



www.tcl.edu/expressions

TCL Expressions Spring 2023
TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

FRONT

Ambriance Lamar,
Cybersecurity Student

TCL Expressions *Spring 2023*

TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Expressions Returns

Welcome to the second edition of *Expressions*, TCL's literary journal, that includes poems, essays, short stories, photographs, paintings, and other works of art from TCL students, staff, and faculty.

With finals and the end of the term fast approaching, you might feel that you're just too busy with some forms of required reading and work and don't have time to "waste" reading and looking at the nonrequired artistic and literary efforts of your fellow classmates, colleagues, and faculty members. If you feel this way, we would propose that it is the ideal time for you to relax, take a break from your day-to-day responsibilities and burdens and peruse the creative reflections and contemplations of life from members of the college community.

A special thanks to all of those who shared their talents and parts of themselves! Thanks to Leigh Copeland and her Marketing Team, Mark Rand and Mindy Lucas, for creatively piecing together the publication and for expert final editing! Thanks also to Rick Ernest for his wise suggestions, advice and guidance!

Hope you enjoy!

Dan Herrin & Russell Keevy
Editors

The Little Flame

S. Frances Tiger, *Computer Technology Student*

My feet could not have pounded the cobblestone pathway faster than they did right at this moment. Smoke darkened the sky above, the scent of burning wood, charred stone walls, and bodies...filled the air. I had to find her, she had to be okay. What would I do if she wasn't? No, I couldn't think like that. The closer I drew to the source of the fire, the more painful the pang in my chest became. I was supposed to protect her. How could their armies have reached this far? No, not an army, I would hear that. This had to be a small regiment, just small enough to infiltrate a town before anyone could realize what was happening.

I was nearly there when I saw her small frame, only about a hundred yards away. I was able to see her perfectly from this distance. She looked fine... Frightened beyond what any four-year-old should be, but...fine. I saw no blood on her, no broken appendages. I saw not one drop of sweat on her brow. Her heartbeat was slightly elevated, but nothing of great concern. What I did see, however, made my heart shatter.

Her darling eyes, that of the bright blue ocean, sun sparkling on its surface...were filled with tears that spilled over and streamed down her little face. They frantically darted around, searching. She was looking for me. My heart was already clenched in my chest at the sight, but my worries deepened as my own eyes drifted down her arms. Engulfing her hands were bright orange flames.

Oh, God...

I continued to run as fast as I could, trying to get to her before anything else happened—before she was further traumatized. She needed me more than she ever had before.

And as I ran, I passed countless bodies, no breath leaving their lungs. They were civilians, enemy soldiers... Women, men, elderly, children... All of them dead; their lives taken away in moments. No longer would they smell a flower, hear a bird's call, taste what life had to offer, see the beautiful sky above...or feel the touch of a loved one. All because I wasn't here when it happened.

"Ahmrih!!!" I called as I approached her. I slid down and scooped her up, hot tears running down my face. How had she even gotten this far from me without me realizing it? I could have prevented this if only I'd been paying attention. "I'm so sorry, baby, I'm so sorry." As soon as she realized it was me, the Flames around her hands dissipated. Her little arms wrapped around my neck. "This isn't your fault, honey, it's mine. I'm so sorry. I should have been here. I'm so sorry." I was squeezing too tight, afraid if I let her go, she would disappear and this would all be an illusion, that my little Ahmrih would be dead, too, just like the hundreds of people strewn on the ground around us.

That was when I realized: I had to let her go. Not just right now, but really, truly... I had to give her up, take her somewhere so far from here that no one would ever find her. It would be the only way she could be safe. The farthest place I could think of to hide her away was a little blue planet called Earth.

She'll be safe there, I thought. No way the Ripper will think to search for her there... Right?

It was the only way. I had to bind her powers and send her away to Earth. If I didn't, they would come for her again, and she would inevitably lose control...again. More bodies would lay around her on some other street, in some other town. If I was going to preserve her innocence, prevent the deaths she would cause...she had to go.

