



# The Threshing Floor

December 2018

Newsletter of the Guild for Psychological Studies

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**Guild Vision:** The Guild envisions a world in which the significance of each person's truth, authority, and inspired purpose finds fulfillment in life and community.

**Guild Mission:** Guild seminars offer a way of psychological and spiritual transformation that inspires individuals to live their purpose, expand consciousness, and discover and create meaning in their lives and community.

## Deborah Ann Larry Kearny

*from the Tomah, CA, Journal*

Deborah Ann Larry Kearney, 62, of Placerville, formerly of Tomah, passed away Thursday, March 22, 2018, with her son, Michael Kearney, at her side. She had been fighting cancer for nearly two years.

Born to Benjamin (Ben) and Irene (Johnson) Larry; known as Debbie by family and friends, she grew up with a love of reading, science fiction, music, astronomy, and French. She graduated from Tomah Senior High in 1973. While in Tomah, Debora worked at her parents' trucking business, Larry's Express, alongside her parents and younger sister, Denise.

After graduating from Carroll College in Waukesha, Wis., with a B.A. in English, French, and psychology, Debbie married her high school sweetheart, James (Jim) Kearney, who was serving in the U.S. Air Force. When Jim was stationed in San Diego, Debbie gave birth to their son and named him Michael Benjamin Kearney. The proud grandparents were on their way to California to greet their new grandson, when Grandpa (Ben) Larry suffered a heart attack. Within three days of Debbie's cesarean, she, Jim, and baby Michael were on a plane to Denver, where Grandpa Larry was hospitalized.

Her father always believed that Debbie would go to school forever, she loved it that much. She continued with her graduate studies at the University of California-Sacramento, and obtained her M.A. in English and reading. She became a teacher at the Los Rios College Campuses at Folsom Lake and Placerville for many years. When her son was older, Debbie had been working on a doctoral degree in English Literature, when she was diagnosed with cancer.

She will sadly be missed by her son, Michael, of Placerville, and her sister, Denise Larry, of Tomah. Debora will also be missed by her friends, colleagues, and students. She was predeceased by her husband, AF Chief Master Sergeant James (Jim) Kearney; her mother, Irene (Johnson) Larry; and her father, Benjamin (Ben) Larry.

In accordance to her wishes, Debora was buried within a day of her death. Chapel of the Pines in Placerville, assisted with her arrangements and burial.

In lieu of flowers or gifts, please send her family, Michael and his Aunt Denise, memories of moments you shared with Debbie. Please email [stillbreathing78@outlook.com](mailto:stillbreathing78@outlook.com).

*We love so hard and so deeply knowing that life has a "limited time offer" attached to it. We'll miss Debbie terribly; after her burial, Michael said, "It was peaceful."*

May serenity and peace be with you.

Water Horns Kauai Hi  
By Maureen Hartmann

Geysers wildly erupting  
on the Pacific Coast  
cracking dark rock  
as emotion out of control  
scary and exciting  
bringing Angst  
effecting  
rising growth.

## Reflections

*by Nils Peterson*

Living in a house  
we live in the body  
of our lives.... "House," Robert Hass

Packing up to leave the house I've lived in for 50 years, deciding what books to take and what to leave behind to create their own fate, I came across Hass's *Field Guide*. It won for him the Yale Younger Poets Prize. I'd already packed his collected poems, and so I thought to leave it behind, but I leafed through and eye caught the words above. They seemed so true, I tucked it in a bag I was taking with me in my drive north with my younger daughter.

For 50 years the house I'm leaving made up the body of my life and the life of my wife and daughters. My daughters tell me they think of it as "Home," even though neither one has lived in it for 30 years and more.

Mostly, it was a good body, though, like even the best of bodies, there were aches and pains in it and us. The new owners will have to exercise it some to renew its elegance, but it has, as is sometimes said of a face that looks good no matter what the age of its owner, good bones.

Here is something I put together a while ago.

## Midspring

*In the yard jasmine overpowers the air.  
Iris make purple and yellow assertions.  
Ground is white with apple blossom.  
Early morning -- I lie in bed almost content.  
What am I missing? It's the heater,  
the morning hum of the heater coming on,  
the sound of my house taking care of me.  
What is in me that wants such taking care of?*

I remembered and looked for it yesterday because the day was cool enough so that the heater came on for the first time since March, almost autumn now, and because we're packing up to leave this house we've lived in for 50 years.

Now I look at the opening pages of Robert's book and find, "For Nils, who keeps teaching me that poetry is music, Gratefully, Bob," and I am grateful that my fingers opened to "House" and my eyes caught his words as I was making my despairing choices. And yes, "poetry is music."

