can be made with "Garden Cathedral," an emerald vision of towering eucalyptus trees backlit by a rising sun. Up close, it's a myriad of stained glass; from afar, a mist of fragrant foliage — and it comes with a poem by the same name.

Martelli paints primarily "en plein aire" and also from photographs. Perhaps the Lorton and other venues should take a close look at some of her photos for a future exhibition. I had the pleasure to peruse them, as well as other selections of Martelli's paintings and drawings, when I visited her in Burlingame to discuss her work. It is no small wonder that her paintings are so replete with vivid color and rich texture. The same qualities are clearly reproduced in the photos she takes with her large format and 35mm Rolleiflex cameras.

"I like photography a lot, but I love painting and drawing. You just can't say with a photo what you can say with a brush," says Martelli.

Among the works on hand at Martelli's apartment/studio were the beginnings of a new collection, each painting with an accompanying poem.

"I consider myself to be a writer and an artist, and often the two seem to go hand-in-hand for me. With this new collection, I am focusing my attention on that pairing," she says.

The anchor piece for this new collection is "Feather Waters," a lush trib-



ute to the fall colors of the Feather River Canyon. Again, Martelli has managed to capture the intimate experience of a crisp autumn moment in her carefully crafted brush strokes, all the while creating an emotional nexus with the viewer.

"When I'm working on a painting, I don't think all that much about what the final effect will be on those who look at my art. I am just caught up in the process of creating something new," says Martelli.

Perhaps new and refreshing. Because Martelli's work is that and then some. She has achieved much in the way of individual style for an artist her age, and we can only hope that she will continue to forge ahead with her bold imagery and eloquent language. This artist has a lot to say.

competitions for that matter. Pretty much for the same reason, and also because I don't really care much about winning awards. I've always been able to sell my art (and my writing), so I don't think an award is going to make any difference for me one way or another. If people like my work well enough to buy it, that's pretty much all I want and need in the way of recognition and encouragement.

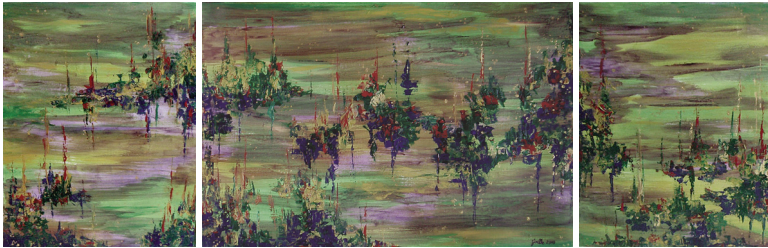
The Meaning of Art

Judging art was not the only thing I disagreed with as far as the art world was concerned. I also didn't agree with the philosophy that abstract art should have a meaning or a message that it sought to convey. In my mind, if I want to send a message, the written word is always going to be the most effective way for me to do it. Words are far less ambiguous than are the vagueries of abstract images. After all, just because an artist tries to send a message through his or her art does not mean it will be received in the way it is intended. A painting that symbolizes an artist's radical political agenda may be seen by a viewer as something other than a social statement and may

instead be interpreted for the personal emotional chord that it strikes in that viewer.

Saying what your art “means” doesn’t guarantee that it will ever be a reminder of that message to the buyer who hangs it over the sofa in his den. And so, my abstracts are never reflective of some inner struggle and they do not harbor any esoteric meaning, unless the viewer wishes to attribute some personal meaning of their own to my work. And they are always welcomed to do so.

When people ask me who has influenced my work, I can’t really answer because I don’t feel a direct influence from any particular artist or art movement. Plus, I don’t like to be labeled. I always look at myself as being a creative person who expresses my creativity by allowing it to flow out of me in whatever format or media feels appropriate at the moment.



Art Versus Design

I have a bone to pick with art snobs – some of them artists themselves – who believe fine art is superior to commercial art (design). To me, art is art. Design is simply art that finds a commercial application. It has to fulfill a function. That doesn’t make it any less worthy of being called art. And, for those artists who complain they can’t make money off their fine art, I say there is nothing glamorous about being a starving artist.

I learned to do design work to pay the bills. It *is* art, and it certainly pays far better than fine art for the average artist, myself included. I have made more money doing illustration (\$4,000 for a three-hour project) and graphic design (\$6,800 for a 28-hour project) than I’ve made doing a commissioned painting (\$2,200 for a 22-hour, 36” x 48” acrylic painting on canvas).

Women's Art Group

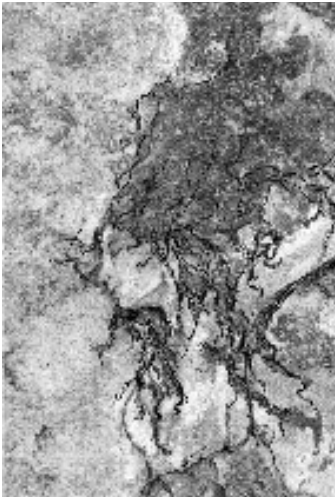
In 1988, my graphic designer friend Nadia and I founded a group for women in the arts. There were about 20-30 working women who all shared a lot of their experiences and their resources with the other artist members. Unfortunately, the group started to fall apart a few years after I moved to Monterey in 1997, and was defunct by the time Nadia moved to Oregon in 2004.



Everyone in the group had a tattoo, and there was a pot of money that was on hand for the next new member's tattoo of their choice (within a budget). When I moved away, they gave me the pot, and in 2006 I finally used it to get my rose tattoo bracelet.

Art Museums & Galleries

I love to visit art museums, and because I traveled a lot for many years, I had the opportunity to visit almost every major art museum in North America, some several times. This gave me the chance to



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Leap of Faith, 2001, pencil and charcoal on floor tile, a work of art that became an illustration for a book cover. An ad for stationery design.

see a lot of exhibits that had traveled from Europe to North America. The only one I really wanted to see that I had missed a few years ago was the Kandinsky exhibit when it came to the United States. It didn't come anywhere near the western states, and I didn't want to travel all the way to Nashville or, I think, somewhere in Michigan.

I have especially enjoyed certain museums that have an excellent collection of permanent holdings. The DeYoung in San Francisco was my first museum experience, and one that I have repeated numerous times, as I have the Seattle Art Museum. I have been to the National Art Gallery and the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington D.C. at least ten times each, and I've been to the Art Institute of Chicago and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago



The Huntington Botanical Gardens.

go about four or five times each. I've also been more than once to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

Some smaller art museums that I liked were the Ringling Museum of Art in Sarasota, Florida, the Frye Art Museum in Seattle, the Legion of Honor in San Francisco, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, and the Rhode Island School of Design Museum. I have also tried to visit museums that specialize in Asian art, such as the Asian Art Museums in San Francisco and Seattle.

I've traveled in Canada several times, where I've visited the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, the Arts Gallery of Ontario, the Vancouver Art Gallery, and the National Museum of Fine Arts in Quebec. I've also been to the National Museum of Art in Mexico City, the Zacatecan Museum in Zacatecas, and the Palacio de Gobierno in Guadalajara. In Ajijic, a town famous for its art community in the Lake Chapala area of Mexico, I have visited the local art galleries.

While living in southern California, I got to make numerous trips to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Getty Art Museum, the Armand Hammer Museum (now simply “The Hammer”), and my very favorite place, the Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens located in San Marino right next door to Pasadena.

I’ve visited the Huntington at least a dozen times, and there is always way too much there to see all in one day, but it is one of the best places to visit in southern California. The art collection is small but very beautiful. The gardens are highly diversified and truly exceptional, and the library displays many original manuscripts and letters by a variety of well-known historic figures, from George Washington to Ernest Hemingway.

In addition to art museums, I have never passed up the opportunity to visit a local art gallery or two, or twenty, or more along the way. I try not to get so caught up in the art of famous artists that I overlook the famous-artists-in-the-making who are currently exhibiting their works in little co-op galleries located everywhere.

Fashion and Jewelry Design

As a teenager, I liked fashion design, and I did many drawings of my creations. I thought at one point that I might pursue that as a career. I often think that fashion design might have been a good thing for me to do career-wise, especially given the fact that it is so incredibly hard for me to find clothes that fit. Being just a half-inch shy of six feet tall I have never been able to buy clothes without having to alter them in some way. They are never long enough, and when clothing manufacturers make clothes for tall people, they make the pants longer. But what about the sleeves? What about the body length?

I’m sick and tired of always having to buy men’s sweaters and shirts to get the length I need. In women’s sweaters and shirts they always hit my arms at three-quarter length. Not what I want at all. If I had become a fashion designer, I would have revolutionized the fashion industry by making the sizing more similar to that used in men’s clothing, where lengths are measured in inseams, and sleeve lengths and neck sizes are measured as well.

Eventually, I put some of my fashion design interests to work for me. When I was living in Venice Beach in 1980, I created earrings, made handbags, and decorated clothing and shoes in my spare time. I made the earrings from a variety of stones and beads, and I made the handbags from heavy-duty fabric that I bought for less than half-price

because I bought it in remnants. I didn't have a sewing machine, but when I had some repairs done on my car seats at an auto upholstery shop I asked the owner where he got his sewing machines, and he gave me a 30 year-old Singer that still worked and had been replaced with a faster model. I used it for several years.

As for decorating clothing and shoes, this started when I bought a pair of shoes and used dye to paint them in swirling colors. People would stop me on the street and ask where I got my shoes, and they were amazed when I told them that I bought them at a shoe store and decorated them myself with dye. So, I decided to buy a bunch of canvas shoes and decorate them. I started out with children's sizes because I found a source for them and they were small and didn't take as much time as bigger shoes, but I also took occasional orders for adult sizes. Doing this led me to decorating sweatshirts. Then, because I found a source for overstocked beads and a woman who made vests, I started decorating her vests with beads, and then designing some vests that I hired her to make.

I sold my creations on the boardwalk at Venice Beach in a tent with a woman I had met who sold complementary items. I didn't do this for long, because after a year I knew that I didn't like to stand in a tent for

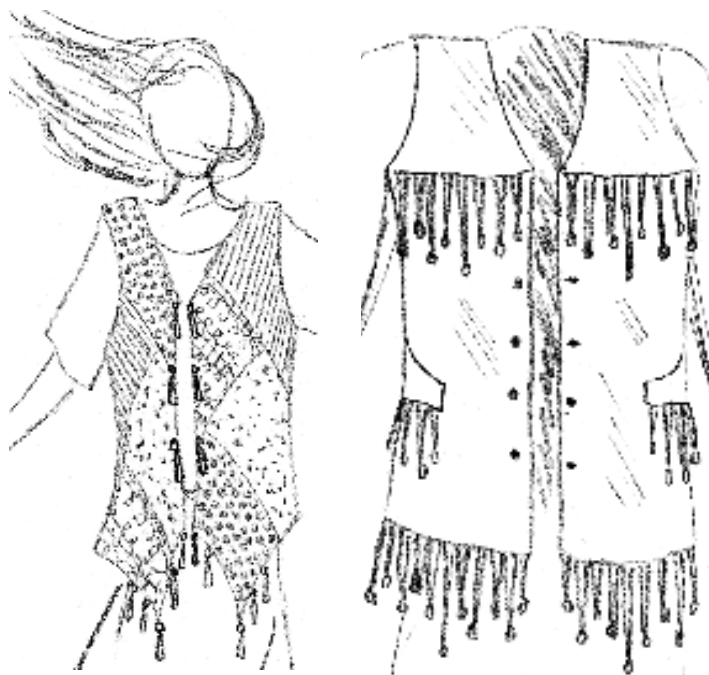


hours on end in the heat, wind, or fog every weekend. Also, I lived in a very small studio apartment, and I really didn't have enough room to create the things I made, let alone store an adequate number of them to sell. And lastly, I get very bad allergy attacks in fabric stores, and I was spending a lot of time in those places.

When I got back to Hayward, I called the agency and went for an interview. The woman asked me for my "book," otherwise known as a portfolio. I was shocked because I thought I was just interviewing I



The handbag on the bottom left was the model for about 100 bags, and I still have the pattern. The one next to it is the only bag I have and use occasionally.



Above are a couple of my designs for vests.

Since I knew so much about the history of fashion, about the design and construction of clothing for men and women, including shoes, hats, and accessories, I was able to put some of that knowledge to good use in 2014, when I created an online course, *Photo-Gen for Genealogists*, originally for the National Institute for Genealogical Studies in Canada. It contains a module entitled *Using Clothing Styles to Date Photographs 1839-1950s*.

Illustration & Cover Design

After I moved away from home to go to Cal State in Hayward, I didn't work for the first six months, but then my father withdrew his financial support because I moved out of the dorm and into an apartment. This meant I had to get a job and pretty fast. While visiting Monterey, my mother and I went to Carmel. We were walking down Ocean Avenue and ran into my former art teacher. She gave me the name and number of her sister, who owned an advertising agency in Oakland.

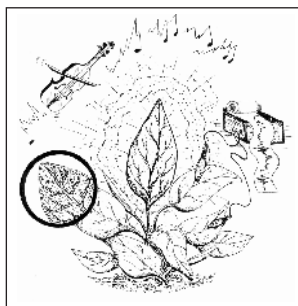
I assumed she was interested in me for an office job. But she wanted to see my art because she was interviewing me for a job as an illustrator! She told me to come back with my book. My roommate had driven me to the interview, and she immediately took me to a stationery store where I bought a big portfolio. We went back to our apartment where I assembled it with pieces of art work I had done. When I returned to the agency two days later, the owner looked at my art and hired me as a part-time illustrator, Level I.

My job as an illustrator involved drawing and painting a lot of different products, and selecting typefaces from large books. The majority of my work was for a large florist. I was already pretty good at drawing and painting flowers, and this job gave me the opportunity to refine those skills. Within six months I was still part-time but had been promoted to Level II. I loved this job. I liked the work itself, the people I worked with, and the office, which had just moved from Oakland into an old Victorian house in Berkeley. It all suited me extremely well. I eventually moved up to a Level III illustrator. In addition to doing illustration work, I sat across from a man who wrote advertising jingles, and I discovered that I had a knack for that, and ended up writing an occasional jingle as well. I worked for the agency for two years.

I continued to do illustration and design work, especially covers for books and CDs that were being produced by individuals and small press publishers. As of about of 2009 I only do covers for my own books. I also did some greeting cards while I was living in Pacific Grove and Monterey, but while they sold well, it wasn't really my thing.

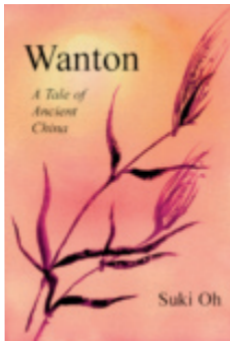
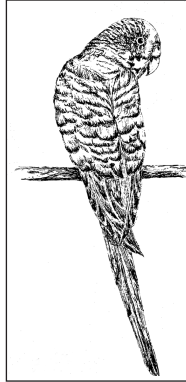


Me wearing a sweater I knitted. It had a boat neck and cap sleeves.



Painting

I still like to paint, mostly acrylics but an occasional watercolor or ink drawing. I do non-objective abstracts and impressionistic landscapes, and I also like to do plants and flowers. As of 2018, I have a lot of sketches of flowers and plants that I want to start working on, but I've been busy finishing up some writing projects, so I don't know when I will begin painting again.



Book and CD covers I designed for others, using my art or photos, and in the case of one CD, using an old photo of Rochester, Washington.



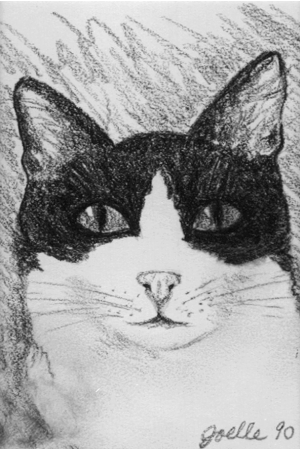
Self-portraits, 1976 & 1986.



Palace of Fine Arts, San Francisco, 1994.



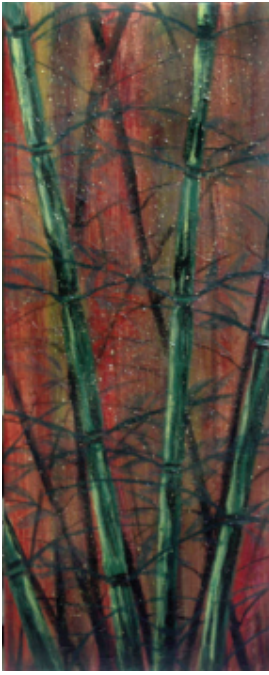
Muffin, 1996.



Timmy, 1990.



Fuchsias, 1996.



Bamboo II, 2010.

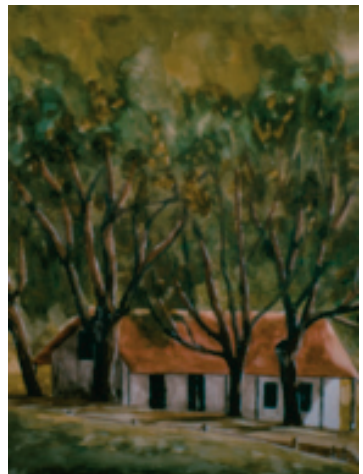
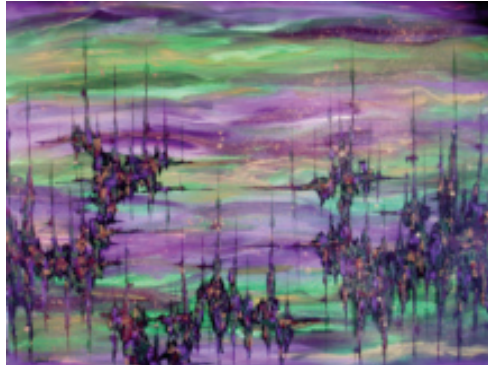
Morning Skies, 2010.



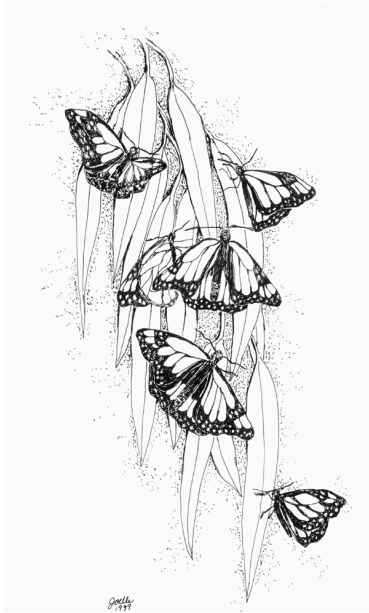
Curly Hazelnuts II, 2010.



Snow Firs, 2005.



Boronda Adobe, 1996.



Monarchs, 1999.



Yellow Sky, 1997.

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PHOTOGRAPHY & DIGITAL RESTORATION

I have always loved photographs, but I have never wanted to collect them. Instead, I have several books on photography or on photographs by certain photographers or of certain places or subject matter. I'm always drawn to things French, so I have books of old photographs of Paris by French photographers.



I also liked taking photos, and my mother gave me her old Ansco camera when I was nine years old. The first photo I took with it was of Lone Cypress in Pebble Beach, and I still have the little original (framed). Up until about 2004, I almost never left the house without a camera. Over the years I've owned many different cameras, including a 35mm Minolta, Pentax, and Rollei. The Rolleis were my favorite cameras, with their crisp Zeiss lenses. I had three of them that were old at the time and I bought them used. One was a 35mm SLR, one was a Rollei

that shot small square negatives, and one was a Rolleiflex TLR (twin lens reflex) that was my all-time favorite camera. Its large negative format produced the most beautiful photographs, picking up the tiniest of details with perfect clarity.

It is a shame that so many of my oldest and best art photos have been lost, the prints and negatives deteriorated due to improper storage in my earlier years. I sold some photographs to people who liked my work, but I never had my photos in galleries or shows.

It was in the 1980s that I actually made money shooting photos. I did headshots for wanna-be actors and musicians (d.b.a. as Holly-

wood Hot Shots), I also did artistic portraits of people, and I photographed portfolios for interior designers, landscape architects, and landscape designers. I also did illustrations and photographs for publishers, mostly of plants, landscapes, and cats.



HOLLYWOOD HOT SHOTS

Portraits of the Stars of Tomorrow

JOELLE STEELE

Photography

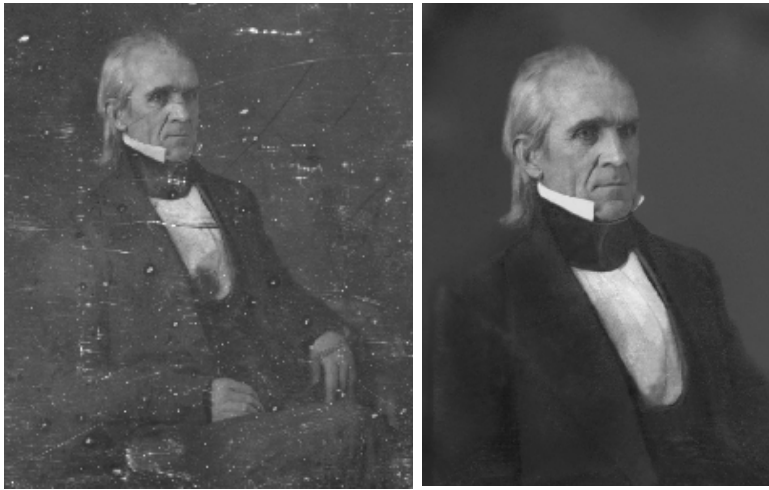
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In the early 1980s I met the late architectural photographer, Marvin Rand. He was known as a genius in the field and was especially known for his documentation of the city of Los Angeles. I met him when he was photographing a new restaurant and I was there making some large flower arrangements for the opening. We got to talking, and he told me how he felt about the artistry of photography, both in black-and-white and in color. His words had a huge impact on me, and I saw him several times over the next ten years. I was truly honored to listen to his opinions and thoughts on both the history and the future of photography.

While living on the Monterey Peninsula, I got to spend some time looking at historic photos when I made the acquaintance of the late Pat Hathaway (whose mother's name was also Joelle). Pat was a photo archivist and owned California Views. I met him when I was the webmaster for the Asilomar Conference Grounds in Pacific Grove and was looking for old photos for their website. He was an interesting man who has done an incredible job of collecting images of California, of the Monterey Peninsula in particular, documenting the history of the area.

As for restoring photographs, I got interested in this back in my darkroom days. Not that I ever had my own darkroom, but I used to

rent them by the hour. At one of those darkrooms I met a guy who taught me the ins and outs of restoring old photographs by reproducing and retouching them. This sounds so incredibly old-fashioned. Nowadays, I do it all in Photoshop software and it is so much faster and easier, and the result is far superior to what could be done



Example of a damaged Daguerreotype image of President James K. Polk that I digitally restored.

in the darkroom (or else I just never did it as well in the darkroom).

One of the advantages of Photoshop and other online photo editing software is that you can do more than just retouch a photo. You can actually repair a severely damaged photo and even reconstruct missing/damaged parts of that photo. I have reconstructed ears, eyes, and mouths. I have even reconstructed half of a face on a couple of occasions.

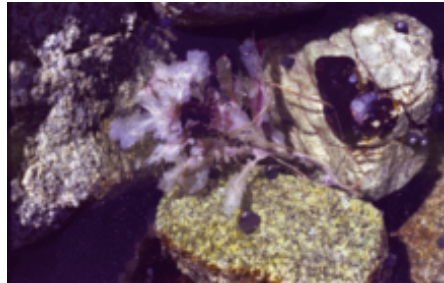
I also liked to experiment with using artistic methods to enhance photographs. I did a lot of hand-tinting of photos in the 1990s. I staged still lifes and tinted those, but I also took some of my older black-and-white photos and tinted them. I used color inks and watercolors at first, but found them too difficult to work with. I had a lot of Rit powder dyes left over from the days when I was decorating clothes and shoes ten years earlier, and decided to give them a try instead. The results were much better, probably because the dyes were absorbed better into the photo media. Also, with the dyes, I could get much better variations in the tint, ranging from very subtle colorations to more vibrant ones.



I also enjoyed taking photographs of landscapes and architecture. For about fifteen years I photographed the landscapes done by landscape contractors for use in their portfolios. I also liked to photograph landscapes in general. I love nature, and to me almost anything in nature is worthy of a photograph. Over the years I've taken photographs in the many places where I lived or visited, especially the Monterey Peninsula. So many of these photos represent places and things that are now long gone. I have sold quite a few of them in a stock photo collection on my website.



Ocean by moonlight in Pacific Grove; Sky at sunset at the Carmel River.



Old railroad tracks and foot bridge in Sand City (now gone), and a view into a tidal pool in Pacific Grove.



Venice Beach in the fog, as seen from a window in my apartment. A garbage-ridden alley with an ironic message on the wall that compelled me to take a photo. The day after, the entire area was cleaned up, and the day after that the wall was painted. I guess they saw me take the photo and thought I was turning them over to the health department.



Two favorite photos that I took of my mother.

MUSIC & RECORDING

Like art, music has always been an important part of my life. My parents had thousands of records, every kind of music imaginable, from Hank Williams to Alma Gluck to Bing Crosby to Elvis Presley to Enrico Caruso. Consequently, my tastes are very eclectic. I love pretty much everything from grand opera to grand ole opry, blues, rock, pop, Cajun, Latin, folk – you name it. About the only music I don't like is the rap/hip-hop sound. In general, I like music that sounds like music, that has that musicality about it. I don't like chants or repetitive drumming. I also like singers who have a unique vocal sound and style, and don't sound like everyone else.

Sound Systems

I got my first record player for Christmas in 1957. I was six years old, and that's when I began collecting records, although most of those early disks were little 78s. In 1962, when I was eleven years old, I got a bigger and better record player, a Sears Silvertone that played 78s, 45s, and 33s (LPs).

I bought my first stereo system in 1975, and I invested in it quite heavily at the time. My love for music was significantly stronger than my love for food or shelter, or anything else, with the possible exception of books and art supplies, which I always seem to want or need.



Over the years that I spent with Bob, I upgraded even further to audiophile level equipment, including a McIntosh C20 Preamp, which provided the most beautiful sound quality, not at all brassy, just clear and bright – qualities I'm always trying in vain to find in an iPod!

I also bought a 1914 tabletop Victrola Model VI in an oak case. It was a wind-up and had a 10-inch turntable, the volume controlled by how much you opened the little doors where the sound came from the curved horn inside.



I ultimately had to sacrifice all my audio equipment and records to pay my medical bills in 1983. I sold all of the audio equipment to a man who owned a wholesale nursery in West Los Angeles. As for my records, Michael Ochs, the brother of singer-songwriter Phil Ochs, and the owner of the Michael

Ochs Rock Photographs Archives (now owned by the Getty Museum), lived a few blocks south of me in Venice Beach. He helped me go through my 4,000 or so albums, 78s, and 45s to determine what to keep and what would sell best individually. He then referred me to someone who bought the rest of the records for a great price.

A few years later, after CDs had come on the market, I bought lots of them, eventually ripping them into downloadable files when I got my first MP3 player. By 2007, I had three MP3 players because I couldn't fit all my music onto a single one. Finally, in 2012, I bought a 164GB iPod Classic to hold my 2,400+ songs.

