

Janus

Westminster College

1994

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The Experience of Being a Frog

By C.A. Leminger

Flicker in the starlight.
Leaping in the sunfire.
Baking on the asphalt.
Sleeping in the quagmire.
Life travels on
while I slip through the coolness.
Roads disappear,
and I glide through the deep.
Leaves fall again,
and I lay in the sky mirror.
Moonshadows fall
as I blend in the green.
If I was
a froggy in a tree,
on passing people
I could go pee.
Pushing from the circle.
Soaring in the sunlight.
Striking at the treetops.
Singing in the twilight.
Dawn comes again,
and I rise up before it.
Flesh coils anew.
With joy, I release it.
Snow softly falls,
and to heaven flies the smoke.
Know ye my name?
I am frog, hear me croak.
By the waters edge,
to live and die,
may make me laugh,
may make me cry.

***Awarded Best Poetry
For 1994***

The Wizard
By Mike Hargett

***Awarded Best Prose
For 1994***

In a small room in the back of a quiet middle-class home, somewhere in suburban America, an old man with a tattered top hat, rumpled cloak, and a few battered accessories keeps twenty tiny terrorists pinned to the floor without laying a hand on them. Today, they are not glued to the T.V. or video games. They are watching an old man weathered far beyond his years as he magically turns one little red ball into two, then three, and then finally four. "Now watch children," he says "because I can only do this once."

The children watched in awe as the old man took a pitcher of milk and poured it into a rolled up newspaper. Then he unrolled the newspaper, and "POOF!", it was gone. Forty little eyes stared in amazement, many kids smiled and laughed, others stayed quiet, and a few were afraid.

One of the children in the back row turned to his friend and said, "Do you think he'll make us disappear?"

"I don't know, but if he can, maybe he'll get rid of my little sister."

This made John laugh. He thought this whole thing was stupid. He was only here to drop off his little brother, but he decided to stay and see the show. As he stood there, he thought to himself, "here's some crusty old man doing nickel and dime tricks for a bunch of whining rug rats for a couple of bucks an hour. He must have something better to do, or at least if he were really good, like David Copperfield, he could make good money."

Meanwhile, the old man changed the color of a handkerchief he had

removed from his breast pocket.

"And now", said the old man, "using the words a traveling gypsy woman once whispered in my ear under the light of a full moon, I will change the color back." In a quiet voice, he said, "Leavumnowa beforea myum hubbym

returneth. Voila!"

The handkerchief returned to its original color, and a pigeon flew out of his hand.

"She was a very nice woman."

That was his big finale, and all the children clapped. Then one of the mothers told them it was time for ice cream and cake. Suddenly forty frantic feet stampeded into the other room.

As John headed for the door he heard, "You didn't like the show?"

"What?" said John.

"Well I didn't see you applaud." As John stepped back to the table, the old man continued, "Usually when people don't applaud they didn't like the show."

"Oh, that's not it at all," replied John.

"Then what was it?"

"Well, it's just tricks for a bunch of kids."

"Oh, I see, I'm just not a high class magician," responded the old man. "Well, what do you want to do with your life, can you tell me that?"

"Right now I just want to travel all over the world, meet a lot of cool people and make a lot of money," said John.

"Oh, that's all huh! Well I've followed that dream son. I've played before many presidents and most of the crowned heads of Europe. Why I once taught a coin trick to a king in Africa! In another tribe I was mistaken for a god because of the same handkerchief trick I just performed! I've traveled from Boston to Borneo, New Orleans to New Guinea, from Baton Rouge to Bangladesh, from Buckingham Palace to basements in Baltimore, and everywhere in between. In every country, I've brought a smile to every face, from the poorest peasant child to the richest man, whoever would watch me perform. It all started with one trick."

The old man produced an ancient silver coin from his pocket and held it between his index finger and his thumb, then it suddenly vanished. He turned his hand over a few times to show John that he wasn't hiding it. Then he reached up,

plucked it from his ear, and dropped it in his hand.

"That's an old trick," said John.

"Yes," said the magician, "that's the coin my father bought on the day I was born." John looked at the coin, it was a silver dollar from 1900.

"Wow," said John, "that makes you..."

"Yes, I know, really old," replied the old man. "But in my time, I've seen more people smile, laugh, and applauded then you can imagine and I've made so much money that you couldn't spend it in ten life times! I gave most of it away, but I could still live comfortably in any castle in Europe."

"Then why do you do this stuff if you have that much money?" inquired John.

"Well it's hard to explain if you've never been a thespian or an entertainer. The whole thing is a game. You want to make the audience feel good and help them forget their troubles for a while. That's what I'm here for. Everything I do in life is to make people happy."

"You mean you do all that with just a few tricks?"

"Yes, anyone can entertain, but other people do it with a few jokes, an act from Shakespeare, an opera, or just a song." said the conjuror.

"I don't think I could ever do that, I'm no good with magic. I've tried before, but maybe if you showed me some tricks..."

Just then there was a crash in the kitchen and one of the kids started to cry, and when John turned around the old man was gone. The french doors to the yard were locked tight, and to get out the front door, the wizened old man would have had to pass John.

On the table there was a magic book with the old man's picture and name on the cover The Magic Of Life by Mike "The Wizard" MacCloud and there was an inscription: "To John, Always leave them wanting more (then you're guaranteed an audience when you return). Signed "The Wizard." Next to the book there was a 1977 silver dollar, John's birth year. He opened the book. "Page 1: simple coin tricks".

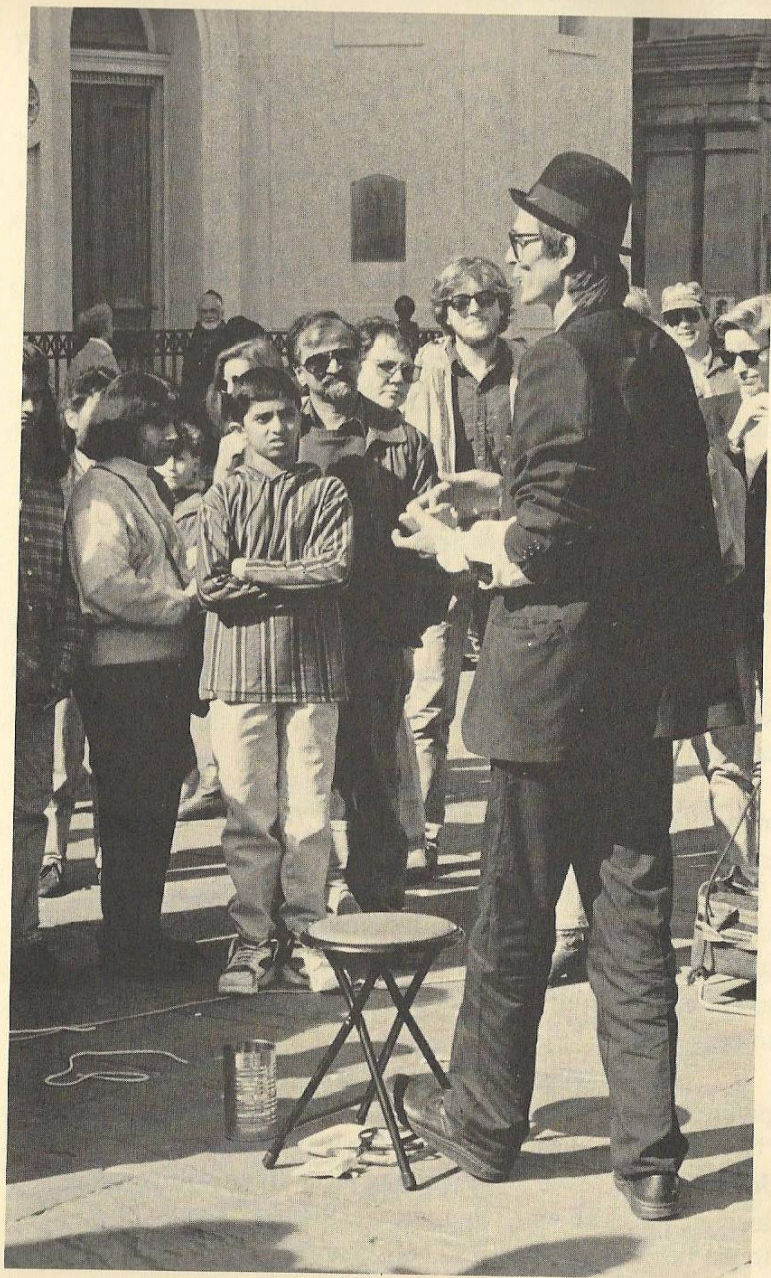


Photo by Matt Kuhl

A Weird Dream?

By Roger Williams

Somehow I was a little red-haired boy with a dream of flying. I went to an antique store in China-town, just outside San Francisco, and made my wish known to the store owner. He was a tall Chinese man with a beard like the ones in the old karate movies they used to show on TNT at two in the morning. The man also wore a pointed black hat and smoked a very large joint. In the midst of a toke on that big joint, he granted my wish.

I became, through some twisted distortion on reality, a bald eagle. My wish had come true. I could fly and I was back in Mid-Missouri again. I flew up as high as possible. This venture took me passed the clouds and into outer space. It was cold out there. I fell back to Earth under some accelerated force of gravity or maybe my mind simulated what a bungee jump would feel like. Whatever the case, I fell amazingly fast. When I caught myself in a controlled flight, I realized the Earth had rotated and I was flying above Colorado.

I felt hungry and instinctively spotted a field mouse running quickly from a boulder to a stand of trees. I swooped down on this field mouse and tore my surprisingly strong claws into its body and flew to a perch I liked. Feeling starvation coming on, I tore into the mouse and swallowed a chunk of its bloody flesh. Immediately I threw up because of its horrid taste. The stoned Chinaman changed me into a beautiful eagle but had left my human taste buds intact. Sick bastard.

I flew to Durango, located in the southern part of the state, to a national park my family goes to annually. I remembered that people used the stationary grills to cook their meals. Like most animals, I wanted people food. I hid in the trees above one par-

ticular family's cooking pit. They were busy making hamburgers. I noticed that they all had on red bozo noses and were not wearing any pants. I waited patiently above the fire and watched the burgers become brown. I planned my attack.

When the family was away from the fire for a second, I think to watch Mr. Ed re-runs since they were all humming its theme song, I swooped down above the grill and snatched the browned cow meat from the hot flames. I flew to an open field nearby and ate the beef with ferocious need to be rid of hunger. I must not have noticed that my bird stomach was smaller than my human one, because, upon finishing the patty, my innards blew open my abdomen revealing an open cavity in my mid-section.

This sight in my dream made me sick and I drifted into thoughts of pink salamanders under the ice in the arctic circle.

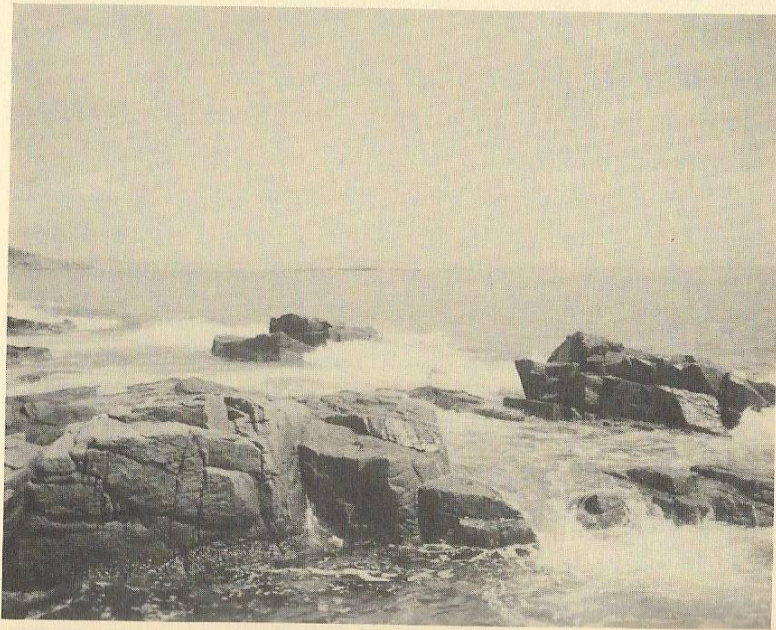


Photo by Diana Korte

An Affair To Remember

John A. Ward

Oh, how beautiful you are!

