Thoughts on Ma Joad

Susan Shillinglaw, NSC Director

When The Grapes of Wrath turned 75 in 2014, I was asked to write articles about Grapes, and, having just completed a book on the novel (On Reading The Grapes of Wrath), I found myself with nothing else to say. In an antic mood, I wrote something I thought no one would publish, “Ma Joad for President,” and to my utter surprise, The Washington Post did.

In 2018, Ma Joad remains a fine presidential model. And her strength is at the heart of the 2018 Steinbeck Festival, “The Women of Steinbeck’s World.” Slightly revised, here is the Post article:

The family bulwark, Ma Joad keeps the Joads rolling along Route 66 and beyond. Ma is a feminist—feisty, strong, loving, resilient—and the kind of leader, then and now, who might steer the nation’s jalopy through difficult times. “Woman got all her life in her arms. Man got it all in his head,” she says late in the book. “Man, he lives in jerks—baby born an’ a man dies, an’ that’s a jerk—gets a farm an’ loses his farm, an’ that’s a jerk. Woman, it’s all one flow, like a stream, little eddies, little waterfalls, but the river, it goes right on. Woman looks at it like that. We ain’t gonna die out.”

When John Ford’s 1940 film was released, the film’s promoters urged theaters to sponsor a contest: “Every woman can appreciate the great human problem that faced Ma Joad,” they said, urging local newspapers to offer prizes “for the best 200-word letter on this subject: How can a mother help keep a family together in the face of adversity?”

Might a Ma Joad keep a nation together as well? Model ardent...
Meet the strong, assertive, creative women surrounding John Steinbeck — impacting his world, influencing a nation, still inspiring us today. Join us! 37th Annual Steinbeck Festival

TICKETS for all events can be purchased at steinbeck.org or by calling 831.775.4721. Please purchase TOUR and BANQUET tickets in advance.

Their stories are our stories.

**FESTIVAL SCHEDULE**

**FRIDAY, May 4, On Cannery Row in Monterey**

Tour: 9:30-11:30: “Steinbeck in Pacific Grove” 11th Street Steinbeck house + Trotter Galleries, “The Artists of Steinbeck’s World” (meet on bike trail, 11th and Ocean View.)

Tour: 10:00-11:00: Ricketts’s Lab Tour, co-sponsored by the Cannery Row Foundation (meet at Lab.)

Tour: 11:00-12:00: Ricketts’s Lab Tour, co-sponsored by the Cannery Row Foundation.

FREE Film: 12:15-1:15: Street of the Sardine, Eva Lothar (InterContinental, The Clement Monterey, Cannery Row.)

**FRIDAY, May 4, Hopkins Marine Station Boat Works**

120 Ocean View Blvd, Pacific Grove

(One day ticket is $30. Please do not park in Hopkins lot.)


2:00: Steve Palumbi, Professor of Biology, Stanford University, Hopkins Marine Station, “The Women Who Re-built Monterey Bay.”

2:45: Stuart Chase, Director, Monterey Museum of Art, “The Year of the Women in Western Art.”

3:15: Gavin Jones, Professor of English, Stanford University, “Fiction in the Lab: Steinbeck’s ‘The Snake’ and the Short Story Tradition.”

4:00: Dixie Dixon, married for 15 years to Dorothea Lange’s son, Daniel: “Universal Language: Dorothea Lange, Photographer.”

4:45: Susan Shillinglaw, Director, National Steinbeck Center, “Wit and Whimsy: Steinbeck’s Three Wives.”


Advanced tickets only—Friday ticket holders OR reception ticket.


**SATURDAY, May 5, in Salinas**

Tours: 8:45-10:00: “Olive Steinbeck’s World,” Tour of Historic 1868 Harvey House and RR museum (meet at NSC.)

3:15: Kate’s Walk: Tour of Downtown Salinas with John Mahoney (meet at National Steinbeck Center.)

9:00-10:00: Archive Highlights in the museum. Coffee in museum.

9:45: Susan Shillinglaw, Director, National Steinbeck Center, “Steinbeck’s Sisters.”

10:15: Mimi Gladstein, author of The Indestructible Woman in Faulkner, Hemingway and Steinbeck, “Maiden, mother, crone: Steinbeck’s Tripartite Female.”

10:45: Bill Souder, Steinbeck biographer: “Steinbeck’s Literary Agents: Elizabeth Otis and Annie Laurie Williams.”


11:00-4:00: Steinbeck’s Home Brew Fest, sponsored by Salinas Steinbeck Rotary Club, 100 Block of Main Steet, Oldtown Salinas. Brew Fest Tickets: $15 for NSC Festival Pass ticketholders. www.steinbeckrotary.org.

12:15-1:30: Taco lunch at the NSC OR “Olive Steinbeck’s House: The Wanderers Club” Special luncheon at the Steinbeck House. 132 Central Ave, Salinas. Presentations by Donald Kohrs and Susan Shillinglaw. $25 tax and tip included.

