



Southern Voices

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SOUTHERN VOICES

Volume IV
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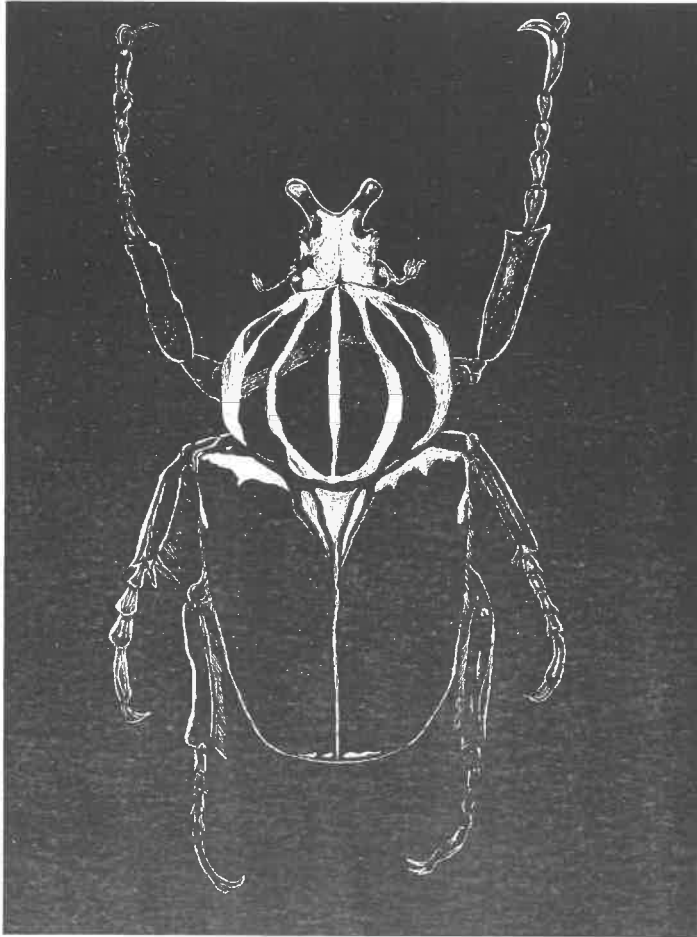
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Scratchboard

Adam Weathersby

Metamorphosis?

The caterpillar moves with many quick steps
Along — so slowly — a leaf;
Leaving a trail of tiny footsteps
Behind for all to see.

He spins and spins his silky cocoon
And hangs down from a skinny twig —
Suspended in that state of time
Beneath both sun and moon.

And just what thoughts do pupae think
As they metamorph through states?
What do the eyes upon their wings
Mean when they wink?

So just who is a butterfly
That flits and flutters about
This world that has created it
From within unto without?

T. Oswalt

Breathy Black and White

We talked all night
But he could not
Stay awake
To watch the dawn with me
So I tucked him in
And turned off the light
Moved to the window
To watch
But I was so sleepy
I looked into the backyard
Cows were breathing
In and out
Of the pre-sun fog
Brushing their backs
On the low limbs
Of the peach trees
They were not supposed
To be in the yard
But the day was too early
For rules
They would move into the pasture
Before the sun would
But I was so sleepy
I could not wait for the sun

Aggie Ausborn
Honorable Mention
Poetry Contest

Blacksmith

He pumps the bellows
And the coals sear
The chill of the early morning
Toolshed.
The iron bar holds the heat
Near his hand.

He bangs the
“Bang-bang” that
Sticks the anvil-shape
To the metal.
Stretching, pulling, beating, cooling
The blade is flat steel that lies
For siesta in the noon.

He sits at the wheel
And whets his blades,
Sparks prick the night
Of the toolshed
As the edges shine sharply.

T. Oswalt



Photography

Nicole Smith

A Window

With ground and sky slowly fading
I cast my eyes to the pane.
Clear, with no colors cascading
I mouth the prayers for rain.
Clouds assemble at my call
As the wind steals the light.
Rain is soon to fall
In a race against the night.
Shadows lengthen and time ensues
Ending that on which I gaze.
All is lost in blending hues
In the sun's last, fleeting rays.
Night falls and I hear the rain,
Averting my eyes from the pane.

Justin Rose

The Antebellum Home

Firm and strong
Fresh and white
Long, slender, forever extending columns
Monstrous, mountainous steps
Bright shutters hugging old, sunlit window panes
The door laced with brass
A wooden staircase reaching,
Friendly banisters giving guidance,
Sweet stairs that creak
Topsy crystal dangles with lingering light,
From mighty chandeliers
A warm smile, a hoop skirt, and sweet Southern talk
Welcomes You.

Katy Montgomery

Scrapbooks

Rusted paint leaves streaks
of gray and white
along the porch front,
The squeaking door
hangs loose on
wooden hinges,
strained smiles
wash faces
clearer than soap
leaving permanent stains of
Years when life didn't quite fall in place —
work unfinished
bills unpaid
cries unheard;
Though life may have been simpler then,
tears of heartache and weariness feel the same,
Can you hear me from within the
lines of black and white?
The crimson blood sharply contrasts the still life —
bonds to the ones I never knew. . .

Carla Hosch

Hymn of Light

Inspired by Book III
of
Paradise Lost

To what light ye may find
Go with open arms;
For darkness dwells at thy heels
With ever ready claws.
Times there be thy flame will die
Light thy fickle friend —
But 'tis best to have had and lost
Than to never have at all.
So find what light may exist
And keep the dark at bay,
Little light is better than none;
For Light outlives the flame.

Dyan Dawson

Molly

Like a mountain waterfall, your hair
cascades down
To your guarded shoulders, cautioning
your discretions.
Your face is that of a pristine cathedral —
A beautiful facade with such deep meaning
behind it.
If an artist could create stained glass
like your eyes,
He would be considered a master by the world.
Maybe that's why God had such a masterful eye
for beauty —

When He gave you to the world.

Kenneth White

A Saturday Morning's Harmony

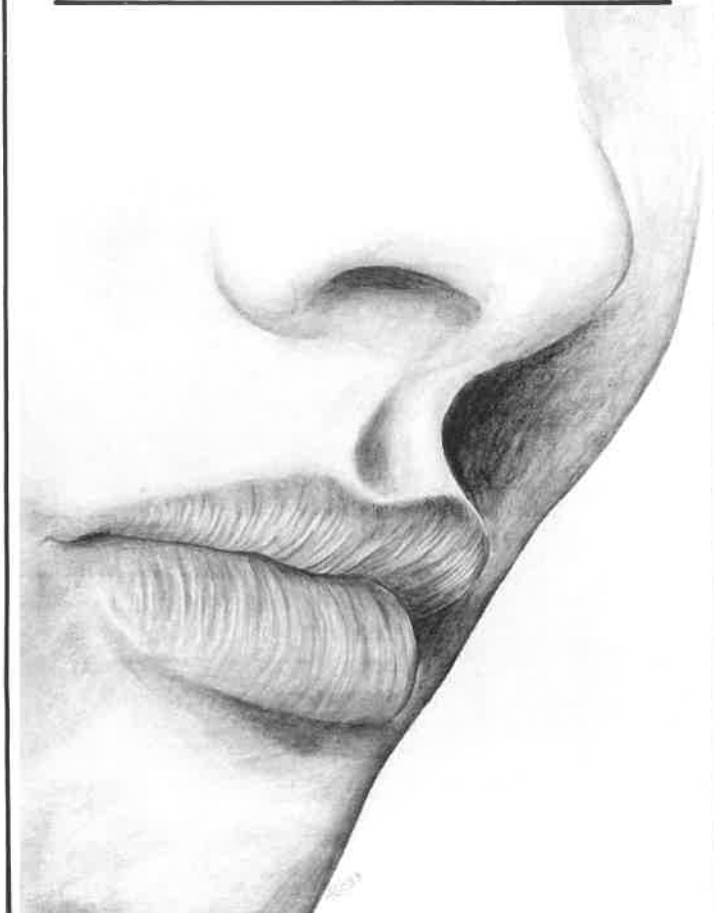
Bird chirps in rhythm for a second split
sip-sip: sip-sip
Rumble roar in baser note
sip-sip: sip-sip
Car's voice hums a background sound
sip-sip: sip-sip
Walker whistles through pane glass lifted
sip-sip: sip-sip
Heels click Heil on concrete path
sip-sip: sip-sip
Inflection murmurs of people pass
sip-sip: sip-sip
Bumpings, groanings, thumpings, knockings
sip-sip: sip-sip
Goes the beating of my clock
sip-sip: sip-sip
sip-sip: sip-sip

Steven Mitchell

Warmth

The sun's rays on a spring day
Salt water up to the knees
Smothering blankets on a cold night
A lover's embrace with arms and lips
Knowledge that there's a home to go home to
Blood trickling out of a cut or scrape
"Chicken noodle" illness remedy
A friend's hug when there's been trouble
Gorgeous eyes seeing through a heart
God.

Jim Owens



Graphite

Lewis West

Complicity

Allen liked the blackness. He had never remembered a time when he had known such contentment. Where was he? Allen taxed his fogged brain until he found the answer that he was looking for.

Of course, the hospital! How could I have forgotten? Gee, this doesn't look like a hospital. All nice and black. Peaceful, like sailing.

Allen heard voices. But these voices didn't sound right. Almost like people talking with a mask over their heads.

"Well, Dr. Endecker, there doesn't seem to be any change in his condition."

"I know, Ted. I've seen a lot of coma patients. There's not much to do now but wait and see. By the way, that was a nice grafting job you did. Nice technique."

Allen let the voices fade into an incoherent mumble. Wait a minute. Why am I in the hospital? Coma. Those doctors said something about a coma. That must be it.

"You know why you're here."

"Not you again. Will you please kindly get out of my head and let me think to myself. Hello?"

Allen hated that little voice. Off and on it had pestered him, day and night, even on weekends. That voice was always so quiet. Allen could almost imagine some little hospital gnome sitting on his pillow right now, whispering in his ear. Allen was sure that's why most people went crazy. Somebody in Hospital Security screws up and lets one of those things loose.

