The Iversen Journal
2016
Introduction

The Iversen Journal is a collection of artwork, short stories and poems collected from members and staff of the Iversen Wellness and Recovery Center in Chico, Calif. This second edition is a small glimpse of the talents and abilities that exist within the Iversen community. We hope you will find this to be interesting, enjoyable, and welcoming, just as we hope you would find it to be at the Iversen Center on any given day.

The Iversen Wellness and Recovery Center offers membership to individuals on their recovery journey from challenging mental health issues. The center, on Rio Lindo Avenue, is open to adults who are invited to visit up to three times before becoming a member. Membership includes free peer-led support groups, computer lessons in the computer lab, medication support in the Med Clinic, informational meetings, and activities. The center is also a place to socialize and relax, where guests can get to know others who share similar life challenges. This Journal is a celebration of this diverse and special community.

Mission Statement

The Iversen Wellness and Recovery Center and Med Clinic is a community of individuals in their recovery from challenging Mental Health issues. We focus on hope, personal responsibility, education, self-advocacy, and peer support in a stigma free environment. Together we realize our dreams.
About the Cover

The cover art represents the collaborative work of 12 different individuals over two month’s period of time in early 2016. Spearheaded by resident artist John McMackin, this work is an example of the virtues of collaboration, communication, and patience.

From the Director

It is hard to believe that we just put the finishing touches on our second Iversen Journal! The first journal exceeded all of our expectations in both the quality of the content as well as the reception from our community. In retrospect, the success of the Journal shouldn’t have been a surprise. If there is one thing I have observed in my years of supporting the Iversen Center, it is what an amazing, diverse, and accomplished group of people come to find value in the center’s aims and activities.

Mental illness is a part of the human experience, and while we understand what a powerful influence it brings to a life, we also believe that a diagnosis does not define an individual.

I want to thank all of the contributors this year for their courage, their vision, and their hope. And I want to invite you, the reader, to enjoy the rich tapestry of experience found in these pages.

Jason Tate, MA
Iversen Director
Contents
The Iversen Center................................................................. 1
Butterflies Are Free ............................................................ 3
I Have a Mental Illness ....................................................... 4
Butterflies at the Sacramento River .................................... 7
A Walk in Nature to Observe Life .......................................... 8
Cry California .................................................................... 10
Twisted Wire ...................................................................... 11
Implosion .......................................................................... 12
Michael Jackson ............................................................... 13
Girl With a Hat .................................................................. 14
Pound of Flesh ................................................................... 15
Ring Around the Sun in the Elder’s Grove ........................... 17
Aftermath .......................................................................... 18
Passing Down of the Peace Pipe .......................................... 19
You and Me ........................................................................ 20
Love Forever ...................................................................... 21
Then, Now and Always ...................................................... 22
The Gifted ......................................................................... 23
No Rest ............................................................................. 24
Superman and Lois ............................................................. 25
Mama Why Can’t I ............................................................... 26
My Personal Road to Recovery ............................................ 27
The Depth of Epiphany ........................................................ 30
Bouquets From Beyond ...................................................... 31
Flower Power ..................................................................... 33
Weird Bedroom Happenings ............................................... 34
Fish Fountain .................................................................... 35
Homelessness .................................................................... 36
Tipsy .................................................................................................................37
A More Suitable Mind in Happenstance .......................................................38
Nature and Machinery ..................................................................................39
The Book of Names .......................................................................................40
Daisy ................................................................................................................41
Appreciations .................................................................................................42
Classic Car ......................................................................................................43
Scotty ................................................................................................................44
Dreams of Ireland .........................................................................................45
Pull Over Goat ................................................................................................46
Appreciation of Living ....................................................................................50
Just Be You ......................................................................................................51
Unnamed ..........................................................................................................52
Inside of Me .....................................................................................................53
Dragon ..............................................................................................................54
Shades of Blue Shades of Gray ......................................................................55
Hunting Chairs ...............................................................................................56
Shaolin Kempo ...............................................................................................60
Black Lines and Rainbows ............................................................................61
Realize With Real Eyes ..................................................................................62
Ninja Turtle Van .............................................................................................64
Mighty Mouse .................................................................................................65
The Flow Of Life Moves Ever Onward ..........................................................66
People Are Strange .........................................................................................67
Glance From Other Place ...............................................................................68
Lairgate Landscape .........................................................................................69
FUB Catalogue Page “Retinal Insanity” .........................................................70
The Iversen Journal Staff .................................................................................72
Biographies ......................................................................................................73
The Iversen Center
day Jonathan Roy Martin

The Iversen Center
Is a welcoming place
The staff is always friendly
And they know my name and face

They greet me when I enter
And when I sign in
I have some close connections
That almost feel like kin

I’ve been active in some groups
Which have helped me grow
Yet I’ve had to exert some effort
This you must know

That is hasn’t been easy
But they have assisted
Me in my recovery
I was once a bit twisted

In the winter months it’s warm
In the summer there is cool air
And something that never changes
Is that the people always care
“The Iversen Center” continued…

The coffee is served often
And is always hot
It’s a great place to socialize
In this very spot

I have met so many people
With talents and with gifts
And sometimes the staff changes
With rotating shifts

Yet one thing that never changes
And on it I can always count
Is that it is a safe place to come to
And that it is a fount

A fount of encouragement
And positivity
Helping one another
Become the very best that we can be
Butterflies Are Free
by Lynn-Marie Lourdes
I Have a Mental Illness

by Elizabeth Moore

I have a mental illness. My mental illness does not have me.

There is a lot of stigma attached to the issue of mental illness. Many people, when faced with the reality of being diagnosed as mentally ill, will go into full-blown denial. Coming to terms with something as serious as a mental illness is difficult. Many people will refuse to get proper treatment or are afraid of what might happen in seeking treatment. Left untreated or undiagnosed, many lives may end in tragedy.

For me, on the other hand, the diagnosis was a rather liberating experience. Finally, to have a name to go with the odd behaviors and depression took a lot of weight off my mind. The only way to handle a problem, especially one as life altering as this, is to know what exactly you’re up against. With my proper diagnosis, things just seemed to make more sense. It also helped knowing that the difficulties affecting me were felt by other people. The knowledge that I was not alone was comforting.

