Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night stays our loyal volunteers from their appointed monthly rounds of tabbing, labeling and distributing the hard copies of our Emeritus Newsletter. Pictured from left are Jaye Glesener, Maureen Phillips, Len Pullan, BJ Hauge and John Kouns. Others contributing are Marje Park (labels) and Loretta Wolf-Dawe (consultant). Article on Page 5.

Production of this Newsletter is supported by the Joan Hopper Trust.
ESCOM COUNCIL MEETS IN JUNE

A well-attended meeting of the ESCOM Council on June 20th marked the end of the 2012-13 year and a shift in the leadership of the Council in the upcoming 2013-14 season. Veteran officer Marian Mermel stepped down from her position of Co-President, while Eric Sitzenstatter will join the reelected Dick Park as Co-President. Vice President Bev Munyon did not stand for re-election and will be replaced by Marlene Knox, but Bev will remain as a member of the Council and chair of the Financial Grants Committee. All of these alignments are the results of the 2013 Election, as reported in the July Newsletter.

Council Member Cole Posard also declined to stand for reelection, and the members expressed their regrets and lauded Cole for his significant contributions in the years of his service. His accomplishments as chair of the Marketing Committee and of the Moral-Ethical & Legal Issues Roundtable Club were duly noted. Donna Posard, who shared his seat on the Council will remain as an active member.

Co-President Dick Park reported that the Executive Committee had met with C.O.M. President Dr. David Coon to discuss a major contribution from the Humiston Trust to the College towards funding a membership in the Marin Net Library System. A formal presentation and acceptance will take place in late summer.

Bev Munyon presented a tabulation of financial grants awarded in 2012 and 2013 to date. She estimates that an average of 25 requests are filed each semester and that a major portion of the class fees would be covered by the available funds.

Karen Hemmeter also presented her report, which indicates an improving trend in membership numbers and an impressive amount of fees received in excess of the require minimum of $15 per year. She also recommended a resumption of an Annual Meeting, historically held in May, to get our membership better informed about the many opportunities offered by ESCOM. The members agreed with that recommendation and will seek the assistance of the Hospitality Committee. A 40th Anniversary Celebration is also under consideration.

Treasurer Art Ravicz reported a strong balance in the checking account, prompting a brief discussion of possible additional ways to benefit needy students. Several purchase orders were approved as presented by the Treasurer.

Club Chair Bill Raffanti asked for the Council’s approval for an Islamic Studies Club, promptly given. He advised that the senior center known as The Whistlestop will need to relocate, as the Central San Rafael site will be re-developed. Its officers are interested in meeting with ESCOM.

Art and Exhibitions Chair Len Pullan sent word that a dual exhibit of works by Medley McClary and Muriel Knapp would begin on July 3rd. Len appreciates the good coverage given these exhibits in the July Newsletter.

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COM IN THE NEWS

Investment Strategy for College of Marin's Unfunded Liability Approved

On June 18, 2013, College of Marin's Board of Trustees approved a comprehensive investment strategy for the College's unfunded liability for employee health benefits. Approximately $2.1 million in funds will be deposited into the California Employer's Retiree Benefit Trust (CERBT) to start the prefunding of College of Marin's OPEB Trust (Other Post Employer's Retiree Benefit Trust). Significant funds have been set aside for several years by COM's Board of Trustees' commitment to address this liability issue. The process to develop a viable investment strategy for this unfunded liability was initiated in August 2012 with the final choice of CalPERS (California Public Employees' Retirement System) being selected to manage and invest the OPEB Trust. The newly-approved investment strategy will allow College of Marin to pay down
its $5.1 million unfunded liability over the next five years using a combination of returns. According to a most recent actuarial study as of June 2013, College of Marin's unfunded liability is the lowest it has been, having decreased from $5.6 million in September 2012 to $5.1 million as of now. In addition, more employees are exiting the plan as they attain age 70 which will result in annual payout reductions.