(This has been a prequel to The Phoenix Chronicles book series, by S. Frances Tiger)

Other Shores

Elizabeth Dardes, *Writing Tutor*

Does the northeast wind
blow messages to him?
Does the cumulous air
bring him close to here?

No paths of rippling calm nor maps
must I follow,
but squawks in blue-lit sky's I want
for all my morrows.

No scheduled course or charted straits need I travel,
But a canvas of unknowns with adventures I can channel.

Oceans meeting rivers
and rivers meeting seas
Avenues for journeys
and freedom just to breathe.

Instead I hear the Leach's lure
and feel the need for other shores,

Harbored at this dock
for months without a guide,
I pray for one high tide.



Trains

*Nina Gibbs, Executive Administrative Assistant
& Academic Coordinator, Culinary*



Jazzmyne Weiss, *Administrative Assistant, Arts & Sciences*

LadyBugs

Leslie Worthington, *Director
of Institutional Effectiveness*

They say
Ladybugs are lucky
And clover
Acorns
A Penny found
All so
Tiny
Because luck
Comes in minuscules?

The burden
of life
Briefly mitigated
By a speck of
mythical resistance.

Echoes of Selma

Rick Ernest, *Online Course Coordinator, Clist Center for Excellence*

The Alabama River moved silently beneath the bridge in a wide green swath. As an avid fisherman, I started to get a bit distracted and wondered about the likelihood of catching a thick blue catfish from the waters below. After a couple of selfies, I continued walking toward the center of the bridge with the rest of the group. As I walked, I tried to imagine what it must have been like to be in two columns on the Edmond Pettus bridge on 7 March, nearly 50 years earlier. By contrast, this day was sunny, warm, and beautiful. I was there joining a class on “Leading through Change,” led by my coworker and mentor, Dr. Marcia Ledlow, who earlier that day asked if I wanted to join her class for a “field trip” to Selma.

The bridge rises in a slight grade to a peak near the center. Once we arrived at the crest of the bridge, the group stopped. Joanne, a survivor of the events that later became known as “Bloody Sunday” and our guide that day, reminded us that it was at this point the peaceful marchers realized what awaited them on the other side of the river.¹ These roughly 600 citizens were protesting the lack of voting rights extended to African-Americans. At the base of the bridge’s east side, a large

group of law enforcement officers in gas masks, some on horseback, armed with clubs and tear gas waited for them at the base of the bridge, blocking the entire width of highway 80. The sight must have been terrifying to the marchers, but they continued to move forward. Within minutes, they were violently beaten, attacked with tear gas, and driven back across the bridge.

Ironically, we were under the protection of a police cruiser and associated officer as we crossed the street and made our way onto the bridge’s wide sidewalk. After a brief pause, we continued on our peaceful march towards a box lunch and our bus ride back to Maxwell AFB. Naturally, I shared my experiences that day on Facebook, and thought this would be just another memory recorded in my social media life. That is, until my dad called me a few days later.

My dad and I usually speak to each other about once a week. He served in the Navy and was gone for a significant portion of my childhood, serving aboard aircraft carriers all over the world for months on end. When Dad was home, it was always exciting and the time we spent together seemed to be too brief and infrequent. When I graduated

high-school, my dad took me to the recruiter to start the process of joining the Air Force. I joined during the first visit to the recruiter and began what ended up being a 21-year career as an enlisted Airman and a commissioned officer. My dad was a huge influence on me, as I knew from a young age that I would follow in his footsteps and serve our great nation in the armed forces. On a personal level, my dad and I had our share of disagreements, but never anything too significant. By and large, I looked up to my dad.