"You know why you're here."

"Yes, yes, alright! I know why I'm here. Now will you leave me alone?"

"You like fire, don't you Allen?"

"Fire. Yes." Sweet wonderful fire. It's been days since I've seen a good fire. Just the thought of a nice blaze started to excite Allen. That familiar rush, building up again. Allen loved to watch a fire, to feed a fire, to care for it. Allen had seen a movie once about firefighters. Somebody in the movie said that a fire was alive. But Allen knew a fire was more than just alive. A fire was greedy. A fire was consumed by an insatiable hunger to have, to eat, to destroy. Allen was consumed with a hunger of his own. Ever since he was a little boy, Allen had been lighting fires. Big ones, small ones, fat ones, skinny ones. But all these fires were small in comparison to the fire he had imagined. He knew about an old Victorian house down in Piney Woods, which was owned by a rich and well-to-do family. The wood had to be old, and Allen had lain awake at nights imagining the huge blaze the house would produce. Then, one night, he couldn't stand it any longer. He had sneaked out of the house and made his way down to Piney Woods. When he got to the house, he was relieved to find that no one was home. He made his way into the house, although he didn't remember how he got inside. All he remembered was the sweet smell of gasoline as he christened the house. Yes,

Allen thought, I sure gave that sucker a nice fire baptism.

"But something went wrong, didn't it?"

"Wrong? Yes," something had gone wrong. Allen didn't know exactly what happened, but suddenly the house, the entire house was ablaze in the brightest oranges and whites Allen could have imagined. He might have thought it was beautiful, if he hadn't been so terrified. But at least, Allen thought, there was no one else in there.

"You know better than that."

"There was nobody else in that house!"

"You know better than that, Allen."

"There wasn't! She. . ."

"Yes, Allen. She was. Do you remember now, Allen?"

Allen was suddenly struck with a vision of a young girl standing in a flaming doorway, looking at him with young, inquisitive eyes. The fire had grabbed her and started to eat her alive. Allen had shrieked and rolled the girl over and over trying to put out the fire. He had cradled her in his arms, and she looked at him. Allen couldn't believe that the girl was still alive. But the blackened shell in his arms was alive and it looked at him. Allen had never seen such eyes. The eyes never left his. They held no anger, or grief, just a strange kind of sadness. The eyes never left his, not until the gas line blew, and then everything had gone a brilliant white.

"Yes Allen, she was in the house. You didn't even think to check around and make sure, did you? You just had to start that fire. But that's going to be the last fire you ever start."

Allen tried to protest, but his throat and chest were suddenly constricted. He tried to struggle, tried to cry out, but he seemed drugged, unable to move.

Down the hall at the nurse's station, the night nurse yawned her way through several piles of forms. She rose, drawn to the coffee pot and its promises of wakefulness, when a piercing alarm stabbed into her brain, snapping her into consciousness. The nurse punched the intercom button and shouted for Dr. Endecker. In less than a minute Drs. Endecker and Stone burst into patient 54's room. The EKG droned on in a monotone whine. Endecker swore under his breath and began CPR.

"Yes, Allen. You like watching things burn, don't you? Well, you'll have plenty of time for that, because I'm going to make sure you burn. Permanently."

Allen tried to scream.

Dr. Endecker wiped the sweat from his forehead as he furiously counted out the rhythm. The EKG remained flat. "Come on, fight, FIGHT! !"

Dr. Stone put a hand on Endecker's shoulder. "It's over. There's nothing more you can do." Endecker stopped and let out a long, deep breath. "Yeah, Ted, I guess you're right. I'm getting too old for this stuff. I mean, three in one month. . . I can't handle it."

"Listen, don't let it get you down. Everybody feels that way. Look, how about you give the wife and kids a call. We can all go out to dinner down at the steakhouse."

Endeker sighed again. "That's a good idea, Ted. I can't wait to sink my teeth into one of those juicy, flame-broiled steaks."

David Williamson
Honorable Mention
Short Story Contest

Dead

Die! I have killed you a thousand times;
With words, I have beaten you to death. I
knock you down, then I pile more and more
words on top of you.

Until you are smothered out, extinguished;
Like a candle. You trail smoke in the
passing of my breath, as I attack you with
more words. I have beaten you, stabbed you
and drowned you with words.

Why won't you die?

The words fall from my tongue like bricks;
each one forming another segment in the wall
I build on top of you and around myself. A
few, I keep as a memorial to you (a few brick/words
retrieved to remember you by). The holes formed
in the wall are easily removed with more words.
The stone of my words cements my heart towards
you. You cannot hear me anymore, because I am
not speaking. Numb, I turn to face the world.
I am closed. There is no key because there is
no lock. This is me, too. I'm just sorry you
had to see it.

Malcolm Carstafhnur

Summons

The piper plays a mournful dirge,
A banshee's wail drifting down the moors.
Drawing the listener in, closer, closer,
Caressing the mind with ethereal fingers,
Compelling young men to thoughts of war
And glorious carnage.

David Williamson

Simplicity in America

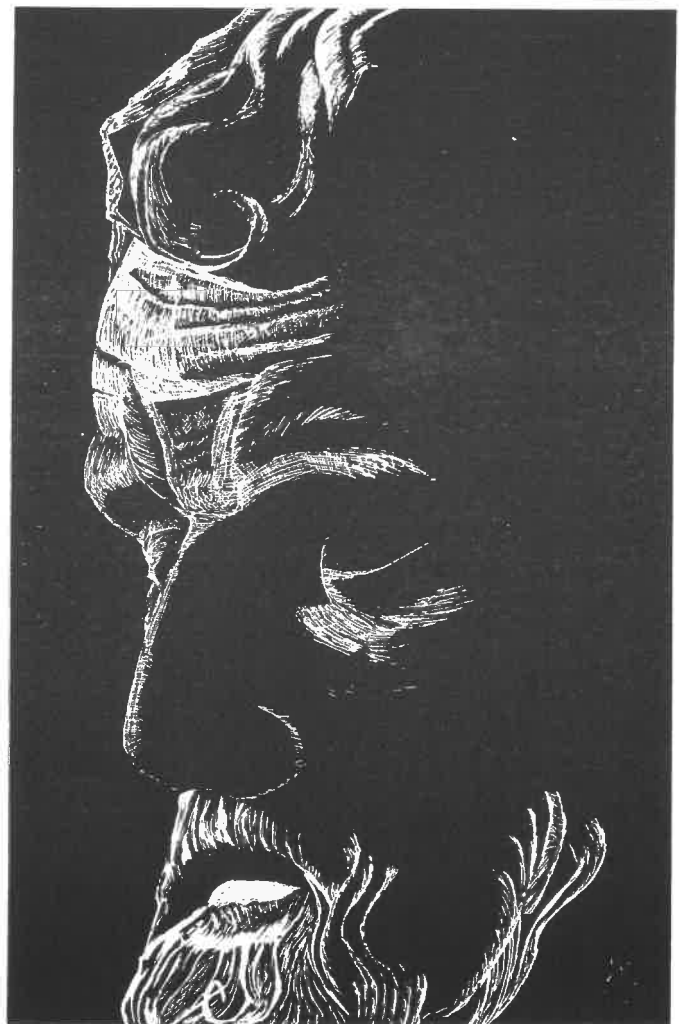
Rain touches his face
like tears from God
His calloused hands ache.
He goes on
undaunted.
untouched.
unbroken.
A lifeless face,
simple hands
plowing fields.
picking cotton.
praying to God.
Sweat stains his brow;
tears cleanse his eyes.
She's there
waiting.
watching.
wondering.
Little eyes peer
though open curtains
Slowly
the clock ticks.
the day passes.
the night rises.
A farmer's wife
always
for eternity and
forever.
Pretending
to know.
to love.
to understand.
Wringing her hands
Smiling nervously
Wanting to leave
Feeling guilty
Daddy's home.

Monica Aday

The Highway

I lean back with
My feet on the seat
And close my eyes to
Adjust to the gloom;
Then the light hits.
I awake to see if the
world is ending (I wasn't
sleeping, I was just resting
my eyes); I watch the diffuse
lights intensify their beam,
and concentrate on the highway
instead of watching the scenery.
As we are drawn together by our
opposite direction, the light stabs
more and more deeply into my eyes;
eventually the car passes and
I close my eyes once more sinking
further into the darkness.

Malcolm Carstafhnur



Scratchboard

Aaron Lauve

Basic Training

A single sheet of paper
In a rumpled envelope
Can make you remember
When you'd rather forget.
The patchwork quilt of memories evoked
Sewn together with feelings,
Will warm you for a time.
Until you realize
Your toes are exposed
To the chill of loneliness.

Sandi Thomas

What Does a Candy Cane Mean?

What does a candy cane mean?
two colors swirling is what's seen,
neither higher than the other,
climbing equally over one another,
a twist of red, a stain of white,
one lick of their juice brings pure delight,
to their core they are constant throughout,
never changing until nothing's left to be happy about,
can life be the candy cane's metaphor?
or merely a simple sign by the barber's door,
such simplicity with complicated jest,
man just bites the treat and puts the thought to rest.

Keith Schwager

i think i've found my place in this world

i think i've found my place in this world —
the spot at the end of the walk.
i've traveled far and long to see
such inconsistent talk.

the people that i've traveled with
voice loud obnoxious songs,
but i still sing a lullaby
that makes the days less long.

it's not as though no flowers grow
on my side of the world —
i simply plant a different breed
which grows on different soil.

my spot on the walk is commonly bare
with no grass in the cracks worn by time,
yet it seems much too life-like to look far away —
for the end of the sidewalk is mine.