Sitting motionless shimmering in the golden sunset
those classic chrome lines that enhance your timeless appearance

It was not your reputation or prestige that first attracted me to
you

I admit, it was your curvaceous German steel body
a sleek form that still enraptures my soul

ELEGANT under big city lights, out to dinner

AGGRESSIVE on narrow country roads, Sunday after
noon

PRACTICAL over long suburban commutes, late to
work

You are positively the pinnacle of perfection
pulse-pounding precision performance
a modern masterpiece: BMW.

A Better Ball

By C. A. Leminger

Angry young people run through the streets.
From their lips issue violence and hate.
You'd like so much to teach them to love,
But, not today, you're already late.
A scared, lonely girl, about your age,
Will share with you her troubles and fears.
She wants someone to reach out to her.
Sorry, you're going out for some beers.
In a run-down house, across the tracks,
A father could sure use every dime.
If someone would even pray for him,
But, no, that would take far too much time.
In a far off land, high on a hill,
A child screams at a stone-grey sky.
Life's so very hard when there's no hope.
"I'm going to help," you sweetly lie.
Every day, ten thousand trees fall.
Smoke climbs high in increasing amounts.
You wanted to save this planet, Earth,
But, hey isn't it the thought that counts?
Somebody's made an effort today.
Someone's been given the hope they lacked.
Somebody's found the strength to live life,
Because somebody bothered to act.

THE ARTIST

By Dawn Isaac

THE SMELL OF BLOOD IS IN THE AIR,
PEOPLE OR ANIMALS OR SOMETHING
SCREAMING IN MY HEAD, MAKING ME DIZZY.
CURIOUS HOW LIFE CAN BE TAKEN IN AN INSTANT.
FLESH SO SOFT AND DELICATE TO MY TOUCH,
MAKING MY MIND WANDER IN THOUGHTS OF
ACTIONS UNTOLD, AND I SMILE AT THESE
THOUGHTS.
THIS SHINY OBJECT IN MY HAND, SO SHARP,
SO BEAUTIFUL.
CAN DRAIN THE LIFE FROM ANY MORTAL BEING.
OH MY LOVE, PRAISE THAT POINT THAT CUTS
THROUGH SO NEATLY, EXPOSING THE INNER MOST
SOUL OF LIFE.
THEN I ENTER WITH MY HANDS, THAT SMOOTH,
NOW RED, WET SKIN AND SLOWLY TEAR AWAY
TO MAKE VISIBLE THE SOUL.
FREE! YOU'RE FREE; NOW FLY AWAY.
WANDERING, MY HANDS FIND THAT,
THAT CAUSES SO MUCH PAIN OR JOY OR PAIN.
ONCE PULSATED WITH LIFE BUT NOW I GENTLY
LIFT IT OUT AND WRING WITH MY HANDS THAT
PAIN THAT FOREVER NOW WON'T BE FELT.

AS I STARE AT THE BLOOD DRIPPING FROM MY FINGERS, I SUDDENLY REALIZE THAT TOMORROW IS A NEW DAY, AND I FIND GREAT JOY IN THE THOUGHT OF RELEASING ANOTHER SOUL FROM ANOTHER TAINTED BODY.

FINALLY I LICK THE STICKY LIQUID FROM MY FINGERS, ALLOWING THE LOVELY VICTIM TO COMBINE WITH ME, LIKE SO MANY OTHERS, INTO ONE INGENIOUS POWER.

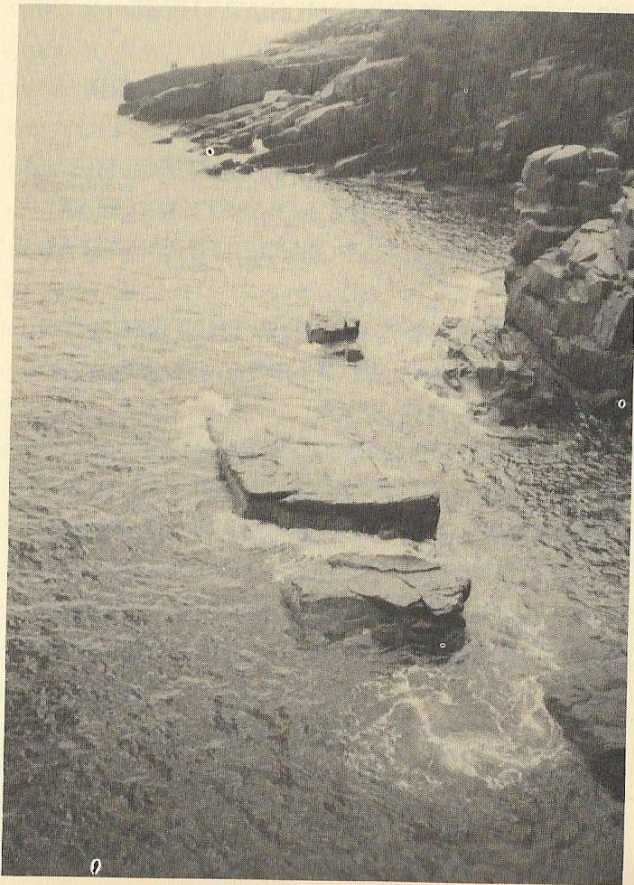


Photo by Diana Korte

THE COMPUTER VOYEUR

By Jason Agee

Power switch, screen on, insert disk...

Wait for the program to download.

You'd think by now they could build these things to run a little faster. Sitting on the desk in front of me is the newest model available, a little house warming gift from the in-laws for our new beach house in San Marino. Typically, I use mine to keep track of finances, income taxes, patient's records, and insurance for Sam and myself. I don't think she could turn the thing on if her life depended on it.

Click the mouse and turn on the modem. Aha! The new billboards for the day.

"Hey everyone in computer land! Huge party over at Justin Palmer's house. Ad. 1224 E. Elkridge Ave. Apt.3. Portland, OR. 11 p.m. BYOB."

Return.

"Wanted: Any little Golden Books for children, esp. Grover's There's a Monster at the End of the Book! Will pay 50 cents per book. E-mail ad. 2644 ajm.@311.467.3043. Please leave message."

I remember reading that book as a kid. I think I gave it to my sister's kids.

Return.

"DWM looking for good times in quiet placesw/ attractive WF. Body hair a plus.

Return! Some people just shouldn't have access to these screens. Other than keeping track of my money, this gizmo of technology allows me to flip through the E-mail channels and communicate with computer junkies all over the country. My modem's receiving a call. . . .

"Anyone home?"

Someone was trying to reach me directly through the system.

"Yes, I'm home, who is this?"

"It's your favorite computer nut, famous novelist, and old roommate. How are you, Mitch?"

Speaking of computer junkies, Spencer is trilingual in English, Spanish, and DOS. He's been trying to get me to buy one of these things for years. He and I roomed together at Columbia. After graduation I returned to the West Coast while he stayed on that overpopulated New York Island. I attended medical school at Stanford while he wrote a best-selling novel fresh out of college. *A Student's Pilgrimage* sold close to three million copies. Not bad for a guy who carried just over a two point and spent most of his waking hours drinking cold coffee in the village cafes while carrying on with aspiring actresses who part-timed as waitresses. He is now a rich bachelor living on the upper west side and currently working on his fifth novel, *Deeper Understanding*. Occasionally he returns to our alma mater for a lecture or two, but he still enjoys a late evening in Greenwich with a twenty-something blonde from Little Rock who is waiting to make it big on Broadway.

"Mitch, guess what I bought?"

"I don't know Spence. Food for that bare kitchen of yours?"

Last winter when Samantha and I went up for a visit he had nothing in the fridge except two Samuel Adams, a Heineken, and half a bagel.

"Are you kidding? Who has time to cook? I got a telescope."

"Sounds like of voyeuristic for a man living on the

eighteenth floor of a high rise apartment building."

"I knew you'd like it. I've already caught one couple at the Westin Hotel, sixth floor. Five times in one night! I can't remember the last time I had that kind of energy. They must be newlyweds."

This from a man who power-shacked almost every night of the week. I gave up on trying to remember all of their names and bought a good pair of ear-plugs instead. Underneath Spencer's irresistible charm, dark features, and award winning smile lay a true pervert.

"Jealous, are you Spence? What are you doing up this early, it's only about 10 a.m. in New York?"

"McGraw-Hill moved my publishing date up. I need to make my final revisions and get it to my editor by the end of the week."

"Congratulations! I didn't realize you were that close to finishing the book."

"Yeah, I'm pretty proud of it. I think it's my best one yet. It should be on the shelves late November, just in time for the Christmas rush."

"I can't wait to read it. Now what possessed you to buy a telescope?"

"Hey, I don't think Willam Baldwin's going to leave one in my living room, and if Sharon Stone can have one, so can I."

"Where'd you put it?"

"Right here by my desk. I can see clear up and down the avenue."

"So what's out there?"

"Well, let me look around. It's pretty chilly out today and everyone's got their coats and hats on. There's a hearse and a shitload of limousines parked in front of St. Patrick's Cathedral. I wonder who died. Whoa!"

"What is it?"

Come on, Spencer. I have to be at the hospital by three. What's taking him so long?

"Mitch, I have just focused my eye on the future Mrs. Spencer Lawton. A radiant blonde in a red coat with a black scarf and legs that look like they could. . . ."

"Could what? What's she doing?"

"I think she's going inside the church, but I'm not sure. She stopped on the sidewalk right in front of it. Let me look again."

Poor woman is probably in grief over the death of a loved one, unaware that my disturbed friend is drooling after her body from a high-rise window. But according to Spencer's laws of life, if she's hot, she's available.

* * *

Where the hell did I put that tissue? thought Lydia to herself. If I'm going to cry I must have a tissue. Here it is, under my tampons and compact. What a time to be on the rag, as if I didn't have enough things to worry about. Just be calm and cool and I can make it through this. And this damn runny nose...

* * *

"She's blowing her nose. She's so beautiful, even while she's wiping her schnoz."

Spencer had pretty high standards for his chicks, so this woman he's got eyeballed must have been gorgeous to pass the "blowing her schnoz" test. Sick and going to a funeral. I bet Spencer's getting out his black suit right now.

"Think you might be heading down for the eulogy Spence?"

"I'm very tempted. Wait a minute. . . . she's walking up the steps... got her hand on the door. . . .but she's not going in. What's up with this?"

Maybe she feels an evil presence staring her down and undressing her with his eyes.

