

CLASS ACT

NEWSLETTER

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<https://encorelearn.net/>

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Winter Greetings,

This year has been busy and has flown by! Bylaws and procedures were updated, some vacant Board and Committee positions were filled, and many new ideas were explored and implemented.

Thank you for telling others about ENCORE, word of mouth is still our best advertising. Our membership has increased by over 35%, with many past members returning, and an impressive number of new members. Every member enriches ENCORE, and as we grow, ENCORE can offer more enrichment in return.

I am excited to introduce new member Rodney Merrill as our new Class Act Editor. Rodney is a lifelong learner who has a BA in sociology, an MPH in public health, and an interdisciplinary PhD in Social and Behavioral Science. He also has 4 dogs who keep him very busy!

Many thanks to our 2025-2026 Board of Directors and Committees. They are all vital to the success of our member-run organization and very committed to keeping ENCORE relevant. All volunteers are listed in the 2025-2026 ENCORE Learn Directory and on our website at [Encorelearn.net](https://encorelearn.net/). Be sure to thank them for their time, hard work, and dedication.

In the past year our Curriculum Committee has planned and scheduled 25 excellent classes and 6

presentations. I encourage you to attend some classes, they do not disappoint!

The Activities Committee arranged 12 local tours, visiting local museums or historical sites and seeing first-hand the inner workings of local businesses.

Our Membership Committee planned our Annual Meeting, picnic, a program about the history and demise of Bayocean, and our annual Holiday Bash, as well as promoting ENCORE.

We do still need volunteers; it takes a lot of people to coordinate classes and activities. We always need instructors, and most of our committees could use a few more people. If you cannot fill a vacant role, remember we welcome your help with a specific event or project. Volunteering is a great way to connect with others and is very gratifying. Come share your talents!

Thank you for being a part of ENCORE Learn. May your holidays be filled with joy and peace, and may the New Year bring hope.

Sharon Borgardt, President
ENCORE Learn

THE QUOTERY

“There is no end to education. It is not that you read a book, pass an examination, and finish with education. The whole of life, from the moment you are born to the moment you die, is a process of learning.” —
Jiddu Krishnamurti

BOOKS/MOVIES

Stephen King's *The Life of Chuck*, both in the novella (2020) and the movie (2024), is a luminous reminder that even in the shadow of endings, life brims with wonder, humor, and small, miraculous moments. It's a celebration of being alive—tender, strange, and unexpectedly joyful. Dancing is a powerful metaphor throughout. If you are confused at first, remember that the story is winding its way backward, not forward.
— Rodney Merrill

LIMELIGHT

Grandpa's Farm (Part I)

- Marilyn deFreese

Nestled in the gently rolling hills of eastern Kansas, my father-in-law purchased 80 acres of land. Longing for a retreat from his daily routine as Executive Director of the Kansas City, Kansas, YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association), he no doubt nursed memories of his childhood at his Aunt Freeda's farm where he spent many happy hours in his youth.

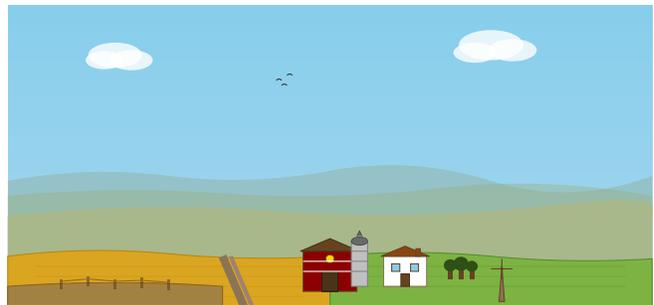
For me, the acreage was a "back to Kansas" paradise after three long years going to school and working in frigid Minnesota. My husband and I were ready for a change of direction in our lives and Grandpa's farm provided the respite we needed. Rumbling into the farmyard in two pickup trucks loaded with all our possessions, we unloaded into the small rustic house, only to find we were to share the space with a family of mice. The owl that hooted through dark trees and the coyotes that yipped and barked through the night must have unnerved my city born and bred partner, yet here was a place we could embrace the full moon, see the milky way, revel in the sunrise and sunset, and rest without the rumble of one vehicle passing our lane.

