



A Program of Santa Monica College

THE EMERITUS VOICE

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From the Dean's Desk

by Dr. Scott Silverman,
Interim Dean



Greetings Emeritus Students,

It's been over one year of being safer at home, learning and working remotely. One year being socially distanced from our families, friends and our Emeritus community. Meanwhile, we've each missed important moments and milestones, have experienced losses in our own lives and from within the Emeritus community, and still have some time apart before we resume traditional classroom instruction.

We've had a number of retirements this year, Cheryl Walker (ART) retired after Fall 2020, and Jerry Schneir (PHOTO) is retiring this semester. Additionally, our student workers Minh-Chau and Marcia have moved on to other opportunities. Marcia even had a baby! We

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You can call him Joie ...

By Darlene Gaston

You know the saying: you can call me Ray or you can call me Jay or you can call me Johnny. In the case of the 20-year SMC Emeritus veteran Creative Writing teacher, you can call him Graeme Joseph Kronsberg, his legal name, or you can call him Joseph or Joe, his childhood and school name or Jeremy Hunt, his acting pseudonym, or Jeremy Joe Kronsberg, his pen name or Graeme Crown Mountain, his single use lyricist name or you can just call him Joie the name his writing students call him. *Joie* is French for Joy and J-O-I-E happens also to be how he spells his name.

Apart from a job as a baker or a candlestick maker, he has done it all. He has been a milkman, a member of the teamsters, a Deputy Probation Officer, an actor, song writer, screenwriter, director and associate producer. Many of these jobs paid the bills while he pursued his love of acting. As a bodybuilder, he won Mr. Colorado, Junior division.

He enjoys teaching at Emeritus, where over the years his students have become part of a family, some of whom have taken his class for over fifteen years. Joie loves to see his students taking chances

with their writing and sharing their life stories, often exposing their vulnerabilities. Over this period, he has seen true growth with his students.

As an actor, Joie appeared in several films and early on he was a contract actor at 20th Century Fox. His last role was Bruno, the biker in *Every Which Way but Loose*, starring Clint Eastwood, for which he also wrote the screenplay. According to IMDb, *Every Which Way but Loose*, was the first movie to make \$10 million or more on its opening weekend and is the biggest hit of Clint Eastwood's career. Joie had a close personal relationship with Manis, Clyde the orangutan in the movie, until Manis bit Joie's hand during a meeting in



Joie and Manus

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Vaccine Times

By Barbara Berner

The Covid vaccine arrived in Los Angeles December, 2020. Of the roughly 40 million people who live in California, as of mid-March, 19% of the total population has been vaccinated.

The people that are getting vaccinated now are healthcare and emergency workers, food and agriculture workers, education and childcare workers and those who are 65 or older. Proof of eligibility and residency are required. The news is by late Spring everyone will be able to get a vaccine. The first two vaccines approved were the Pfizer and Moderna for which one needs two shots, now there is a third, Johnson & Johnson for which only one shot is needed.

It was nerve-wracking for me to wait for the Covid vaccine. Before it was developed, I was not even sure if I wanted to have it. I know it takes years for a vaccine or medication to get approved for distribution and here were two that took less than a year. I worried that they wouldn't be safe. Many of my friends had concerns too. But by the time they were available I was all for it.

I am a semi-retired nurse but have not worked since March of 2020 because I am a senior and have a chronic lung condition. My RN license is still active since I plan on working part-time when the pandemic is mostly or safely over, but I was not sure if I would be accepted in the first round.

Finally, it was ages 65 and up and health care workers so I felt okay about signing up never realizing the confusion and difficulty in getting an appointment! Two of the big hospitals sent around vaccine notices stating an invite would be

given when it was my time. Do I wait for an invite or do I try and get my own appointment? After hearing from both the hospitals and the news, all of whom said to try everywhere, I went ahead and did that.

This was no easy task. I looked on the Los Angeles County of Department of Public Health/Covid website, which uses "My turn" and has a number to call if one is not computer savvy, 833-540-0473, between the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. 7 days a week. The city of Los Angeles website which is Carbon Health, and Pharmacy chains such as Albertsons, Vons, Sav-on, Pavilions, Ralphs, Costco, CVS, Rite Aid, Walgreens, and Walmart also administer the vaccine.

It was making me a little crazy. I got competitive when I heard from my friends that they had gotten appointments. I think my obsessive/compulsive nature came in handy for this. I was on my phone 15-20 times a day looking for appointments.

I called my doctors at the two hospitals who explained they had no control because the appointments were set to an algorithm so the doctors could not play favorites. That calmed me down a bit, but the anxiety and competitiveness prevailed especially when I heard from one of the doctors that people were making several appointments and not cancelling the other appointments once they got the shot.

Finally, I decided to try for the 10th time sitting in my car one afternoon and all of a sudden the Forum opened up with appointments! I was so excited and nervous fearing I would press the wrong button on my phone but I managed to get it right and had an appointment for the middle of the week.

Then when I got home there was an invite at one of the hospitals that was near my home. I quickly got on their

When the Pandemic Ends

by Jeanne Shamji

When the pandemic hit, most of the everyday activities everyone took for granted suddenly ended. A year ago, I closed my daycare business and retired, looking forward to travelling. I had to cancel the domestic and worldwide tours I booked. Now that people are getting vaccinated, we can see the light at the end of the tunnel.

I polled 66 friends, family, former daycare parents, and Zoom classmates and asked, "what is the first thing you will do after the pandemic ends?"

The "first thing" most people desire to do (18—myself included) is to take a trip to an interesting

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website and made an appointment. So then I had two appointments. I cancelled the one at the Forum right away because I did not want to be "one of those people."