## The Stories We Tell

April 15 - 18 , 2019  
Bishop's Ranch Healdsburg, CA

There are stories that reside within each of us. Perhaps they come into conversation as an anecdote or are retold around the holiday dinner table. They may be awakened by an image, song, or movie character. Often linked to experiences in the past, they seem to carry within them an indelible "truth" about who we are.

*By the third grade, I realized that I was an odd duck.*

*Or, I came into a big family so I do well in groups.*

*Or, When my father died, I stopped believing in God.*

*Or, I am just not a creative person...*

What are the stories that have formed our sense of self? How have they influenced us, possibly from behind the scenes? Perhaps we need to hear them through their own voices. Who or what authors our "history"? Do these stories have their own intentions? If so, do those intentions support or stifle the becoming of our true self?

In this seminar we will become our own listeners, allowing the stories to tell their own tales. Welcoming what has become history, we will invite *Knowing* to unfold itself through reflection, imagining, art, body awareness, and sharing. Through this process, space may be discovered that allows new and different stories, along with their insights, to emerge.

We listen for answers to the question: Who do I think I am?

Leaders: Manuel Costa, M.A. LMFT  
Jennifer Morgan Mansfield, M.A.  
Patricia Calcagno Stenger, M.A. LMFT

When: Mon, April 15 (dinner) through  
Thurs, April 18 (lunch)

Cost: \$500.00 plus \$50.00 registration  
fee. Scholarships available.

To register, contact the Guild for Psychological Studies,  
PO Box 29385, San Francisco CA 94129-0385

Or register online with

Pay-pal at <http://guildsf.org/online-seminar-registration/>

For more information about the seminar,  
contact [pstenger@comcast.net](mailto:pstenger@comcast.net)

## Debora Ann Larry Kearney – A Remembrance

by Anne Dilenschneider, Sioux Falls, SD

Debora Ann Larry Kearney died on March 22, 2018, after a courageous journey with several forms of cancer. Over the years, Debora was a beloved friend, colleague, scholar, educator, and explorer. She was passionate about diversity and creating safe spaces for each person's voice in the classroom and in the wider community.

Debora was an active Guild member until October 2009. During that time, in addition to attending Guild seminars and trainings, she led City Records.

As a Guild member, Debora challenged the use of 1960s scholarship when more recent discoveries provided better context. She encouraged a rewriting of the Records questions to reflect this new information. She hoped to include the range of new scholarship ("whether it be Christian, Jewish, feminist, post Jungian, post colonial, or post modern") to provide even more light (and darkness) for our inner work.

Her own words say this best. As she wrote Elli Norris in 2005: "As for your questions, Elli, about what we can do with the Records, I can only suggest one thing right now: Listen – let those with ears hear – to what some of us are bringing out of Jewish scholarship. In some instances, the changes are minor – using "ask" instead of "accuse." But in other instances, the Records material needs to be reconsidered – the Good Samaritan parable is one. If Jews were astonished that the priest and Levite did NOT stop to help the man, I think the parable illuminates with new and powerful possibilities."

At the end of 2006, she invoked this statement from the Guild's website:

In discussion sessions, the seminar leader asks questions intended to evoke responses on the part of all — questions designed to illumine the meaning the text offers to us. Since there is no single "right" answer to such questions, individuals are encouraged to think for themselves, to consult their own resources, and to contribute their own particular response to the material, as free of preconceptions as possible. They are also encouraged to listen with genuine openness to

contributions of others.

She then noted: "I feel strongly that I must be able to bring forth what I know about Judaism and Jesus, as the Gospel of Thomas reminds me, because it may save me. Or at least let me sleep at night. :) This is one of the gifts I can offer the Guild folks."

Debora's journey led to her conversion and membership in the Jewish community. I am including the letter she wrote at that time to give you a deeper sense of her soul's journey in her own words. We have been blessed by her presence in our lives.

P.S. Debora's obituary is at:

[https://lacrossetribune.com/community/tomahjournal/lifestyles/announcements/obituaries/debora-ann-larry-kearney/article\\_fa20ea90-c93f-5087-a6ce-a9be870f334a.html](https://lacrossetribune.com/community/tomahjournal/lifestyles/announcements/obituaries/debora-ann-larry-kearney/article_fa20ea90-c93f-5087-a6ce-a9be870f334a.html)

Debora A. Larry Kearney  
May 3, 2005

"And why would anyone want to become a Jew?"

Cary Cohen asked me that question at the oneg following my first Shabbat service with Rabbis David and Nancy.

Becoming a Jew certainly was not on my list of goals in life when I was 29 years old; in fact, I had always thought I would be a happy member of the United Methodist Church. However, those goals, like the rest of my life, became strained in my 30s with the deaths of my parents and finally collapsed at age 41 when my husband died.