* * *

Should I go in? His wife will be there bawling in the front pew. The bitch probably inherited close to thirty million. I bet she stops by Tiffany & Co. on the way home. Dammit Lydie, make up your mind. If I don't go it'll make the police suspicious. Regardless, they're going to question you about his sudden death at Edwards, Taylor & Bennet law firm. He had no previous heart conditions of any kind. He worked out in the corporate gym three times a week. I was his secretary and mistress for the last three years. I was outside his office typing an appeal to Judge Thurman when he drank the coffee I made him and fell dead on the floor soon after. Of course they're going to question me! Healthy lawyers don't have heart failure. Well screw them. They can't trace it back to me. He wouldn't leave that bitch of his, even though she didn't love him. He even gave me fifty thousand if I promised not to call his wife. There would be another fifty grand if I continued to satisfy him in his office during my lunch hour. Well I'll be damned if that bastard is going to treat me like a prostitute. This weather is too fucking cold. I bet the Riviera is beautiful in late September, after the tourists have returned home. It wouldn't take long to stop by the bank and then pack a few things on the way to Kennedy International.

* * *

Spencer hasn't typed for a couple of minutes. He's probably too busy panting at the telescope.

"Did she go inside Spence?"

No answer.

"Are you there Spencer? What's going on?"

"Dammit! She's walking away from the church, Mitch. No funeral or dinner date for me tonight. Wait a minute, she's heading towards the bank across the street. I could be there in five minutes, and it's Saturday so the banks are closing in a couple of hours and are always packed. There's going to be a long line. I think I'll run down there and check my balance."

Spencer never did know when to give up.

"Well, good luck, my friend. Leave me a message on my E-mail and let me know if her panties and bra match, okay bud? I'll get back in touch with you later."

"Yeh, I'll talk to you later—take care, S."

Poor girl. Too devastated to go to a funeral, thought she'd get some cash and pick up some groceries on her way home. She's completely unaware that "Lucky Lawton" was about to bump into her at the bank. If she's smart she'll leave the country.

Words

By Tim Brown

My words roll by like the miles
I put between us, when, returning to school
The things I should have said, or would have
Said, in those moments of truth
Lead my mind through a dying heart.
But in moments that should have been filled
With truth I spouted lies, or half-truths.
The words I spoke cheated my heart.
Lies running my mind in painful spikes of doubt.
Now the road is running a rhythmic pulse into my mine,
Tears fall free from eyes too tired
To hold them back.
My words roll by like these highway miles
And I cry.

Infinity

By Michelle Hipes

Only 15 more minutes!
It seems like forever!
f of x and x squared, who cares?
I peer to my left and spy
the blinding sky.
The trees are bare,
one solitary cloud in the sky
like an ancient carriage being
pulled by a mythological creature.
TAKE ME WITH YOU!!
I want to fly in the sky.
You fly by my side like in the
midst of this daydream.
Oh, it's gone!
Too bad.
Only 10 more minutes left!
Here comes another like a
barge in the fog.
The trucks down below make for
a horn.
Maybe this time they'll come get me . . .
fractions . . . what? Logs, bases . . .
five minutes, it's a beautiful day.
The glare on my desktop makes me
squint, gum popping and head pounding,
feels like an eternity.
Now I know what they mean by
positive and negative infinity.

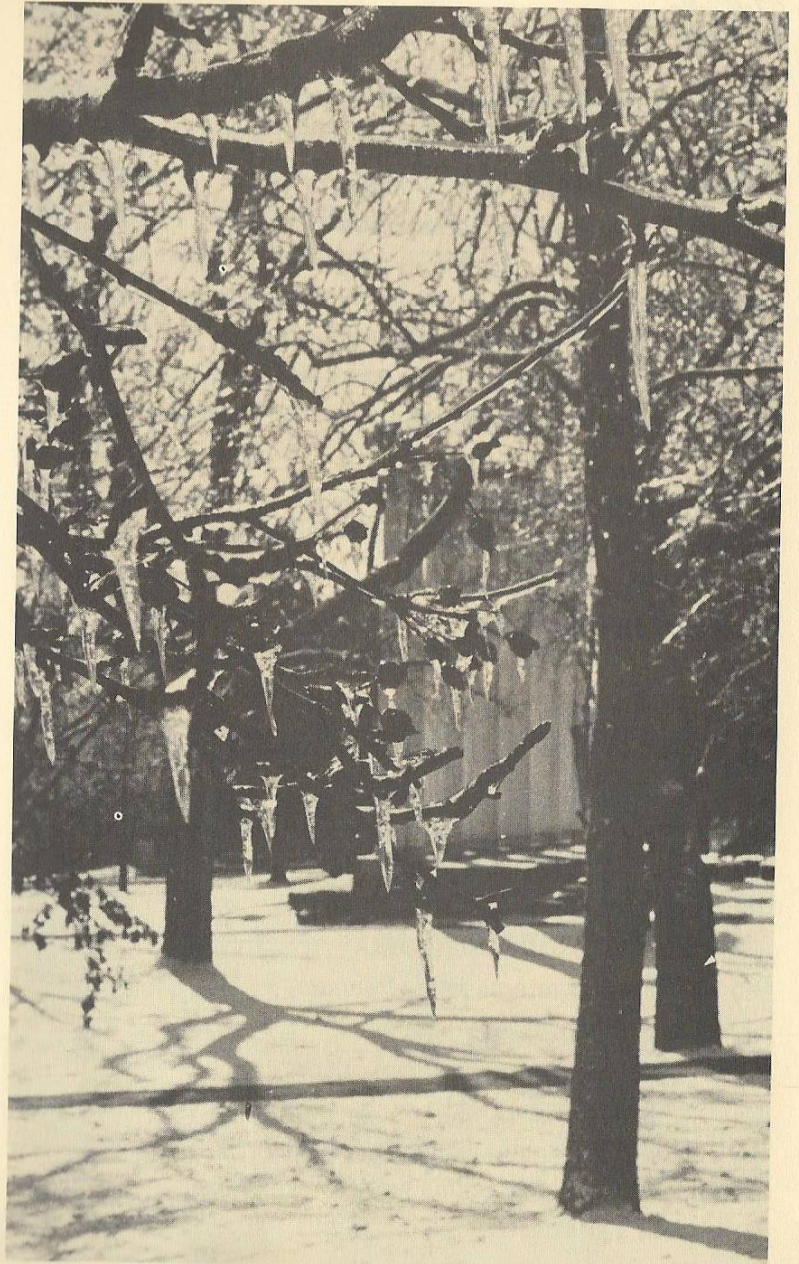


Photo by Jay Kish

Tell Me
By Mike Hargett

Tell me what it is that I must do
All you need do is name your quest,
I will take it then and see it through,
For you there is nothing but the best.

How do I say I Love You
When I've tried a thousand times?
How do I steal a heart so true
When I've tried a thousand crimes?

If love is such a common thing
Then why is it uncommon to me?
If love is blind, as goes the saying
Then why must I still see?

There is not enough depth in the ocean
To measure my Love for you,
And I do not know where to begin
To tell you of what I could do.

Maybe I should give up this game
And admit that I have lost,
But even a sailor returns to the bounding main
Though he knows he'll be tempest tossed.

Tell me what it is that I must do
All you need do is name your prize,
I would risk all I have in this world
To win but a glimmer from your eyes.

New Orleans
By Emily McMillon

Wet hair sticking to warm cheek, she lies up against you and
some of her perfume rubs off on your skin.
You breathe her in liquidly like the heavy morning dew on the
Magnolia and Banana in the courtyards
of le Vieux Carre. You lower yourself into her,
white marble thighs softly gleaming in green graveyards where
the wind blows up clouds of milky down and brushes the beads
hanging around her neck, swaying with careful rhythm from
your chest to hers. The sun gently beats the pools the rain
leaves
in the Rue Royale and the steam rising from her body smells
like Cape Jasmine and the mold from her slowly rotting clothes
draped on the railing of a black wrought iron balcony. You hear
the clamor of the trumpet and the drum of the carnival as it
passes below your window on the way to her funeral.



Photo by Matt Kuhl

Untitled

By Jennifer O'Donley

She woke up that morning feeling different than she usually did. She actually looked forward to the day ahead. It was first day of the fall holiday. The five hour drive home was not one she normally enjoyed, especially when she made it by herself. That day, however, she knew she would not mind it and might even enjoy it.

It was not the going home she looked forward to - - it was the time she would have to herself before she got there. The time away from school, from classes, from people, from the obligations and responsibilities of her life. She was tired and needed the three day weekend to catch her breath, to gain a hold on her life again. The year was flying by quickly, as it always did. Her first two years in college had already passed. Somehow she had made it through them. This year was different for her. She felt like she was stumbling along, with no control. The future loomed ahead of her and she was afraid.

She was eager to start out on her trip and left by mid-morning. The first couple of hours went by quickly and when she stopped for the first time, at a gas station, she was surprised that the time had passed so quickly. She took a minute to stretch her legs before getting back in the car. When she tried to start the engine, at first it didn't want to. She felt a flash of anger until it finally turned over. She relaxed and sighed in relief, only to face frustration again as she had forgotten to call her father as she promised. He always wanted to hear from her when she was about halfway home to make sure she was all right. She jumped out of the car and hurried to the phone booth.

"Yes, Dad, I'm fine. No problems." She thought she sounded like a recording. She could not imagine how many times she had needed to reassure her father that she was all

right and could take care of herself. For a moment she contemplated telling him of her trouble starting the car, but then she thought better of it. She knew he'd make her find a mechanic to check it. She didn't feel like waiting around forever while some mechanic checked the car. There was probably nothing really wrong with it anyway. It would make it home at least.

She thought no more about it as she pulled back onto the highway. The day, which had dawned cloudy, began to clear and she was astonished at how little traffic there was on the road.

Driving through mostly countryside, she was surprised to see a man walking along the highway. A hitchhiker, she supposed. She watched him until she was close enough for him to see her doing so. Then she averted her eyes.

"Don't stare at strangers, Dear. And certainly don't talk to strange people." She could hear mother's voice from when she was a little girl. "Don't bother them and they won't bother you."

The man did not look that strange, though. She had expected him to look like a bum - - tattered, filthy clothes, long unkept hair. He looked basically like a normal person. She judged him to be about forty years old. His hair was a decent length and he was wearing faded jeans and a long, gray jacket. A backpack was slung over his shoulder.

His demeanor was what really surprised her. He walked with strong, definite steps and his head held high. It was not an air of indignant pride that he carried, just one of self-assurance. His expression was clear and pure, without shame or pain. She could not figure out why a vagrant would appear so confident, even though he had nothing.

"Maybe he's just insane," she thought to herself. She thanked God that even though she might not know where she was going in life, she would never be that bad off.

She had only driven past him a few hundred yards when the engine of her car started cutting out. She pulled over to the side of the road and turned the car off, thinking it would be all right if it cooled off for a moment. However, when she tried to start the car again a few minutes later, nothing happened.

She knew absolutely nothing about cars. Thinking maybe someone would stop and help her, she got out and stood by the car. A worried look crossed her brow. The drivers of the few cars on the road whizzed by her without so much as lolling in her direction. The driver of the one car that did slow down and notice her gave such a strange look that she decided to get back into the car and wait until a highway patrolman came by.

She had been waiting about five minutes when she glanced in the rear-view mirror. The hitchhiker was walking toward her. She immediately panicked. Her mind screamed as she sat motionless in the car, her eyes riveted to the approaching figure. All the worst case scenarios that had ever been implanted in her mind became vivid. Over-reacting was never the wrong thing to do. "Better safe than sorry," her parents had taught her.

She reached over and opened the glove compartment. She stared at the gun which lay inside. She had told her father he was crazy when he had insisted that she keep a gun in the car. "You never know," he had argued.

She never thought she would ever need it. She took it out of the glove compartment and laid it on the seat beside her. She sat there a moment, absorbed by the silence, praying the man would walk on by.

But the silence was shattered by knock on the car window. She looked up, covering the pistol with the jacket which lay on the seat beside her. The man stared intently at her. With fear gripping her heart, she rolled the window down

a few inches.