Finding music I like has become a bit of a chore, since there is so much music being made and not all of it is on the radio. So I have had to learn how to hunt down songs that I hear on the radio, in TV shows or commercials, or on movie soundtracks. I only download music these days, so I look for digital music online, and sometimes I find it free. Other times I've had to pay for it, but at least I'm buying a song I like and not a full album where I might only like two songs. I feel like I get my money's worth in that regard.

But there are some things I don't like about a lot of the music I hear these days as I write this in 2017. This is the era of do-it-yourself music, and so there are many singers and musicians who don't understand how to record music properly, and the end result is often overly-mixed sounds or songs that are screechy or have too much bass. The sound of the individual instruments is lost, and the vocals are sometimes buried in the rest of the music to the extent that you can't hear them clearly, even if the singer enunciates the words sufficiently to understand them – which is becoming a rarity. I miss the days when studio production values were the norm.

Beatlemania

In 1963, I became a teenager and simultaneously discovered the Beatles. Wow, did I love them. To this day, I have never heard any music that I like as well as that made by the Beatles. I vividly recall their first appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show in February of 1964. I remember going to Midco, a small department store in Seaside, to buy their first record album, *Meet The Beatles*. That was in the days when you paid \$2 for a “monaural” record album and \$3 for stereo. You could also buy a 45 “single,” which had one song on each side. You played a 45 at the 45 RPM setting on your record player, and you played an album at the 33RPM setting. Albums were also called “LP’s” which stood for long-playing.



I played Beatles records non-stop as I painted and read, and before I went to bed at night. And after I went to bed, I would try to tune my transistor radio into KRLA in Los Angeles so that I could listen to all the latest music. I was in 7th grade at the time, and I hung out with five other Beatles fans, and one of them had a portable record player. We used to go into the band practice rooms at Fitch Junior High School and eat our lunches while we listened to all of our Beatles records.

When I was 13, my father took me and three of those friends to the Cow Palace (a stadium in Brisbane just south of San Francisco), to see the Beatles on August 19, 1964. It was the first stop on their first American tour. He took some 8mm films of the concert. He took me and my brother there again to see the Beatles on August 31, 1965, the tenth stop on their second American tour. I didn't see them in August 1966 at Candlestick Park (their last tour).

Music Legends Lost

On December 9, 1980, I arrived at work in Santa Monica to find that my boss and several of my co-workers were all crying and upset.



Left to right:
Suzanne
Clemett, Denise
MacGriff,
Suzanne Rawl-
ings, and me
arriving at the
Cow Palace.



A clip from the
8mm footage my
father shot.

They had all just heard that former Beatle John Lennon had been murdered in New York City the night before. And I cried too. It was not only a personal loss to his family and friends, it also marked a terrible loss to the world.

Years later, on October 12, 1997, I was at work at a part-time job in Pacific Grove. I was sitting at my desk that afternoon when suddenly there was this loud horn alarm going off all over the town. A co-worker said she thought it was the emergency call for volunteers. I looked out the window and saw several people heading down the street towards the ocean, and so I went to see what was going on. It turned out that folk singer John Denver had been killed when he crashed his plane into the ocean off Point Pinos. Yet another very sad loss to music lovers everywhere.

Concerts

In 1965, my mother and I went to Hartnell College in Salinas where we saw the British pop duo Peter and Gordon. In 1966, we went to Big Sur to the Esalen Institute to see the Big Sur Folk Festival. I don't remember all the performers except for Joan Baez, Judy Collins, and Mimi Fariña. That same year, I went with friends to see the Dave Clark Five at the San Jose Civic Auditorium. I don't remember where I saw some of the other popular British bands of the time. Some might have been on the bill with the Dave Clark Five. I also remember seeing quite a few other concerts, including Chad and Jeremy, Billy J. Kramer and the Dakotas, Herman's Hermits, Ian Whitcomb, the Hollies, the Beach Boys, Del Shannon, Jan and Dean, and Lesley Gore. Wish I could remember the others.

In 1967, the "summer of love," I went with my friend Kathi to the first and only Monterey Pop Festival. Portions of the concert can be seen in the documentary film *Monterey Pop*. The concerts began on Friday evening, June 16 and ran through Sunday evening, June 18. It was an incredible three days of concerts by many now-famous rock legends. I went to all the performances except Sunday afternoon, which was a Ravi Shankar concert. I wasn't into sitar music (then or now).

The Monterey Pop Festival was a fantastic experience that was unlike any other concert I have ever seen. Over those three days, I saw and heard the music of The Association, Lou Rawls, Johnny Rivers, Eric Burdon and the Animals, Simon & Garfunkel, Canned

Heat, Janis Joplin and Big Brother & the Holding Company, Country Joe & The Fish, Al Kooper, Paul Butterfield, Quicksilver Messenger Service, Steve Miller Band, Electric Flag, Moby Grape, Hugh Masekela, The Byrds, Laura Nyro, Jefferson Airplane, Booker T & the MGs, Otis



Redding, Blues Project, Buffalo Springfield, the Who, Grateful Dead, Jimi Hendrix, Scott McKenzie, the Mamas & Papas, and a few other groups I had not heard of then – or since.



In July 1968, I went to San Francisco with my friend Iris and her older cousin. We went to the Fillmore West, which had just opened for rock concerts, and we saw the Jeff Beck Group featuring Rod Stewart on vocals. It was many years later that I found out that

The El Patio Ballroom (above), and its later incarnation as Bill Graham's Fillmore West (below).

the Fillmore West on Market and Van Ness streets, formerly known as the Carousel Ballroom, had once been known as the El Patio Ballroom, the place where my parents first met on March 21, 1947.

In addition to having been at the Monterey Pop Festival in 1967, I also got to be at another famous concert, the *Last Waltz* at Winterland in San Francisco on Thanksgiving day 1976. It was the farewell concert of The Band and they had a lot of guests performing with them. They also served Thanksgiving dinner there. It was made into a live album and, like Monterey Pop, it was also made into a movie, *The Last Waltz*, this one directed by Martin Scorsese. And no, you can't see me anywhere in either movie!

Over the years, I have gone to more concerts than I can remember. I have seen all the greats and then some, including ABBA in September of 1979 in Anaheim, when I was recovering from abdominal surgery and could barely make the drive. Good thing I did – they never came back to America!

I also went to some landmark concerts, such as ELO's "spaceship tour." I saw this concert at the Oakland Coliseum on August 24, 1978. It was one of the few arenas that could support the stage, which was a flying saucer that opened up, with the top being raised above the bottom half which was the stage. It had pulsating lights all around it and laser lights shooting out of it and, of course, the white fog/smoke all around it. It was really quite spectacular. The downside to it was that my seat was right in front and the stage was high up above me, so I was being blasted out by the amps and couldn't see much of anything. I went with my current husband, Richard Robles.

I saw many other singers and bands over the years, some several times. Among them were Rod Stewart (with and without the Faces), Fleetwood Mac (and Buckingham-Nicks in their early days), the Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan (with and without The Band), the Fifth Dimension, Bette Midler (with and without Barry Manilow playing piano), Barbra Streisand, Neil Diamond, Bee Gees, Peter Frampton, Foghat, Janis Ian, Simon & Garfunkel, Willie Nelson, Eagles, Linda Ronstadt, Elton John, Barry Manilow, Eric Clapton, Cher, Martina



My photo from the ELO concert at the Oakland Coliseum in 1978.

McBride, ZZ Top, Alabama, Marshall-Tucker Band, Five for Fighting, Train, Eric Clapton, Muddy Waters, Crosby Stills Nash & Young, Chicago, Tower of Power, Genesis, U2, Journey, Carly Simon, James Taylor, and Deanna Bogart. There were many, many others. I stopped going to concerts in 2016. Most concerts were in Seattle and the traffic coming home late at night on I-5 was getting too dangerous for my taste.

Rock Musicals & Other Performances

As a kid, the first musicals I ever saw were *Oklahoma* and *The Fantastiks*. I also saw the “Ice Capades,” at Winterland in San Francisco. I also managed to see some of the great rock musicals of the time, including *Hair*, *Godspell*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. I also saw a few other musicals with my mother, including *Cats* and *A Chorus Line*. I have also seen “concerts” by comedians, including Bill Cosby, Steve Martin (during his Saturday Night Live years), and Robin Williams (long before his *Mork & Mindy* TV show days).

Playing Instruments

When it comes to playing musical instruments, I’m worse than pathetic. I seem to be completely lacking in talent or ability, or maybe I just don’t practice enough. When I was about seven, I wanted to take piano lessons because a friend was taking lessons. My parents bought a piano, and lessons started with an instructor who came to the house every week, Frank Paul Bruno.

I learned to play with the John Thompson music books, but I never learned scales or chord progressions. As a result, I never really understood what I was doing and I never played with any fluency. Also, Mr. Bruno was very regimented about music. I remember once when it was time to take a break from classical music for a “popular song” break. He brought a stack of sheet music and I selected *Tonight* from *West Side Story*. But a week later when I played it, I varied it from the sheet music because I thought it would sound better with a beguine beat – and it did. But Mr. Bruno didn’t care how it sounded. He was going “No, no, that’s not right!” He made me play it just like it was written. So much for my attempt at musical interpretation.

I wanted to stop piano lessons only a couple years later, but my parents refused. I took lessons well into high school and never played

well. I later took lessons as an adult with only a little more success. I have a great old 1933 studio upright with ivory keys. It is in excellent condition and only needs an occasional minor tuning. I occasionally tinker around with it, but I'm not a pianist at all.

Interestingly, my friend Patrick also took lessons from Mr. Bruno – for four months! Never took another lesson. He plays incredibly well: stride piano, honky-tonk, blues, classical, you name it. He can also do notation and arrangements. Plays piano in a band that plays for charity events. We talked about why I don't play well, and he said it's the same reason why he doesn't write very well. Practice. I never had that drive to play piano at all. I do have the drive to write and to sing, and I write every day. So I guess this proves the old saying, "practice makes perfect."

When I was about 10 years old, someone – I don't recall who – bought or gave me a mouth harp (in case you don't know, "harmonica" is a trade name). It was an old Hohner Marine Band in C-Major. For many years, I could actually play it fairly proficiently. Over the years, I replaced that old one with a newer Hohner Marine Band, and I also had four other mouth harps, including three Hohner Blues Harps in C-Major, A-Major, and F-Major. The latter two were stolen in one of several break-ins in Venice Beach.

I also had a Hering E-Flat harp – it was my favorite – but it rusted out inside when I was living in damp Venice Beach, and that's death to a mouth harp. Most harps can be cleaned and the reeds retuned or replaced periodically, but once they rust, they are history. I still enjoy playing to this day, although now it is me who is more than just a little rusty! I can't bend the reeds the way I used to. As a fan of jazz harp player Toots Thielemans, I've always wished I had a chromatic harp like he plays. The chromatics have a spring-loaded button connected to a slide that shifts the notes by a half-step so that you can have a three-octave scale complete with the sharps and flats. I might be able to play notes a little better since the slide makes it easier. But, sadly, I'm at a point in my life where I don't really have time to take up the instrument again.

By the time I was about 13 years old, I decided to learn how to play guitar. I got my first guitar at that time, and reversed the strings because I play left handed. Years later, I interviewed Leo Fender, inventor of the Stratocaster guitar, and he told me you should never just reverse the strings, because the neck of the guitar is built to

accommodate the sound of the strings, and you won't get the right sound if you just reverse them.

Anyway, again as with the piano, I never managed any real level of proficiency with this instrument. I could pluck really well, but I have always had problems with chording. Lessons were not helpful at all. I have had four different guitars, and my favorite one, a classical guitar, was stolen, along with a lot of my other belongings, in the big 1984 break-in at my apartment in Venice Beach. I had a nice left-handed guitar recently, but I just can't seem to hold down the chords anymore due to arthritis, so I almost never played it, and sold it.

I have noticed that while I don't play anything well, I do have an ability to pick up an instrument and understand how to play it almost instantly. I found this to be true with the piano, mouth harp, and guitar, and also with the recorder, the flute, and the accordion. My mother and I used to drag out my brother's accordion and I would play it and we would sing.

Singing

The one thing I could always do musically was sing. I have been told many times throughout my life that I have a really great voice, and I think I probably come by it genetically, because my mother also had a great voice, as did her sister Lillian. My mother played the violin and could also play piano by ear. She used to play piano and sing and I would sing along with her. We were both really good at doing harmonies on the fly.

Over the years, I have sung in school choruses, church choirs (even though I didn't belong to any church or religion), community choruses, and in small bands. I have also sung backup vocals on several rock/pop/folk/blues music demos. I also occasionally sang lead vocals (and played a little mouth harp) in a cover band belonging to my friend Patrick, who performed for the sole purpose of fundraising for a variety of non-profit organizations, most for animal welfare and environmental causes.

I had been singing in the Pacific Grove Community Chorus for about a year or so when it was discontinued. I rounded up some of its members and started The Peninsula Singers. We sang for convalescent hospitals, drug rehab centers, assisted living and retirement communities, and even at Monterey's Christmas at the Adobes event.

I really enjoyed it so much, but I had to disband the group because I simply didn't have enough time to handle the administrative end of it and I couldn't find anyone to help me.

I still sang every day after moving to Washington state, but couldn't find any kind of group that sings the music I like. It seems like all they want to sing is religious stuff, which I don't mind, but it's kind of boring for me. To sing the same music over and over again is not my idea of singing.



That's me on the far left singing with the Pacific Grove Community Chorus, probably in 1998 at Lovers Point for the Feast of Lanterns festival.

Many people over the years have asked me why I didn't pursue a career singing. Well, here's the very short and simple answer to that question: I love to sing, but I don't like anything else that goes along with being a professional singer. I don't like to travel. I don't like hotels. I don't like having to dress up for anything. And there are other aspects to that life that don't appeal to me, such as drug use and dealing with people's overinflated egos. I just like to sing.

Up until 2013, I sang every day for at least a half-hour, sometimes up to two hours at a time. I used to have an almost four-octave range and I could still sustain a note for 32 seconds – that's six seconds longer than Barbra Streisand! But now I don't sing well at all since I had a virus in my left sinus that spread to my left ear and throat. Since then my range has been reduced. My voice fades out entirely in the higher range, and it makes a raspy sound when I sing in the lower range.

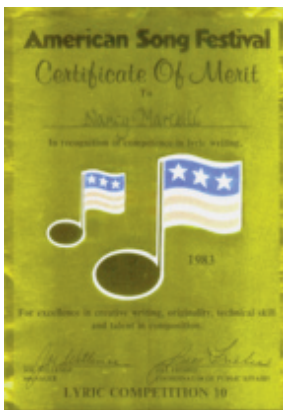
I always liked to sing a little of everything. I sang blues, folk, country, pop, old ballads from the 1930s and 1940s, songs in other languages, and a few opera arias (that I sing in the alto range). I have heard that singing is actually very healthy for you because it works your heart and lungs and it also causes your brain to release endorphins. Not sure if that's true or not, but I hope it is! Would be nice to know that in addition to being fun, it's also good for me, even though my voice is not that great and I'm frequently off-key.

Songwriting

I have written about 40 songs, many of which have been performed but none have ever been recorded. My favorites are: *Why Can't It Be Christmas Every Day* (music by Scott Getline, performed many times in Pacific Grove and Monterey, including at tree lighting ceremonies and Christmas at the Adobes); *A Little Bit of Heaven in a Honkey Tonk* and *Ballad of Annie Rivers* (performed by me at and by my friend Joanie); *Money Isn't Everything* (performed several times by my friend Art who really rocks it); two duets, *Come Home* and *Gotta Let Go* (performed by me and my friend Patrick at two fundraisers), and two songs for which I won honorable mentions in lyric competitions way back when: *Echoes Out Of Time* and *Sheila's Not At Home* (the lyrics to *Sheila* were lost somewhere along the way).

Starshine Recorders

At one of my temp jobs, I met a bookkeeper named Sharon who was married to a sound engineer from Canada named Gus. He want-



ed to start a recording studio. I had always been very interested in music and felt that I might enjoy working in that field as a producer. Gus and I decided to give it a shot, and we began producing demos in various studios for local bands.

We were a good team because he could do all the technical stuff and I understood the music end and could work with the musicians and create press kits for them too. One night, while we were scouting bands, we ran into an artists' agent who Gus had met in Canada. He owned an unused recording studio on his property in Portola Valley, just south of Burlingame. We formed a "silent" partnership with this man and we upgraded the old 8-track studio to a 16-track. We then recorded more demos as well as doing commercials and corporate soundtracks.

While I was working full time for the book publisher, I still managed to do about a third of all the production work and Gus engineered it all. Unfortunately, our silent partner turned out to be a criminal, and everything fell apart after about a year and a half. In some ways, I think it was destined to be the end of that mini-career for me because while I enjoyed the job and was really good at it, I didn't like being around all the drugs and drug use that seemed to be so prevalent in the music industry during that time.



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ASTROLOGY & NEW AGE

I started studying astrology when I was 14 years old. My father had a long-time interest in it and knew quite a bit about it. He had about a dozen astrology books that he gave me, including the works of Charles C.E.O. Carter, one of the great astrologers and writers of his time. Unfortunately, my father didn't know his own birth time, and his mother, for some strange reason known only to her, would not tell him. The time was not on his birth certificate. Now, in most cases, when someone doesn't have their birth time, this doesn't prevent them from being able to do at least partial chart interpretations. But my father was born on a day when the signs changed for both his sun and moon. This means that technically he could have been a Pisces or an Aries, depending on what time he was born. This kind of drove him crazy, and it was this dilemma that triggered, in part, my initial interest in astrology.

Including the books my father gave me, I ultimately had my own library of more than 400 books on astrology. Many consisted mostly of charts and tables, but there were more than 100 that I actually had to read cover to cover. I couldn't understand how astrology could be so accurate, and I still don't. I just know that studying and practicing it for more than 50 years has proven to me time and time again that it works. But it's a very complex art and science. You have to understand all of the science, the mathematical calculations behind everything, the movement of the planets, etc. Then you have to learn the art of accurately interpreting everything. This is not as simple as it sounds because there are easily more than 800 things to interpret in any given chart. Most astrologers interpret only ten percent of those.

In the beginning, I learned how to erect a chart manually using tables and basic mathematical formulas. It was hard to do and was very time-consuming. And, it was never even 100% accurate. But then, around 1969 or so, I heard about a company in San Diego that did all kinds of astrological charts on a computer for accuracy within one degree of arc. I immediately started buying my charts from

them. Many years later in the mid-1980s, I bought a professional astrology program for my computer, and it was equally accurate and was based on the software used by the company in San Diego. It was the Kepler program by Cosmic Patterns, which is a much upgraded program that I still use today.

I was naturally most interested in my own chart when I first started out with astrology. I had erected it myself but it took me forever, and I wasn't sure if it was accurate. As it turns out, when I bought a computer generated chart, I found out that the rising sign on the chart I did was off, and I was Cancer rising, not Gemini rising.

My chart very accurately reflects me and my personality, as well as my career, my interests, and my life in general. Cancer rising makes me appear trustworthy and amiable, but Uranus in the 1st house makes me also appear a little eccentric, which I am. My second house is empty, with its ruler, the Moon, in the 4th house, meaning my value system is good and I'm likely to work from home, which I do. Pluto is in the 3rd house which is good for in-depth research and writing. My 4th house has a Moon and Saturn conjunction, and that makes for an ability to live alone in a tidy house, but it can also make for sterility, and I was born sterile. Neptune is in my 5th house – the house of creativity – and since Neptune rules creativity this has been a good placement for me. My 6th, 7th, 8th, and 9th houses are empty, and they have been uneventful houses, even in transit forecasts. My midheaven – the 10th house cusp – is Pisces, with the ruler, Neptune, in the 5th, meaning my career and life purpose are entirely wrapped up in creativity. With Jupiter in Pisces in the 10th house that creativity has the potential to be great. Jupiter also rules publishing, which has been the part of my career that I have enjoyed the most, as it allows me to tie together numerous creative pursuits. My Sun is in the 11th house and in the latter degrees of Aries, also called the critical degrees. This makes for a personality that could potentially become unstable at times. Since I suffered a long nine-year bout of depression, that certainly fits. Also in the 11th house are Mars and Venus, both conjunct and in Taurus. These give me a lot of energy, especially in communicating, meaning that I can talk a blue streak, and I can assertively debate a subject while maintaining some degree of tact and diplomacy. Lastly, Venus is in Gemini in the 12th house. This is usually called the “da Vinci” aspect or the “Renaissance [wo]man” aspect. It is the sign of

already occurred in order to try to prove that it could have been predicted.

As for astrological consultations, I had attended the 1976 International Astrological Congress and took their exam – which was a lot harder than I expected – and became certified as a Professional Astrologer. It was shortly after this that I started doing astrology consultations. I put small ads in a little “new age” publication and had clients almost immediately – one was with me until her death in 2003. In later years I always had a web page for my services and I ran ads in new age periodicals and the phone book yellow pages.

In 1985, I began specializing in career and life purpose. To me, this was really the main focus of all my consultations anyway. No matter what was going on in a client’s life, it was always the Mid-heaven of the chart that carried the most weight in their life, and that is where career and life purpose are located. If something isn’t going well in that part of the chart, nothing else in life seems to work as well as it should.

I wrote a series of chart interpretations by house, sign, planet, and aspect that were specifically for career and life purpose but that also included other aspects of life as well. This was much easier for me to use and it enabled me to simply pull out the paragraphs that pertained to each very specific part of a natal chart. This resulted in very accurate interpretations that I could use in a face-to-face as well as a written consultation.

From about 1988 to 2002, I taught astrology off and on, mostly in new age bookstores, but also in a few adult education classes at community colleges. I was also the “resident” astrologer at two new age bookstores for a couple years.

As of 2010, I stopped taking new astrology clients unless they come to me by referral. It was something I had been debating about for almost ten years. I had begun to realize that most astrology was becoming nothing more than a lot of Internet businesses run by people who didn’t really have enough astrology knowledge and experience to fill a thimble. I didn’t want to be lumped in with them, as they were just giving astrology a bad name in the long run.

Astrology is not brain surgery, but it’s quite difficult to learn and to practice, so this dummying down of a complex practice really drives me crazy. It reduces astrology to “sun sign” astrology, in

which only your sun is interpreted. So, if your sun is in Virgo, that is all that is interpreted. The sun is important, but it's not a stand-alone entity that dictates how your life will be. It's only important as it relates to and among the moon and planets in your chart and where they were and what houses they fell in at the time you were born. But "sun sign" astrology was exactly the kind of nonsense that Linda Goodman wrote about in her astrology books. It's easy to think you actually know something about astrology if you read her books, such as *Linda Goodman's Sun Signs*. But they are very far removed from the legitimate practice of astrology and they have done more to damage the use of astrology than anything else. That's not just my opin-



A re-issued certificate with my current name on it.

ion. Ask any professional astrologer. The same can be said for the astrologers who write "sun sign" horoscope columns in magazines, newspapers, and online. Nothing valid in them at all because they are written for only a person who is born in the middle of a sign and, because that person's other chart information is not available, no astrologer can ever make a valid prediction of how anyone's day is going to go.

When it comes to using astrology in my personal life, I look at my chart and the transits, etc., about once a month, maybe more often if something is going on into which I want some insight. But I don't run my daily life with it since astrology is really about when there are indications that it's a good/bad time to do something. In the end, as every professional astrologer knows, the individual always has free will. As has been said by many an astrologer : "The stars impel, they do not compel." How you live your life is based on the decisions and actions you take.



Besides astrology, I studied Wicca, palmistry, numerology, Tarot, I Ching, and runes. I see a lot of validity in some of the Wiccan spells, the intention behind them, in particular. Palmistry is somewhat linked to astrology as well as physical health, so that was interesting to me. Numerology was quite simplistic and I couldn't find anything in it that was accurate. Tarot, I Ching, and runes are interesting but rely on intuition. The problem is the randomness of drawing cards and other items and interpreting the results. Tarot is kind of entertaining, and I have read Tarot at many a party! But I'd rather do a psychometry (psychic) reading on a piece of jewelry or a photograph in an envelope, or something along those lines. I'm pretty good at that. But astrology is the best as far as accuracy goes.

GRAPHOLOGY

I'm a handwriting expert. I studied graphology (also known as graphoanalysis) in depth in my teens and early twenties. During those times, I had learned mainly the psychological interpretation of handwriting, but I was really far more interested in forgery detection. Both rely on recognizing an extremely wide range of different traits and characteristics of handwriting. I began studying document examination in 1985 and became certified in handwriting analysis in 1987 by the Graphoanalytical Institute of Berlin. That is when I began practicing.

Over a period of 20 years, I analyzed more than a thousand documents, including wills, letters, contracts, deeds, bank drafts, invoices, diaries, calendars, anonymous letters, and even some handwritten manuscripts. I became very adept at spotting irregularities in signatures due to a person: having variable signatures (never signing quite the same each time); being ill or aged; and being a forger. I also did linguistic profiling; evaluated suitability for employment; and analyzed non-cursive (printed) writing. I taught and spoke about both the psychological interpretations and forgery detection.

I became court-certified in 1993, but after that I never appeared in court because my declarations, and sometimes my depositions, were sufficient to keep a case from going to trial. I believe this is because I don't take sides. I have always refused to advocate for either party in a dispute. It was always stated in my advertising and other literature that I act as a neutral third party, will not advocate for either side in a dispute, and look only to find the truth in the documents I analyze. I always made this clear to whoever hired me and I always stated it in my declarations and depositions. I will not allow myself to be directed to testify in any way that is not 100% accurate or truthful at the whim of an attorney who is merely trying to win for their client. As Shakespeare wrote in *The Merchant of Venice*, "the truth will out."

The majority of my work in graphology ended in 2007. For forgery detection, original documents are a necessity, and nowadays most people want to have non-originals analyzed, such as carbon

copies, NCR copies, photocopies, and scans. All of those non-origi- nals lack the necessary fine details that need to be analyzed – such as pen pressure and handedness. In most cases the reproductive process- es either eliminate or enhance handwriting traits, making an accurate analysis very difficult and any results somewhat questionable. As of 2012, I only analyze signatures on photographs or writing on post- cards, usually for genealogists and family historians.



A re-issued certificate with my current name on it.



ANTHROPOMETRY

Anthropometry is the measurement of the human body. I became interested in the anthropometry of the human face in the mid-1970s. My mother had gone to Finland and brought back a lot of family information and photograph. At the same time, my friend Liz' grandmother died and left her a lot of albums and loose photographs with faces she couldn't identify. Liz' husband, a police officer, obtained the notes of fellow officer and ear identification expert Alfred Iannarelli, and I studied them. Over the years, I had a great deal of correspondence and phone conversations with the now late Al Iannarelli. I have included many things I learned from him about ear identification in the books I wrote on the subject.

I also read books and audited classes in skull anatomy and physiology, and in forensic anthropology. This helped me get my feet wet in face anthropometry as it pertained to photographs. I learned from studying all these family photographs what to look for and how to measure faces and convert the measurements into proportions so that they could be compared and their identities authenticated.

It was in 1980 that I began to sell my services as an anthropometrist, as a face comparison analyst, and in 1989 I became court certified.

My first client was a man who was referred to me by my friend Liz' police officer husband. This man was a Nazi hunter and he had about 200 photographs of men believed to be Nazi war criminals. He wanted me to examine the faces in those photographs and tell him if they matched the known Nazi war criminals. The man lived in San Francisco and I called him and told him I could meet him in Monterey (I was living in Los Angeles at the time). I was able to positively identify six of the faces as belonging to known Nazi war criminals. The other faces in his photographs were not clear enough to analyze or were simply not matches.