**Marinites Kay Ryan and George Lucas honored at White House Presentation** -- Poet Laureate Kay Ryan and Film Maker George Lucas, both longtime Marin residents, were among those honored by President Obama in July this year for their contributions to the arts and humanities--Lucas for "his contributions to American cinema" and Ryan for "her contributions as a poet and educator". George Lucas was the recipient of the 2013 National Medal of Arts, and Pulitzer Prize Winner Kay Ryan was awarded the 2012 National Humanities Medal.

*Submitted by: Alicia Warcholski*

**CLUB NEWS—COLE POSARD**

On Tuesday, July 16, Cole Posard announced his resignation as the conference room overflowed with attendees of the Moral-Ethical & Legal Issues Roundtable. Cole's final address was perfect, like all his efforts. He spoke of the recent death of his first cousin, the first of his generation to pass on. This reminded him that that cousin's father, Cole's uncle, was also the first of his generation to pass, followed very soon by Cole's own dad. And so Cole now wants time for other activities without the intensive preparation and diplomatic moderation each session demanded. He told how much he'd enjoyed the group, and he closed with his own charming paraphrase of Ecclesiastes, "To everything there is a season..." Then Jason Lau, Director of Community Education, presented Cole with a certificate, speaking of how well-received and popular the group had been.

Yes, EVERYONE wants the group to continue in some format. It will meet again Tuesday, August 6 (regular forum time) to consider options. Cole will be there, too.

*Carol Randall*

**RICHARD DIEBENKORN’S WORKS ON PAPER AT COLLEGE OF MARIN**

By Michael Azgour, MFA

Forty works on paper featuring Bay Area Figurative Movement pioneer Richard Diebenkorn will be exhibited at the College of Marin’s new Fine Arts Gallery, Kentfield, from Sept. 30 to Nov.14, 2013.

This exhibition is timely because Diebenkorn is currently the subject of a major exhibition at San Francisco’s de Young Museum. This concurrent presentation of his works on paper is a way for his admirers—and there are many—to dig deeper into his work and process.

I was introduced to the work of Richard Diebenkorn in my first year of graduate school in 2002. He was the prime example of an artist who had successfully combined abstraction and figuration in painting, which is not a simple task.

His work, along with other Bay Area Figurative artists—such as David Park, Nathan Oliveira and Elmer Bischoff to name a few—provided immeasurable inspiration to my own painting process and sensibilities. I was immediately drawn to Diebenkorn’s sophisticated solutions, incorporating expressive brush strokes and layers of paint that remain visible in the finished work. Most of all, his work validated my desire to pursue representational painting that is not realistic.

My own paintings are better because of the works of Richard Diebenkorn. This is a sentiment often repeated by my students at the College of Marin’s Community Education program and other schools in the Bay Area.

This exhibition will be inspiring and enriching for artists who are familiar with Diebenkorn’s major works and will help to introduce his work to those who have yet to be enriched.

For more details, go to www.marin.edu, under “What’s New”.

[Michael Azgour is a Bay Area Artist and Instructor at the College of Marin]
ESCOM/IVC NEWS/EVENTS/CLUBS
Questions please call:
Larry Witter 883-6889  G. Kopshever 883-7805
Bill Raffanti 883-4079  Rudy Ramirez 491-0522
Following events will be held in Bldg 10, 140AS

Indian Valley Organic Farm & Garden: Fall Weekend Plant Sale and Celebration, Saturday & Sunday, September 28 & 29, 10 AM-3 PM. Produce sales, live music, farm tours, bouquet-making, tastings, face painting.

Native Feast Day Celebration, Sunday 12 noon to 3 PM: The Farm will host an afternoon of appropriate activities and will feature Guest Speakers Jacquelyn Ross, Native Food Gatherer, Educator and writer plus Lois Ellen Frank, PhD, Culinary Anthropologist.

New and Continuing Fall Community Education Courses at COM/IVC: Chinese Brush Painting, Pilates, History of Rock and Roll, Zumba Gold, Basic Photography, Greek Mythology, Medicinal and Edible Herbs, nine food related courses, plus others for improving physical and mental well-being. Additionally, over 40 computer related courses.