My dad and I usually talked on the phone on the weekends, and I usually made the call to him. On this first Saturday after my visit to Selma, my dad initiated the call. While this was not an unprecedented event, it was outside the norm. When I answered with my usual “hey Dad,” he replied with a question: “What were you doing in Selma the other day?” My answer was simple, “I was learning about the events on Bloody Sunday, and I got to walk across the Edmond Pettus bridge.” While his initial question, instead of a “hello” or “how are you doing,” was a bit off putting, I’ll never forget what he said next. “I was at Selma that day. I was sitting on the back of a 1956 Pontiac Chieftain. I saw all those people walking across the bridge; they beat the shit out of those people!” I remained mostly silent on the other end

of the phone, while my dad continued to describe the scene and his reason for being there. He said the group wouldn’t leave when they were told to go away, and the cops went in and beat the shit out of them (he repeatedly used the term “beat the shit out of them” throughout the conversation). I spoke up and said those folks just wanted to be able to vote, and I asked why he was there that day. He told me he was in the fifth or sixth grade, and he and his family heard there was going to be a parade of some kind. Apparently, he wanted to get candy or watch a parade float. During the conversation, I realized this could not have been the case, since my dad had graduated high school in 1967, just a little over two years after the events of Bloody Sunday. When I challenged him on the dates, he said that he wasn’t sure about how old he was, but he repeated that he was there. We spoke for only a few more moments, likely about our respective plans for the weekend or something like that. I honestly don’t remember what I said before hanging up the phone.²

I felt angry after the phone call. Why did my dad care if I was in Selma, why did he feel the need to brag about his presence there, and why did he lie about his age and reason for being there? While I would not agree with the actions of a 16-year-old white kid

in Selma. Alabama, in 1965, I thought he would have admitted some sense of remorse for the way the marchers were treated—especially 50 years after the event. This was not the case. He still holds onto the belief that the actions of the police in Selma were somehow justified. This I can never understand; how does someone who has been around this world multiple times not have some appreciation for other races, cultures, and basic democratic rights?

Aside from my challenge about his age on the phone that day, I have never asked anymore questions. When I hear of people claiming that things are better now, racism is a thing of the past, etc. I disagree. Racism is alive in this country and while some laws have changed and more opportunities are available to people of all colors, there is still work to be done.

In just a few months after the phone call, I was getting ready to retire from the Air Force. My family, close friends, and coworkers would attend the event. My friend and mentor, Marcia Ledlow, was kind enough to officiate the ceremony. The event was a happy one, complete

with jokes about my younger days, good food, great conversations with family and friends, and tearful goodbyes. After retirement, my wife and I moved to Port Royal, South Carolina, and settled into our new life after the military. My relationship with my dad has changed. I no longer see him as a role model to emulate, and I certainly do not agree with his attitude towards race. We still speak often, but the underlying tension around race and racism still exists. I still love my dad, but his underlying anger is still present. For me, the words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. sum up my feelings quite well: “Hate is just as injurious to the hater as it is to the hated. Like an unchecked cancer, hate corrodes the personality and eats away its vital unity...Hate is too great a burden to bear.”³ I just hope that he can find the same spirit of love in the future.

Notes

1. Joanne Bland, Tour Guide (briefing during bus tour, Selma, AL, 12 November 2014).
2. The author's father, telephone conversation with the author, 16 November 2014.
3. Martin Luther King Jr., *Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1968), 66–67.



Sunset Dreams

Jennifer Kassing, *Adjunct Art Faculty*

Nina Gibbs, *Executive Administrative Assistant
& Academic Coordinator, Culinary*

Party for One

There was a small square hanging on the end
of the board at the back of the water cooler.
It said...
Party for one.
It had confetti,
with bright bold lettering that was embossed in gold that stood out.
The address was blank,
the RSVP said “Sophia” with no other form of contact.

Black and White

Here under the monochromatic void, far below,
there’s an unsettling sea that no one can hear.
No one will ever dread below the excess,
and there is no sleep where the future is shallow.
Nowhere can happiness be way below the loam,
where no one will ever find us.
Here under the monochromatic void, far below,
The premise is freshly dug,
And the truth that you refuse to actuality,
assuredly withers away.

