

Full-time Grossmont College English instructor, 1964 to 1983.

Jack Lynch Obituary

Jack Lynch



1921 - 1998

GCCCD Grapevine 8.3 (October 1998): 7.
Jack Lynch Succumbs to Asbestosis

Jack Lynch died on October 16 following six months of illness from the severe respiratory effects of asbestosis. He had been exposed to asbestos in 1942 while in the Coast Guard working on a damaged ship, the USS Sterope. He is survived by his wife, Hazel and three daughters.

Jack taught English for many years at El Cajon High School before coming to Grossmont College in 1964, where he taught in the English department until his retirement in 1982. According to his colleagues, Jack did a marvelous job of introducing college English, and his students were consequently quite fond of him.

He was an avid reader. One of his favorite writers was Ernest Hemingway, so much so that on a sabbatical to Paris, he took the time to visit many of Hemingway's old haunts in that city.

Jack was a frequent contributor of poetry to the local El Cajon Californian (previously Daily Californian) newspaper. He wrote a great deal of poetry, some of which he published in a 1992 book, *A Dream of Condors*. The following poem is from that book, and reveals the naturalist in Jack as well as his inquisitive and gentle soul.

The Call

I meant to do my work today
but a strange bird called from a
distant tree
and the path though choked with
new mown hay
led toward the woods and mystery

And though I did not know the way
nor where the path might carry me,
I did not hesitate to go
for something within me seemed to know
my only error would be to stay

And so I left without a word
to anyone, but what could I say?
that I awoke because I heard
from the furthest woods
a strange bird sing
and an unused path looked promising?



Scanlan, Tom. Biblio-files. GCCCD Grapevine 9.2 (June 1999): 5.

In this issue's book reviews, I'm including a book of poetry written and published by a recently deceased GCCCD retiree, Jack Lynch (see Grapevine Nov., 1998).



A Dream of Condors, Jack Lynch (Rattlesnake Mountain Press, 1992)****

This 100 page collection of approximately 90 poems should appeal to almost anyone who enjoys poetry. The poems range from Haiku to sonnets and include a wide variety of meters and rhyming, although some are what I'd call structured free-verse (a repeating rhythm but with little or no rhyme). They are easy to read (most are only one page long) and take on that special quality inherent in good poetry when read aloud.

The subject of his poetry is quite broad but focuses on nature and is often regional and sometimes historical. There are numerous poems about the birds Jack has observed, some in his own back yard, others as far away as Alaska. There are poems about the seasons, about storms, about the seaside. He writes also about places he has hiked, some in the San Diego area, others in the Sierras, Alaska, Utah and Arizona. He writes about teaching, including several poems about his decision to retire. He writes about the stars. He writes about aging. He writes about war and veterans. He writes about the soul and beauty and Truth. In other words, his poems are about life and humanity, though it is life enriched by closeness to nature and a humanity forged of experience and compassion.

I cannot imagine any reader who would not enjoy at least some of the poems in this small book, but for those of you who knew Jack or partake in bird-watching or enjoy the outdoors or appreciate the way words can be used to paint pictures and make music, this is your kind of book.



GCCCD Grapevine 9.2 (June 1999): 11.

Calling All Poets...

Beginning with this issue, I plan to publish at least one poem written by a GCCCD retiree. I'm including one of Jack Lynch's in this issue because he wrote some exceptionally good poems during his lifetime and it complements the review of his book in Biblio-files. I'm also asking at this time that any of you gentle readers out there who write poetry from time to time to send some to the [Grapevine](#) so that we can all enjoy your thoughts and feelings and word craft. Try to limit the poems you submit to about forty lines. Submit more than one if you like, but I'll normally only include one poem per poet in each issue.



So polish up those metaphors, pick a favorite metre (or keep it free, as that may be), rhyme or no rhyme (or some of the time), apply abundant alliteration and demonstrate to the rest of us what Louis Untermeyer meant when he said, "poetry is the art of defining the undefinable in terms of the unforgettable".

SOMETHING OTHER THAN A TREE

by Jack Lynch

I'm thankful I was born to be
something other than a tree:
A tree that cannot sing a note
nor take a step nor cast a vote-
A tree that's born to stand alone
without a name, a friend, a home-
A tree that cannot pet a dog
or ride a horse or catch a frog-
A tree totally unaware
of the cinema or the county fair-
A tree that stands before the storm
while other creatures lie snug and warm.

I'm thankful I was born to be
something other than a tree.
And yet how interesting it might be
if one were born to be a tree:
A tree that year by year grows tall
while celebrating spring and fall-
A tree that stands in sun and rain
and beckons birds back home again-
A tree whose path beneath the stars
is true as Jupiter's or Mars -
A tree that spreads its shade below
where all are free to come and go-
A tree devoid of fear or gain
and never causes another pain.
I'd not mind to be one with trees
if I could know such joys as these.