Bridging the Communication Gap approved the purchase of a new MAC printer/scanner for members use in ESCOM/IVC. Expected delivery in September.

COM Library at IVC: Major additions have been made in the Library in Building 27 over the past months. Staff are available to point out the new sections and services now at IVC. When COM joins MarinNet next year, the Library at IVC will make it even more convenient to access library services in Marin. Consider stopping in Building 27 when next at COM IVC to see the future unfolding.

Do You Enjoy Foreign Films? Let’s talk about it on Wednesday, September 4, 1:00 PM. An idea for a new ESCOM/IVC club is being floated. If you like foreign films come to ESCOM/IVC for this meeting to assess interest and determine a schedule. Questions: e-mail Laura Milholland at milholland_l@hotmail.com or call 578-2972.

ESCOM/IVC NEWS/EVENTS/CLUBS

IVC Book Forum: Two new members were welcomed at the July meeting when The Private Lives of the Impressionists, by Sue Roe, received unanimous positive reviews and initiated plans to attend the current Impressionist on Water at the Legion of Honor.

8/26 Showdown at the Hoedown, Steve Minkin
9/23 The Language of the Threads, Gail Tsukiyama

Global Issues Club: Sept. 20 (3rd Friday), 2 PM, Memory of Forgotten War (award-winning 2013 release) global conflict that ravaged a nation. Memory of Forgotten War follows the stories of four Korean Americans who witnessed firsthand the war’s devastation and its aftermath.

Great Books: Members are re-reading favorite classics and viewing related film versions.

Film Noir Theater Club: One of the summer films, The Glass Wall, Columbia’s off-beat noir project took us to seedy neon-lit Times Square of the 50’s and the impressive but empty UN. The film title is taken from the UN’s glass wall, symbolic of the plight of desperate immigrants in the post war era.

Club leader Rudy Ramirez ended the summer film series with another of his 5th Saturday Film Classics” on August 30.


Humanities Club: The series concludes with Lectures 11 & 12.

9/07 Origins of Great Ancient Civilizations.
9/21 The World Was Never the Same: Events that Changed the World.

Beginning a series of 36 lectures by Professor J. Rufus Fears; a master storyteller and celebrated professor begins the series on Sept. 21, 2013, and concludes June 7, 2014. Two thirty-minute lectures will be given each meeting. The first three titles are: Hammurabi Issues a Code of Law (1750 B. C.); Hippocrates Takes an Oath (430 B.C.); Dante Sees Beatrice (1283).
THE NEWS PREP TEAM
Our monthly Newsletter is made up of a collection of submissions from our Newsletter Staff of writers and reporters and some outside contributors. Our Editor, Don Polhemus, applies his judgment and editorial skills to all the material. The cover pictures vary from the present art exhibit in the Emeritus Center, a theme, seasonal photos or cartoons. The collection of writings and reports are then massaged and manipulated for placement on the pages...from front to back covers...by our talented computer technician, Art Ravicz. The final work is e-mailed to the College’s Reprographics Department for printing and folding. About three hundred copies result, while an equal number of members have received the issue electronically. It is at this point that our Mailing Crew, pictured on the cover, collects the papers and wheels them to the Emeritus Center for the tabbing and addressing. The final step is to distribute these copies to our membership, throughout the two campuses, and to certain retirement homes and libraries. If you should wish to change the format in which you receive the Newsletter, you may contact the Emeritus Office and request this.

Barbara Tarasoff

CLUB NEWS—IRENE PLATZ
She’s one of the first to arrive, as usual. Just as she has nearly every week for the past twenty years, she helps get all the tables ready for play. Irene Platz is 93.

Irene is a mainstay of Emeritus’s Monday bridge games at COM (and the monthly game at the Corte Madera Women’s Club). She learned to play whist when she was a girl and eventually got hooked on bridge, for life. The years have clearly only honed her skill, and she has the trophies to prove it. She’s an excellent declarer and a formidable defender who shines at “setting” her opponents.