Wild garlic propagated itself along the old fenced-in yard, wafting its pungent odor into the air if brushed lightly. A row of tall, mature cedar trees stretched across the front yard into a patch of orange

day lilies. A mulberry tree grew near the mailbox.

On mellow fall days, the mulberry hung heavy with berries, enough to tempt us, and turn our fingers and lips purple picking enough to fill a couple pies. Dew berries, the biggest berries I had ever seen, grew abundantly on vines beneath the pasture fence. They were easy to access and pick if one could overlook the occasional long black snake that warmed itself beneath the vines, or the black widow spider menacingly protecting its carefully orbed hideaway, or the sharp thorns hidden along the tendrils. These berries too made wonderful pies.

(Writer's Exchange class) Fall 2025



Blue

-Jean McGonigle

Blue is not the color of forgiveness

But of entitlement, as in:

The New England Gentleman is a
"Blue Blood."

Blue can be sadness without

Reconciliation, as in:

"The Lady Sings the Blues"

Or a longing for an undisciplined

Happiness, as in:

"Blue Skies Forever."

Blue can also be an awe inspiring

Moment that invites tranquility,

As in: a wispy October sky on the

Pacific Coast set between
The bold of sunny September
And the ominous hues of slate
In a pale November.

Then, the color blue
Blends the solitary, as

Shakespeare said:

“Those icicles that hang on the wall
(Where) blood is nipped.”

With a cultural heat, a soulful,
Dixieland lyric as sung by

Louis Armstrong,

“Why Am I So Black, I’m Blue?”

Writers Exchange class) Summer 2024



Spider

-Marylin deFreese

Tendrils of dusty web
Trail across my face,
Braid themselves into my purple jacket.
I didn’t see the orb.
Now its remnants flutter against the breeze,
Strand over strand.

Where is the creator of this work of art?
There, I see her vibrating,
Clinging to the broken web,
Assessing the tornadic damage.
Her carefully crafted garden,
Her garden of bugs, hangs in tatters.

She begins to spin again,
Throwing out threads like spindrift,
Weaving intricate knots,
A perfect knit and perl.
Perhaps her neighbor
Can walk more carefully next time.
(Writer’s Exchange class) Fall 2025



Resident Poet

- Rodney Lewis Merrill

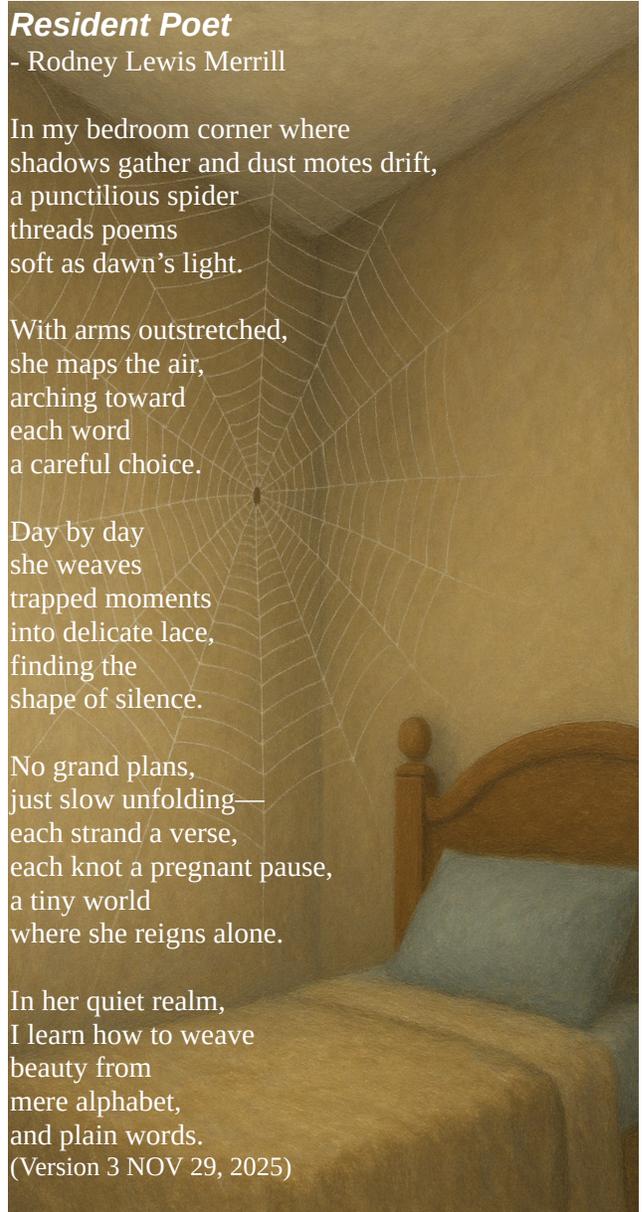
In my bedroom corner where
shadows gather and dust motes drift,
a punctilious spider
threads poems
soft as dawn’s light.