I had my second shot on 3/2/2021. I was fine throughout the day, I did sleep but in the middle of the night I woke up with chills, fever and aches. This lasted till the next day late in the afternoon. I have a slight rash on my arm but feel fine now. We are all so different and have different experiences. Some friends say they had fever and chills but others had no reaction.

Many people experience a palpable sense of relief on receiving the vaccine. That was my experience too. The hope is that most Californians will be fully vaccinated by the end of the summer.

destination. Vacations have been postponed and staying in a hotel and being waited on is what many would love to do. My husband and I had to cancel the tours of Croatia and China and would like to complete them next year. Traveling to National Parks like Yosemite and Joshua Tree for quiet and inspiration would be delightful for two more poets from my group.

The next highest number—sixteen—want to travel to visit family and friends in the states and worldwide whom they have not seen in more than two years. One of my Zoom teachers longs to see his son who lives in Hong Kong while others worry that if they do not visit their parents in Uganda or Canada, it might be too late. My daughter-in-law's Taiwanese mother came to Los Angeles to help out when our grandson was born more than a year ago, and it has been that long since she has seen her husband who has a business in New York. As soon as

it is safe, she wants to rejoin her husband in New York, then fly to Taiwan to spend time with friends.

Seven responses were from people who miss going to a restaurant as they are tired of cooking and hungry to try different foods.

Five colleagues say hugging friends was their most important first thing to do. Going dancing without masks or being able to have a gathering of family and friends was the response of three people each. One Zoom friend from our editing class wants to meet again in person.

Three people yearn to throw away their masks - one because she already has to wear hearing aids and glasses and those weigh down her ears enough.

My well-traveled brother-in-law craves to take a cruise so he could have unlimited choices and amounts to eat for breakfast.

One friend I hike with is looking forward to returning to a gym.

One member of my poetry group intends to go to a salon to have her hair professionally cut and blown dry. She tried to cut her own hair and the results were catastrophic. Another poet plans to go clothes shopping. Four more want to go to a theatre or concert.

My phlebotomist wants to go to a bar, not for the drinks, but to have "man time" watching soccer with friends.

My niece looks forward to taking her two-year-old for Storytime at the library. My grandniece has never been to a library.

Most of these desires are simple but had to be put aside and were not fully appreciated until they were out of reach. Hopefully, before the end of the year, everyone will be able to travel, dance, hug, and eat out again without wearing masks.

You can call him Joie ...

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which Joie inquired whether he had an interest in doing another movie. He didn't, so Joie gave the role to Rusty, the baby orangutan.

Joie also had a stint in television. For two years, he served as the Dialog Director for Raymond Burr's Perry Mason.

For his music career, he worked with Ambrosia, Bobby V and Steve Lawrence, who recorded the song, *You Came and You Left*. Joie also collaborated with many great composers, including Elmer Bernstein, who scored the film, *Going Ape!*, which Joie wrote and directed.

If someone were to make a movie about his life, Joie would have

wanted the late Sean Connery to play him. Sean was also a body builder and a milkman. He has determined that the movie would be titled, *Feels So Good to Win*. The soundtrack, of course would include two of Joie's songs, *The One-Eyed Green Horse On the Merry-Go-Round* and the titular song, *Feels so Good to Win*.

In 2018, the Woolsey fire destroyed 400 homes in Malibu. It claimed Joie's house on November 9. He and his wife, Lynne, had only ten minutes to gather and collect what they could carry before evacuating. In this devastating fire, Joie and Lynne lost a lifetime of memories and possessions. Joie lost his poetry, recordings and writings. Lynne

lost her artwork. They both lost a 500-year-old oak tree which was perched above the Pacific Ocean back when Columbus arrived in the new world. But fortunately, they still have each other.

Lynne is the class' resident AV technician, for which we are eternally indebted. Joie ever the romantic, asked her out on a first date in 1965 to the laundromat and oddly enough she still married him three years later.

So, what brings Joie joy? Phoebe his Doberman, who loves to play on the beach and chase helicopters. The sound of his wife's laughter. Beautiful things all around him. And of course, teaching his writing class.

What Will You Carry Forward?

By Darlene Gaston

So, did you test your gourmet cooking skills, establish daily family biking time, pull out your gloves, hat and tools to try your hand at organic gardening or commit to a more active lifestyle during the pandemic? Covid-19 has inspired us to attempt new ventures, bake lots of banana bread, develop new hobbies and find different ways to connect. Before the pandemic, most people had never heard of Zoom. Now, we have Zoom happy hours, dates, meals, drive-by graduation, birthday and anniversary celebrations. We use a variety of meal delivery services and multiple grocery delivery services as well.

I discovered SMC Emeritus and started taking classes here—writing, watercolor and calligraphy, for the first time ever. I found that I loved the classes and I especially enjoyed the great people that I met. During the pandemic, I learned to make exciting meals: stuffed cabbage rolls, dal, and sorrel soup. I discovered new learning opportunities via webinars hosted by many schools and organizations. I set a goal in September to attend church services in all fifty states and I should complete that goal by May.

What activities or hobbies will I continue after Covid? I must say that I have gotten some enjoyment from dabbling more in the kitchen and with my organic garden harvests, I have loved experimenting. What will YOU continue? I decided to ask the Emeritus Community.

Fay A has found solace in the art of weed pulling: “That is, one of my favorite things to do is get my ear buds, open one of the books I’ve downloaded from the library, get something hot to drink, and sit on my gardening stool and pull weeds for a couple of hours at a time. It’s such satisfying work that leaves a physical marker of time spent. Sometimes I use weeding time to listen to a book that I’m struggling with (difficult concepts, poorly written but literarily important) and sometimes I listen to fluff (like *The Duke and I*—the book that was the basis for “*Bridgerton*”). I usually work until there’s too much sun, I spot an earwig, or I start itching.”