“I’ve been playing bridge since I was thirty, and I love it!” she says. Irene attributes this unflagging enthusiasm to “the nice people and the fun of the game.”

Her refreshing “it’s only a game” attitude—a gracious disregard of someone else’s inadvertent goof—along with her cheerful laughter and boundless energy—makes a hand of bridge with her a real joy.

Photo and article by Lynn Mason

LITA RECRUITING VOLUNTEERS
Now in its 38th year, LITA (Love is the Answer) is proud that 37 percent of its volunteers are 60 years plus. With support of a grant from the Marin Community Foundation, LITA is now working to recruit even more older adult volunteers.

LITA is a nonprofit organization that brings needed companionship to socially isolated residents of Marin’s long-term care facilities. LITA carefully matches volunteers and residents based on common interests and preferences to foster lasting friendships.

In just one hour a week LITA volunteers change lives of lonely residents, many of whom have no other visitors. LITA’s One-to-One Friends visit independently while Pet Connection volunteers bring along their well-behaved pets. An interesting note is that several LITA volunteers in their 70s and 80s are visiting residents younger than they are.

For more information about volunteering for LITA, contact Meg Stiefvater at (415) 472-5482 or litamarin2@sbcglobal.net, or click “Get Involved” on LITA’s website, www.litamarin.org.
APPRECIATION

The Newsletter Staff thanks these COM writing instructors for selecting and making available their students' work for inclusion in the August Literary Supplement.

Jacqueline Kudler (MA, English Literature) started teaching a class in memoir writing at the College of Marin in 1985 and two years later added a literature class. In the spring, the literature class, Poetry: From Delight to Wisdom focuses on a range of great poetic voices; in the fall, A Writer's View of the World is a class in the novel. In 2007, she was awarded recognition as an outstanding Emeritus instructor by the College of Marin.

Jacqueline's poetry has appeared in numerous reviews, magazines and anthologies. Her two full-length collections: Sacred Precinct (2003) and Easing into Dark (2012), were published by Sixteen Rivers Press, San Francisco. She was awarded the Marin Arts Council Board Award in 2005 and the Calliope Lifetime Achievement Award in Poetry in 2010 by Marin Poetry Center. She lives in Sausalito.

Prartho Sereno: Even in her former careers as counseling psychologist, vegetarian cook, and meditation instructor at Cornell University, Prartho Sereno encouraged poem-making as a healing and nourishing force. An instructor in the Emeritus College since 1997, she has created and taught a variety of “poetic” courses at the College of Marin, including The Psychology of Joy, Sanity: An Eastern Perspective, Three Modern Mystics, Three Mad Mystics, and Meditation and Creation. For the past seven years, she has been at the helm of the popular Poetic Pilgrimage: Poetry Writing as Spiritual Practice; the past three years co-teaching with Catlyn Fendler, MFA, Iowa. Prartho also teaches young poets (grades 1 through 12) as a Poet in the Schools (since 1999); she received a Radio Disney Super Teacher Award in 2005 for that work. Her illustrated poetry collection Causing a Stir: The Secret Lives & Loves of Kitchen Utensils was awarded a bronze IPPY in 2008 and a Mom's Choice Gold in 2010. Her prize-winning collection Call from Paris (the Word Works 2007 Washington Prize) is due out in a second edition this fall. This past spring, Prartho made good on a lifetime promise and completed an MFA in Creative Writing from Syracuse University. Check out her website: www.prarthosereno.com.

Robert-Harry Rovin invented WRITE ON! in 1997. He’s the chief facilitator of this nonprofit creative writing program that nurtures well-being through self-expression for those who are homeless, abused, in recovery or in need of expressing the deeper language of their heart. Mr. Rovin is a lifetime student and practitioner of integrative (spiritual, somatic, and psychological) healing practices as counselor and play therapist for the emotionally disturbed. A student of the Diamond Approach, he has also worked as an actor, teacher, body worker and a movement meditation teacher. While offering classes at College of Marin he also offers interactive performances of poetry and movement as Green Man Alive—the archetypal bridge between the green world and humanity—in order to awaken the loving appreciation of the natural world living in each of us. His home life is enriched by the high voltage shenanigans of his feline companion, Leela. Like wind rustling through leaves, his bass baritone voice enlivens Green Man’s true voice of ecological lyric poetry; augmented by fluid movement of the biosphere, he deepens his audience’s connection with nature’s gifts.