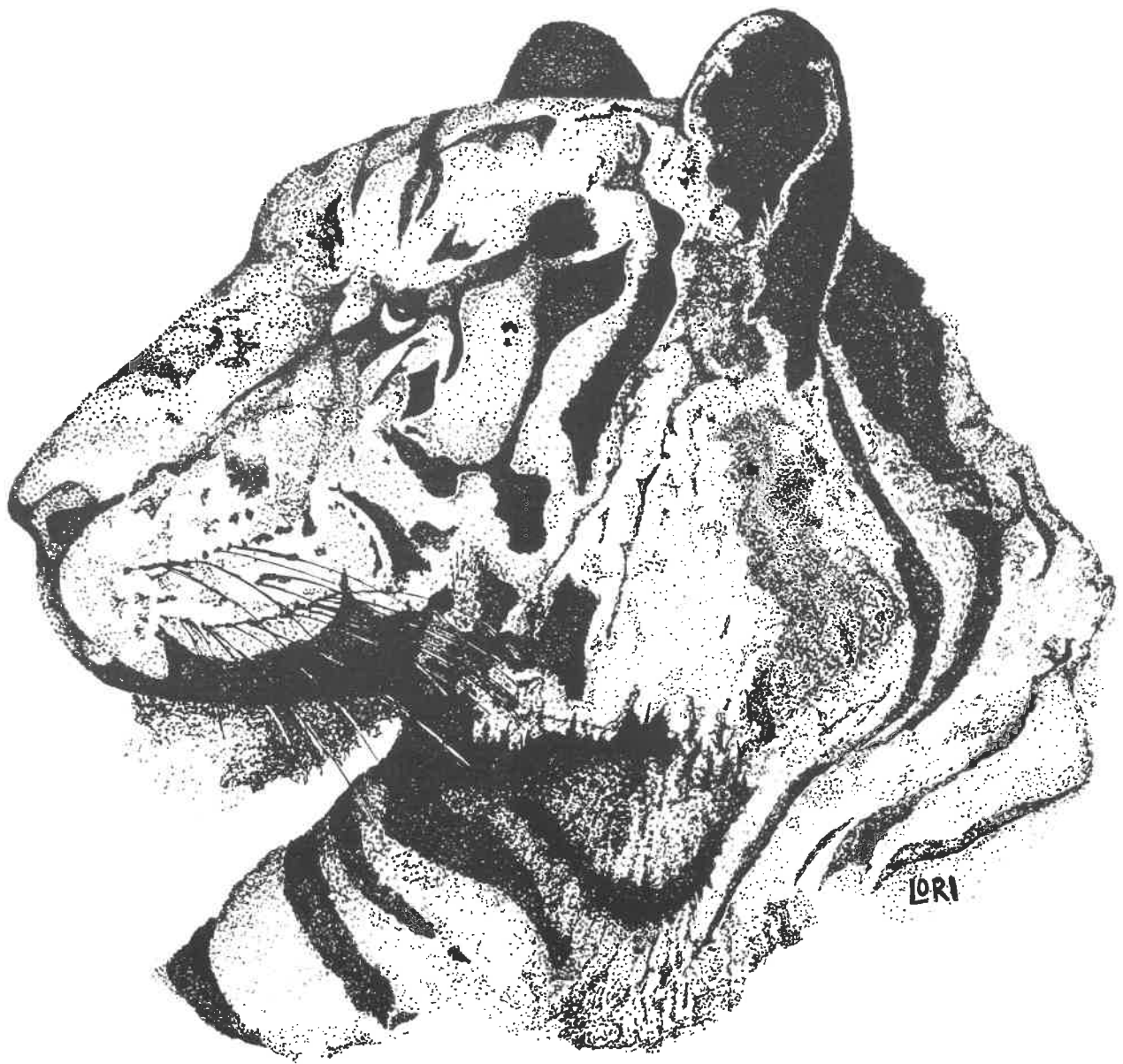
nobody told me the sidewalk would end
and they're not building anymore —
so as i sit here, i wonder if
i've seen this spot before.

Lori Trussell

How Do You Form a Concrete Image?

How do you form a concrete image?
Do you sit on the pavement and draw?
No.
You use words like clay —
Mold them, shape them,
Let them sit 'til firm.
You look at things like a child —
Look up, not down; around, not ahead.
Watch, don't think.
You change your mind often
Wanting perfection without knowing what perfection is.
"This? That? No, I'll take both!"
You sit on it like a mother hen —
Wait for your eggs to hatch.
Patience.
Patience.
It takes patience.

Sandi Thomas



Pen and Ink

Lori Trussell

Checkered Panes

A tree leans,
Yields to brisk winds.
The squirrels seldom jump and play anymore;
They've gathered their nuts and retreated
To their winter chateaus.
I stare through the glass
Seeing only what the checkered panes
Allow me to.
Taking care never to touch
The icy transparent wall.
"Falling in love weather"
Is finally here,
And I rejoice and smile as I
Say goodbye to the summer.
Sandy beaches just don't add up
To silent, rolling slopes.
I gaze across the green
And I see holy work;
I see grace and delicacy,
I stay inside so that I don't
Upset this balance, this
Total harmony in nature.

Ryan Beckett

Thanatopsis Revised

Life is a constant struggle —
You push against the walls
of conformity, bending them
just a little out of shape,
until you can die at rest. . .
The ultimate conformity.
Face it —
We all die, whether we be
young or old —
We all die.
Should we then hide behind
the feathers of tradition?
I say no.
A human is one who holds on to
his dreams,
while his toes dig into the earth
of himself, digging for the
unknown, the undiscovered,
the uncreated waiting to be born,
for deep within the
ESSENCE
of each of us,
there is the stifled longing
to be ourselves
for the short time we have.

Brandie Bjorklund



Pen and Ink (Contour)

Michael Buehler

August

Lizard tongues of heat lightning
Race dragonflies
Across the dusk
Ponds
No more puddles
Have the heavy smell
Of too many cow-baths
And too little rain
Noses have stopped peeling
And all the dogs are under the car

Aggie Ausborn

Autumn Day

Leaves shower the ground
Like gold rain
But the touch of the grass
Turns them brown
As they find repose
For the long winter

The sun shines
Not a cloud in the sky
To be seen
The sleeping leaves
Shine silver here and there
In the sunlight

Donna Hardy



Pen and Ink (Pointillism)

Dawn Tyler

He Sighs

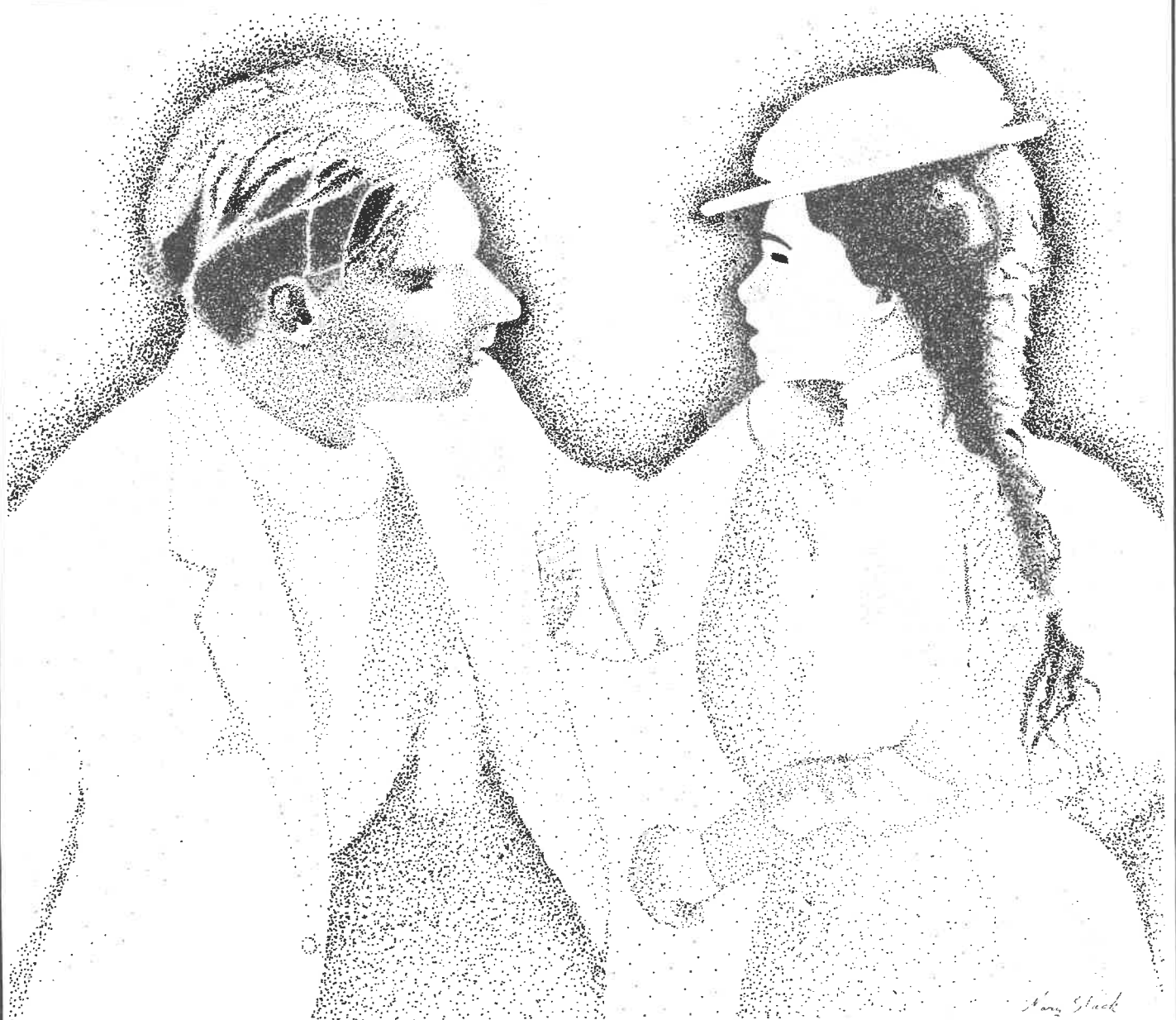
He sighs, and I marvel in His wonderful beauty.
He sighs again and my hair tickles my ears and cheeks.
The water is cold on my ankles and the sun is
warm on my face.
I lie down on the soft blanket that He has created,
And I listen to the music that will never die;
Until that one day when He sighs once more and all will die,
Except for the beauty in His children's eyes.

