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The SJSU Emeritus and Retired Faculty
Association

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San Jose State University, Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association

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SJSU ERFA News

REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

- Ever sat in a boat, with your line in the water, and waited for something--*anything*--to happen? See Page 4.
- Or perhaps you've clutched your rabbit's foot while dodging Fiats, Alfas and Maseratis on Italian streets? See Page 5.

A Newsletter of the San Jose State University Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association

A happy Holiday Celebration



Photo by Sebastian Cassarino

Photo by Sebastian Cassarino

Santas rock! At our December gathering, furry red hats were worn by John Pollock, above, and, at left, Gus Lease, standing between Marian Yoder and his wife, Lois.

President's Message

The Retired Person's Neighborhood Watch

By John Pollock

Certainly one way we retired folks can be of service to our community is to be ever vigilant regarding suspicious activities taking place in our own neighborhoods. And if, like me, you are a regular reader of the San Jose Mercury News' *Police Blotter: Reports of Crimes in Selected Cities*, you know that criminal behavior can rear its ugly head anywhere, anytime.

Take, for example, the recent crime spree the *Police Blotter* has reported occurring in nearby Atherton. Within the last few months, no fewer than three heinous crimes evidently have transpired in that city alone. The first report was of a home burglary that resulted in the theft of an "exotic plant." Fortunately,

nothing else was stolen, but just imagine the shock and horror the homeowner must have experienced, arriving home to find that his or her "exotic plant" was missing.

The second "crime" described was that of an unknown individual reportedly knocking on the front door of a residence in that area. That's it. Knocking on the

front door! Where might such frightening behavior lead? Will the good citizens of Atherton soon have to confront someone actually telephoning their home?

And most recently, the Mercury News described the following hair-raising incident. The news account, in its entirety, reads: "A male was reported to be lying on
(Continued on page two)



Friday, April 8

**Spring Event
Filoli Estate**

(See enclosed flyer)

Friday, May 6

**Spring Luncheon
at the Villages**

A Day Of Remembrance

By Nils Peterson (English)

As Poet Laureate of Santa Clara County, Nils was asked to deliver the Invocation to the San Jose City Council on December 7, 2010. His comments may bring back memories to some of us. Here is what he said.

Mayor Reed, Council Members, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel privileged to be here speaking on December 7th, the anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor. I was 8 when it happened. I lived in New Jersey where my father had found a job after some difficult years early in the Great Depression, but on that day, we were visiting Mt. Vernon, N.Y. where my parents, both of them from Sweden, had met in an English-as-a-Second-Language Class. They still had many friends there among the small colony of

Swedes. We had a nice day, but I was looking forward to the ride home because we were going to listen to Jack Benny. We drove through the Holland Tunnel, then turned the radio on, but there was no Jack, only news of the attack and the whole world began a change that still goes on. My father, too old for the army, left a job he loved for work in a factory to help with the war effort. Half a continent away, David King left his wife and the two-month-old daughter who would later become my wife to join the Navy.

Soon meat, sugar, and gas were rationed, (the speed limit was set at 55 if you could find gas) and soon all the windows of all the houses were covered with black shades to make sure light would not betray us to night attack. Wardens strolled the streets to make certain no

glimmer shone through. Soon there were red and white flags in those windows with space for the blue stars announcing this was a house that had sent a soldier, or soldiers, off to war. When the first casualty lists came back, some of those stars changed to gold. And soon the whole world was changed, the great globe at the center of the reading room of the library which had seemed so permanent, each country defined by its own color, became more and more irrelevant. At the war's end, it was as outmoded as the Gatling gun.

In those days, at school assemblies, we sang not only the first verse of the "Star-Spangled Banner," but the 4th which begins:

Oh, thus be it ever that free men shall stand

Between their loved homes and the war's desolation.

It goes on,
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation

Our time too is difficult with its own wars and desolations, but on this day, it is my hope, and I'm sure the hope of all your constituents, that you will be given the wisdom to make choices that will preserve us, a city, a state, a nation, and, yes, more than preserve--the choices that will help us grow in justice, good will, and freedom.

Neighborhood watch

(Continued from page one)
the ground, possibly writing." One can only speculate, with some fear and trembling, about what this miscreant might have been writing. God forbid it was...poetry!

So let us all redouble our efforts, whether we live in Atherton or not, to keep a sharp eye peeled for the goings-on around us. We old folks may well be the best hope for maintaining civil order in today's too-often lawless society.