Jackie M started her retirement where she had been an archivist at USC right after the pandemic was in full force. “I suddenly felt more boxed in and not knowing what to do with myself. I turned to my old interests of art, writing, and yoga and signed up for SMC Emeritus classes which I’ve been taking for over a year now. I will definitely continue painting, drawing, and writing post-Covid; and will hopefully start hiking/nature walks again just to be outdoors.”

Liz W started and will continue with her jam making: “...to me there’s no better way to start your day than a dollop (or two 😊) of homemade jam on a piece of toast in the morning. Scrumptious!” She also purchased a water rower to continue her exercise routine when the gyms closed, and she says that this is something that she will definitely continue.

Tom P has developed a closeness with his family during the stay-at-home order that they didn’t experience previously. He and his daughter have a twice weekly cooking date. They also go to the park and play catch—either football or baseball once or twice per week. In addition, “My wife and I have grown closer in little but significant ways, we hike together weekly and have developed cleaning routines that no longer feel like anyone is keeping score.”

Lee F will continue her genealogy and family story project after Coronavirus: “With the prompting of my daughter and granddaughter I have started to work on family history, particularly genealogy. So much of my family was destroyed in the holocaust that I cannot go back more than two generations, but I have been lucky to tap into several online sources.” She gets to practice her story telling skills in the Emeritus Creating Writing Class.

When we emerge from quarantine, will you take your newfound hobbies, skills, interests and positive energy with you? Will you continue to play those board games, work on new jigsaw puzzles, maintain that baking mastery? I hope so.

If It's Free, It's for Me

By Shifra Wylder

You've heard the saying, "The best things in life are free." I'd have to agree. The scent of a Double Delight rose. The laughter of a child. Walking on the beach or in a park. Watching a sunrise or sunset. Emeritus classes. All are free. You may have also heard, "There's no free lunch." I'd have to disagree.

Before the pandemic, I'd wander into Costco around lunch time and stop by the food sample stations. I'd get the stink eye if I stopped at the same station more than once. Okay. More than twice, for food I couldn't resist. I was pleasantly satisfied. The many samples I consumed, was an ideal free lunch for me, as long as I escaped without buying bulk items that could last for a year. However, not everyone has the time or patience to wander through Costco at lunchtime. Since the pandemic, food samples have come to a screeching halt. Currently at Costco you could say, there's no free lunch. Around town, free lunches still exist.

The WISE & Healthy Aging Program offers healthy lunches served to adults 60 years and older who are Santa Monica residents and WISE Adult Day Service Center are locations offering free lunches. During the pandemic, some locations offer only drive through lunches. Call the Center first or go online to sign up and inquire about times and days of service.

If you are in need of food, The Salvation Army offers a walk-up free food pantry for seniors, individuals and families on Mon, Wed, and Fri 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. and St. Mark's Parish in Venice offers a walk up or drive through food pantry provided by

Nourish LA on Saturdays from 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.

As for free local transportation, all tech savvy seniors who live in Santa Monica, Venice or Marina del Rey, can download the CIRCUIT App on your phone. Circuit is a local electronic ride-share shuttle.

Mobility On Demand Everyday (MODE) program offers low cost transportation options. Shared-ride curb-to curb van transportation is available for Santa Monica residents who are 65 and older. To sign up, call 310-394-9871, ext. 455.

Elder Helpers offers many free services. They recruit, screen, and train volunteers for senior care. Volunteers will help you with groceries, running errands, transportation, cleaning, cooking and even help making phone calls, or signing up for online assistance. elderhelpers.org

The next best thing to free, is a discount. Don't be afraid to ask! Many stores and restaurants offer senior discounts. El Pollo Loco offers seniors 60+ a 10% discount. Albertson's Market gives customers 55+ a 10% discount on the first Wednesday of every month. Kohl's offers seniors 60+ a 15% discount every Wednesday upon proof of age. Ross provides people 55+ with a 10% discount on Tuesdays. Rite Aid gives 20% discounts on all non-prescription products on the first Wednesday of each month. Amtrak, Southwest Airlines and several car rental companies also offer discounts for seniors.

AARP members receive discounts on numerous resources including travel, medical services, insurance, and restaurants. Through AARP, I

received close to 20% off of my car insurance after completing the Driver Safety Course. Due to the pandemic, the course is now available online at aarp.org.

There are advantages to being a senior and help is available if needed. In a world that can seem dreary at times, focusing on the beauty around you and the free gifts life gives us, seems to lessen the burden and ease us into gratitude. If you happen to find yourself in the rose garden at Palisades Park on Ocean and Palisades Avenues, feel free to stop and take time to smell the roses. Especially the red and white Double Delight.

- WISE & Healthy Aging Program: 310-394-9871, ext. 220, wiseandhealthyaging.org
- Christine Emerson Reed Park: 1133 7th St. (corner of Wilshire Blvd.) Santa Monica, CA 90401
- Ken Edwards Center: 1527 4th St. (near Broadway) Santa Monica, CA 90401
- WISE Adult Day Service Center: 1527 4th St. (near Broadway) Santa Monica, CA 90401
- The Salvation Army: 310-451-1358 1533 4th St. (near Colorado) Santa Monica, CA 90401
- St. Mark's Parish: 310-821-5058, 940 Coeur D'Alene Ave. Venice, CA 90291 (2 blocks south of the intersection of Venice and Lincoln Blvds. Enter on Garfield off of Lincoln Blvd.)