Since starting this service, I have analyzed more than 100,000 photographs and more than 25,000 faces in those photographs. I have analyzed about 60 faces in painted portraits too. My clients have included auction houses, libraries, museums, historians, genealogists,

documentary-makers, and a few collectors of antique photographs. In the beginning, I had to enlarge photographs using copy machines, and it was pretty hard to get a clear copy back then. My other method was to use a very strong magnifying glass, but that was only useful for getting a closer look, not for measuring. It was not until I got my first scanner in 1992 that I was able to perform faster yet accurate analyses onscreen using Photoshop.

In practicing anthropometry, I have encountered more crackpots than I can even begin to count. First, there are the collectors who insist that the photograph they found at a yard sale is a previously unknown photo of some famous person. Usually it's Abraham Lincoln, Billy the Kid, Jesse James, Bonnie and Clyde, or Jefferson Davis. And in almost all cases, there is absolutely zero resemblance between the faces in their photos and those of the person it's purported to be. Second, there are conspiracy theorists who insist that someone died and has been replaced by a look-alike, or that someone is not really dead and here's a photo of him pumping gas in some small town in the middle of nowhere to prove it.

Whether it's a collector or a conspiracy theorist, these people are absolutely crazy, blind, and furious. I have been threatened, I have been maligned on their websites, and I have even been told that it was my analysis that prevented them from selling their famous-person photo for a million dollars. So, a few years ago, I started discouraging individual collectors by refusing to authenticate identities of certain famous people. It seems to have worked. I much prefer working with historians and auction houses anyway.



GARDENING & LANDSCAPING

Gardening started out as a hobby for me and it grew into a business. And I love everything about gardening and landscaping.

Gardening

I have always loved gardening, even as a child. When I was a toddler, my mother and I used to pull weeds together in the vegetable garden when we lived in Daly City. We moved away from there when I was four years old, so I got my start in horticulture early on. My mother had grown up on a farm, so she knew quite a lot about growing plants, and was the source of the foundation of my horticultural knowledge.



The third floor hallways outside my apartment at 30 Dudley Avenue in Venice Beach.

My mother didn't like to garden at all. For her it was a thing you had to do to make your yard look presentable. So when it was time to clean out the geranium beds, I usually helped. We grew a variety of herbs and vegetables and I helped with those as well. I used to do almost all of the yard maintenance at our house in Monterey, including cleaning off the roof – can't believe I used to climb up there without a rope on the part of the house that was two stories tall! I continued to main-

tain the yard and roof at my parents' house up until a few months before my mother's death in 1986.

When I lived in southern California, I had a sunny apartment with an equally sunny hallway and I was only a block from the ocean, so it

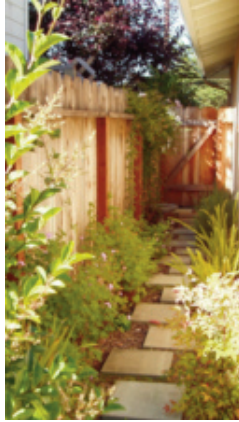
was very humid. I grew all kinds of plants and my apartment and the hallway were very, very green. In addition to many common indoor plants, I also grew a lot of orchids, mostly phalaenopsis, dendrobiums, cymbidiums, and oncidiums. I grew quite a few African violets too, all different colors and flower types. I had such good growing conditions that one of my ceiling-height dracaenas actually bloomed, something they rarely do indoors. Its flowers were a bunch of tiny white flowers on long spikes, and they were incredibly fragrant.

After I moved to Monterey and then to Lacey, I never had enough light for growing indoors. My houses had plenty of windows, but they either faced the wrong direction or were shaded by giant Douglas firs. The most I have growing indoors now are succulents that I replace every couple of years.

I re-landscaped the front, back, and side yards of the house I lived in on Casanova Avenue in Monterey. The entire lot was previously



Before and after photos of the back yard on Casanova Avenue in Monterey.



Before and afters of one of the side yards on Casanova Avenue.

previous owners left giant piles of yard debris that filled several large trailerloads. My cousins helped me remove and take it all to the dump. Again, I upgraded the landscape.

dirt, a handful of Hollywood junipers, and two big fir trees. When I moved to Lacey, Washington, I again encountered a badly neglected landscape. People told me my house was once the garden showplace for the development. Hard to believe. It was wall-to-wall weeds, the worst I'd ever seen. The fences were falling down, the grass was mostly dandelions, stuff was overgrown, and the



Before and after photos of the back yard and patio area in Lacey.

Before and after photos of the front yard in Lacey.



Landscaping Business

I enjoyed gardening so much as a hobby that I got a vocational certificate in Ornamental Horticulture. I never thought I would use it, but after I moved to Los Angeles in 1979, I ended up taking a job with a landscape company in Santa Monica. I worked there for five years, starting part-time and soon going full-time. While in southern California I received many certificates for classes I took that were sponsored by various trade associations.

The creative part of the job – the design work – suited me and the horticultural part allowed me to use my vocational certificate. I did interior landscapes, small outdoor landscapes, and floral design. I also did work that really wasn't the best fit for me job-wise, particularly the management of the office. However, I did enjoy working there and it led me to make future work choices that were centered around that field.

On September 8, 1983, I began putting to use everything I had learned during the previous five years in the landscape industry. I started a consulting business aimed at the horticultural industry. At the same time, I started a quality control service business for interior



Some of my horticultural certificates, one with my current name on it.

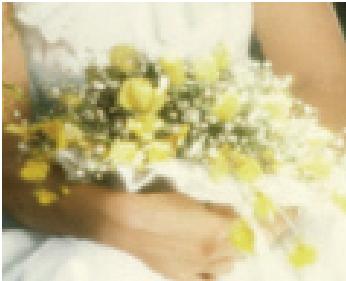
landscapers and an employment referral service for interior and exterior landscapers throughout California. The quality control and employment referral services grew very rapidly and I couldn't do all the work myself. I tried to hire and train people to do some of the work for me, but they just didn't work quickly enough and couldn't get the job done in a reasonable amount of time. So, in 1985, I sold the quality control business. I abandoned Plantscapers Referral Service but revived it for several years before finally kissing it goodbye.

In early 1984, I had also started a landscape business with a partner, Rick. He and I were a good match as partners. He already had quite a few maintenance accounts and some very good employees, but he had zero design background and was terrible at handling finances. He also

had no credit and we needed more vehicles. I turned over all our book-keeping to my bookkeeper Gisela, and I took over all the design duties. I also purchased two more vehicles, a 1980 Jeep Cherokee Laredo (for our newly-formed patio maintenance crew) and a 1977 Chevy C10 Silverado pickup truck (for one of our new landscape crews).

While working with Rick, I enjoyed doing the landscape design. But what I enjoyed even more was floral design, and I managed to somehow land quite a few jobs doing flowers for weddings, openings, and other events. I was often referred by my clients for the very large, splashy flower arrangements I did. I loved doing them and I really liked shopping for the flowers at the flower market in downtown Los Angeles – even though it was located on skid row. The fragrance in the market was absolutely beautiful, as were the flowers.

I also became an expert witness during this time, testifying, usually by declaration or deposition only, on the usual and customary practices in the interior/exterior landscape industries. I was going on lecture circuits every year, speaking to the horticultural industries at conferences and on my own.



Wedding flowers.

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My partner Rick and I had very little turnover in the work force. He had to fire two men for coming to work under the influence, and another two for chronic tardiness (which holds up entire routes in the morning), and that was it. We always tried to give employees the benefit of the doubt. After a few warnings, these four men just couldn't get their acts together, so they had to go.

By late 1996, I was divesting myself of many of my business interests in anticipation of my move to Monterey. I sold my half of the landscape business to Rick. I loved landscape design and continued doing it up until 2010, when it became too difficult for me to safely navigate some of the rugged terrain on many of the properties whose owners contacted me to do design work.



Before and after photos of one of my landscape designs installed in the Old Port neighborhood of Olympia.



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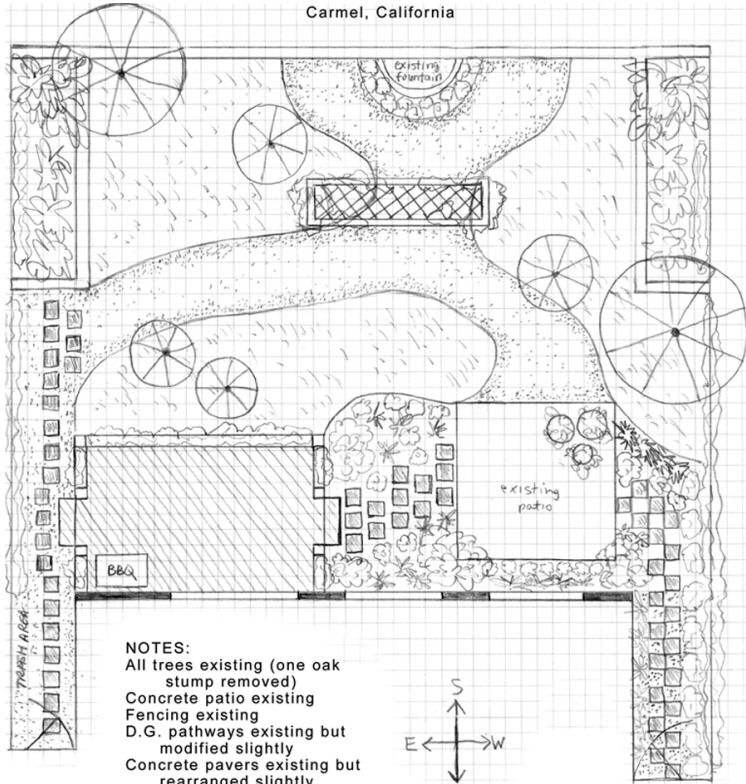


H&M's truck with its freshly-painted sign on the door in 1984, to be changed only a few years later in 1990 to H&S.



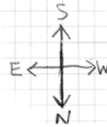
My business card after we went from H&M to H&S following my name change.

Carmel, California



NOTES:

- All trees existing (one oak stump removed)
- Concrete patio existing
- Fencing existing
- D.G. pathways existing but modified slightly
- Concrete pavers existing but rearranged slightly
- Arbor new
- Deck new
- All planting new
- Fountain relocated
- BBQ new



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One of my design plans for a Carmel Valley residence.

ILI Features Article On Pros & Cons of Certification

Probably the best in-depth article about Certification appeared in the January, 1988 issue of Interior Landscape Industry.

This five-page story by NCIHC Governor, Nancy Martelli was featured on ILI's cover and tells it like it is.

Titled, "The Pros and Cons of Certification," the story looks at NCIHC's goals and objectives, the certification process and NCIHC's history.

Thanks to Nancy Martelli for all of the time, effort and enthusiasm she put into developing the article from

dozens of phone calls to interior landscapers in all parts of the country. The story is objective with all of the positives and negatives of Certification.

If you haven't seen the article, write Norma Gammon at the NCIHC office and she'll be glad to send you a copy.



NCIHC GOVERNORS' WINTER MEETING AT THE MIAMI HYATT. (left to right) seated — Lisa Komisar, Linnaea R. Newman, Lee Schindel, Nancy Martelli (standing) left to right — Rick Wilcox, Don Horowitz, Don Gammon and Gary Kaelson.

1st NCIHC Breakfast Meeting at TPIE A Success

Every chair in the room was filled as more than 25 people attended the first NCIHC Breakfast meeting at the Miami Hyatt during TPIE in late January.

The discussion led by Linnaea Newman was lively and covered a range of subjects. The big question about NCIHC was, "How Are We Doing?" and there was strong affirmative support. From the excellent response this will become an annual event. Thanks to Lisa Komisar who handled the arrangements.

NCIHC Governors Winter Meet In Miami

Following the early morning NCIHC Breakfast Meeting at Miami Hyatt the Governor's winter meeting took place.

In attendance were Nancy Martelli, The New Leaf Press, Venice, CA; Lisa Komisar, ALCA-IPD Rep., Great-house Landscaping, Nashville, TN; Linnaea R. Newman, Tropical Plant Rentals, Prairie View, IL; Don Gammon, Donald L. Gammon Designs, Andover, MA; Barbara Helfman, Something Different Interior Plant, Middletown, OH; Rick Wilcox, Wilcox

Environmental Interiors, Rancho Santa Fe, CA; Gary Kaelson, Interior Plantscapes Int., Dallas, TX; Lee Schindel, State Univ. at Farmingdale, Farmingdale, NY; Don Horowitz, Plantscape, Inc., Pittsburgh, PA.

The agenda was packed full and a good deal of time was spent discussing NCIHC's plan for registering maintenance technicians and the testing procedures, as well as approving the criteria for Re-Certification.

On the board of governors for the newly-formed NCIHC (National Council for Interior Horticultural Certification), which set standards that were used in certification programs for interior landscapers internationally.



MEETING ATTENDEES GOT THEIR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

With the topic "Get Your Questions Answered" as her guide, March PIPA General Meeting speaker, Nancy Martelli, did just that...and a lot more. Martelli's discussion revolving around two major themes: an in-depth explanation of NCIHC and the certification process and the steps involved in making sales and profits.

As a member of the Board of Directors of the National Council for Indoor Horticulture Certification (NCIHC), Martelli outlined the certification procedures to the 80+ attendees. She discussed the qualifying factors, the application process, the client/project verification phase and the comprehensive examination.

"In addition to certifying horticulturists, NCIHC has begun registering horticultural technicians," Martelli said. "The registration process is less rigorous than the certification process, but cer-



Our March speaker, Nancy Martelli, emphasized the importance of being certified.

tainly requires a registrant to hold a valid pesticide applicator's license." Following a round of questions, Martelli re-directed her presentation to sales and marketing.

She pointed out the "need to target your market" and that advertising in the Yellow Pages just isn't enough. "The keys to success are networking and referrals," she

said. Martelli discussed the differences between designing and bidding a job compared to simply bidding it, and the amount of time involved in the former.

The meeting was sponsored by Planter Technology of Mountain View, manufacturers of the Natural Spring controlled watering planters. Rep Annemarie Mockler displayed and described the planters and pointed out that Planter Tech is now carrying a full line of horticultural service products as well. She bid warm greetings from our friends at NorCal in the Bay area.

The next PIPA General Meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, April 20, 1988 at the Long Beach Hyatt Regency. Featured will be a presentation on the "The Dollars and Sense of Your Plantscape Program" by George Patterson of City Gardens, Newton, MA. □

S.D.I.P.A. Program Update

May's program was led by Vickie Cate of Evergreen Interiors. "Staging Plants" was the topic of discussion. We opened the floor to those who attended the meeting in order to generate the many helpful ideas that were shared by all. Canyon Pottery of San Diego was the sponsor, updating us with the newest in designer containers.

S.D.I.P.A. and the Program Committee would like to extend our thanks and appreciation to Nancy Martelli, our June speaker, for her enlightening and, as ever, entertaining presentation. A few of the topics covered by Nancy were contracts, past control licensing updates, hiring employees as subcontractors, and insurance. The meeting was sponsored by Broadleaf P4. This presentation was complete with a film and cassette tape show. Brochures and samples were also available.



Me in 1998, at the last landscape industry show I ever attended.

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

I learned a lot about property management before I ever entered into that business. I learned it from listening to my father's mother talking about her apartment rentals. From her I learned that if you want to make money in real estate by doing nothing, you should buy land, hold on to it, and later sell it for a profit. If you want a steady source of income from real estate, you need to invest in apartment buildings. But, unlike the empty lot sitting around and increasing in value, rentals are a business. To keep tenants you have to know how to manage people, and you must constantly maintain and upgrade your rentals to be able to attract good tenants and raise the rents. It's a tough business.

I used to think that one day I would buy an apartment building and put my grandmother's advice into practice. But that was not to be the case for me. Instead, I took jobs as a resident manager of two apartment buildings in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1970s. It was an eye-opening experience for me.

While I didn't like being a resident manager – having to live on the premises and deal with tenants on a daily basis – I did like the upgrading and maintenance parts of the job. So, in 1983, I agreed to manage some rental houses for one of my landscape clients in Venice Beach. This grew

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into a much bigger job in which I ended up renovating 82 houses. While I was renovating, I got more jobs managing other rental properties, including two apartment buildings and several duplexes and triplexes. By the fall of 1984, I was managing 170 units.

It must be in my DNA, because I found I had a real knack for that sort of thing and very much enjoyed it, especially the design aspects of the renovations. I felt that my vocational certificate in interior design was finally getting put to good use.

In the spring of 1987, I was offered the job of managing the 18-unit building I lived in, and I turned it down. But a year later, I was again offered the job and I took it, just for the opportunity to make the place more livable.



Within two weeks I managed to get rid of the prostitutes and the drug dealers, as well as the homeless people who camped out in the hallways at night. It took two years to get rid of the cockroaches!

Managing that building turned into a much bigger job than I wanted or expected. I partially remodeled most of the units, and that was fun. But being a resident manager in Venice Beach was nothing like that same job in the SF Bay Area. Most of the tenants were nightmares. Finding good ones in

such a crappy neighborhood was an ongoing challenge.

I enjoyed the renovations part of property management, but the rest was just a big chore repeated over and over again. At first, I had only a few employees, and several self-employed contractors. I only once had to fire someone, and that was a handyman who was always late, always slow, and frequently had to re-do something he had supposedly fixed. By the time I let him go, I realized I had kept him on a lot longer than I should have.

As with all my temp and client work, property management taught me a lot about people. I had so many different kinds of tenants, and good tenants came in all kinds of races, religions, occupations, etc. My best tenants were an African-American woman and two male Mexican cousins. My worst tenants were a white male attorney and a Hindi woman. You definitely can't judge a book by its cover under any circumstances, and tenants are no exception.

As for my landlord clients, in many instances they were the source of a great deal of frustration and excess work for me. With the exception of three of them, they all seemed to think that buying an apartment building meant they were going to have this endless flow of money and they didn't think they had to ever make repairs or upgrade their units. They were always wanting to raise the rents on their crappy apartments. I was fairly successful in explaining the facts of life to these landlords, but just as often I gave up and dumped them as clients. Being the intermediary between these kinds of landlords and their tenants is an awful place to be.

In late 1996, in anticipation of my move back to the Monterey Peninsula, I quit my job as the resident manager at the building where I lived, and I turned over all my other property management clients to a man I knew who managed two buildings and was doing a really good job with them. I sold most of my tools and equipment and took the rest with me to the Monterey Peninsula in June 1997, although I was pretty sure I was not going to be managing property again.

Managing My Residences

At first I lived in a house on 9th Street in Pacific Grove. I really liked the house, but I didn't like dealing with my unstable landlord. However, I did a lot of work cleaning up the property. Three years later, I was living in a small two-bedroom house on Casanova Avenue in Monterey.

The Casanova house was structurally okay, but it had been neglected over the years. The only good things were that the refrigerator was brand new and there was a Flushmate toilet. I was in the house for only two weeks when the completely corroded bottom of the water heater gave way and water went everywhere. I had to get a new one. The stove didn't work. The kitchen and bathroom floors were in very poor condition and literally held together with duct tape, so I had to replace them.

The single-pane windows leaked cold air, and had to be replaced. The house had not been painted since it was built. It really needed it, so I painted it, inside and out.

After the first year, a November storm tore down the entire western fence along with an unwanted and rather unattractive structure on the back patio.



Before and after of the Casanova kitchen.

I landscaped the front and back, over a period of five years. When I moved, it looked great.

When I moved to Lacey, Washington, the house was in the worst condition I'd ever seen. The carpeting was laid poorly and I tripped over it constantly. When I vacuumed the carpet in the master bedroom, it filled up the cup on the vacuum about two dozen times with a dark gray powdery substance. There was a decorative wall covering of thin slats that were falling off four walls. The house was in dire need of fresh paint inside and out.

The heat didn't work properly and the place was an absolute ice box. I

was freezing all the time, probably due to the old double-paned windows leaking very cold air, and also the heater just didn't seem to produce enough heat. I would sit at my desk, which was right next to a heating vent, and the heater was only about 12 feet away from me in the garage. The air that came through the vent wasn't even luke-warm, and a heating company couldn't find anything wrong with it.



Before and after of Casanova house.

The power bill was more than \$500 per month. The solution was to install two gas fireplaces. They heated the entire house perfectly and very economically, the highest bill being \$225.

The stove didn't work and the water heater died shortly after I moved in – just like at Casanova. After twelve years, almost everything was painted, repaired, and/or replaced except for the windows, and I re-landscaped the entire property.

As with most properties, the cheapest fixes are cosmetic, so I always prefer to start with painting. The difference is like night and day and it's so incredibly inexpensive. In the cases of both the Casanova and Lacey houses, the painting of the exterior really cheered up the places a lot. Same with painting old kitchen cabinets. Even if I could afford new ones, I wouldn't waste the money replac-



Before and after Lacey house kitchen paint job.

ing them when I can just paint them. I know that's contrary to what most people like to do today with ripping out everything and starting from scratch, but I can think of a lot more important things to spend money on, such as plumbing and electrical, so paint is always my first choice for a quick face-lift.

TEACHING & SPEAKING

I have spent a good many years teaching and speaking throughout the United States, Canada, England, and Australia, in colleges and on lecture circuits. I have always enjoyed addressing a group of people who are interested in the same things I am. Sharing knowledge is an important part of my life.

Teaching

In 1983, while I was working for a landscape company in southern California, I met a woman who asked if I would be interested in teaching an adult education class. She said it would be a writing class, and I said I would think about it. A week later, she said it would be a class in writing poetry.

I couldn't believe anyone would sign up for such a class, but I reluctantly agreed to do it, and I was shocked when 30 people enrolled. But, Los Angeles is huge, and so there were simply more people who were interested in that topic. The class went well, and when I was asked if I wanted to teach a class in how to make a living as a writer, I taught that one too. I continued teaching that class in its many updated incarnations for more than 30 years.

I also taught other adult education classes in writing and expanded my adult education teaching repertoire to include classes in art, the business of art, the business of writing, small press publishing, self-publishing, cat care, gardening, genealogy, face comparisons, computer and website basics, astrology, and graphology.

From 1985 to 1988, I was the co-coordinator and one of the instructors for the Interior Landscape Course in the Continuing Education department of the University of California at Riverside. It was a bit of a trek going all the way out to Riverside, but it was a very positive experience and I enjoyed it very much.

When I moved to Washington state in late 2005, I decided to try to find work teaching adult education classes at the local colleges. Not just two or three a year, but as many as I could at as many colleges as I could. By the Fall of 2006, I was teaching writing classes



That's me answering questions and also moderating a panel of experts at UC Riverside.

and a variety of other subjects I had taught previously, adding a few new ones along the way, and eventually expanding, updating, and upgrading them all with PowerPoint presentations.

I first taught at Evergreen State College (until they cancelled their adult education program). I was already teaching at Tacoma Community College but dropped them after a year. After that, I was teaching a minimum of nine classes per quarter at South Puget Sound Community College, Pierce College, and Centralia College. I taught a single class on almost every Saturday, starting at 9 a.m. and ending between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m., depending on the class.

In 2013, I decided to teach only at Centralia College. But, like the other community colleges, enrollment in adult education was down overall, so I finally stopped teaching at the end of 2016.

I really liked teaching these classes, and I learned a lot from my students, hearing about what they had done or what they had tried and what had worked for them. I especially liked teaching the writing classes and my family history class. It was really a shame that so few people were enrolling in classes (probably relying on the Internet for instruction) because I do miss teaching.

I did pursue creating some online classes, one in particular for the National Institute for Genealogical Studies in Canada in 2014. It's

a 10-week intermediate course called *Photography: Clues Pictures Hold, Editing, Digitizing and Various Projects*.

One quarter, I was asked to substitute teach a course in interior landscaping and floral design. I went into it with a great deal of



My class module on the website of the National Institute for Genealogical Studies.

enthusiasm, but it turned out to be nothing in the way of a positive experience. Unlike adult education where students *want* to be there, this required course was filled with students who wanted to be anywhere but in that classroom. It was a struggle to keep their attention. I never pursued teaching another course in any subject after that very disappointing experience.

I have also taught a few workshops and classes in introductory painting techniques, mostly in the 1980s and 1990s, and mostly for seniors. I have also taken on a few students for private art instruction from time to time. There's no better way to help someone become a good artist than by teaching them the most basic techniques and then guiding them to use those basics to find and express their own unique style.

Lecture Circuits & Public Speaking

In addition to teaching adult education classes, I made many presentations about sales and marketing for the interior and exterior landscape industry in southern California, starting in 1983. My reputation quickly grew, and I began speaking throughout California and then all over the United States, not just for the horticultural industry, but also on topics such as writing, self-publishing, and small press publishing, plus occasional presentations about astrology, graphology, and anthropometry. I gave one presentation, “Get the Job and Make A Profit” more than 100 times.



This is me delivering one of my “Get the Job and Make A Profit” presentations at Planter Technology in Mountain View, California.

Sometimes I was asked to speak at conferences, and other times I just tagged on a date to speak during or after a conference. Most of these speaking engagements were organized by me as part of my regular lecture circuits and were hosted at local plant nurseries and/or small hotels with conference rooms. My lecture circuits averaged about 15 to 20 cities per year, with most of the cities changing each year. I stopped the lecture circuits in 1993, although I continued to speak occasionally, but only locally, to the tune of about 50 additional presentations.

Radio Show

From 1985-1987, I did some speaking of a different kind when I was invited to be a business panelist for a radio talk show. There were four panelists and we fielded call-in questions in our specialty areas. At first I was doing the employee relations calls, but when the man who was doing the sales and marketing calls had to quit, I asked if I could do that subject instead. I referred the radio station to someone



Me speaking about website design at the Monterey Bay Users Group (MBUG).

who I thought could handle labor-related questions better than I could. The show ran for two years, live on Tuesdays during morning drive time, and re-run on Fridays during afternoon drive time.

VOLUNTEERISM & PHILANTHROPY

I wish I had a ton of money so that I could be a full-time philanthropist. I have only been able to afford donating money on a small scale, but every little bit helps. I have always believed in giving as much as you can of your resources and time without expecting anything in return. I believe that if you donate money or things and then write them off on your taxes that you are not giving in the true spirit of giving. To that end, I have never written off a donation.

I have often given when I really couldn't afford to give. I have given money to people who needed help more than I did. Most actually paid me back, but not because I required it or asked them to do so. I also helped people who needed more education to find better jobs. In that regard, over the years, I have sponsored small scholarships at several community colleges that offered vocational certificates. I have also donated money and time to a variety of animal charities. In fact, for many years, I gave 10% of all the proceeds from my website sales to animal charities and vocational certificate programs at local colleges – something I plan to do again soon.

I strongly believe that everyone should be willing to give whatever they can, because it is so important to help others. It is, very simply, the right thing to do.



In the Monterey area, from ages 50 to 54, I donated my time tutoring students in English and English literature, and also provided editorial and production services for *The Quarterly*, a newsletter of the Swedish Finn Historical Society – not a charity, but still a non-profit.