A relationship with God was an important part of life growing up, and even when I dropped away from the church in my college years, I was conscious of my lack of relationship with God and the church. I returned to the United Methodist Church when my son was four and my father, who had developed a strong relationship with our son, was suffering from congestive heart failure. How would I explain death to a four year old? Where would Grandpa go after he died? Creating a wonderful place in heaven for Grandpa seemed the only answer, so we found a United Methodist Church, and cautiously, we built a relationship with the church while I struggled to find God and Jesus in my life. I had several conversations with the pastor, and his best advice was that I could not have the same relationship with God that I had had in my adolescence. True, but unfortunately, God, Jesus, and the church became an

interesting intellectual exercise, lacking a sense of spiritual resonance. My son and I did find a welcoming religious community, and eventually, I became the music director, focusing my energies on creating an innovative and moving musical environment for the services.

My mother died five years later, and my marriage started crumbling. My husband and I had tried to do the impossible: having a two career marriage, with my husband making the US Air Force a lifelong career and my becoming a college instructor. We tried to compromise, but there is no compromising with the military, and finally neither of us had anything left to compromise. A year after my mother died, my husband asked for a divorce, I refused, and we lived separately, emotionally as well as physically. During this time, I realized that I was gay. I could not find God in any of this, and I could not reconcile my involvement in the church with the lack of a spiritual foundation.

When my husband died unexpectedly eight years ago, it was like a great hammer falling, smashing everything in my life into tiny, irretrievable bits. My husband had lied to everyone in his life: me, our son, his parents, the military, his mistress, his doctors, everyone. In the meantime, I had lied to myself by being in denial about so much in my life. In the midst of this turmoil, God became real again—the wrathful, judgmental, vengeful God of my childhood, for whom nothing less than death for my transgressions would suffice.

I did experience my own death, in a symbolic manner: the death of all that had been in my life. With the help of an excellent therapist, I began the next part of my life's journey. The members of my church tried to be supportive, but the struggle that God and I were having was more than they could bear. I stopped taking communion because I no longer believed in forgiveness. I eventually left the church. I had to turn somewhere else to find the space for God and me to wrestle.

That space came in the form of a San Francisco based group called the Guild for Psychological Studies. It held seminars at a retreat center above Calistoga, seminars that focused on Jesus of Nazareth (the historical Jesus) and Jungian psychology. Through a unique blend of discussion, art, movement, music, meditation, and silence, I found a place where the people were not frightened by my experiences with God. Indeed, they understood such experiences and could permit each participant the emotional and physical space for such struggles.

The more I learned about the historical Jesus (as opposed to Jesus the Christ), the more of a human being he became. I soon concluded that he had experienced God and was not God himself and that his Jewishness contributed to his understanding of God. I

wanted to know more. A friend, a United Methodist pastor actually, directed me towards synagogues whose affiliation began with R: Reform, Reconstructionist, and Renewal. Four years ago, I attended CBS the Friday after Thanksgiving when Rabbi Matt Friedman was there. The Torah reading for this Shabbat service was the section on Jacob wrestling with the angel (honestly!). When I heard the scripture and the rabbi's reflection on it, I knew I had found a religious space where I could wrestle with God, where I would not have to ignore all the Christ language, and where no one would tell me that Jesus loves me and God would never give more than I could bear.

So I began to read and attend services irregularly. I attended the services of the Jewish fellowship in Placerville, and the people were polite, but without a rabbi, they didn't seem to know what to do with me and my desire to learn more about Judaism. I then went back to CBS where the new rabbis welcomed me. In fall 2003, I began the Introduction to Judaism and introductory level Hebrew classes, which I deeply enjoyed and gave me much to consider; I was quite annoyed when I was unable to continue in spring 2004 because of a teaching commitment. I picked up the Introduction to Judaism class again in fall 2004 and have continued with it and the Jewish theology classes offered by Rabbi David, and I look forward to taking more classes this fall.

So why do I want to become a Jew?

First of all, I am no longer a Christian. I simply do not believe in the tenets of Christian Church as expressed in the Apostles Creed or Nicene Creed. I do not believe that Jesus was born of a virgin mother, that Jesus was raised from the dead, that Jesus died for my sins, that salvation is through Jesus Christ, and that I can be forgiven through the sacrament of communion. Secondly, I can express these thoughts without the anger and bitterness that I felt after my husband's death. I have returned to my church twice since I left at the end of 2000: both times, I could see how the church and I had moved on with our lives and I could feel a divine presence in the space and between the people there. I truly wish them the best, but their path is not my path.