APPRECIATION
There I stand, one of many nodes on a slithering octopus tentacle, impatient to get my Australian lamb chops and wild Alaskan salmon home to the freezer. But, let’s get real, this is a Saturday afternoon at San Rafael’s Trader Joe’s, somewhere between the Canal and Whole Foods.

From above, the eight checkout counters appear as worried eyes of the octopus. Long lines of shoppers squirm, shifting behind their carts like limbs of the beast.

Carpal-tunneled checkers scan each customer’s mound of pecorino cheese, chardonnay, kosher dills, tzatziki. When a customer finally pays the cashier, hopeful sighs rise from the lines. Unfortunately, movement forward is illusory.

We stand at least forty minutes without entertainment (unlike Safeway, where Enquirer and Soap Opera Digest tempt us at the checkout stands). Here we are forced to eye lozenges and chocolates, strategically placed at the “last chance impulse” rack.

A man, six-foot-six, about fifty, as skinny as Ichabod Crane, dark curly brown hair falling onto his extremely white forehead, appears to the right of my line. He stands there without a cart.

“Bill,” he throws his voice like a basketball toward his acquaintance at the checkout counter, twenty feet in front of him.

At last, entertainment. We, in line, move our heads from Bill, far left, toward the tall man at our right, and watch their ping ponging conversation. Noting his escalating tab, Bill is fumbling with his wallet, searching for his credit card.

“Hey, Leander,” Bill calls back, one eye recognizing tall Leander, one eye trying to calculate his total.

In contrast to Leander’s checked shirt and jeans, Bill is medium height, his bald head crowning his benign beige face. He is dressed in a suit and tie – looking more like San Francisco Financial District than “casual but sophisticated” Marin.

“I’m back! I’m alive!” yells Leander, his prominent Adam’s apple rising and falling.

“Yes, I see,” says Bill, finding his credit card and handing it to the cashier. Again he flicks his eyes toward Leander, shifts from one foot to the other, looks around, his face reddening.

“God, Bill, it’s so good to run into you. Did you hear? I almost died!” shouts Leander.

“Yeah, I heard,” Bill mumbles.

“Did you know, they found me on the showroom floor, between the Audi A6 Quatro 2, and the Audi Allroad?”

“Yeah, sorry,” Bill answers.

“In the hospital, you know my nightmare? That lousy Porsche 6 SUV is ramming me into the wall.”

“Yeah,” says Bill. “I’m glad I’m out of it.”

“I laid in that hospital bed,” Leander turns his palms up, “and thought, I don’t give a damn if I never get out of here. Hah, sure, they said I was depressed. But then I lived! So I go back to work. And what do I find? While I’m gone Lexus got killed by that consumer mag. And the Audi – Audi’s in the toilet. But the worst,” he whines, “you know how they treated me?”

“Yeah, tough, Leander,” shouts Bill, shrinking, maneuvering his cart toward the exit. He glances at his oversize watch. “I retired. Gotta go.”

“Sure, sure, old buddy. So good to be here.” He waves goodbye as he lowers his head. His previously strong voice fades off as he says, “So good to see you.”

A blonde, thirtyish woman dashes from the end of our line to the front counter and grabs a 73% superdark, Belgian chocolate bar. On her slow trip back to her cart she unwraps the bar and nibbles. She glances left watching Leander as his long legs lope toward the liquor aisle. I have also noted Leander’s lurch toward whiskeys and wines. She stops for a second, turns her head and looks directly at me. My eyes meet hers. Simultaneously both of us roll our eyes heavenward.

Now Leander exits liquors holding a bottle of Jim Beam by its neck, his fingers trembling slightly. He becomes another node at the end of the next line. I feel a kind of sick sadness after this scene and a voice in my head repeats “murder, murder.”