With arms outstretched,
she maps the air,
arching toward
each word
a careful choice.

Day by day
she weaves
trapped moments
into delicate lace,
finding the
shape of silence.

No grand plans,
just slow unfolding—
each strand a verse,
each knot a pregnant pause,
a tiny world
where she reigns alone.

In her quiet realm,
I learn how to weave
beauty from
mere alphabet,
and plain words.
(Version 3 NOV 29, 2025)



**A blue butterfly
Hovers above a white rose;
A small boy moves close.**

Rodney Lewis Merrill

If I could fly

- Rodney Lewis Merrill

If I could fly
like a penguin flies,
I would dive and glide
through a watery sky
instead of dog paddling
and thrashing around,
bobbing and grappling—
ass up, head down.



African Proverbs

- Lynne Ryan

When I left the airport in Johannesburg, South Africa there was a sign which I expected would say something like “Welcome to Johannesburg”... but it really said “Arrive not dead, bullet proof your car.” Somewhat disconcerting, but fortunately, the need for a bullet proof car did not arise.

However, I did encounter many more African sayings and proverbs which were less frightening and more uplifting:

- The rain does not fall on one roof alone.
- To get lost is to learn the way.
- A chattering bird builds no nest.
- He who does not know one thing, knows another.
- You learn how to cut down trees by cutting them down.
- No matter how hot your anger is, it cannot cook yams.
- Even the best cooking pot will not produce food.
- Do not look where you fell, but where you slipped.
- Teeth do not see poverty.
- Coffee and love taste better when hot.
- Knowledge is a garden. If it isn't cultivated, you can't harvest it.

- A child that does not cry will die in the carrier.
- No sun sets without its histories.

And my favorite, called “the spirit of humanity”:

I am because you are;
We are because they were.



Sexy Size 8: Ode to a pair of pants

- Janeen Phillips

Tugging violently at the waistband
I curse the unyielding jeans
Like a temptress, coyly teasing me
“Go ahead. Give me another chance”

The svelte, size 8; the embodiment of my ideal
A badge of honor for battles won
Desserts resisted; second helpings refused
Denim, soft washed to perfection
Faded in all the right places
hint of nakedness beneath

Unique scarlet red stitching
Traces the hip-hugger waistband, pockets and seams.
Sculpted panels of tapered diamonds
emphasize the boot-cut flare

Some jeans are courteous, and give fair warning

They won't allow progress
beyond ample thighs
The sexy size 8 is the acid test of my resolve

Button poised, a quarter inch from the hole
Undaunted, I lay supine, suck in and hold
Red-faced, straight legged, I attempt rise
Too old to suffer for beauty's sake
I reach for stretch pants, faithful, compliant

Optimism and frugality
a dresser full of previous versions of me
Sizes 12 through 16 buried deep in the drawer
A history of hormones, breakups, regrets
Sad reminders of lost control

Defeated, I gently fold the jeans
nestling them below the size 10s
Why do I hold on to that sexy size 8?

