

Watercolor Sketch of Grytviken Whaling Station, South Georgia Island. Roy Beckemeyer, January, 1998.

Trip Journaling

by Roy Beckemeyer

"...the unexpected colorful splurge of sprawling red-tiled roofs, the hard-cornered granite peaks that lorded it over earthy, worn slopes and grassy swards."

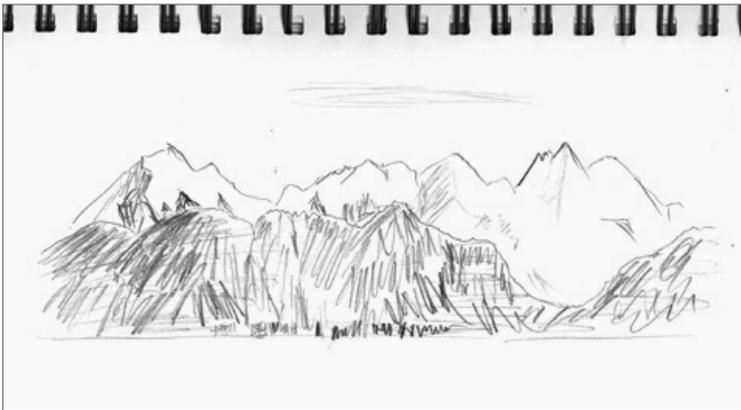
In the 2016 issue of *Konza Journal*, I wrote a piece titled "[Nature Journaling](#)," in which I suggested journaling and drawing as a way of taking time to look closer at what is around you, a way to gain a new insights into your space, your place in the world in all its depths and intricacies.

I have also used journal entries and sketches during vacations and trips to places other than my home ground. Since my wife Pat and I were avid naturalists and bird watchers, many of our trips have been made with me festooned with camera bodies, lenses, tripods, and roll after roll of film. I truly love taking photographs to document the new and unfamiliar. But I also find a real sense of renewal in divesting myself of that photography gear every so often, taking paper and pencil in hand, and taking a deep breath.

The water color that heads this article is a perfect example. As our Russian icebreaker rounded a point and the little whaling station of Grytviken (South Georgia Island) came into view on a sunny morning in January, 1998, we were astonished by the scene. Cameras flew up, shutters clicked, people exclaimed. It was a view of unparalleled loveliness. I snapped a dozen photos or more. But when I think back to that trip to Antarctica some 20 years ago, it is this drawing, sketched rapidly in pencil, quickly filled in with washes of color, that seems to have captured the soul of that morning: the unexpected colorful splurge of sprawling red-tiled roofs, the hard-cornered

granite peaks that lorded it over earthy, worn slopes and grassy swards.

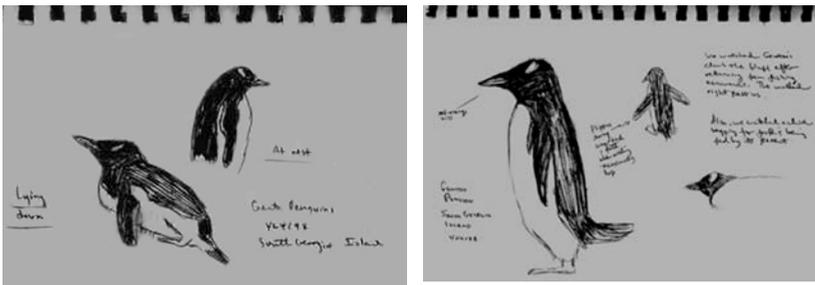
Looking through the viewfinder of a camera is often an exercise in framing masses of color, groups of people, arranging the world within a field of view, apportioning reality onto an image sensor. To sketch a scene or an object, on the other hand, requires you to see form in all its intimacy, to trace its outlines, shade its shapes and angles:



Quick Sketch of Mountainous Slopes of South Georgia Island. Roy Beckemeyer, January, 1998.

We got our first close looks at penguins in nature on South Georgia Island. I noticed that when photographing them, I tended to look for "photogenic" individuals, or small groups that were arrayed in pleasing poses. When I took out

my sketchbook and pencil, I began to notice the way they stood, held their wings, the stance of their tails, their personalities. I had taken short video segments of their way of walking, reminiscent of Charlie Chaplin's jaunty strolls in old movies, but I think that my tiny rough drawing of a penguin walking away and holding its wings out as if they were balance beams captures that unique locomotory style quite charmingly.



Quick Sketches of Gentoo Penguins, South Georgia Island. Roy Beckemeyer, January, 1998.

So by all means, continue to take photographs on trips, vacations, family reunions, adventures. But take along a notebook and pencil, too. You may find that your drawings capture unique aspects of the personality of the place you are visiting that go unnoticed in photos.

Roy Beckemeyer of Wichita is a contributing editor of *Konza Journal*. He and his wife Pat, married for 56 years, have traveled extensively, and have visited all seven continents in their wanderings. He is author of the [2015 Kansas Notable Book Award](#) winner [Music I Once Could Dance To](#) (2014, Coal City Press). He blogs at <https://phanaerozoic.blog/>.