Feline Causes

I also devoted many years of my life to the care of my own cats as well as to the welfare of other cats. In particular, I have volunteered my time and resources to low-cost/no-cost spay/neuter clinics and feral cat colony management, which I consider extremely important. I have written about and spoken out about my opinions regarding feline population control and breeding:

Millions of perfectly adorable and healthy cats are destroyed in shelters every year throughout the world. This alone makes for an unarguable case in favor of spaying and neutering. Along those same lines, the deliberate and intentional commercial breeding of cats for characteristics appealing only to humans, and that carry known or potential health risks for the cats, should be abolished. Not only is this practice unconscionably cruel to these innocent creatures, but it is unnecessary and irresponsible given the innate beauty of cats and the enormous number of perfectly wonderful cats and kittens readily available for adoption everywhere. I feel exactly the same when it comes to spaying and neutering of dogs, stopping the breeding for characteristics and, of course, puppy mills.

And so, my biggest volunteer efforts have always been the ones that were closest to my heart: working with cats, the animals I love so much. I volunteered with low-cost/no-cost spay and neuter clinics because as many as 1.5 million cats are euthanized every year throughout the United States simply because their owners neglect to stop them from reproducing and creating an overpopulation of cats for whom there are not enough suitable homes. This is due to not having the money to do it or due to ignorance of why spaying and neutering are so critical. This is an important crusade of mine.

Also while in southern California, I worked with three different feral cat colony management groups to trap, spay/neuter, and pro-

vide medical attention to feral cats before releasing them back to their colonies. The purpose of this was to prevent these animals from spreading disease among themselves and to neighboring non-feral feline populations. In volunteer work with cats, I often worked directly with handling cats, but I also did a lot of writing to draw attention to what these various non-profit groups were doing and how people could participate by donating things, money, and time towards those efforts.

After moving to Lacey, Washington, I decided I was done volunteering. While I like to support a cause and still donate money, I really don't like working in most volunteer groups. It seems that in so many cases there are always some volunteers who don't take the work seriously. They treat it like a hobby that they can pursue when it suits them, as opposed to when it is best for the cause and for the rest of the volunteers. I tend to be extremely reliable, so when I commit to a cause, I'm going to always show up, always do what's needed, never complain about what I'm asked to do, and always be respectful of the other volunteers. Wish others were more like that. It was my mother's chief complaint about volunteering. So, adios to volunteering. Leave those efforts to another generation.

HOBBIES & INTERESTS

I'm interested in almost everything in life, and I have very eclectic tastes. Nowhere is that expressed more than in my hobbies and interests.

Reading

I have always loved to read. I started reading before I was in kindergarten, probably because my mother read to me a lot. I don't specifically remember her teaching me to read, but I already knew my alphabet and could count when I went to kindergarten. By the time I was finished with fourth grade I had finished all the biographies and autobiographies in the library at Ord Terrace Elementary School, had read at least a dozen or more Nancy Drew books, and was also reading my way through my parents' library, starting with classics like Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities* and *Great Expectations*. I learned to use a dictionary early on!

My parents had thousands of books, fiction and non-fiction, covering a wide variety of topics. Lots of magazines too, including *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *National Geographic*, *Good Housekeeping*, *House Beautiful*, *Home & Garden*, *Woman's Day*, and many that were short story science fiction anthologies that my father bought at the drugstore in the 1950s and 60s, such as *Amazing Stories*, *Fantastic*, *Argosy*, and *Analog*.

Over the years I read just about everything in the living room bookcases and the ever-changing piles of magazines. Most of the books in my parents' library were or have become classics. Some of the authors became my favorites and I read almost everything they ever wrote early on. Some I read much later in the 1980s when I was ill, frequently bed-ridden, and in need of something to occupy my time. These great authors included the likes of E.M. Forster, Sinclair Lewis, Jack London, Edith Wharton, Nikolas Tolstoy, Margaret Mitchell, William Faulkner, James Fenimore Cooper, Shakespeare, Franz Kafka, Rudyard Kipling, Thomas Hardy, Isaac Asimov, Pearl S. Buck, Ray Bradbury, Larry Niven, Stephen R. Donaldson, Mary Renault, Alexandre Dumas, Agatha Christie, Robert Louis Stevenson, Jane Austen, John Steinbeck, Marjorie Kinnan Rawlings, Peter Straub, D.H. Lawrence,

Charles Dickens, Anne Rivers Siddons, Isabel Allende, W. Somerset Maugham, Victor Hugo, Arthur Conan Doyle, Stephen King, Elizabeth George, Jules Verne, Daphne du Maurier, and the Bronte sisters. I also read many of the Greek and Latin classics by such as Pliny, Aristotle, Plato, Ptolemy, Josephus, Manilius, and Lucius.

I had also read the *Bible* cover to cover by the time I was 14, and I found it an interesting book, particularly because of the history included in the Old Testament. A couple years later, I read a book called *Ages in Chaos* by Emmanuel Velikovsky, and fast-forwarding to the 1990s, I read a book called *Pharaohs and Kings: A Biblical Quest* by David Rohl. Velikovsky and Rohl used the dating from the *Bible* to try to rectify many of the different calendar systems used by historians and archaeologists in order to create a more universal chronology of ancient history. The views offered by both authors are fascinating yet are still considered controversial by some experts.

I read fiction and non-fiction. I think that people who don't read fiction are missing out on a lot of great stories, often set against an interesting place or historic event or subject matter such as art or music or education or any number of things. And I think that people who only read fiction are missing out on expanding their knowledge of themselves and the world we live in.

From my own experience, non-fiction tends to be fairly repetitive, so no matter how much of it you read, it is often just a lot of interesting stuff that's repackaged with a different title. No work of non-fiction that I've ever read has made me think, "Wow, that's the greatest book I've ever read." Perhaps I just missed that one! But with fiction, I've read quite a few novels that were outstanding.

I never kept as careful track of the non-fiction I read as I have the fiction. But, I have read hundreds of non-fiction works, and I remember the majority of them, especially self-help books such as *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, *The Road Less Traveled*, *The Brain that Changes Itself*, *Psycho-Cybernetics*, *To Have or To Be?*, and *I'm OK-You're OK*. But on the whole, in non-fiction I generally read mostly history, art, photography, health, and science, or books about the things I do career-wise, such as anthropometry, astrology, graphology, and horticulture. And I've also read lots of books about relationships, business, computers, and website technology.

Science fiction, fantasy, and horror were the first genres of fiction that were my favorites as a child and later as an adult. I read almost the entire works of the best-known authors in those genres at the time and added to the list from that point on. I read H.P. Lovecraft, Edgar Allan Poe, Oliver Onions, J.R.R. Tolkien, Ambrose Bierce, C.S. Lewis, Aldous Huxley, Edgar Rice Burroughs, Anthony Burgess, Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, Poul Anderson, Larry Niven, Jerry Pournelle, Philip Dick, Ray Bradbury, Doug Adams, Piers Anthony, Tom Tryon, Anna McCaffrey, Margaret Atwood, Marion Zimmer Bradley, J. Sheridan Le Fanu, Michael Crichton, Stephen R. Donaldson, Frank Herbert, Ursula K. Le Guin, George Orwell, Frederik Pohl, Mary Shelley, Bram Stoker, Jules Verne, Stephen King, Peter Straub, Dean Koontz, Algernon Blackwood, William Peter Blatty, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Henry James, Anne Rice, and many other great writers with unique stories and excellent writing skills.

The next genres I delved into were mystery, crime, and ghost stories. I especially liked these stories – any stories, actually – when they took place in Paris, because even though I have not visited that city, I’m extremely interested in its history and its literature. In fact, I often try to find English-language translations of some fairly obscure early French literature. I can read French fairly well, but English is just a whole lot easier. I’m not as particular about who I read in these genera because a lot of times the author has written only one really good mystery or crime novel or ghost story, and that’s it. Some authors, like mystery writer Agatha Christie, whose many works I read when I was living in Monterey in 1978, are experts in their genre. While her works often seem so timid in comparison to our grittier modern mysteries, when dissected it is easy to see that they hold up very well due to their near-perfect construction.

There have always been a wide variety of books that I’ve really liked that don’t seem to fall into any particular genre; they were just very, very good reads. Often, they were one of several books by the same author, and when I tried to read another book by that same author I was disappointed or could not even manage to complete it. But there were a few authors whose works I enjoyed enough to read most of their works, such as, again, Agatha Christie – I’ve read 49 of her 82 short mystery novels and enjoyed all of them. And sometimes I’ve read books in a genre that I would never have thought to read, such as westerns.

I had started a little library in the laundry room in the building I lived in and managed in Venice Beach. You could keep a book that you borrowed or return it or you could leave something in its place. Someone put about 20 western novels, all Zane Grey and Louis L'Amour, into that library. I picked up a couple that looked interesting and was surprised at what good stories they were and how well-written the books were. I ended up spending almost an entire summer reading westerns. Grey's *Riders of the Purple Sage* and *The Rainbow Trail* were a couple of my favorites, as were L'Amour's *Where the Long Grass Blows*, *The Californios*, and *Conagher*.

I'm constantly reading. I have always read an average minimum of two books per week. I'm often reading more than three or four books at a time. I generally tend to read in certain genres for long periods of time and then switch to something else when that genre is exhausted for me, occasionally returning to it if something new is published that interests me.

I don't read everything in each genre, because so many books turn out to be poor derivatives of much better works by far better writers. I also don't read exclusively in any one genre. I have a very, very long list of books I want to read, and even though I have made great progress in reading from that list, there are always more books that I read about or that people recommend to me, and I add them to the list, so it just keeps on growing.

Because I'm always doing research for the books I write, I often come across a reference to a book that sounds interesting, and so it goes on the list too. I love research because of all the things that come up during the most mundane search, especially if one of those things happens to be a book. For example, I was trying to find a photograph that might match the scene in an etching I have. As I searched online and looked at photos and at Google maps, I finally came to a series of photos that looked like the right terrain, and one of the places in those photos was of an island in the Brière marsh in France.

Its name matched the title on the etching, so I researched this a little further and eventually I came across a reference to a book that takes place in the Brière marsh. It was *La Brière* by Alphonse de Châteaubriant, and it had won France's highest literary award when first published in 1923. It was translated into English in 1927, but the

English titles varied, and so trying to get this on an interlibrary loan took awhile. Eventually, I found out that the most common title for it was *The Peat Cutters*. It turned out to be one of the best books I've ever read. In 2022, it inspired me to write a book, a mystery titled *Buried in the Peat*, that takes place in the Brière, on the island of Pendille in Saint-Joachim.

But that was not the end of this particular research trail. When I was looking online for *The Peat Cutters*, I came across a reference to two short novels by Belgian author Georges Rodenbach called *Bruges-la-Morte* and *The Bells of Bruges*. *Bruges-la-Morte* had the distinction of being the first novel ever published that was illustrated with photographs.

Both of Rodenbach's books had recently been re-translated into English and were available in ebook format, complete with illustrations. So I downloaded them both and read them too. Those two books led me to the English translation of a book by Eugène Sue, *The Mysteries of Paris*, published in 1843. I haven't read it yet but I hope it is better than Emile Zola's *The Mystery of Marseille*, which was incredibly b-o-r-i-n-g.

I have read more than a thousand novels and have enjoyed most of them. It's hard to just pick out a few and call them my favorites, but some stand out above the rest and they are, in no particular order: *The Peat Cutters*, *The Knowledge of Water*, *Gone With The Wind*, *Pillars of the Earth*, *Out of Africa*, *The Paris Wife*, *The Sheltering Sky*, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, *Riders of the Purple Sage*, *The House Behind the Cedars*, *The Quincunx*, *Interview With The Vampire*, *The Hobbit*, *Green Mansions*, *Timeline*, the *Dragonriders of Pern* series, the first three of the *Outlander* series, *The Other*, *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant the Unbeliever* series, *The Joy Luck Club*, *Marjorie Morningstar*, *Ivanhoe*, *The Mists of Avalon*, *The Thorn Birds*, the *Nicolas LeFloch* series, the entire *Poldark* series, *Zoli*, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, *Remembrance of Things Past*, *Felidae*, *Where The Long Grass Blows*, *Ramona*, and *An American Tragedy*.

I also like to read poetry. Poetry, to me, is the most elevated use of one's creativity combined with the careful use of one's language to tell a story or express a feeling or idea. I learned long ago that reading poetry is best done aloud, as that is how it was originally meant to be read. So, I read it aloud – to my cats since I live alone. As with

all writing, I like many types of poetry from many different poets and time periods. I especially like some of the older poets, like Wordsworth and Longfellow, but I also like some of the more modern poets, like Maya Angelou.

My favorite poets are the French ones, and I prefer to read their poems in French, so I have read Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and several other French poets in French. (When I was finishing my bachelor's degree, I did some independent study translating poetry from French to English and from English to French, and I very much enjoyed it.) I have also read some poetry in Italian, which is not too hard for me since I'm used to reading opera librettos in Italian. My favorite Italian poets were Ada Negri, Andrea Leone Tottola, and Andrea Maffei. And, I've read some of the Spanish poets in Spanish, which is a lot easier for me to read since I've used it more in life having grown up in California and having to communicate with several Spanish-speaking employees. My top favorite Spanish poets were Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, Jorge Luis Borges, and Gabriela Mistral.

In 2014, I started uploading all the books I'd read onto goodreads.com, and now I see even more books there that I want to read. There is apparently no end in sight for me when it comes to reading. Now, with so many books available in digital format, I frequently download ebooks – many free – and so I currently have a lot of the books from my “to read” list sitting on my tablet in my Nook and Kindle apps, just waiting for me to get around to reading them. And I will.

I know that some will disappointment me, because many of the free ebooks are just dreadful, and there are so many of them. They are the product of authors who decide to self-publish, either because they erroneously think they will make more money this way or because they were rejected by a publisher or two. Their stories tend to have stereotypical characters set in derivative plot lines, and everything is written by someone who has precious little skill in writing and needs an editor and a good proofreader.

I also like to read autobiographies. I like to experience the voice of the person who is telling their own story. I especially like to read the autobiographies of singers, musicians, artists, photographers, and other creative people.

TV & Movies

My earliest memories of going to movies are of drive-in movies when I was about 3 or 4 years old. We lived in Daly City and my parents had a Pontiac Streamliner, one of those big cars from the late 1940s. I remember the tinny sound of the speaker that you hung on your window. I don't remember the movies we went to in that car, but I remember going to sleep in the rear window shelf – this was in the days when there were no seatbelts and no car seats for toddlers.

As the years went by, and we moved to the Monterey Peninsula, we used to go to the drive-in movies in Salinas. I remember us going in our old pickup truck, with me in the middle straddling the stick shift and my brother in my mother's lap. And I remember going with my father into these bleak snack bars where you could get popcorn, drinks, candy, and ice cream sandwiches or bon-bons. I went to the drive-in theater in Burlingame back in the 1970s and saw quite a few movies there. I liked the giant screen and the comfort of my own car, but the sound from those old speakers was pretty awful.

As I got older, we started going to movie theaters, and there were a lot of them on the Monterey Peninsula and in Salinas. Monterey had two theaters downtown, the Golden State (a beautiful old theater) and the Rio (which was a ratty place for a long time, later improved and re-named the Regency, and gone as of about 2013). At the Del Monte Shopping Center was Cinema 70, a theater that was built in the late 1960s, and across the road from it on Soledad Drive was the Hill Theater (still standing but no longer a theater). And on Cannery Row there was the Steinbeck Theater (that burned down in the 1970s) and the 812 Cinema (now gone). In Carmel there was the Golden Bough (still there but no longer a movie theater), and in New Monterey was the Dream Theater (a great place that closed right around the time that I was moving to Washington state). There were other movie theaters in Seaside and Monterey, but they were sleazy places, now long gone. Anyway, there was no shortage of places to see movies way back when.

The height of my movie-going days was when I lived in southern California where there are tons of movie theaters. I've probably been to almost all of them. It was not unusual for me to go to two or even three movies during the course of a single day, especially in down-

town Santa Monica where there were several theaters, mostly multiplexes. Movies ran in theaters starting at around 10 a.m. and everything up until about 5 p.m. was a bargain matinee, so I could easily see three movies for a total cost of around \$7.50.

I also used to rent movies a lot. But nowadays, I almost never go to a movie theater. I think I've only been three times since I moved to Washington. Instead, I watch mostly international TV and movies on Netflix, MHz, and BritBox. I do occasionally watch American movies, but they are just so boring and unimaginative.

There seem to be more movies than ever, but like music and books, a lot of them are not very well done, and some are just plain awful. I think that's one of the reasons why I don't go to movie theaters. Too expensive for what you get a lot of the time.

I have seen more movies than I can begin to remember, let alone count. I've always liked movies since I was a young kid watching "The Prize Movie" in the afternoons, with the movies being hosted by San Francisco's society hostess, Pat Montandon.

Among my favorite movies are, beginning with the silents: *The Wind*, *La Roue (The Wheel)*, *Metropolis*, *Greed*, *Körkarlen (The Phantom Carriage)*, *Intolerance*, and *Broken Blossoms*. There are a few others, but I don't recall their titles. I also love film noir, particularly films from the 1940s, which to me is the very best movie era. And I love Alfred Hitchcock's movies.

My non-silent favorites are, in no particular order: *Gone With The Wind*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *The 39 Steps*, *The Third Man*, *Wuthering Heights*, *Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *Captains Courageous*, *Casablanca*, *Rebecca*, *Citizen Kane*, *Double Indemnity*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *The Big Sleep*, *Laura*, *Rope*, *Spellbound*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Stella Dallas*, *Pinky*, *The Uninvited*, *The Bad Seed*, *To Have and Have Not*, *The Maltese Falcon*, *Shadow of a Doubt*, *The Big Sleep*, *The House on Telegraph Hill*, *Rear Window*, *North by Northwest*, *Vertigo*, *Marnie*, *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir*, *Bunny Lake is Missing*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, *East of Eden*, *1900*, *Psycho*, *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Dr. Zhivago*, *Dances With Wolves*, *The Birds*, *Charade*, *Annie Hall*, *Barry Lyndon* (boring but beautiful), *The Elephant Man*, *Circle of Deceit* (1981, German), *See No Evil*, *The Blues Brothers*, *Saturday Night Fever*, *Dirty Dancing*, *Schindler's List*, *Out of Africa*, *The Color Purple*, *The Sixth Sense*, *A Passage to India*, *Imitation of Life*, *Groundhog Day*, *Sky Cap-*

tain and the World of Tomorrow, Michael, Memento, District 9, Twelve Years a Slave, Darkness, Shy People, Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil, Shutter, and The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo series.

There are only a handful of comedies that I like, because I just find a lot of them are too predictable. But I did enjoy a few, such as *Legally Blonde, Overboard, Idiocracy, Galaxy Quest, Groundhog Day, Notting Hill, Uptown Girls, and The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel.*

I also like a few of the “Bollywood” romantic musicals, which I think are very cute, but I don’t remember their titles. I like a lot of Chinese and Japanese movies, some of which were made in those countries and some that simply took place there. Some were originally produced on location there but were later re-made in English versions. I especially like the period pieces and the horror and ghost stories. Among the ones that stand out in my mind are: *Raise the Red Lantern, The Last Emperor, Ju Dou, Crouching Tiger-Hidden Dragon, The House of Flying Daggers, Red Sorghum, Rinne* (re-made as *Reincarnation*), *Ju-on* (re-made as *The Grudge*), and *Ringu* (remade as *The Ring*).

I also like a lot of the sci-fi and adventure movie franchises, such as *Star Trek, Star Wars, Alien, The Hobbit, Indiana Jones, and Harry Potter.* And when it comes to movies in general, I generally don’t like the more modern re-makes. They seem to be so cheesy and reliant on special effects, often losing the entire intent of the original plot. I have yet to see any re-makes that could even begin to do justice to their predecessors. And why re-make something anyway? New is certainly not the same as better.

While I will watch almost any movie, I’m much more picky about TV. As with movies, I prefer dramas, especially mystery, crime, and historic, similar to what I like to read. Over the years I have watched at least a couple episodes of many drama series, but there are only a few where I watched every episode available to me, and some of these date back to the late 1950s and early 1960s. Among my favorites are: *Surfside 6, 77 Sunset Strip, Hawaiian Eye, Bourbon Street Beat, Twilight Zone, The Outer Limits, Perry Mason, The Man From U.N.C.L.E., The X-Files, Stargate* (franchise), *Star Trek* (franchise), *Farscape, Law & Order* (franchise), *ER, St. Elsewhere, LOST* (my all-time favorite show), *House, Fringe, Travelers, Dexter, Damages, Defiance, and Battlestar Galactica* (the dramatic version, not the original).

But what I really love are the European and other international TV series. These are among my favorites: *Poldark*, *The Avengers*, *Wallerender*, *Jonathan Creek*, *Beck*, *Cain*, *Unit One*, *Blood on the Docks*, *Dirty Money-White Lies*, *Bukow and König*, *Dicte*, *Blood of the Vine*, *Inspector Morse* (franchise), *Broadchurch*, *Luther*, *The Fall*, *Taboo*, *Spiral*, *Orphan Black*, *Bordertown*, *Legacy*, *Anno 1790*, *Hinterland*, *Shetland*, *Ripper Street*, *Jack Taylor*, *The Dark*, *Anatomy of Evil*, *The Five*, *Vera*, *El Ministerio del Tiempo*, *Stranger Things*, *Winter Sun*, *Hatırla Gönül*, *Humsafar*, and a host of other great movies and TV series from France, England, Sweden, and other parts of the world.

I rarely watch daytime TV except for soap operas, which I really enjoy. I started watching *General Hospital* in the 1960s because my Grandma Steele watched it. I only watched the ABC soap line-up, so when each new soap opera started, I watched it too, and for many years I taped them because I was busy during the day, and taping them allowed me to fast-forward through all the dreary commercials or plot lines that I didn't follow. Over the years I watched *Never Too Young*, *Dark Shadows*, *One Life To Live*, *All My Children*, *Ryan's Hope*, and a few others that came and went quickly. All that's left now is ABC's *General Hospital*, but for the most part, it is a consistently good soap opera with good writing and excellent casting. I have also enjoyed two night-time soaps: *Dallas* (the original and the newer version that didn't last long) and *Nashville* (which I liked because of the music).

As a rule, I detest sitcoms, but I have occasionally watched some I found funny, including: *The Good Life* (a.k.a. *Good Neighbors*, a British series), *To The Manor Born* (also a British show), *Mork & Mindy*, and *The Big Bang Theory*. When it comes to comedy, I prefer *Saturday Night Live*.

I like documentaries about history, ancient history (especially Egypt), medical diseases and disorders, and speculation on the origins of earth and various myths associated with various cultures. I don't like reality TV except for the ones that follow veterinarians. I love those shows and I've learned a lot by watching them, especially Dr. Jeff Young (*Rocky Mountain Vet*), Dr. Michelle Oakley (*Yukon Vet*), Dr. Dee Thornell (*Alaska Vet*, recently cancelled), and Dr. Jan Pol (*The Incredible Dr. Pol*).

I don't like talk shows, variety shows, or song or dance competition shows. I did enjoy *Oprah* for many years, although I often

missed it due to work. I don't like game shows except *Jeopardy!*, which I have been watching faithfully since the original series hosted by Art Fleming debuted in 1964. I rarely miss an episode and usually record it.

Collecting

I like to collect, but I'm not the kind of person who collects indiscriminately. I am picky about what I collect and what I buy, and I always do my best to conserve and protect what I buy, because that is part of being a responsible collector.

Stamps & Postcards. My first interest in collecting began when I was about eight years old. I got a stamp album and began collecting stamps because both of my parents were interested in the hobby. My father had collected as a boy, and my mother had begun collecting when she opened mail for the family business. Later, I also started collecting postcards. I looked at both stamps and postcards as miniature art, and I was most interested in stamps and postcards that were issued prior to about 1950. After that, they just lost all their artistry and became garish and ugly in my eyes. My mother felt the same way. The collection we had was a mutual one, and we worked on it regularly. When she died in 1986, I lost all interest in stamps and postcards. The fun part, the sharing of the hobby, was gone, and I missed that. I put up a few pages on my website to sell my postcards. I may do the same for my stamps.

Etchings. Another thing I always enjoyed with my mother was browsing in antique shops. It was also while browsing an antique store on Cannery Row in Monterey that I bought my first etching. When I saw it hanging on the wall I thought it was a pen and ink drawing, and I did a lot of pen and ink drawing. I was immediately taken by it. The man who worked there said it was an etching, and he told me a little about what that meant. I bought the etching for 25c. It was the first of many that I bought over the years.

I soon discovered colored etchings. By the mid-1980s, I had about 200 etchings. Since I needed money at that time due to being seriously ill, I sold most of them, retaining only a few of my favorites. Years later, I resumed collecting, and I have roughly 60.

I've bought etchings in antique malls and from a variety of online auction sites. I mainly collect European landscape etchings made



between about 1890 and 1940, mostly by artists from France and the lowland countries of Belgium and the Netherlands. I now collect mostly colored ones, but still have black-and-white ones too.

I always try to identify the place where the etching was made, and Google Maps has helped me “walk” down the streets of Paris and other European places to find exactly what is depicted in these pieces. There are some that I can’t identify because they are rural scenes, but when it’s in a city, I can almost always find it.

I’m most attracted to the works of Marcel Augis, but I also like Francis Roth, Marcel Baron, and Lucien Dasselbourne (a.k.a. Davril). I don’t always like all of their works, but I buy the ones I do. I also have several favorites that are by unknown or unidentified artists. And I have some etchings that fall outside of my main area of collecting interest. Some etchings by artists I really like are way outside of my price range. Among those, I would love to collect the etchings of Tavík František Šimon and antique Japanese woodblock prints, but I’m satisfied to admire them in books.



The first etching I bought on far left, and two small favorites.

Small Art. I also collect small art. Not tiny, just not giant paintings. I have some works that were made by artist friends of mine, and other works I found in antique malls or bought online.

Rocks & Shells. I collect rocks, shells, and bones, and so did my mother. She brought back rocks and even a fir cone from Finland. I can remember us looking for shells on the beach and for rocks in streams in Big Sur and Malibu. This is not a huge collection, but I have always been fascinated by these works of nature. I especially like geodes and wish I had more of them, but then we're talking about me adding more "stuff" to my life. I have been trying to scale down my possessions rather than add to them.

Silver Bracelets. I like almost any kind of bracelet, but I only buy sterling silver, sometimes with copper and brass in them. I only buy bracelets with cabochon cut stones. I prefer link bracelets made prior to about 1970, although I occasionally buy a cuff. The older bracelets have the better and stronger links, and often the more interesting stones. I like amethyst, peridot, amber, dragon's breath, shell, and bone. I also try to find artisan bracelets that have other metals and stones, and that have unusual shapes, but these are hard to find, so I only have a couple of them at this time. I have about 30 bracelets and I wear them, usually several at a time. Some were gifted to me by friends and lovers, including one made of walrus tusk and another of abalone given to me by my friend Patrick Somers; an amethyst one and a peridot one from Bob Sargeant; and a rose quartz one from Rich Torre.

Pottery. My pottery collection began in 1977 when I was at a flea market with Bob Sargeant where they had a section of boxed items that you couldn't open. There was a description on one box saying "old vases" and another said "old dishes." I needed dishes at the time, and Bob bought me that box for \$3. A couple of months later I bought the vases box for about the same price. I originally collected mostly USA molded pottery, but over the years I shifted my interest to rustic, hand-made, one-of-a-kind pottery, and an occasional Asian piece. I mostly collect vases.