Secondly, I have spent a couple of years away from any religious community. Even though I was reading about Judaism, I was aware that making such a dramatic shift in religious affiliation demanded much thought and care. I needed time to grieve the loss of my own church's community. Moreover, being a loyal person by nature and realizing that I had made important decisions in the past without much consideration, I wanted to take the time to be clear about whether I needed a religious community, which

religious community, and why.

Finally, I have exploring Judaism, its history, traditions, values, conflicts, and sorrows. I find the history and tradition fascinating, especially as I understand how much Christianity has borrowed from Judaism. I am amazed at how the Jews have maintained their identity throughout the centuries. I am learning to appreciate Israel and its significance to the Jewish people. I love the ambiguity and playfulness of the Hebrew language. I relish the cliché that between two Jews there are three opinions! I find the values of community and doing good works powerful. I have learned that anti-Semitism is alive and well in the twenty-first century. I now understand that Jesus was a Jewish prophet in a long line of martyred Jewish prophets and that he was part of the Jewish tradition, not outside of it. Most importantly, I have discovered a people who celebrate that God needs them as much as they need God.

I know I still have much to learn and understand and experience in Judaism, I doubt I will live long enough to know as much as I would like to know, and I will never have the experiences of growing up Jewish. However, I am making this decision with as much forethought, research, and consciousness as I can. Like a marriage, there are no guarantees, but I have decided to cast my lot and become Jewish and welcome the journey ahead. I am honored to become a Jew.



### December Birthdays

John Petroni	Dec 4
Hope Raymond	Dec 11
Dorinda Hawk	Dec 14
Carina Ravely	Dec 16
Jennifer Mansfield	Dec 17
Angie Papastefan	Dec 17
Linda Missouri	Dec 19
Elizabeth Chandler	Dec 20
Fran Sheridan	Dec 23
Elizabeth Bremer	Dec 31

## Stay Connected

Bob Ridder, Administrative Coordinator, is available for all inquiries by phone at (415) 561-2385, or by email at [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org).

Send your email address to [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org) so that we can keep you connected and up-to-date on Guild events. Also be sure that we have your current mailing address so that we are able to send you this yearly edition of the newsletter. Please keep us updated with your address changes.

## Mailing Address

Guild for Psychological Studies  
P.O. Box 29385  
San Francisco, CA 94129-0385

## Guild Website

Visit [www.guildsf.org](http://www.guildsf.org) for information about seminars and events, and to register for seminars. The website also has general information about the Guild, past issues of the Threshing Floor, relevant news, and links to resources. If you would like to post information of interest to the Guild community, please email [harryhenderson51@gmail.com](mailto:harryhenderson51@gmail.com), our web administrator.

## Guild Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/guildsf>, launched in January! If you haven't yet, please "friend" and "like" us!

## Newsletter

To receive 12 issues of *The Threshing Floor* a year, please contact the Guild office. There is no charge for an e-mail subscription. For a print subscription, please send a check for \$25 to the Guild office.

Items for inclusion in the Threshing Floor should be mailed to the Guild Office, Attn. Threshing Floor Editor, or emailed to [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org). The deadline for each issue is the 20th of the month. Items received after that date will be published the following month.

Production & Layout Editor: Wilene Chang  
Content Editors: Janet Boeth Jones, Sue Renfrew  
Distribution: Bob Ridder

Disclaimer: The opinions expressed in this newsletter (by contributors other than staff and directors) are the writers' and not necessarily an official position of the Guild.

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Order publications on the Guild website, or contact Carina Ravely at [guildpublishing@yahoo.com](mailto:guildpublishing@yahoo.com).

## Donations

Many thanks to our donors! Your financial support in any amount helps the Guild with seminars and other events, with the training of leaders, with outreach, and with other new and ongoing efforts. Because the Guild is a registered nonprofit organization, with 501(c)(3) status, your contribution may be tax deductible. Donations should be directed to the Guild office address, or you may donate online using the PayPal link you'll find by selecting the Make a Donation link on the main page of our website.

## Volunteers

There are several people who fill necessary volunteer roles in the Guild. If you would like to be a Guild volunteer, please contact the Guild office at [office@guildsf.org](mailto:office@guildsf.org) and let us know particular volunteer roles that appeal to you. Currently volunteers are members of the editorial staff for the Threshing Floor; members of the Board of Directors; serve as continuing education coordinator; train to serve as seminar coordinator, committee person or cook; provide transportation to/from seminars for attendees; help to catalog or research Guild archive materials; write reviews for Guild books and other publications; etc.

## Friends and Members

Friends of the Guild are donors and others interested in receiving Guild information who are not Voting Members. Voting membership requires active participation in some form of leadership or committee role, or other volunteer effort, and the payment of annual dues. Voting members may receive a print subscription to the Threshing Floor upon request.

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