Christy Byrd

Late September

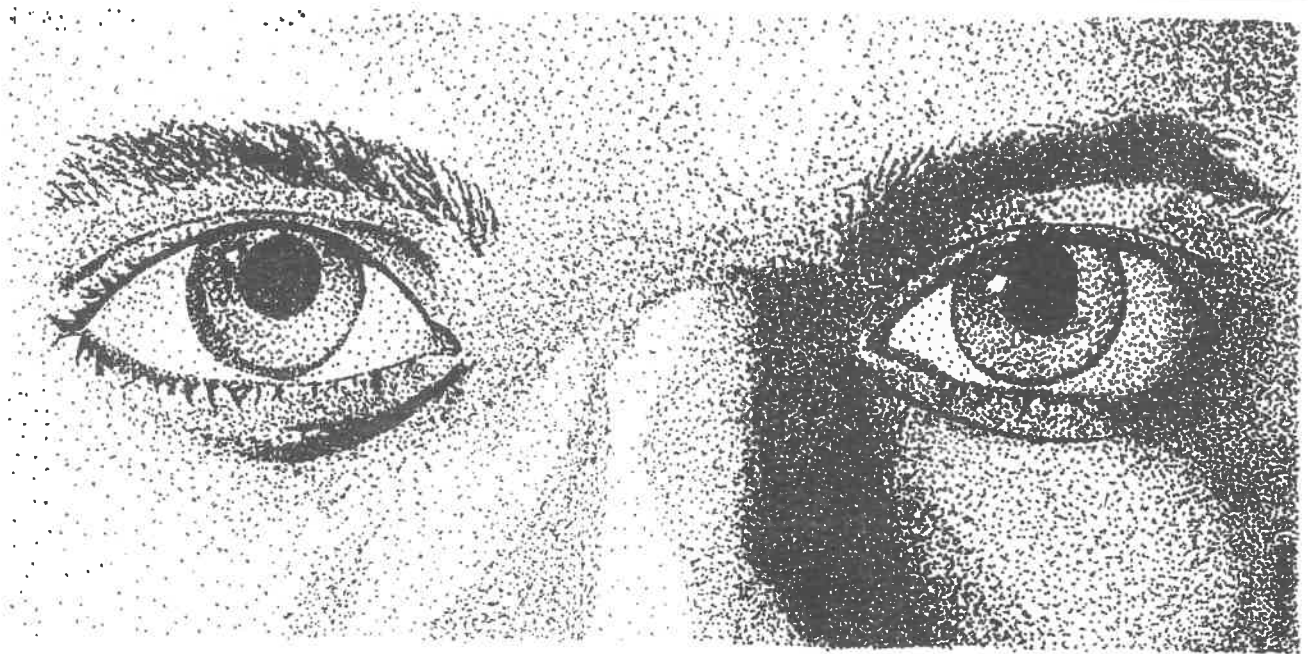
Magic swirls of color caress the air
as leaves
leisurely dance
to the ground,
Whispering breezes light my face
as the sun
touches my eyes,
Heavens' tears pitter-pat my head
sweeping in
the fresh scent
of newly damp earth.

Carla Hosch



Pen and Ink (Pointillism)

Mary Black
Mary Black



Pen and Ink (Pointillism)

Bradford Rhines

boxcars

together
thinking of nothing
talking of everything.
love
for now
holds us forever.
trains
run all day
and tonight
one was ours.
the stocky black man
never saw us
sitting cross-legged
together
but we saw him.
maybe
our train will return
and maybe
we'll be there to see it.
until then
i ask for nothing
except
a smile
every now and then
to let me know
you haven't forgotten
that's all
i can promise
you.

Bradford Rhines

I Feel Your Hate

I feel your hate
pound
pound
pounding
on me
on my wall.

I radiate a thin,
feeble
ray of love. . .

I love you
I love you
I love you. . .

Understand. . .
There is enough
hate
violence
cruelty
in this world. . .

I am the fragile child
in the corner
cringing from your
blows. . .

Please stop.

Brandie Bjorklund

Remembering Leigh

Sometimes
I look out that window
and I see nothing,
and everything.
I don't know what I see,
I don't care,
I guess.
But I remember
when I was a little girl
and Leigh shined the
flashlight
and we sent messages
across the street.
My window was up high;
Leigh's down low,
but the signals
were clear
for best friends.
Our secret code
never failed.
I still see that code
sometimes,
seven blinks a G,
twelve blinks an L.
The quick flashes of light
don't stay very long, these days,
but sometimes I think
Leigh is still in that room.
I flash my light.
Yet I see nothing
and everything
from my
window.

SuzAnne Brown



Photography

Nicole Smith

Matchbox Casket

met a man down at the community house
he said he knew my grandfather
said he used to play basketball with him
"he used to point that eerie finger at me,"
he said, and I knew what he meant.
grandpaw was four when he lost his finger
he buried it in the back yard in a big matchbox
a knife propped open the bathroom window
but that knife was just too inviting
for four-year-old hands
closed too quickly
for him to scream
four and a half fingers were left on that hand
that would raise cotton and four children
and play basketball with a man
that I met at the community house
last Saturday.

Amy Boggan
Second Place
Poetry Contest

Bare Humanity

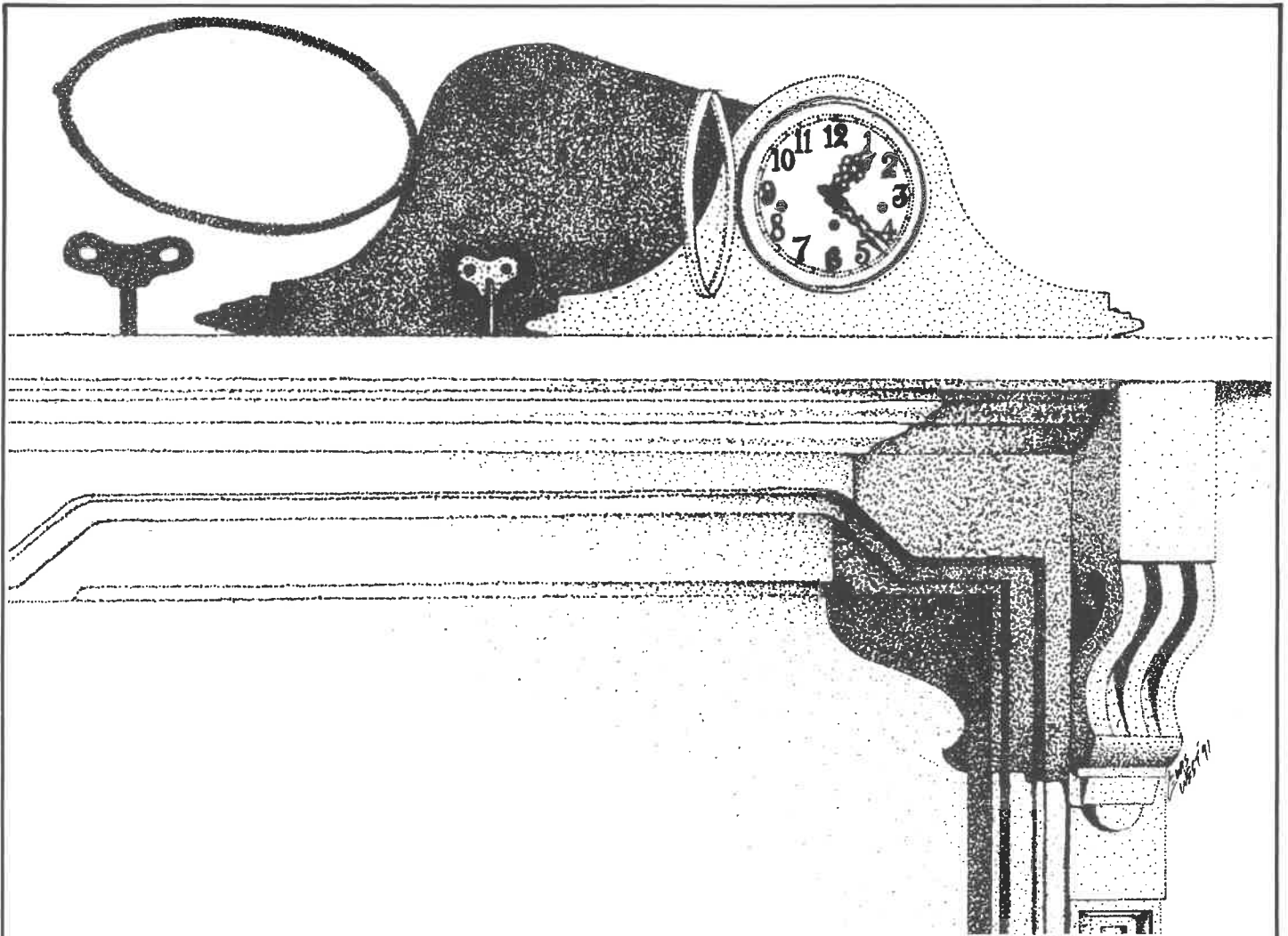
Bare back and legs
weigh on earth
where I swallow
the grass and the odors
of living.

This body chariot is
the finest garment
in God's nature.

My reddened skin
stretches over muscle
bone and words
that fail to
stitch and stifle
the growing
rumble of
blood.

I spin and step
over crushed decay
kissing gravity
and embracing this
fabric of perfect
Chaos.

Jonathan Barlow
Third Place
Poetry Contest



Pen and Ink (Pointillism)

Lewis West

The Confederates

While Grandma watched
 we climbed
 the bank —
 that led to the
 twice-picked cotton.
 The cousins —
 all
 played Civil War
 firing mounds
 of red clay dirt —
 riding —
 borrowed brooms.
 The cockleburs
 stabbed
 our rusted feet —
 wounded rebels cried.
 Sitting behind a barricade
 doctoring cuts with
 dirty cotton.