2:00: Brian Duchany, Ph.D. candidate, “Two can play at that game...”: Steinbeck’s Wartime Women and the Creation of the Literary Mistress.


4:30-5:30: Book signing and wine. Dinner on your own before 7:30 Of Mice and Men production.

6:30 reception at Western Stage for Festival 3-day ticket holders.

7:30: Of Mice and Men, a Musical Drama and Dramatic Reading Adapted in 1958 by Ira Bilowit and Wilson Lehr, directed by Jon Selover. West Coast Premiere, The Western Stage, Hartnell College. FREE.

**SUNDAY, May 6, National Steinbeck Center**

1 Main Street, Salinas

Tour: 9:30-11:30: Red Pony Ranch. Meet in front of the NSC. Tickets must be purchased in advance. Tour led by Susan Shillinglaw.
**FESTIVAL SCHEDULE, CONTINUED**

10:45: Story teller Graciela Serna-Nutter and Anzar High School students with Linda Bynoe and Jennifer Colby, Partners for the Advancement of Teaching. "Telling Women's Stories: Ascension Solorsano, Toyupina, and "The Pearl's Juana."

Teaching "The Pearl" curriculum project is funded by a grant from the Arts Council for Monterey County.

11:30: Rose Marie Beebe and Robert M. Senkewicz, Professors of Spanish literature and Professor of History, Santa Clara University, "Testimonios: Early California through the Eyes of Women, 1815-1848."

12:15-1:30 Pizza lunch and panel, organized by Ignacio Ornelas Rodriguez, Female fieldworkers and organizers, "Mujeres Campesinas y Huelgistas."


3:00: Workshop on "Girl Power, Women in Tech," sponsored by Digital Nest, coordinated by Miguel Lozoya Burciaga

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**Thoughts on Ma Joad, continued**

engagement? Understand men and sons whose careers have been sidelined, like Pa Joad’s, like Uncle John’s? Ma pulls folks together, listens, counsels. As her clan slips back, she leans in. There is a bit of Steinbeck’s own fierce mother in Ma. And there is some of Steinbeck’s first wife, Carol Henning, in Ma—Carol who “willed” *The Grapes of Wrath* into being (as the dedication, in part, reads). Initially more politically engaged than her husband, Carol nurtured the partisan fervor of *Grapes.* It was she who urged John to write a novel about the migrants late in 1936, after his journalistic series, “The Harvest Gypsies,” was published in the *San Francisco News.* It was she who typed and corrected the manuscript, she whose presence was indispensable throughout 1938, as he wrote the book in 100 working days. And it was she who came up with the title from opening lines of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

It seems fitting that Steinbeck would choose this Civil War tune with lyrics written by a woman (Julia Ward Howe) that were adapted to the masculine battle cry “John Brown’s Body” —a woman symbolically leading Union troops toward Shiloh two months after her lyrics were published in Feb. 1862. This inherent feminism permeates *The Grapes of Wrath;* one cannot escape Ma leading the troops toward California.

Ma Joad is a fervent believer, not a pushover. When the Joads’ truck breaks down on the way to California—a family crisis—Tom Joad suggests that part of the family head on to California to find work. Wielding a jack handle, Ma tells Pa and her men that they can “whup” her, but she won’t split up the family. And if they somehow make her go to California and leave Tom Joad suggests, “You git upright,” she tells her self-absorbed daughter. “You jus’ been mopin’ enough. They’s a ladies’ committee a comin’, and the fambly ain’t goona be frawny when they get here.” She counsels Rosasharn again and again on the importance of dignity and pride: “Jus’ shut up an’ git to work. You ain’t big enough or mean enough to worry God much.”

Wealth in the hands of a few is inconceivable to the Joads and their companions. When told that there’s a “newspaper fella near the coast, got a million acres,” Casy is incredulous. “What in the hell can he do with a million acres?” Considering that near the coast, got a million acres, “Cas is incredulous. “What

Ma Joad, 1940 Russian Grapes

Ma's America would be diverse. When a border agent dressed like a Nazi threatens her in Needles, California—“We don't want none of you settlin' down here”—she picks up an iron skillet: “In my country you watch your tongue,” she snaps. He snarls back “….we don't want you goddamn Okies settlin' down.” Ma has never heard the word before, as a slur, and she is stunned and hurt. But she doesn’t crumple.

In a stark economy, Ma Joad notes the importance of generosity: “I never heerd tell of no Joads or no Hazletts, neither, even refusin’ food an’ shelter or a lift on the road to anybody that asked,” Ma tells the preacher Casy and her assembled family at the beginning of the book.

Ma is a patriot, proud of her Okie heritage. She can’t abide whiners, male or female. Throughout the novel, she checks her daughter Rosasharn’s misery after Connie, her husband, abandons her. “You git upright,” she tells her self-absorbed daughter. “You jus’ been mopin’ enough. They’s a ladies’ committee a comin’, and the fambly ain’t goona be frawny when they get here.” She counsels Rosasharn again and again on the importance of dignity and pride: “Jus’ shut up an’ git to work. You ain’t big enough or mean enough to worry God much.”