Hope springs eternal.

REVIEWS

Cranberry Harvest Outing

- Janeen Phillips

It was fun watching them harvest the berries. What a well-orchestrated operation that was. One man roused up the berries using a machine that looked like a Zamboni grooming an ice-skating rink.

The cute bright red berries, bobbing on the surface, were corralled with long booms and brought to the workers running the conveyor belt that dropped them in the back of a truck. Watching them work, I heard the happy tune of an Ocean Spray commercial in my head.

The museum contained photos and artifacts of the cranberry industry. Lots of yummy food and gifts to choose from in the store.



Photo 1: Harvesting Cranberrues



LUNCH BUNCH

An ENCORE tradition: LUNCH BUNCH.
- Bernie Thomas

Once a month members get together on the first Friday of each month. We meet at different restaurants and ask for individual checks.

If you're a new member please come and join in, it's a nice way to meet other ENCORE members. Promise. We don't bite.

Seasoned members, many of you haven't joined in for a while. Remember how pertinent social contact is to our well-being. A little chit chat. A giggle or two.

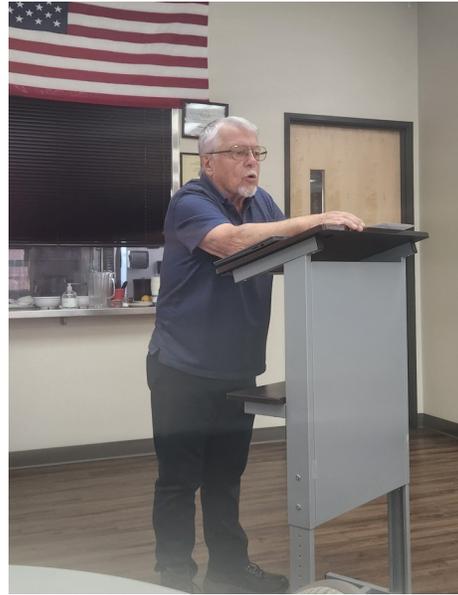
Every month you will receive an email from our prestigious web master, Craig Holt, with an invitation to the next Lunch Bunch. We include an option to RSVP to either Sue Korpela or me; it helps to give an expected head count for the restaurant set up.

PLEASE JOIN US!!



Bernie Thomas and Sue Korpela

FLASH BACKS



Erhard Gross teaching History of English



For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.
“ I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud ” - Wadsworth

Table of Contents

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE.....	1
THE QUOTERY.....	1
BOOKS/MOVIES.....	2
LIMELIGHT.....	2
Blue.....	2
Spider.....	3
Resident Poet.....	3
If I could fly.....	4
African Proverbs.....	4
Sexy Size 8: Ode to a pair of pants.....	5
REVIEWS.....	5
Cranberry Harvest Outing.....	5
LUNCH BUNCH.....	6
FLASH BACKS.....	6
CLASSES SCHEDULE.....	8
Jan 5 to Jan 26.....	8
Communication Across Differences.....	8
Jan 6 to Mar 17.....	8
Writing Exchange.....	8
Jan 9 to Mar 20.....	8
Buddhist Philosophy in China.....	8
Jan 12 to Jan 26.....	9
Architectural History of the North Coast – Selected Topics.....	9
Feb 2 to Mar 16.....	9
Perspective and the Brain.....	9
Feb 6th to Mar 13.....	9
Hurdles in Retirement – Pre and Post.....	9
ENCORE CLASS ACT INFORMATION.....	9

CLASSES SCHEDULE

Arranged by Starting Date

All classes will be held at the Astoria Senior Center

Notice: When you attend an Encore Learn class or event, you are entering a place where photography, video and audio recordings may occur.