SuzAnne Brown

My Only Fear

stargazing
 contemplating
 more than distance
 quick resistance
 fear of dying
 lack of crying
 pity sympathy
 comfort surrounding me
 protecting providing
 secret place of hiding
 afraid to discover
 the reason of wonder
 what makes me afraid
 to say your name
 when my only fear
 is an occasional tear

Amy Boggan

The Tenth Narcissus

He worked the spade in and out of the mulch of Mrs. Cline's flower bed in a swift hard motion. He stabbed in at a downward angle then drove upward, with a ripping sound, as the spade edge cut through hidden hairlike roots. He slowed only to avoid the exposed body of an earthworm that his digging may have uncovered. The worms that lay in severed segments among the clods did not receive so much as a regretful glance as Matt tore through the soil searching for the last narcissus bulb.

"You find it?" came Mrs. Cline's anticipated and unwelcome question.

"No, ma'am," Matt answered.

"Well, you better get to finding it. I planted twenty narcissus in this bed, ten around the azaleas, and ten around that rose bush you've been trying to beat to death with all that flying dirt. I swear, you're going to have my mulch flung all over the yard before you help me find that bulb. Now come on. It's in here somewhere."

Matt's strokes got deeper and faster as he renewed his attack on the flower bed. Worm halves flew unnoticed. Even a fleet cricket fell under the death-wielding spade. The bulb had to be found.

"Every December for almost sixteen years now, I have fixed up a pot of 10 narcissus bulbs to bloom for Christmas," said Mrs. Cline. She sunk her yellow, plastic-covered, hands into the dark abyss of the flower bed. Mrs. Cline wore an extra pair of dishwashing gloves over her gardening gloves that had been a gift from one of her nephews.

"No way am I going to start violating my own tradition by settling with nine just to save you and me an afternoon. Now, Matt, I know that right now you would rather be somewhere else than digging in the dirt with a fifty-year-old woman, but if you want to get to that somewhere else before dark, you better stop sulking and start looking."

Matt muttered under his breath as he slowed the murderous strokes of his spade and looked more carefully through the broken soil. It probably rotted. . . something probably ate it, Matt thought as he rummaged through the cold soil reburying bits of rose bush root before Mrs. Cline saw them and scolded him again. Searching. Matt searched for the bulb. . . and freedom.

Nobody but she is going to know there are nine instead of ten bulbs in those pots. She's an English teacher not a math teacher; she probably can't count right anyway. But Matt knew Mrs. Cline had counted right and he kept on looking, moving aside the battered body parts of his accidental victims.

"Ever since Thomas was in the first grade I have been blooming ten narcissus for Christmas." Mrs. Cline stopped her yellow hands for a moment when she mentioned Thomas, but only for a moment. She was back at work no different than before.

Her voice took on a different quality whenever she mentioned Thomas. Not a sad quality, or a hurt, or angry quality. . . just a deepness that wasn't there before - a barely noticeable change that let the listener know that whatever something she was talking about was an important something, a special something. That's the way Mrs. Cline always talked about Thomas.

"That was the only year I didn't bloom ten bulbs. I don't remember how many I did bloom, but I know it wasn't ten. I guess it was about five or so because I do remember that I only used one pot. Thomas couldn't believe you could make flowers grow and bloom in the winter time. I swear, I almost had to whip that boy to make him quit worrying those plants. I asked him how many he wanted me to plant next year since he loved them so much. He said he wanted ten. I guess ten is a pretty big number to a first grader. He was always such a pretty boy. . . Matt, pay attention to what you're doing, now. You almost beheaded my gardenia. Why don't you try digging closer to the ground from now on?"

Matt's face reddened with sullen anger and humiliation. He could not resist making a gesture toward Mrs. Cline's turned back. She was good at tricking somebody into thinking she was nice. . . telling stories that made her seem almost human, but as soon as she realized that she was fooling somebody. . . out poured her true acidic meanness. Matt would not let himself be deceived again.

But he could not help remembering Thomas's funeral - memorial service, rather. They could not have a funeral for Thomas because they never got his body back from the river. Matt was in the seventh grade then so that would mean Thomas was about eighteen when he drowned.

Matt remembered the service. He remembered Mrs. Cline had the priest read "Full Fathom Five" by Shakespeare. . . except the priest said "only son" instead of "father." After Matt had Mrs. Cline for English in the eleventh grade, he realized she must have felt very strongly that "Full Fathom Five" should be read. . . even if she had to rewrite a bit of it to make it fit. Mrs. Cline loved Shakespeare. She would skewer a student on a verbal spear if he misquoted so much as a syllable.

Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes:

"Yes," thought Matt. That's a good way to die and a good way to be buried. He reasoned that since Mrs. Cline was denied Thomas' actual body, she built one from poetry to bury him in. That was why "Full Fathom Five" was so important to Mrs. Cline, and that was the reason why it had to be read for Thomas. She never taught that poem in class.

Matt felt cold. The sky was beginning to darken, and for

all his cold fingertips and dirty broken fingernails, the tenth narcissus remained buried.

"Well, Matt, it looks like I'm not going to get my tenth narcissus this year. I guess it really doesn't matter that much after all. . . nine or ten won't make much difference in work or plants. I'll be the only one who really cares, anyway, and if I want another I'll just have to go and buy one. . . I don't think I will, though. Well, get on home, boy. I'm through with you."

"Are you sure you don't want me to come back and help you look for the bulb tomorrow?" Matt asked.

"Well, I never thought I'd see the day you would volunteer to work an extra thirty minutes for me, much less a whole afternoon. Get home now before your momma decides you've been driving around town looking for trouble and a one-stop that will sell beer to minors. . . Don't you worry Matt. Nine will be just fine."

Aggie Ausborn

Third Place

Short Story Contest



Photography

Nicole Smith

A Little Girl

A little girl

brown dirt on her mouth
icy white teeth hide
the sweet smell of sugar
strands of hair caught in her mouth
dress stained and ripped
cries for her mommy
being pulled her hair
by the i.q.-less neighborhood bully
he has won for now

A soldier

dirt and defecation on his face
burnt darkened teeth emit
the stale taste of salt
a colony of lice thriving on his head
clothes flaking off dried blood
cries for his God
slowly, wrenchingly being sliced apart
by the i.q.-less neighborhood bully
he has won for now

A teacher

time held glasses on his head
slightly yellow teeth emit
the perfect taste of nicotine
his hair lost in previous battles of the mind
clothes in perfect style (for 1974)
cries for knowledge
being killed by ignorance frustration judgement
by the i.q.-less neighborhood bully
he has won for now

A bully

shame branded on his face
of the teeth that remain
the genuine taste of loneliness
his hair - an act of abandon
clothes - a stage show of confidence
cries for himself
being killed by the part he plays
by the i.q.-less bully
who never lost

Kissy Dabbs

Will it Matter (When I fit the Description)?

Sometimes when I'm walking,
I think
of Yusef and Bensonhurst,
of the '60's, '90's, and the future.
I'm constantly reminded of
APARTHEID 'N RACISM 'N AMERICA 'N
I'm Scared
'cause nothing will matter
when I fit the description
not grades, not profession, nothing.
Only human emotions:
Fear, Hatred, Prejudice, Ignorance.
'n AP Biology 'n Chemistry won't help when
the bullet
from the sick enforcer of a sick nation
enters my back.
When I fit the Description
I'm reminded of
"WE SHALL OVERCOME"
'n Pray
that one day we shall

Jarvis DeBerry
Honorable Mention
Poetry Contest

one child's wish

star light, star bright

a smile full of passion
a soul full of life.
trying to hide my fears.

first star i see tonight

running from you
hoping you'll catch me.
you always do.

wish i may

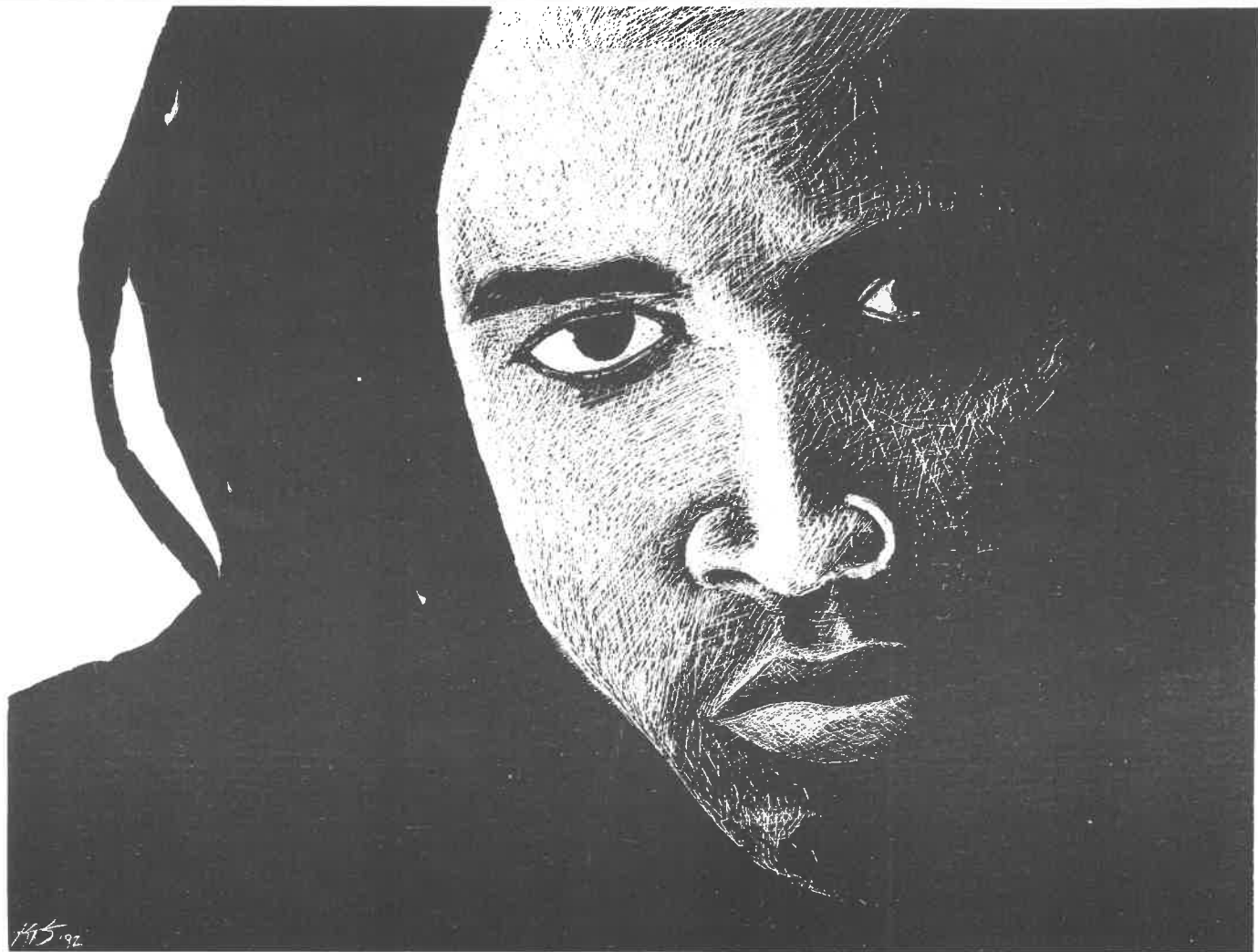
should i wish for love
or should i wish for time?

wish i might

they both slip away
much too easily

have the wish
(you)
i wish tonight.