When people hear the term mental illness, most people picture someone in a straightjacket drooling on themselves or Norman Bates in the movie Psycho. Many people fail to realize that mental illness covers a broad range of behaviors and conditions. Some aspects of a mental illness may even be considered funny or amusing, such as someone with OCD rituals. Many successful and creative people have suffered from mental illness. But these lives sometimes end in tragedy when fame gets in the way of treatment.

I, myself, have been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. This condition presents itself with various symptoms such as points of high energy and elevated mood to deep depression and crippling sadness. It has a strong effect on my emotions and handling of various situations. I have learned to live with my condition and
can sometimes even use it to my advantage. Great sparks of creativity during a manic episode can sometimes lead to brilliant works down the road.

Early and proper diagnosis is the key, as well as a safe and stable environment. Many of the transient population suffer from some form of mental illness and are too sick to help themselves. I, myself, was homeless for long periods of time and once you hit that level, it is hard to drag yourself out of it.

The mental health issues faced by most people are not something you can just get over or snap out of. They are not the result of having a character flaw or weak will. You wouldn’t ask someone with no legs to just get over it. This does not mean that you feel sorry for yourself or make excuses either. Coming to terms with a condition is the first step in dealing with it.

With proper care and treatment, all but the most severe mental illnesses can be handled and that person can lead a productive and healthy life. But that journey can be very difficult and is different for everyone. Some people will be fine with just proper medication but that, too, is a difficult road, simply based on the trial-and-error aspect of the process. I, myself, took ten years to get my meds straight.

Coming to terms with yourself, being mindful of your condition, and proper knowledge can alleviate many of the symptoms and anxieties associated with various conditions. Sometimes just having someone understanding and non-judgmental to talk to makes a world of difference. Take to heart that you are not alone and it does get better.

Our country is in the midst of a mental health crisis where incarceration is the only option for many people with mental health issues. The criminalization of mental illness is seen in the problem of overflowing prisons and incorrect police action. Crime rates are actually down and yet we continue to jail the sick. Officers need more
training in the aspects of a mental health call rather than to shoot first and ask questions later. I, myself, wound up in jail when I should have been receiving treatment.

There is a hope that compassion and proper knowledge can ebb the tide. Teaching proper coping skills at a young age cannot only help the mentally ill but all people live healthy, happy lives. Getting people proper treatment and stable housing and environments can make a world of difference. Sometimes just having a friend can point things in the right direction. Public awareness and de-stigmatization of mental health issues can get us all on the same page.

I tell you this because I am proof that, when implemented properly, the system can work. I also tell you this because many types of mental illness don’t become apparent until about college age and I don’t want anyone to be blindsided like I was. It took me 12 years to get to where I am now and patience is the key. There is no quick fix but there is always hope.

Learning to love yourself, being happy in your own skin and taking personal responsibility are key aspects, not just in dealing with a mental illness, but life in general. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Feeling safe to seek treatment and forming a good support network are key factors in maintaining good mental health.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please have the courage to speak up. Help is available from crisis centers to community groups to online chat rooms and hotlines. Seeking help is not a sign of weakness; it is actually harder to admit there is a problem and do something about it. Many people are willing and able to reach out to you if just given a chance.

With the stigma of this issue, and the harm it does to society as a whole, breaking boundaries is paramount. We need to stop jailing the sick; we need to have faith in ourselves and others and work as a community to find proper solutions. Nothing worth doing right is going to be easy, but together we can make a difference.
Butterflies at the Sacramento River

by Jon Bell
A Walk in Nature to Observe Life
by Cheryl Grace

Saturday, June 25, 2016, at 4 p.m, at a picnic table in the Harmony Ridge Campground, mostly in the shade:

On the afternoon before returning home to Chico, I went for a long walk through the grounds. Since Harmony Ridge has 85 campsites plus 12 cabins plus many other components (such as the clubhouses), walking around the facility is a long traverse among the beautiful trees and interesting RVs.

I’m sitting on the picnic table writing, taking snaps, listening to the birds sing & watching leaves rustle in the breeze. I have taken this time to be alone and take in all my senses will allow and take the time to absorb the beauty of the mountains.

I’ve noticed there is pretty gray stone just spread on some of the campsites. It makes them look very professional & modern. The campground is well taken care of and looks great.

The bright summer sun glistening on the pine leaves makes them appear to shimmer and glow, as they sway in the air.

I elected to apply mosquito repellent when something buzzed in my ear. Hum, suspicious.

The shade is a blessing and the tall trees are wonderful monarchs of the forest. Not far from me is a large group of campers, but their voices hardly stir the quiet mystery and power of the forest.

Today, the weather is perfect and glowing in the warm air slightly moving around me, my skin feels the movement, and I enjoy the sensations.
“A Walk in Nature to Observe Life” continued…

To observe, to sit awhile and take in through all my senses, the calming beauty of going to the mountains and breathing their majesty into my body:

I smell the pines and firs.

I hear the bird songs, so loud and perfectly melodious. (I recorded the music)

I feel the dirt and gravel under my feet.

I taste the lip balm I just purchased in town.

I see, truly see, the peace and love of visiting nature and drink in its pristine calmness.

This is my short visit to one solitary spot to take in, through my senses, all that nature and beauty have to offer. Soon, I will continue on my walk down the gravel pathway with a whole new world of gifts because I stopped to absorb precious moments, to purposefully observe what life has to give. I am so much the better for doing so.
Cry California
by Davy Andrek

In The Mystic I see the suns that tell me your name
as my midnight wanders and I’m the fool to blame
Yet I believe in ways of the night.
As cities cry California in the dark of my eye
rivers get high on the ways of moonlight
Yet I believe in the ways of the night.

As the world turns, my heart yearns,
as the midnight learns of city lights.

As the fire of my dream knows the root of your soul
I’ve felt you near years beyond yet I’m a fool
And I believe in the ways of the night.
As the highs of light burn the city skies alive
I know the hills are the path to higher sight
And I believe in the ways of this night.
Twisted Wire
by Eden DW
Implosion
by Sia Timmons

For thirty eight years, the pain has remained like a stain

The wounds have stuck around - some open - some closed, scars against my shining stars

The sorrow has never ended, as for years my mind has felt bended.

For all these years, I'm stuffed with broken gears, and rarely a shedding of tears.

