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Notes from the Director

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SUSAN SHILLINGLAW

THIS IS THE FIRST ISSUE of *Steinbeck Studies* as a joint publication. I thank libraries and individual subscribers for their patience during the past year. As you can see, this is a much-expanded version; it just grew. When I give a dinner party, I worry that there may not be enough food, so I inevitably cook too much. When I edited this volume, not quite knowing how to judge page length in the new format, I just kept editing, adding courses, so to speak. Throughout, I received friendly support from the staff at the University of Idaho Press, and I thank Ivar Nelson, director of the press, for sound transitional advice; Candace Akins for superb proofing; and Amy Grey for design and patience. At San Jose State, Dean of Humanities and the Arts, Carmen Sigler, approved the merger; Rita Peth in the business office expedited contract negotiations; and Craig Kochersberger, designer, graciously supported the transition. Warm thanks to all for their belief in a new direction.

This has been a year marked by change. The Steinbeck Center moved to the new Martin Luther King Jr. Library, a joint venture by the city of San Jose and the University. The building at the corner of Fourth and San Fernando is eight stories high and houses both the city's and the University's collections. Some were skeptical about the merger, mostly professors worried that city residents would snap up books their own students needed for research. After three months of occupation, however, the energy of the library, the stunning views, and the abundant light seem to have won over the most reluctant patron. Housed on the fifth floor, the Cen-

ter now attracts scores of visitors, more in a week than we heretofore had in a semester. The Steinbeck Center shares space in Special Collections with three other archives: the Beethoven Center (largest in North America); the SJSU Special Collections; and the California Room. To enter the Special Collections area, patrons pass through a “Golden Gate,” a public art masterpiece of 100 golden carburetors encased in plastic, lining the doorway. Steinbeck, lover of cars, tinkerer with parts, might well appreciate the artistic homage to California’s mobile culture.

It was also a year marked by loss. On April 27, 2003 Elaine Steinbeck, the author’s widow, died. In this issue there are three articles about what her life meant to Steinbeck scholars; there could be scores of tributes. With her unwavering support of Steinbeck scholarship and creative endeavors, she touched many, many lives. My editorial work this fall was shadowed by another loss, the death of Wes Tiffney on September 5, 2003. With his wife, Susan Beegel, he was the vision behind and co-director of the Nantucket Steinbeck conference, as well as co-editor of *Steinbeck and the Environment*. This issue is dedicated to the memories of both Elaine and Wes.

In this post-centennial year, when I, for one, thought that Steinbeck would be a quiet presence, his work again captured national attention: *East of Eden* was the pick for Oprah’s book-club. The fanfare was delightful. But so was teaching Steinbeck again this fall. My students and the long-time supporters of *Steinbeck Studies* remind me, as always, that the real joy of my position is less public than private—the joy of working daily with books and ideas that inspire me and so many others.