A 2018 President Ma Joad would fire up the country with collective energy. “Maybe if we was all mad in the same way,” Ma offers to Tom when he first comes home. Ma’s notion of the American spirit might be students protesting guns and teachers wanting fair salaries. As she puts it “If you’re in trouble or hurt or need—go to poor people. They’re the only ones that’ll help—the only ones.” Pulling together is the Joad way.
A full century has passed since the “war to end all wars,” World War I, ended on November 11, 1918. John Steinbeck was 12 years old when the war started and 16 years old when it ended. WWI plays a prominent role in East of Eden.

In honor of this year’s Steinbeck Festival, “The Women of Steinbeck’s World,” this piece looks at the news, achievements, and lives of women in 1918: historic “firsts, the effects the War on daily life, and the ways that women contributed to the war effort. All stories were found in The Salinas Daily Index, available on microfilm at the Salinas Public Library.

On December 11, 1917, Katherine Stinson made a record setting flight from San Diego to San Francisco, reported on January 2, 1918. Her solo flight lasted 9 hours, 10 minutes over the 610 miles between the two cities. After this flight, she told Capt. J.W. McClaskey that she wished she were a man, so that she could enlist in the Marine Corps. Undeterred, she tried to persuade Congress to pass a law allowing her to enlist. Her efforts were unsuccessful.

On January 4, 1918 the paper announced that Monterey County was the first county in the state to hire a permanent school nurse, Beatrice Woodward, who would travel the county, visiting all schools. In an effort to make the experiment permanent, the Red Cross and County school children sold Red Cross seals during the holidays to raise the money for the nurse: 75% of proceeds went to the nurse’s position, 25% to a fund for the prevention and cure of tuberculosis. The hope was that the advantages of a school nurse would be clear after the first term, encouraging Monterey County to make the position permanent and take on the responsibility of paying for the position. The measure was fully supported by the County Superintendent of Schools, George Schultzberg, who believed that the nurse would identify children’s ailments that would otherwise be ignored.

February 4, 1918 The first women called for jury duty reported to the superior court on February 4, 1918. County Clerk T. P. Joy drew 35 names, on the order of Judge J. A. Bardin, and fourteen were women. Six of those women were sworn in as the first female jurors in Monterey County.

On Friday, January 4, 1918, The Salinas Daily Index published a reminder for members of the Red Cross to pick up their personal supply of yarn on Tuesday, when a shipment of several hundred pounds was to be delivered. The article calls on the women of Salinas to make it their 1918 resolution to “knit, knit, knit!”

Mrs. Steinbeck—in life and in East of Eden—dedicated herself to selling war bonds. A young Salinas woman, Bessie Seibrant, enlisted as an army nurse, following her two brothers, who were already fighting in France. The article notes that this would deprive George Seibrant, father of the three, the company of his children for the duration of the war.

January 14, 1918 Of course, war shortages impacted Salinas. Effective on January 14, 1918, Salinas Steam Laundry and Domestic Laundry raised prices for starched work and overalls, due to the war’s effect on the price of supplies. The required fuel oil that cost $0.90 in 1917 rose to $1.75. Soaps that were $0.04 rose to $0.15 and bluing agents that were $2.75 per pound cost nearly 10 times as much at $25.

Food shortages were another reality of the war. Mrs. Richmond Wheeler of Salinas was appointed a director of food administration for Monterey County and her responsibilities included helping Monterey County women comply war rationing-restrictions on eating meat, wheat, fats, and sugar. Americans were encouraged to eat perishable fresh fruits and vegetables, impossible to ship overseas. Herbert Hoover earned the nickname the “Great Humanitarian” for these efforts in his role as head of the American Relief Administration.

The end of the war was announced with great fanfare in Salinas; businesses closed and a parade was planned. Wartime restrictions were lifted on the sale of flour (during the war, fillers were added to flour–rice, rye, and potato).

In November, the 1918 influenza epidemic hit Salinas. Reported on November 15, 1918, the women of the Red Cross chapter of Salinas opened a hospital on the upper floor of the Armory at the corner of Alisal and Salinas streets. Mrs. George E. Lacey, vice president of the chapter, put out the call to all women who had completed the course in home care of the sick to report to her at the hospital. Although the facility opened with only two patients, the expectation was that it would soon be overtaxed.