Unraveling Tragedy and Comedy with John Achorn

By Perri Chasin

Strolling along the Marina harbor one Saturday, a fellow Emeritus student waxed lyrical about a Shakespeare class, one she has taken for five years while others, she enthused, have attended each semester for 20 consecutive years! My friend is one of hundreds of seniors who vie for a space in one of the two Shakespeare courses Emeritus offers each semester, both taught by John Achorn.

A Chicago native whose father was employed by the Morton Salt Company, (his mother was the model for the second iteration for the little girl holding an umbrella), John moved with his family to Menlo Park when he was 15. A degree in Literature from Claremont College because the school refused to grant him a degree in Acting, led to a love of the classics.

Following a stint in the Peace Corps, where he taught theater in the Philippines, John returned to San Francisco determined to be an actor. He cut his teeth on Street and Experimental Theatre groups, studied Commedia Dell'Arte, worked with El Teatro Camposino on the picket lines of Cesar Chavez's United Farmworkers Union, and on the Bay Area Playwright's Festival with Sam Shepherd.

Since 1967, Achorn has supported himself as a working actor and teacher of students ages 6 to 102 and, since landing in southern California in 1980, he has taught at many of the UC's and the Virginia Avenue Project with at-risk teens. John has starred or guest starred on major networks, in Movies of the Week, has been on a variety of local

stages, including the John Anson Ford, the Odyssey and Mark Taper Forum and has been featured in dozens of films on the big screen and HBO.

He was introduced to Emeritus when fellow actor and Emeritus instructor, Tony Abatemarco invited John to guest speak about Commedia Dell'Arte. John began regularly substituting in that class and, in 1991, when the instructor who taught *Shakespeare* departed, Achorn was invited to teach at Emeritus.

"I was scared of Shakespeare," he said, and though it took a while to get comfortable, comfortable he became. So much so that a second section of *Shakespeare* was added, both of which he continues to teach each term. "I select a play and put it into historical context, translate it, then act it out." The inclusion of film clips adds layers of nuance to each work's rich tapestry. According to my friend, "John brings Shakespeare to life with the passion and interpretive understanding of an accomplished actor."

This semester, before presenting *A Comedy of Errors*, he introduced Plautus' *Menaechmi* (*The Twins Menaechmus*) upon which the Bard based his play. He tells students, "We're discovering material you've never had time to check out, so let's check out something new together, discover what we care about and make it relevant to our own lives."

Following the success of his *Shakespeare* courses, Emeritus created a new course for Achorn, the *American Novel*. In that class,



John introduces each work through the context of time, the movement in which the action occurs and the style of the novel. This semester students are comparing John Updike's *Rabbit Run*, about the 1950s, with Rita Mae Brown's *Rubyfruit Jungle*, which takes place in the 1960s. Here too, John reads excerpts in each class, "It's a matter of connecting our perspective now with the perspective then."

Achorn also teaches *History of Comedy* for Emeritus where, this semester, his focus is on the history of stand-ups.

John's courses are among the most popular at Emeritus. Now, mid-pandemic, anywhere from 80 to 90 participate via each Zoom section not including the additional 20 or so students to whom Achorn sends recordings of classes they've missed. He explains what he presents "... is not a lecture, but rather it's an ongoing exploration of material."

"It's been a great gift learning to work with seniors. I've aged with them." According to Achorn, "Emeritus is a special place because it allows people to socialize around knowledge and I love the community." That love, it appears, is reciprocated.

Light and Shadow: A Profile of Ken Bruckner

By Linda Rosman

Hidden under “Employment for Seniors” in the SMC Emeritus catalog, is a class called Digital Photography taught by Ken Bruckner. One would think photography might be under Art, but for some reason, the photo classes are considered computer training.

Ken Bruckner was born in Atlanta, Georgia at the end of WW2 and raised in Orlando, Florida. He started College at Stetson University—where he excelled at bridge, but not academics. He went from college to the Army in 1965 and was sent to Germany in an artillery unit. In order to get out of Germany, he volunteered for Vietnam and conned his way in as an artillery combat photographer.

A bit of a rebel, Ken was collecting images that he wasn't supposed to shoot, with the idea of making a book when he got out.

Ken was shot on January 9, 1967. His knee was shattered, but fortunately, after numerous surgeries, they were able to save his leg.



© Trudy Haas

When he got his locker with his possessions back, he discovered that most of his images had been confiscated. There went his dream of publishing a photo book.

After coming home, he decided to take advantage of the GI Bill and he attended the Brooks Institute, widely acclaimed for its photography and visual arts focus. His career really started when he wandered into a gallery on Sunset Blvd., where he met the gallery owner, Jane who invited him home to meet her husband Ed. Ed wasn't thrilled with the intrusion, but his wife said “give the kid a break. He's a vet, just starting out as a photographer. Let him shoot your portrait.” The result of that lucky day was Ken's



entrée into the world of celebrity. Ed was Edward G. Robinson, and the portrait that he shot that day is the cover photo of

Edward G. Robinson's autobiography “All My Yesterdays.”

Ken has had a long and varied career. He was the cast photographer for Rowan & Martin, shot the Bullock's fashion catalog for four years and worked with numerous top models like Cheryl Tiegs and Jerry Hall. Working out of his studio in Beverly Hills, Ken was a much sought after glamour photographer. In 1976, he wrote the best-selling book on photography, “Available Light.”

Lucky for all of us, in 1998 Maggie Hall, Associate Dean and Founder of Emeritus approached Ken to come and teach at SMC Emeritus. He started teaching computer classes like Word and Excel and that eventually led to teaching digital photography.

Those of us who take his class are treated to his wealth of knowledge on photography as well as Photoshop. He teaches us to see the light and shadow, details and movement in our images.

The one benefit of this crazy time is that since Ken's class, like all of our classes is on Zoom, many more students can get the benefit of his wisdom and knowledge. He inspires all of us to see the world in different ways.