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Academic Senate and University news

Money, money, money, and the lack thereof

By Peter Buzanski

If there is a unifying theme in this report, it is, unhappily, one pertaining to finances, and nothing herein can make the reader feel good. The major feature of the last Academic Senate meeting for the year 2010 was the annual budget report, which showed that the total amount from all sources of revenue was close to one half billion dollars. Barely one-half of that came from California state appropriations (50.7%), while the rest was derived from tuition and fees. SJSU was budgeted for 21,145 full time equivalent resident students (FTE/S) for the 2010-2011 academic year, a 5.8% reduction from the previous year. In addition, we expect to enroll 1,243 non-resident students, for a total of 22,388 FTE/S. The Administration forecasts that in fact SJSU will only emerge with an actual 21,958 FTE/S for 2010-2011, a small enough difference that should result in no penalties applied by the Chancellor's Office.

One subject that always results in a spirited Senate discussion is the amount appropriated from the General Fund (now renamed "Operating Fund") for Intercollegiate Athletics (ICA). Back in the early 1990s the Senate voted to limit operating fund appropriations for ICA to not more than 2%, and for the longest time this recommendation went unheeded. Figures as high as 5% were devoted to ICA, since football is a high expenditure activity. When Don Kassing served as President, around 2006, he imposed a \$50 per semester student fee increase that was devoted to ICA, and with that stroke of the pen, he successfully reduced operating fund appropriations to ICA. This current year shows that about \$5.5 million, or 2.137% of operating fund sums go to ICA.

Next the Senate was told that the CSU appropriation envisaged by Governor Schwarzenegger's budget is one that SJSU could live with, but was warned that incoming governor Jerry Brown might alter all expectations. And indeed, that shoe was dropped quickly after Brown's installation. The CSU's budget would be reduced by \$500 million, which would amount to close to a \$50 million reduction for SJSU. Chancellor Charles Reed reacted by noting this 18% budget reduction would bring State support for the CSU to the same level that the system had in 1999, when 70,000 fewer students attended. Reed clearly implied that the number of students would have to be reduced at a time when an increase in applications for 2011 is expected. SJSU has already had over 37,000 applications for the fall semester, while our pre-Brown budget proposal goal was to enroll 22,222 FTE/S.

The history of fund raising for SJSU goes back to the presidency of Robert Clark, 1965-69, and it has not been a successful story for many decades. In fact, it was not until the presidency of Robert Caret that fund raising became an important source of income for the university. By that time Fred Najjar became involved in University Development. Fred has been with SJSU for more than twenty-one years, working with Housing Services, Student Affairs, and the Alumni Association before moving to University Advancement. Today he is Vice President for University Advancement and Chief Executive Office of the Tower Foundation, a joint creation of Don Kassing and Fred Najjar. Under Fred's leadership the \$200 million fund-raising campaign was choreographed and implemented,

and as of now over \$125 million has been collected or pledged. One sign of the Tower Foundation's success is that while the SJSU Research Foundation has total revenues of almost \$70 million for the current academic year (with a current fund balance of \$7.5 million), the Tower Foundation, barely two years old, has total revenues of \$25 million, with a fund balance of \$102.5 million. Unfortunately for us, Fred announced that as of March, 2011, he will assume the position of Vice President of Philanthropy for Catholic Healthcare West, "which delivers health services in Arizona, California and Nevada, with headquarters in San Francisco." The University community wishes Fred well, but is sorry to lose the best fundraiser in our history.

At its last meeting, the Senate defeated a draconian measure that was designed to make it difficult for students to apply for a change of major, or to add a second major or minor. This policy, in an attempt to make room for more students, would have forced students who wanted to change a major in their senior year to forgo such changes. But after a lengthy discussion and the offering of various liberalizing amendments, the entire measure was defeated. Two less significant measures were passed—one dealing with the selection and review of department chairs and the other with that of administrators.

The Senate then went into recess—in fact the entire University was closed from December 23 until January 3, thus saving money and utilities energy. The next Senate meeting will not take place until February, 2011.



REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Sharing memories with our members . . .

Morning Catch

By Verle Waters Clark

Verle Waters Clark is a retired nursing educator and Dean Emerita of Health Sciences at Ohlone College. She is also the widow of two SJSU English professors, Lou Waters and James Clark.

(I claim this short story is based on an actual incident. My dad was a fishing guide on Minnesota's Mille Lacs Lake in the 1940s and '50s and I swear I heard him tell this story. My brothers, younger, tell me I'm making it up. Maybe I am.)