Thanks to Karen Steadmen, who found this selection of articles.
Sonya Noskowiak Photo Of Steinbeck Firmly Dated

The iconic photo of John Steinbeck by Sonya Noskowiak has now been firmly dated to 1935 by Leslie Squyres at the Center for Creative Photography (CCP) in Tucson, Arizona. Responding to a query by the author to locate the original Noskowiak negative in the CCP, Ms. Squyres researched the Center’s file and found the negative envelope labeled “May 1935” in the Center’s archives this past January. The new date now revises the presumed dating of “c.1940” currently in use by the Steinbeck Review and other scholars for the famous photograph. The Noskowiak photo shows the young Steinbeck, aged 33, sitting cross-legged with khaki pants and a leather smoking jacket wearing a black jersey and his hands resting on the armchair, staring straight into the camera with high combed hair in a studio setting. The bent angle of Steinbeck’s left knee, draws the viewer directly to his black jersey and determined face, creating a formidable portrait of the emerging writer contemporary with the publication of Tortilla Flat in spring of 1935. The studio portrait was one of a series of six, likely requested by Steinbeck’s publisher Covici-Friede in New York for the new novel.

In May 1935 Sonya Noskowiak (1900-1975) was a young photographer who had just opened her own portrait studio on Union Street in San Francisco. She was part of the founding members of modernist photographers who had formed the f/64 group with Ansel Adams, Imogene Cunningham and Edward Weston in Carmel, California. Noskowiak was born in Leipzig, Germany and had moved with her family, first to Chile, then Panama and finally to Los Angeles in 1915 following her father’s career in horticulture. In 1919 the family moved to San Francisco and became part of the art community in the Bay Area. There she met Johan Hagemeyer, a Dutch horticulturist and photographer who taught Sonya studio portraiture and landscape studies. It was through Hagemeyer that she met Edward Weston and became his studio assistant and lover in Carmel. When the relationship dissolved in 1935, Noskowiak moved back to San Francisco and established her own portrait studio in early 1935. Noskowiak had already developed a reputation for striking portrait work; among her early subjects was Martha Graham, the modern dancer, as well as Zohmah Day, later the wife of Jean Charlot, the Mexican muralist and friend of Diego Rivera. The Steinbeck portrait is likely among the first of her new San Francisco studio, although how he came to select Noskowiak is still an open question.

The Noskowiak studio series is first documented on March 6, 1937 in Time magazine for a book review of Of Mice and Men. The Time photo is a close-up of Steinbeck without credit, but recognizable by the leather jacket, black jersey and high combed hair from the 1935 session.

A second series of Steinbeck portraits is also documented by Peter Stockpole at some point in 1935 or early 1936 in an informal session at Steinbeck’s home in Pacific Grove showing Steinbeck smoking and sitting in his living room. Stockpole later worked for Life magazine and became well known for his photography during World War II. However, it is the 1935 Noskowiak portrait of John Steinbeck that has become the recognizable image of the author, and now understood to be a portrait in his youthful California career before The Grapes of Wrath.

BOOKSTORE
Lively sales in NSC bookstore

Yisel Chavarin and Maria Almanza, Sales Associates

The Steinbeck store has been improving sales in the past months; items that have been popular selling have been bookmarks, magnets, and most importantly the range of different books that John Steinbeck has written. We have to order more. We also now provide an online bookstore located on the NSC website for customers that have interest in purchasing any items of Steinbeck. Items that the online store offers include shirts, handmade soaps, key chains, and mugs. Now that the Steinbeck Festival is approaching, popular items that people really look forward to are John Steinbeck’s books, so our shop is great because we provide a variety of books from children’s books to adults to choose from.
Ed's memorial was held on March 10 in Tiberon, near the shore. My memorial comments are below. Ed's daughters, Katie Rodger and others spoke as well.

I don't think I ever talked to Ed, starting in 1989, without learning something new. “I told you about the night that they put Carol [Steinbeck's] name in lights in front of the lab...” Ed said once. “No! When was that?” And a story unfolded—John Steinbeck had promised Carol that he would put her name in lights once he became famous. With “Carol's Place” over the Ricketts's lab, everyone assuming the lab was a brothel.

“I liked Carol,” Ed Jr. insisted when I was working on her biography, leaning heavily on him for facts and sketches of the lab group. “Carol took me to a recording studio in San Jose—maybe in 1940—and made a record” of Ed playing his trumpet (what a kind gesture). Ed had a wonderful memory, a sharp sense of humor, sensitivity, curiosity, and great kindness. He knew his life was a book many wanted to read, and he turned the pages graciously, with so many of you here.

I wanted to hear about his life, all of it, and over the years, as we met, I learned more and more. Ed didn't tell you everything at once; indeed, he told me something new the last time we met, in December, laughing merrily at his secret.

Ed moved into his father’s Cannery Row lab in June 1938, when he was 14. I wanted to know what that was like, thinking of my own son at 14: “We were more like two brothers than father and son...we loved to talk. Big complicated conversations about how far away the moon was.”

“I did not pal around with kids my own age. I was kind of like a mascot, Little Ed, Young Ed. I was shy...Between the dining room table and Encyclopedia Britannica was my corner.”

Sometimes young Ed played jazz for the group. “I had 600 records, all 78s. That's the only way I could participate.”

