

CURIOS



2013



Coconino
Community
College

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Curios

Our intent for CCC's Curios is to provide a student-produced publication that supports and reflects the breadth of creative expressions across our northern Arizona community. Here we present a venue to display art and literature, providing exposure not previously available to those in northern Arizona.

We invite you to enjoy the works of friends and neighbors and encourage you to submit your work for our next edition.

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Photo by S.D. Lunday

Narcissistic Chicken • Bonita Estes

Narcissistic chicken.

You might as well have used one of those fancy cork screws
To drill my chest and pop my heart from where it stopped
all that angry hurt safely corked in the pit of my stomach.

It would have been more merciful than
Playing the smiling faced joker's sympathy card
Tossed on the table with careless abandon

To my empathetic,
or maybe it's just pathetic,

Nurture VERSUS

Nature.



Photo by S.D. Lunday



Photo by S.D. Lunday

I Can Only Imagine • Santino DeFranco

I can only imagine what it would have been like to know my father. As children, we forget that our parents are humans, too, attempting to get through this calamitous world with a sense of self, separate from their roles as mothers and fathers. Looking at my father, worn from years of pain and suffering caused by an unfathomable amount of time spent in Vietnam during the war, I saw nothing but a shell, a silhouette of an old man that lived in a time that I didn't know existed. As he sat at our kitchen table day after day, year after year, with yellow nicotine-stained fingers, I only harbored animosity toward the figure that I thought made all attempts to hinder any joy in the world that I might find.

As a child, I was blind to the fact that the one who raised me, my loving father, had needs just as I did. He needed to have a sense of self-worth, he needed to be loved and feel compassion from others, just as I do. He had to balance humanity, and the emotional and physical needs that come with it, with also being a father. Although his main purpose in life after my sisters and I were birthed was to protect and nurture us as parents do, he also was this entire being that my sisters and I had never known.

As an adult, as a father to my own child now, I realize that just as there is an entire person who lived prior to being a father in myself, and one that continues to balance the dichotomy between being a father and achieving my own personal aspirations, my father, too, was that same man. It has been six years since his last breath, but just a week ago a friend of his from his days in the military searched far and wide to find my father, or his children, in hopes of telling him, or us, of the great influence that my father

made on him 40 years ago. Unfortunately, this man was greeted with the news of my father's death, but what can one expect after forty years? He went on to explain to me that my father had made a profound impact on his life, and to this day, he is grateful of their friendship many years ago. I learned that prior to being a shell sitting at the kitchen table for years, my father was, as his lost friend put it "The most physically impressive person I have ever seen. He was the elite of the elite of the Special Forces and was the epitome of what a Special Forces soldier should be." Really, my father? He went on to tell me of the amazing things he knew about my father, that continued to surprise me to no end. And to think I only saw, and perceived him, as an old, worn out man.

I am now imaging what it would have been like to know the "man" that was my father, not just the person that raised me. I wonder what his interests were growing up? Did he like Rock and Roll music? Jazz? What books did he find interesting, if he even read at all? Who was the man behind my father? I only know glimpses of what that man was. It is a pity we allow ourselves to center our own universe in the extent that we do, rarely searching for anything that we, ourselves, are not the center of. What would it have been like to sit down and have a conversation with him that didn't revolve around me?

As a father myself, I now wonder if my own son will know me or if he will just see me as his "father" -- a random old person that spent his entire life rearing children? Will he sit upon my casket, as I did my father's, asking himself if he knew the man who raised him, the dead man eternally sleeping before him? I can only imagine the answer.

Dance into the Night • John Mauro

Will I step in, when
the earth swallows the sun?

Clasping hold of the starlit blaze,
as she crashes to the ground;
a dance of playful cloud colors,
her expression, glowing,
as she takes her bow.

She calls to distant specters of light,
scattering across their incessant
medium of dark sky.

I will step in, this cathedral of the night,
gazing through phantoms of ambiance flickering,
as they recount their story.



Photo by Monica Saaty

A Chicano Fires Himself • Marty Lara

When I couldn't measure up,
when the lines I cut in the soft grass
looked like I drank my lunch,
it was time; time to take a lesson
from Mitt and do what he did best . . .

fire people, in this case me.
There was only a little outsourcing.

To a few landscapers, the cut
is in the blood, a work of art,
balance, symmetry, proportion,
following the curve of the land.

Beneath the mower's roar
is both a battle and a meditative
dance, but I missed a few moves.
My pattern was not like Orozco's
"Zapatistas," the gentle curves
of the peasants' serapes, sombreros,
and machetes; no, a few staggered
steps and my lawn looked as if
I were possessed by Jackson Pollock.

So I took a lesson from Mitt
and fired myself.

Then I hired my wife.

I bet you have angry children
so pissed at living your life
they can only squeak.

I met one of my kids,
the one we would have had together,
fanning a butterfly knife

in a Mission Street alley.
He said when he swings his blade
it sounds like a scorpion

dancing on glass,
the fog slides right off
and its edges stay sharp.

He's the kind of kid
I'd hop a fence to get away from,
the kind that makes me want to hug

the backside of a garbage can,
hide in its rusty tuck and roll grooves
and let my knees bite broken glass-

or be filleted like a fish.