"Something wrong with your car?" he asked with a hint of laughter in her voice, sensing her fright. She nodded. "Pop the hood," he ordered.

He headed around to the front of the car before she could reply. She did as he said, kicking herself all the while. She couldn't believe it. He was laughing at her! Swallowing her pride and holding back her anger, she pocketed the gun in her jacket and put it on. "Why is this happening to me?!" she muttered under her breath as she got out of the car.

"Uh, look, it's all right, don't worry about it. I'm sure a cop will be by at anytime," she told him, bolstering false courage.

"It's no trouble at all, ma'am. I think I see what the problem is," he replied, fiddling with something under the hood. "Do you have any tools?"

"Yeah, I think so," she answered. She walked around to the trunk. She took him the brand-new tool box she found there. Another one of her father's precautions.

As he took it from her, a thought struck her. "I don't have much money . . ." she told him.

"I don't want your money," the man answered. He thought her naive, but cautious. He sized her up. At five feet six, she was not very big. She wore blue jeans, a gray sweatshirt, and a tan jacket. He thought she looked like she had been well taken care of in her life. As she ran her fingers through her short, curly auburn hair, he went back to working on the car.

"I don't even know your name," she spoke up, determined to gain control of the situation.

"John. And yours?"

"Melissa." She answered automatically, and surprised herself with her answer. No one ever called her Melissa; it

was always Missy, ever since she was a little girl.

An uncomfortable silence settled between them. "So do you live around here?" she finally asked.

"No, I'm just passing through. Business venture."

Fighting the feeling that he wasn't the type of person she should be talking with, she continued the conversation, urged on by her curiosity. "Business venture?" she asked.

"I'm a journalist," he replied without looking up. He continued working on the car as he told her his story. He was traveling his way across the country, writing as he went. He was working on a book about the people he encountered. Melissa, intrigued, listened closely. She found herself feeling grateful that he had stopped to help her. She guiltily remembered her suspicions and overactive imagination when she had first seen him.

Then John asked her about her life. She found him surprisingly easy to talk to. He glanced up occasionally as he listened.

Just as she was feeling more comfortable around him, the clouds above began to threaten rain and the wind picked up. She shivered slightly and put her hands in her pockets to warm them. As she reached into the soft folds of her pocket, her fingers brushed icy metal . . . the gun.

Her voice faltered slightly as she spoke, but John didn't notice. A few minutes later, he asked her to try the engine again. Her mind frozen with the thought of the gun, she mechanically got back in the car. The engine still wouldn't start. "Just a few more minutes and I'll have it," John called as she got out.

Closing the door, Melissa leaned against the car and took the gun from her pocket. She stared at the weapon she held in her shaking hands. "How could I have even considered it?!" she criticized herself.

"He's a good, decent man! What if I had gotten scared and . . ." She shuddered. Gripping the gun, she wished she could destroy it right there with her own two hands.

Finished with the car, John slammed the hood down. Startled, the gun went off. Her screams echoed in her ears as she watched the man fall.

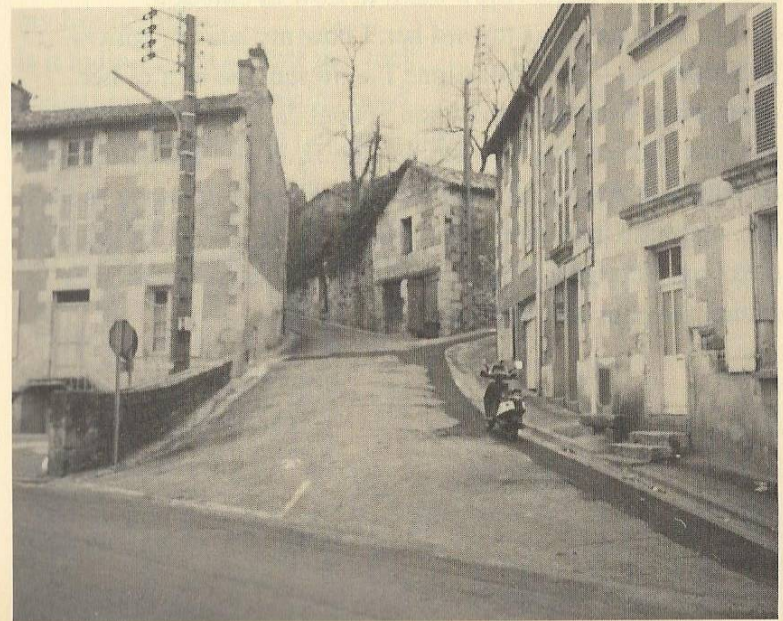


Photo by Tanya Gates

Dimension of Anguish

By Michelle Hipes

So many emotions. Intertwining, overwhelming they all exist as one. Guilt, Pain, Fear, Confusion, Anxiety—how can I go on? Is it really all worth the emptiness? I feel so alone—nowhere to turn! The Greatest Sin lies upon my soul. Is it fair that such immense power lies in my hands? Created without thought as we reached the climax in our drunken oblivion. Destroyed in your innocence.

Her heart is wanting, needing—but she is not aware. I am here. I will carry her through. My breath beholds her existence. Accept me as I forgive you. Your actions were of your mind. Hate does not fill my heart yet disappointment has occurred. Let my heart embrace you as you ascend the stairs of my house. Enter! Enter! Do not turn away! My child! Your eyes well with tears. Allow them to flow as emotion.

My face turns toward her. I bow my head in sorrow. She holds me—solitaire. Alone I represent the root of her depression. Tears descend upon my petals like vast bursts of anxiety! The choice was simple, done quickly. The effect will be with you always. In maturity you will look upon me as love, life, respect. Until then, remember me. Don't let go of my true meaning. Though it may seem that you are alone, without a friend, the pain will diminish.

What Do You Do?

By Grier Huffman

what do you do
when cats are screaming
they're clawing in my head
and my heart
where it used to be
there's a hole now there instead
there must be something that i'm missing
other than everything

the walls the walls
they're leaning in and falling down
all the doors without handles
i'm walking down an endless hall
my life my life
is it hiding there behind that rock
and all i hear is my beating heart
and the ticking ticking ticking ticking

clocks stuck in my head
but up there's now a hole instead
i'm surrendering
i belong to you
i'll do all you ask me to do
just ask me just ask me
don't ask me

what do you do

Escape

By Michael Rebstock

No matter how she turned it, Beth couldn't get it to go through the bars.

"I'm just going to have to force it," she said.

"But it hurts," complained Wilma.

"They stopped for a moment, and Beth listened to the commotion that kept the guards from finding them.

"Are you sure this will work?"

She turned to Bald Wilma, disgusted. These people were so hard to work with. "Of course it will work. If you can fit through these bars, Thomas will find you, and you can have all of the candy that you want."

Wilma beamed a toothless smile at her, and knelt down again, putting the crown of head between two of the widest bars. "Okay, I'm ready," she announced, "Push!"

Beth did as she instructed, and leaned in on the skull with all of her weight. Her socks slipped on the floor, but by walking towards Wilma, she was able to maintain a near constant pressure. As she did this, she told the story of Thomas: of how, though they thought he was only a hallucination, he was not; of his long list of friends that he would show you if you asked him to; of how he had shown her what life was really about; and of how he had done the same for thousands of others, over hundreds of years. "*When you get out of here, he will be your friend too,*" she said.

Blood had started to dribble down the sides of Wilma's head, and soaked a few of the long, lonely hairs that were there. She had started to cry.

Beth pulled her away from the bars and looked into her face. "*If you want this,*" she said, "*it will have to be now. I*

won't make another chance like this." She pushed Wilma back down. "Now you help too. Put your hands on the bars like this, and when I push, you pull."

"Thomas doesn't even have to work for friends, like we do. People naturally want to be with him, and when they find him it is like the most wonderful thing in the world."

"I'll get to find him, won't I?" Wilma asked, groaning at the effort.

"The only reason people aren't nice to Thomas's friends is that they are jealous. These people keep me here because they know I am his friend, and it hurts them to think that they are not. Thomas means freedom. I have it, and you will soon have it, but these people that hurt us will never know."

"It's not working, Beth!" Wilma's arms hurt, and her socks were slipping too, and then Beth heard the commotion die down and saw the guards down the hall pointing at them.

"Keep pulling Dear," she said, and stepped away for a moment.

One of the guards shouted. Wilma never heard him, because it was then that Beth started to kick, kick, kick. The scalp began to peel away on the sides — long, lonely hairs and all. Kick, kick. Wilma screamed, but she was too weak to push away. Kick, kick! Beth's foot slid through the bars, and the skull ahead of it collapsed. Wilma, still a little alive, lay crushed under Beth's leg, choking and twitching.

"My God," prayed one of the guards as he watched, in terror, Beth climb to her feet.

"That will never work," she said to anyone who was listening.

"My God" he prayed again. Bald Wilma stopped twitching.

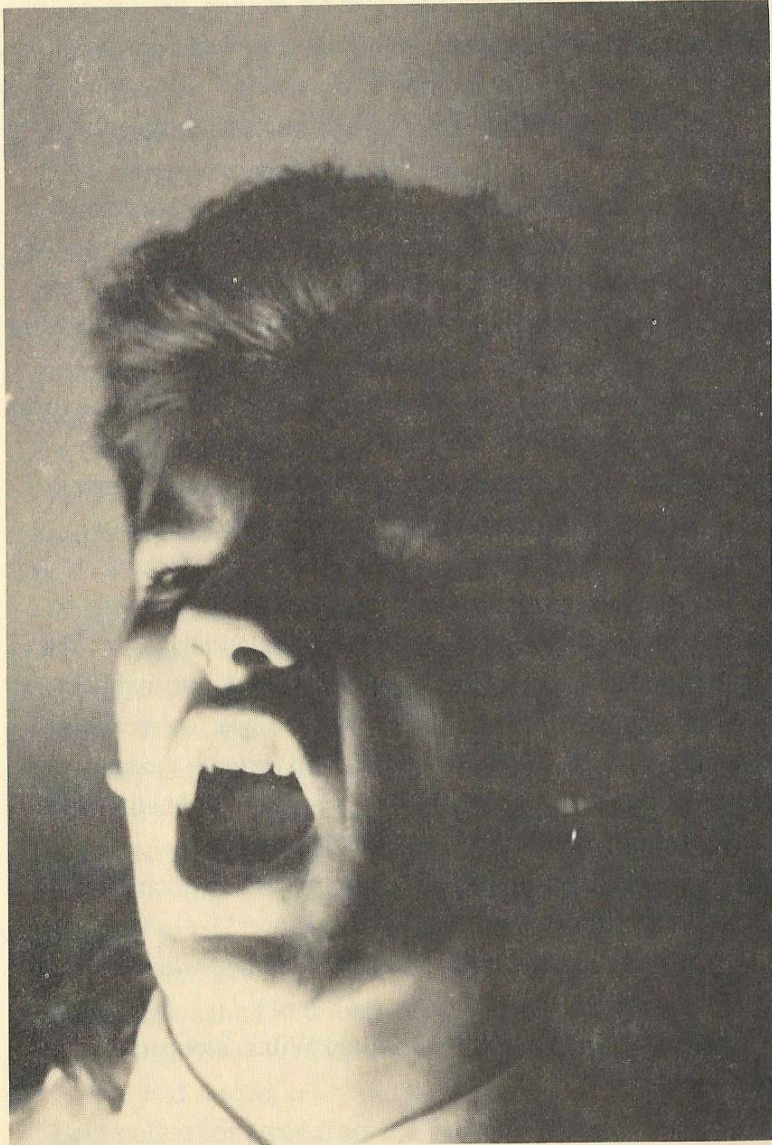


Photo by Matt Kuhl

The Clock

By Charles Brigman

Yesterdays gone left with a bang.
Where and the hell did the time go?
I remember when time was endless and forever...
Now there's hardly time for dreaming...