I have added to the Franciscan ware dishes that came in the flea market box, and I use them daily. I collect different patterns that have similar edges and that also have a lot of green in them. I love green



and it goes with my kitchen. I pick ones that have other colors I like that all complement each other sitting on a table.

Egyptology

I'm very interested in ancient history, Egyptology in particular, but also history in general. I became interested in ancient Egypt when I was in elementary school. In fact, I wrote a short paper on mummification when I was in fifth grade. My teacher sent a note home to my parents expressing her concern with my interest in such a morbid subject. I always wished I could travel down the Nile in an old-fashioned boat – not a modern-day cruise ship. But with all the unrest in that part of the world and my decrepit body, this is a dream that won't reach fruition.

Paris & France

I'm also interested in Paris and France in general, its history and its culture. I love to read books that take place in Paris or France, and I have managed to read quite a few of those over the years. I set a large part of one of my novels, *Reflections*, in early 18th century Paris. I spent a lot of time researching that time period and studying old maps from the time, because Paris was rebuilt in the late 19th century. I also have books of photographs of old Paris. I love the French language, I watch French movies and TV shows, and I like a lot of French artists. I guess all this means that I'm a "Francophile." Perhaps I was French in a previous life!

Other Activities

Bowling. I liked bowling beginning when I was a kid, probably about ten years old or so. My father would take my brother and me out to breakfast and then bowling after church on Sundays to Cypress Bowl and Monterey Lanes. As an adult, I bowled in Hayward when I was living there, and I bowled in Monterey at Monterey Lanes when I visited and later when I lived there. I also bowled at the Pico Bowl in Santa Monica when I lived in southern California. I was never a top-notch bowler by any stretch of the imagination, but I was an average bowler and I very much enjoyed it.

Running. I was a runner throughout most of my 20s, and I especially enjoyed it while I was living in Burlingame, California. It was a great area to run, not because it was especially scenic, but because it was flat! I used to go out every morning at the crack of dawn – my favorite time of day – and I would run about 3.5 miles. I'd go down my street, Bellevue Avenue, to California Drive, then north along California all the way to Millbrae Avenue and back the same route.

Running was so exhilarating. It was easy to see why they called it a "runner's high." Whenever I visited my parents in Monterey and later when I lived there for a year in 1978, my route took me up to Del Monte Park in Pacific Grove. I ran up Madison to Monroe, out to Franklin, up through the Presidio, out Taylor to David, down to Pine, back through the Presidio, out to High, back down Franklin, to Monroe, and then back down Madison. It was a much more rigorous run than in Burlingame because so much of Monterey and Pacific

Grove are very hilly, and you couldn't avoid that no matter what direction you were running. I was at my most fit and healthiest back in the days when I was running. I couldn't run after the automobile accident in 1980.

Hiking. I continued to hike after I stopped running, despite pain in my right leg from "meralgia paresthetica," a condition that resulted from the 1980 accident. The nerve that supplies sensation to the thigh is compressed causing numbness and pain in the outer thigh. It is easily relieved by sitting for about 30 seconds, but since I also have stenosis (compression of discs in my back), it's hard for me to sit on the ground and then get up without help. I needed to walk or hike where there was something to sit on.

When I first started hiking it was with my boyfriend Rich in 1975. We hiked all over the San Francisco Bay Area, including Mount Tamalpais, where my mother used to hike when she was my age. We used to camp a lot too, so we hiked wherever we camped. Later, I did a lot of hiking off-trail with Bob, some of that also in conjunction with camping. I really enjoyed hiking. Just being out in nature, especially off-trail, was incredible. No other people around, no litter on the ground, lots of unspoiled nature. I still hike, but I'm pretty limited to easy trails.

Bicycling. As a child, I liked to bicycle, but as an adult, I didn't start bicycling until I was 42, and I didn't stop until I injured my knees in late 2005 when I was 54. I really loved bicycling and today, twelve years later, I still miss it. It was great to be outdoors, enjoyable and also very functional since I could bicycle to the grocery store or wherever else I needed to go.

I started bicycling when I was living in Venice Beach. An unclaimed one-speed bike in the basement was my first. Then I got a Specialized Globe 3 three-speed coaster. After I totaled it in 2001, I got a seven-speed all-terrain coaster with back-pedal brake for the rear tire and a hand-brake for the front.

In Venice, I did a ten-mile ride every morning starting at sun-up, and another ten-mile ride just before sunset. On the weekends, I bicycled all over, often going out the 17-mile Ballona Creek trail and up to the Los Angeles County Art Museum, or to Olvera Street, Long Beach, or Chinatown. I also bicycled to visit all the properties I managed about

every six weeks or so. And I bicycled about once a week to Manhattan Beach or Redondo Beach and back. I had an odometer on my bike and I rarely bicycled less than 250 miles per week.

When I moved back to the Monterey Peninsula in 1997, I lived in Pacific Grove for three years. I bicycled early every morning and in the late afternoon, usually out to Roberts Lake in Seaside. When I lived in Monterey, I reversed that route for five years. I lived just a couple blocks from Roberts Lake. I also bicycled out to old Fort Ord and to Point Lobos. When I lived in Carmel Valley for a month, I bicycled all over the areas surrounding Carmel Village.

I often bicycled in Pebble Beach, sometimes going the entire 17-mile Drive and coming out at the top of Carmel Hill. When I made that trip up to Carmel Hill, I couldn't bicycle the last leg of it because it was such a steep grade, so I pushed my bicycle. One time, I was really tired, and so I pulled my bicycle to the side of the road and sat down and leaned back on a tree and promptly fell asleep. When I woke up, there was a mule deer grazing right next to me. It didn't seem to care when I woke up. It just kept on grazing.

I went everywhere on my bicycle, even taking my cats to the vet by bike, strapping their carriers across the rack. And I loaded my bike with groceries and took my vacuum cleaner in for repairs too. I felt totally free to go anywhere on the Monterey Peninsula. On several occasions I caught the bus to Salinas, put my bike up on the bus racks, and bicycled around there. I made two trips by bus (with transfers) to Santa Cruz and bicycled there too. While living on the Monterey Peninsula, I again rarely bicycled less than 250 miles per week.

Travel

I do not like to travel. This is mainly because I don't like to fly. I'm a germaphobe and don't like hotels; and I'm not real crazy about eating out. However, for someone who doesn't like to travel, I have sure traveled a lot. I have traveled extensively on business throughout North America, visiting Canada and Puerto Rico, and many states several times – some, like Florida and Washington DC, as many as 20 times each. I've missed only Alaska, Hawaii, and the Dakotas, none of which I'm interested in visiting. I also traveled on business to England, and for business and pleasure to Australia. I managed to see pretty much every natural wonder, major art gallery, architectural tour as was humanly

possible during my busy travels. I have also traveled numerous times throughout Mexico and Canada, and once sailed for pleasure throughout the Caribbean. I stopped traveling for business in 1991, but still traveled a little after that.

I also loved hiking, camping, and rowing. I never rowed competitively and never had any desire to do so, but I loved it. I never wanted to paddle a kayak. I liked rowing in a simple row boat. On a couple of occasions I rowed in a canoe, which I also don't like. All I wanted to do was be on the water and close to nature. I loved the intimacy of being in a boat surrounded by wildlife and an abundance of greenery. Not every rowing experience was an adventure, but nearly every rowing experience was a pleasure, and I have rowed in many places since I was a child. My many rowing experiences, along with my hiking and camping adventures, are outlined in this travel section.

1950s. My earliest travels were the short trips we made to San Francisco to visit my father's parents, Mabel and Basilio. Basilio died in July 1953. About two years later, Mabel married Leo, the man I would always know and love as my grandfather. We also visited my favorite aunt, Great Aunt Enes, my grandmother Mabel's twin sister, who lived in San Francisco with her husband Stanley.

Meanwhile, my mother's parents, Helny and Joel, lived in Anacortes, Washington, on Fidalgo Island in the San Juan Islands up near the Canadian border. They lived at 2018 L Avenue, and my aunt and uncle, Elsie and Ted, lived right across the street from them at 2013 L. My Aunt Lillian and Uncle Bill lived in Rochester.

In December of 1951, when I wasn't even a year old, I made my first of many trips to Washing-



1951, me in Anacortes with some of my cousins, holding hands with Carol and Pat.



1951, two screen shots of me from our 8mm home movies. Me with Grandma Steele and with Grandpa Steele (a very blurry shot).

ton state to visit my grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. We visited again in August of 1952 and October 1953. Grandpa Steele died in February of 1954, and we went to visit Grandma and Elsie and Ted in June of that year. We also made the three-hour trip to Clear Lake in Lake County, California with Aunt Enes and Uncle Stanley that same summer. In September of 1954, Grandma came to Daly City and visited shortly after my brother was born.



1953, me in Washington.

flew there in 1955 on an old-fashioned American Airlines propeller plane. My brother was still a little baby at the time. The stewardess (they weren't



1954, me and Great Aunt Enes at Clear Lake.



1954, me in the water with my father at Clear Lake, California.

called flight attendants back then) gave me a silver pin that was a little pair of wings with the American Airlines eagle logo in the middle. She pinned it on my sweater.

We didn't fly to Washington again and mainly took the train to Mount Vernon where someone picked us up and drove us to Anacortes. I still love train travel and wish there was better passenger service throughout the United States. The whole train experience is one that I find so wonderful. I like the fact that you can get up and walk around on a train and they have big seats. You're not all cramped up in a flying tube with limited mobility.

Train travel was in Pullman cars with individual little cabins complete with individual pull-down beds and a bathroom. These were definitely good for a



1957, my 6th birthday party in Rochester. Left to right, my brother Chris, cousin Lois, me, cousin Judy, my grandmother, and cousin Carol.

mother with two small kids. We'd get snacks in the club car and eat meals in the dining car. A porter would walk up and down the train length ringing the dinner chime.

Every cabin came with clean towels and bedding, and you had a button you could use to call a porter when you wanted the berths to be pulled down for the night. I remember that in the early morning,



Me with my mother and brother at Disneyland, 1958.

the train, which had a steam engine pulling it, would be making a very slow chugging sound as it slowly climbed through the mountains, usually in the snow. Before you arrived at your stop, or if you had to change trains, the porter would come and knock on your door to let you know when you were about fifteen minutes out from your stop. They would actually help you off the train with your luggage.



Me with my parents and my brother in Tijuana in 1958. The donkey is painted to look like a zebra.

In September of 1955, my cousin Pat and my Aunt Lillian visited us in Daly City. And in the summer of 1956, Grandma Steele visited us at the house on Waring in Seaside. In 1957, we again visited Washington during Easter vacation, which was

when my birthday usually occurred. I had my sixth birthday party that year at my Aunt Lillian and Uncle Bill's house in Rochester, along with Grandma Steele, my parents, my brother, and my cousins Judy, Carol, and Lois.

I liked my aunt and uncle's house in Rochester. They lived on a five-acre property that had a barn and a playhouse on it, and they had an outdoor cat named Popcorn. She was kind of shy and wouldn't let me get close enough to pet her unless my cousins were around. My cousins were a little older than I was, with Lois being the youngest at three years older than me. And when you're a kid, three years is a huge age gap. But they played with me, so I assume they didn't mind having me around when we visited.

In California, we used to go out to the Santa Cruz Beach and Boardwalk and to neighboring Capitola and Aptos. We played Skee Ball, went down the big slides, rode the merry-go-round, and grabbed the ring and tried to toss it into a hole. Once I rode the big wooden roller coaster, The Giant Dipper (now a National Historic Landmark), with my friend Kathi. My knees shook so badly I could hardly walk after that ride. It was the most frightening thing in the world. And Kathi wanted to ride it again! I haven't ridden a roller coaster since (unless you count one ride on Disneyland's Matterhorn).

In the summer of 1958, we went to southern California to visit a new amusement park in the orange groves of Anaheim – Disneyland. We also went to Knott's Berry Farm, which really was a berry farm in those days, and then we went to Tijuana, Mexico. We also made a trip to Las Vegas, which I think was this same year, and we saw the Ice Capades show there.

Disneyland was in its infancy. The monorail was not even up and running yet. We went on the jungle boat ride, and on Main Street we watched glass blowers make little figurines. To this day, when I see blown glass figurines, all I can think of is that trip to Disneyland. We also played on the fort in Adventureland.

Knott's had a little western town atmosphere where they had mock shootouts between "cowboys." In Tijuana, I just remember a big store with lots of junk in it – decorated sombreros, piñatas, paintings on velvet, etc. We actually brought some of that junk home with us.

1960s. In the summer of 1961, we visited Disneyland again. That same summer, my mother and brother and I rode the train to Washington, and my father joined us about a week later. We all went to Vancouver, BC with my Aunt Elsie and Uncle Ted. I remember that we went to Stanley Park and to at least one museum. Aside from that, I don't really remember very much about that trip since I was only seven years old at the time.

In the summer of 1960, when I was nine years old, I took my first turn at the oars. It was in Monterey on Lake El Estero. I was a Brownie at the time, and there were five of us who were there with two troop leaders. We rented three small rowboats and took turns rowing. I remember that I really liked rowing a lot and I didn't want



1962, with Grandma Steele in front of her house in Anacortes, leaving to go to the World's Fair in Seattle.

to have to give up the oars to the other girl in the boat. I didn't make a very good Brownie and only stayed in the Girl Scouts for a year after that. I rowed on Lake El Estero again about a year later with a woman named Joan who worked for my parents. She didn't make me give up the oars.

In early 1962, my mother and brother and I took the train to Washington, and my father joined us a week later in Anacortes. We all went to the World's Fair in Seattle. I only went one day, and got sick when we were in the Space Needle restaurant. I remember spending

the other days at Grandma Steele's house and across the street at my aunt and uncle's house where I stayed in the attic bedroom of my cousin Pat and drew pictures. This was a year when I had brought my art pencils and pens with me, because while I mostly enjoyed these trips I would often get bored because I didn't have access to my books, records, and art supplies. I couldn't bring enough stuff to keep me occupied for long. Also, my cousins were teenagers or were in college, married, or living somewhere else, so I was mostly alone.

On the same trip, we also took the ferry to Victoria on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. We went to Butchart Gardens and China-

town, and to some shops in the Old Town area. There, my mother purchased a large set of English Masonware dishes in a pink pattern called Vista. They were shipped to us in Seaside in a big wooden crate filled with straw. My brother and his wife use them on holidays now.

In the summer of 1962 and again in 1965, I rowed on a lake in Anacortes that had an island in the middle of it, so I guess it must have been Cranberry Lake, since that was closest to my grandmother's house. I went to that lake in Anacortes with various family members, and remember rowing with my brother and my mother. In 1962, I also rowed on a lake near Olympia. It was a fairly large lake, and I'm guessing that it may have been Black Lake. I went with my Uncle Bill and a much younger boy, but I don't remember who he was. My uncle let me row a bit. This was when I first learned that big lakes were very different in comparison to my only other rowing experiences at the time. On tiny Lake El Estero in Monterey there were no power boats and the water was so still. On this big lake I had to be watching where I was going and had to learn not to get caught in the wakes of the bigger boats going by. I think it was rowing on the lakes in Washington that made me fall in love with the natural beauty of Washington. I always thought of Washington in relation to the lakes I rowed on for many years.

In the summer of 1962, when I was eleven years old, I went camping in California with my parents and my brother at Pinnacles National Park, south of Salinas and northwest of Soledad. We took the route that comes

from Hollister because camping is only on the Hollister route side, and you can't get to it from Soledad. We camped in Bear Gulch, and it was pretty there, under trees and near caves and a reservoir. My parents shot 8mm footage of us hiking around the cave areas.



1962, me and my brother Chris hiking around the Pinnacles.

It was in the summer and it was scorching hot. I remember us walking around and looking at the scenery and going into a couple of caves. In one cave, a bat (or maybe it was a bird) flew out and its wings



1966, me with family members on Harstine. Left to right in front is Uncle Ted, my mother, Aunt Lillian, cousin Carol, Uncle Bill, and cousin Lois. In the back is me next to my father.

brushed my face causing me to knock my glasses off my face. But what I remember most was hiking the Bench Trail with a girl named Marlene who was about 14. She and her parents were in the campsite next to ours. Marlene and I walked for a long time in burning heat. We got to the Peaks View picnic area where there were tables with food on them but no people. We were really thirsty, and we drank some of their Kool-Aid, then headed up a trail to a cave before we turned around and came back, just before it started to get dark.

I'm always amazed at how unworried Marlene's and my parents were when we got back.

They were just making dinner and we all simply sat down and it was business as usual. Nowadays, parents worry constantly about where their kids are. I don't think my parents ever worried about me, because I used to go everywhere and never got into trouble and always came home when I was supposed to be there. Good luck, I guess.

In 1963, our Washington visits took us to Anacortes, then to Rochester, and finally to Harstine Island, where my Aunt Elsie and Uncle Ted stayed at their house on Jarrell Cove, across from the 45-acre Jarrell Cove State Park. They had a house, a marina, gas station, market, apartments, laundromat, showers, and public restrooms. The property had been inherited by my Uncle Ted, and he had made a lot of the improvements to it. Elsie and Ted moved there in 1966, but then sold it in 1980. It is still there as of 2017, and looks very much like it always did, with only a substantial improvement to the pier leading out to the gas station dock.



1965, Jarrell Cove marina, the dock on the right.

We went to Washington again by train in 1965 and 1966. In 1965, we spent part of the summer on Harstine Island. I rowed all over Jarrell's Cove, as I did a couple years later when we visited there again in 1966 and 1967. Calm waters, not much to see, but very peaceful and tranquil. In the water you could see these big jellies that looked like giant raw eggs. I saw a seal and an otter in the cove once, both times when I was rowing closer out to the Puget Sound end of the cove.

In 1965, we went camping in Yosemite with Jackie and Mac McCullough. Jackie was the secretary at my parents' garbage business for several years and she and my mother were close friends.



1965, me by the river in Yosemite
(with a terrible haircut).

The main thing I remember about this trip was that I went on a horse ride and was terrified when we rode across this very narrow bridge across a river and the horses began to canter. I had never been on anything other than some old trail horse that just kind of plodded along. And I was already afraid because I don't like

being up that high off the ground. I love horses, but I just don't like to ride them.

In 1967, my father bought a 24' boat, and we towed it with our pickup truck from Monterey up to Olympia, Washington, mostly along the coastal route, Highway 101. In Olympia, we put the boat in the water and motored out to Harstine Island. I got to steer the boat for most of that trip. This was our last family trip to Washington.



To Harstine Island, 1967, me at the helm!

My first solo plane trip was in December of 1968. I was seventeen years old and flew from San Francisco cross-country via TWA to visit my friend Kathi who lived in Alexandria, Virginia, near Washington DC. Air travel was not at all what it is now. It was right around Christmas and the plane wasn't even half full. I remember this trip very well and for many reasons, but mainly I remember that I was so poorly prepared for a trip to the East Coast. It was 18 degrees during the day, it had been snowing, and I had just a lightweight suede coat and a bunch of mini-skirts. I didn't even have mittens. I ended up buying a hat, muffler, mittens, and heavy tights, but I was still shivering in the cold.

Kathi and I went to several historic sites. We toured the White House, the Capitol Building, the Library of Congress, the Bureau



1968, me outside the White House after taking the tour.

of Printing and Engraving, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Washington monument. We climbed the stairs to the top of the Washington Monument because I don't really trust elevators and I'm claustrophobic in



1968, me in front of the flag in the State Reception Room of the Capitol Building.

them. The Jefferson Memorial was undergoing some kind of renovation, so it was not open at the time. We spent one day shopping in downtown DC, where I bought a beautiful, navy blue, pleated wool skirt and a silk scarf. We also spent two days visiting the Smithsonian.

In the Capitol Building, Kathi took a photo of me in the State Reception Room in front of an 1889 forty-two star American flag, just before a security guard told us we were not supposed to be in that room and asked us to leave. In that same room we saw the original Wash-



1968, me in front of the Lincoln Memorial.

ington state flag, which looked nothing like it does today. I have since returned to Washington DC many times, almost yearly from 1983 to 1995, either because I was on a lecture circuit or I was attending a conference there or nearby, sometimes both. I wouldn't want to live there, but it is one of my favorites places to visit.

In 1969, my senior year in high school, I went with three friends to San Francisco. We took the Del Monte Express Train from the stop near the Naval Postgraduate School in the morning and came home on the train that evening. After we graduated, the class trip was Disneyland. We went there in several school buses, and while

there I went on the Matterhorn ride and lost my glasses. They had to stop the ride and find my glasses for me. This was the last time I ever went to Disneyland. As an adult, I don't really like amusement parks at all.

1970s. In 1971, I was a student at California State University-East Bay in Hayward, near Lake Chabot in Castro Valley. The lake is long and narrow, and rambles in a kind of U-shape, with a lot of little inlets. I rowed there a couple times with my roommate but mainly I went with my friend Debbie. Like me, she was an early riser, so we went as early as we could. Boat rentals were pretty cheap back then, and the young guy who rented the boats knew us and was good about leaving us a boat key before his shop opened. In exchange, we left cash for the rental in a box next to the door.

The reason we went early in the morning was because it got pretty hot on the lake, especially during the late spring through early fall when it was about 85 degrees. Getting an early start rowing by 7 a.m. gave us a few hours before it got too hot for either of us and gave us time to get to class. We usually rowed during the week because when we rowed on the weekends, it was crowded. In addition, there were tons of birds around in the early morning – I love birds – and by noon most of them were gone.

In 1973, my first husband Ken and I traveled to Tijuana. It was exactly as I remember it from when I was there at the age of seven. Some things just never change. That same year, we went to Big Bear



1973, me in front of the Goodyear blimp.

Lake in Big Bear, California. We spent the night on the Queen Mary in Long Beach and visited the Goodyear blimp in Carson.

In 1976, while I was living with Rich Torre and his 4 year-old son, we would go camping. I suggested we go to the California Delta, otherwise known as the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. My father had always talked about how much he liked boating there. My hidden agenda was, of course, to row on the river and see all the wildlife.

The Delta is a very large inland river and estuary system with an abundance of wildlife – tons of birds and other animals everywhere. It was mostly reclaimed marshland and parts of it were still pretty marshy in places. In May of 1976, we stayed at a small campground and spent three days there. Every morning, I rented a row boat and sometimes rowed again towards the evening. It was really wonderful there, mosquitoes aside. It was such a pretty place. I saw so many birds, most of which I couldn't identify at the time. The ones I knew for sure were the sandhill cranes, tundra swans, and snowy egrets. There were also lots of ducks and geese, little stilt birds, and small song birds.

The one thing I remember most was when I was out one morning by myself, and there was a great blue heron that didn't even move when I rowed almost alongside him. I had never been that close to a bird that size before. That trip prompted me to buy bird books so that I could learn how to recognize them when I saw them. We returned to camp in the Delta area that same year in early September, but it was very hot and humid then, so I only rowed for a short while before I had to give it up to the heat.

In 1977, my future husband Bob and I went hiking for the first time. Bob liked to hike off-trail, and I had never done anything like that before, so I was a little nervous the first few times. He always carried a shotgun, snake bite kit, first aid kit, and other survival stuff that made me feel safer. We never had to use any of those worst-case-scenario things, but we did have a couple of interesting hikes.

One hike led to a gruesome discovery. We were in the Santa Cruz mountains. We had hiked for about 45 minutes, and it was hot. We stopped to rest at a spot where it was obvious that many other people had stopped before, and we sat down on a log. As I sat down I noticed what appeared to be a back-pack on the log across from us. I quickly glanced around to see if someone was there, but we were alone. I

walked over to the log to discover the body of a long-dead person behind it. We hiked back to the road and went to a pay phone and called the police. I stayed in the van while Bob led them back to the spot and we later found out it was a missing hiker.

On another off-trail hike, we ended up at this beautiful field that looked out over the Pacific Ocean in the distance. We had a picnic lunch with us, and we laid down a blanket under the shade of an oak tree and ate.



1978, Bob at our picnic site in Santa Cruz mountains.

When we got up to leave, we started walking up this little gully where rain apparently ran off regularly and had made a little path. All of a sudden we were surrounded by rattle snakes, literally dozens of them in all sizes, coiled up in the sun. Bob said to just keep walking and not to step on one. I thought he

was crazy, but apparently when they sleep in the sun, they don't usually spring at you. We walked right through them and they didn't even rattle their tails. Not something I would do again.

In 1978, I was temporarily living with my parents for a year in Monterey. I got a little more adventurous with rowing that year. I started by renting a rowboat from a place on Fisherman's Wharf. I had to get my own life jacket because I'm a lousy swimmer and they didn't provide them. It was actually quite difficult to row among so many boats in the harbor, and the harbor seals were relentless. I had been warned that they could be aggressive, but I found them to be more of a nuisance than anything else.

One day, I decided to see if I could row beyond the harbor. I had seen people kayaking out at Lover's Point and Otter Point in Pacific

Grove, so I figured this was do-able. And it was, but what hard work it was! I had to learn very quickly how to maneuver in swells so the boat wouldn't tip over, and to row between the tides.

I got in better control of the boat and built up considerable endurance to the extent that I was able to row from the wharf, all the way out to Hopkins Marine Station (just past what is now the Monterey Bay Aquarium) on at least twenty or more occasions. It is a lot farther away than it looks when you are rowing a little boat. That's probably why I never made it past Hopkins. It also gets quite treacherous beyond that point.

As for wildlife, besides the seals, there were tons of otters floating in the kelp – and I learned quickly to avoid rowing in kelp as your oars can get tangled in it. Once while rowing I saw a humpback whale. It was close enough that I could see the barnacles on it, but not so close that I had to worry about being tipped over by it.

North of Monterey are the tiny towns of Castroville and Moss Landing. I had heard people talk about the Elkhorn Slough, and I often saw people kayaking and canoeing in that area. One of my temp jobs at the time was working in Moss Landing at Kaiser Refractories. I mentioned to one of the men who worked there that I was interested in taking a rowboat onto the slough. He suggested I talk to a guy (name forgotten) who worked in the plant.

A few days later, that man stopped by while I was working at the switchboard and said he had heard I wanted to row on the slough. He had a very small rowboat that I could use. He brought his oars to work that Friday and drew me a little map so I could find the boat, which was tied to a tree stump, no lock on it or anything! I went very early in the morning on a Saturday, and rowed around for a few hours. Tons of birds. As an extra bonus, I was on the water when a big freight train was crossing the slough – I love trains, especially viewed up close!

And speaking of trains, also in 1978, I went with Bob to Santa Cruz to ride this historic railroad, which was a little narrow gauge steam train that ran in Felton to the top of Bear Mountain. It was the Roaring Camp Railroad's Redwood Forest Steam Train. It was a little over an hour ride round trip, and like its name implies, it went right through the redwoods. I was surprised at how slowly these trains travel – only about 18-20 mph and less if climbing. The locomotive

looked much older than did the cars, which looked to be quite a bit newer in age.

That same year, Bob and I went to Sonora and stayed in an old Victorian farmhouse that was on a 60-acre wooded property that he co-owned with four other men. It was really wonderful to be in such a beautiful, peaceful place where no other people were. You couldn't run into another hiker or camper because it was private property. There were two creeks and a large pond, and quite a bit of wildlife to watch. Bob showed me how to operate the wood-burning stove, which was a lot easier than I thought it would be. There was no electricity on the property, but we managed to survive without it for almost a week. We returned there a few more times over the years.