The morning sun, now well up over the treetops, was discouraging to the fishermen. When dawn first streaked the sky they had been in high spirits, making modest bets on the first fish and immodest claims about who would catch it. The important sound of their voices sliding over the surface of the water in the quiet half-light had given them pleasure. But now the pool of quarters and half-dollars tossed on the lid of the minnow bucket lay there, still unearned, reflecting the morning sunshine. "Guess we might just as well head back," Bill said. "Bum luck." No one answered; the sun's warmth made their bodies slump with the heaviness of unfinished sleep they had wisecracked away a few hours ago.

Just then a small motor boat came around the island, and the men turned to the sound. Louder than the motor, the song came across the water, "Oh, what a beautiful mornning..." "Somebody's happy," Bill said. Squinting against the sun they watched the small boat twisting carefree S's, bouncing over the loops while listening to the singing.

The song stopped as abruptly as the sound of the motor. The

fishermen sat straight; Bill said what they all saw: "By god, his motor fell off!" The small boat bobbed noiselessly in its own dying wake. "Look, he's fixing a dragline with his anchor on the end," Calvin said. The sleepiness was gone; their own lines trailed in the water untended.

"He'll never get that motor back."

"Well, I don't know. He's pretty close to that shallow reef. Maybe he'll be lucky."

"Hell, he's half a mile from the reef. Water's 20 foot deep where he is."

"By god, I'll bet you that halver I put on the first fish that he hooks her."

Bill reeled in his line, not taking his eyes off the small boat. Its occupant put the oars in place and rowed back toward the place where the motor had dropped. He pulled his anchor up out of the boat and dropped it overboard, playing out the tether until the anchor just touched the lake bottom. Going back to his oars, he rowed back and forth, back and forth. The men watched, re-stating their bets, and arguing about the location of the reef. "Shoot! He's snagged something. You don't suppose that lucky fool..." When they saw the dripping motor hanging precariously on one claw of the anchor, some of the men smiled and shook their heads. Calvin laughed and slapped his knee. Wisecracking again, they distributed the coins on the minnow bucket lid to the winners, who called attention to their judgment about the location of the reef.

"What's he doing now?"

"Putting the motor back in place. Looks like he aims to try and start her. He's drying off the plugs."

"The crazy. He'll never get it going now. Gas tank'll be half-full of

water."

"Bet you a quarter he does."

"Bet he don't."

They talked, two or three at a time, declaring truths about motors, fuel mixtures and spark plugs, setting forth as evidence experiences they had had or said they had had. As the man in the small boat picked up the starting rope and wound it around the motor no one spoke. He gave one hard pull, the screw dug into the water and the boat shot ahead. Above the sound of the motor his song spread again over the lake, "Oh, what a beautiful mornning..."

The men's laughter trailed off after the disappearing boat, and the second set of coins on the minnow bucket lid was pocketed. "Well," Bill said with a smile, "reel in, folks. I expect we'll get a nice mess if we come out again around supper time."

Upcoming elections for SJSU ERFA board

As always, we'll be holding elections to our ERFA Executive Board during our annual Spring Luncheon/Business Meeting on May 6, 2011. There are four positions open for the 2011-12 school year: Vice President (President Elect), Secretary, Member-at Large, and Academic Senator. If you are interested in serving on the Board, please contact any of the members of the Nominating Subcommittee: Dennis Wilcox (denniswilcox@msn.com); Don Keeseey (dkeeseey2@comcast.net); or Gene Bernardini (geebarnard@comcast.net). Any of these folks will be happy to tell you about how the Executive Board operates.

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REMEMBRANCE OF THINGS PAST

Sharing memories with our members . . .

Innocents Abroad: Travels In Italy

By Gene Bernardini (Humanities)

Not long ago, my wife, Genie, and I returned from three weeks in Rome and Florence. The art, architecture and food were impressive as always, but, as usual, the street traffic was the first thing to grab our attention. The noise and confusion in the streets seemed as chaotic and maddening as ever. Cars, busses, scooters and bicycles still speed down narrow lanes while pedestrians step off tiny, crowded sidewalks right into the flow of traffic with little apparent concern. One expects disasters at every turn, yet, despite close misses, we never saw an accident.

After a few days of observation, I gradually began to perceive a method to this madness and a rationale behind the apparent chaos. And by the time we left, I felt qualified to pontificate on the nature of this behavior. I concluded that the phenomenon we were observing is both particular and universal: it is particularly suited to the Italian temperament, and is universally necessary in big cities everywhere.