Say What

There are so many things that are a part of you
And then they are not.
What once was
Except no one knows.
Just you.
For everyone and
No one



Ambriance Lamar, *Cybersecurity Student*

First in Fright

Morgan Garrick, *Dual Enrollment Student, Bridges Preparatory School*

When I was in the eighth grade, my Junior Beta Club had an opportunity to attend the National Beta Convention. The convention was to be held in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, that year, so, if our club wanted to get there, we would have to take an airplane. Now, let me explain something; at thirteen years old, I was infamously known for being afraid of everything. However, I was particularly petrified of sea creatures and high altitudes. Ergo, you can imagine my distress when I learned that I had to fly on a plane. Though I never expected it, my first time flying on an airplane helped me to overcome a lot of my anxiety because it showed me what a waste of time and energy it is to be afraid.

A few days before the flight, I sat around on my front porch with some friends and family, staring into the night. The dark nothingness allowed my anxiety about flying to come creeping into my brain. I tried to suppress my thoughts, but it was no use. In the background, I could hear the others talking about more serious matters, but the ever-resurging fear of the impending flight forced me to interrupt them. “Have any of y’all flown before?” I asked, whipping around to

face them. “Is it scary? Is it awful?”

“No,” they all responded, and someone said, “But you’ll be fine. People, like, never die in plane crashes.” Then, they resumed their chat, clearly unaware that I was in great distress.

I groaned. Why did someone have to mention death? Were they thinking that I was going to die? I certainly hadn’t considered that a few minutes before, but I did now. I tried to stop the crazy train that was starting up in my mind, but it was already rolling and there was nothing I could do. I seriously regretted bringing it up.

The night of the flight, I lay awake with the new possibility of death lingering in my mind. The plane could crash. It could be hijacked by terrorists. It could spontaneously combust in midair. All of those things were likely to cause death, and, in my mind, they were also very likely to occur. The more I thought about flying, the faster my heart raced. I begged in vain for God to make me get sick so that I wouldn’t have to go, but it was inevitable. I was going to have to get on that plane tomorrow, whether I wanted to or not.

The next day, as predicted, I found myself at the airport. As I drew close to the plane’s entryway, it seemed my

prayer for sickness was finally coming true, but it was extremely bad timing. I turned quickly to my friend and my sister. “I, um, I think I’m gonna be sick, y’all,” I said. “Like, for real.”

My sister objected that I would be fine, and my friend’s face broke into a grin. “It’s good luck if you kiss the plane,” she said, putting her hand on my shoulder. “If we do that, we should be fine.” With that, she bent down, gave the plane a ridiculously large smooch, and leaped inside.

I wasn’t about to put my mouth anywhere near that plane’s exterior, especially after seeing that display of slobbering, so I just patted the doorway gently. I hoped that would appease the luck gods, but it did very little to calm my churning stomach. Luckily, though, a stewardess must have noticed that I did not look very well because she handed me a barf bag once I sat down. I grew more and more nauseous while staring at the barf bag, watching the plane circle the runway, and listening to the lectures of the stewardesses.

Finally, it was time for takeoff. The plane rumbled wildly as it gained speed. I squished my eyes shut as tight as I could and squeezed the life out of my sister’s hand. “This is it,” I thought, shaking. “I’m about to die.”

Suddenly, I felt my stomach drop, and I gulped in as much air as I could. I heard lots of people gasping in awe. I tried to keep my eyes closed, but my curiosity got the better of me. I peeked out of the window, and I gasped, too. I couldn’t help it; the view was literally breathtaking. In that moment, a wave of peace washed over me. “No,” I thought immediately, answering my own question from days before. “Flying is not scary, and it is not awful. Actually, it’s pretty awesome.” My fear from seconds before completely dissipated, and it was replaced by a burst of amazement.

To clear up the mystery, I did not, in fact, die on that flight. On the contrary, it helped me come alive in a whole new way. Those first few minutes in the air helped me realize how wasteful it was to spend so much of my time worrying and being afraid of things. I wanted to be like my friend: devoid of fear and overflowing with so much enthusiasm that I would have kissed that plane. I had let fear steal so much joy and excitement from my life, and I did not want to do that anymore. That day, as the plane grew closer to the ground, I decided I would no longer give fear a say in my life, and I would kiss the next plane I got on.