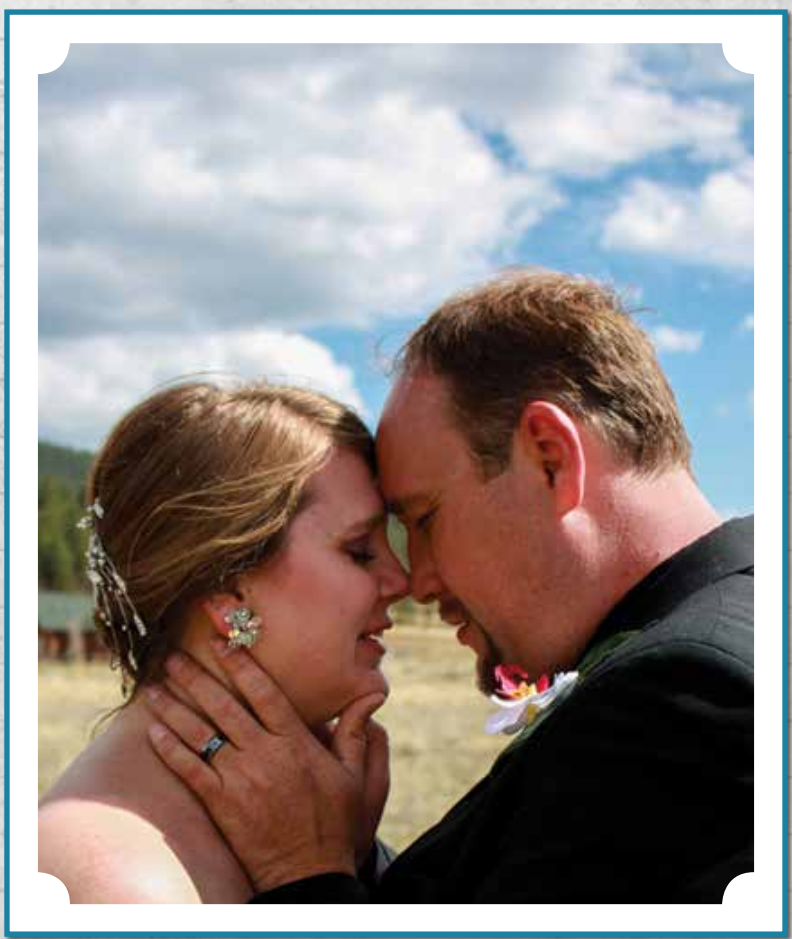


Photo by Shelby Rae

Curios 2013

The subsequent years after high school are learning years, whether continuing as a student in the education system or a more rudimentary way to learn. Those ways of learning may include learning of life, love, endangered California condors, or how to hold down a 9 to 5 job. It seems that most community college folk have opted for the latter, and thus here we are, learning via a computer. The circumstances around either scenario, school or no school, make up the decision as much as personal desire does, and as such those years can hold surprises. When I went to graduate, it seemed like many of the average white kids from my high school chose the classic four year institution; I chose to learn my own way.

Now, college seems like an easy way to do things. You've been in the education system for something like 12 years, sitting in a classroom, taking in older people's views and hanging out with those your age: many people accept it, celebrate being away from it (if only for a summer), then throw themselves right back into it for a few more years. If you've got the money (or a credit card) and the desire, it is a no-brainer, and many people will congratulate you on such fine decision making.

I came out of high school hating the scholastic experience, fighting a drug problem and having no reliable source of income, so college really didn't make sense. Seeing as how I had some negative influences around home in Pennsylvania, it didn't seem to be the place to get my mind together. Plus, there's always been this roaming bone in my body that's been fed by lots of books, pictures and letters from pen pals, so I made the move to travel on. I went to the Jersey Shore, made some money, formulated some plans, went back home, fell back into drug usage, then skipped out before I was broke again. The main gist of the plans I formulated was this: though college may be for some time and place down the road, it wasn't for me then. As many of the graduating class of '03 went on to their respective institutes of higher learning, my goal became to feed that roaming bone. Come early September, I'd be on the road, ready to feast my eyes on spectacular cities, mountains and forests I never had the opportunity to explore before.

That's just what I did. I made my way back home every once in a while, found work, saved money, and got myself back on the road every fall. The idea felt right. Students started new freshman, sophomore and junior years in the fall; I started my own journeys of learning

while constantly refining ideas of travel, responsibility and appreciable slices of American culture. It was a happy existence. There were lots of difficulties and even more information to sift through, but exploring the country from my very own vantage point became a minor obsession with me. No longer did I have to stare out of a classroom window at the rolling hills around the Susquehanna River, the sun feeding the trees and the river feeding an ocean a hundred miles away. I could now find trees that ate all sunlight before the rays could make it to my level of duff and rodent. I had time to walk along that mighty river till its opposing banks were little more than accents on the horizon. Though I had little smarts from a scholastic standpoint, my curiosity and imagination naturally led me to learn.

The summer before my "junior year" of fall journeys, a rather traumatic event occurred involving a forced hospitalization in New York State. It shook me hard and left me clueless as to how to rectify it. I started getting bills totaling around \$9,000, which was scary enough, but the damage done to my state of mind was positively frightening. I was some type of victim, I was sure, but it seemed the victims of the medical world are numerous in this country, and I was just another average Joe owing money into a corrupt system that feasts on the poor. This was not a situation I wanted to dwell on, plus the fall was coming on fast, so I latched onto a temporary remedy that was more within my means: a bus ticket to Oregon.

Some may look at such a solution as little more than a Band-Aid on a broken bone, but it was the only (well, easiest, anyway) thing to do to ease my troubled mind. I was slapped in the face while in my own dream world, so it seemed a decent idea to simply descend deeper into that dream world. Ever since I first visited the Northwest two years prior, the lush, green rainforests of Washington and Oregon downright captivated me, and a dreamier spot to escape the worries of the civilized world I knew not of. Within a few days of travel I was back on the left coast, hitching rides and searching for a place to hunker down.

As I headed north along the 101, a road of inviting options throughout all its Oregonian existence, a few instances of good fortune led me to the National Forest outside of Lincoln City as my new base. With a sleeping bag, hammock, tarp, camp stove, great raingear, more than enough books and a few odds and ends, I began my own version of therapy that revolved around mornings of reading, smoking and sipping tea, followed by romps through

the wet, green underbrush all around me. It was a pleasant existence, and with town being less than twenty miles away, stocking up on provisions wasn't too difficult. Soon I landed myself a bicycle for \$40, which allowed me to move my camp even farther from the 101. Though rain and clouds were continual, it elevated my being from the entrapments of society. I could study mushrooms, visit the ocean or lose myself in a green world more fit for faeries than drifters, all the while only getting small tastes of civilization whenever I deemed necessary.

For what I needed from a little base camp in the forest, my locations were nearly perfect. They were in a heavy forested area rarely visited, yet I could make journeys up and down the coast with ease. Most every task was compounded in difficulty by constant rain, but it was also refreshing in a way. Normal tasks involved foresight to potentially avoid rain and dedication to withstand hours of a soppy existence. Short trips would present their own unique situations, but they hardly seemed like too much trouble, for it was relaxing to leave the world of debts and gloom, my world of the previous summer, only to be submersed in a daily existence that was based more on my own actions. Rain was a persistent factor; discomfort a mere formality that came with each day.