Early in 1979, Bob and I made our first out-of-state excursion together. We traveled to Helena, Montana where we stayed with his friends to watch the total solar eclipse on February 26. Everyone was talking about it at the time, so it was kind of "the thing to do." We wanted to take the train there from Sacramento, but that would have taken almost 40 hours. We ended up flying out of San Francisco, which took about four or five hours because there were no direct flights. We arrived on February 24. Bob's friends lived way out in the boonies on a small lake. While it was very cold, it was also very pretty. The night skies were black and filled with stars.

The eclipse was around noon or so. I remember we all sat inside in front of a big window eating and waiting for it to start, and then we bundled up and went out on the deck to view it through boxes with holes poked in them. I wasn't all that anxious to go on this trip, but it turned out to be pretty good all the way around. I also thought it was great to see an astronomical event that I might never get to see again in its entirety. Although I did get to see another total solar eclipse from my house in Washington on August 21, 2017.

In May of 1979, I went rowing again on Big Bear Lake with my friend Debbie when she visited southern California shortly after I moved there. She and I, along with two other women, rented a cabin that was right on the water at the end of a deep inlet of Kidd Cove. The rental included a row boat. I saw that row boat and didn't even unpack. Even Debbie thought I was nuts. We all got into the boat. There were life jackets for each of us, and I rowed us all over until it started getting too dark to see and my arms started getting too tired.

Debbie rowed us back. I liked Big Bear Lake a lot, and being in a forest environment again confirmed for me that it was the kind of landscape in which I wanted to live some day.

1980s. In March of 1982, I traveled to Mexico on a business trip with a woman named Marcia. We had a mutual friend who knew that I spoke Spanish fairly well. Marcia had just opened a store in West Hollywood and wanted to buy Mexican folk art to sell in it. She didn't speak Spanish at all. I agreed to go with her to Mexico to help her navigate the country, buy the folk art, and get it shipped to the United States. As it turned out, we made really great travel companions, and the trip became a combination of business and pleasure. After we had finished whatever business transactions she needed to make, we would just do the tourist thing wherever we went. On this particular trip, we flew into Mexico City, and from there to Querétaro, San Miguel de Allende, Guanajuato, Leon, Guadalajara, Ajijic, Morelia, back to Mexico City, and then home.

In September 1982, my mother and I went on a ramble of a trip. I had been in Monterey and we decided to drive back to Venice Beach together. Along the way, we visited the little Danish-style town of Solvang. Our timing was excellent as the town was having a festival with dancing, crafts, and food. We stayed for the day and arrived in Venice Beach that night. My mother stayed for about a week, and just before she was going to return, we somehow made the decision to take a trip to Taos, New Mexico. I have no idea how we came up with that plan, but we hopped on a plane to Phoenix and changed planes there to a little puddle jumper that took us right into Taos, north of Santa Fe.

Taos was a very nice place. It was quiet, peaceful, and rustic. We stayed in a small hotel with an old pueblo feel to it. We spent two days and two nights in Taos. We visited a lot of art museums, watched a very old Taos woman weaving, and browsed many shops, particularly the ones that sold hand-made jewelry. We also took a tour of the Taos Pueblo, where people still live the way they did centuries ago, without plumbing or electricity.

In December of 1983, I was again in Mexico. I left California, taking a bus to Calexico and then walked over the border to Mexicali at about 11:00 p.m. I bought a bus ticket and headed for Mexico City where, in a few days, I was going to be joining my parents and my

brother and his first wife. The bus made its first stop out in the middle of nowhere in the desert state of Sonora. This was a rest stop, and I needed to use the bathroom. What a surprise to find that the bathroom was a drain hole in an old tile floor in the middle of a room filled with other women who were also waiting for that hole. You paid a couple of very old women ten centavos each to hand you a bit of toilet paper and then hold big blankets up in front of you while you squatted over the hole to pee. I had never encountered anything like this in Mexico before.

On the bus, the passengers were very friendly, many spoke English, and I could get along pretty well in Spanish. The woman next to me was going to see her grandchildren in Guzmán, south of Guadalajara. I was knitting a muffler and she taught me how a way to knit much faster than I did. She didn't speak any English, but she pointed out different



1983, me with a view of smoggy Mexico City.

points of interest along the way. The bus stopped periodically along the road, always in the middle of seemingly nowhere, to pick up people standing by the road, and to buy lemonade and food from other people who were also just standing by the road. Everyone shared their food with everyone else on the bus.

When we arrived in Guadalajara, I found out that my ticket was only to Guadalajara and not all the way to Mexico City. The lines for

the ticket counter were very, very long, and I was very, very hungry. I knew I couldn't eat and get a ticket in time to get back on the bus in a half-hour. The bus driver told me to give him the money and he would get me the ticket. He went right behind the ticket counter to get it, while I went to the bathroom (with a real toilet!) and then went to where there were all these food stalls, one with the grill right between you and the vendor so that if you stood too close, you would get burned, or at the very least get grease spattered on you. I bought these little potato and cheese burritos. When I got back to the bus, I was at least ten minutes late, and everyone was just standing around talking. The bus driver smiled and said, in Spanish, "Here she is!" as I arrived. Everyone wanted to know if I was able to get something to eat. Here I'm holding up the entire bus and they just wanted to make sure I was fed.

We arrived in Mexico City at a big bus and transportation terminal. I had no idea how to get to the hotel. I just knew it was the Reforma Hotel on Paseo de la Reforma. I saw a man standing near the Metro and asked him for directions. He said I had to take the Metro to get there. He took my bag, led me down an escalator, bought me a ticket, escorted me to my stop, walked me up to Paseo de la Reforma, walked me up to a bus stop, talked to a student who worked at Pemco, said goodbye, and refused compensation for the metro fare. The student took my bag, bought me a bus ticket, and when we reached the hotel, he again took my bag, helped me off the bus, and walked me down the street to the hotel and up to the check-in desk, again refusing any compensation. I found this kindness and courtesy a standard in every trip I have ever made to Mexico.

I had two days in Mexico before my parents would arrive. I checked into the Reforma and spent the day walking all over the city. Bad idea. I forgot how high the elevation is in Mexico City and I overexerted. I ended up with a splitting headache that refused to go away. When my parents and my brother and his wife Diana all arrived, we visited the various museums, the zoo, Xochimilco, and Chapultepec Castle. We also went by tour bus to Cuernavaca and Taxco. Cuernavaca was a nice little town and Taxco had cobblestone streets in parts of it. My mother and I also spent a day together in the Zona Rosa (the Pink Zone) of Mexico City where we browsed shops and ate lunch. Then we walked around in some beautiful neighborhoods and finally ended up in an



1983, me with my parents at the pyramids in Teotihuacan.

area that overlooked a part of the city that looked just like East Los Angeles.

When it came time to go home, I decided to fly back. I got a plane ticket on the same flight as my parents, but when it was time to leave, the airport authorities wouldn't let me. I had neglected to get a tourist card before I crossed the border. I hadn't even thought about it for some reason. But, after talking to the airport officials, with my mother and father verifying that I was a U.S. citizen and also their daughter, they let me on the plane. We went through the same thing once I got off the plane in California. It was after this that I applied for and received a passport.

In early April of 1984, I made another trip to Mexico with my friend Marcia. We went to Xochimilco, a place I had visited a few months earlier. There are more than 100 miles of old canals that are murky waters. We eventually found a man who rented us a "chalupón," the closest thing to a rowboat that I could find. I rowed us around for a few hours. This rowing trip was sort of fortuitous for me, because it was where I first learned about some of the earliest uses of hydroculture gardening systems. The canals have these big floating growing plots on juniper rafts called "chinampas," and over time, the roots of the plants grow past the soil that is heaped onto the chinampas and they just extend into the water below. I included this

information in one of the first books I wrote for the horticultural industry, *Indoor Watering Techniques*, which had a section on hydro-culture. I saw lots of birds, mostly similar to what I had seen in other places where I had rowed previously: snowy egrets, green herons, stilts, coots, ducks, grackles, doves, and even parrots.

Later that same month, Bob and I went camping in Yosemite the week of my birthday. We had heard about this old steam railroad, and so we took a ride on it on my birthday. The locomotive was very old-fashioned looking with one of those wide smoke stacks. It was called the Yosemite Mountain Sugar Pine Railroad. I didn't even know Yosemite had this railroad, so this was a great surprise and a fun ride.



1983, me lounging at the pyramids in Teotihuacan.

After being bedridden for three months and now pain-free following back surgery in August 1984, I went on my first lecture circuit. It was 31 cities in 69 days. I learned from that experience that 31 cities is about 10 cities too many regardless of how many days you're on the road and how good you may feel. By the time I was half-way through, I was absolutely exhausted. But it wasn't all work, and I had a great time seeing places I'd never been to and people I hadn't seen for years. I did my first stop in Los Angeles, and from there I went to San Diego, San Francisco, and Portland, Oregon. From Portland, I took the train to Centralia and visited with my Aunt Lillian in Rochester where I also saw my cousin Carol from Olympia prior to my Seattle presentation. From Seattle I went to Vancouver, BC where I stayed for two days. I hadn't been to Vancouver since I was seven years old and I didn't really remember much about that first trip at all. It was a really nice city, and since I was considering all of the places I visited as potential relocation sites, Vancouver made the top five of my list.

My next stops were Boise, Idaho; Helena, Montana; and Boulder, Colorado. Boulder was near Denver, and I stayed there and in Denver for three days. It was a very beautiful area, particularly Boulder, and I enjoyed seeing all the local sights. From there I went to Omaha, Nebraska; Kansas City, Missouri; Wichita, Kansas; and then Dallas, Texas. I stayed in Texas for about six days, going from there to Austin and to San Antonio (to another conference). I liked the River Walk and the Alamo in San Antonio and that is all I have to say about Texas.

My next stop was New Orleans, Louisiana. I had a friend named Susan who lived there on the outer edges of the Garden District. I was there for six days and I loved New Orleans. Susan took me all over the Old Quarter. We listened to music and ate great food. It was a memorable trip for many reasons, including the paddlewheel boat trip we took to Memphis, stopping along the way to visit sights such as the Oak Alley plantation house about midway between New Orleans and Baton Rouge. A beautiful plantation, but like all other plantations in the south it has an ugly history of slavery.

Before that riverboat trip, I got in some rowing on Bayou St. John where there is a lot of boating activity. I rented a boat and Susan and I took turns rowing – I hate having to give up the oars, but I was her guest, so I relented. There were many beautiful old homes lining this bayou, and so it was a very different kind of rowing experience. I was used to more wildlife and this was not that rustic at all, with all the residential and commercial structures everywhere. And on top of that, a pelican pooped on my hat. Guess I was lucky to be wearing a hat that day.

Because I expressed a desire to see more wildlife, Susan suggested that we make a trip to the Atchafalaya Basin west of Baton Rouge. She had been there many times before, but she said we had to bring our own boat. Fortunately, her cousin Ed loaned us his big rowboat along with a truck and trailer to pull it. I did most of the rowing this time since Susan was now confident that I knew how to row, and she knew where we were going. There was a boat ramp and we had no trouble getting the boat into the water. It was an absolutely amazing place. It is thousands of acres of swampland right in the middle of Cajun country.

I rowed around all of these huge cypress trees that grow right in the water. We saw alligators everywhere, and while some were fairly

up-close-and-personal, none of them ever tried to approach the boat. We also saw deer, wild turkeys, herons, cormorants, ibis, pelicans, and even a bald eagle. All around us we could hear birds chirping and warbling. Don't know what they were, but their voices were very beautiful. We got stuck at one point when I tried to row us between two trees that Susan warned me were closer together than they looked. I didn't listen so I had to jam an oar into a tree to free us.

On the first night in New Orleans at Susan's house, she came into the living room and asked if I needed anything from the kitchen. I said no, and she asked if I was sure. I said I was, and wondered why this was important. Turns out, she dumps the garbage outside every night, then turns off the kitchen lights and closes the door to it because these huge cockroaches (the American cockroach) come out and they are all over the walls and ceiling, and they sort of drift down onto you when you go in and turn on the lights. And I complained about the little German cockroaches at the apartment building where I lived in Venice Beach!

After New Orleans, I continued on my lecture circuit and traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas; Des Moines, Iowa; Indianapolis, Indiana; Detroit, Michigan; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Louisville, Kentucky; Cincinnati, Ohio; and Nashville, Tennessee. I stayed in Nashville for three days. Great place, great food, great music. Then I continued on to Atlanta, Georgia and Miami, Florida.

I stayed in Florida for three days because my flight attendant friend Susy had flown in from Los Angeles to meet me there. She took me to the Little Havana neighborhood where she grew up, and I met many of her Cuban aunts, uncles, and cousins. I can't say I liked Miami, but I enjoyed the people, and I think that's more important. After Miami, I went to Raleigh, North Carolina and then to Alexandria, Virginia.

In Alexandria, I gave a presentation following a conference in nearby Silver Spring, Maryland. Susy and I had flown into National Airport just a few minutes apart. When we arrived, we saw a sign for a car rental for \$14.95/day saying they would deliver it to the airport. So we called there from the airport and found out that the rate on the sign was old but they gave us the rate anyway. We rented a Ford Fiesta and stayed at a small hotel in Alexandria. After my presentation we visited the National Art Gallery and the Smithsonian in Washington

DC. We also drove on a small rural road that took us on a loop through the incredible Fall colors in Virginia, West Virginia, and Maryland, where we had dinner in the Little Italy area near the waterfront in Baltimore. From there we headed south back to Alexandria. We also went to Georgetown where we ate lunch at a restaurant called Clyde's. Since that visit, I have always made it a point to eat at Clyde's when I visit. It's a great restaurant with excellent food.

I spent a great five days with Susy in the Washington DC area. It was one of the very best trips I have ever taken, which I attribute to the company, because Susy and I had a lot of interests in common and were both fairly adventurous people.

My last three stops on the 1984 lecture circuit were Boston, Massachusetts; Princeton, New Jersey; Brooklyn, New York; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. I didn't like Princeton at all, but Boston and Philadelphia were great places to visit. They are loaded with all kinds of historical landmarks and their art museums are great. What I remember most was a visit to the Mütter Museum in Philadelphia, a medical museum that has all kinds of specimens, including a plaster cast of Chang and Eng ("Siamese" twins), a wide variety of anatomical anomalies, and even Einstein's brain. It stands in my life as the most interesting museum I have ever visited.

In January of 1985, I again went to Florida. It is my least favorite state, but I have some great memories of it from the several occasions when I was there with my friend Susy. We flew to Florida where I went to a horticultural conference and trade show in Miami, after which we went to Gatorland in Orlando. In addition to eating alligator, we also walked through the cypress swamp on a raised wooden walkway. I immediately wanted to row in it, but they didn't allow rowing. I asked the cashier about places where you could row a boat in a similar environment, and she recommended the Hillsborough River State Park in Tampa.

This part was a good possibility for us because our next planned stop was Sarasota, where Susy had friends she wanted to visit, and Tampa was kind of on the way. We arrived in Tampa that night, and the next day, we headed for the park. No row boats to rent, but we rented a canoe – which always makes me feel very cramped – and I actually made do with that, but still prefer a row boat. We paddled around the big cypresses and saw wild turkeys, herons, and alligators,

as well as a lot of other birds and some squirrels. It was really quite pretty and it was a beautiful day, not too hot or humid. A few too many people around, in my opinion, but we managed.

In March of 1985, Bob and I went to Mexico. The plan was to go to San Blas, a town on the west coast of Mexico that is a tourist destination for Mexicans. It boasts an estuary filled with wildlife. I made train reservations for us and we took the bus to Calexico and then boarded the train in Mexicali. We traveled in an old Pullman car with cabins and pull-down beds. It was like riding the train to Washington state back in the 1960s. I had read that the Mexican railroad purchased those cars from the United States. It was great to have a private cabin for the trip, especially since Bob wasn't feeling well when we left California. Unfortunately, Mexico disbanded its passenger trains in 2000.

We were asleep when the porter knocked on our door at 4:30 a.m. to announce that we would be arriving at our stop in a half-hour. I was surprised because we weren't supposed to be in San Blas until about 9:00 a.m. We scurried around the cabin getting dressed and packing up what few things we brought with us. The train arrived at the station, it was totally dark out, no street lights, and only a fly zapper light in the window of the station. There was a bench, and we sat down and decided to just wait until the sun came up. When it did, we discovered that there were a bunch of people sleeping on the floor in the train station, but the doors to the station were locked. Nearby, we could see people in houses moving around with lanterns and candles.

Then buses and cabs started showing up, and we grabbed a cab right away. I asked the driver to take us to the beach, because I knew the hotels were at the beach. He said there was no beach. I asked if this was San Blas and he said it was. So I asked where the nearest beach was, and he said Los Mochis. I asked how far that was and he said it was about 25 miles and that we should take the bus. So he drove us to a small bus station in San Blas and told us which bus to take. We didn't have much of a wait until a bus arrived. We rode with the chickens to Los Mochis.

When we arrived in Los Mochis, we went to a travel agency on the main street to try and find out what was going on, and the woman there told us that there were two places with the name San Blas, and

that our train ticket was booked to San Blas in Sonora, and the one we wanted was in Nayarit, which was much farther south, way past Mazatlan. That was where I thought we were going, and since I made the reservations, this was definitely my error.

But, all was not lost. Los Mochis was the starting point for the train trip to Chihuahua through the Barrancas del Cobre (the Copper Canyon). We spent the day in Los Mochis going through a big open air market where we browsed and ate. Then we spent the night in a small hotel and boarded the Copper Canyon train – “El Chepe” – the following morning.

The Copper Canyon route is very unique. It is a railroad that both American and European engineers said could not be built. But the Mexican engineers did indeed build it, taking 90 years to do so, and finally opening it in 1961. To get some perspective on this, it helps to know that the Copper Canyon makes the Grand Canyon look like a pothole. It is enormous, and the train makes seven stops along a route that is almost 400 miles long, with 86 tunnels, and some of the 39 railroad bridges a mile high. The elevation along the route ranges from 3,200 to 6,200 feet. It is a train lover’s dream to make this excursion.

One of the stops was at Punte Divisadero. This is the half-way point between Los Mochis and Chihuahua. There was about a foot of snow on the ground when we arrived, but it was clear skies and a



1985, me in the snow at Punte Divisadero, the midway point of the Copper Canyon train trip between Los Mochis and Chihuahua.

magnificent view of the canyon. We got off there to enjoy the view, and after the train was underway again, we traveled for about an hour and then the train stopped.

We sat there for at least two hours, and no one seemed to know what was going on. I thought maybe there was an engine problem. Finally, after four hours, we were told that a freight train that was ahead of us had derailed, and since there was only one set of tracks, we would have to wait until another train could come from that direction and take us the rest of the way to Chihuahua.

That train didn't arrive until about 11:00 p.m. We had to get off of our train, walk along a very narrow ledge above a very deep canyon lit by small fires and lanterns. It was cold and it was snowing as we walked past the wreckage of the train that was ahead of us. Finally, we got on the other train and rode the rest of the trip in darkness because when people re-board-

ed the train they filled up first class and we had to ride in third class – on hard metal seats. We arrived a couple hours later in Chihuahua and I asked the cab driver to take us to a motel that was clean, had hot water, and was inexpensive. It turned out to be one of the cleanest and nicest motels I've ever stayed in anywhere.

From Chihuahua, we took the bus to Monterrey. By this time, Bob was really sick with fever and chills. He stayed in the hotel in



1985, me on the balcony of our hotel in Los Mochis, Mexico.

Monterrey and slept, while I went out and walked around the town. However, I wasn't feeling that great either. I had a terrible headache and by night I had a fever and chills too.

We wanted to get to Mexico City, and the next day Bob was feeling fine and I seemed to be okay, so we took the bus and made overnight stops in Zacatecas, Aguascalientes (which we liked and stayed for three days), Leon, and Querétero (where we stayed for two days), before finally arriving in Mexico City, where we checked into the Hotel de Carlo. (As a note here, this hotel collapsed in on itself six months later on September 19 during an 8.0 earthquake.)

Mexico City was a complete bust for Bob and me. I had become very ill by the time we arrived. I was delirious and had to be taken to a nearby hospital, partly unconscious, where I was given a dose of epinephrine that finally brought me around. I still wasn't feeling well after that, so we flew home from there the next day. By the time we got back to Los Angeles, I was starting to feel a little better, but I had a terrible headache. In retrospect, I think that my main problems in traveling to places at high elevation was probably due to altitude sickness, as my symptoms seemed to match, with headache, nausea, and fatigue. I think that on this trip, I had caught whatever it was that Bob had when we left California, but I just didn't get it as bad and the altitude sickness probably made my symptoms worse.

When I got back from Mexico, my mother came to visit me in Venice Beach. We went to the San Diego Zoo, and in Santa Monica, she bought me my favorite earrings, the last birthday gift she ever gave me since she died just a few months later.

In the Spring of 1985, I was again on a lecture circuit, this time a much shorter one because I had learned from the first one not to do so many stops or to stay for so many days. My first stops were two presentations in Los Angeles and Culver City. After that, I was on my way to San Diego, followed by Phoenix, Arizona; Albuquerque, New Mexico; and Colorado Springs, Colorado.

I had planned to spend a few days in Colorado, and I ended up going on a nice side trip there. After I spoke in Colorado Springs, a woman from the landscape industry came up to me and we ended up having lunch together. While chatting, she mentioned there was a steam train ride that was an all-day trip from Durango to Silverton with a couple hours layover in Silverton before the return. She had always

wanted to go, and so we went together. It was a narrow gauge steam railroad that ran through the San Juan mountains along the Animas River. It was a wonderful trip. The cars were very old-fashioned. The only problem I had with this trip (in general) was the elevation. I ended up getting a slight headache, although not as bad as the one I'd had earlier that year in Mexico City.

I spent two days in Phoenix and two days in Albuquerque. Interior landscapers I knew in both cities acted as my tour guides, so I got to see what the locals enjoyed. In Phoenix, I also went to the Arizona State Fair. In Albuquerque, the Old Town area was really nice, with great food and great music. Austin, Texas was next, followed by Oklahoma City, Oklahoma; National Hot Springs, Arkansas; and New Orleans, Louisiana. National Hot Springs was not a particularly big city, but it was very clean and very green. There were several "bath houses" because the area is known for its thermal springs, and people come from everywhere to seek out the health benefits of the springs. I was not one of them. I only stayed for the day and long enough to drive around with another interior landscaper who acted as my tour guide.

Next was New Orleans, Louisiana – again. This time I didn't stay longer than one day. I moved on to Memphis where I stayed for two days, just long enough to check out the area a little more thoroughly after having been there briefly the previous year. Then I went to St. Louis, Missouri; Des Moines, Iowa; and Chicago, Illinois. Chicago was really great. I wouldn't want to live there, so it didn't make my list of possible places to relocate. But there was a lot to do and see. I stayed for four days and went on several architectural tours. I also visited with a writer friend of mine who lives there. He took me to several museums and art galleries, and to lunch and dinner at some terrific restaurants. It was in Chicago that I stayed at the nicest hotel I've ever stayed – the Drake Hotel. It was absolutely gorgeous and very clean, and for a germaphobe like me whose skin crawls at the thought of hotels in general, that's a very high compliment. It also served excellent food.

My last stops in 1985 were in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Richmond, Virginia; Raleigh, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; and Miami, Florida. I stayed in Richmond for three days so that I could go see some of the historic sites in that area. There is so much

to see in this part of the country, and there just isn't enough time to see it all. But, I did manage to see Colonial Williamsburg and Jamestown, both of which are near each other and just a little way south of Richmond. I also drove out to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, which is on the road from Richmond to Charlottesville. I then visited the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, which has an excellent art collection.

I left Richmond and drove up to the Alexandria, Virginia and Washington DC area and visited Mount Vernon, just south of Alexandria. I took a tour of George Washington's former residence and the grounds. Then I spent a day at the National Art Gallery and had lunch in Georgetown at Clyde's.

Parking anywhere in Georgetown is a challenge – the traffic is awful. I parked somewhere on or off of O Street NW. When I left the restaurant, I couldn't remember exactly where I had parked, and so I was walking around trying to find my rental car, which was an additional challenge since I couldn't remember exactly what it looked like. I was walking down O Street NW, admiring the old row houses and the cobblestone street that used to have a street car – the rails were still there. I saw a group of people standing in front of a house and as I walked by them, I realized that one of them was my friend Lille from Palo Alto, California. Incredible coincidence. I knew she and her husband were moving to the DC area from Boston, but I didn't know when that was supposed to happen – no email in those days. Anyway, she and her husband had just bought the house and they were meeting with an architect.

The house was pretty awful from the outside and inside it was much worse. It smelled terrible. I had already been doing renovations in Venice Beach for more than a year, and so I had worked on some pretty awful little houses there. I couldn't even believe that anyone could see the potential to make this rowhouse livable. I saw that same house five years later, and it was absolutely gorgeous. My all-time favorite house in the world.

In late October of 1985, I again traveled with Marcia to Mexico. We covered several cities we had visited previously, and this time we also went to Oaxaca. After she purchased some pottery there and we arranged to get it shipped to the U.S., we decided to take a "jungle" tour by Jeep convoy. There were six Jeeps and it was quite interest-

ing. The road was pretty rough, so it was not exactly a comfortable ride. We stopped at one point to take a bathroom break by the side of the road. I went down a little ravine, small roll of toilet paper in my hand, did my business, and promptly came up the opposite side of the ravine to another road. I was disoriented at the time, partly because the sun was directly overhead and I had no sense of what direction I was going, and partly because I was on a medication that made me feel a little fuzzy at times. When I got to this other road, I thought it was the road I had come from, but I didn't see the Jeeps and I couldn't believe they had left without me. I started to walk back downhill, which was the direction we had come from. I walked and walked and walked, toilet paper roll in hand. I saw all kinds of birds and lizards, but no snakes. I knew there were rattlesnakes in the area, but none crossed my path.

Eventually it started to get dark. I had not seen a single house or building or car or person. I also couldn't see much in the way of a town with lights in the distance. At one point, just before it got completely dark, I came upon a big log next to a tree. I sat on the log and leaned against the tree, hoping I would not get something crawling on me if I fell asleep. As it turned out, I couldn't sleep at all. I kept hearing all these noises that I assumed were the local wildlife waking up for their nightly outings. Something was near me and was chewing loudly, possibly grazing on the undergrowth of the jungle. I was worried that it would come chew on me, but it kept walking around and chewing the vegetation and making a grunting sound. I have no idea what it was, but I had read that there were small wild cats and boars in that area, and I suspect it was a boar. There were also supposed to be some kinds of wild cats and monkeys there, but I didn't see them either. I just heard a lot of trampling around on the forest floor and in the trees.

I was just starting to sleep when the sun came up. I was thirsty and hungry and really tired, and I was worried about the fact that I hadn't taken my Dilantin for the seizure condition I had at the time. I started walking again. Finally, I saw a tiny little village way in the distance, miles too small to be Oaxaca, and the Jeep tour had not taken us through any village. I just kept walking. Right around noon, as I got a little closer to the town, I saw a car coming up the road from that direction. It was the police, and they had several cars out

searching for me. They seemed very relieved to have found me and one of them gave me his lunch and a can of 7-Up. They drove me back to Oaxaca where my friend Marcia had been frantic with various visions of me being eaten by a wild animal or being kidnapped by a drug lord. I found out later that I had walked about 36 miles.