Rosemary Hunt, *Spanish Instructor*

Missing Part

Chaunasha Brown, *Career Development Student*

My Life has been missing a part. I could not understand why God took you out of my life. My world always collided when you came around; you were my light and my friend all in one. You believed in me when nobody else would. It is sad because your innocence has nothing to do with my broken heart. Your love kept me around because all through those times we had nothing but each other. I prayed that you would come back and forget what we went through and how our love kept me sane.

To this day I do not understand why we went through this stage, but we did, and I cannot get over that we stopped talking and walked out of each other's lives like nothing ever happened; like we never had a close true friendship, and we used to tell each other everything. Now we are a distance from each other, and you found new friends. Every time I look at you, I burst out in tears, but I know I should be away from you for a little while.

I have learned that love sometimes is not enough to keep people together, and sometimes that person is not who we grew up with or the person

we loved and cared about. You and I had our memories of the best time in my life, but I know you loved me and I know that I loved you. My world swirled around you like a sway of leaves surrounding a beautiful tree of roses.

I just want to know why? Why did you stop loving me and became this person I don't even recognize anymore? I know I had my share of the pie in this agreement, but I never in my life decided to blame you for this. The way I looked at you, I knew it was going to be trouble from the start, and I knew that I believed in my conscience, but I did not let that stop me from loving you even more.

You are my one, you are the best friend I could ever ask for in my entire life. But it is over now, you and me. I could not hold back the tears from running down my soft bubble cheeks. You did not care. You believed what all the others told you, but not once asked me "Chaunasha is this true.?" But you were not the one, you were the lesson that I needed to get my life back on track.

Ignorance is not bliss

Ashleigh Keisling, Career Development Student

When heartbreaking images of poverty inspired me to serve the poor and later allowed me to reap true joy from helping, I experienced the untruth of the saying “ignorance is bliss.” Our twenty-first century America, complete with endless conveniences and comforts, often creates a private bubble that smoothly sucks its inhabitants into a state of ignorance. We fail to recall the copious abundance of our blessings compared to a huge percentage of the world. The true tragedy experienced daily by billions of souls in deprivation often slips our mind. Certainly, it is much easier to forget about poverty and suffering because it is a difficult reality, but “easier” does not always mean “more blissful.”

One evening earlier this year, this reality of impoverishment re-visited my forgetful mind. When doing a Bible study on contentment with my family, we watched a couple of YouTube videos that showed us a small bit of the world’s poverty. A solemn and sorrowful sight, we encountered pictures of deceased street children, their thin bodies clothed only in meager rags. The video continued, interviewing an Indian mother who explained how, for hours, she worked away from her two young daughters-just to provide food

for them. Her parents watched the girls in her absence. Financially deprived themselves, their desires to help provide for their grandchildren faced the harsh reality of their incapability to do so. The second video we watched transitioned back and forth from clip to clip, one showcasing the extreme wealth of first-world nations, and the second providing a glance into third-world impoverishment. At one moment, the TV displayed extravagant, smiling, wealthy shoppers carrying bags of merchandise. Following this in contrast, it presented a woman walking down a dusty dirt road, distant from the ubiquitous prosperity I see all around me. Another part of the video showed a half-consumed hamburger being dumped into the trash, even though someone somewhere in the world would hastily and eagerly eat it to satisfy their hunger. As is imaginable, these videos impacted me.

Viewing others’ poverty evoked a clear reminder of just how wealthy I really am. It also served as a “wake-up call” from God to actively use my wealth to help others! Before the video, I already had a desire to sponsor a child through Compassion International (an organization that assists children in poverty). This reminded me of it, and

so I asked my parents if I could look into sponsorship. They encouraged me to pray about it, and that week, I visited Compassion's website and searched for girls in Honduras. After learning about Honduras' poverty in my Spanish class, I especially wanted to help someone there. A few nights later, having prayed about this special burden to God and agreeing with Mom and Dad to split the monthly sponsorship fee, I sat in front of the computer and excitedly filled in the sponsorship form. After completing it, I joyfully clicked the final button that finished the process! I now had a sponsor child!