No one told me a dream today, but the hands keep going
around.

I own a clock that is over 12 yrs old.
It runs on electricity
Damn, it still amazingly works as well as it did the day I
bought it.
But, where has the time went?

My nephews are 10 yrs older.
They have it now.
That careless no track of time Attitude.
The hands subtract another hour away from the day.

Just how can I capture a moment of thought?
The clock is running at time and half-man.
I put another 20 hrs over time today.
What the hell for?

OH, the ad executive says it's time that I buy again.
Damn, I don't even know why I just bought this thing.
Now I remember, I've always needed and wanted it because
"RCA makes it
simpler."

Let's don't forget our good friends at G.E., we must not forget them.

Gosh if it was not for them I couldn't work past sun down.
Boy I'm sure glad I can do my shopping 24 hrs a day. Thanks Walgreens!!!
Gee wizzzzz, I have a fuller life.
Everything is so convenient.

But, but MAN I just don't have time to enjoy my integrative T.V..

Mother Dear,

Are we going to the play ground today?

(Shit, I need not forget I'm over 25 yrs, and that would not look

right/good)

The seconds tic away

The minutes melt away

The hours slept by

Damn another day has passed away

Yes, a year has faded away.

Broken

By Grier Huffman

A glass ball,
poised on your arm,
reveals how fragile
I really am.

You make me think,
go round and round,
in ways I shouldn't
unless I'm dancing.

But that takes both of us, now doesn't it?

AFTER HER FATHER DIED

By Jeanne M. Caho

She was sitting in a holy place
her mind filled with pagan revelations,
when the preacher-priest looked straight at her
and spoke,
“We sometimes say, ‘Lord, You are not fair.’”
Her images of wild woods faded and
her mind struck up a lively chorus of
“Not Fair! Not Fair!”
She looked at the gory crucifix and said,
Hey Jesus, you owe me one,
I’m not one of your children, and I would have never
thought of blaming you;
but since you offered...

I. "Jezebel's Pride"

by Anne Zimmerman

The small crowd that had gathered at the pavilion in the town park watched in anticipation as Mason thrust his hand into the bowl and drew the winning ticket. His two buddies stood nervously beside him when he announced the name of a Mr. Olin Riser, a long-time resident of the town and owner of the small drug store at the corner of Ninth and Saint Streets. Mr. Riser was pleased with his big win, as thoroughbred mares are not the kind of prize that a man is presented with everyday. Needless to say he became quite suspicious when Mason visited him the next day to inform him of the horse's sudden death. Dressed in his best slacks and blazer, he told Mr. Riser that the mare, "Jezebel's Pride," had broken her leg and had required a swift shooting to keep her from extreme pain and a prolonged death.

Mr. Riser took his suspicions to the headmaster at St. Lawrence Preparatory Academy, Dr. Kenning. When the boys were questioned, Mason was blamed. He had been having so much fun with this prank that even he did not want to believe that it was all a hoax. He tried to maintain a sense of humor with the headmaster, telling him that since "Jezebel's Pride" did not really exist, then no one had to be upset at her loss. Despite his glib attempts, he was to report to Dr. Kenning's office the next morning at eight a.m. sharp. His two accomplices had already been reprieved.

Dr. Kenning gave Mason a long lecture about the nature of prep school pranks and their inevitable consequences. He went on and on about the importance of developing personal

honor and responsibility. This speech was exactly what Mason had expected. What he did not expect was for Dr. Kenning to blame his lack of honor and responsibility on his upbringing.

"We strive to teach the importance of integrity here, Mason. But I understand that these kinds of values are taught differently where you come from."

Where you come from. Those last words hung in Mason's mind. He sat distracted, thinking how pathetic it was that a man in Dr. Kenning's position would adhere to the same unfounded, ridiculous stereotypes as did his classmates. Mason was hurt by the remark, but did his best not to show this. He was doing a fine job of diverting his attentions within himself, until Dr. Kenning explained why he had not given him a swifter punishment. The headmaster slid a thin, white envelope across the desk to him. Before Mason had a chance to open it, he explained that his mother had sent him the telegram that very morning. She wanted him to tell Mason the news of his grandfather's sudden death, and to make the arrangements to send him home as quickly as possible. For this reason alone, Mason escaped suspension from school. He could not escape, however, the sense of shock that surrounded his mind at hearing this news.

II. Whistling Dixie

The tall, quiet attendant by the side of the train took Mason's bags. Tipping him with an absentminded sort of air, Mason walked slowly into the car and found a seat. The ride from New Jersey to Alabama was a long and often tortuous one for him, as he was averse to being cooped up in small places and unable to move about for long periods of time. This did not cross his mind at the beginning of this trip. Mason was too distracted in thinking of his grandfather to be reminded of his

own personal comfort.

He had always heard that the best way to deal with death is to remember the good things about the person, and to think of the wonderful times that you spent with him. This was not as easy as he had imagined that it would be. In all of his eighteen years of life, his grandfather was only the second person close to him to die. The first had been a friend, Billy, who died hitting his head on a rock when he fell from a tree. He had been in the tree with Mason, and they both had been about eight years old. Climbing that old willow was Billy's idea. They wanted to catch a glimpse of the negro baptisms in the creek below. Somehow, Billy had lost his balance. It had been his grandfather who had comforted him the most at that time, and who had explained to him death's mysterious meaning in words that were easy enough for a child to understand.

The loss of his grandfather was more painful. Part of this was because he was a family member, and he had known grandfather longer than he had known Billy. But now Mason was old enough to understand death's true finality. He was old enough to have his own feelings about it; to have his own ideas about what happened to a person when they died. All of this maturity somehow made it more difficult. His grandfather was Mason's boyhood hero, and there was no changing this despite any changes made by the hand of death.

He remembered his grandfather's strong, dignified presence. His grandfather had always smelled of spicy cologne and of peppermint. Once in a while he had smelled of brandy, too, but Mason had not recognized that smell as a small boy. Pleased that his memory had rendered his grandfather's image so perfectly and completely in his mind, Mason closed his eyes. Memories flooded his thoughts as the train continued to roll its way towards home.

His grandfather was the man that Mason looked to for

guidance during those years that his father was away at war. He had kept Mason and his mother safe. He had taught him to read, to fish, to fear God, and to love Jesus. He had saved him from harm that he was then too young to understand as harm. His grandfather has earned the respect of every man in the country, serving for so many years as the District Attorney. Only now, looking back, did Mason fully comprehend his grandfather's power. Never once had Mason seen him abuse this power, or use it in any way other than to better the lives of his family, friends and community.

Sometimes grandfather showed mercy to the wrongdoers of the town, perhaps feeling pity for their misguided souls. Mason recalled a warm spring Saturday eleven years ago, when he had accompanied his grandfather to the hardware store in town. Several other men from the town had gathered outside the store that day, with benches and stools, to enjoy each other's conversation along with the pleasant weather. His grandfather greeted these men, and went into the store alone, leaving Mason on a bench outside, thoroughly absorbed in a comic book. Their farmhand, William, had come, too, and stood next to Mason while the men around them talked. For reasons that Mason could not remember, he was holding a large garden rake straight upright as he stood there.

One of the men in that group was not truly welcome, but was never made to feel this was. Ed Shelby was a slightly balding man of about thirty years, who almost always had a hint of sunburn on his pale face. He had the reputation of being a pervert, but he seemed to be a quiet, unobtrusive sort of man. Rather than insulting him by asking him to leave, the other men simply continued their conversation without including him. Ed was standing next to Mason's bench that day.

Mason had been so distracted by his comic strip that he did not notice Ed Shelby's strange actions until William

brought attention to him by smacking the rake handle down onto Shelby's hand. In a flash, the other men were on top of William, threatening him with an afternoon lynching. Mason remembers crying for his grandfather amidst the confusion that had exploded around him.

When his grandfather came out of the store asking what the commotion was all about, one of the men stepped forwards and announced that William had been completely in line for what he had done, even though Ed was a white man. The man told his grandfather that Ed Shelby had tried to "touch" him. At the age of seven, Mason did not know what that meant, and was more concerned with William's safety. They were good friends, and he had not idea that his own self had been threatened.

All else that he remembered from that day was grandfather promising to take him to a cowboy movie and asking him not to mention the incident to his mother. This had been a fine request for Mason, as he had had a boyhood fascination with cowboy movies and did not see that anything worth telling his mother had happened anyway.

Mason came out of these reflections just before dawn. The train was fast approaching home and he was hungry. Stretching his sore limbs, he stood unsteadily in the small, red velvet-covered space. Heading towards the dining car, he passed a young, black attendant who was softly whistling to himself. As Mason walked on across the shaky floor of the train, strains of "Dixie" followed him. He knew that he would be home soon.

III. "Old Times There are Not Forgotten"

Mason surveyed the marvelous array of food that was spread out on the dining room table. Every woman in town

had brought her best culinary efforts out to the house. There were pies and cakes, baskets of golden fried chicken and shimmering Jello molds. Macaroni salad, casseroles, cornbread and a dish of Coca Cola gravy weighted the table at both ends. All of the appropriate dishes had been prepared to make this a real Southern funeral. No one was sent to their final resting place in this part of the world without well-fed mourners.

He had offered to get his mother something to eat, but she tearfully refused, wondering how he could think of food at a time like this. He was curious to know why it was always women who brought so much food to the homes of those in mourning when they never ate any themselves in such situations. He concluded that the duty of consumption was then left to the men, and so sliced himself a large piece of sweet potato pie. Tasting it provided a kind of comfort he only knew at home.

Standing in the corner of the dining room, alone, Mason felt a hand on his shoulder. He turned to meet the face of Clarence Monroe. Clarence had been the town's sheriff for as long as Mason could remember. A thin man with graying hair, he had the kind of friendly smile that can make a person's whole day if they run into him on the street. He had been particularly close to Mason's grandfather.

He offered his condolences to Mason and they spoke briefly of his grandfather's last days. Then, hesitating, Clarence Monroe told Mason that he had something important to ask him. He explained to him that his grandfather had thrown Ed Shelby in jail without a trial and without bond or chance of appeal. This was his response to the incident of eleven years ago, outside the hardware store where Shelby had tried to "touch" Mason.

Clarence apologized for the inappropriate timing, but

needed to know if it would be alright with Mason if the town released poor old Shelby. His grandfather had ordered that Shelby be left in that prison cell until the day he died. Clarence went on to explain that no one was quite sure whether his grandfather had meant his own death or Shelby's, but that they felt he had done his time and should be released. Shelby had waited until a few days after he heard about the death before he made this request to the sheriff, out of respect for one who had passed on to a better place.

Mason continued eating his dessert, and the sheriff waited patiently for his reply. The sound of clinking forks mingled with the sniffing of ladies who were crying softly into their scented handkerchiefs. Guests began to wander into the dining room, famished from the long hours of reminiscence that are so necessary at the end of a life. Their acknowledgement of hunger signified, perhaps, that it was all truly ended.

