

SCHOOLS: Community gets opportunity this week to see design options for major construction at Hillview Middle School campus. Page 5

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The Almanac/Marjan Sadoughi



Lenore Horowitz's camera has opened up a world of new experiences

By Jane Knoerle
Almanac Lifestyles Editor

Who am I? At this stage of my life, I'm a poet, photographer, and a traveler," says Lenore Horowitz of Atherton.

Ms. Horowitz has been taking pictures for 25 years, ever since she photographed her children for her book, "Kauai Underground Guide" (Papaloea Press \$14.95), coming out soon in its 18th edition. (What started out as a little self-published book has sold more than 200,000 copies.)

Despite the success of her book, she never wanted to become a travel writer. The guidebook was just 16 photocopied and stapled pages when first published in 1980. It originated from "things to do" lists Ms. Horowitz made up for renters of her family's Kauai condominium. They were so helpful that friends suggested putting them into a book. Hers was the first guidebook to be written about one of Hawaii's outer islands, she says.

Although Ms. Horowitz has been asked to write other guidebooks, she says no. "It just wouldn't be the same."

Photography became her passion, however, after her four children were grown. "I went back to school after the kids were in college," she says. She already held a bachelor of arts degree from Brown University and a

doctorate in English literature from Cornell University.

Over a 10-year period, she had also taught an honors seminar in literature and expository writing as a parent volunteer at Menlo School, which all her children attended.

In 2001, Ms. Horowitz began taking photography classes at Foothill College. This later-in-life passion for photography (she's 61) has led to a world of new experiences. It inspired her to write poetry, and to approach travel in a new way, reaching out to people as she had never done before.

She would never have visited with a contessa in her Venetian palazzo, for example, if she hadn't taken that first step with a photography class.

At Foothill, Ms. Horowitz was fortunate to have "an inspirational and gifted teacher, Kate Jordahl. "She became a mentor.

Going back to school, Ms. Horowitz found herself part of "a whole community of people who share the same passion," no matter what their age.

A fascination with trees

Ms. Horowitz became fascinated with the California oak trees dotting the hillsides when she was driving down Interstate 280 to her Foothill photography class.

She yearned to photograph them, but knew stopping on the freeway was illegal. "Finally, I just had to stop," she says. She pulled over to the shoulder, "and my heart beating hard," slid the sunroof open and snapped the shutter.

The experience prompted her to write the poem, "Stopping by the Tree on 280," which she accompanied with a photograph of the oak tree that first drew her attention. "Stopping by the Tree" was one of her first forays into writing poetry. "It was a pivotal moment for me. I had not really written before. I began listening to

the voice inside me and found myself writing poetry. Sometimes my poems astonish me.

"I became a photographer-poet or poet-photographer about five years ago," she says.

Other poems and photographs of trees followed. Many of the trees were photographed at SLAC, off Sand Hill Road, which she needed a pass to enter.

A stunning photograph, "Tree Against the Sky," came about when she was "chasing a full moon." She looked in the other direction and "there was this beautiful sight," a lone tree silhouetted against a sunset sky.

One of her most beautiful photographs, "Golden Oak," was photographed at SLAC in the late fall, when the leaves on oak trees are dead and brown. "When there's a stormy sky, there's sometimes a magic moment when the sun comes through and turns the leaves to gold."

To grab that moment, she parked her car before a tree she had photographed many times. "I waited and waited. It was cold and drizzly. I was ready to leave. I had taken my camera off the tripod when I looked up and there was the sun. I grabbed my camera and just had time for two exposures, then it was dark again."

Poems and images

Which comes first the poem or the photography? Usually it's the photograph, says Ms. Horowitz, "but sometimes I have the poem first."

Ms. Horowitz's first solo poem and photography exhibit, "Trees That Climb the Sky," was shown at SLAC in 2005. Her fellow students and teacher pitched in to help her hang the show. She also had an exhibit at Atherton Town Hall that year.

Her work was shown at Atherton Arts Committee exhibits in 2005-2006. "Turning Leaves, Poems &

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Lenore Horowitz, opposite page, photographed these twin sisters during her workshop in Venice. Small photos shown on both pages are of people she photographed as a workshop assignment. The woman with her dog, Coco, is Contessa Zavagli, whom she photographed in her palazzo. Below is a self-portrait of Ms. Horowitz with her camera gear, reflected in a mirror in Venice.