Bradford Rhines



Scratchboard

Keith Schwager

English Teacher

Old Mr. John:
He's a teacher, you see.
He's really not crazy,
But humorous as can be.
He reads us stories
And acts out the parts
Then puts that aside
And acts real smart.
It's amazing to see the man think.
He knows all there is to know.
Except **one** missing link.
And to find it out
He'll scratch his head
And blow his nose,
Read us a poem,
Then some prose.

Mac Alford

Prisoner

He stares outside the window
To the sun beaming over the earth;
The clouds have faded
And new flowers burst open
Until the ground is covered with a carpet of color.
Cars zoom by, shining in the sunlight,
Blaring music in his ears.
Children giggle past on tricycles
As little ants roam free from trash can to trash can.
A tear forms in his eye
As he leans his head against the bars
And sinks back into his jail cell.

Donna Hardy

Photograph

Black and White surpassing color
Images of a living old.
A country store striving forward
Proprietor standing bold.
Owner regal, beaming pride,
Hands overly worn.
Stitches pulled tight,
A life refusing to be torn.
Resisting depression
The porch weeps to breaking.
An apple strays from its bin,
Rocking chairs sway.
Wind strums a roof of tin.
Wooden floors and wooden walls
Course as the bearded face
Who sees a castle,
Falling prey to weeds.
Follow the dusty steps
Into the sunny haze
Of a lazy dog and a crowded maze.
A creaking sign beacons all
To a lonely man and a lonely store
Living together, becoming one.
Black and White surpassing color
Images of a living old.

Justin Rose

Mrs. Kennedy's

She's always glad to see us:
"Have you boys been working hard?" she says
As we walk into the little store.
"Yes, ma'am," we reply.
We wander down the aisles filled with tobacco,
Pork skins, motor oil, and pigs' feet
To the drink cooler.
As we pay for our Cokes, she asks us
How our parents are doing.
We pile back in the truck and wave goodbye
Knowing we'll be back one day soon.
And she'll be in the same place
Behind the ancient cash register,
Like an enduring rock, weathered and wise.

Russ Gibson

Elle

A little girl who left me a year early
accident stole my first friend cried forever
realizing that 600 miles away jeopardize a family
no game today and I am lost again

Kissy Dabbs



Photography

Nicole Smith

Cowpalace

We used to live on Cowpalace Road. It was a pretty nice place all in all. The elementary school was down the road so we kids never had far to walk. There was a little grocery store three miles down where Cowpalace hit the highway. Momma quit sending us to the store on our bicycles after the Polk boy got run over by a tractor trailer that summer. That sure was a shame because James (that was the Polk boy's name) was an all right fellow even though he was the youngest boy on Cowpalace to drop out of school.

He graduated from the elementary school two years late and he decided he would go to work at the slaughter house instead of the high school. My brother Frank used to work with him. They were pretty close. He and Frank would sneak up to the holding pens late at night and jump on the backs of the bulls. This was not as daring as it may at first seem. The cows were so crowded into the pens that all those bulls could do when my long-legged brother and the Polk boy leapt off the rails onto their sweaty backs was bellow a lot and roll their eyes. They had to quit that, though, when my brother fell off and got his arm broke. It's a good thing the slaughter house is on Cowpalace Road because James didn't have to run too far to get help.

Because of Frank's arm, my daddy decided I should go to work with him at the stockyard when I started going to the high school. It was right across the highway from the grocery store, not a far walk at all, but my daddy always drove us. I guess he felt it would be undignified to walk to work. He must have felt the same way about church because we never walked there either.

Daddy worked the weight machine at the sale barn. It was a stressful job. Trustworthy men had to work the scales, because if the scale man got close with the slaughter house man then somebody was going to get cheated and somebody was going to get in trouble for it. It had happened before, but not while my daddy was the scale man. Not so much because my father was a good Christian but because he knew if he tried he would get caught sooner or later and he didn't want that kind of shame on himself and his family.

At the stockyard my job was the usual herding and culling. I had a cut off piece of rubber hose to slap the backs of the cows with to make them get to where they were supposed to be. The boys at the door of the ring had electric prods because there wasn't enough room for swinging your arms around up there and the cows were a lot closer so you had to be real quick about putting them in the right place. Can't be that quick with a hose.

Over the corrals under the tall roof of the barn were these little catwalks that are for the farmers to stomp around on and do their shopping from before the bidding starts. The catwalks are about twenty feet up and the ceiling is about twenty more feet above the walks. Great big lights hung from the ceiling. Sometimes I would be walk-

ing around on the catwalks when the herding and culling and penning of all the animals had been done and I would look at those lights and wonder how they changed the light bulbs. I just couldn't figure it out. Not all the lights were over a catwalk so that was forty feet instead of twenty that somebody had to overcome to change a bulb. They weren't attached to pulleys so they couldn't be lowered. I didn't think they made ladders that tall and if they did I couldn't imagine how shaky and shivery it must be at the top of them.

"Daddy."

"What."

"What do they do at the barn when one of them lights burns out?" I asked when we were driving home one afternoon.

"I guess they change the bulb."

"I know they change the bulb, Daddy."

"Why did you ask then?"

"How do they reach them? Those lights are about forty feet off the ground."

"Are the lights on rope pulleys?"

"No, I already looked."

"Well I'd hate to think about getting on a ladder that tall to change a bulb."

"Me, too." We quit talking then because my daddy saw my little sister Sarah on her bicycle leaving the store at the turn on to Cowpalace. He ran her down, threw her bike in the back of the truck, slapped her butt and put her in the cab with me.

"Your momma told you not to ride to that store."

I continued to worry over that light bulb. I was determined to find out how they could change a light bulb forty feet off the floor. I decided I would just wait for a bulb to burn out. Shouldn't be long. I'd been working there for six months now and none of the lights had burnt out yet and they leave all of them on when they're having a sale and those sales sometimes go on till real late at night.

I waited. Light just kept glaring down from that ceiling. Never a break in it. The whole time I'm working I smell, over cow sweat and horse urine, the hot dust of those light bulbs. Burning. I look up. They are so bright sometimes they hurt my eyes. Burning.

The grass sounded like it was breathing as I walked through it down the side of Cowpalace Road. The sky was big tonight. I knew I was halfway when I heard the low nervous moaning sounds of the animals at the slaughter house. I couldn't see nothing. Dark night. Just felt the tall grass through my jeans sliding around my legs. I smelt the highway. Exhaust fumes, hot tar, run over possum. Before I topped the last little rise that lay between Cowpalace and the highway, I could see lights from the passing cars. See them ride on the curve of the hill looking like a whale back coming out of the water then going back under, disappear-

ing on the other side.

The stockyard and barn were quiet except for the stomp of a hoof or a low animal breath. Sometimes horses and cows stay at the yard days before they ever get sold. When I passed close by a pen the dark bodies in it would move away. I climbed up the stairs leading to the catwalk.

"God. This is so stupid. I can't believe I'm doing this. If my daddy knew I was here and what I was planning he would beat my butt a whole lot worse than the whack he gave Sarah."

I didn't care.

The light exploded; glass shards spread outward in a circle around the naked fixture. They fell like water does when you splash it, but longer because they were so high up. The fixture swung with a long gnawed up string of wires hanging out of it, looked like guts.

I held my twenty-two in my hand as I walked down the catwalk and across the floor of the barn. All the animals were nervous and milling around behind the rails. I smelled blood. Something must have hurt itself on the broken glass. Well, it will give the vet something to do in the morning.

I walked home down Cowpalace.

Aggie Ausborn
Second Place
Short Story Contest

Mamie at the Mirror

With strong hands and gray eyes
She softly brushes her hair:
Long arms like tree branches
Reach and sway
Pull tight and firm
Her hair dark
Black as coal
Black as a sinner's soul
Weave, Mold, Knead
With fingertip eyes.

Katy Montgomery



Photography

Nicole Smith



Colored Pencil (Contour) *Michael Moss*

One Simple Truth

Alone, standing in the shadows of her
shattered dreams

As the garden gate swings softly in the wind,
She leans to save a daisy from a crystal pool
Which relentlessly became her only friend.

The daylight seemed so far behind the fierce and
blinding rain

And the once prismatic garden seemed to fade,
But the simple floating daisy that caught her eye
Was enough to keep her heart from turning gray.

To everyone there is a promise and a simple hope
That the beauty of simplicity can bear,
Like a portion of a rainbow that can calm a storm
And relieve a soul of foul and morbid air.

Like a tormented heart that's been starved of
true love,

Never seeing a single red rose,
Is the daisy that fell in the puddle of tears
As the old rugged gate whispered closed.