In February of 1986 – as if I hadn’t had enough of Mexico a few months earlier – I ended up going to Mexico again with Marcia. This time, we didn’t go to Oaxaca at all or to Mexico City. We instead went to Guadalajara and to the Lake Chapala area and the art community of Ajijic. The trip was blissfully uneventful.

This was a busy year for me in California. I had fifteen speaking engagements between April and September (excluding May), covering everywhere from San Diego to San Francisco. I traveled by car and combined my presentations with consultations to interior landscapers along the way. My Fall lecture circuit started in early October with my first stops in Phoenix and San Francisco, where I spent two days visiting with friends. From there I went to Sacramento and again stayed an extra day to visit with a couple of friends in that area. I flew to Portland, Oregon after which I took the train to Centralia, Washington to visit my Aunt Lillian for a few days.

On the train to Centralia, I sat across from a woman who wanted to play cards. As we played, we talked, and I found out that she lived across the street from me in Venice Beach! I had never laid eyes on her during the six years I’d lived there.

When I arrived in Canada my first stop was Vancouver. I stayed there for three days. I really liked Vancouver and it was still high on my list of places I thought I might want to live. It had a great artists’ community and lots of great bookstores. After Vancouver, I went to Edmonton, Alberta, followed by Toronto. Toronto was a much bigger city than I had imagined, even after Bob told me so much about it, having lived there himself for eight years. Nice city, but too big to be on my list of places to relocate.

My next stop was Montreal, Quebec. What a beautiful city. Great European-style architecture, nice museums, and good food overall. My next two stops were Burlington, Vermont and Manchester, New Hampshire. I had an acquaintance who lived on the outskirts of Burlington, and she acted as my tour guide for the day. It was a nice city, but not much that appealed to me except for a museum that fea-

tured folk art. My last four stops were Boston, Massachusetts; Baltimore, Maryland; New Haven, Connecticut; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania – all during the height of Fall color. The color display was spectacular. Unfortunately I only got a few glimpses of it since I only stayed the day that I made my presentation and then moved on to the next city, and finally home.

In early May of 1986, I again returned to New Orleans, this time with my friend Liz. She had never been there before, and after hearing me talk about it, she suggested that we go there someday. My friend Susan was in Florida at the time we visited, so we stayed for four days at the old and quaint Cornstalk Hotel just off of Bourbon Street in the French Quarter. It's in a former "mansion" in typical New Orleans architecture inside and out. I liked it because it was quiet and the neighborhood was filled with art galleries of all descriptions. I spent almost an entire day browsing those galleries and others on the nearby streets. Liz and I had never traveled together but we turned out to be pretty compatible and seemed to like a lot of the same things, so we had a really good time. We especially liked listening to live music in some of the little cafés.

I wanted to row in another swampy bayou again. Liz was skeptical about doing this, but I felt comfortable with the idea. I looked up my friend Susan's cousin, Ed, who had loaned us his boat the previous year. He knew his way around the bayous, and he introduced me to a man named Arseau, a Cajun man just a couple years older than me. Arseau owned a fishing and bait shop and he gave me the use of his boat, along with a hand-drawn map. Liz and I rowed on what turned out to be a less-traveled part of the Barataria Preserve in Jean Lafitte National Park.

I must confess this was rather scary at times. We never saw another human being and we were on the water for about four hours. There were a lot of areas where the water was densely packed with plants and at times it was hard to get through them. We saw a lot of alligators and plenty of birds. It was extremely quiet except for occasional bird songs or the sound of something hopping around in the water – probably a frog. It was an almost spiritual type of experience to be so alone and isolated with only the boat between us and the wild.

It was in the late Spring of 1987 that I began to make regular day-trips, sometimes weekend stays, to Phoenix, Arizona in order to get

away from my life in Los Angeles. My mother had died in August the year before, and Monterey had always been a place I could go to get away from Los Angeles. I often went to the San Francisco Bay Area and to Menlo Park where Bob lived, but Phoenix was closer. It was also very economical because I flew standby on a commuter flight that always managed to have a spare seat for me. Despite the heat, I really liked Phoenix. I liked the art galleries and going to places that featured live music.

When I went to Phoenix in May that year, I had been there before, but I didn't really know the lay of the land at all. I stayed for three days and two nights at a Comfort Inn on W. Camelback Road, technically in Glendale. I had no trouble getting around on the bus until I decided to go to the Desert Botanical Gardens. I got on the bus, rode for what seemed like an eternity, and arrived at the zoo. I stayed on the bus since the zoo was not my destination. The bus driver said I had to get off because it was the end of the line and that the bus didn't go to the botanical gardens anymore, even though it clearly said it did in the 1987 bus schedule. So, I got off the bus. I spoke to someone at the zoo, and she pointed off in the distance and said, "That's where the botanical gardens are. It's not very far, you can probably walk there."

Silly me – or maybe it was *stupid* me – I took her word for it. I walked across the desert, literally. I had flashbacks to walking down the road in the Oaxaca jungle about six months earlier. I dodged rattlers and jack rabbits as I walked over hard, flat, gravelly terrain at high noon in absolutely horrible heat. I had a wide-brimmed hat, but no water with me. It didn't look like it was that far. But, when I finally walked through the entry of the Desert Botanical Gardens, the man who worked there asked, "Where did you come from?" When I said I had walked across the desert from the zoo, he shook his head and bought me a coke from the machine and then gave me a personally-guided tour of the gardens, which was really great – he was very knowledgeable and entertaining. There were only a couple other people visiting the place at the time, so it was quiet and peaceful.

However, my adventure was not quite over. After the tour, I wanted to go back to my hotel. According to my map and my rather dubious bus schedule, I could walk a very short distance and catch a bus back to the hotel. I waited at the bus stop. I waited. I waited. It

was getting dark. Still I waited. No bus. No pay phone in sight. I'm in the middle of nowhere. I ended up hitchhiking back with a couple in a pickup truck who dropped me about six blocks from my hotel. I then walked through this desolate area in the dark with barely a streetlight anywhere. I made a mental note to myself: Rent a car next time you decide to stay in this town! And I did.

In July of 1987, I made a trip to Seattle, Washington to do a presentation at the Red Lion at Sea-Tac. My cousin Pat met me there afterwards and we spent the night there – where we were awakened when fire alarms went off and the building was temporarily evacuated. The next day, Pat took me to visit her mother, my Aunt Elsie, who was living in a group home in Olympia. Then we saw our Aunt Lillian in Rochester, Washington, where I stayed for about a week before returning home.

Later in the Fall of 1987, I was again on a lecture circuit. This time I started out in Los Angeles, then on to San Diego. From there, I went to Tucson where I stayed three days with my friend Joan, who I hadn't seen for several years. I was speaking at a plant nursery/store, and Joan picked me up afterwards and took me for a quickie tour of the town, after which we had dinner at a nice little Mexican restaurant. The next day, we went to some art galleries and she introduced me to a friend of hers who was a potter. We watched her making pottery, which I found very interesting since I collect pottery but am not a potter myself.

The next day, we drove to Tombstone, where we toured the famous cemetery and the courthouse, along with other places of interest. That night I had to catch a flight to Santa Fe, New Mexico, where I stayed for five days. Santa Fe was a nice town and filled with art galleries. There were a lot of other historic areas that I wanted to visit, so I rented a car and drove all over the place. I went to Taos, where my mother and I had visited a few years earlier. I knew an artist there who had previously lived in the building where I lived in Venice Beach. We spent the day together and visited various art galleries.

From that point on, I do not remember the order in which I visited the other places. I traveled to Las Cruces, Roswell, Alamogordo, and El Paso, Texas. This part of my trip was hot, dry, and mostly nothing much to see. It was in El Paso that I hopped a plane for my next lecture circuit stop in Dallas, Texas, where I only stayed for the

day. Afterwards, I continued on to Wichita, Kansas; Omaha, Nebraska; Des Moines, Iowa; Toronto, Canada; St. Louis, Missouri; Little Rock, Arkansas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Birmingham, Alabama; Jackson, Mississippi; Atlanta, Georgia; and, finally, Charleston, South Carolina.

I only stayed for a day in each of these places, less if you subtract travel time. From Charleston, I took a bus to Savannah, Georgia. I had wanted to put it on my lecture circuit, and just couldn't get enough attendees, but I did want to see it. I left myself time to go there, and I'm really glad I did. Savannah was a very nice city. I stayed there for two days. It was very beautiful with a *Gone With The Wind* kind of atmosphere to it. Very Old South feeling. I went on two architectural tours, one of which was a walking tour. I really enjoyed visiting there, and wish I had allowed another day or two, but I had to get to my next stop, which was Orlando, Florida.

In Orlando, I met up with a woman who I used to work with in Santa Monica. She and her husband lived in Port St. Lucie, and they drove to Orlando where we went to Gatorland. I'd been there before, but I really found it interesting, and again got to sample alligator meat and a host of other unusual treats. I couldn't stay longer than that one day. My next stop was San Juan, Puerto Rico.

This was my first trip to Puerto Rico, and it was not at all what I expected. I thought it would be a small town – remember, this is pre-Internet days and so I didn't have the luxury of just taking a quick peek at all the photos online. I probably could have gone to a library, but I just didn't think about it. Anyway, it turned out to be a fairly good-sized modern city with tall buildings. It had some pretty run-down areas too, but on the whole it was quite nice. I especially liked the historic colonial district in San Juan where I spent an entire day walking all over that area and seeing the historic sites and enjoying some great food. It was very touristy but still well worth seeing. In the more modern part of town was the Museo de San Juan, which is a history and art museum. There were also a few other museums and art galleries that I also visited in that area. My last stop was Brooklyn, New York, and from there I flew home.

In April of 1988, I had my only non-positive rowing experience. It was on the Los Angeles River. It is (or was, don't know much about it these days) illegal to row on the Los Angeles River. I was

lucky enough to do it only because I rowed a friend who had a broken arm and had received permission to test the water at various parts of the river. I practically begged him to let me row for him. He had someone else who was willing to do it, but I wanted to see why it was illegal or what the condition of the river really was. It was not worth the effort. It was a filthy, disgusting river system, nothing to look at worth reporting. Just a few birds here and there, mostly garbage floating everywhere and it smelled awful in most places. Yuck!

In May of 1988 it was time for a very fast Spring lecture circuit. I started with Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Sacramento, California. From there, I headed south to Phoenix, Arizona, then north to Salem and Portland, Oregon; Seattle, Washington; Boise, Idaho; and Salt Lake City, Utah.

After I spoke in Salt Lake City, Bob joined me and we rented a small camper and visited several parks in Utah, all the way south to Zion. We drove to Las Vegas where we parted company, and I flew to my next stop which was Butte, Montana. From there I went to Minneapolis, Minnesota; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Cleveland, Ohio; Nashville, Tennessee; Louisville, Kentucky; Richmond, Virginia; Wilmington, Delaware; Newport, Rhode Island; and Hartford, Connecticut. With the exception of the Utah camping trek, I stayed only one day in each city. It was the fastest and most stressful lecture circuit I ever did, probably because it was so tightly scheduled, and I had to rush a lot to get to and from places. This exhausting pace lasted almost four weeks.

But this grueling travel schedule was not over. In early June, after the last stop in Connecticut, I flew to London, England, and arrived right around dawn at Heathrow Airport, about 30 or so miles from London. I had been invited to speak by a horticultural trade association. They made the airline reservations based on the dates I gave them for my last stop on the East Coast of the United States. When I got out of the airport, there was a line of cabs, and the first one was a guy about my age, and he took me to my hotel.

On the way, we talked and he asked how long I was going to be staying, and I said, "Not nearly long enough." When he found out I had to leave late the following day, he said he could create a very quick custom tour for me and end up at the airport in time for my

flight. I said it sounded like a good idea, and he asked me what I wanted to see. When I mentioned the Beatles, he said he could take me on a tour of well-known Beatles sites. So, I spoke for the association that afternoon, and that afternoon and evening I walked around the busy area surrounding my hotel.

The next morning, I spoke again, and after that, I was done lecturing. The cab driver picked me up just before noon. Our first stop was to get fish and chips, and the rest was a whirlwind of stops all over. I had no idea where we were in relation to anything, but I got to see all the famous places, some of which are no longer known by the same names. I saw the house on Wimpole Street in Marylebone where Paul lived for a short time with Jane Asher and her family; the Bag o' Nails club where Paul met Linda; the Indica Bookstore/Gallery where John met Yoko at her exhibit; Abbey Road Studios; where Ringo once lived; and a host of other places. It was really great and I recognized most of the places from photographs I'd seen over the years in books and magazines. I did get to see some more famous landmarks at a distance too. We drove by Buckingham Palace, Big Ben, the Tower Bridge, Carnaby Street, Piccadilly Circus, and Royal Albert Hall.

In February of 1989, I went to San Blas, Nayarit, Mexico with my friend Marcia. It is a coastal town that is frequented more by Mexican tourists than Americans. This is the same place that Bob and I had tried to get to a few years earlier when we were sidetracked into another town with the same name in Sonora. I mainly wanted to go to *this* San Blas because I wanted to row on the Estero del Rey, a 20-mile or so estuary of mangroves. Like a visit I had made to Xochimilco a few years earlier, I had a devil of a time finding a place to rent a rowboat. Finally, I found a guy who had a large canoe-type boat called a chalupa, a smaller variation of the larger chalupón that I rowed in Xochimilco. I really would have preferred a row boat because these narrow little boats seem so confining, and they sit so low in the water. But, you take what you can get, so I took the chalupa.

Marcia was freaked out by the small size of the boat since there are crocodiles in the estuary in places, but I guess I'm crazy when it comes to wildlife, and I was willing to take the risk. We rowed all over that swampy estuary, and I'm so glad that I took the advice of another American tourist and bought plenty of water and mosquito repellent.

It was very humid and we were thirsty right away. As for the mosquitoes and other biters, those things were everywhere, and I have always been a magnet for them. I only got one bite on my leg.

We did see crocodiles, mostly sunning themselves onshore. One swam right alongside of us and then turned away and went into some marshy grasses. We could feel the wake from him swimming past us. At one point, I had stopped paddling. We were sitting in the canoe talking while another canoe passed us in the opposite direction. Suddenly, a big crocodile plopped off of a log and slipped into the water right between our boat and the log. That log was not more than about two feet from us and we hadn't even noticed the crocodile until it decided to slide off into the water.

As with all my rowing trips up to this time, I saw many birds. The Estero del Rey is home to a lot of birds common to North America. Not only did we see the standard array of egrets, herons, and other stilt birds, as well as many kinds of medium to large parrots, we also saw turtles and lizards along the way.

In mid-October of 1989, I started my Fall lecture circuit with a presentation in Beaverton/Portland, Oregon, after which I took the train to Centralia and then stayed at my Aunt Lillian's house in Rochester, Washington for a week. It was while I was at my aunt's house that the Loma Prieta Earthquake struck in Santa Cruz/San Francisco. My cousin Ken and his wife Linda and their son Dane were visiting at the time, and they were all sitting down to watch the baseball game on TV when it happened. I was very concerned about my step-grandfather Leo and his girlfriend Rosalie who lived in the Marina District of San Francisco. The TV coverage kept showing footage of buildings collapsed in that area. Fortunately, they didn't have much damage at all and were unharmed. My friend Liz was living in Los Angeles at the time, and one of her apartment buildings in San Francisco sustained quite a bit of damage. No one else that I knew had severe damage or was injured.

After leaving my aunt's house, I spoke in Seattle and from there I traveled to San Francisco where I stayed with Bob in Menlo Park for a week. From there I went to Reno, Nevada, then Los Angeles and San Diego. I hadn't been to the San Diego Zoo or Balboa Park for a couple years, and I revisited. The San Diego Zoo is an incredible place. It's quite large and there are thousands of animals. They have all these

beautiful and exotic birds, fish, amphibians, and reptiles, many of which I've never seen in the wild because they come from parts of the world I've never visited. I love seeing the big cats too, especially the tigers. Most of all, I like to see the animals from Africa, the herd animals and all the unusual creatures that don't live in North America. My favorites are elephants, rhinos, and hippos – there's something so pre-historic about these giant animals. I used to think they must be related to dinosaurs, but apparently the latest DNA research indicates that dinosaurs were neither reptile nor mammal, and that their physiologies were something quite unique to them.

After a day in San Diego, I headed for Phoenix, Arizona, then continued on to Albuquerque, New Mexico; San Antonio, Texas; Kansas City, Kansas; St. Louis, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; and Columbus, Ohio. I didn't stay any longer than the day I spoke at any of these cities. My next stop was Boston, Massachusetts, where I stayed for three days with my friend, and now content editor for my books, Gretchen. Back then, Gretchen and her husband lived in an area called Back Bay, which is not far from the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Museum of Fine Arts, both of which we visited. We also walked through some beautiful park areas. I didn't row on the Charles. It was the second week of November, and way too cold.

I continued my lecture circuit with one-day stops in Trenton, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Raleigh, North Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; Miami, Florida; and San Juan, Puerto Rico.

In late November 1989, I spoke at a horticultural conference in Sydney, Australia and stayed in that country for three weeks. November is late Spring in Australia. Bob's parents came to Sydney from Melbourne and met me at my hotel. They took me on a really nice harbor boat tour of Sydney and showed me some other sights in that area as well.

After Bob arrived the next day, we spent a day in Sydney and then we all went camping together in a small RV for five days at Ganguddy (also known as Dunns Swamp) in Wollemi National Park north of Sydney. The river there is the Cudgegong, and it was not all that swampy, in my opinion. The area was very beautiful and there was a lot of wildlife in addition to the lush vegetation. We saw a "flying" squirrel and a platypus right after we pulled into the campsite at dusk.

I couldn't find a place that rented anything other than canoes and kayaks, and since I don't like the claustrophobic feeling of a kayak, I was

again forced to row in a canoe. I just want more room in the boat, period. From the water I saw tons of birds – ducks, cormorants, egrets, coots, little snipes, grebes, and a stork.

After the camp-out and a trip out to a Queensland sheep station in the outback that was partially owned by Bob's grandfather and uncle, we went with his parents to their home in Melbourne where we stayed for five days. Melbourne was a beautiful place for a big city. Bob's parents lived in a quaint little red brick house that was almost 200 years old. It had white wrought iron details and a real jungle of a yard. I'm not saying that in a negative way, because the yard was gorgeous. Bob's mother and I went shopping in the Old Town neighborhood on Elizabeth Street and some of its side streets. I was very glad she took me, because it is a rather large historic area and I would never have known all the great places to visit the way she did.

I rowed twice on the Yarra River in Melbourne. This is a city that is home to several old rowing clubs. Getting a rowboat was not a problem at all since they were readily available for rental, along with any kind of scull, kayak, canoe, or other boats that were unfamiliar to me. I rented a rowboat near an area that is known for its old boat houses. I rowed inland on the part of the Yarra where it is still quite narrow (it gets bigger and busier if you head towards Hobsons Bay where the Yarra flows into Port Phillip). On one side of me was the Royal Botanical Gardens (which Bob and I visited) and on the other side were a couple of



1989, me at a park in Melbourne.

parks. Like everything else in Melbourne, it was all very lush and green. There were not a lot of big boats in the area although there were barges and houseboats lined up in places. There were a lot of other rowers, all far more accomplished than I ever was or could be. I had no problems rowing at all, and Bob went with me both times. Not much wildlife to see, but the weather was gorgeous with deep blue skies and a few big white clouds floating by.

After leaving Melbourne, Bob and I drove through Southern Australia (enormous Eucalyptus forests), stayed in Adelaide overnight, and then stayed overnight again at a park that was near the border of Western Australia. The next day, we drove to Perth and arrived late at night. Perth really reminded me a lot of what California probably looked like, maybe back in the 1920s or so, not so densely populated. The terrain sure looked every bit like California. And Perth wasn't exactly a small town or anything, but the whole surrounding area was not at all as crowded with people and cars. There were quite a few small towns and we went through a few of those as we explored the area.

In Perth, I got to row on the Canning River (a tributary of the much bigger Swan River) in the Canning River Regional Park, part of a series of parks and reserves that line both sides of the river. This was probably one of the most beautiful rivers I've ever seen. I absolutely loved it. As for rowing, it was very quiet and still water most of the way, and everywhere I looked were these big black swans – in the water, sitting on the shore, sometimes flying in the air. There were also spoonbills, cockatoos, pelicans, ducks of all kinds, cormorants, night herons, coots, and an abundance of smaller stilt birds that I couldn't identify with any certainty. As much as I enjoyed being in this beautiful place, it was mercilessly hot, so I only rowed one day. That was quite enough for me.

We spent a week in Perth, traveling to King's Park and the artsy neighborhood of Northbridge, and then drove down to historic Fremantle to see the sights. Bob and I had often talked about relocating to Perth, and I must say it was extremely tempting. Like every other place I went to in Australia, it was very clean, not terribly crowded, and filled with some of the nicest, friendliest people I've ever met. I actually felt more at home there than any place I've ever been. I think it would have been a big adjustment for me as far as the weather is concerned,

but we all adapt to things after awhile. Perth, like Melbourne and Sydney, are sort of Mediterranean climates, so they are not all that unlike what you find in California. Unfortunately, as with California, Perth suffers a lot from drought. If we had moved to Australia, I think we would have probably settled on the outskirts of Melbourne where the climate is cooler with more rain.

1990s. In February 1990, I went to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to deliver a lecture at the university where a trade show was held. There were more than 900 people in the theater and it was filmed. At my hotel in nearby Hershey I met one of the other speakers. I always ask locals what's the best thing to see or do in their town or state. He told me about a steam railroad ride in Lancaster County. I was planning to go to Philadelphia, and the railroad is mid-way to Philly, so I rented a car, drove there, and then took a great steam engine train ride on the Strasburg Rail Road. It went through absolutely gorgeous Amish countryside. I felt like I was time-traveling. I was in an antique railcar, chugging past beautiful old farms where men were out plowing their fields with horse-drawn plows. For a brief period of time, it was almost hard to believe I was in the 20th century.

In late Spring of 1990, another very fast lecture circuit. I could see a trend coming in how much time I didn't want to spend anywhere anymore. I just wanted to get the thing over with. So that year I went to Vancouver, Canada; Spokane, Washington; Helena, Montana; Denver, Colorado; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Chicago, Illinois; New Orleans, Louisiana; Detroit, Michigan; Indianapolis, Indiana; Albany, New York; Portland, Maine; Ottawa, Toronto, and Edmonton, Canada; Portland, Oregon; and Los Angeles. Didn't stay more than a single day anywhere.

In October of that same year, I was off to Washington DC with my friend Marcia. She had never been there and wanted to go, and she knew I loved the area and knew it pretty well, so we decided to make the trip. I really can't think of anything we did there that I hadn't done there previously, but I have to admit that I love the area, and I never get tired of going to the Smithsonian or the National Gallery or any other tourist spot. There's an energy about Washington DC that is just so unique. Not only is it our nation's hub of past history, it's also history-in-the-making that gives it a feel of such life and vibrancy. It would be hard to be bored in a place like DC. The one thing I do remember

about this trip was that we went to visit my friend Lille, who lived in Georgetown. We met at Clyde's for lunch, and afterwards we went to see her house. When I had seen her about five years earlier, she and her husband had just bought this very derelict row house and now it was absolutely beautiful.

In mid-January of 1991, I again went with my friend Susy to Miami where I was speaking at a horticultural conference and trade show. I spoke once in the morning to a packed room of about 400 people, and it seemed to go really well. But, in the afternoon I spoke again, and there were only eight people. I was shocked. I kind of joked that I must have really bombed in the morning presentation since there were so few people there. A woman spoke up and said, "No, *you* didn't bomb. Bush is bombing Iraq and everyone is watching it on TV." I still spoke, but not to a full house.

After I visited the trade show floor, Susy and I left to visit her family and friends in the Little Havana neighborhood. While we were out and about, we saw an article in a magazine about kayaking the Oleta River. I wasn't going to kayak anything, but I figured if people were interesting in kayaking it, there must be something to see there. Susy knew exactly where it was, so we went to Oleta River State Park in North Miami. We got a canoe rental – no row boats there either. This was a very different river than the Hillsborough we traversed two years earlier. The Oleta rambles through a big mangrove forest and has tons of wildlife, but it is also in the middle of civilization, and the sounds of the human world were often with us.

There were very few people out on the river and this may be because it was kind of chilly and breezy for July, which I shouldn't complain about since I much prefer being cold than hot. Anyway, it was very pretty, and we meandered around a lot into little inlets that were very narrow. We saw lots of herons, ibises, and spoonbills – more than I had ever seen in a single day – as well as many other kinds of marshland birds. The real highlight of the trip was when we saw a manatee. At first I thought it was a rock in the water and so I was trying to steer us away from it, when suddenly it moved and kind of rolled over and then went underwater again. It was a much bigger animal than I thought it would be. We also had some dolphins pass us by. They were very close to the boat and I had to pull in the oars to let them pass.

In April of 1991, I was invited to spend a few days in New York City with my friend Jane, who I hadn't seen for many years. I had been to Brooklyn twice on lecture circuits, but never stayed longer than the day that I spoke, so this was the first (and last) time that I ever went to New York City. Jane is an artist and architect, and she had a great little apartment in Greenwich Village near 5th Avenue and West 9th Street, only a couple blocks from Washington Square Park. She took me all over Greenwich Village the first day and night that I was there. The next day, I walked (and took a couple cab rides too) all over Manhattan, going to Times Square, the Empire State Building, Central Park and the Central Park Zoo, and all the way into Harlem. I went to the Whitney Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, the Frick, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, all on that same day. I had to rush through those museums, looking only at things that interested me and passing by the rest. I just didn't have enough time to see it all, but what I did see was really great.

The next day, Jane took me to see the Statue of Liberty and also to Ellis Island. Afterwards, we walked across the Brooklyn Bridge – which was quite a hike. We then ended up in an area that reminded me of Venice Beach, kind of artsy-Bohemian, and pretty run down, but with some interesting art galleries and a few good places to eat. I have heard that this area has since been much upgraded and is now a trendy area known as DUMBO (short for Down Under the Manhattan Bridge Overpass). I enjoyed this trip a lot, but I could see that New York City, with such an incredible amount of things to do, is also a very dirty, noisy, and crowded city, so while it's a great place to visit, I would never want to live there.

My Fall 1991 lecture circuit started in August as I was going to be camping in late September. I flew to San Francisco, then Reno, Nevada; Salem, Oregon; and Seattle, Washington, where I visited with my cousin Pat in Tacoma, who took me to Rochester where I stayed with my Aunt Lillian for a week. From Seattle I went to Boise, Idaho; Kansas City, Kansas; St. Louis, Missouri; Memphis, Tennessee; Columbus, Ohio; Boston, Massachusetts; Trenton, New Jersey; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Raleigh, North Carolina; Atlanta, Georgia; Miami, Florida; San Antonio, Texas; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Tucson, Arizona; San Diego, California; and a final presentation in Los Angeles. I didn't stay

at any of those cities for more than the time it took me to speak.