From my current vantage point in the progression of time, it was not the most beneficial action to embark on fall's journeys without a solid financial strategy and to simply cast my cares to the proverbial curve, for there aren't garbage men to take out the trash of regretted moments. Deeds were done, and hiding in Oregon's woods solved no problems. A couple years later I heard a song called "The Weight of Lies" by the Avett Brothers that summed up a lesson I eventually had to learn. A line in that song goes "when you run, make sure you run to something and not away from, 'cause lies don't need an aeroplane to chase you down." I had tried to justify that trip as a journey back to a land I loved, but even more so that song spoke to me and pinpointed the underlying farce. I was only running from a problem bigger than me, and it didn't get any better while chasing faeries around toadstools.

I don't make my yearly travels every fall on cue anymore, though whenever I spot trees breaking from the daily grind of producing photosynthesis, that roaming bone starts acting up again. Luckily, I live in the desert and trees are pretty rare, but that may simply be another temporary solution.



Photo by Shelby Rae



Photos of Kathleen Raye
Taken by Monica Saaty





Photo of Kathleen Raye
Taken by Monica Saaty

Is It An Act? • Elise Boyle

*Sometimes I wonder about actors
after the curtain hushed closed
and the stage is a scuffed black mirror
after they pull off the fraying wig and the costume with someone else's
sweatstains in the armpits
and swipe away sweet powder
and beetle-black lines*

*Do they go home
to a shabby apartment
(where else would an actor live?)
and cry clear tributaries in
the dingy yellow light
because
They can't remember who they are?
hold tightly to themselves
because they may or may not be
disintegrating?*

*Have you said so many lines that they've started to tattoo on your life-
weathered skin?
Have you stopped eating because the admiration tastes better?*

Do you fall in and out of love every night?

*Is there a singular you
Or are you an amalgam
Sewn together by the numberless bolded monikers?
Are you the canvas?*

Dressing Room • Elise Boyle

A red door
Is sobbing animal sounds that
move,
swell, burst
Like bubbles.

A mother steps out
The usual
Short hair + t-shirt + jeans
(is it a required uniform?)

Exhausted eyes
Purple half-moons
Sagging under the weight of her words:
“My daughter says she’s fat.
She thinks
She’s huge.”

...

This girl
Was [just] that: a girl.
How old?
A decade?
They’re gone
Before I can see her
All I catch is the
Purple sole
—soul?—
I wait
Button-zip-fold-fold
Shake-fold-tuck
I could.
I could run
And stop her.

Force beautiful
Down her ears
I could tell her
Not yet
Because it only gets worse,
The guys who don’t look
And the girls whose eyes
Are measuring tapes
And all the numbers
Will trail behind you like a jacket
Self-hate is a drink you sip
Out of a mirror cup
With a barbed wire straw
[that leaves your lips bloody and raw]
Please not yet.



Photo by S.D. Lunday

We play the game daily, but what is the game? Who determines the winner or loser? How is the game played? To me, the game is exploration, and we play by instinct, impulse, and whatever aspects of humanity will urge us to be or do. As long as we are breathing--pumping blood through our bodies, giving reason to doubt theories of any condition, or generally understanding any mysteries in our wake--we will continue playing the game.

A personal favorite of mine when discussing what makes us all “human” is to consider our curiosities: our need to discover and to learn experiences and achievements at their best. Yet we haven’t the foggiest as to why we, as mortal men and women, care so much to figure out the unknown. We know it frightens us, being blind to it all. Some people disagree that humanity shares a similar interest, this need to “figure out the unknown,” regardless of the type or personality, but if there is the slightest interest to learn, experience, or even to merely discover what kinds of luxuries or leisure we have at our disposal, we have that much more of an interest to explore our horizons. This could be a motivation in itself, so awareness is key to a greater lifestyle of fulfillment.

To discover is to complete, to complete is to achieve, but to achieve is to lust, and to lust makes room for more improvement. We, as human beings, are never satisfied with what we have done to reach the point we’re at today, so we use exploration as a means for further advancement. Do you doubt me yet? Have you any reason to believe that you’re not the adventurer I’m claiming you to be? Let’s take a moment to look at your past. Each of us has a moment where we experienced a childhood crush, had an interest in a pet, or were even influenced by the enjoyment of our peers. How did you go about seeking out said interests if not by exploring your choices? There is no human being alive who isn’t an explorer, an adventurer of sorts; thrill and excitement is crucial to avoid living a boring, routine based lifestyle.

One question still remains: how will we know if we've experienced plenty to make us feel complete, whole, satisfied, or fulfilled? My friends, I tell you this with the best of faith in our own capabilities of just being men and women; we will never know, and we will always want more out of life. The most depressed people on the planet wish for a change for the better, the most fulfilled people are addicts to the thrill but may just be in control of the addiction, those who haven't given this much thought; if they're wiser than those before them, they will never doubt the time to step up to the cliff and dive into the pools of adventure.

In the end it comes down to this: we are all blind, and when we find bits and pieces of whatever truth lies before us, we grab onto said truth and easily cast it aside for another. Our paths as human beings are dark, and no light in the world can show us the way, so we take each step, one at a time, and hope that along the journey we won't falter, trip, stumble, or regret the choices between each fork in the road. So remember, when you journey down the road to success or just wonder what else is out there in the universe keep an open mind about what your options to any situation are. Admire what you've done before any specific point in time in order to encourage yourself to find more accomplishment in your life.

Godspeed my fellow explorers! Venture cautiously with open eyes, heightened senses, and the truest of wisdom and judgments.

talking to the dead—
it's crazy but cathartic,
this touching the void

at the prayer meeting
songs of praise, tears of joy,
and one rebel yell

rain pelts the windows
it sounds like fire
inside I'm ash

brushed by a butterfly—
such an unexpected blessing.
I feel like a contrite
caterpillar suddenly
coming of age

our first kiss--
8.6 on the Richter Scale
aftershocks guaranteed



Photos by Monica Saaty



Curios 2013



Photos by Monica Saaty



If I had It All to do Over Again • Chuck Wood

If I had it all to do over again, I would be more mindful. More mindful of the needs of others and less mindful of my own wants. I'd be more mindful about living my life so that I regretted things that I hadn't done, rather than things that I had. I'd be more mindful of the small things that were good, less mindful of the big things that were bad, mindful that I couldn't fully appreciate the one without the other. I'd be more mindful of the daily events in my life ... the people, places, and things ... let the memories of them soak more deeply into my mind. More mindful of my precious time, that I've been given only a finite amount of it and that once it's gone I can never get it back. I'd be more mindful of sunrises and sunsets, of the wind in my face, the bird in my ear, the flower in my nose and the sweet taste of honey. I'd be more mindful of my health and not take it for granted. I'd be more mindful of my spirituality and nurture it more fully. I'd be more mindful of the joy I had and who shared it. I'd be more mindful of the love received from others and the love given in return. I'd be more mindful and grateful for the things I had in my heart, rather than the things I held in my hand.