Learning about others' difficulties provided an opportunity for me to use my resources, be generous, and help. This results today in true bliss—one that ignorance simply cannot produce. In a ripple effect, the financial aid not only provides for the girl I sponsor, but it also blesses her family. Sponsorship helps meet her immediate needs like food, water, clothing, medical care, and more. In addition to this, the Compassion program also enables her to pursue an education and one day a career. Most importantly, it gets to the core of her most pressing, urgent, eternity-changing need: salvation. While poverty in this life is horrible, it merely shadows the excruciating deprivation of a soul without a Savior. Compassion makes

it a point to share the gospel with the children in its program in hopes of leading them to Jesus, who will take care of their spiritual poverty by filling their hearts with His love, affirming them of their value and purpose, and giving them an eternal inheritance in heaven. Thus, knowing that my nineteen dollars a month helps impact someone in so many life-changing ways gives me joy! It also makes me happy that I can not only use my money to help, but I can also employ the Spanish I am studying as I write letters to my new friend. Jesus taught that giving is better than receiving, and I see how the ability to give my money, language ability, work, and time for another person is a gift.

I am learning through this experience that while ignorance seems more comfortable, cognizance of others' suffering followed by action to help them produces authentic bliss. If this bliss is to be ours, understanding the plight of the poor firstly should generate a deep, overwhelming gratitude for our blessings. Secondly, it should drive us to give of our abundance of resources to help those who desperately need it. Once we follow what Christ commands us to do, once we give, once we make a difference instead of just talking about the problem of poverty, we then and there find true joy.



Nina Gibbs, *Executive Administrative Assistant
& Academic Coordinator, Culinary*

Our Blackness

Jamella Renee Taylor, VA School Certifying Official

The evolution of our blackness is filled with caramel, mocha latte, almond butter, blackberry awesome goodness that can never be broken or destroyed. Our blackness has cultivated fields in the blazing hot sun while being ridiculed for the skin we're in. It was our blackness that changed America for the better so we can drive on the busy highways and fly in the high blue skies. The blackness that births generations to never fold and take a stand. The same blackness that revolutionized and modernized the beautiful rhythm that is heard and loved. It was our blackness that broke many barriers even when the world didn't love us, we believed, we recognized, and we

celebrated the culture of our diversity. It is our blackness that are highly educated intellectuals. You know the ones that work tirelessly to build up our neighborhoods. We are entrepreneurs, lawyers, healthcare workers, engineers, educators, politicians, entertainers, motivators, the movers and shakers that change the game. The ones that vow to take on adversity and have everyone remember our names. We are strong, fearless, and ready to always rise up and take no prisoners. We are bold and we never let up. We love deeply and will always stand tall no matter what. That's our blackness and our blackness is us! #HumbleResilience

Driver's Remorse

Elizabeth Dardes, *Writing Tutor*

There comes a time in your life when you are too stubborn or too ignorant to heed the advice of your parents creating a permanent imprint in your mind that occasionally resurfaces every now and again. The summer of '87 after college graduation, I was working at a radio station writing copy. I would park my car in an empty lot in the city and walk four blocks to my building. I loved the freedom of driving, and I drove a lot. Work, road trips, and jaunts with friends put many miles on my car. I was driving my dad's former company car that I had paid \$2,500 cash before leaving for college. It ran well and had been a good car, but I was ready for something new.

Dad decided to help me in my new car search. I'm sure he regretted it after realizing that as a shopper, I was the type that had to know all options available before making any purchase. We careened every new car lot within 40 miles all to discover that I couldn't afford to buy a new car. I should have left well enough alone. It took three months and all of dad's patience, exasperation, and exhaustion before I finally made my choice. Dad suggested a fire engine red Mustang. A Mustang, which to me now, is absolutely beautiful, however back then seemed too sporty. I wanted a more sophisticated car – a European car satisfying my longing for luxury and style. Wouldn't I beguile my friends in a foreign metallic sedan with a sunroof! I spotted such a dream at a used car lot. A silver blue Audi 4000 sedan that I gleefully took possession of instead of that new sporty red colt.

