

EDITOR'S NOTES

This is not my first job, or even my fifth. I have lived many past lives. I imagine them listed on the jacket of my first novel:

As a Peace Corps volunteer (Palau/Micronesia), I taught English under coconut palms that raised gleaming fronds toward a blue sky. Dark-haired women in Gauquin dresses balanced washtubs of wet laundry on their heads. Children walked barefoot on white sand edging a turquoise lagoon where their fathers went spearfishing by moonlight.

As a fire lookout (Flagstaff), I spent Arizona's summer monsoon season tracking lightning strikes in the Coconino National Forest. The metal tower was five stories tall, and I marked smokes on a big map using colored pushpins. I enjoyed the calm order of the forest service, manned by Hopi and Navajo staff, and the friendly radio exchanges with other lookouts.

As a university instructor (Missoula, Mt.), I corrected stacks of essays during a deadly cold winter. The streets shone with glare ice and the local sawmill darkened the air as the Clark Fork River froze over. In Glacier Park the grizzlies slept.

As a writer/editor (Boulder, Colo.), I reviewed journal papers on atmospheric science. Behind the center where I worked, the Eastern Rockies angled down into the jutting pink Flatirons. My co-workers

helped share my workload when a family illness took me away from the office one day a week.

And now I work at Cal Poly in what used to be an old dorm. From my window I can see the hills east of San Luis Obispo. The lawn in front stays green all year — it's mowed on Tuesdays, releasing the clean scent of cut grass — and cars drive quickly down the one-way streets. The Amtrak passenger train passes by around 3:30, its trumpeting call interrupting phone and hallway conversations.

The thing that stays with me in each of these experiences is not the work itself. It's the feel of a place, and the people I meet.

The best job from the past — as memory recalls it, probably revised by time — was my fire tower post. Shortly after I arrived for duty in April, it snowed. I took a walk alone through the perfect white stillness. The pines were bent low. I saw the tracks of a deer in the crust of a deep drift. I stopped and closed my eyes. Remember this, I thought, breathing in the cold sweet air.

And I always have.

Vicki Hanson

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Editor

FROM OUR READERS

I just received my first issue of *Cal Poly Magazine* and reviewed it from cover to cover. Thank you very much! I have been out of touch for quite some time . . . My last trip to San Luis Obispo was for the last annual Poly Royal. I had hoped to return the following year, but that was not to be. Keep up the

great work and I will be looking forward to my next issue of *Cal Poly Magazine*.

Sincerely,

— **Robert W. Kempel (AERO '60)**

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ON THE COVER



In an era when university presidencies average five years, 1999 marks the 20th anniversary of service to Cal Poly by President Warren J. Baker and his wife, Carly (shown here in front of the Performing Arts Center, San Luis Obispo).

The Bakers' special talent has been coalition-building. They have worked with representatives from the California State University System,

the community, industry, and state, national, and international legislative groups to spearhead a variety of programs and projects together and individually (see story on pages 6-15).

We dedicate this issue of Cal Poly Magazine to President and Mrs. Baker as a special thank you for their stewardship over the years. (Photo by Karen McLain)