I learned important parenting lessons from Ed. He told me once that during World War II “I was going to collect scrap iron and sell to the Japanese. I worked out how to get pieces of rail tracks up out of the Bay to sell the metal. I figured I could use empty 55 gallon drums and pull the metal to shore—then I could get up to the lab to sell.” Ed didn’t discourage his son—although he knew the oil drum pulley system wouldn’t work. “That’s an interesting idea,” he said to me. And he sat down at his typewriter and wrote out ‘impractical idea.’ But Dad never turned me down. Would write on typewriter, ‘I learned a lot from my son...’”

“Dad never said no but tried to reason with me... I ruined the roof when building a cage. But he didn’t tell me not to do it.”

Volunteering at Elkhorn Slough

David Butler, Director of Finance and Administration

I am David Butler the Finance Officer, and since I am a part time employee at National Steinbeck Center I look to other nonprofits to volunteer my time. One of my favorite outdoor activities is documenting green algae concentrations at Elkhorn Slough. The algae blooms grow on the mud bottom and can only be observed and measured during very low tides when most of the water has flowed out to the ocean. This exposes the mud bottom from which we collect data over specific grids at several locations. The algae feed on nutrients in the water which come from the rain and agricultural run-offs. Significant algae concentrations are harmful to fish and oysters as they reduce the oxygen levels in the water.
Tara Spada, Programs and Exhibits Coordinator

On Monday, March 5th at 7:30 in the morning, a line of excited parents and sleepy-eyed 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students turned over their backpacks and checked-in to the 15th Annual Steinbeck Young Authors Day of Writing.

At 8:30 AM sharp, 108 pencils scurried on paper, 216 hands flipped through thesauruses, and 108 brains worked with gears churning. That was the view of the writing room after students filled up on breakfast and began to write their first drafts.

Seventeen different schools from all over Monterey County nominated their most promising young writers for this day. After several months of curriculum and reading Steinbeck’s The Red Pony, students were ready to write. While prompts change every other year, this year’s two prompts asked students to either write a compelling argumentative essay on who was the better father figure to Jody or to discuss a theme while comparing examples from the novel with their own life experiences.

The students’ day allowed them to write first drafts then break for a morning filled with engaging activities. They met cowgirl Amanda Gianolini, from the California Rodeo Salinas, who taught them the history of ropes and roping as well as animal handling. The SPCA brought a pony and discussed horse care. At another station, Alfredo Avila got them moving with an exercise in telling stories with movement. Terrence Gargiulo helped the students expand their storytelling toolbox, and Susan Shillinglaw led the groups through the exhibition hall to deepen their understanding of Steinbeck’s own literary accomplishments.

After the five rotations, the students were ready for lunch with their writing coaches. Students were paired with dedicated and supportive local volunteers from all over the community—and abroad, a visitor from France volunteered. Coaches came from a range of professions: students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, and even a merchant marine!

Writing coaches play an integral role during the day. They help edit students’ papers without rewriting papers for them. No easy task! They encouraged students to read their papers out loud, draft outlines, brainstorm, and check for spelling and grammatical errors.

Coaches noted that the toughest aspect of their job was to edit and critique students’ papers without deflating the students’ confidence.

The Day of Writing celebrates the rewarding task of communicating important thoughts and messages through writing. It’s a day of building up young minds that have distractions aplenty but mentors a-few. Most of all the Day of Writing builds community and trust between some unlikely pairs to help accomplish a single goal: improve writing skills, one paragraph at a time.

Our young authors’ essays are judged by a panel of expert writers. Final awards are announced at our Award Ceremony on Saturday, April 28th at 1:00 PM at the National Steinbeck Center. Coaches, students, and students’ families are invited to attend the award ceremony to congratulate and celebrate the hard work of all our participants. Winners will be awarded according to skill-level based categories. There will also be an honorable mention.

Please join us at the April 28th Awards ceremony, where Oscar Ramos, 3rd grade teacher featured in East of Salinas, a PBS film on challenges youth face in East Salinas, will be the keynote speaker.
More Light on The Moon is Down

Lisa Josephs, Archivist

In April of 2017, I greeted two journalists from Denmark: Poul Husted, Travel Editor for Politiken, a national newspaper in Denmark, and Lotte Malmgren, Digital Editor for Samvirke, Denmark’s largest monthly magazine.

I showed them a Danish translation of The Moon is Down from the Kenneth and Karen Holmes Collection of Foreign Editions, donated that year. During World War II, this novel was illegal to own in Nazi-occupied areas, including Denmark. Despite this, Danes illegally translated, typed, and copied the book for clandestine distribution. The copy in the Steinbeck Collection is one of these illegally produced copies, mimeographed pages from a typed original, plain cover, and bound together with staples.