I'd be more mindful of the gift of family, of the one I was given and the one that I gave. I'd be more mindful of my parents. More mindful of the demons they struggled with and the pain they had. More mindful of their courage and less mindful of their fragility. More mindful of the things they gave me, rather than the things they didn't. I'd be more mindful of the kindness shown to me by my older siblings. I'd be more mindful of my best friend, my wife, and what was going on in her life. I'd be more mindful of the pure joy in the laughter of my sons, when they were young. I'd be more mindful of the questions they asked and more thoughtful about the answers I gave. I'd be more mindful that some of the most important lessons I learned about life were taught to me by my children.

I'd be more mindful of how I perceive others, try to sense the essence of their spirits before I judge them by their appearance. I'd be more mindful of my revelation that just because someone isn't highly educated, it doesn't mean that they aren't intelligent. I'd be more mindful of my conversations with people, not just hearing their words but listening to the meaning hidden within them. I'd be more mindful of my own voice, choosing words with heartfelt thoughts behind them. I'd be more mindful of my walkin' rather than my talkin'. I'd be more mindful about feeling more empathy towards others and showing less sympathy. I'd be more mindful of the suffering of others and the desires that caused it. I'd be more mindful of my fears and the opportunities that were lost because of them. I'd be more mindful of my inner voice and what it was trying to tell me.

I'd be more mindful of my baggage, leave it at home and not lug it all over hell and back, and certainly not pass it on for others to carry. I'd be more mindful of my petty emotions, like

jealousy, and not waste my time with their promotions. I'd be more mindful of my guilt and why I had it. I'd be more mindful of my anger, that I choose to grow it and show it, or not. I'd be more mindful of my sadness, but even more so of my gladness. I'd be more mindful of the tears that I cry ... and why. I'd be more mindful of the times that I laughed so hard my stomach hurt and I couldn't breathe ... and why.

I'd be more mindful of the compliments collected and less mindful of the slights received, real or perceived.

I'd be more mindful that true happiness lies within me and not outside me. I'd be more mindful that I choose to allow myself to be happy or not.

If I had it to do all over again, I'd be more mindful of life and how I chose to live it ... and why.



Photo by Monica Saaty

Can You Visualize My Life In The Studio? • Lyn Matthews

I am a painter. I paint on an easel in my studio when I am moved to do so! I often paint from my imagination and dreams. My subjects are dancers. As I paint, my dancers come alive!

The layer of paint is very thin and translucent in the first stage of painting. There are blobs and drips on the canvas because the paint is watery. I am the story teller and the story begins to come alive. Dancers emerge in the shadows and are brought to life as the layers of paint pile up to thick and gooey. They can be clearly seen, moving, twisting, turning and some dance right off the canvas! They forget where they are in their excitement to explore new steps in private. A few emerge again in a new space with new steps and movement. What is a painter to do?

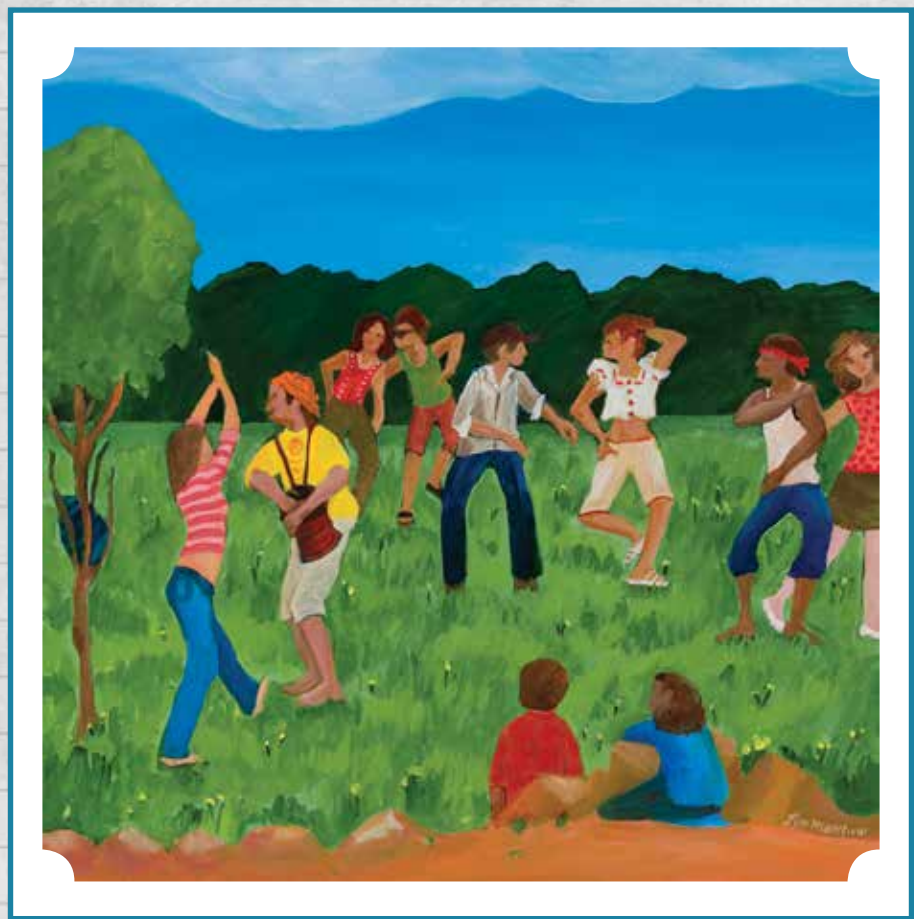
I sit on the sofa in my studio looking at the canvas, deciding what to do next. I need to temper the dancers. The air is warm and the sofa is too comfortable. I sink back, squinting at the painting. I see dancers stepping off the canvas, paint dripping down their backs. I think I have lost my mind. I am clearly losing the dancers.