At last my line is moving. Maybe chocolate is the answer. I reach for the 97% dark. As I begin to peel away the cover, I hear the clerk say, “You’re next, lady.”
VILLEFRANCHE

Part I. Villefranche sur-mer, a tiny fishing village on the Mediterranean nestles into the hills and to arrive at the sea must include descending a cobblestone hill past the church and long stone stairs to the Rade, the walkway along the turquoise water. Pretty restaurants face this water and the Rade so the diners can watch the parade of strollers pass by while cooled by the gentle breeze from the sea. These eateries range in quality from the Trastevere with its pizza and pasta menu to the excellent "La Fille du Pêcheur" (the daughter of the fisherman) listed in the Michelin Guide.

We, my husband, Alexis, and I, lived in a 4th floor walk-up under one of those tile roofs that descended the hillside. Living in such a small space was a bit of an adjustment after the house on Russian Hill in San Francisco. Even more was learning to live with a two burner stove, a refrigerator the size of a very small filing cabinet, and a total lack of dishwasher, washing machine, or dryer. We not only adjusted, we thrived.

Madeline Burke had been my Villefranche mentor since we'd arrived, exhausted from a long train ride from Paris with a new Renault V stashed on the train and far too many suitcases. A tall, striking woman with graying blonde hair, she'd loaned us sheets which we were appalled to learn did not come with the apartment. She'd counseled us to go to Ventimiglia, across the Italian border for sheets, an iron, and all the vegetables and wine we could carry back on the train. I turned to her for advice about everything - where was the best bread or apple tart, what the horse's head meant on a local butcher shop. (They sold horse meat there.) Where was the best place to swim and when - eight o'clock in the morning before the sun was too high and never on Monday because the boats always dumped their effluent over the weekend. She became my very good friend and I usually trusted her judgment because she'd been coming to the apartment below us for many years and had made an instant connection with my five year old daughter.

However, when she said that most of the older villagers were Mafiosi, I scoffed.

I thought of thousands of little kindnesses that the shopkeepers had shown me, of the help the mothers of my daughter's classmates had given as we deciphered the myriad ways that the school differed from American schools. Remembering the elder men who sat on a bench under the large bay tree in the middle of the town square, "Not my Villefranche," I thought, "so pretty, so sweet".

So I moved into the rhythm of the town, enjoying practicing my French with the local shopkeepers, laughing and sipping wine with Madeline on the balcony that overlooked the sea. This was exactly what I had hoped for when we decided to spend a year in this place so that our daughter could learn French in that period in her life when it is all so much easier.

One day, while hurrying through my errands before my daughter returned from school, I heard the funeral bells. This was not unusual for so many of the villagers were elderly. But now these bells seemed especially, gravely insistent. I saw a huge crowd of villagers standing, waiting for the funeral procession to pass by on the decline below the square. Their mournful cadence underlined the solemn silence of the villagers. Foremost in the large group stood M. Neri, wizened and erect - one of the local artists. He sculpted and drew, always the same subject, a beautiful young woman rising from the sea. He called her "La Petite Sirène". He'd always seemed very placid, even merry as he had showed me his many versions of the lovely "Sirène". Today he was stony-faced. We looked down as the funeral profession approached. Curious, I asked a neighbor who had died. "A young woman of twenty-two of a drug overdose, leaving a five year old daughter". She shook her head grimly. Now the procession began to descend from the Place de La Paix led by the mayor, M. Calderone and the priest. The bells continued tolling their sad message. I watched M. Neri fold his arms across his chest. As the procession neared us, about four feet below, I saw M. Calderone bow deeply to M. Neri, who looked down and nodded briefly in response. As I watched this exchange, I understood. I knew.

Part II. The insurance man smiled blandly. "It is not our fault, Madame. The car was in a locked garage with a security guard on duty. Your prob-
lem is with the company that owns the garage." I tried to snap at him, but my French was not really up to an eloquent outrage.