Poul and Lotte clarified the last page of the text, clearly not part of the novel. It has underlined headings with a small paragraph under each. Poul and Lotte explained that Denmark did not offer much military resistance to Germany’s invasion, as a small country with a large, militarized neighbor. Since it was deemed a “model protectorate” by the Nazi regime, it was allowed to keep a provisional government through most of the war. This last page lists a description of the positions of the various wartime Danish parties. The book thus served two purposes—a narrative of resistance and was a way to disseminate useful political news.

On Sunday, March 18, 2018 Poul published a piece about the National Steinbeck Center in the Sunday edition of Politiken. Established in 1884, Politiken has the largest circulation and highest readership of any newspaper in Denmark. Poul describes the newspaper as “a social liberal newspaper and you could call it the New York Times or the Guardian of Denmark.” Poul describes Politiken’s readers as “…very well educated and travel on average six times a year and spend 6 billion kroners on travelling yearly.”

Poul mentioned that he has had some interesting responses to the article. Readers sent Poul emails about their own copies of the manuscript and one sent a photo of his Danish manuscript of The Moon is Down. The most interesting email, however, came to him from psychologist and writer Eva Theilgaard Jacobsen. Her father, Jørgen Jacobsen, translated The Moon is Down into Danish. He was a member of the resistance movement that was active throughout the war. His girlfriend (later wife) also played a role in the work: she typed the manuscript on a typewriter smuggled out of her workplace, at a watchmaker’s. After the war, he became a defense lawyer until his death in 2016 at 97 years old. He wrote about his work in the resistance and translating the manuscript in his memoir, Live While You Live. Today, Eva Theilgaard Jacobsen still has the original translated manuscript of The Moon is Down that her father worked on.

Top: Danish Moon is Down sent in by reader, Bo Geertsen, with 2018 article
Middle: Last page of NSC’s Danish Moon is Down, listing political parties and platforms
Bottom: Poul Husted’s 2018 article in Politiken
Steinbeck, Citizen of the World

Recent emails to Susan Shillinglaw

Subject: Photo Exhibit from Italy: “In the Footsteps of Tom Joad”
From: Daria Addabbo

“You asked me why The Grapes of Wrath: I think John Steinbeck is the most contemporary of the great American writers. You read his novels and it’s like he’s telling the present, both of America and Europe, like a reporter. The drive for a better life of humans, the resistance, the resiliency of his characters and his families really tells as much of his America as of our present. Of course, as a photographer I’ve always been fascinated by the United States and how they are always on a thin line between myth of great novels, of movies, of music, and reality. I like the tensions between moments when reality feeds the myth and others when reality contradicts the myth.

This is our American work: [www.dariaddabbo.com/sulle-tracce-di-tom-joad-2/](http://www.dariaddabbo.com/sulle-tracce-di-tom-joad-2/)

We tried to capture the mood and the political mindset of the population on the eve of the 2016 presidential election. We made a coast-to-coast road trip like a ‘scalpel cut’ on the belly of America. We travelled the country on Greyhound buses, away from the spotlight of political rallies. The reportage began in New York on September 11, the day of the fifteenth anniversary of the fall of the Twin Towers.”

Subject: Film from Germany: “John Steinbeck Tracing Steps Books”
From: Martha Schorn

Martha wrote to me: “I’m a non-commercial filmmaker and produced last year a movie about John Steinbeck and his roots here in Germany. I wonder if you might be interested in my little film which you can watch under this link: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhqfJvhQV_g&t=3s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhqfJvhQV_g&t=3s)

She later expanded, after I asked how she came to make the film:

I’m filming since at least 40 years, but really started to dig deeper in this hobby when I retired. I do send my movies to competition festivals and do not always win first place, but yeah it happens. Well 10 years ago after my dad passed away, my mom started to travel with me to meet my/our long time friends in Olympia,WA. By that time my mom was 81. Anyway she liked it so much and told me that she wants to see it all. Since then we two girls travel once but sometimes also twice a year to North America. In 2017 I took my mom to Steinbeck Country to show her the places. I did shoot some video footage not really knowing what I could use them for in my movies. Back home in Germany when I was doing some research for another movie, I came across a paper that said: Steinbeck’s grand father is from Heiligenhaus. Wow Heiligenhaus is a 20 minute drive from Düsseldorf where I live. I got into my car and started to find that place. Luckily I did and even became acquainted with Elizabeth Grosssteinbeck. I asked her if I could film that place where Steinbeck’s grandfather came from and she offered to present me some documents. We agreed on another meeting and she surprised me with all the historical documents of this family. It was overwhelming and the result of all that was my movie, “Steinbeck—tracing steps-books.” I really enjoyed doing that one film, because I’m a “Steinbeck fan” so it was very special to me.

20 Must-See Literary Destinations Around the World

Expedia.com released its “20 Must-See Literary Destinations Around the World” feature on March 6, 2018. An Expedia poll found books inspire vacations for 78% of Americans, so Expedia sought destinations around the globe and rated them on four criteria: quality of bookstores, literary history of the city, literary events and educational opportunities in the literature field. The feature was written by travel writer Lily Rogers, who is an avid reader herself. And Salinas/Monterey is one of the destinations featured!