WHAT'S HAPPENING: *Spring Emeritus Events*

Annual Emeritus Student Art Exhibition Online—Part 1

Opens 5 p.m., April 22

Don't miss the first part of our popular annual group exhibition of creative works by students in SMC's Emeritus program.

A free, live Zoom Virtual Launch Event will be held online from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 22.

A link at smc.edu/emergitusgallery

takes guests directly to the exhibition's opening reception.

The Zoom opening reception will be hosted by Interim Dean of Noncredit and External Programs Dr. Scott Silverman and Emeritus Art Gallery Curator Jesse Benson.

To see the artwork online at any time after 5 p.m. on April 22, viewers may go to smc.edu/emergitusgallery and click the **Emeritus Student Art Exhibition**

2021 Part 1 link. The link takes viewers directly to the exhibition album on Facebook.

Annual Emeritus Student Art Exhibition Online—Part 2

Opens 5 p.m., May 27

Join us for Part 2 of our popular annual group exhibition of creative works by students in SMC's Emeritus program.

More information at smc.edu/emergitusgallery

101 Things I Love About You

By Darlene Gaston

*“pockets sewn outside on top so
when I fly around that dance floor
they roundhouse punch the air
when I swing my pockets swang*

*When my zoot suit dances,
all I can do
is try to keep up”*

So ends the poem, an ode to dancing, Zoot suits and youthful fun by Fay Armand, a student in Joe Kronsberg’s Creative Writing class. Fay has regaled the class with tale after tale of her very own personal project. The complete story is an homage to the deep and enduring love story of her parents.

For Fay, it all started as an innocent question, Mom, what was your life like before you were a mom of seven? In answer to that question, she left the room and returned with a pillowcase filled with letters—letters written by Fay’s dad, Augustus to her mom, Thelma; letters that started three days after the 1938 New Year’s Eve Party where they met, letters that continued to the middle of December 1945, a month before they married, letters that professed his love, letters that detailed misunderstandings and letters that discussed war time activities and ordinary life. Two hundred sixty-seven in all.

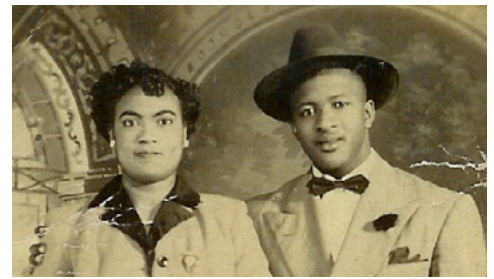
What makes this story so remarkable is that it is set against the backdrop of World War II and during the Jim Crow Era, yet on page after page Augustus expresses his love. You see, Augustus was an African American soldier in the army—in the 868th-Engineering Aviation Battalion—and in the words of Augustus and other black soldiers they were, “Fighting for the Right to

Fight.” Fay wanted to tell his story, but more importantly she wanted to tell the story of Augustus and Thelma in prose and poetry, using Augustus’ own words for much of the story.

When Fay retired from a 32-year career from LAUSD as a Literacy coach and teacher trainer and in the classroom as an English teacher, she joined the Creative Writing class which gave her the time and tools to do exactly that. Culled from Augustus’ letters and interviews with her parents, Fay with her lyrical and poetic writing style, crafts each chapter to capture the development of the relationship.

Unlike Fay, who was born in California, her parents were born in Louisiana. That is where the courtship between Augustus and Thelma began in person and continued in letters over a period that almost overlays World War II, which began in September 1939 and ended in September 1945. He was 18 and she was 17, teen-aged sweethearts. Neither had a formal education, but reading was something that Augustus’ father stressed. He and his younger brother Ed and their father spent time each night reading stories at bedtime. It was from this experience that he developed a love of reading and later a love of writing, a natural extension.

Military troops were segregated at the time and African American soldiers were typically not assigned to combat detail. The Engineering Aviation Battalion provided support services and built roads, airstrips, and camps. Augustus’ military journey took him from Boot Camp in Mississippi to Tampa



and San Francisco. His overseas assignments included Australia, New Guinea, and the Philippines.

Black soldiers were not able to escape the racism that they faced in the country for which they were fighting, in other countries. They faced distain in Australia for dancing with Australian women. They felt that they were fighting for the right to be there and would again once they returned home, but Augustus was singularly focused on his one true love.

You don’t often hear an African American war time love story or the perspective of the black soldier during the war. That’s what makes Fay’s writings so special. With eighteen completed chapters, Fay’s goal is to bring the story to life for others. Sometimes, she reformats the letters into a poetry format as she did with the two pieces in this article. Other times, she will create a story based on the events referenced in her dad’s letters. Like the time that he reminisced about a fair he and Thelma attended. Or a joyride he and his friends took off base. Hers is a ten-year project shaped by love.

A love song from Augustus to Thelma. A chronicle of the love story of Fay’s parents. An abiding devotion that lasted 69 years.

*“There is a hundred and one
things I like about you.
...The one thing that tops them all
is that
you
are in love with me
and I
am in love with you”*

Secrets to Better Sleep for Seniors

By Sharon Valente

Oh no! Another night tossing, wide awake and exhausted the next day—too tired to drive safely or work effectively. Drowsy driving accounts for a substantive number of car accidents. Over 55% of seniors grumble about insomnia (e.g., chronic difficulty falling or staying asleep or early awakening) but don't know what to do. Like alcohol intoxication, sleep deprivation limits decision making, immunity, and memory. It saps emotional well-being, impairs relationships, and causes traffic accidents and injuries and makes one grumpy. During sleep, your brain reorganizes information and improves memory. That's why it's so important to get a good night's sleep.