With paint still dripping down their backs, they fall in line, snake down the hall and out the door beneath the moon. They move down the road to find a cool place to dance. They dance on the slippery rocks, slipping and sliding and splash across a stream, having fun, laughing as they go.

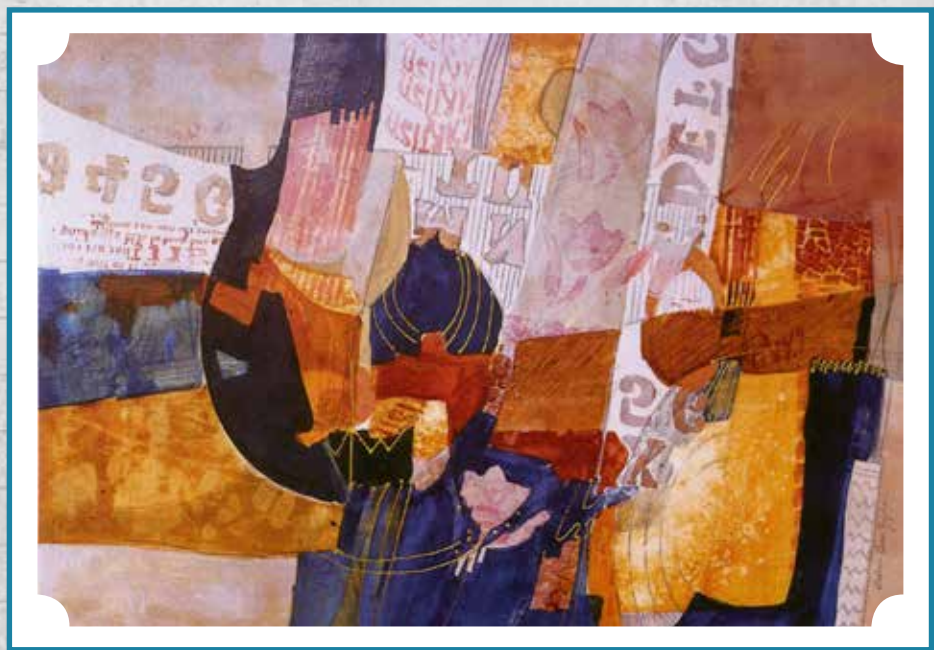
I make a quick decision to leave the studio. Turn off the lights and lock the door, up the stairs, down the hall and out the back door. I follow laughter and find all the dancers, paint dried on their backs, kicking up their heels and dancing in the night near the aspen grove. Golden leaves swish and rattle in the moonlight and the dancers move to their rhythm. I think they are hearing music in their heads.

At home, in bed, I dream of new dancers, brilliantly costumed, and a new story. In the studio, the next day, the brush strokes bring new dancers to life. They move in lively steps and swing and sway to imaginary music. Two dancers leap high in the air, another stretches and the fourth stands in a corner looking pensive. The layers of paint emerge and the scene is set. They won't leave this time! I glance at the first painting and see the dancers are still having fun dancing in the moonlight. Now there are three canvases, all in a row, and it is time to start the third scene.

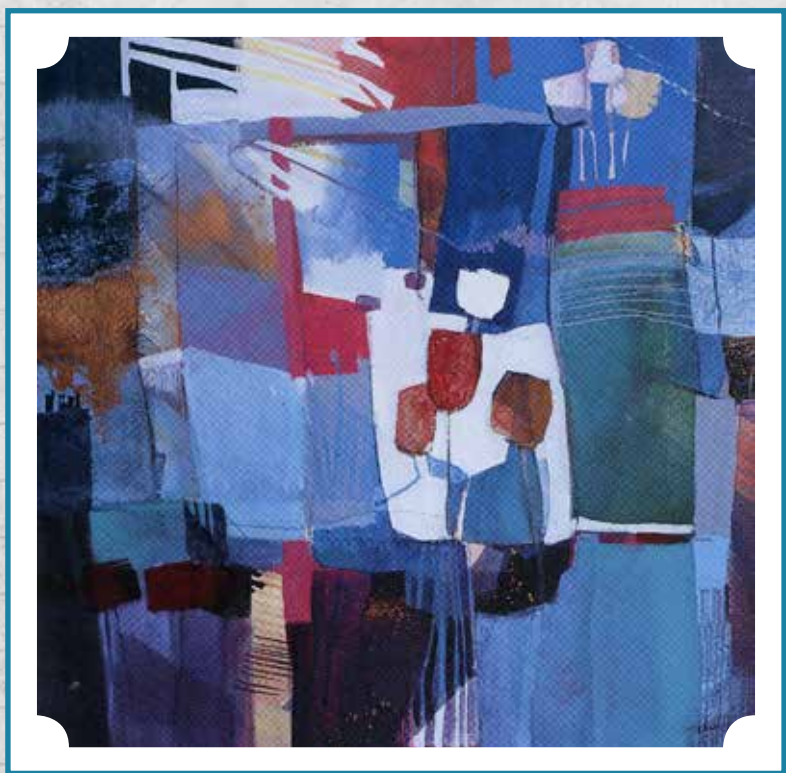
Tackling three canvases at once is a dance itself. Palettes are set and the earnest work presents itself. In the world of dance, the movements can change the scene at any point in time. Completion is dubious. The dance is not linear. It is a continuous pathway of movement, one move leading to another and another and one canvas leading to another. Only a thread of thought holds them all together. I am the painter but I am also the dancer, the choreographer, and the storyteller.



Painting by Lyn Matthews



Painting by Delores Ann Zelgler



Painting by Delores Ann Zelgler

The Path • Maxie Inigo

Smooth sandstone,

up both sides to the Light.

Waves of rock scoured by wind, by water, and by sand

reveal primordial Jurassic dunes

manifesting to their present form.

Small human fleck at the bottom of a vast crevasse-

bird cry Echoes as i listen to my own Breath,

The Breeze brushes, cooling the salty sweat, slowing the pounding Heart,

Wisps of clouds throw elegant shades of Color:

Light Dancers on the rocks above.

Gratitude for small gifts; the evidence resolute.

i hike the narrow path,

deep in the shadow of the stone.

the canyon walls obscure the view (of what awaits).

continuing up the creek bed,

Faithfully, toward the beauty of the Light.