This tear is a sorrowful reaction to the cruelty and BS I see happening in this world, with people, and just about everywhere I frequent. Words don’t need to be uttered and actions don't have to be seen for me to know that too much evil abounds everywhere: in the restaurants, on the bus line, while waiting in a postal line, while walking down the street to a friend to meet, and even when swirling invisibly through the air to create a stir and a scare.
Michael Jackson

by Butch Hastaran
Girl With a Hat
by Butch Hastaran
I am 100 pounds overweight.

1 pound was from hating myself
5 pounds were from being picked on relentlessly
1 pound was from feeling worthless
4 pounds were from thinking I was no worth of love
1 pound was from doubting myself
10 pounds were from going for years with an undiagnosed mental illness
3 pounds are from my medication
2 pounds were from thinking I was stupid
1 pound was from thinking there was something wrong with me
4 pounds were from letting people take advantage of me sexually
1 pound was from turning to drugs to stop the pain
3 pounds were from staying in an abusive relationship because I thought no one else would want me
4 pounds were from crying myself to sleep
3 pounds were from being ignored
5 pounds were from having no friends
1 pound was from not believing in myself
6 pounds were from internalizing how others treated me
10 pounds were from the times I tried to kill myself
3 pounds were from being homeless
1 pound was from finding out I was adopted
3 pounds were from getting tough love from my parents
2 pounds were from being too ashamed to ask for help
2 pounds were from losing my job because someone had a problem with my weight
3 pounds were from having an abortion
2 pounds were from spending 3 days in jail
3 pounds were from being disgusted with my body
4 pounds were from being angry at myself
6 pounds were from believing that my dreams didn’t matter
2 pounds were from almost giving up
2 pounds were from just not caring anymore
1 pound was from food
I don’t want you to feel sorry for me because I don’t, not anymore. I earned those pounds and now they are notches on my belt.

People think I’m fat because I’m lazy or weak-willed. Well, that’s not the case. I have more willpower than most just by being happy with me and loving myself.

I am a human being and, like every other human being, everything I am has a story behind it. So next time you think of making a wise crack about someone’s weight, try to take into consideration that each one of those pounds has a story and it’s not likely to be a happy one.

I’ve come to terms with my size and I wouldn’t change it. I’m not special or asking for much. I just want what all people want – to be treated with dignity, compassion and fairness. But this goes beyond that and if you get anything out of reading this, I hope in the back of your mind you remember that everyone has a story.

Take that into consideration next time you see a homeless person, a drug addict, or a fat person. Don’t judge until you can honestly say you know their story.
Ring Around the Sun in the Elder’s Grove

by Jon Bell
Aftermath
by Suzanne Chilow

This mind, this bottomless mind
Don’t ever need to anesthetize it again

For, this night, it has broken
through to the other side

Into this dream

Broken through the sleep
Into the dream

I can rest now
Because, I understand

The universe is my intoxicant

I will enjoy this gift
of numbness, from the beginning
I have so cherished
On my bed of velvet green

The worry is gone
I have given it completely up

Beast, Good-bye paranoia

Into his loving hand

Goodnight

- Dedicated to Clara Scott La Fleiche, my beloved mother
Passing Down of the Peace Pipe

by Lynn-Marie Lourdes
You and Me

by Jack Chaney

If I could have a wish,
I wish it could be you and me, you see.
If it was you and me, we’d walk hand in hand
along the ocean shores leaving our footprints
in the sand, and watch them slowly slip into the sea.
I look into your eyes and then I imagine us kissing each other
With a love that is real. Yes, if it was you and me.
I’d never make you cry,
the only tears from your eyes would be tears of
    happiness.
You see, we’d be happy if it was you and me together…
But, you see it could never be you and me, you see
Because it was never meant to be…
    ....You and me, you see.
    But I wish it was you and me
    Because I love you! Then, now, and Always.
    But it could never be…you and me.
Jimi Hendrix once said, “The other half of a man is a woman.”
And without you I’m only a half of man.
Love Forever…

by “Momo”

Even through rough times and hard times, I’ve never dwelled upon the negative.

Remember our most memorable cherished moments like our unending bond of

…love forever.

Never will these voices about how I can hear you suffer, but know I do hear.

You’ve told me I’m beautiful and that you love me and asked me to marry you.

Just because I can’t see you and not hear you all the time, always know that, my love, you’re

…loved forever.

Love Letter

7/26/16, 10:55 p.m. In my heart and in my mind for now you are with me even though it seems you’re locked away from me. It’s as if your spirit still follows as my guardian angel, kinda like a ghost I can hear but can’t see. Even though you’re apart for a little while, at least I know you’re with me even though your self is traveled.

In a spirit of my sweet guardian angel, as a voice of my conscience, you’re very loved by me, and your family as well, and we miss you very terribly with prayer of a release to happen soon. Again I miss you and love you and forever know we’re in love. Nothing has stopped that bond of our unending love of how I first laid my eyes on you in that hospital. Nothing has changed in my heart. My loving you isn’t any different but loving you more.

-Your best friend and soul mate and wife. Through God’s eyes, we are husband and wife, since January 5, 2013.

Met December 26, 2012 and forever caught me, Momo
Then, Now and Always  
by Jack Chaney

Then, now and always
These words I speak are true
Because they come from my heart
And they’re only meant for you.

Then, now and always
These words I speak are true.
I guess what I’m trying to say is
I Love You.

I love you for the woman you are
And how you make my day.
Then, now and always.
When I hear these words
I’ll think of you.
The Gifted

by Lynn-Marie Lourdes

Whom may the gifted be
But an inner light of sanctity
Veils of flowers mark the sea
Symbolic waves of God in thee
Stand upon a higher mount
Listen, God is calling out
Come away, come away, turn to me
The spirit of eternity
No Rest

by Lynn-Marie Lourdes

The one I’m bound to love
I hear you calling me
Like the whisper of the wind
Through a weeping willow tree
As the sun sets in the west
The wings of wind are blowing
Jasmine through the air
A message hence foregoing
A love that binds the heart and soul
You wear upon your breast
I’ll search for you forever more
My soul can find no rest.
Superman and Lois
by Butch Hastaran
Mama Why Can’t I
by Susan Waterreus

When I was growing up, I couldn’t express how I was feeling about life. Now at almost \( \frac{3}{4} \) of a century, I now understand that the times you tried telling me were somewhat true, because you had experienced them first hand.

Now as I myself am watching my children grow and have families of their own. I hope that these values are falling on the ears of the future for a better life with good morals, strong beliefs and down to earth teaching maybe we can become a strong nation.