Jan 5 to Jan 26 *Communication Across Differences*

Instructors Bernice Moore, PhD and Maureen Balaam, MS

Mondays
2 pm to 4pm
4 weeks

This class will be focused on developing skills for communication and practice of various methods of communication in dyads, triads and whole groups. We will explore basic skills, as well as, dialog conversations and collaborative inquiry.

Classroom

The purpose of the class is to give students the tools to experience the value of successful and meaningful communication with other people, especially those who are different from ourselves; to increase comfort in communicating about things important to them; to be with differences without reaction and with appropriate concern and empathy

Jan 6 to Mar 17 *Writing Exchange*

Instructor Eric Anderson

Tuesdays
9:45am to 11:45am
8 weeks
Online Class @ Zoom

Awaken the Writer Within You!

Join this fun interactive class and share your memoir, short story, poem, or novel and receive kind, constructive feedback.

If you prefer, sharing of your writing and its constructive feedback can be recorded into audio and/or video format for later review by you.

For more information: email the instructor, Eric Anderson, at EricCAnder@aol.com or call (503) 325-3131

Contact instructor if interested: EricCAnder@aol.com

Jan 9 to Mar 20 *Buddhist Philosophy in China*

Instructor Seth Tichenor

Fridays
10am to 12pm
11 weeks
Classroom

The course will look at the story of Buddhism in China from its appearance in the first few centuries of the common era through its dominance under the Sui and Tang dynasties (581CE – 956CE). We will look at the political, cultural and philosophical issues that gave rise to the ideas and practices that emerged in the major schools of Chinese Buddhism.

We will also look at the debates thinkers within these traditions, had with non-Buddhist philosophers. Finally, we will consider the philosophical and cultural legacy that Buddhism left in China as its dominance receded

Jan 12 to Jan 26 *Architectural History of the North Coast – Selected Topics*

Mondays
11am to 1pm
3 weeks
Classroom,
no field visits

Instructor Eric Wheeler
Focusing on the historic and present day Astoria downtown area, the course will present the Louvre, one of the most lavish gentlemen’s clubs in the Pacific Northwest. It was an architectural masterpiece gone but not forgotten. Early salmon canning industry was pivotal to Astoria in early days and we have a remnant of that time with the current Pacifick Distillery which will be discussed.

A review of downtown addressing the distinctive architectural history of Astoria will follow and will recount the Great Fire of 1922 in terms of damage and recovery of important structures

Feb 2 to Mar 16 *Perspective and the Brain*

Mondays
11am to 1pm
6 weeks
Classroom

Instructor Maureen Balaam M.S.

Our ability to perceive is created by our senses and our brain. It has come to the attention of those doing research on the brain’s activity that our brain may be influencing our perception more than we like to think. We use our perception to navigate the world and to make daily decisions. Could it be that the brain decides for us?

We will discover the meaning of perception in the realms of psychology and neurology. We will learn how the brain makes sense of things and forms hypotheses and how that information can be of help or not. We will understand how our brains are a work in progress.

Feb 6th to Mar 13 *Hurdles in Retirement – Pre and Post*

Fridays
2:00pm to 4pm
6 weeks
Classroom

Instructor Thom Allison

Learn about the four phases of retirement and how to “squeeze all the juice out of retirement”. We will address why life transitions are inevitable at any age. We will learn skills to help navigate those transitions and use worksheets to help our progress.

The class will be fun and interactive, filled with practical information and useful ideas to help you enjoy all that life has to offer. This is a good class for those about to retire or those who are post-retirement.

ENCORE CLASS ACT INFORMATION

Encore’s Class Act is published quarterly except summers – December, January & February; March, April & May; September, October & November by Encore Learn (Exploring New Concepts of Retirement Education). Rodney Merrill, Editor 503-298-7776 rodney.merrill@gmail.com. Josh Allison, CCC Liaison, phone 541-290-5989 or email jallison@clatsopcc.edu/clatsop. Next Class Act deadline for submission: Friday, February 6, 2026.

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