Red-tiled roofs
cap whitewashed walls.
Like tumbled dice they spill
along the tranquil
Baja sea and sand.

While across the blue horizon-arc
crested sun-lit ocean waves
flash sea-green tipped
reflections
in your eyes.

They mesmerize,
they paralyze,
they devour me with want.

And as a pristine salty breeze
sets the curtains softly sighing,
I hear faint echoes
keeping time
with the deep and rhythmic sea
languishing within
our love spent hearts.



Photo by Shelby Rae

Tonight I feel your wanting,
on the other side of town,
as the first of winter's snowflakes float

gently

to

the

ground.

Vainly I try keeping
my hungry thoughts from drifting,
slipping 'cross
its seamless, frozen sea.
Diamond flake to diamond flake,
my mind's eye softly tip-toes

from tree

to street

and up the hill,

beneath the velvet sky.
And having traced your garden paths,

my only guide
anticipation,
I find myself
outside your frost-rimmed door.

Do you send out
such shadow-thoughts;
faint whispers passing by?
Two nocturnal actors
in a cross-town traffic play?



Painting by Mike Templeton



Photo by Mike Templeton

Jonestown • Julla Shreder

I have always wondered how a place that looks like a barren wasteland can actually harbor more stimulation than a flourishing, bustling city. Don't even begin to picture some kind of sub-tropical oasis, lined with swaying palm trees and glistening pools. Forget cool breezes and half-naked ladies in little strings. Let's not even tap into the realm of a dense, mysterious forest.

I know a place where it looks like ancient ruins once graced the parched soil; stone temples chiseled away bit by bit by the whipping gusts of sand and time, disintegrating structures lifted away by the sudden winds, howling a glorious battle cry, drowning in the distance, leaving eerie silence.

The dusty expanse becomes part of the nose, cheeks, and for the incautious, the mouth. Brown, caked dirt, the war paint of the desert. The sun beats down upon the shoulders, warm and benevolent, until reddening flesh, scorched with kindness, desires to detach from its fixture and hightail it to the nearest clump of exoskeleton-like shrubbery. Fart dry, brown and off-green, wimpy, the pathetic little bushes are suitable only to spice up a little *I Spy* from the windows of moving vehicles. The flesh of burning bodies finds no shelter here.

In between deadbeat brush, rocks, and sand, there is a plethora of rubbish. Pure garbage, filled with .40 caliber and 9 millimeter. It's a toaster. It's a washing machine. It's a bag of household waste. Filthy diapers. It's a...who knows what the hell that is? Barren, vast expanse + plus hot, dry wind + dirt + useless, minimal vegetation + garbage + more shrapnel than a modern day battlefield = less than a spring of life. The essence of this place is deceit. Only a fool would gaze upon this land and fall into the clutches of this tricky witch, the desert, for every single element appears to be something which it is not. There is more life in death than meets the eye.

I start my engine the same way every time, with great anticipation. I've got two wheels, six gears, and miles to leave behind. This is how I clear my head, where I bury the cadavers of my mind, where I come to seek out the realm of the living in the land of the dead. The humor in it is there isn't another human being around for miles. There's a lot of cholla though, with strikingly human-like personality. I keep away; I avoid that crowd every time I come out here. Besides, this is no place for distraction, especially if there is desire for a successful hunt.

It doesn't take long to witness movement. Actually, the whole land is moving. In the smallest increments, every grain of sand relocates on the wind,

little particles of plant debris, anything light enough to catch the slightly over-warm gusts. Every step is an imprint, building tracks in the dirt, crunching as singular chips of rock relocate at the mercy of weight. Little brown lizards scurry occasionally from one patch of meager shade under dry, brittle bush to the next. Curious little creatures, living lives entirely in accordance with the position of the sun and the immediate threat of danger. Danger is a little brown bird, calling off into the distance. *Is there anybody out there?* Hop and flutter, a new clump of vegetation. It modestly, hopefully tweets another summons. Danger is a snake slithering gracefully through the dust, leaving a trail of reptilian Sanskrit as a silent signature. *I exist.* With a flash of quick, bouncing white lightning, little bunnies bound from one dry, rattling bone cage to another or dive into the entrances of underground tunnels. They disappear into the abyss under the rolling sands, wide-eyed, cautious, infinitely terrified. Their appearances are always brief—late to tea—the only lasting evidence of their presence lying in little circular piles. The number of pellets littering the ground presents the immediate downside to vegetarianism. Where did all this come from? Gnawing on the bark of crusty, rough wannabe vegetation? Ah, alas, the art of deception. The thriving, surviving veins of life lie beneath the hideous brittle sheath. Only with training can the refreshing relief of water be extracted from this vegetation: not bad for a sad little clump of tumbleweed.

The soft roll of the wind is drowned by the eruption of bullet from barrel. An explosive crack breaks and another hole appears, joining the collection of scars in the fading paint along the ribs of a gutted, used-to-be oven. The place has changed, even if in the most trivial sense. Within another few seconds, the place will have changed again, but my lack of intention will make the change invisible to me. Where else can I change the environment at my will, only then to have the environment change it all the same, catering to its own natural vision? Out here I can play God and be reduced to nothing, all within 30 seconds.

It's dirty out here. It smells like dirt. The view...you guessed it...dirt. Open your mouth on an ill-timed yawn and it tastes exactly how you expect. It's not the conventional dirt we vacuum up or sweep under a rug or scrub out of a bathtub. This is real dirt, not the filth of our industrialized lives. This is the food, the habitat, of the earth in its naked exposed glory. It moves, flows, assembles, and disassembles. It's gritty and warm, or it's silky and cold, depending on what time of day it is, and how you touch it. This dirt is a tool, a slave to the elements.

It's mildly embarrassing and strange to admit that I have pondered the idea of dirt. That's exactly what I like about Jonestown though. It's a place where thoughts about dirt have a home. There isn't another person out here to tell me I had better stop thinking about gravel and worry about what's real. Out here, order of importance and priorities are not the same. What if the winds summoned a storm? What if the night came more quickly than expected? Jonestown

prides itself in quick draw, the climate changing in minutes. Mercy is only a concept. The meaningless expanse of dirt can turn the place I stand into an eternal burial site.