In that fact why can’t I be what I have always dreamt of being?
- a movie star
- a singer
- a storyteller
- a seamstress
- a dreamer
- a person of great beliefs

Oh!! I am all of these because of you.
Thank you, Ma Ma
My Personal Road to Recovery
by Marjorie Totten

My name is Marjorie Totten and I’ve become a familiar face at the Iversen Center for the past eight months. My “Road to Recovery” began when I started spending my days at the Iversen Center. I suffered with a mental disability that surfaced in my life 32 years ago. I was 35 years old with my story began…

From the age of 18, until I was 35, I struggled raising my children alone with no job skills, on minimum wage (when I was able to work), barely getting by from month to month.

The stress I suffered from finally culminated in a mental breakdown at age 35. I was hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital at least six times, each time for three days to a week, over a span of about two years.

At first, the doctors thought I was doing drugs. I’ve never done any drugs in my entire life. Finally, the doctors did blood work and other tests and diagnosed me with paranoid schizophrenia. Both my father and his mother suffered from this disease. I was prescribed the antipsychotic Haldol and, for 32 years, I managed to maintain my sanity. I saw a psychiatrist each month to refill my Haldol. The side effects were very annoying. I had excessive muscle twitching around my mouth and my hands. It was essential that I continue taking the Haldol to keep from being institutionalized from paranoid schizophrenic behavior.

Approximately ten years ago, I began living with my sister because neither of us could afford to live alone. My sister is a practicing alcoholic and becomes very verbally abusive and physically violent. She loses control when she is drunk.

During those ten years, I stayed indoors all the time, sitting at the table and smoking cigarettes – never visiting with anyone – just existing in a state of mental disorder and manic depression, all the while being verbally abused by my sister.
Finally, in August 2015, my sister got drunk, lost control, and threatened my life with a knife.

One night, I waited until she went to sleep, snuck out of the house, went to the sheriff’s office, and told my story. The officers told me there was nothing they could do because she hadn’t physically harmed me yet.

Two days later, I was threatened again and went back to the sheriff’s office. They told me I should get out of the apartment before I was harmed. I had nowhere to go and I was also on home oxygen use. I have COPD and I have a machine that fills my portable tanks. The sheriff’s office sent me to Chico to the Torres Community Homeless Shelter. I am still there while awaiting an apartment to come available.

When I first arrived at the Torres Shelter, I was scared to death, alone, and in the big city of Chico. I was lost and desperately ill. A staff member at the Torres Shelter told me about the Iversen Wellness and Recovery Center. I started coming to the Iversen Center every day and my “Road to Recovery” began the first week of “wellness time” I spent at Iversen. I also went to Behavioral Health in Chico to continue getting my medications, including Haldol.

The doctor I saw re-evaluated me and put me on a medication called Abilify, which has no side effects for me.

The Abilify has been a miracle medication for me. I no longer have symptoms of paranoid schizophrenia and I’m no longer depressed. I’m a 100% different person. I gave up smoking, I am busy doing purposeful activities, I am very social and have made many friends, and I can get up very early in the morning and stay occupied until night.
The Iversen Center recovery groups and the peers there have been instrumental in my becoming a new person, this side of Heaven.

The Abilify has been a key factor in my recovery from mental illness and depression.

I’m now a spiritual human being, believing in the power of prayer. I came from the mire of a life of hell to a happy and recovered life of health and wellness.

I owe my recovery to the medication of Abilify, to the Iversen Center and its wonderful peers, and, last, but not least, to my faith and my prayers.

I truly believe becoming homeless at the Torres Shelter and my time at the Iversen Center has been the greatest blessing of my entire life. I now have life more abundantly, I am healthy, and I am on the “Recovery Road” to better days in my future.

I am deeply grateful to the Torres Shelter and the Iversen Center and their staff members.

Thank you all for being influential in my new life.

March 8, 2016
The Depth of Epiphany
by Joya Autrey

Her head bowed. Shoulder slumped in sorrow
Her raven, midnight black hair
Cascades down her back and half her face,
Next to a long-dead tree
The sky that covers them, is grey and dead
Sitting beside a lone, twisted, long-dead tree
In a cold, damp field. She doesn’t speak to me.
My tragic beauty. Too dead inside to cry
Her silence calls out to me

I could fix her, I said.
Protect her
Comfort her

If only she would let me near
I could tell her, that I would do anything for her
If only she could see…
    And then I realized…
She was me…
I went to a wedding in blue, almost as blue as the sky. I had a lovely time with my friends, the kind you could never buy. It came time for the bride to throw the bouquet. This, to me, is as competitive as a game of croquet. For, you see, I am single. So I joined the crowd. And it was funny but the bouquet came to me as if it were allowed. I have caught four bouquets. For me, I want an answer of why four. What could possibly be in store?

Four times the boy because I am four times the girl? My mind is very deep. I search for answers all the time. Maybe they were bouquets from the dead or all things really in my head? It may be that believing is more like a wish but life has shown me that anything can happen and the wish always has a twist.

Sometimes in your wishes, you really do not know what you are asking and you cannot believe it is possible for such wishes to come true. And when they do happen, no one believes you but you.
“Bouquets From Beyond” continued…

The first bouquet was for a beautiful boy who died at 16 by a gun. Our lives were no longer fun.

The second bouquet was for the other man’s brother. He became my first lover.

The third was for a man I was with for ten years. His addiction to drugs gave me nothing but tears. I left him; how could I watch him die? And that he did. That is no lie. I was right. The drugs were why.

Since I thought the three bouquets were for my children, I stayed single. But the fourth one made my hands tingle. I thought of another of my ex-men that had passed and threw me the bouquet out of regret of losing such a lass.

Now I must end this tale. For you see, things start happening to me. I must be careful on how much I delve for them and me because, you see, in this Western world I must stay in reality to keep my sanity.

I cried the tears of yesterday, these tears for you, my dear. Now, you know how much I cried, these days and years after you died.
Flower Power

by Jeannie B.
Weird Bedroom Happenings
by Cheryl Grace

A strange thing occurred after I went to bed last night, Thursday, 05/12/2016.
I was sleeping on my back and I came to enough awake to roll over on to my right side. I saw my clock and it said 1:09 a.m.

In just a moment, I sensed an animal slither into my room and flow up onto the bed. I felt its walk and its weight. It was either a small dog, a cat, or, at last, I thought it might be a big rat! I was scared and tried to move to turn the lamp on, but I could not move at all. The animal was up on the bed and coming toward me and then stood on my leg with its front paws.