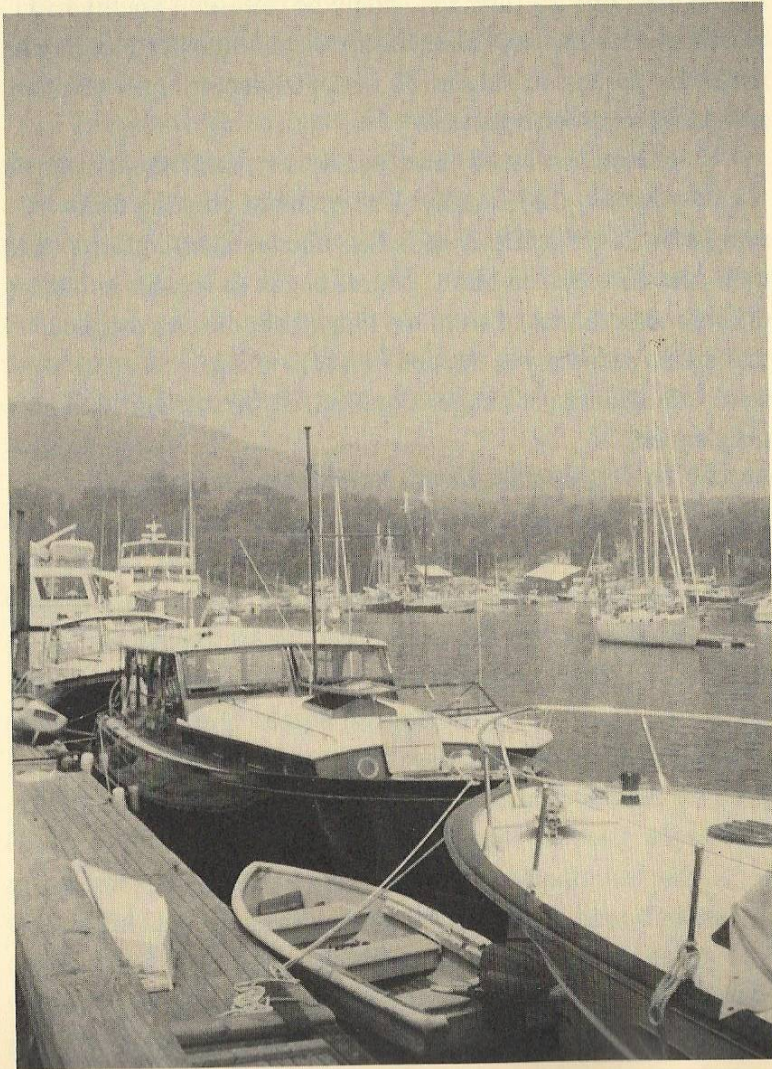


Photo by Diana Korte

Memories I Hold Dear
By Charles Brigman

Buckets & Shovels
Foamy walls of salty colored marble water
Sun light breaking the horizon
Once big rocks, now they squeeze with ease between my toes

Children smiling
Adults hang gliding
Older folks combing the shallows
Crabs float in and out with the tide

Tan lines as gold as the sun
Weather warm as a sauna
Beach balls & Sea gulls
Bar BQ & Beer

Today's troubles deep & Unclear
Become erased by Memories I Hold Dear

INSPIRATION

Anonymous

Inspiration just will not give itself over to me today.
Maybe it's just that I failed two tests and set the curve on
another one, life is cheap today. Kind of a Wal Mart type of
world.
where we **always** sell for less, and where our brand beats the
competition fair and square, and we sell everything.
Maybe a blue light special on families,
ready to use, family of three just add you, half price
this week only.
Where everything's a snack and you never have time,
for roast chicken, reading a good book,
or taking a drive for no reason at all.
Art is the imitation of life, at least cheap art...
Nah, art is what we wish or maybe fear life to be.
Life is never as interesting as art.
Fifty years from now I'll sit and whisper about how things
were
when I was a girl, if I can distinguish life from art.

My Sara By Emily McMillon

We went to Lake Itasca
in the cold, early spring,
and watched the birth waters of the Mississippi
cleanly wash between our legs
and over the glacier-scrubbed stones.
We ran to catch up
with that swift laughing stream,
and passed it somewhere in Iowa,
where the river aged miles like years
adding a few brown wrinkles
like ripples in its current.

Someday, we may find each other
in the sand in the delta below New Orleans,
clinging to the shoreline
tasting the gulf,
but I will always see you as
the little girl
picking rocks out of the young stream in Minnesota.
If a woman's life is like a river,
then let New Madrid
shiver down the spine of the country again,
so that the river rolls back on itself,
and takes us with it.

An Ode to the Devil
By Grier Huffman

Resignation,
Stagnation,
Frustration,
Lead to mutilation of body and mind.
Myself and others.
A song to the Devil.
I hate you for the things you make me do.

Excitation,
Penetration,
Ejaculation,
Lead to creation of body and mind.
Myself and others.
An ode to the Devil.
I love you for the things you make me do.

THE RED PLANET
By Emily McMillon

The cold air of fall chaps
the Earth's summer soft skin
and draws blood to the surface.
Blood blisters in tiny beads of crabapples,
bright warm clots of apples,
blushes in the cheeks and throats of maples,
colors the foreheads and temples of sweetgums.
It coagulates in the rosy heads of sorghum
that turn brown drying in the October sun.
It runs in the veins of the vines
of the Virginia Creeper,
reddening each Autumn
from the ground out.

The Sensuality of a Blank Page
By Steve Tanner

The wandering mind grows erect,
paying close attention to every last detail
of its puzzle-piece muse,
insisting that we're all
part of this great endless orgasm
that somersaults through our imagination —
and cradles the spine of God . . .

We're all erotic childfren
of our own amusement park!
Gut-fluttering excitement! All fun and games!
Holding the roller coaster
lapbar tight,
our pupils swallowing
a river of light —
 that disperses
 into oil slicks
 on the retinal canvas,
we grab hold of evaporated icebergs
 hovering in spirals,
refracted in the surging kaleidoscope
 river splash, reflecting
Asian starlight of another day —
 a glowing, cratered sphere
of yesterday and tomorrow
 points to —

Wait!
Stop torturing us

with this damning peepshow!
Your words soar, topple, destroy like kamikazes —
just a messy ejaculation
of consonants and vowels . . .

Don't sell me
your choreographed fantasies
of voluptuous daydream Lust.

—I see her already,
winking over Her shoulder
at you, my romantic friend
and you chase Her through the city
with an absurd arrangement
of flowers!

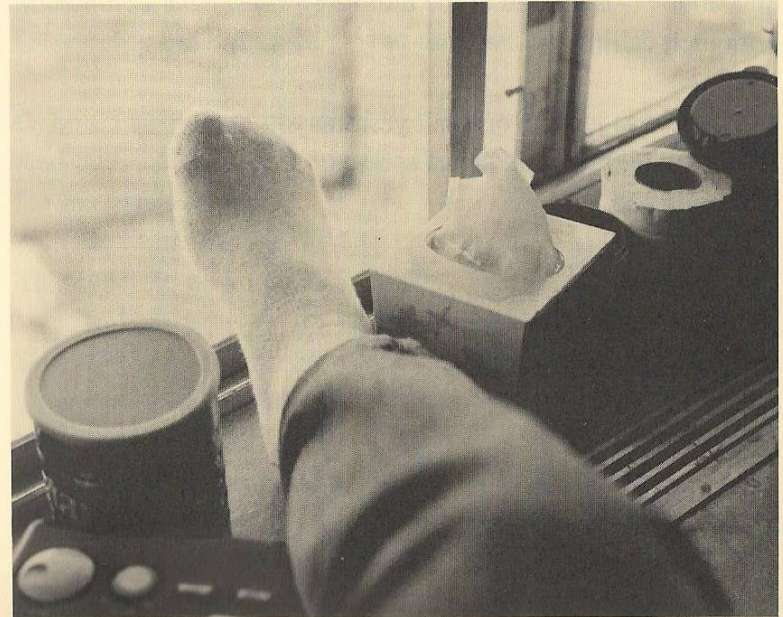


Photo by Tanya Gates

Rare Days

By Emily McMillon

Yesterday, I heard a cardinal's song
come in with the cold from my window.
I wanted to stop and look
out over the snow-matted grass
to see him high, red, and bright,
singing against the hard closed buds
fitted like thimbles
on the tips of the fingers of the Sycamore tree.

There were winter walks,
the flat plate of the sun
rising through red clouds,
when the cardinals would fly up into the trees
and fill the frosted rind of the morning
with their calling.

But there was just the one call yesterday.
It came to me like a dream of spring,
or a promise.

Obituary of Innocence

By Aaron Clarkson

Here lies Innocence:
Dead of causes quite unnatural.
Though the autopsy lists a broken heart,
We know better than that.

There went Redcrosse out on a crusade,
unable to decipher the "friendly" evil.
He bit into the poisoned apple,
And swooned into a virtual coma
That would prove fatal.

Ever since, my heart
Has been pining for a
Substitute for Innocence
Of which it has not succeeded in discovering.

O, how I wish that I could die
And take the place of Innocence
On the sweet by and by.
Although I have the feeling
That it would do no good.

Here lies poor Innocence:
Now this lament is through.
It is too late for me,
But it might not be too late for you.

A Special Occasion
By John A. Ward

The car was cleaned and polished to the pinnacle of perfection. The reservations were for eight-thirty, booked weeks in advance. His clothing: one neatly pressed white dress shirt, one pair of black pleated dress slacks, one burgundy silk tie, one black alligator skin belt and one pin striped wool jacket, were all carefully placed on a hanger in his closet awaiting the big event.

He had hoped the weather would be accommodating, but when the day came it was less than picture perfect. It rained most of the morning and the forecast called for continued rain. Regardless of the weather, he was determined to have a good time. He felt a passionate sense of invulnerability about this night, a feeling that transcended any he had previously experienced. Nothing could go wrong.

When it was time, he calmly showered, brushed his teeth, shaved and did everything he had so carefully gone over in his mind. As he stared in the mirror and dressed, he thought only of his objective: to attain an acute sense of propriety in his appearance. Once he was satisfied with his appearance, he called and confirmed with his companion and also with the restaurant. Everything was set. He was confident he would have plenty of cash, but brought his checkbook just in case. Car keys in hand, he proceeded to the garage. A few feet before reaching his polished chariot, he was overpowered by a sense of happiness. As he stared at the sleek German body of the Mercedes, he felt as though he had achieved perfection in detail; not just in polishing the car, but in the handling of such a special occasion. Pulling out of the driveway he thought of something he had heard the night before on "Star Trek: The Next Generation", "...the hall is rented, the stage is set, and now its time to see if you can dance."



Photo by Tanya Gates

THE DEATH OF THE LITTLE GIRL WITHIN
By Karen Newberry

Smooth, red blood moved down her hand as she stood in her bedroom and watched it flow. Droplets of blood were falling in to the plush pink carpeting. The stereo was turned on, but not too loud, just loud enough so that she could hear the drums behind the lead singer's voice. The sleeve of her sweater was pushed up her arm but the cuff was still wet with blood. Her many school books were on her desk waiting to be opened and explored; they would be waiting for a long time.

She glanced at her lacy, ruffled bed, all powder-puff pink and the white teddy bear lying on it. The bear had been her sole comfort during many dark times and now a sudden urge to hug it once more seized her. Her blood had been smeared along the side of the comforter, and now she stood clasping the toy bear closely. She was speaking to it softly as she ruffled the short fuzz between the bear's ears. Then her legs buckled under her and she fell to the spotted carpet with the newly blood-red teddy bear.

"Never Regret Yesterday"
By Brigita Dzatko

There are times of happiness and times of despair. There are times of anger and times of forgiveness. To find something you truly love is your happiness and then to find it's gone, but shall comes back is your despair. But one day when it comes back, it will leave you within a short time. So soon and so quick, that you weren't prepared to know; that's your anger. The anger of knowing you gave your total deveotion, received it back, but only later to find out it wasn't real. You reflect upon what you've had, or thought you had, and live on with memories, being glad you even had the chance. That's when forgiveness sets in. . . . and the sorrow.