Images” was at the Palo Alto Research Center in 2006.

A permanent collection, “California Oaks, Poems & Images,” hangs in the main entrance hall at Stanford Hospital. Visitors to the hospital tell her the poems and photos have been a comfort to them.

Her poems are also on the Web site: womencandoit.com. “I’ve had comments such as, ‘You really made a difference for me. Thank you,’” she says.

Ms. Horowitz uses a Canon 5D digital camera and prints her own photos. She has a powerful Mac G-5 computer and an Epson 4800 inkjet printer in her studio.

She says everything done in a darkroom can be done with digital technology. “Digital photo software is based on many of the techniques of traditional darkroom printing, such as dodge and burn.

“I like it that I don’t have to be in a (traditional) darkroom. You have much more control in a digital darkroom. I want to change the image as little as possible,” she adds, noting someone once asked her, “How did you place the moon between the branches of that tree?”

Lenore and friends

People were the focus of a week-long workshop in Venice Ms. Horowitz took last October. “Before, I had always photographed trees; nice and safe.”

The “Il Chiostro” workshop was under the auspices of Michael Mele and Linda Minonti of New York City, who lead workshops in Florence, Venice, Tuscany, Lake Garda and Sardinia. They can be contacted at IlChiostro.com.

She stayed in a converted convent with 24 students — 12 photographers and 12 painters. “My room was like a cell, but the location was phenomenal.”

Her assignment was to get out and photograph people, asking first for permission. She doesn’t speak Italian, and most of her subjects didn’t speak English.

“I got more and more courageous. I found showing them the image (she had taken) was a tremendous icebreaker.”

She recalls a photo of two young Pakistani men taken on the boat to the neighboring island of Burano. She had a camera. They had a camera. She took their picture. They took her picture. “We spoke through the lens,” she says. They wrote down their e-mail address and e-mailed the photo captured on their camera. They now stay in touch by e-mail.

After the workshop was completed, she stayed a second week in Venice. “I was having so much fun I couldn’t leave.”

Ms. Horowitz traveled alone to Venice. “My husband, Larry, doesn’t like this kind of travel. Photographers travel differently. They go slowly and carry a lot of equipment. They’re always stopping.”

She spent her second week in a hotel that occupies three floors of a palazzo. The palazzo was owned by a contessa who occupied the two top floors.



Lenore Horowitz shows some of the prints she has photographed for her projects.

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With her newfound courage, Ms. Horowitz asked to meet the contessa. It was arranged by the hotel personnel and she was invited upstairs to the contessa's apartment. "I would never have met the contessa and her dog, Coco, if I hadn't taken the workshop."

Ms. Horowitz has more travel plans. In March she is traveling with her son, Jeremy Horowitz, to the Dominican Republic. Jeremy, deputy general counsel for the San Diego Padres, is in charge of the Padre's baseball academy in the Dominican Republic.

In May she will take photographs in Tuscany, taking her mother, Rosemary McCann, with her.

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Of her photography, Ms. Horowitz says: "I've made wonderful friends through this passion. I've learned how impoverished travel can be without engaging people. I'll never just shoot churches and gardens again." ■



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— The silence of trees —

is belied
by the furnace underground
that blows hot sap up through the roots,
blasting its way to leaf,
and the crunching of the earth
as bark swells
and the trunk stretches
to conduct energy upwards,
crackling,
groaning with each pang
as the branch gives birth
to each new stem, each
bud greening

And all the while
the tree stands still
as it always has,
in silent communion with the hills
and constant partnership with the sky,
solemn marriage with the earth
from which all progeny emerge,
soundless cacophony,
boisterous silence
simply there
with only the dew
to mark the passage
of night to day.

**"Red Dress,
Place Vendôme,"**
photographed
in Paris, won
honorable mention
out of 31,000
entries in 2004 in
the 24th annual
national College
Photography
contest. Left,
this photograph
of "Golden Oak"
inspired the poem,
"The Silence
of Trees."