Over thirty years later, dad still refers to that Audi as “Jason,” the monster of horror movie fame. I may have even bought it on a thirteenth Friday. It had more rides on a flatbed truck than miles on its speedometer. Although it was a tank on ice and snow, maintenance and repair were nightmares. Living in the mountains of Pennsylvania, it climbed many treacherous peaks on ice, and kept me safe. But the wear and tear of its earlier life and perhaps lack of attention from previous owners was something I was impervious to. My work commute was over 40 miles one way through the mountains and on the Interstate. I must have knocked on the doors of at least four strangers’ homes throughout those years asking to use their phone after a breakdown. In addition, there was only one mechanic within 50 miles with the expertise and willingness to work on an older German car.

It was painful paying for repairs especially since I wasn’t making much money. What was even more debilitating was driving an unreliable car. Every day was a roll of the dice. The transmission was the last part to go when I had finally had enough. To this day, I have never bought another used car, and again, from the advice of dad, I take extreme care of every car I own. I’ve been driving for over forty years now harboring the memory of that car, the regret of not listening to sound advice, and remorse every time I pass a dreamy Mustang donning a red coat and creamy tan interior. That colt is still a stunner - stylish and sporty with sophisticated flair. How happy that owner must be.

Inked

Russell Keevy, *English Instructor*

I keep thinking I should get an inking.
But why should a 65 year old guy need a tattoo?
If I got one, would I feel 62?
Just a little something on my arm? No harm.
A new age symbol? My wife's name? A portrait of my kids?
One of our dogs' names. All their names? A profound quote?
So many choices; none get my vote.

Ink should tell a story; it should sing;
Ink should recite the life I've authored:
Authentic, non-fiction, auto-biography, true.
Four prominent scars on my arms; three on my legs.
Some old, some new. Some faded from my skin and memory.
Yet they all compile pain, change, truth, desire.
These scars are more deeply etched into my skin,
Into my soul, into me than a tattoo could ever be.



Nina Gibbs, *Executive Administrative Assistant
& Academic Coordinator, Culinary*

Ol' Me and the North Sea

Kim Ribsskog, *Surgical Technology Student*

I don't often wonder what it would be like to look into the future. I have no desire to go to a psychic to have my palms read nor my cards read. If we really knew what was coming, would we make changes? Would we even be the same type of person we are if we knew, in advance, to select alternative B over the uncomfortable option A - the path we opted for that had bigger bumps in it. I'm not sure life would be the same if you could continually take the path of least resistance. Isn't the journey itself as important as the ultimate destination?

After years of dreaming, discussions and planning, the day of our departure had finally arrived, May 19th. Three years before, my husband and I had a meeting of sorts. We would decide, once and for all, if we were going to realize our dream to 'sail into the sunset'. The choices were; should we become long distance mariners, serious sailors (maybe not that serious), live-aboard cruisers, sun-seeking seafarers singing shanties on the wild blue sea, or should we do the responsible, sane thing and continue our careers, living a very comfortable life and stick to recreational sailing in the beautiful fjords of Norway? It was during this first captains' meeting (out of hundreds, as these meetings continue to this day), that we picked May 19th, and some how managed to make it happen.

The last of the lines were untied at dawn and the water bubbled along the water line as we slowly motored out of the harbor of Skudenes. We came around the

lighthouse at the edge of the island, set some sails and pointed the bow west – next stop Scotland. I have written a log since we bought our first sailboat, 11 years before. This day's entry reads: Sunrise was lovely and the anticipation is almost overwhelming.