I still could not move. I especially tried to move my right arm to get to the lamp.

After a number of minutes, or longer, I was finally able to move my arm and I rushed to turn on the light. Upon looking thoroughly around the bedroom, I searched the rest of the apartment and to my relief, I found nothing.

Afraid to go back into the bedroom, I sat in my recliner chair and decided I would stay there the rest of the night. I was truly terrified and thought maybe I was going crazy.

After a while, the idea of sleep paralysis came to mind and I used my smartphone to look up “sleep paralysis and hallucinations.”

Guess what? The results clearly showed that search topic as abundant and I educated myself on this disorder and realized I was under intense stress three times yesterday. Stress seems to be a common reason for having hallucinations and sleep paralysis. I felt very relieved and went back to my bedroom to sleep.

Hundreds of years ago, a person observed having a case of sleep paralysis was thought of as being possessed by demons and evil spirits. I am glad I live in these times where it is a medical condition and one can chuckle about one’s spirit possessions.
Fish Fountain
by Eden DW
Homelessness
by Brenda Louise Cuomo

The cars whiz by in the cold, exposing my soul to inner turmoil.

I sit and think.

Another day weighs heavily upon me. I ponder, captivated by my thoughts.

Will I eat today?

Where can I bathe?

Am I asking too much?

Do I really exist?

Dedicated to John, Tipsy, and all others on the frontline battle of homelessness
Tipsy
by Iversen Center Staff
A More Suitable Mind in Happenstance

by Jon Bell

What does it mean?
Stories of cursing and perseverance rigged, and long since thought absently, unable to commit to a language, however imposed and ominously malleable.

Unsure of sources to detail with meaning.

At differing opinions of where to go.

Here again to appease this coming out of what I can excrete in maneuvering sameness being in a cubic body coated in texture never realizing it was there or said of such as is, like means, during this witching hour, or science without human ethics.

But what’s with the wheeze like a suffocating siphon, and jerking to gasp a menagerie.

Acceptable entertainment, a convenience at the party I left or can’t escape from, but mostly monotonous boredom, unsure of how long it will last, wondering, what are the conditions?

I want you to buy it, I feign at the sight, a movement against me, but not an end to a path traveled. A path much like hiding and never being found, subsisting with an inadequate mind.
Nature and Machinery

by Eden DW
I look over high into
the daylight sky

Clouds descend from heaven
Above

Rainy days and with heavy
clouds scare the doves away

Sunny days when the Flowers
do bloom are a blessing from
our creator

Days birds fly are times
when our creator opens the
book of life to place new names
inside

To be a bird is to be new
And a new name like
A new flower to live the
Days of old...
Daisy
*Project by Finding Your Inner Child Group*
Appreciations

by Tracy Bright

Today I woke up appreciating
And in deep joy
To be able to appreciate
Now this life,
And on this day
I appreciate the many little nods and winks
Of appreciation
On this day
I appreciate
appreciation
Classic Car
by Anthony Nicosia
Scotty
by Davy Andrek
Dreams of Ireland
by Lynn-Marie Lourdes

At first glance
A deep foreign blue
Shone through ancient eyes
Enchanted remembrance
Erupted within my very soul
Ireland
I have loved you before
Ocean’s crash and spray within your gaze
Mists creep in about us
Past tense communicating with the present
Two souls clad by sacred oath
As we sense the isles within us
Ireland
I have walked with you before
In twilight and in sunshine
Danced upon fields of clover and wild hemp
Tasted from your hand the ripest shoreline berries
Together we have quilted the mast of many a ship
Ireland
This I know, I have loved you before
I have laid with you in Wedlock eternal
My soul has found home once again
In the deep foreign blue
Which shines within your Irish eyes.
“Pull over Goat!”
I couldn’t breathe.
We were near Vina when the panic attack hit. Goat pulled onto the shoulder of Highway 99 and I flung open the car door.
Goat, my bearded buddy, was steering my car away from Chico, toward his meth dealer’s trailer in Corning on Thanksgiving.
Visions of my brother’s Chico townhouse suffocating with a trash hoard and dotted with faces grimacing in judgment toward me played on repeat in my mind.
This was it. I gasped in and out audibly. It was the worst it had ever been.
“I feel like I’m going to die,” blurtling between gasps.
I slowly looked at Goat, focusing my eyes, concentrating, finding the ground of dust and gravel beneath my bare feet, smelling some faint nearby cow pasture.
He chewed his dirty fingernails and stood near the car silently, glancing up and down the dark stretch of Highway 99.
It could have been enhanced by smoking pot or by the whole slew of psychiatric medications I’d been testing out after my stay at the “puff” inpatient unit, but the anxiety attack was intense.
It took me by surprise, but the truth was, it was not the first time. However, it was the first time I knew what to call it. I was finally looking at and admitting that I have a mental illness.
My life’s up and downs, from sexual abuse as a child, having my first son, bouts of homelessness, abusive relationships, deaths of my parents, suicide attempts, going in and out of college, jobs off and on, were tangible evidence that something was askew in my ways of thinking and feeling.
Even as early as high school, I remember that feeling. My body, my emotions, my reactions to stress, made me think I was about to die.
Once, before I took a flight from Sacramento to Denver for a three-day visit to check out the University of Colorado, I was overcome with extreme fear. It choked me. I was up in the middle of the night terrified. I trembled and cried alone in my room.

I felt like God was giving me a premonition of my own death.

I thought about canceling my trip, even though I had planned and paid for it all myself through my part-time job. My thoughts raced. I couldn’t get to sleep.

I didn’t know why I felt so scared. Nobody had ever connected me with the terms anxiety or panic attacks back then. Perhaps if I had known or understood, things could have felt differently. Since I was very young, fear had gripped me many times and I would give pause to what could have been exciting or fun events in my life.

The fear became depression and I spent years in the school bathrooms at dances and events suffering with the feeling that I was unlovable and crazy. I asked myself, “Why can I not enjoy things the way other people can? Why was it hard to relax and hard to laugh? Why was I so afraid of what other people may think?”

As a young adult, suffering through tough times, I started to really lose control over my symptoms. At one point I ingested a bottle of acetaminophen with alcohol and ended up in the ICU for three days. I will never forget the experience of throwing up charcoal in the emergency room and feeling stupid, like I couldn’t even do this right.