I said something threateningly about my husband, Alexis, being "vraiment en couleur". He didn't seem at all moved. "Ah well", I sighed inwardly, "I'll let Alexis handle it when he arrives." Clearly, the security guard had not been up to the task -- if not a co-conspirator. The car had been taken for a joy ride of monumental proportions. One of the electric windows was broken, a couple of tires were flat, and some internal hose thing was broken.

How all of this could have happened to that VW Golf if it had rested quietly in the garage was a mystery.

Everyone knew that Nice was the winner of the international Grand Prix of auto theft. It was only common sense to rely on the excellent public transportation system interspersed with the occasional rental.

I had been against the project of owning a car that was parked in a French garage eleven months a year, but Alexis loved having a car to zip into Nice three times a day if necessary to buy some part or other for a repair on the apartment, or to drive to the little hill towns with specialty restaurants that were, admittedly, fun to try. So he prevailed, which was why since the previous August we had owned a French car with French insurance that we housed in a French garage and was now undrivable.

When Alexis arrived from the States, he argued fluently with the insurance company, with the garage and with me to no avail. So he had the expensive repairs made and paid through the nose.

This time we were in Villefranche for a shorter visit without our daughter who had been installed in the New England boarding school she had clamored for. We'd already spent a week dealing with car issues. At last we had the vehicle and could leave for the planned trip to Languedoc, an area noted for duck's breast and a red wine that is almost black, as well as a divine museum in Montpelier devoted to Ingres. Now we looked forward to a meandering carefree trip, visiting friends and landmarks. I waited in the Place de La Paix with our bags while Alexis trotted down to the railway station where the only free parking was to be had. As I waited, M. Neri, the artist of "La Petite Sirene," approached for a chat. He was patient with my French and had been even more friendly ever since the time I'd asked him to apply sun screen to my back as I headed down to an early morning swim. He must have been about 80-plus years, lively and witty, and now explained why he'd been forced to give up a hard sought place at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. It was WWII and he had to go into the army. When the Nazis occupied France, he was captured and forced to work in Goering's mines. Though he would have been eligible to collect war reparations, he declined. "I don't care about money that much anymore. It's too much trouble."

The sun was shining and he seemed happy. We smiled and spoke to the other villagers as they passed and I reveled in their friendly comments, frequently asking after my daughter who'd spent the day in the village. She, after all, was the reason we felt so accepted in the village. They all loved it that "la petite Americaine" was at school with their children. Suddenly, I realized that Alexis had been taking a long time to get the car. Where could he be? It was only a five minute walk to the train station and we had been chatting for at least a quarter of an hour. Then he approached trudging disconsolately toward us. "It's gone," he said. "Been stolen."

Then my wrath exploded and my French improved. I yelped indignantly, "What is wrong with this town? This is not the same town where Antonia went to the village school, where I sent her down to the creperie to get a crepe au chocolate for dessert after dinner!" I was furious to be so insulted. Alexis looked at the bags, packed so eagerly. "What shall we do?"

"Rent a car, and be done with this car-owning business," I said.

Then M. Neri stepped in, "But surely you have insurance against theft."

"No," I said, "Who'd want to steal a 7 year old car? We'll just have to eat the loss."

We bade him good-bye and left to take the bus to Nice and the rental car agency. We had a delightful time in spite of the dismal beginning. We loved the food and the wine, and the Musee Ingres was

(Continued on Page 10.)
"OK, why not?" I ponder half aloud. "I've done virtually every-thing else."

Radical feminist communes in Berkeley, relationships straight and gay, single parent, travel from Bei-jing to Moscow and numerous destina-tions in between. I had jobs in prisons and even retired an assoc-i ate warden at San Quentin. Inside all these twists and adventures there were critical points of no re-turn and tortuous events and decisions. I'm still here.. Now uttering this simple word -- "marriage" -- I feel clammy and faint. "Holy Cow", the pros-pect of this blatant traditionalism slows my blood to a crawl.