Improving Sleep: To mimic Sleeping Beauty's enchanted snoozes, try Yoga, meditation, or bedtime stories online. Some seniors report that chamomile tea, melatonin, or sleep-inducing snacks (e.g., bananas, almonds) help slow the mind and relax the body to induce sleepiness. You can fall asleep listening to a free internet hypnosis recording. Consider what causes your insomnia including medical or mental health disorders. If muscle pain disrupts sleep, ponder analgesics, massage, or heat. If your mind races, try meditation. If noise disrupts your calm, maybe earplugs will help. If a bedtime medication (e.g., decongestants, diuretics, cortisone) interrupts sleep, ask your health provider if it can be taken earlier or changed. If restless legs syndrome triggers insomnia, explore treatment.

Sleep cycle and age: Some sleep facts may help. Your biological clock determines sleep; a typical slumber cycle lasts 1.5 to 2 hours and repeats. For seniors, aging changes patterns; it reduces time in the deep sleep stage and REM (e.g., dreaming, and immobilized body) with more time falling asleep and light then slightly deeper sleep stages. With the hectic pace of life, average hours of sleep have shrunk from 7.9 in 1942 to 6.8 in 2013 but seniors need 7.8 hours, probably because we have lighter sleep with more awakenings. During light sleep you may feel awake but be asleep. A wrist activity/sleep tracker would clarify this. For more on sleep, see sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works; uclahealth.org/sleepcenter/circadianrhythms; or cdc.gov/sleep/resources.html

Here are some tips to snoozing better:

- Maintain a consistent sleep schedule—with the same bedtime and awake time with at least 7 hours of sleep.

- Set a relaxing bedtime routine—turn off electronic devices 30 minutes before bed. If you can't disconnect, use blue blocking eyeglasses.
- Sleep in a quiet, dark, relaxing room with a comfortable, cool temperature (68-70 F.) or use an eye mask to block light.
- Avoid a large meal, caffeine, heavy fluid intake, and alcohol 4 hours before bed. If hungry, have a light healthy snack. If you think a night cap or more would help, know that alcohol doesn't improve sleep, it causes you to awaken after falling asleep.
- Limit evening bright light exposure but include daytime exercise in your routine.
- Heavy snorers should ask a health care provider to evaluate sleep apnea.
- If medications before bed disrupt sleep, ask your provider about taking them earlier or changing the drug.
- Go to bed when sleepy, if not asleep in 20 minutes, get up for a relaxing pause—a foot bath, music, or a book without blue light.
- If worries keep you awake, make a list of them, schedule time earlier to focus on them, and try online hypnosis or meditation for sleep.
- Experts recommend that you shouldn't sleep with pets, but pet lovers including me reject this advice, and my cat would complain loudly. She doesn't like to be disrupted so I must carefully navigate turning over as her favorite sleeping spots are between my legs or on my head.
- If insomnia continues for over a month, consult a health provider, and discuss your medications and side effects. Take a diary with sleep and wake times, problems, and a medication list with you.

When you pinpoint what keeps you awake at night, like noise or light you may lessen them. Plan relaxing activities, enjoy a warm bath, calming music or a light snack before bed. If you can do so safely and you're not on call, turn off your phone during sleep. Reading a book or petting your dog or cat may induce tranquility. If the tv news induces anxiety, avoid watching it before bed. Lessen worries by focusing on positive, amusing thoughts and breathing exercises. Imagine enjoying a restful night without distractions and if negative thoughts intervene view them as clouds passing though the sky or items for tomorrow. These approaches can lull you into a peaceful slumber for an average of 7–8 hours nightly. May you have sweet dreams, restful sleep, and happy snoozing.

A Joyous Escape: Comedy Improv for Seniors

By Gordon Blitz

"Fortunately, Eldon won the lottery. Unfortunately, he lost the ticket. Fortunately, his wife found the winning ticket in the basement. Unfortunately, the basement flooded." And so, starts the comedy improv weekly class game where each participant flips between a fortunately and unfortunately declaration. For two hours our courageous group of seniors perk up our mental health with comedy exercises that includes creating characters with a designated emotion and job. We can't plan ahead when a laid-back brain surgeon, undecided mayor or sexy eye doctor is assigned to us.

The exhausting fun is a joyous escape for Santa Monica seniors

plummeted by Covid isolation. Improv classmates help each other through diseases like dementia and the loss of beloved spouses. I accidentally found the group three years ago and have been hooked.

Brian Hamill, our fearless leader, begins our session with a yoga meditation that loosens our limbs. We are the perfect foil to challenge his years of experience as an actor with our physicalizing of baking a gluten-free cake to creating a to-die-for flower arrangement. Tears of laughter ripple through us when we interview inanimate objects like a dishwasher, garbage disposal, or scissor. Hamill transforms the improvisational comedy workshop into mind-bending activities.

Hamill is part of the nonprofit organization Mob Rule, Inc. I spoke to Lee Costello, the Executive Director and she told me some of the history. "Free senior improv class in Santa Monica got started in 1995 by a group of alumni from Second City Improv in Chicago. From its beginnings, Mob Rule, Inc. has been on the move from locations in Pacific Palisades, The Pier, Little Santa Monica Theater and finally residing in Ken Edward's Senior Center." Lee talked about The Second City improv method which was built upon a series of games developed by Viola Spolin, who worked as a drama supervisor for the Chicago branch of the Works Progress Administration's recreational program from 1939 to 1941. She worked with immigrants, and improv provided an activity that reached across cultural and linguistic boundaries. The source of the Improv game Gibberish had its roots in the program. In the exercise one student speaks in gibberish and another translates based on physical and voice patterns.