Lori Trussell

An Ode To John Dryden

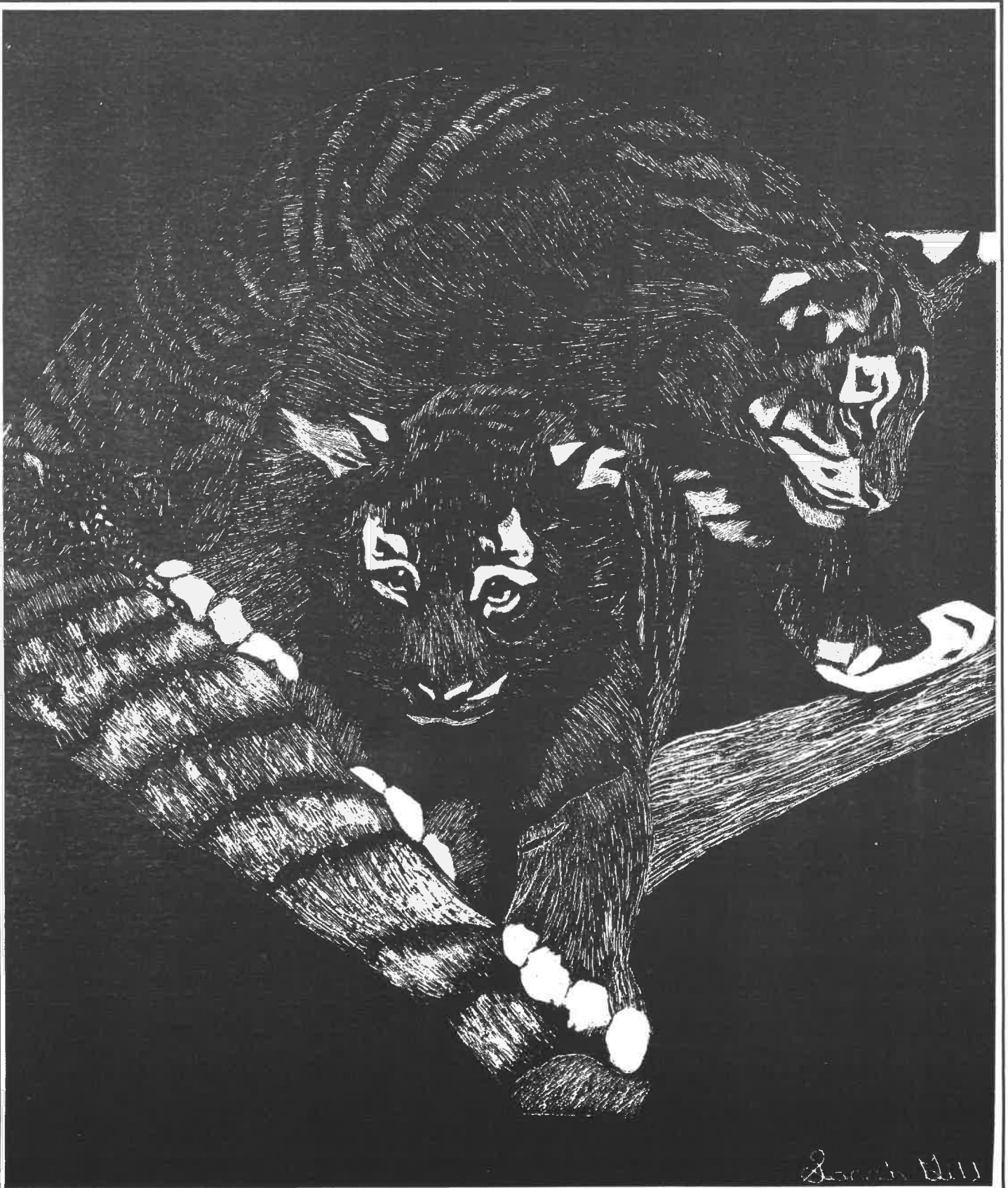
"Music will untune the sky."
this I do believe a truth,
Dryden knew of things high,
greater than things under our shallow roof,
harmony of living and dead,
crash down the final Chord,
Man is the one who said,
I am the leader of the horde,
the Scale does end with us,
in a way many more than one,
He showed us that we must,
bring Judgement upon,
It would seem that the
most complicated note
would break the fingers of the
Guitar Player who so wrote.

Keith Schwager

Window Watching

Rolling down his face and chest
Bubbling on his forehead
He sweats ferocious
As he cuts and cuts
Pushing harder the handles
Of the rusty machine
It snaps and grows cold
He yells in the air and pulls once
More — VROOM! VROOM!
He mows the lawn.

Katy Montgomery



Scratchboard

Sarah Gill

Guarding Eternity

Visage of the knight
Guardingeternity.

Sword and mace at hand
Chainmailinthesunlight

Punk in the alley
Guardingeternity.

Switchblade and pipe - an arsenal
Tinklingchains-awarning

Western gunslinger
Guardingeternity.

Gun on his hip
Chainsonthebandolierofammunition

My self-worth
Guardingeternity.

Weaponless , naked
Chainsholdingconformity"in-check"

Jim Owens

Autumn

The wilting of leaves
Changing from neon greens
To vibrant oranges complemented
By dull browns.
The thrill of a quiet, rushing wind
The disappearance of ragweed.
The sound of coaches yelling
At a team who won by 20 instead of 30.
The intensity of Friday nights,
When the armed warrior goes to battle
And the fittest survives.
The tranquility of 60 degree weather,
When a long sleeve just seems to do the trick
And coats aren't needed.

Ryan Beckett

Why

it riddles
it strains
it boggles
the brain
how hinderput
could snufferfuss
or gilligrass
could pilliwuss
but why oh why
Mr. Coddlestone Pie
did Dr. Seuss
have to die?

Amy Boggan

The Sun

In the morning, she slowly wakes
Pulling the sheets off her warm body.
Her fair skin radiates in all directions;
Her beauty is incomprehensible for light.
And she sits up, stretching her limbs.

She emerges from her bed ready
As she prepares herself for the day.
Placing a foot in position, she jumps.
Pirouetting through the sky, twisting,
Flipping, dancing her daily routine.

Night approaches, she is tired.
She wrings her wet, golden hair,
And pulls back the dark violet sheets.
Lying down as God tucks her in,
She sleeps until tomorrow's recital.

Kenneth White
Honorable Mention
Poetry Contest

Rage

The sound of keys rattling in the lock awakens me. "Okay, Smith," the guard says. "Time for breakfast." I swing my feet over the side of the mattress and onto the cold concrete floor. Ralph (that's the guard) is standing outside the open door, waiting for me to come out. I notice he's grasping his night stick a little tightly, and I can see little white spots on his knuckles. His blue uniform is neat and clean, as ever. I still don't see why he starches it every Sunday, because the only people that ever see him are the inmates. Still, he starches it just the same and even wears a hairpiece, for all the good it does him. I stand up and stretch, flexing my muscles just enough to make him nervous. I seem to have that effect on everyone, but maybe that's only common sense. After all, wouldn't you be afraid of someone who was convicted of ripping a man's arm off and beating him to death with it?

Ralph knows what I'm in for, so I play it to the hilt. "How's that leg feeling this morning, Ralph? I notice it's been a little stiff lately. You want me to give you a nice hard massage?" I say with my most innocent smile. Ralph immediately grips his stick harder, so hard that I swear his hand is just going to break.

"You just don't give me any trouble, and I won't have to knock you," he says. It seems that "knock" is Ralph's most dire threat, because he uses it constantly when he's around me. I know that it's all a bluff, so I intimidate him just the same.

It takes about five minutes for me to wash up and get ready, mostly because the little rusty razor won't do its job. I can tell that Ralph is nervous again, probably because I'm holding a sharp object. I whirl around, too quickly for him to react, and stick the safety razor an inch from his face. I say, "Will you look at this Ralph? How in the world do they expect a man to look all nice and clean-shaven if they won't even give him a decent razor?"

Ralph nods, too shocked to speak or even move. I guess he wasn't expecting me to turn around that fast, and he knows I could have shoved that safety razor right through his eye and up into his brain, killing him instantly. I wouldn't have, though. I don't kill nervous prison guards, only men with loose shoulder joints foolish enough to insult my mother. I allow Ralph to cuff me and put on the leg irons. I know he'd like to have some help with it, but the warden still refuses to assign more than one guard to even the most dangerous men.

As we walk down the bright halls, the clink of chains is heard. It sounds lonely and hollow, like someone shutting and closing the creaking door to the gas chamber. I smell the food before I see it. It's the usual slop, of course. Runny eggs and cinderized bacon, washed down with a little milk with last week's expiration date. "The daily breakfast of champions, I suppose," I remark to Ralph. He says nothing, only picks his nose and hitches up his belt.

I go through the line and get my food, sitting down with the rest of the guys. Everyone is courteous, as usual, and I don't even have to ask for the salt and pepper. Big Mac, his neck like a tree trunk on top of a battle tank, quietly whispers, "We got a new guy, sittin' to the left o' Hodges." I glance over at the new guy and check him out. He's kind of a big guy, with long, straggly blond hair and tattoos up and down both arms. He's not trying to get along with anyone; he just stares at his plate and pushes his eggs around with his fork. He looks up and sees me giving him the once-over, so I smile and say good morning. I'm not one of those guys who tries to intimidate every newcomer; you have to work together in this prison or else you get hurt. The man doesn't seem to be in the best of moods, because he glares back and says, "What are you lookin' at, boy?" Now here I was, trying to be nice, and he has already gotten things off on the wrong foot.

"Well that's a downright rude attitude, don't you think? All I did was to look your way and smile. You better start trying to get yourself a better attitude, or else things could get unpleasant."

His face gets red and he starts to say something, but thinks better of it. This probably has something to do with the fact that I'm holding my fork with the expression that I'd love nothing more than to stick it in his jugular.

I can see that this guy is going to be a problem, and I lean over to tell Big Mac something, but Warden Schilling comes into the room and yells for silence. He's a pretty big man, and usually gets his way, but this morning the men were feeling a little talkative. He had to pull out his revolver and fire a shot into one of the walls before everybody finally shut up.