I remember truly asking myself, “Am I crazy?”

Since then, I have been diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and bipolar 2 disorder, but it took many years, many psychiatrists, and many different medications before I arrived at this point where I can truly understand and better cope with my mental illness.

Life didn’t stop forkling with me, even as I got better.


All I was doing stopped. All the therapy and coping skills and healing slipped into shadow.

I lost my apartment, couldn’t bring myself to work, and wound up living in my van with my younger son Ed.
“Pull Over Goat” continued…

While sleeping in the van, I awoke and saw a man reach inside through a broken window and steal my backpack that had my basic necessities and journals, important things, I had kept with me.

The event was the final straw that sent me to the mental hospital once again. After a week in the hospital, I spent three months staying at the Torres Shelter.

I had many times again thought, I must be crazy!

I suffered flashbacks, anxiety, panic attacks, and life seemed overwhelming.

Getting through it, finding a way to hope, was the key. This time I had tools, resources, and support.

I became a peer support worker and found myself surrounded by people like me, people who knew what these incessant, dark, self-destructive emotions and thoughts were like. These people, and all they have taught me about what it means to embrace recovery, have changed my life forever.

Now, two years later, I am working as a peer advocate and case manager in behavioral health services. I have taken every training, counseling, and assistance offered to me and learned whatever I could from each experience.

Medications, though they can work well for many people, didn’t work for me. We all have our own paths to recovery and wellness.

What works for me is I have developed my own Wellness Recovery Action Plan for when things get worse again (not if), and I work every day on dealing with grief and loss through acceptance and talking to people who have empathy and understanding.

Writing is one of my favorite coping skills and my passion. I have a bachelor’s degree in journalism and used to work as a newspaper reporter. Now, I’ve started this Journal and facilitate the weekly writing group at the Iversen Center.

I have found that every experience has prepared me for each new experience I encounter.

Mental illness is a spice, not the main ingredient, of my life.
“Pull Over Goat” continued…

I wish I could say when I got through with that panic attack near Vina that my life got better real fast, that Goat and I got back on 99 as changed people and made better choices.

But change is slow and lessons learned take effect over years and through experiences.

Goat disappeared from my life as did many people. I learned that often people are only in our lives for seasons, and that is alright.

I also learned that life is short and can end at any point unexpectedly. We better use our every days as best we can and take opportunities whenever they come. Do not wait.

Mental illness is just a part of the ride, making it a more challenging and exciting climb up the mountains we face. We can still make it up and over just like anyone else who doesn’t have a mental illness.

Some of us just need more help and patience than others to reach the same place.

Most importantly, I have to keep believing in the power within myself to cope with symptoms.
I am always ready to learn and to listen.
I also work to develop the courage to ask for help when it all seems too difficult to do on my own.
I used to think I would die.
Now, I understand why I thought that way.
Now, I think I will live.
And I will live well.
Appreciation of Living

by Tracy Bright

Favorite sun home night
Most pretty camp trip (lots of fun)
Lassen: Mountain, sacred stream blessing
Night – fairies, light, spirits, into dreams
Shasta city, great coffee
Shasta mountain, two nights up free camp group
Indian and aesthetics; “Harold”? medicine wheel blessing
Hiking trails, lots of pics with my friend and me in Shaman Leo hat
Loads of fun and laughter
Huge campfire night flames
Sounds of singing
Never want to leave
Fresh air, blue sky
Friendly cool people
Very good time
My return to Wintu home.
Just Be You
Collage by Denise Peterson
Unnamed
by Sadie Longcor

In my kitchen I have all of my flour, sugar, beans, and rice, each in unnamed containers so that I have to actually open each one of them up and look inside to see which one is what I need. Yes, this takes extra time and effort, but for me it’s worth it.

I do the same when it comes to people because I find the most inspirational, knowledgeable, and loveable people that way. So many people overlook me because I don’t have a distinct label.

I choose to be a mystery, like my ingredients above, waiting for the right person to come along to spend that time and effort to see what I have on the inside. Because in reality we are all made from the same ingredients, but some of us have shinier, prettier, and bolder labels, or so we think. What truly matters is what’s on the inside, unnamed, that counts.
Inside of Me

Collage by Denise Peterson
Dragon
by Davy Andrek
Shades of Blue Shades of Gray

by John Breen

Soon I have to be leaving
but when I go away
in my heart I'll be grieving
through Shades of Blue Shades of Gray.

Hear the wind when it’s blowing.
Watch the sun on the bay.
Love the child who’s still growing
through Shades of Blue Shades of Gray.

Through the world you are facing
guard your dreams every day.
It’s the moon you are chasing
through Shades of Blue Shades of Gray.

What you see will keep changing.
What you feel goes away.
It’s your life you’re arranging
through Shades of Blue Shades of Gray.

Love, Sweet Love, is so healing!
Love, Sweet Love, doesn’t die!
Let yourself feel the feeling!
It’s okay if you cry!

Soon I have to leave
but when I go away
in my heart I'll be grieving
through Shades of Blue Shades of Gray.
The Old Chair

Grandfather's Great Chair; arms torn away; cloth skin retrieved. Weathered remains with working functions in the abandoned frame.

Guardian Locked in Ritual Peace Bond, it waits... will not take menace to heart of Will to talk in dreamscape, passage, time while it links to touch the crippled two at circle circle edge.

They tremble, restrained by force, to not move. The Knowing One is not here and the beasts run in moonlight, still dim. Fierce chitter as they move past Roots Bundle resting on Sit Zone. Heart new bones of former living— their dry death rest.

The Vision persists; Shadow Spin... Rolling Twist, Leap to Roll, Fierce Forward Momentum. The few wild, young, feel the passing vision and with breath rasps, throat whispers warm and challenge the spectral view. Raccoons return to play, Water again now, but dry soon. They will go to Horse barrels, again.
The Chairs of the Field thrum in low vibrations carried in the slight breeze. Must wait. Not yet able. Bow was drawn, it was seen! All knew the tension; points of steel, fiber plastic curved vanes. Out yet, undone, not yet released.