“The Pastures of Heaven” Highlighted at Tate Modern

While in England earlier in the month, I visited the Tate Modern’s Picasso exhibit (focusing on Picasso’s “year of wonders,” 1932). As I exited the exhibit, this table featuring “Great Works of 1932” greeted me: “Many other modern masterpieces across literature and the arts also came into being in the same year, and we have selected some of these enduring classics from 1932 that still entertain and inform today.” Steinbeck’s The Pastures of Heaven was one of the enduring classics!

Transatlantic Films in England is working on a film of The Moon is Down.
John Steinbeck: Historian

Katie Stoops, Yale graduate

Editor’s note: Katie recently sent me this description of a Steinbeck class she taught to high school students while a Yale undergraduate; her course was part of Yale’s Splash program, where local high school and middle school students come to Yale for a day of courses.

“I’m trying to write history while it’s happening and I don’t want to be wrong.”

Who was John Steinbeck? This is the question I chose to answer in a class I volunteered to design for high school students as part of the Yale University SPLASH program. On a Saturday afternoon in November, students arrived from schools all over Connecticut and New York to take classes they chose from a course catalogue consisting of anything from The Lyrics of Bob Dylan to Icelandic Sagas-Viking Outlaws. I arrived eager to teach the class I titled John Steinbeck in Historical Perspective.

It was a challenge, deciding how to approach the question of who John Steinbeck was, in a sixty minute, one time class. Mr. Steinbeck has been under the scrutiny of multiple gifted biographers for the past fifty years. It’s a tough question to answer in any timeframe. Certainly, it would be impossible to reveal all of the man in an hour. I needed an angle—some way to present Steinbeck’s impact on the world and, perhaps even more important, its impact on him.

Leaing through Steinbeck: A Life in Letters, in search of direction, I came across the above quote and found a jumping-off point. John Steinbeck was not only a great author but a great historian. His work can be used as a roadmap to the world that existed between 1902 and 1968. And, as I hoped to show my students, it can be used to draw comparisons between that world and the one that exists today.

To begin the class, the students read part of a letter Steinbeck wrote to his publisher, Elizabeth Otis in 1938 just after returning from some of the field research that led to The Grapes of Wrath. He described what he saw in the migrant camps when he “went down with Life [Magazine].” After reading this letter, we looked at some of the famous images of Dust Bowl refugees and migrant camps which were published after The Grapes of Wrath caused its stir.

In this manner, a few years at a time, we moved through the timeline of John Steinbeck’s world. We talked about how the American workforce changed during the First World War when men were away and women were left to fill their jobs. Students passed around my copy of the October 1937 issue of Harper's Monthly Magazine in which Steinbeck’s lesser known short story, “The Chrysanthemums”, appears and we discussed its feminist implications. They listed adjectives that described the main character while she was working—handsome, overpowerful—and those that described her movements as she returned to her traditional role as a wife—weakly, limply.

We looked at pictures of American anti-Semitic propaganda and read Steinbeck’s response to a letter from Reverend L. M. Birkhead in 1940 who wrote to inquire if Steinbeck was Jewish.

“I am sad for a time when one must know a man’s race before his work can be approved or disapproved,” Steinbeck answered.

Next we saw a photo of the Tuskegee Airmen and talked about who they were. We read excerpts from the story, “With Your Wings,” which was rediscovered and published in The Strand Magazine in 2014. Here, Steinbeck told the story of an African American airmen returning home from WWII. In the midst of his welcome party, the soldier’s father says “Son—every black man in the world is going to fly with your wings.”

We finished the tour of Steinbeck’s world by discussing his relation to nuclear weaponry. Citing the introduction of my current read Steinbeck: Citizen Spy, I speculated that perhaps Steinbeck, who seemed to be a friend of Albert Einstein, may have known more about the potential for something like the Manhattan Project than the average American. (What good is a lesson on John Steinbeck without a little conspiracy theory?)
Then we watched the YouTube video of the last few minutes of Steinbeck’s Nobel Prize banquet speech, given at the height of the Cuban Missile Crisis, which warns mankind to take responsibility for the “Godlike power” it had unleashed.

I hoped to show the students that Steinbeck’s works of fiction, letters, and speeches, while deeply immersed in their present period, were far ahead of their time. To close the class, we went back through some of the historical images we had reviewed during the course. This time, images of the Dust Bowl refugees were compared to images of Syrian refugees. We looked at images of women marching for equality in the 1930s, 1960s, and again on January 21, 2017. We compared the anti-Semitic propaganda of the early 20th century to the anti-Islamic imagery found in post 9/11 America. The Tuskegee Airmen flew on behalf of a country that undervalued their race and, today, questions of continued racial inequality are raised by movements like Black Lives Matter. The East Coast lived in fear during the Cuban Missile Crisis and, now, Japan and the American Pacific islands fear North Korean nuclear testing. In this way we saw that the commentary Steinbeck made about his world is relevant to our own.