My engine roars again, my single line of tire tracks the only evidence of man. Throttle wide open, cacti and shrubs pass by, cluster by cluster. Coming up on a herd of free-range cattle, I slow down, returning the fixed stares of these wild beasts. They pick at the sad looking little shrubs — chew, chew, chew — and then return them to nearly the places they stood before, though they look a little different now, like something Little Debbie might wrap up in plastic and take to market.

Cattle are actually fairly curious creatures. It's something about their eyes. They look like idiots, standing around aimlessly, but there is something mistrustful in their eyes. They band closely together, examining the situation, and then, kicking up dust, turn and move out quickly in the opposite direction, eventually turning their swiftness into a slow trot. For as clunky, goofy, and slow as they appear, they sure can move quickly. It's obvious which ones in the herd are the elders. They stop and look back from time to time, sometimes releasing a long drawn out MOO before moving on with the rest.

Where there are cattle, there is also sure to be a plethora of insects: beetles, flies, creepy crawly unknowns scurrying around from pile to pile, collecting and feasting. I'm not really big on crawlers, so I never really pay too much attention to them, though they are definitely part of the package out here. It's personally far more interesting to me to watch the occasional bee buzz around.

Back on the bike, back to the truck. The sun is setting here in Jonestown and darkness and chill can fall quickly. This is the epitome of the Wild West. Beginning and end are rapid shifts, and everything in between appears to stand still. This is a place that makes you look, makes you question the power of things unnoticed. Things here are the same, and yet always, tirelessly, changing. Sometimes a barren wasteland can make the soul flourish. Just like the trash littering the sands, I too come to dump off some internal garbage. But I always pack out my beer cans.



Photo of Kathleen Raye
Taken by Monica Saaty



Photo by S.D. Lunday

Curios 2013

When prose or poetry wants action,
Vibrant verbs provide the traction.

If an object needs a name,
Some fine noun enters the game.

Perhaps a noun is too specific?
Some pronoun would be terrific.

All conjunctions are connective,
And are used to be reflective.

If a writing seems too dry,
Adjectives can make it fly.

Adverbs now and then are timely,
And their sounds sing out sublimely.

Prepositions are phrase intros,
Whose word tasks are added infos.

If writing cries for keen attention,
Add interjection intervention!

Parts of speech are well worth knowing,
If your writings you'll be showing.



Photo by S.D. Lunday

Darkness closes in with evil intent.
In the distance a sliver of light beckons,
But I am weak; unwilling to move.
At last, its promise of liberation falls silent--
Illusions of safety and immunity lie shattered
Like so many fortresses built on sand.
Fear and uncertainty take their place.
Nothing is as it seems.
Death winds its fierce grip around my heart
And lays claim to hope.



Photo by Monica Saaty

My Old and Smelly Books • Marty Lara

Hardbound books and paperbacks,
journals, magazines, and pamphlets,
cremate them all with me.

It will make a splendid pile
of ash, bone, and cooked staples,
all swept into a banana box
at the foot of the now empty
oven.

Who would read them anyway?
Who wants to inherit a load
of out of print smelly books
in an age of digital readers?

Take the box to a mountain
meadow, please. Shovel our remains
onto a bare spot and mix with
potting soil. Throw in a few
seeds from local trees
and we'll grow from sprigs
to saplings to old growth,
and maybe, if we're lucky,
become a book.

As we landed at Sea/Tac International Airport, I was frozen to my seat with fear. The door of the airplane opened, and I looked over at my husband. "I can't move," I said, gasping for just a simple breath. "Honey, I can't breathe, what if it doesn't work? She will die."

With tears in his eyes, Lloyd reached out to me with his soft, large hand. "Sweet-heart, you can do this. Look into my eyes and take a deep breath. You have to believe."

It was late in the evening when we checked into our hotel--my home for the next two weeks. I lay awake in the strange bed, multiple emotions running through my head. The unknown was scary and made me nervous, but I knew what I had to do.

I decided to walk to my first of many Seattle Cancer Center appointments. I'd been told that spring was a beautiful time in Seattle, and May of 2007 lived up to my expectations. The rhododendrons were in full bloom, their colors magnificent. For a brief time, I did not think about where I was headed. I just enjoyed the flowers.

But reality settled in my already upset stomach in the waiting room as I anticipated the moment they would call my name. Visible signs of sickness were everywhere. A little girl, who looked to be three years old, wore her pink pajamas, bunny slippers, and a pink bandana, covering her head where she once had hair. How can this be? I thought. It is not fair. "Julie Drinkard," the nurse called out. I looked at my husband, and we walked to her hand in hand. "My name is Tammy, and I will be your nurse for your injections," she said in a very soft voice.

We followed her into a room where I could see a tray with a blue towel covering it. I knew what was under that blue towel, and the butterflies in my stomach began to multiply.

Tammy explained the process I would undergo every day for the next five days. Healthy individuals, she said, have anywhere from 3,500 to 10,000 white blood cells, and if I was going to donate stem cells, we would need to increase them as much as we could. Today I would receive two of ten injections in my stomach of Neupogen, a growth factor that would hopefully raise my white blood count between 45,000 and 60,000.

After the injections, Tammy gave me a thermometer and a prescription for Percocet. Neupogen had one known side effect: severe flu-like symptoms. If I started running the slightest fever at all, I was to return at once to the clinic or, after hours, to a hospital emergency room. Since my white blood count was multiplying so rapidly, I would have achy joints. I was to do as much walking as my body would tolerate and take advantage of the Percocet to relieve my pain.

Lloyd and I walked to the Pete Gross Home, a home designated strictly for cancer patients waiting for a transplant, where my sister Kris was living. As we headed up to her apartment, I began to think about the responsibility that had been put upon me. I was so thankful that I was not only a match but a perfect one: ten out of ten. It doesn't get any better than that. As I walked into her apartment, tears begin to roll down my face. I hadn't seen her since March, when I'd helped her move from Tucson to Seattle. She looked so tired. I could hardly see those beautiful blue eyes behind all the puffiness. Her pale skin revealed the signs of the illness taking a toll on her frail body, and I could not help but wonder why it had to be my little sister. She'd been out of remission for five months; without the transplant, she only had nine months to live. But as sick as she was, she still had an incredible and contagious smile. I could not help but think of the closeness we shared: we were only eleven months and one day apart—Irish twins. I had so many memories of all the fun things we did together: riding quads, camping, fishing, our husbands pulling us on "Big Mable" behind our boat at Lake Roosevelt. Most of all I missed sitting in her backyard around the fire-pit drinking margaritas, dancing, and singing our song, "I like big butts, I cannot lie . . .," our kids turning red with embarrassment. I missed those times more than I would have ever imagined. But for now, we would have to trade margaritas for stem cells.