The camping trip began on September 21. It was a five and a half week trip throughout the western part of the country. I went with Bob and 11 adults and 5 children on an incredible trip in several local, state, and national parks throughout the Western U.S. and Canada, including and in this order: Yosemite, Sequoia, Valley of the Rogue, Silver Falls, Palouse Falls, Glacier (my all-time favorite, the most beautiful place I've ever seen), Banff, Jasper, Yellowstone (pretty but too touristy for my tastes), Rocky Mountain (gorgeous), Grand Canyon, Painted Desert, Petrified Forest, Sedona, and Joshua Tree (these last five were way too hot for me). Seeing all the beauty of nature made this one of the best trips I have ever taken in my life. Part of it was the company, part of it was that we had the opportunity to experience so much natural beauty.

I couldn't get a rowboat anywhere, but I again managed with canoes. The first place I paddled was in Yosemite. You can't rent anything there, but one of our friends had both kayaks and canoes on board his RV. So, I paddled a canoe, this time with Bob and I both paddling at the same time. We went in the water at Curry Village, but the water was just a little too rough and crowded for me. We didn't paddle for more than an hour.

The next park I paddled at was Valley of the Rogue, the Rogue being the Rogue River in southern Oregon. I again used the canoe that belonged to one of my friends. This paddling experience was much better than at Yosemite. There were fewer people and it was very clean and pretty. I paddled with Bob again, and we saw deer and river otters. There were, of course, tons of birds, but we ended up paddling towards the latter part of the day, and only a few were out and about at the time.

The next paddling spot was in Glacier National Park, which I feel is the most beautiful park I have ever visited. It is absolutely exquisite. Not nearly as crowded as many other parks and a lot more wildlife than I have ever seen in any single park. I hardly saw any of that wildlife from a canoe. Bob – always a reluctant oarsman – and I paddled our friends' canoe on Two Medicine Lake, which gave us several close-up views of moose. Other than the gorgeous reflections of the surrounding area onto the lake's surface, we saw no other birds or wildlife there. It felt rather sterile. Bowman and McDonald lakes felt the same way. However, I'm not complaining. These lakes

were outstandingly beautiful. It could have been that time of the year.

A few days into our stay at Glacier, Bob sprained his ankle. It wasn't a major sprain, but he was off his feet for a few days, so my friend Patrick and I went hiking several times, once up to some waterfalls. We saw big horn sheep and mountain goats, some up fairly close. We also saw deer and a moose. One morning, we headed out very early when it was twilight. We walked on a trail and saw two grizzly bears that were not far from us – maybe 200 yards at most. I was terrified. But he just said to keep on walking because they were busy fishing. They looked over at us but ignored us. We got up to a place where there were a few big rocks, sat down, and watched the sunrise. A little fox was rummaging around in the brush next to us. The sky was violet at the horizon. I had never seen a sky that color before, and there were small clouds that were white with pink and gold edges. Truly spectacular, and I have never forgotten the view that morning. It is possibly the most beautiful thing I have ever seen. And I had no camera with me.

After we left Glacier we headed to Canada where we camped in Banff and Jasper (gorgeous). When we got to Banff, I quickly found out that most of the canoeing there is way too rough for a novice like me. I prefer the calmer waters, and one of the more experienced canoers there suggested I try the Bow River, so Bob and I followed the 40-Mile Creek for awhile. During this paddling experience, I saw several different kinds of ducks, as well as trumpeter swans, Canada geese, and some other geese I can't name. There were frequently hawks or hawk-like birds flying overhead.

After Banff, we went to Yellowstone, and on the way, we stopped to see bison at a reserve. I was shocked to see how huge they were. Some were right near the road, so we got a very close-up look at them. Yellowstone turned out to be a very big disappointment for all of us. In addition to some rather dreary and drizzly weather, it was extremely crowded and reminded me of Disneyland. Also, our reservations were completely screwed up, so we didn't stay there as long as we had originally planned. We left after three days and headed for Rocky Mountain National Park.

At Rocky Mountain, I was again paddling a canoe, this time on Grand and Shadow Mountain lakes. They are connected together by

a narrower waterway, and it was very quiet there. Hardly anyone around. It was early fall, and it was a little cool, but it was also absolutely gorgeous. We saw moose, elk, deer, squirrels, and even a lone beaver – the first one I ever saw in the wild. There were only a few birds that I saw, mostly small ones like the Stellar’s jay. Like some of the other parks we visited, I saw more wildlife when hiking than in the boat, but a beautiful paddling experience nevertheless.



1991, me somewhere in the great outdoors.

In February of 1992, Bob and I went to Mexico, Belize, and Costa Rica. In Mexico, we went to Mexico City and actually got to see the sights this time without being ill. We then traveled to Palenque by train. I had never seen those ruins before, and it was quite beautiful there, although the trip was a little rushed. After Palenque, we eventually took a bus to Mérida, then out to Cancún and Cozumel, then down to Tulum, another site of ruins that I’d

never seen. This trip was the first time I’d ever been on the Yucatan Peninsula. While I enjoyed the ruins, it was way too touristy for me – just not my kind of place. After Tulum, we took a bus back to Cozumel, and from there we flew to Liberia, Costa Rica.

From Liberia, we took a fifteen-mile – it seemed much longer – incredibly unpleasant bus trip to Rincón de la Vieja. I knew two people who had been to Rincón de la Vieja (which is a national park)

and they thought it was a great place to visit and highly recommended it. I must say it did not disappoint. We couldn't possibly see the entire park because it is also enormous. It's an area with active volcanoes, Rincón de la Vieja being the largest, and Santa Maria a little smaller. The year before we visited, one of them had been spewing ash, but it hadn't erupted. There are a lot of volcanic peaks, loads of rivers, streams, waterfalls, a big lagoon, hot springs, and bubbling mud pits. There were miles of trails to hike and we tried to cover as many of them as we could, but we did not climb the volcano. There were a million insects, but we had purchased a ton of insect repellent and refreshed it constantly. We saw quite a lot of wildlife, but none of it up close. There are cougars and jaguars, but we didn't see them at all. We saw three tapirs one day, but they were in the distance, so even with binoculars we couldn't really get a good look at them. We also saw a lot of very brightly-colored birds, including one small, vivid green toucan.

We stayed at a very rustic motel, the Rinconcito Lodge, that was close to the park. We got married (unplanned) under the trees on February 14, 1992. Two other couples also had casual ceremonies in the same spot that day. We had seen that there were quite a few people getting married there who were not dressed formally and who did not have a best man or maid of honor. Those roles were played by the same people each time, workers from the lodge.

By Spring of 1992, I was really not wanting to go on a lecture circuit at all, but I was releasing my new book, *The Interior Landscape Dictionary*, and I needed to use the speaking engagements to promote it. I started in San Francisco and Sacramento, California; continued on to Portland, Oregon; Vancouver, Edmonton, Toronto, and Ottawa, Canada; Boston, Massachusetts; Baltimore, Maryland; Hartford, Connecticut; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Brooklyn, New York; Princeton, New Jersey; Raleigh, North Carolina; Charleston, South Carolina; Savannah, Georgia; and, finally, Orlando, Florida. I was no longer looking for a place to live when I traveled. By this time I had already pretty much narrowed down my choices to the Pacific Northwest, even though I was slowly moving my stuff up to the house in Menlo Park.

In the summer of 1993, Bob and I again traveled with the same people from the 1991 camping trip. This trip was not as great, but it was pretty good. We traveled through Mexico, and I have been just

about everywhere in Mexico several times and love it there. We traveled through Central America down to the Panama Canal. We were supposed to go to Peru and then to Santiago, Chile, but there was a big earthquake in Chile and we ended up going on a sailing trip through the Caribbean instead.

In Mexico, I rowed again in Xochimilco and San Blas with my friend Shelley. I managed to rent a chalupón again in Xochimilco. It was lovely. It was July and the weather was warm without being hot. This is apparently the tourist season there, and it was very crowded, far more so than when I had gone previously during the month of January. We saw a lot of birds there, ducks and coots, and lots of stilt-type birds. I also saw a lot of people out tending to their chinampas, their floating gardens. Shelley didn't have any interest in rowing, so I didn't have to give up the oars. But, like me, she is pretty adventurous, so we rowed down some parts of the canals that were barely navigable and a little more jungley.

In San Blas, my friend Patrick (Shelley's husband) and I rented a chalupa. This one was considerably wider than the one I rented before. We rowed all over the Estero del Rey, and I remembered to bring extra water, which I didn't need because it wasn't nearly as warm this time around. But, there were still hordes of mosquitoes, and my repellent really didn't work very well this time. I had more than a dozen bites and itched for days. We saw crocodiles everywhere, far more than I had seen on my previous rowing experience in this mangrove estuary. Patrick took photos of some lying on logs and eye level with the boat. We also saw beautiful wild parrots all over. Some were just sitting on branches and others flew overhead and quite close to us.

After we left Mexico, our first stop was Belize at the island of Ambergris Caye. The middle of the island is a mangrove swamp, and Patrick and I rented a large canoe. It was a very pretty day, not too warm at all, but it was very humid. The water was exceptionally clear, not as dark as I have seen in all my other swamp-rowing experiences. You could even see rays and fish in some areas. We also saw a crocodile and loads of herons, spoonbills, egrets, cormorants, and other North American birds. Some of the lagoons were rather narrow, some quite shallow, and so they were a bit of challenge to navigate at times, but we didn't get stuck and we really did see a lot.

The following day, several of us rented canoes and kayaks, and we paddled out to the Belize Barrier Reef, several miles south of Ambergris Caye. Some of us manned the boats while others went snorkeling (not me). The water was absolutely crystal clear. From the boat you could clearly see all kinds of brightly-colored corals, anemones, and fish. I also saw a couple of sea turtles and a spotted ray. I borrowed a “parasol,” because the guy who rented us the boats said that it gets really hot out on the water, and he knew some of us were going to be waiting in the boats. I’m glad I had it, because I could feel how hot it was and I don’t think my hat and sunscreen application would have been enough.

We had met some Austrian tourists while we were in Mexico and we kept running into them, mainly because we would stop and talk about various places to go and we’d all end up going there at roughly the same times. When Otto, one of the Austrians, told us about a big earthquake in South America, we altered our plans to travel there and instead joined Otto and his friends in chartering an old-fashioned sailing ship. The ship was beautiful and it had the capacity to sleep forty people. But that was more than the captain liked to book at one time, so all of us together, including the Austrians, were enough to have the boat all to ourselves.

Besides the captain, there was his wife, their teenaged son, a cook, the assistant cook, and a six-man crew who kept everything going. The cook and his assistant made frequent trips into towns to get fresh vegetables and other supplies. We had fresh water tanks and an RO system. There were solar showers, which most of us were used to using on camping trips. The boat had all kinds of fishing equipment on it. Several of our group, including Bob, fished off the side of the boat, always keeping us supplied with fresh fish throughout the trip – mostly grouper and snapper, and occasionally small tuna. There were some other fish too, but I don’t remember what they were called (I’m not a fish expert).

We island-hopped, usually just spending the day in a port city and sleeping on the boat. After departing from Colón, Panama, our first stop was the island of Aruba off the coast of Maracaibo, Venezuela. Not very interesting. From there we went to St. Lucia; Port-Louis in Guadeloupe; Charlestown in St. Kitts & Nevis; San Juan in Puerto Rico (where we spent three days); Turks & Caicos; and the Bahamas (for two days).

Then we sailed to Bermuda (where we spent two days after an overly long trip through the Bermuda Triangle). While we were on the way to Bermuda we were stuck in the doldrums for about eight hours. Two interesting things during that time. First, we saw an enormous, unmarked, black submarine that surfaced not more than about 200 feet from us and just as quickly disappeared under the surface. That was kind of scary. Second, we saw about 20 Portuguese man o'wars floating together, all different sizes, some with bladders (sails) about a foot long, but most about half that length. The captain said not to get near them because they sting worse than jellyfish. We couldn't see their tentacles at all, but when we got home, I looked up these critters and found out that the tentacles are usually about 30 feet long but can be almost 100 feet. I also found out that they are not a single organism at all, but a colony of specialized polyps attached to each other and integrated in order to work together like an individual animal.

After our brief stay in Bermuda, we headed back to the Bahamas (just for the day); then on to Jamaica; the Cayman Islands; and finally Cancún, Mexico (the end of our sailing trip). From there we went to Veracruz and then to Mexico City, and we flew back to Los Angeles from there.

As luck would have it, I ran into a problem getting out of Mexico City. It was a similar re-run of my 1983 trip when I entered Mexico without a tourist card. This time, I was already in Mexico courtesy of my passport, but somewhere between Cancún, Veracruz, and Mexico City, I lost it. No idea how. I didn't have my purse snatched or anything like that. Bob and I stayed at the same places together, so when we gathered up our passports, he had his and somehow mine seemed to have just disappeared. Luckily, Bob had some of the paperwork that had our names on it for some of the places where we'd been, and they let me on the plane. Of course, when we got to Los Angeles, we had to go through those same papers again. Nobody arrested me or put me in jail, so everything turned out fine.

I'm not a beach-lover, so most of the Caribbean was wasted on me. I enjoyed the sailing experience. Most of us, myself included, slept in big, heavy hammocks below deck, even though there were bunks and other places to sleep. It took me a few tries getting into my hammock the first time as they kind of fold up around you once you're in them, but they were very comfortable. I loved the rocking motion of

the boat, the smell of the salt air, and the relaxing sounds of the masts creaking, the sails fluttering, and the water lapping at the sides of the boat. Very peaceful. I couldn't stop thinking about what it must have been like centuries before on these old sailing vessels.

The Fall of 1993 was my final lecture circuit. I was so sick of being on planes and sleeping in hotels, and I had been feeling that way for a couple years. I guess I was just burned out, because I really couldn't even stand the thought of going on this lecture circuit. So, I made this swan song as brief as possible by again staying only for the day I spoke in each city. I started in Los Angeles and San Diego, and from there I went to Phoenix and Tucson, Arizona; Santa Fe, New Mexico; Houston, Texas; New Orleans, Louisiana; Memphis, Tennessee (where I visited my friend Marcia in her new location); Atlanta, Georgia; Raleigh, North Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Baltimore, Maryland; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Brooklyn, New York; Cincinnati, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; St. Louis, Missouri; Omaha, Nebraska; Salt Lake City, Utah; Las Vegas, Nevada; Sacramento and San Francisco, California; Ashland, Oregon; and, finally, Seattle, Washington.

In April of 1994, Bob and I had recently split up, and I was back to living in Venice Beach full-time. I went to Monterey for an astrology conference at the Marriott Hotel. I wasn't speaking at the conference but it was one of the first times this particular conference was being held on the west coast, and since I knew people in Monterey, I had places to stay and friends to visit. I stayed for a little over a week with our family friend Gundy, and I reacquainted myself with the area. This was the first time I had been to Monterey since my mother died in 1986. Things hadn't changed that much, but Fort Ord was in the process of closing, and that was a pretty big deal. It was on this trip that I made the decision to move to Monterey.

In November of 1995, I went to Mexico with Marcia, who flew in to Mexico City from Memphis, and we met up there. It was not a combined business and leisure trip as these trips had been for us in the past. No business this time at all. We spent a few days in Mexico City and the surrounding areas. We went to San Miguel de Allende where she had friends, and we visited with them for two days. After that, we took two long bus rides out to Chapala and Ajijic for another two days. Then we headed for Guadalajara where we stayed for three

days and flew back to our respective homes from there. I have always liked Guadalajara a lot and so did Marcia. We enjoyed just walking around, visiting shops and art galleries, and going to the big open air market. This was my last trip to Mexico.

In 1997, I was living in Monterey, and I hadn't rowed on Monterey Bay since 1979. I was bicycling one day when I ran into an old acquaintance who worked in the fishing business and had a row boat that he kept tied up at the Municipal Wharf where the commercial fishing enterprises were located. He told me that if I ever wanted to go rowing, that I could stop by and he would untie the boat and drop it into the water for me. So, I took advantage of this free offer – I took him to a lunch a few times – and started rowing around the harbor. I found it even more difficult than before to navigate around the many boats that are anchored there. I wanted to go past the Coast Guard pier, but I was almost immediately besieged by sea lions and harbor seals. I felt I was in too small of a boat to be in their rather raucous company. But, as before, I enjoyed seeing all the birds up close and the activity in the water below. Once I even rowed with a pelican sitting on the seat of the boat! I rowed again many times in the harbor, and I finally managed to get past the Coast Guard pier and out to Hopkins. It is so choppy on Monterey Bay, and I really didn't feel all that safe, even though I always wore a life jacket and rowed between the tides to avoid getting swept onto the rocks.

2000s. In 2001, I was working part-time in Pacific Grove, California as the webmaster for the Asilomar Conference Center, managed by the Delaware North Companies. They sent me to Buffalo, New York to their corporate headquarters to get some additional website training. They were located downtown and so was my hotel. All I can say about Buffalo is that the food was great. Otherwise, I didn't see anything of it that was worth mentioning.

While I was living in Monterey, I took several whale watching tours, most only seeing whales from a distance, but on one trip we saw lots of whales, some quite close to the boat, and on another we saw dolphins too. I also toured a few of the various boats that visited Monterey Bay, such as the Hawaiian Chieftain (now ported not far from me in Aberdeen, Washington). That was a beautiful replica of an old sailing ship, and it reminded me a lot of the one we traveled on in the Caribbean in 1993. I also toured an aircraft carrier, a giant cruise ship, and two other “tall ship” sailing vessels.

I haven't traveled much at all in the 2000s. I made a couple trips up to Washington state to visit my cousins and also in anticipation of moving here. After moving there I also went with my brother and his family to Monterey in 2006 to clean out my father's house when he was moved to assisted living. I went to Vancouver in 2008 when my friend Jill was visiting, and we were just there for the day. I don't need to travel for business anymore and since I don't like to travel, my life has kind of improved. I'm a homebody and I just like to be at home.

Food. There is one thing about travel that I almost always enjoyed, and that was sampling foods that were native to the places I was visiting. If you haven't traveled a lot, you might assume that "food is food" all over the United States. You would be very wrong unless your idea of eating out consists of burgers at McDonalds or breakfast at Denny's. I don't eat fast food very much, so when I eat out, I look for places where the locals eat. I have never been disappointed, and yet I have eaten in some places that most people would shun just based on the outside appearance. But I think that if you're going to travel at all, you should at least try to discover and experience all aspects of the places you visit.

Food comes in all varieties, and nowhere have I found that to be more so than in the Southern states. I have eaten in little out of the way cafés and restaurants where they serve such things as "small birds," and that doesn't mean little chickens. It means wild birds like quail, dove, and grouse, and sometimes even robins and other backyard-type birds. They are usually in a stew or a soup, and while I wouldn't want to eat them as a steady diet, they can be quite tasty.

I have also eaten possum, rabbit, and squirrel – again usually in a stew. And I have eaten snake (including fried rattlesnake), turtle soup, frog legs, and alligator, all very tasty, and yes, they do taste like very tender chicken. I've heard people say they taste like crab, but I can't stand crab and none of these tasted anything like crab to me. I have also had escargot (snail) cooked in a variety of spices and sauces. It doesn't taste bad, but it's like eating squid or tripe – very rubbery. Really gives your teeth a workout, and in the end the only flavor seems to come from whatever is in the sauce. I only once tried a deep-fried "prairie oyster" (bull testicle), and it tasted pretty good if you can just get past knowing what it is.

Outside of the United States, you can find some interesting things to eat when you head south of the border. In Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean, I have eaten battered and deep-fried spiders and insects on a stick – they taste nutty and crunchy for the most part and they were sold by street vendors all over. I have also eaten chocolate-covered bees and ants, and you can't tell that you're eating anything other than a nutty chocolate treat. I've also eaten breaded chicken feet, which sounds a lot worse than they are. I also had a dish called escamol, and it is made of ant larva from the plant they use to make tequila. It's kind of a mushy-like oatmeal consistency and has a nutty flavor, but I didn't like it well enough to eat more than a couple of teaspoonfuls.

I also traveled throughout Canada, but the only things I ate there that were unusual for me were whale and moose. It is not considered politically correct to eat whale, and it is not a healthy food to eat due to the levels of mercury coupled with a history of causing illness akin to "mad cow" disease. I did give it a try. It tasted like moose, which tastes like beef but a little gamier.

Australia also offers a lot of insect dishes, and one of them is quite gross but has an almond taste. It's called the witchetty grub, and it's a big white insect larva. People actually eat these raw and alive – as did Bob – but as adventurous as I am with food, I draw the line at raw and alive. I instead had this Aboriginal delight cooked, and it was actually pretty good, but I didn't like it well enough to have it a second time. I also liked kangaroo meat, and it was available everywhere, often in burgers. Bob loved Vegemite, which is a brown paste, very salty, that is spread on bread (usually toasted). I thought it tasted absolutely vile.

People. When you travel a lot you get to meet many different people from different cultures, even within the continental United States. People in the South are different from the people in the West and East Coasts, and those people are different from the people in the Midwest, etc. Add people in other countries, and you find that they are all very different too. But, in general, they are also all incredibly the same.

However, in my travels, the kindest people I ever met were the Mexicans, Canadians, and Australians. The most laid-back people were in the South, the Midwest, Central America, and the Caribbean. The rudest people I ever met were on the East Coast of the United States.

Now, it sounds like I'm stereotyping when I define people by region or by country, but remember, I'm traveling, not living there, so my experiences with people in those places are extremely limited. I'm sure there are literally millions of exceptions to everything I said. But on the surface, based on people in hotels, stores, restaurants, airports, etc., that is what I experienced.

After writing this section on travel, I realize that for someone like me who doesn't even like to travel, this section on travel has taken up an awful lot of pages!

CELEBRITIES

I'm including this section only because this is a part of my life that people always ask me about. I have met a lot of celebrities in my life. Most of them were through my work, but some were through other activities. Most people are fascinated with celebrities, and they always ask "What's he really like?" Well, heck if I know. I didn't know them that well. But the one thing I do know about celebrities is that they are just like everybody else. They may be rich and famous, but they are subject to all the same problems that everyone else has in life, including financial problems. The difference is that celebrities choose careers or exhibit behaviors that cause them to live their lives in front of the entire world, always in a glass house, always under public scrutiny. My first encounters with celebrities began while I was living in Monterey and Burlingame from 1969-1978.

In the Fall of 1969, I was a student at MPC when I met a future actor named Gerald Anthony Bucchiarelli. He was my age and he was an art student and worked as a waiter down on Fisherman's Wharf in Monterey. He came to a party I gave at my parents' house and later went on to become a famous Emmy award-winning soap actor (under the name Gerald Anthony). He played a character named "Marco Dane" on the ABC daytime series *One Life to Live*, which I used to watch. Around 1995, I ran into him in southern California in front of the Venice post office, and he still remembered me!

During the mid-1970s, I was writing articles about music, and I mainly interviewed people who worked behind the scenes, but not always. The first interview I did was a fill-in for a writer when I used his notes to interview Joe Perry of Aerosmith when their album, *Toys in the Attic*, became a hit thanks to two cuts from the album: *Sweet Emotion* and *Walk This Way*. Only a couple weeks later, I interviewed Nicky Hopkins, a British-born piano player and session musician who performed on many albums by numerous well-known rock bands. He had recently released a solo album, *No More Changes*, which was a follow-up to his first album. After that, I interviewed luthier Leo Fender who invented so many very well-known Fender

guitars such as the Stratocaster and Telecaster. At the time, Fender had just become the president of a company called Music Man. I also interviewed rock impresario Bill Graham, who opened the doors of the Fillmore West, the Avalon Ballroom, and Winterland to rock concerts. I also interviewed music producer Bones Howe, agent and manager Skip Taylor, RKO programming director Les Garland (who went on to co-found MTV and VH1), and recording engineer and producer David Rubinson.

I met some other celebrities through my boyfriend Rich at the Record Plant recording studio in Sausalito where he did occasional session work. I used to wear a lot of unusual shoes and stockings and one day I was wearing pale blue stockings and a pair of purple shoes with light blue wedge heels and laces at the ankles. I was sitting outside with my feet up on a wooden planter box. Mick Jagger walked out of the studio, tapped one of my shoes, and said "Great shoes!" That same day, I met the late Gary Kellgren, co-founder of the studio, who purchased a series of five black-and-white photographs I had made. About a year later, he attended my first solo art show and bought a painting.

In 1979, I moved to southern California. When I was working in the landscape industry, my employer's client list included more celebrities than I can actually remember, but the ones I actually met always come to mind: Rod Stewart (singer/songwriter and musician), Henry Mancini (composer), William Peter Blatty (author, *The Exorcist*), Kenneth Turan (entertainment writer), Rick Monday (baseball player and sportscaster), Anthony Hopkins (actor), Judith Light (actress), Rue McClanahan (actress), Martin Sheen (actor), O.J. Simpson and Nicole Brown (in happier days ...), Vilmos Zsigmond (cinematographer), Bud Baumes (co-creator of the *Love Boat* TV series), Larry Harmon (one of the original Bozo the Clowns and owner of that franchise), and Gerald Chaleff (criminal attorney who defended Hillside Strangler Angelo Buono and one of the Menendez brothers).

I most remember meeting Bette Davis, probably because she was certainly the biggest celebrity I have ever met, a real American movie icon of the silver screen era. I was working on the deck at William Peter Blatty's house in Malibu Colony when I was paged by the office and directed to go give an estimate to a "Mrs. Davis" on Havenhurst in West Hollywood. I was not really dressed for sales work that day, but I went anyway. When I got there, a woman with long dark hair in

a braid came to the door. I innocently said, “Hi, Mrs. Davis?” She looked at me like I was the village idiot but welcomed me in anyway. I instantly knew where I was when I saw Bette Davis’ face staring at me from a large oil painting in a gilt frame. I waited in a little sunroom-type area and she eventually appeared wearing a white shirt and gray slacks. She was a very tiny woman, and she looked just like anyone’s grandmother, no make-up, nothing fancy. She was very sweet, and when I left, she directed me to be very careful getting in and out of the elevator because it didn’t always stop exactly even with the floor.

I met many other celebrities outside of the landscape industry, including singer Cher, who I met briefly in the ladies room of the Pico Bowl where we both used to bowl on “smokeless” Wednesdays. We stood in front of the mirror and she said she liked my earrings. I met actor Robert Redford at a client’s house in Malibu – was surprised that he was not very tall. I met British character actor Ian Abercrombie when he lived in my apartment building. I met poet Maya Angelou who knew the friend I was lunching with at the Merchant of Venice restaurant in Venice Beach. I met writer-producer Lee Zlotoff (*MacGyver*, *Remington Steele*, *Hill Street Blues*) when his office was next door to where I worked on the Third Street Mall in Santa Monica (now the Santa Monica Promenade). I met writer/cartoonist Matt Groening before he was famous for *The Simpsons* and lived a few blocks from me in Venice. I met Michael Ochs (music archivist, “The Michael Ochs Archives,” and brother of singer/songwriter Phil Ochs) who also lived in Venice a few blocks south of me. He was the one who came to my apartment and helped me go through my record albums to determine what to keep and what to sell when I needed to liquidate stuff to pay medical bills. I met actress/model Tia Carrere and her then boyfriend, the late musician Danny Sembello (brother of Michael Sembello who wrote the song *Maniac* for the movie *Flashdance*), when they lived in the apartment next to mine (into which I later moved after they had moved on). I met rock drummer Carlos Vega (who performed with James Taylor and many others). He was the late brother of my very dear and also late friend Susy. I met the late Rick Danko (guitarist, *The Band*) when I was doing preparation work for an upcoming charity event. He asked on being introduced to me: “Where’d you get those boots?” (I was wearing a pair of vintage decorated red cowboy boots.)