Within our dreams and aspirations, we find our opportunities.

One card had stamps she'd carved, of pink flip-flops, over which she wrote, "Happy Summer! Happy Swimming!" Another had yellow and purple watercolors on which she'd written, "So Caroline, these colors are pretty fun!" Her cards always seemed simple, but would be so hard to replicate. They reflected how she cared about people and how artistic she was. I was so lucky she shared that with me. I kept them because they were so pretty, but now I'm glad I kept them because they're part of her. A history of her loving friendship.

Kris Nevius - My first class with Erma was a card-making class sponsored by FOC. She introduced me to the fun of making cards and opened up that new world to me. I loved her Summer Correspondence classes. Erma was a gift to me and to the calligraphy/card-making world.

Gina Vasquez - I recall Erma during the 2005 summer workshop with Lisa Engelbrecht. I had just lost my mother. No one really knew, but Erma was so inspirational and supportive. I'll never forget that. My mom, Lisa, and now Erma are gone, but that time and place will never leave me.

Meredith Klein - I took Summer Correspondence for many years and, upon retiring from my day job, I took Erma's classes when I could (Thursday group). In addition to the regular bands, I enjoyed the nontraditional ones she devised, such as the Soup Alphabet (based on the pasta shapes in alphabet soup), and replicating Michael Harvey’s Songlines typeface with calligraphy tools (we experimented with Brause nibs and brushes). I use her Monoline Variation regularly, and have taught it, with her permission. I am ever grateful I had the chance to study with Erma, inspired by her brush lettering (she used it for the calligraphy on the 2005 FOC Membership Directory), the elegance of her cards, her amazing hand-carved stamp collection, and her ingenuity. But even more than that, I admired her warmth, and calm, kind, and helpful approach to teaching. I still hear her laugh and her soft voice, and as I look through the cards I’ve received and the exemplars I still follow, she will continue to be with me.

Suzanne Yoshi - Sitting at a coffee shop surrounded by small gardens, I became aware of a profusion of yellow, orange, papery flowers with tall, skinny stems—poppies dancing in the breeze. I knew immediately Erma was saying hello. She loved poppies and planted them every year in front of her house where she taught classes for decades. Erma was a quintessential Japanese American woman—tiny, soft-spoken, patient, kind, great cook, gentle smile, sparkling eyes. But what a woman would fall in love with German, major in German at UCLA, and go on to teach high school German? What teacher would have high school students who loved her and organized reunions over the decades? And what calligraphy instructor would have so many current and former FOC Council members and FOC Bulletin editors in a weekly class for years, kept together by Erma with her presence, which required few words?

As Meredith and I were trying to gather Erma's work for this tribute, there were no formal pieces to be found. What we collected comes from her class handouts, cards exchanged from Summer Correspondence, cards and notes she sent us for holidays, well wishes, and birthdays. Unable to attend her classes taught during the day when I was working, I made her promise to continue teaching until I retired. She said, "Don't worry, I will teach until I can no longer hold a pen." Her classes wore her work, her art, and her love. She brought us all together every week with her wonderful grace and love of calligraphy, and we will be forever grateful.

Desire to have things done quickly prevents them being done thoroughly.
A MANIFESTO

The Calligrapher in Our Time

We don’t create heroic things to earn fame. We put no scratches on the globe; but perhaps with our gentle art we add a few little daisies of joy to life, in a nicely written praise of the Lord, written with the complete engagement of our heart. Calligraphy is a peaceful and noble art; done by well-educated human beings who do their work with full commitment, with intense concentration. For we want to put into our letters a little of our own feelings, our personality and mood. Letters should have grace and beauty in themselves. We see everywhere a growing interest in calligraphy. In the future people will work fewer hours a day and hopefully some may use their free time to do something creative with their hands.

A few more facts about calligraphy. No calligrapher pollutes rivers with his ink, nor poisons the air we breathe. Calligraphy makes no noise. We don’t fight with arms nor with our pens, but we want to convince sometimes with a hand-lettered message of special importance in which we believe. Of course we know we are not the center of the world — we rarely like to make nice things with our given talent. And we have the burden of responsibility; the heritage of the great masters of the past, the tradition of the scribes of the Middle Ages of the royal and imperial ancestors in Europe and Asia.

CALLIGRAPHY IS STILL A ROYAL ACTIVITY

The Washington Calligraphers Guild is proud to pay tribute to Hermann Zapf by awarding him Honorary Lifetime Membership. This is a tangible way of expressing our deep respect and admiration for his unique and all-encompassing contributions to the allied fields of Calligraphy, Typography and Type Design.

Presented at the Letterforum Conference, Washington, D.C. August 11, 1988

Rose Feller, "In Memoriam" Jack Neely, President, WCG Sherie Worster, President, WCG Sybil Heymann, Program Chairman, WCG Pamela Deitchman, Program Chairman, WCG