Stan invites me to the Left Bank restaurant in Larkspur. It is my birthday -- 55. Nothing to snort or shout about. In Larkspur the shadows fall on the main street, dress boutiques, cafes, way too expen-sive gift shops and a vintage theater. Parking al-though not impossible is a challenge. Stan noses the car up into the side streets of this upper crust town. We finally park free from driveways, curbs, shrubs and a suitable distance from other obsta-cles. Stan is obsessed with finding the right spot, jumping out from behind the wheel to calculate distances from curb and other parked cars. It's OK in Marin, but in San Francisco, where you must ransom your first born to find a spot, it drives me nuts. Mission accomplished we make our way to the Left Bank.

The bar and restaurant are brimming with diners holding generous glasses of wine. They crowd onto the terrace and sidewalk where their deep red glasses of Cabernet and Merlot dot the noisy throng. I leave Stan halfway trapped in the door-way. "Just wait, don't move" (as if he could), "I'll see what I can do about a table." I squeeze, dodg-ing elbows and glasses, inching toward the host-ess. The ability to pass through crowds is one of the few benefits of being five foot two. I return to Stan held hostage at the threshold and pull him through the crowd to the small table I have secured near the rear of the cafe adjacent to an open win-dow and a birthday table of 20. We take our seats and a menu is tossed casually our way by an over-loaden waiter with a chiming "Here Honey." We decide upon "light" fare, a berry cobbler a la mode and one glass of champagne (house will do). We also decide to split the food between us. The bois-terous crowd behind sets up for a chorus of "Happy Birthday, dear Marty." We fall silent for a few moments in the din. A sprightly young waiter waltzes back to our table with drink and sweet.

The champagne is set on the table between us. I have a good view of the golden band of bubbles circling the top of the flute. More bubbles wait be-fore they start their final ascent to the rim. The ice cream cobbler near to melting begins a purplish pool in the dish.

It is just over two years since I met Stan at a Jew-ish singles over-40 event in San Francisco. Things went fairly slowly for quite awhile, curtailed by
our lifestyles and hesitations. I am still reeling from an eight year relationship with Ann, a beguiling French woman who descended into alcohol and ultimately death in front of me. I have David, my beautiful twelve year old boy who is the object of all my love and attention. Stan bears the scars of a messy divorce eight years prior, which left his ego fragile and temperament edgy and sometimes raw. Here we are in Larkspur, a couple of "walking wounded" in this overcrowded, overheated restaurant. "Darn it," a small berry plops onto the white table cloth and bounces to my lap by way of my blouse. Stan smiles and I notice another berry stuck to the corner of his mouth. I reach over and dab the stain with my napkin. The ice cream and cobbler enter into melt down. The cobbler is practically obscured by milky ice cream, a defeated but stoic dessert.

For two years we drive the 101 between San Francisco and Marin. Every week we steal time together, dinners, coffees and walks along the trails and towns of Marin. We manage to see each other several times a week despite our full schedules. "Love 101," we joke.

Stan reaches in his pocket and withdraws a small box and blue envelope. "I've been thinking about this for awhile. Would you like to marry me? Will you marry me"?

I am floored; the dessert I have managed to swallow jumps back into my throat. I take a deep breath which turns out to be more of a gasp. I try to find my composure, but lose it. A tear trickles down my cheek. I swallow hard, hands trembling. I take the box and untie the tiny bow exposing a brilliant solitaire. I take the ring gingerly and slide it onto my left finger -- a perfect fit. "How did he manage that ?" I wonder. "An omen?"

"I've been looking for a ring for the last four months. I have hit most of the stores in San Francisco. The fire in this one was the best."

"The spark and fire are beautiful," I sniffle. Trying to dry my eyes in a way to leave mascara intact. I turn to meet his eyes and reach for his smooth hand. I say, "Yes, yes I will, I think."

The cobbler heaves a silent sigh and collapses into the puddle of vanilla ice cream. The champagne releases its last bubbles to the rim. Stan signals the flamboyant waiter, "Two coffees, cream no sugar, please." We both smile, two slightly older and maybe just a little wiser bride and groom.

Claudia Belshaw