Chairs of the field, Berry Edge, two, also there "Climb steps" and "good Rest Metal"
By Fire Edge, two more; "Strong, is deep burdened by metal. Fork tool and burned Log resting in. Sit Zone. A pile tangle of Things Not Wood, then the Chair "the Small One," broken or nearly, so. Both, Wait.
Grandfather Chair, burden seat of the bundled Roots. To never be.
The Knowing one, yet awake.
The Time of War, will come.
Showah Messenger of the Deer, Dancing Deer, Spirit runs Free. I Name here, the Doog. The Coyote would not let that be.
Quail run. Pheasant stride or rush. Possum, soon. Skunk has passed. Raccoon "& Above," now out, at shadow runs. Knowing one, walked, with staff, days, ago. In the hours of dark.
Water runs, but not to ground.
In Fire season, Full heat, yellow fields, tops of dry cream yellowed white, blistered, Field, matchbox tipped drift of long stalks, become straw, at length leaning in gentle breeze, hundred degree moving air.

Imaginary moments when created perfect existence allows impossible realms of pure existence, where-in absurd complex realities allow curious and bold

Contrivance of sure perfect, humor, intensities of unreal new events.

Is there a book on speech pathology that relates a poetic moment when fictitious persists to become tall tales, related in delusional perfect reality

Story woven, bits of unlikely real realms which allow a resting chair at circle edge to be transformed into living will and menacing intent.

Archers Bow used to prevent impossible and absurd events; of twisting, leaping, surging attack by in animate. Formerly constructed Furniture to become stones, come alive.
I'm sitting on the ‘63 car; a ruin abandoned over 10 years ago. The Bowers in the storage shed nearby, the car, two arrows just inside the closed doors. My feet are on the hood. It is a fairly cool late afternoon. There are a few more hours of light before a cloudy reddish sunset.

A friend arrives from the far side. He walks under the mulberry trees and stands for a minute by the car.

We begin to talk. In the next few moments I spin a fantasy tale. Derelict chairs, the Grandfather Chair, chairs alive, listening. He smiles.

I ask him if he can see the chair about a hundred and fifty feet out, at the edge of the fire circle. "There's a chair out there; about 50 yards." "Can you see it, there on the edge of that dark shadow?" "On the right?" He indicates he can, "Oh yeah, I see it now." We spend another few minutes at word play and he leaves, smiling.
Shaolin Kempo
by Edward Doran
Black Lines and Rainbows

by Sadie Longcor

I’ve been asked quite frequently, “What’s your favorite color?”

Well, I always respond to that question with, “I love every color in the rainbow even the black lines between the colors that everyone doesn’t see because people are all focused on their favorite colors.”

Without the black lines, that most miss, the colors would blend together and they would all be one color – black.
My heart in pain
and lives are shattered
Black lives – white lives
all lives matter

Does my color pose a threat?
Are cops that upset?
“protect and serve” was the motto
Now it’s “kill with no respect”

Racism – segregation
everywhere you go
Do I assume that whites are
ignorant or they just don’t know?

Do we assume that all blacks
are gonna rob, steal, and kill?
I don’t like to be followed in the
store, I don’t like the way it feel

What I find interesting and
I’ve witnessed in many cases
all people steal – while you stare
at black faces.

People should get to know each
other – before passing judgment
Ignorance involves misunderstanding
and surrounded by assumption

We are all created the same
a heart, a brain, and DNA
Blood runs through our veins
So why you feel some type of way?

No one race is superior over
another
We’re all sisters and brothers
from different fathers and mothers
“Realize With Real Eyes” continued…

Embrace solution – no excuses
Be a part of the problem – or
a part of the solution

There’s a fool in every race
one bad apple can spoil the bunch
Some have mentally checked out
for breakfast and dinner – and won’t
be back for lunch.

I ask myself how can it be so
much hate – to the African
American race –
Yet our style is duplicated all over
the place

Our history is mis-educated
so we search out the truths
We pull out the shovel – and dig
deep for our roots

So keep in mind – it’s never too late
to evaluate –

You’re never too young to educate
Stop being a victim and celebrate
To stop race misconceptions
is communication

And remember racism is
the biggest under estimation

I’m not in PMS mode
“Poor Me Syndrome”
This is me at my best
and I’m letting it be known

Racism is a miserable way
to live –
Be happy – don’t frown
Swallow your pride – it’s fat free
You won’t gain a pound

So thanks for hearing me out
Thanks for lending an ear
When the student is ready
the teacher will appear
Ninja Turtle Van

Fabric Creation by Susan Waterreus
Mighty Mouse
by Edward Doran
The Flow of Life Moves Ever Onward

Collage by Denise Peterson
People Are Strange
by Andrea LaVoy Wagner

People are strange, they say.

Joseph talked to himself, laughing usually.
   Called “the Jesus guy” on the city buses.
   Tall, long, beautiful fingers, black hair.
He taught me how “Tiny Dancer” inspired his piano playing.

Max ate at the free hot meal site daily.
   Riding there on his bike
   White hair fanned out like a lion king.
   His right eye pointed away from his nose.
He taught me that the military may be close to curing cancer.

Baba gave me big smiles all over town.
   He wore his long, gray locks tied back
   A blue bandana tied like a cap.
   In his 80s, still walked dozens of miles daily.
He taught me to find peace and handed me cathartic, spiritual messages, handwritten.

Jesse was autistic and kept to himself at school.
   One kid kicked him repeatedly to get him to talk.
   I brought him Guinness World Record books for his brown paper sacks of pennies.
He taught me to listen, even when no words are spoken.

People are strange.
But sometimes when I pay attention,
Like waiting for the toast to pop
Or getting a package in the mail a day early,
People surprise me.
I learn things
I would never learn any other way.
Glance From Other Place

by John V. McMackin
Lairgate Landscape

by John V. McMackin
by John V. McMackin
In Remembrance

Goku Slide and Goku SS
by Byron Thomas Wagner

Byron is the artist who inspired me to do everything I do today and in remembrance of him, I edit this Journal. My son, at age 14, lost his life to brain cancer in December 2013. May his memory and his creativity live on.

-Andrea LaVoy Wagner
The Iversen Journal Staff

Editor .................................. Andrea LaVoy Wagner
Submissions Manager ....................... Nicole Auer
Photo Editor ................................ Jason Tate
Typist ........................................ Diane Coultas
Supervisors ................................ Jason Tate
Ril Werstler
Meghan Anderson

Special appreciation goes to Susan Spann for lending her publishing and legal expertise.
Biographies

*In their own words, meet some of the people who contributed to this journal and learn a little about their creative processes.*

**Davy Andrek**

I have been writing songs since 1992 and am currently working on an animation. I have performed live as well as recorded my own material while working on my animation character, “Captain Scotty McRockstar.” “Dragon” is a zentangle drawing and “Cry California” is song lyrics.