The games inspire students to be spontaneous and you'd be amazed how easily the games have been adapted to the Zoom technology. Lee who has a theatre background and ran The Second City Training Center in Los Angeles, talked about the benefits of Zoom and the ability to reach seniors all over the country. Mob Rule, Inc. expanded from a single class of many original members to a second weekly class.

With Improv you put on a mask as a character and then you are able to remove the mask of emotional filters that we wear. We get to speak first and think later.

Luba, a fellow classmate told me, "Improv is very freeing. I'm giving myself permission to be a playful and silly five-year-old. Isn't that what most adults want?"



Leyla Shams, *Shoes*, 14" x 17", colored pencil on bristol paper, 2021. From the Emeritus Student Art Exhibition.

Kudos: Gordon Blitz Publishes a Novella

By Merry Greene Rose

“When a passenger on the Carnival Cruise goes missing, a massive search of the vessel ensued. Is the missing man dead, injured in some part of the ship or ... drugged? If drugged, who did this? And how does the deepening mystery affect the relationships of three people.” This is the teaser for Gordon Blitz’s novella, *Shipped Off*, published on January 1, 2021. *Shipped Off* is one of the novellas included in The Running Wild Press Novella Anthology Volume 4, Book 1.

Gordon was in high school when he was introduced to creative writing. His experience there was his first foray into writing and he didn’t think he was very good. When he was twenty-one, he met his lover Scott, a poet, playwright and PHD English professor. During their fifteen-year relationship, Gordon felt intimidated by Scott’s writing ability, and didn’t fully embrace his own evolving interest or skills in writing. As his life progressed, he got a job at a company called Dignity Health and worked there as an accountant for 40 years. While at Dignity Health, he delved into writing “going-away” speeches for employees who were leaving the company. He also wrote eulogies for people he knew personally, and word got around that his pieces were touching and beautifully written.

In 1990, after his lover, Scott, died of AIDS, he felt drawn to join Beth Chayim Chadishim, the oldest GLBT temple in the world, and has been a member ever since. While at Beth Chayim, he wrote and gave sermons about intimacy with God. He found great joy in being in front of people and sharing his thoughts.

In 2007, his friend, Charlie, invited him to a poetry class, taught by Steven Reigns at the Gay and Lesbian Village in Hollywood. Although poetry is not his primary genre, he received positive feedback and you can find his poetry on his blog at culturecritique.blog

When Gordon retired in 2017, he began taking several writing classes at SMC Emeritus. He found that the autobiography class he took with Robert Fox really helped him cement his writing skills and the autobiographical short stories he wrote for class became chapters for his memoir. Over the past year, he started writing a novel, working with an editor which he feels really helped him grow as a writer, and now has a very disciplined writing schedule.

When he isn’t writing he likes to cook gourmet gluten-free meals, read Elin Hilderbrand novels, watch

Alfred Hitchcock films, and listen to anything by Barbra Streisand. He walks 7,500 steps a day, and gets writing inspiration from his friends Sy, Charlie and husband Neal.

Gordon has published work in Two Hawks Quarterly, The Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review, Issue #22 of Really Systems, Abstract Elephant Magazine, Gay Wicked Ways, Emeritus Chronicles, and Free Verse Revolution. He is also a standup comic and has performed at the LGBT Village, Canters, and the Ruby. You can find his stories recorded at AKBAR in Hollywood on the Queer Slam podcast called “Just Gordon.” For more, check out [podcasts. apple.com/.../episode-21-just-.../id1446511726...](https://podcasts.apple.com/.../episode-21-just-.../id1446511726...)

The Running Wild Press Novella Anthology Volume 4, Book 1., in which Gordon’s novella is included, is available at select bookstores online.

Brain Teasers and Trivia

- 1) What has a head, a tail, is brown and has no legs?
- 2) What can be found once in a minute, twice in a moment and never in a thousand years?
- 3) What is the smallest ocean in the world?
- 4) A flamboyance is a group of what animals?
- 5) What is the first sports-themed movie to win an Academy Award for Best Picture?

Answers: 1) A PENNY 2) THE LETTER “M” 3) THE ARCTIC OCEAN 4) FLAMINGOS 5) ROCKY



Kudos: Shifra Wylder's Art Show

By Merry Rose

Last year, during the Covid shutdown, Emeritus student Shifra Wylder and her husband cleared a space in their home for her to exhibit some of her work, inviting potential customers to come and view her latest endeavors.

Shifra discovered her passion for making art at age four, when she was fascinated by finger painting. Yes, she painted on walls, furniture, lampshades and whatever else might be available in her childhood room. As she grew, so did her interest in making art and in the early 80s, attended the New England School of Art & Design. As life many times does, she was thrown a few curves, putting the pursuit of her art on a back burner. She moved to California to pursue a career in fashion modeling.

She was offered a job working for Rob Wylder, who owned an advertising agency, and eventually she married her boss. She worked as a production artist for a while at Rubin Postaer and Associates, an advertising agency in Santa Monica, learning the ins and outs of commercial art.



Shifra Wylder, *Rise Above*, 18" x 24"
acrylic on canvas.

As the result of a family tragedy, Shifra decided to become an addiction counselor. She went back to college and received a degree in Psychology. Practicing as a counselor for many years left her burned out. While in the depths of despair, she started taking art classes and workshops (some at Santa Monica College) and found healing.

She took more classes and workshops, all the while building up a beautiful collection of her own art.

Shifra works in a variety of mediums and techniques and finds that each painting takes its own path to the end result. Her art is abstract and deeply soulful. She finds the process a very freeing form of therapy for working through thoughts and emotions.

Her art show was so much more successful than she expected. She sold 14 paintings, which for an unknown artist, is quite a feat.