But always remember, NEVER REGRET YESTERDAY. Life is in you today. You make your own tomorrow. Be able to provide yourself with knowledge and strength to go on. Knowlegde and strength you can use to deal with stress, incese your natural abilities, and live the kind of life you want to live. Greater happiness and success are not elusive when you have skills. But all in all, learn from life. Don't take things to deep into the heart, because you will end up getting hurt. And if you should, think of it as a learning experience; grow with it and move on. You have your whole life still ahead of you, wating to give you what you deserve.

THE SCHOLAR

By Mike Hargett

I spent all night on the porcelain Harley,
But I offered the day to the God of Barley.
I thought the Lord Baccus was my friend,
He reminded me, that morning, that I had sinned.

I remember blatantly pouring them down,
And I woke up somehow on the ground.
My G.P.A. does not exist.
These parties, they have a real cruel twist.

My grades surely as Satan will fall
It's either crack the books or more alcohol.
I partied all day then partied some more.
Why the hell is my head so sore?

I drank so much that I cannot recall
Whether or not I made love to a party ball.
I woke up this morning, and lord I could cry,
I think I had taught my car to fly.

I don't know the reason, don't care to know why
I got feathers and crazy glue stuck to my thighs.
She had hand-cuffs, chains and a whip.
I think she used my body to serve onion dip.

Fireflies

By Wayne Zade

In the evenings, because the kids leave the room after whatever they're watching is over and don't turn the TV off, I sometimes hear the local news come on, and listen for a while. I'm busy in the kitchen, slicing this or that, washing my hands, and as I let the cool water run over them and try to forget what bothered me during the day or what I didn't do but should have done that really can't wait until tomorrow, I stop and take a long breath and listen more closely. If you want sadness, it's still there waiting.

Tonight it was the story of a 35 year-old woman who, after shooting her 10 year-old son in his room, picked up her 5 year-old daughter, took her into bed with her, then shot the child and herself. There were notes left all over the house, and, on the bed, propped up on pillows, religious pictures. She thought she was dying of cancer, but the police say she wasn't. The neighbors knew nothing about it. Someone was on saying how happy the woman had looked the day before. There was a large note on the front door for her husband: "Randy, the kids and I have gone to heaven. Call the police before you come in." He found this at 7 in the morning, when he came home from working all night. How long had they been dead? The police have not yet ruled him out as a suspect.

*

Last week, out walking the dog, I saw a police car slide up to the front of our house. My son and his buddies, smoking on the porch, stood up, uneasy, feeling their car keys in their pockets. Then the car pulled farther up the street, stopped in front of another house, and another car followed, and quickly, too. A few minutes later Josh came in and announced a fight up the street, women and men yelling, about 20 people, maybe

friends and in-laws joining in, several now out near the curb, bent over the hoods of more police cars. My wife and I and the kids stood out on the porch, listening, no closer. This was the first hot day of the summer.

*

The woman who shot herself and her kids, one note said, did it because she couldn't stand the thought of anyone else caring for the children after she died from cancer. There were many shots on TV of the outside of her house, the grass bright in the afternoon, bikes and toys not picked up. I wondered which bedroom the husband had entered first, which body he saw first. I wondered about the room he'd been taken to at the police station. What they said to him. How that felt.

*

The morning after the fight up the street, nothing in the paper about it, nothing on the news. Sitting in my office, surrounded by books which sometimes give me answers or comfort, talking with a guy I teach with, I asked him what had happened—all this was next door to his house. When I'd called him the night before, no one answered. The next morning, he still knew nothing about it, but told me he'd been worried for a while. He'd been hearing yelling, screaming through the windows open in the warm spring weather, worse in the evening after they'd been drinking to cool off. What got to him the most, he said, was that they'd yell at the kids about beating the crap out of them, and then beat each other. When he tried to knock one day, the door slammed.

*

In the tiny Japanese poem, the lost child cries and cries, but still catches fireflies. When I look at the characters, written in a single line, I don't know Japanese, but they look like a family. Some look like women, some like men and children. Some look frantic, as if they're searching. Some look joyful because

they've found someone. They are all opening their arms and mouths, waving, maybe dancing. They face different ways, but they look as if they're about to move again. One way or another, they're always about to move.

Sandbags

By Margot McMillen

7/30

After the heat yesterday, I want to put in my hours early, so I'm up at 6:00, calling Emergency Central. They tell me to go to Rocheport. They say the highway's clear. The busses will start running from town at 8:30, bringing people with shovels and work gloves. I want to work while it's still cool and quiet. I want the river to myself.

The water is still over I-70 at the bridge. There's a car every few hundred feet on the shoulder. People have pulled off this way and that—did they run out of gas? Did their cars overheat? Did the people just give up? Did they say to someone at supper, "That damn river . . .?"

When I arrive in Rocheport, the National Guardsmen are loading themselves onto trucks. They've worked all night, the area lit by portable lights that run off the generator of one of the fire trucks. They've created a mountain of sand bags in the street, the parking lot. Where on earth will all the sand bags go? I can, of course, answer. A wall of sand bags snakes through town and it must be constantly fortified.

Two other people drive in when I do, and park on either side of me. We walk in together. Now we are a team.

With the Guardsmen leaving, things are disrupted. No one, as usual, is in charge. My two companions and I shuffle over to the sand and start to shovel. "I can only stay til 9:30," I tell my partners, "so I want to work steady until then." They nod in understanding. The man, an attorney, says he can't get to work today because the road's closed. He'll fill sand bags until dark. The woman, from Texas, is visiting her university boyfriend. She tells us with a heavy drawl that she will stay until noon.

Sandbaggers work in teams of three—a bag holder, a

shoveller and a knotter. The bag holder kneels, holding the bag open for the shoveller who fills it with scoops of sand. The bag holder drags the filled bag to the knotter, who ties it at the top. My hands are too blistered to shovel. My back is too sore to lift the bags, but I have learned to tie knots while wearing work gloves, so I am a knotter.

During the night, someone has brought a new kinds of bag to the site. Not burlap, but plastic. The holder makes the opening for sand when she separates the two sides. The bag tears open at the fold, where the plastic is weak. There are new ties, too, also plastic, which hook around the neck of the bag, much faster than tying.

There's other new equipment, probably brought in by the Guard. There are stationary funnels made from oil drums welded to stands. The shoveler dumps sand into the funnel and the bagger holds the bag underneath, then hands it to the knotter. The shoveler has to pick the loaded shovel up very high to get sand into the funnel. It's not much of an improvement.

One huge piece of equipment they refer to as a double bagger. It holds as much sand as the bucket of a front-end loader. There is a lever which releases two bagfuls at a time to waiting baggers, who pass them on to knotters. People are respectful about these improvements, but we all realize the truth about sandbagging. Without the labor-intensive job, we wouldn't be together, talking and laughing and sweating. We'd be watching the river on T.V.

After we've done a respectable amount of work, a child brings us canned water. Our little crew strolls down to see the river. The water has covered fields, tipped barns, and brought its own kind of life to the land, yet it seems to barely move. We stand at the edge and a very gentle, tiny wave laps shyly at our shoes.

The white house—the one that was an island yesterday—has been abandoned. Water is halfway up the windows. You can see a quiet place in the water where the sandbag wall still stands, almost at water level, almost.

There's water up to the stone wall around the yellow house. A pump is carrying water off and seems to be doing the job. The people have apparently gone away. A National Guard man peers in the window. His big boots leave squishy places where he's walked.

One of the things that has happened is that my real life seems less real. My sandbagging life is the thing that really counts. My children ask for rides here or there, my husband wants to fix me breakfast, but I think of the river and wander off to find a pile of sand and a team of strangers.

Part of me says that this has to stop. I need my old life. Things must get back to normal. The day must come when the roads no longer disappear into water, crops are planted in the fields, homes and businesses are pumped out and cleaned up or abandoned.

This morning, the river is King. We stand and watch as it creeps up ever so slowly to cover our shoes. It is silent, and consuming.



Photo by Matt Kuhl

P.C.

By Aaron Clarkson

Have no thoughts
that we do not believe.
Do as you're taught
or be prepared to leave.

Say nothing that we can disagree.
Controversial speaking?
Then turn in your key.

Don't do
anything that remotely offends.
Better be careful, too
of messages your actions send.

Better watch your mouth;
Clean it out with soap,
Else you could hang yourself
without benefit of rope.

We'll control your thoughts
and your speech, too.
Don't worry about your freedom.
We'll take care of it for you.

We will confiscate your writing.
Don't consider raising a fuss.
Just give up your individualism
and leave the decision-making to us.

We have taken control,
cutting like a switchblade knife
Our ultimate goal
is to run every aspect of your life.

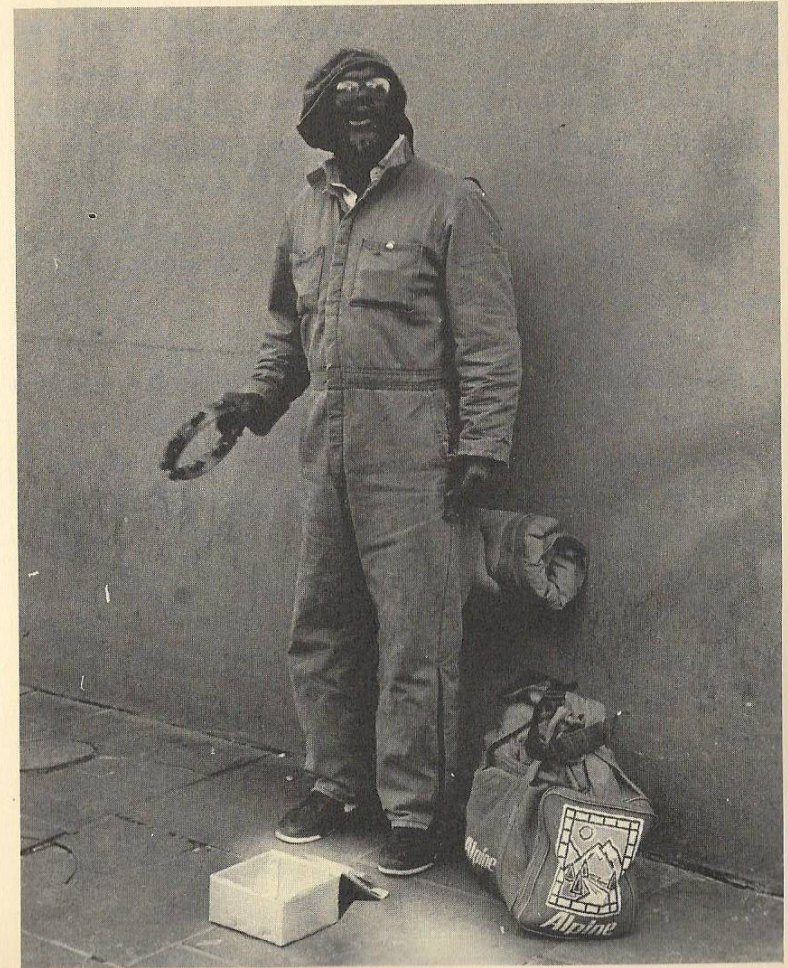


Photo by Matt Kuhl

Winds of Change
By Bo Masner

Upon a lone pillar, a creature stands naked and alone. The creature is not of flesh and blood, but of sculpted stone.

The creature stands as it has for the last fifty years, not even as much as twitching.

A storm of acid rain falls upon its outstretched wings. Lightning strikes with a brilliant flash. The searing arc does not crumble the mortar between the scorched stones.