When Lloyd and I walked back to the hotel, we took a detour, walking around Lake Union. The smell of the crisp ocean air was refreshing, and I could feel the warm sun shine down on my face, drying my tears. It had been an extremely long day, and I was exhausted. I climbed into bed as soon as we got back to our hotel. Tomorrow it would start all over again.

On the fifth day, Lloyd and I headed back to the cancer center to have my blood drawn for the fifth and final time. This was the day I would find out just how many white blood cells my body had produced. When Tammy entered the exam room, the smile on her face was as big as the Grand Canyon, and from that moment, I knew it had worked. All the pain, achy joints, and mild fevers were worth it. My body had produced over 50,000 white blood cells, and I was one step closer to saving my sister's life.

We headed downstairs to the second floor of the Cancer Center, the Apheresis Floor. Squeezing Lloyd's hand, I followed Tammy through two big gray doors to meet Elizabeth, my nurse for the remainder of my journey. She showed us around and briefly explained the process. I did not have to be back until Monday morning, and she wanted me to relax over the weekend and enjoy Seattle.

The weekend flew by, and when I opened the curtains in my hotel room on Monday morning, I was greeted by a beautiful day. For a few minutes, I got lost as I stared out my window into the sky. The sun was so striking with its rays shining brilliantly, and the clouds looking like puffy cotton balls. As we walked to the clinic, I could not help but stare into the clouds, feeling God's presence. I knew in my heart that everything was going to be okay. When we arrived on the Apheresis Floor, Elizabeth greeted us.

"Good morning, guys. Are you ready?"

"As my sister would say, let's get this show on the road!" I replied.

In my room, Elizabeth began to prep my arms for the needles. Here we go, I thought. This is it. And then when I saw the needles, I wanted to run for my life!

"Holy crap, are those the needles that you are using?" I asked.

"Yesss," replied Elizabeth.

"Why—in the you know what—do they have to be so flippin' HUGE!!" I asked firmly.

"I don't think I have ever seen needles that big before. They look like giant tapestry needles!"

Since the needles were steel, and would not bend like normal needle catheters, I was to lie completely still for the next three hours. With the slightest movement, I could blow out a vein. With my arms straight out to my side, we watched my blood leave my left arm and travel through a clear tube into the apheresis machine. There were two big wheel-looking things that separated my stem cells from my blood. Once the stem cells were separated, they traveled up to what looked like an I.V bag, and then my blood re-entered my body through my right arm. Lloyd and I were mesmerized by this at first, but by the end, I was getting impatient.

I had only five more minutes of this grueling process when my nose began to itch, and I moved my right hand. The pain was excruciating. Elizabeth removed both needles immediately. Bruising was already visible. It looked like someone had beaten me with a baseball bat; from my wrist to my armpit, I was turning purple, black, and green.

Kris was waiting patiently in the room next to mine, ready to receive my stem cells, and after I was done I crawled into her bed. We laughed and cried and laughed some more. My sister was the strongest person I have ever known. She fought leukemia with hope, dignity, and faith. Although the transplant was a success, I lost my Irish twin on November 16, 2008, due to complications that arose eighteen months after the transplant. My beautiful sister remains in my heart, my memories, and in my niece, Tessa.

Contributor Biographies

Elise Boyle enjoys reading and writing. Her work was inspired by her employment in retail and her experiences with theatre, both on and offstage.

Santino DeFranco is a student in Northern Arizona University's MFA program for Creative Writing (Fiction), where he has just finished working on his first novel. Santino lives in Flagstaff with his wife and two sons.

Julie Drinkard is a member of Phi Theta Kappa who is pursuing an Associate's Degree in General Studies, and will apply to the Social Work program at NAU upon completion. Julie's long-term goal is to work with cancer patients and their families.

Wendell Duffield is a retired geologist who spent a forty-year career studying volcanoes. He is the author of many research reports published in the peer-reviewed geologic literature. Parts of Speech was written for and dedicated to his 9th grade English teacher Marlowe "Red" Severson, of the Browns Valley, Minnesota, Public School System.

Laura Fisher's biography not given at time of publication.

Maxie Inigo likes to write poetry and volunteer at the Coconino Center for the Arts. Her poem was inspired by an exhibit at the Center featuring a wall-hanging quilt of Antelope Canyon. Like the exhibit, Inigo's poem expresses her spiritual belief that all is interconnected.

Shelby Rae Irons first started taking photographs in high school, and her passion only grew from there. She loves being outside and surrounded by family and friends, so finding inspiration for her photography is not difficult.

Marty Lara is a retired English/Humanities/Religion instructor from CCC. He lives in Oregon with his wife and cat and enjoys foggy days and freezing rain.

John Mauro loves to write, sing, and go on refreshing morning walks. He loves to go to the local HeadStart to do activities with the kids and read them stories.

Contributor Biographies

K.F. Mullins has 30 years of pent-up, unused and unwanted adjectives and adverbs with which to construct his poetry.

Deanna Pelton works at W.L. Gore and enjoys writing in her spare time.

Monica Saaty's favorite thing about photography is that it encourages her to look beyond what others define as 'beautiful,' and has taught her to see beauty in everything.

Julia Shreder enjoys the outdoors, obscurities, painting, drawing, and observing everything that piques her interest. Her essay reveals her life as a child of the desert--a place with which she is well acquainted.

Gordon Slauch lets his published piece serve as his biography.

Mike Templeton is a painter and a professional musician under the alias I Am This. He has chosen to release his music for free to the public through his record label's website www.jamendo.com.

Daniel Travis has lived a life of struggle, from which he has derived empathy. This piece was written to open the eyes of others to the hope of a better, more caring world.

In a writing class, **Charles Wood** was given the line starter "If I Had it All To Do Over..." He had been reading some literature about mindfulness and the ideas along that line of thought began to flow.

Dolores Zeigler majored in fashion illustration at college and later studied with several internationally known artists. Today her work appears in more than 75 coronet collections and in hundreds of private collections in the United States and abroad.

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