To see some of Shifra's art, please go to soulrevivalart.com and take a look at some of her beautiful artwork.

Passings: Jasmine Lieb

by Rozelle Teplitsky

On Friday, January 29, 2021, Jasmine Lieb, beloved yoga instructor at SMC Emeritus, passed away from a sudden stroke. She was 68 years old and had been a part of the Emeritus faculty since the winter of 1994, teaching well over 200 yoga classes in the Department of Health and Conditioning. She is survived by her husband, Stephen, daughter Casey, son-in-law Jared and grandson Oliver, all of whom she loved dearly.

I had been one of Jasmine's students for three years. She was passionate about yoga and her students. Her classes were always totally booked when it was time to register at Emeritus. I usually enrolled in her class on how to relieve stress through yoga. At the beginning of each class, we would lie on our mats and do deep breathing exercises for the first few minutes. After the first time I took her class, I walked away with a sense of peacefulness and relief for the rest of the day.

Jasmine was known to say that she taught yoga because she was "passionate to share with as many people as possible the simply amazingly and readily available benefits of the practice of ashtanga yoga", which synchronizes breath with movements. She said, "I feel blessed that my experience, my practice and my studies allow me to teach."

She was instrumental in training other yoga instructors and medical professionals in the art of yoga therapy. She not only taught classes at SMC Emeritus, but also



taught at Yoga Works on Montana Ave. and Main Street and did private consultations and yoga sessions.

Several of Jasmine's students praised her therapeutic work, saying, "Jasmine Lieb's class literally realigned my life." Another student said, "Jasmine is a master. Through the simplest movements and most gentle help, you can begin to unlock trauma in your body and awaken a spiritual journey you never imagined." And a third student remarked, "If you have an ailment in any part of your body, Jasmine will help contribute to your wellness."

Before Christmas break, Jasmine's students collected money to show their appreciation for her guidance and the thoughtfulness she put into her classes to help them deal with pain and health issues. Sometime ago, she collected enough money to buy a new station wagon, or at least put a down payment on one.

On the last class before the Christmas break, she brought scones, jelly, sour cream and all the plates and utensils, etc. for us to enjoy after class. During the last Christmas yoga class I attended, Jasmine brought all the presents that students had given her over the years. More than 50 of us sat in a circle on the gym floor. She placed all the gifts in the middle of the floor and told us to choose whatever we wanted.

The prior Christmas I had knitted a beautiful, deep purplish-blue cowl for her. It was round, almost accordion-like and fit over the head around the neck, or it could be pulled up from the neck to cover the head and ears. It was very special to me, and I was excited to get it back because I loved the color and the style. I still have that beautiful cowl and will think of her whenever I wear it and remember how thoughtful it was for her to let go of gifts that were given to her with love. What a selfless act!

She will be sorely missed by the yoga community and especially her dedicated students. Rest in peace, Jasmine, and thanks for all your yoga advice and concern for your students' health and welfare.

What I will take away from this is that every time I start to slouch when I am walking, standing or sitting, I will straighten up my back, stand straight and tall, and hear Jasmine's voice in my head telling me to "straighten up".

From the Dean's Desk

continued from page 1

will be bringing on new student workers over the summer and hope to introduce them to you at one of the upcoming Gallery exhibitions. All of our current and recent Art Gallery shows have been virtual, with a recorded event, plus a virtual slideshow smc.edu/emergitusgallery where audience members can view both long after the virtual event was held. We have a similar site, smc.edu/emergitus-events for events like the Emeritus Chronicles launch event and various workshops we will hold in the future. We made one more significant edit to the website, adding the Emeritus Faculty Directory and biographies onto the website. Go to: smc.edu/emergitus then click on Faculty. You can use this to email faculty any questions you have about a class, or if you're registered for that class, but are missing the Zoom access information.

The Emeritus/SMC Foundation Meal Project has been very successful, delivering well over 2800 meals so far to Emeritus students since June 2020. Recipients who have had limited financial resources and/or limited ability to physically get out to the grocery store, have found that the meal deliveries we provide from Everytable have supplemented other resources and assistance. It has helped them survive during the pandemic. If you are in need of assistance yourself, email emergitus@smc.edu, and if you want to purchase the service for yourself, please visit everytable.com

Thanks to the ongoing generosity of Emeritus students, we have done some facility work in the building. Automatic opening doors for the 1st floor restrooms, new HVAC system with in-room controls (for the faculty to be in charge of), lighting upgrades, mirrors in Room 308, and an openable window in room 205. We are also having the elevator refurbishment be conducted before we return to the building. Likewise, you can imagine we are installing plexiglass where needed for safety in the time of Coronavirus ... so that even when we return to the building, there will be some added protocols in place.

Last, but not least, our new Administrative Assistant, Ashley Price has been with us since November. Many of you may not get the chance to meet her until we return to the Emeritus building ... but she is great and I know you will all like her.

In the meantime, be safe, and stay in school!

Scott

This edition of the *Emeritus Voice* was written and produced by students in the "Writing For Publication" (E34) class taught by Monona Wali.



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SMC Emeritus is committed to life-long learning for older adults. From art and literature to health and safety, personal finance, and digital technologies, SMC Emeritus students connect, discover, renew, and reinvent. Classes are held at the SMC Emeritus headquarters at 1227 Second Street, Santa Monica, as well as at community sites located throughout the cities of Santa Monica and Malibu.

Got Suggestions?

You can give Emeritus your feedback in several ways: by emailing emergitus@smc.edu; calling 310-434-4306; through the suggestion boxes located on the 1st, 2nd, and 4th floors of Emeritus; and in-person on the 1st floor Enrollment Services or 4th floor Administrative office.

SMC Emeritus Campus is temporarily closed.



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