For the first time in its life of fifty years, the figure moves. It pulls its wings close to its sides. It leers down at the city streets with a hatred born from the boredom of its life on this earth.

The creature spreads its wings to catch the currents of air and flies away with the grace of a hawk.

The gargoyle is silhouetted by the light of the city below. He flies aimlessly to vent his frustrations. Suddenly, struck by a brilliant idea, he changes course. He flies toward the museum across from the library, where his perch stands. He dives at a speed unimaginable by normal avian. The gargoyle smashes through the window, and lands on the floor unscathed from the impact.

He walks with an awkward cadence, his knees rigid and unbending. With sudden inspiration, he launches himself into the air with his powerful hind limbs. He soars through the open hallways with deftness alien to this world. Nothing in his course is altered. The ancient vases stand as they have since their discovery. In fact, there is only one thing touched by his passage, a trail of dust which quickly resettles as if nothing has tread upon it in years.

The gargoyle flies soundlessly behind a security guard who is peering anxiously about for the intruder who has broken a

window. The gargoyle flies under a low security beam and into the inner sanctum, where the most prized museum treasures are kept. Instantly seeing what he desires, he flies to the pedestal and snatches the statue of the crystalline falcon in his talons. The gargoyle, then, flies back the way he came and out through the broken window into the night sky. He returns to his perch on the library roof, carefully setting the statue beside him. The creature cocks his head toward his beloved.

Lightning flashes. The gargoyle begins his metamorphosis back into stone. In the last seconds before his complete transformation, the gargoyle utters, in a guttural voice, the words, "I am no longer alone."

The police investigating the robbery are left with only two clues: One, the breaking of the window; the other, deep grooves in the marble floor tiles around the broken window. They surmise that this was done with stone, but they do not know why.

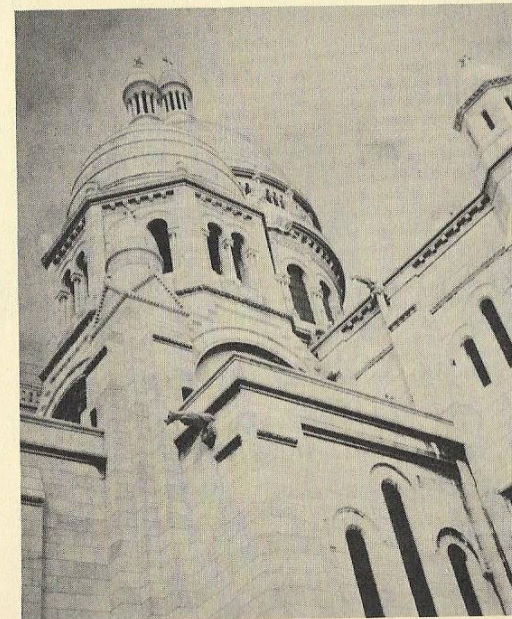


Photo by Tanya Gates

Nightfall

By C. A. Leminger

The purple cloak descends.
Darker than shadows, the night birds fly
from star to star under the last burning clouds.
In the distance, twinkling lights wind
their silent way between the sentinel trees,
weaving the twilight mystery.
Here, in the deepening remnant, we lie
majestic in our bittersweet wisdom,
the final gift, the dying words, of that
which, moments ago, rang out
with a blaze of glory, a promise of hope,
a quickening of the path!
Now, under a darkling sky,
we collect our remains and rise
to, one last time,
walk the morning paths
and not feel sorrow,
run through childhood's meadows
and not feel regret.
We must not show sadness.
For, though this day is done for us,
glorious dawn will come again
to mirror the hearts and shine in the eyes
of those who rise in our legacy.
And we pray that they will know
the lessons we have learned
in this day so gone.

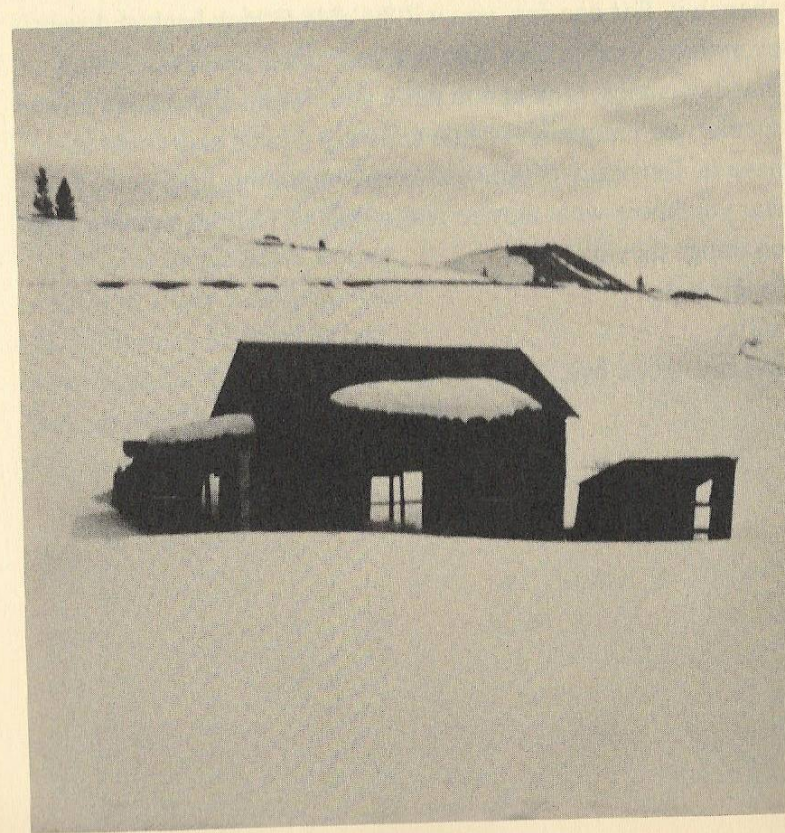


Photo by Ryan Gattermeir

My Thought

By Brigita Dzatko

Life is like a whirlwind of miscellaneous adventures.

You have great moments of joy and happiness. Then, when you think you've gotten it forever, it leaves you. It leaves not knowing you care til it's the end. You feel nothing at all, but yet, you show an emotion that you don't feel. Always remember that life is only temporary and you're just a person living one moment in time. Learn to make the best out of life in any situation. Take everything that's given to you. Value and cherish it. For one day, you will be able to look back and see everything you've been through, bad and good times. When that day comes, look at one thing you've had and realize how special and unique it is while knowing no one else could ever have it. Too many people waste time on things they don't have. But you know what they're really doing? They're wasting time on things they do have.

In the end . . .

Smile . . .

and say "good bye."

EERIE NIGHT

By Dawn Isaac

Oh, it 'twas eerie night,
so I was cold and filled with fright,
the beasts of burden all around,
so did I not make one sound.
Darkness was my company,
shrills of horror rang through the trees.
Then I stumbled over a grave,
above the ground was this poor knave,
skeleton bones lay here and there,
the scent of burning flesh was in the air.
SATAN betook this deserving man,
TO HELL WITH HIM by GOD's command!
So I walked by growing more afraid but wait,
what is this, a light to me doth bade?
As I approached I heard a song,
could it be Circe urging me on?
Oh, it 'twas an eerie night but
now I have GOD's land in sight!
Through Hell I came but here shall I
stay, to carry out the rest if my days.

TWO HALVES OF A LIFE

By Tim Brown

In daylight dropped from winter suns,
I begin to live, when your laughter
Lands on ears in a chorus of love, or friendship.
To smiles, and shouted greetings
To a lover, or friend. Winter sun
Falls on sparkling eyes, and the
Mischievous glint I saw there.
It falls on the smile, begging my heart to feel.
I begin again, out of a tunnel leading to a
Lonely death, into a light of love, or friendship.
My doubts dismissed, seeing you that night,
Talking my nerves away with smiles and laughter.
That softening look, in your eyes and lips, followed
By a kiss,

In parting, mumbled questions rising
Unbidden to my lips. Answered with
Words not giving hope, but not causing despair.
And nervousness gone from sweating hands, clutching
Love in fists made weak by a leaping heart.
The muttered stupid words of wishes
Unlikely and untrue, torturing the hopes
Stillborn in the lambent glow of
My knowledge, suppressed.
Always there is a parting, always there is an after.

Shiva and Brahma

By Emily McMillon

The room shakes and a little bit of dust sifts down into the
bright bowl of curry,
powders the small porcelain elephant, his trunk pointed upward
for luck.
Hundreds of miles away, squalid naked and half-naked children
and bovine Hindu gods emerge from the dust and parade
through the streets.
The dead bodies of brahmins, saddhus, and untouchables burn
together in pires like Indian bonfires.

Next Spring, the robins will come back when they are least
expected
and hover on the green grass like gray-suited gentlemen.

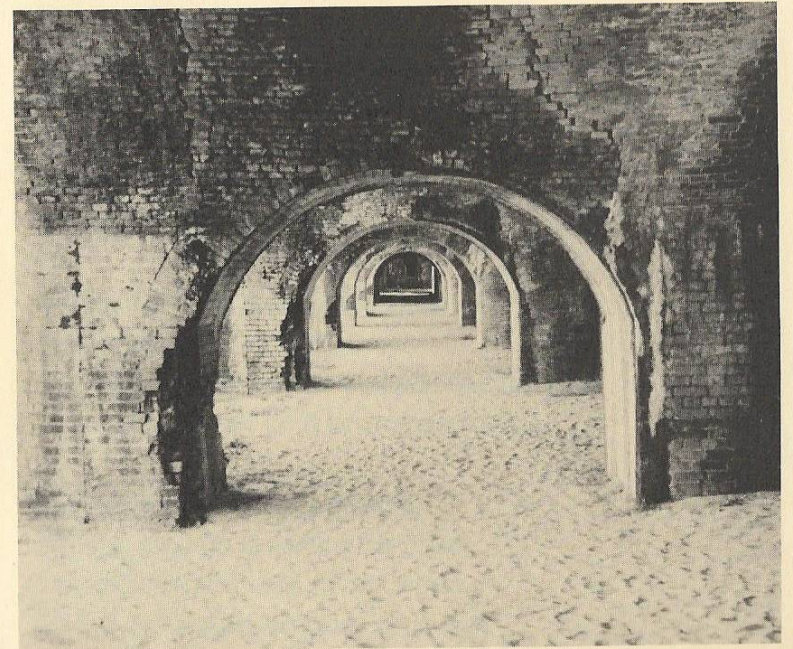


Photo by Alan Wright

Dada

By Tiffany Thomas

Birthing options mortality increase did
First able make where
For rebirth tumbled the merciful
Her breech after converted
Her self-righteous delivery anesthetized once
Done lowering a head
To epidural junkie later her
Everything that his zeal
Symbol the life time declared
New Age coward freshly about
By wet mother conclude first
Cesarean he serious well-being
Rates but become years she had

("This is a 'Dada' poem, constructed by choosing words at random. This poem was part of a project by the French Masterpieces class." Sarah M. Penick)

Untitled

By Mike Hargett

Tell me what it is that I must do
All you need do is name your quest,
I will take it then and see it through
For you there is nothing but the best.

How do I say I Love You?
When I've tried a thousand times,
How do I steal a heart so true?
When I've tried a thousand crimes,

If love is such a common thing
Then why is it uncommon to me?
If love is blind, as goes the saying
Then why must I still see?

There is not enough depth in the ocean
To measure my Love for you,
And I do not know where to begin
To tell you of what I could do.

Maybe I should give up this game
And admit that I have lost,
But even a sailor returns to the bounding main
Though he knows he'll be tempest tossed.

Tell me what it is that I must do
All you need do is name your prize,
I would risk all I have in this world
To win but a glimmer from your eyes.