The North Sea is seldom a flat, calm surface but that first day it was like a mirror. The sails were flapping about annoyingly so we motored a good chunk of the day. Fifteen hours out there was a strong smell of diesel, turns out the diesel filter housing threads had been stripped when the filter was replaced. I was concerned, which is my nature, and I noted in the log: Several birds were following us all day and they seemed to entertain me... one even landed on deck. I felt better for the distraction. The first night was thrilling. Daylight hours are long in northern latitudes that time of year. When the moon came up during my shift, it was so big and bright that I thought it was a HUGE vessel bearing down on us. Silly me. It was so brilliant that night I could have read a newspaper by it.

The second day started calm as well with an average speed of about 4 knots. I believe we walk at about 3 knots. Sailing boats are very different than motor boats. At best, a good gale in the right direction would have you flying along at near out-of-control speeds, but at worst, the wind and tides are against you so you are making no headway or even going backwards. This slow going gives you time to stop and smell the seaweed. We did have some fishing vessels, oil & gas platforms and even a seismic operation to check out. When shooting seismic, the vessel can have cables as long as 3 ½ miles dragging

behind. As with driving on land, there are rules and guidelines you have to follow, especially how close you are allowed to be with platforms and working vessels.

The ocean is an animal all unto itself. It is vast and has a presence of its own. A thick fog rolled in at dusk. Now one would think this would worry me beyond reason but years before I had learned to trust the compass and the radar instead of my woman's intuition. We could hear the desolate wail of a fog horn that came from a platform named 'Rob Roy and Ivan Hoe'. Although the water remained silken, it began to undulate ominously due to an approaching low. We spoke to the caretaker onboard the obsolete platform who confirmed the weather would 'freshen up' on Friday. The Aberdeen Coast Guard confirmed a force 6 gale was expected on the exposed headlands from Cape Wrath, around the Orkneys, to Kinnaird Head. We were 50 nm (nautical miles) northeast of Kinnaird Head. I had the 3 to 5 a.m. shift and the weather began to steadily deteriorate and the seas seriously began to heap up, as I wrote later.

For many hours we were tossed around and the conditions were not to improve anytime soon. We listened soberly to the latest radio forecast when the announcer suddenly says "but what do I care, I'm in the Highlands" [!/?urggh!!]. We were so close to getting out of this tempest (we were later told by a local who had been following our progress, or lack of, that a mile or two south we would have been out of the worst of it). Of course we did not know that at the time and we felt we couldn't afford to rev up the horse power to plow

south because of the rigged fuel filter and the risk losing engine power and what steerage we did have. So, because the conditions were really nasty and our fatigue was bordering dangerous exhaustion we called in the calvary.

The Royal National Lifeboat Institute is a charity, largely based on volunteers, who support and execute all manners of assistance at sea. These lads out of Fraserburgh came out and escorted us to their harbor, where we stayed for five days waiting on the inclement weather to clear. They were great guys and it was an honor to meet them and get to know their town and people.

In the end, I believe in Ralph Waldo Emerson's adage "It's not the destination, but the journey". The lessons learned on our first leg, our first little journey in the greater one, were humbling and considerable. They have continued to help me through much worse storms (both literally and metaphorically) and they continue to help me make decisions today.

In the end we sailed and lived aboard for six years staying mostly in the North Atlantic and the Caribbean Sea. Although most of our travels were amazing, we had plenty of other gnarly experiences but somehow I truly believe that the spanking we received in the North Sea made me better prepared for whatever came next. The first step of 324 nm was the beginning of an amazing 9800 nm adventure. In the grand scheme of things, I believe the voyage and the destination are both worthy of full attention. If I could have seen into the future, I wouldn't have changed a thing.



Nina Gibbs, *Executive Administrative Assistant
& Academic Coordinator, Culinary*



TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF THE LOWCOUNTRY

Beaufort | Bluffton | Culinary | Hampton | Online

tcl.edu

The Technical College of the Lowcountry is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all qualified applicants for admissions or employment without regard to race, gender, national origin, age, religion, marital status, veteran status, disability, or political affiliation or belief.