**Joya Autrey**

This dream (“Depth of Epiphany”) has haunted me for some time now. I finally figured out what it meant to me. I never knew how much I value myself. I’ve been destroyed so many times. I’m glad that I’m still in there.

**John Breen**

I dropped out of college when they told me I had to join the ROTC. I kept running even when the statute of limitations was up. That was my gut reaction to the draft for the Vietnam War. I have lived in Chico for 32 years.

**Jack Chaney**

I wrote this poem (“Then, Now and Always”) for a woman named Binnie. I live in Chico. I have a history of writing through junior high and high school and my own Journal. I wrote this a year and a half ago.

**Suzanne Chilow**

Born to great parents, spoiled me rotten. I like the booze and cigarettes. I’ve been sober thanks to the Lord Jesus and AA and many wonderful people.

I’ve made it to age sixty-seven and I’ve never felt better in my life. I’m suffering from bipolar disorder.

**Brenda Louise Cuomo**

I am a 59-year-old female, diagnosed with a mental illness at age 23 and put on meds. Honor student at Penn State University and straight-A individual for 6-12 years of my education. Born in Altoona, Pa., and I have always loved to write. This poem’s subject (“Homelessness”) came to my one long and lonely night.
Biographies continued…

Edward Doran
The ancient Chinese writing in left-hand upper corner is the original name for Kempo; Kempo is the original name for karate, and the original “White Tiger” was trapped in Asia and inter-bred for its albino genes. That is how we come by all the white tigers you see today. My aim is to spotlight Shaolin Kempo Karate because of its spiritual and physical balance. “Wing Chung” is its highest form of Kempo Karate. Is soft as water.

“My Mighty Mouse” was drawn in an isolation cell in jail in Bellingham, Wash. The guards gave me the ink, pencils, paper, and a women’s wrist watch with a picture of Mighty Mouse on it. They wanted to know if I could draw. After “Mighty Mouse” was done, they let me keep the pens, pencils, and paper.

Cheryl Grace
I live in Chico. I am an amateur photographer and writer. I enjoy describing my adventures with details people will appreciate. I take much time taking photos of the birds at the Sacramento Wildlife Sanctuary and capturing bald eagle shots.

Lynn-Marie Lourdes
I write, paint, sculpt, practice calligraphy, and make jewelry. Each day, I work on my wellness. My diagnosis is bipolar, PTSD, depression and DID. “The Gifted” is a poem about spirituality and a small part of how it works. “No Rest” is a poem that I wrote in search of a mate. I wrote “Dreams of Ireland” in honor of my grandparent’s 70th wedding anniversary. My grandfather was from Ireland. My watercolor piece, “Butterflies Are Free,” is a visual healing prayer. “Passing Down of the Peace Pipe,” an acrylic painting, is in honor of Chief Black Sky and all he did for me.

Jonathan Roy Martin
My name is Jonathan Roy Martin. I am a native to Chico, born and raised. I have been writing poetry since I was in the 8th grade. Something significant about my poem I am submitting is that I wrote it specifically for the Iversen Center and my good experiences in coming here and being a member.
Biographies continued...

John V. McMackin
Chico and the Northstate have been a source of joy and serenity in childhood and senior years.
My rich outdoor experience has allowed my arts and fantasy to become fun and foolish. BFA Drawing. Toastmaster speaker. Old Scouter and outdoorsman.

Denise Peterson
Denise balances multiple jobs, children, recovery and artistry in Chico. She suffered from depression for 25 years and had been depression-free for 7. Recognizing the possibility of relapse, she jumped into recovery work six years ago. She now facilitates peer support groups at the Iversen and answers the BCBH Crisis Line.

Andrea LaVoy Wagner
Writing has been my way to cope with life, anxiety, and depression since childhood. My background is in journalism. Writing is my passion and I believe in its power to help others. I am a secretary for the North State Writers club and facilitate the Iversen Center Writing Group. I currently live in Chico with my 9-year-old son Edward.

Susan Waterreus
As children, my older sister, younger brother and I were brought up to the old saying, “Children should be seen and not heard unless spoken to.” This (“Mama – Why Can't I”) is my chance to thank them.
As for the “Ninja Turtle Van,” I made it for my son as a birthday present. He loves the Ninja Turtles. I made it out of felt and stuffed it with polyfill.

Ruthie Willis
I am a 61-year-old woman. I have three children and four grandchildren. I live in Chico and this is my third publication. My poem (“Bouquets From Beyond”) is about the number of bouquets I have caught at weddings and staying. I made up that they were from dead boyfriends but the fourth is a mystery man.
Author Index

Andrea LaVoy Wagner .........................................................46, 67, 71, 75
Anthony Nicosia ..................................................................43
Brenda Louise Cuomo ..........................................................36, 73
Butch Hastaran ..................................................................13, 14, 25
Cheryl Grace .......................................................................8, 34, 74
Davy Andrek ......................................................................10, 44, 54, 73
Denise Peterson .................................................................51, 53, 66, 75
Eden DW ............................................................................11, 35, 39
Edward Doran ....................................................................60, 65, 74
Elizabeth Moore .................................................................4, 15
Finding Your Inner Child Group .......................................33, 41
Jack Chaney .......................................................................20, 22, 73
John Breen .........................................................................55, 73
John V. McMackin ............................................................56, 68, 69, 70, 75
Jon Bell ...............................................................................7, 17, 38
Jonathan Roy Martin ..........................................................1, 74
Joya Autrey .........................................................................30, 73
Lamar Lee ..........................................................................40
Lynn-Marie Lourdes .........................................................3, 19, 23, 24, 45, 74
Marjorie Totten .................................................................27
Momo ..................................................................................21
Ruthie Willis .......................................................................31, 75
Sadie Longcor .....................................................................52, 61
Suzanne Chilow ..................................................................18, 73
Ta’nika Blasher ...................................................................62
Tracy Bright .......................................................................42, 50
Hope
Support
Respect

Northern Valley Talk Line
1-855-582-5554

Iversen Wellness & Recovery Center
492 Rio Lindo Avenue • Chico
530-879-3311

Peers helping peers

THE IVERSEN JOURNAL
2016