First, I should explain that Genie is not well suited to the Italian urban environment. On the streets of Rome and Florence, in the shops, markets and busses, she is like a puritan in Babylon. Courtesy, fairness and the rule of law are bred into her American bones. She automatically goes to the end of any line to wait her turn, stops to let other people go first, crosses streets only at designated crosswalks and is simply incapable of going against a red light, even if it's late at night and there's not a car or a cop in sight. Call it "California niceness."

Needless to say, she had

a difficult time in Rome and Florence—especially getting from place to place. She was terrified at the prospect of crossing any busy street, and in these cities all streets are busy much of the time. "C'mon, let's make our break now," I'd shout, pulling her frightened, resisting body across one street after another. At the end of the day we were both exhausted.

I tried to convince her that if she followed the normal rules of courtesy and safety, we would be hard put to get where we were going, or accomplish what we intended. Also, I argued, if Italians did likewise, sheer disaster would ensue. They would be unable to get to work on time and necessary functions would not take place. Services would slow and cease, deliveries would not get made, businesses would shut down and Italian civilization would once again be threatened with collapse.

That's why cars, busses, trucks and scooters can't wait for pedestrians—even those in marked crosswalks. Zipping in front or behind those on foot allows motorists to go freely on their purposeful way. And because pedestrians realize that crosswalks offer no special protection or advantage, they cross the streets wherever they need to. The police pay no attention.

Yet, despite this apparent, random lawlessness, there are certain unwritten rules that all drivers and pedestrians observe. Pedestrians crossing the street fully understand that drivers will speed up to pass in front of them, or slow down to go behind. The critical element is predictability: it matters not how slow or fast a person moves across a street; drivers will make the necessary adjustments. Walkers

simply have to proceed apace. I've seen little old ladies slowly wend their way through oncoming cars without even seeming to look at them. (It's very important not to let drivers know you see them.) The drivers go around pedestrians without incident. It's only dangerous when someone does something unpredictable, like panic in the middle of a street, stop abruptly, then stutter-step before lunging forward or leaping backward. That's when drivers slam on their brakes, lean on their horns and hurl imprecations out the window. It's as if a smooth, whirling waltz has been interrupted by a stumble that takes down other couples on the dance floor. You have to keep the rhythm and go with the flow or bad things happen.

Another kind of dance takes place on the sidewalks. People approaching each other on the narrow sidewalks are forced to pass at very close quarters. One or the other usually has to step off the sidewalk into the street. (In the rain, umbrellas complicate this situation even more.) Passing on the sidewalk sets up a game of chicken to see who will step off first. But Italians seem to manage without either person doing so. As they approach that critical moment when it appears they will inevitably clash, they quickly turn a shoulder and a hip and glide past each other with only a hairsbreadth of space between them, then go smoothly on their way without even breaking stride.

The behavior in the streets says it all. Italians seem to prefer the fast and immediate to the slow and deliberate. They appear to like tension and release, challenge and response. That's why they

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Chat Room . . .

Special News from and about our members.

Edited by Gene Bernardini

This edition contains news about travels and activities taken from the membership renewal forms. Members are invited to send additional news about themselves to Gene Bernardini at geebernard@comcast.net or by snail mail at 775 Seawood Way, San Jose CA 95120.

- **Beverly Waller-Wharton** (Undergraduate Studies, '95), since retiring, has been President of CSEA Chapter 23, which represents over 700 members from various state agencies in the Santa Clara County area. She is also a member of the CSEA's Women's Committee which is planning its annual conference meeting for October 8, 2011, to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the right to vote for women in California.
- **Jo Bell Whitlatch** (Library, 2006) travelled to China in May of last year on a government grant ("Think Globally, Act Globally") to foster collaboration between US and Chinese librarians. She returned in late June to participate in another international conference in Janzhou, China, then went on to tour the fabulous cave paintings in Dunhuang.
- **J. Benton White** (Religious Studies, '92) travelled to New England with his wife, Mary Lou, to view the fall colors, visit friends, and see some Broadway productions. Benton is writing a book on the dramatic changes that have taken place in American Protestantism during his lifetime and how those changes will affect the 21st Century church. A tentative title: "Old Time Religion Ain't What It Used to Be."
- **Patricia Villemain** (widow of Francis Villemain, Dean of Education) writes to thank two SJSU professors for their part in honoring her husband this past February. Prof. Lawrence Quill (Political Science) gave the 2010 Annual Francis T. Villemain Lecture and Prof. Michael Katz (Education) was responsible for establishing the 18-year-long series. Patricia has happily attended every one of the lectures.
- **Lonna Smith** (Secondary Ed,

2002) travelled with her husband Michael to Chicago and Pittsburgh to attend two weddings in July. They also made a trip to New England in late September. Lonna still volunteers as a Deputy Commissioner of Civil Marriages at the Santa Clara County Building and conducts wedding ceremonies a couple of days each month.