It’s difficult to believe but after this long trek through history, five minutes remained of the original sixty. With this time I asked students to write letters to John Steinbeck, President Trump, Elizabeth Otis, Eleanor Roosevelt, whomever they wanted and tell them what’s going on today. One student concluded her letter, which she chose to write to John Steinbeck, with a question which I believe Steinbeck spent his career asking, “How do we save the world from ourselves?”

Perhaps the work done by the National Steinbeck Center is the answer to that question. I had only a fleeting hour to contribute but the NSC works daily to preserve the spirit of a great American historian. Through my experience at SPLASH, I learned that by instilling a love for John Steinbeck in younger generations, we can start them asking the right questions.

Running North and Underground: Janet Whitchurch’s opening at the Steinbeck Festival

Tara Spada, Programs and Exhibits Coordinator

Having fully inaugurated our Arts and Cultural Gallery within our exhibition hall, the Center is ready to launch our second exhibition (the first a popular quilt exhibit). As part of this year’s Steinbeck Festival: “The Women of Steinbeck’s World,” our next exhibition will be on the works of artist Janet Whitchurch. Whitchurch is a San Francisco native. She studied at Stanford and UC Santa Cruz, eventually earning her MA in painting and her California teaching credential. She started her career as a high school art teacher, teaching at Sacred Heart School in Atherton. Moving to Monterey in 2007, she became deeply attached to the Salinas Valley. A woman of many talents, she has published an illustrated children’s book, The Fisherman and the Fish (Рыбака и Рыбка) which she translated from Russian to English. She was a visiting artist at the American Academy in Rome, which she said helped her conceive the idea for the body of work she will be bringing to the Center in May.

Her most recent work to be displayed here at the NSC is a combination of photography, pen and ink, text, and watercolors on the Salinas Valley and River. She visited many of the locations, both grand and banal, which make up the patchwork of the Salinas Valley, drawing and painting the scenes along with field notes. Whitchurch’s exhibition is called The Salinas River: Running North and Underground. The exhibit will open Sunday, May 6 at 2 pm, with a reception and book signing. Janet will be giving a presentation on her process and the pieces displayed.
National Steinbeck Center Applies for NEA Big Read grant with Tobias Wolff’s This Boy’s Life

Eric Mora, Marketing Coordinator

After successfully completing four National Endowment for the Arts “Big Read” grants (The Grapes of Wrath in 2007, Fahrenheit 451 in 2008, Sun, Stone, and Shadows: 20 Great Mexican Short Stories in 2016 and Citizen: An American Lyric in 2017), the National Steinbeck Center applied to the community-wide reading program once more. This year the center applied with Tobias Wolff’s memoir This Boy’s Life as the proposed book for Monterey County. This Boy’s Life chronicles Wolff’s life as a teenager in the 1950’s. Much of the book focuses on Wolff’s search for identity and his struggles coping with an abusive stepfather.

When I first read This Boy’s Life I found myself thinking about other books and articles that I had recently read and the many connections the book has to Monterey County. Tobias and his mother’s initial journey from Florida to Utah reminded me of the Joads’ journey to California in The Grapes of Wrath. Despite having different motives for moving (the Joads to escape economic despair and the Wolffs to escape an abusive relationship), both families displayed so much optimism despite omens along the way foreshadowing that their destinations were not the idealized panaceas for their respective problems. The optimism and excitement over prospective change and reinvention—whether it is ultimately actualized or not—are feelings that I’m confident will resonate with the many families who migrate annually to the Salinas Valley in search of jobs in agriculture, and the countless students who are drawn to the area for its educational opportunities and see the potential for change in relocating.

Going into the book, I knew close to nothing about it or the author except that Tobias Wolff was an accomplished writer and professor at Stanford University. It’s funny how these two simple facts influenced my reaction to This Boy’s Life. As Tobias Wolff described ways in which he acted out due to domestic troubles (chronically lying, vandalizing school property, siphoning gas) I found myself not rushing to judge him. Knowing that he turned out alright made me downplay the infractions he committed in his youth. I then thought about two of my favorite works by local authors: Julie Reynold’s investigative journalist book on Salinas Valley gangs Blood in the Fields and Claudia Melendez Salinas’ YA novel set in Salinas A Fighting Chance. Both books illustrate how these all too common reactions to teenage angst, problems at home, and the need to belong can have drastically different outcomes for teens growing up in the Salinas Valley. Too often, we rush to judge youth with problems as being beyond redemption.

I hope that through This Boy’s Life, we will be able to open conversations about the problems that youth face in Monterey County and the ways in which we can better assist them. We will hear back from the National Endowment for the Arts on their decision in late April. Fingers crossed.

If we receive the grant, Tobias has agreed to speak in Monterey County!