- **Fred Schutz** (English, '86) decided in November, '09, to get his aching back fixed. The spinal fusion was a total success, restoring his freedom of movement. This past year he planned trips to the islands off the California coast, then to the Aspen Music Festival in July, and finally, swimming in Hawaii and hiking in Yosemite. "It's great to still be active at the age of 86," he says.

- **J. Michael Sproule** (Communication Studies, 2001) writes, "Betty and I are pretty well settled after returning to California in late 2008." Betty is still doing marketing consulting and Michael is bringing out a new edition of an old book, while starting on a new one.

- **C. Ralph Morse** (Library, '83) considers himself fortunate to live at The Heritage retirement home in San Francisco with his spouse, Joan. Joan is now confined to a wheelchair and has a room in the Nursing Section, while Ralph lives in the Independent Living Section, but they share the same building and spend each day together. They tour the Marina neighborhood regularly and enjoy the beautiful scenery around Fort Mason and Moscone Park.

- **James Willis** (Economics, '98) and his wife, Marianna, took a trip from Sydney Australia to Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand early last year. They spent ten days in Bangkok and Northern Thailand,

then managed to leave one day before the serious disruptions started.

- **David McNeil** (History, 2005) travelled to Iran, Greece and Italy in '09, then returned to Italy in March, '10, for a two-month stay. He and his wife returned home after driving through France to visit old friends in Aix and Paris.

- **Ken MacKay** (Meteorology, 2002) is associated with the University of East-West Medicine in Sunnyvale, CA. He was pleased to witness the first three Masters candidates graduate in June from their College of Tai Chi. Two of the student projects, funded by The Health Trust (thanks to Ken's written proposals), were designed to teach senior citizens, through the principles and practice of Tai Chi, how to prevent falls and reduce the fear of falling.

- **Milton Loventhal** (Library, '92) and his wife Dr. Jennifer McDowell continue to work on extending the reach of their research project in Soviet history. Having authenticated documents stolen by the German Secret Service and housed in the Hoover Institution archives, they wrote an article, "Stalin's Foreign Policy Documents that Shed Light on the Stalin-Hitler Pact," that was published (in July, 2008) in a Russian book. The article is now being translated into German and will be included in a collection of research papers to be published in Germany.

- **Gus Lease** (Music, '93) remains as busy as ever and continues to sing. He was the soloist for the CSEA General Council, the Cal State Supervisors Assembly and Cal State Retirees Assembly. He also sang at the SJSU Fall Convocation, the Negro League Baseball Hall of Fame Exhibit in the

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More Chat Room

(Continued from page six)

MLK Library, the SJSU Stadium Commencement and the History Department Commencement. This past year he was both a panelist and speaker ("Suddenly Disabled") for the statewide CFA Equity Conference. In addition, he's been Chapter President of the Phi Kappa Phi Honor Society and an adjunct faculty member in the SJSU History Dep't. He has just completed his 60th year at SJSU.

• **Jerry Kemp** (Instructional Resources/Education, '88) has just published a book: *Live Healthy at Any Age: The Wisdom of Almost 90 Years*. It covers all the relevant topics--exercise, nutrition, keeping busy and changing old habits--with suggestions for staying active. Published online by Xlibris, it can be found at www.livehealthyatanyage.com.

• **Richard Ellefson** (Geography, '99) continues to do consulting, this time for the Air Force Research Lab at Eglin AFB in Florida. He says it provides the opportunity to visit (by car) different parts of the US. "Who needs foreign travel?" he asks. This past year he and his wife planned to visit the capitol in Montgomery, AL, the campus of "Ole Miss" in Oxford, MS, and Mud Island in Memphis, TN. He says "Our goal is to visit all 50 state capitols in the US. We're now at 36."

• **Mary Lou Peterson** (widow of John Barr, Counseling, '80) says she's doing "nothing spectacular," but enjoys seeing the beautiful display of her garden flowers, which she's photographed "too many times." She enlarges and frames the photos so she can "enjoy the flowers all year round." She's taking "no trips--been there;" instead, she's having fun with her last children's book, *The Hijacked School Bus*.

New Tower Cards: Important News

Nothing ever stays the same!

The University will be issuing newly designed Tower Cards this month, February, 2011, to all emeritus and retired faculty. Previously issued cards will not be valid after March 6, 2011. The Tower Card is necessary for using University Library facilities, for having access to University email accounts and for other campus benefits to retirees, like free parking.

If you wish to obtain this new ID card, don't delay. Contact either Marlene Trifilo at 408-924-1634 (marlene.trifilo@gfwd.sjsu.edu) or Chau Tran at 408-924-2274. Simply provide either of them with your current Tower Card ID number and mailing address, and they will send you a new card with the same photo that is on your current card.

Should you wish to update that photo with a new one, you will need to go to campus to arrange that. Either Marlene Trifilo or Chau Tran can give you specific information about how and where to do so.

SJSU E-Mail Accounts

The University is also making changes in the way we access SJSU e-mail accounts. If you want to access your campus account and are having trouble doing so, go to <http://mail.sjsu.edu>. You'll need your Tower Card ID number and your SJSU One password. To reset your password, go to <http://sjsuone.sjsu.edu>. If you have any questions about this, you can contact the University's H&R Tech Support person, Susan Huang, at 408-924-2853. She should be able to help you.

SJSU students join the San Jose Rep

Beginning last fall, SJSU formed an exciting new alliance with the San Jose Repertory Theatre. A new affiliation with San Jose Rep offers SJSU students the opportunity to work closely with top professionals in the field, observing the art and operations of a professional regional theatre through interaction with members of the theatre's staff. In addition to learning production design, directing, playwriting and acting techniques, at least four SJSU students will act as understudies to the leading actors in three of the Rep's plays this season.

Currently, two Bay Area venerable actors are starring in *The Dresser*, a poignant story of unrequited love and the power of the human spirit in the face of adversity. Then follows *Legacy of Light*, the Winner of the American Theatre Critics Association 2010 "Best New Play" award. Finally, The Rep's 30th

Anniversary season ends with the World Premiere of *Love in American Times* by local favorite Philip Kan Gotanda, a highly regarded chronicler of the Asian American experience. Collaboration with the Rep is now providing SJSU students with a world-class experience in some of the best of American theatre.

Upcoming board elections

(Continued from page four)

In addition to filling these elective offices, members will be asked to vote on the following amendment to the SJSU ERFA's Bylaws. Article X--*Dissolution: Should the SJSU Emeritus and Retired Faculty Association cease to exist, all of its remaining funds shall be given to the Tower Foundation, on the understanding that the funds are to be used only for student scholarships.*

Travels In Italy

(Continued from page five)

don't line up at bus stops, stores, shops or counters. Too boring, too slow. They all want to get in and out, be quickly on their way, and are willing to test their mettle in daily competition with others. It sharpens their reflexes, and keeps things moving.

Urban life everywhere creates the same tendencies, and they occur in all big cities where the pace is fast and people's needs are pressing. The US is no different. Who can forget that scene in *Midnight Cowboy* when Dustin Hoffman slapped the front hood of a New York taxi and shouted, "Hey, we're walkin' heah!"? The rules of courtesy are at a discount when everyone wants to get where they're going, right now.

Lincoln Steffens, the American muckraking journalist, came to a similar, but more profound, conclusion in his later years. He said that big cities like Chicago and New York were actually better off when governed by corrupt politicians and laissez-faire cops than by progressive reformers. The reformers, law-abiding and literal-minded, could not stoop to grease the wheels of a flawed system, a system riddled with all the eccentricities, tensions and conflicting connections of a Rube Goldberg contraption. Their rigid rules kept the machine from operating smoothly and, as a result, they were unable to meet the needs of a badly bent, but still functioning, society. The reformers came and went, and life in the cities

continued much as before.

The Romans and Florentines long ago came to the same conclusion as Steffens. Today people are still breaking the rules to free up the process. By the third week of our sojourn in Italy, Genie began to relax and accept the reality around her. She was finally crossing streets in the middle of the block and was now barely looking at the cars. "I think I'm becoming more Italian," she said. Like young Dorothy in the Land of Oz, she came to realize we were not in California anymore.

Travel, they say, is educational. I believe that's true. What's often not remarked, however, is the loss of innocence that accompanies both travel and education.

SJSU
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News

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