"Men, we're going to have visitors this morning," he says, "A group of psychologists is going to tour the facilities, and I want you to be on your best behavior." Everyone starts getting excited, because we hardly ever get visitors; I just sit at the table and say nothing.

Sure enough, at ten o'clock we're herded into the activity yard and told to look natural. Some guys took the chance to lift weights; a couple of others played basketball. At about ten-thirty, the thick gray door on the side of the building opens and six or seven people in slacks and coats come out, accompanied by guards. Most of them are scientist-types, but there is one cute little girl, about twenty-five, who stands shyly behind the others. She writes something on a clipboard, and pushes a lock of hair back from her face. Some of the men notice her, and a few profane remarks are yelled out. She just blushes and pretends not to hear.

It was at this moment that the newcomer decided to make his escape. He had been inching closer, trying to get within range of the guards. Suddenly, he hurled a small weight at one of the guards. It couldn't have weighed more

than five pounds, but the little black disk slammed into his head with a loud crack, and the man was knocked to the ground unconscious. He snatched the little shiny .38-special from the man's holster, and whirled around with a wild look in his eyes. Then he grabbed the pretty young lady by the hair and screamed that by God, nobody better move if they didn't want to see her pretty little face blown off.

All of this happened so quick that the other guards didn't have time to react. However, I did. I had seen the newcomer inching closer, and I knew which person he would take as a hostage. I now decided that I would stop him before the young lady got hurt. Walking toward him, I say, "That's not the way we do things around here, kid." He focuses on me, the wild look in his eyes intensifying as he sees who is challenging him. He moves the gun from the frightened young woman's temple and points it at me.

"This will be a pleasure," he says.

This is all the distraction I need. I take another step forward, and see his eyes narrow. Watching closely, I see his finger twitch, and I whip my body sideways before the cylin-

der can rotate and fire the bullet to end my life. I stand back up and say in a quiet tone, "Big mistake." He is so awestruck by the fact that I just appeared to dodge a bullet that he offers no resistance to my attack. Kicking the gun from his hand, I follow through with a fist to the gut. The wind knocked from him, he stumbles back. I can feel the rage coming over me again, a driving force that washes over me like waves of molten metal. I know that I couldn't stop now even if I wanted to. I kick his feet out from under him and follow him to the ground, where I begin to slam his face again and again into the rough asphalt. That was the last thing I remember before something struck me behind the ear.

I wake up in the infirmary with a splitting headache. Ralph is there, and he manages his ever-nervous smile when he sees that I am awake. "He's dead," Ralph says. "He died last night of a severe concussion. The girl's O.K., though."

I yawn and rub my sore head; then I grin at old Ralph and say, "I just hate to see what little beauty we get around here destroyed."



Photography

Nicole Smith

Russ Gibson
First Place
Short Story Contest

Southern Promises

He dropped out of school
after Mrs. Mamie's
fourth grade.
He never learned about Dick or Jane.
"Daddy's makin' me cause
Billy's fightin' in Korea
an' somebody's gotta work
them cotton fields."
Pull up them weeds, son.
No more hunger
after this fall.
I promise.
Pick the cotton, son,
we gotta survive.
Your momma's proud of you.
I promise.
Son, it's not time for water.
The day is passin' fast.
We can rest Sunday.
I promise.
Son, we got work to do.
Time to rise cause
there's light out.
You can go back to school
some other day an' maybe you can
learn me to read.
I promise.
Son, it's time for work now.
We can rest later.
I promise.

Monica Aday
First Place
Poetry Contest

The Unknown Soldier

A thousand battlefields he has seen.
He gives his life for his country without hesitation.
Dying without a word, perishing with honor in his heart,
He is killed with rifles, bombs, grenades, pistols,
and knives.
He has many faces, many names.
He is short and tall, slim and stout, dark and light.
But of his many forms, one facet of this man is
unchanging.
No relatives mourn at his funeral; no familiar hands
lower him
into the earth beside his family.
But although he dies a nameless man on a nameless
battlefield,
The greatest honor is his.
He is the Unknown Soldier.

Russ Gibson

Vietnam, 1967

with a nervous grin,
he sits on a ledge
among the vines
of a drafted home.

the government gave
him two things for
the war:
a trigger finger
and a gun.

they didn't give him
compassion.
they didn't teach him
mercy.

they just made sure
he knew the difference
in vietcong and american. . .

and which one to shoot.

Kristen Higgins



Colored Pencil (Contour) *Elizabeth Allgood*

The Ultimate American Challenge

Interwoven in a country of chaos and neon signs lie many small towns. Each town is a small society that does nothing more than exist. Most children attend the same high school as their parents, marry their high school sweethearts, settle down, and grow old with the ones they love. My friend lost his dad in a state prison and his mom to alcohol. Dean kept his faith in everything, including himself, including his country.

The last time I saw Dean he was lying still and calm as a procession of mourners silently passed by his coffin. In the slow parade of sorrow many cried or comforted someone, but not a soul could divert his attention from the silver box that lay at the front of the chapel. Flowers representing words never spoken and dreams never fulfilled lined the bleak walls; then there was Dean. Less than a month before I had seen him in his United States Army dress blues. He had been celebrating life and here he was again, wearing his Army uniform.

In just a few years the Army had taken a mere boy and transformed him into a man who was willing to die for the military. Dean served his country and freely gave all he could to the United States because his life had revolved around the Army.

Shortly after graduating from high school as valedictorian, he entered an Army boot camp and with pride he endured the rigorous training required to make him a soldier. While in the Army, Dean had shown advanced maturity and was made a Sergeant at the age of nineteen. He was then transferred to West Point Military Academy, where he graduated third in his class. After graduation, he returned to the small, provincial town known as home. The town's people were extremely proud of their "local boy," and showered him with praise and support beyond any he had ever known. The Board of Aldermen gave Dean a fish-fry on the football field of his old high school, and invited the residents of the county to attend. With tears in his eyes, Dean accepted the key to the city and his new found maturity gave him insight to the future and a positive reflection on the experiences in his past. The same town that he had tried to escape from now was proud to have him back. With quivering lips Dean gave a short speech giving hope to the people of the town, and encouraging them to believe in themselves. Dean was the ideal picture of accomplishment.

The hot summer day in 1984 gave no relief to the even hotter nights. I still recall the phone ringing, not realizing how my world was about to change. I still tremble at the memory of hearing the words, "Dean was killed last night." Dean had died somewhere in a patch of desolate woods when the helicopter he had been piloting crashed. Nobody knew how or why. He had begun life with the world against him and he died with an entire nation on his side.

In my grief I recalled the words Dean had spoken to his home town. He had said that the United States Army had taken him from a life without hope and had opened many, many doors for him. He wanted to know if his life, if he were ever called to give it, was really enough to pay back his country. Had he turned to a life of crime, some might say he was worthless. But he turned to military service, and created a very fulfilled life; he was far from worthlessness.

Dean now lies in a military cemetery, surrounded by other heroes who found their answer to their own personal challenges, and accepted their calls to serve the United States. Dean's tombstone seems to be another faceless, white marker which gives no clue to the personality that he possessed. His life was not given in vain, for it was his country he died for. I only regret that I did not have the chance to tell him how much I admired him for his bravery and patriotism. I still recall the words I spoke to Dean as he lay still in his coffin. I asked him if the Army was worth his life. Then I saw the wings, attached to his chest, and the flag neatly folded at the end of the casket and I knew Dean would say yes. He had truly given the ultimate gift, without a single regret. He had accepted, fought, and died for America's challenge. If Dean's life can encourage another human being to seek a wealth of inspiration inside himself, then his life of service to the United States shall continue, forever.

Monica Aday



Photography

Nicole Smith

Crying to the Wind

The hands of winter close
Sending birds away
Leaves just fly away
Bones of trees are left
Their glory is gone

Walking by the trees
I can see the clouds
There a lonely crow
Winging through the snow
And crying to the wind

Nothing is the same
Never clear again
Never as before
And never being sure
Of the next sunrise

The crow flies to a pine
He lights upon a limb
And it's then I see
He has a family
Yet I — have not a friend

The winter goes on by
My days I spend outdoors
Watching all the birds
Seeking an answer
(To) Crying to the wind

And now the spring sun shines
Through clouds that rain like tears
I wonder if the crow
Still can see the snow
That only I can see

So when the summer sun
Bakes the beaches' sands
Still I dwell in ice
Watching gray clouds fly
(And) Crying to the wind

Dyan Dawson

In an Airplane

In an airplane
Looking out the window
down
down
Through the clouds
Through the fog
Past the birds
Through the smog

Under the smoke
Through the trees
Past the mountains
And the seas
down
down
Past the skyscrapers
And the papermills
Beyond the fenceposts
And the windowsills

In the ground
Among the weeds
Between the grass
Beneath the leaves

I see a ring
Sparkling in the sun
Then a foot comes crashing down
And it's gone.

Donna Hardy

I Am Love

I am Love,

Is it true. . .
Is it true?

Am i you?
You, a God, lowly are we;
I, a pauper, begging for thee.
You, Perfect, a red wine tease;
I, shunned, follow like leas.
You, Poetic, unpredictable to me;
I, a servant, obedient, unworthy.
You, Behemoth, break life free;
I, an infant, caged, in need.
You, Romantic, a gull by the sea;
I, a soldier, die quiet in agony.
You, the Essence I long to be,
You, the Essence I want for me.

John Browning



Graphite

Kenneth White

Computers, Mice, Airplanes, and Life: An Interpretation of Flight and the Answer in Douglas Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* Four-Part Trilogy

Humans exist as sentient beings. The process of sentient thought has throughout time led humans to seek a purpose — a reason for existing. This seeking — a quest for knowledge and understanding of the environment in which humans exist — has resulted in the evolution of scientific experimentation and questioning, which has satisfied humans' initial questions but has prompted even more. These further questions have allowed humans to acquire a general understanding of the internal and external workings of their surroundings and, in the past century, to free themselves from the limits of gravity and fly past the Earth to enter a universe of new questions.

A universe of questions concerning freedom, understanding and enlightenment is expanded in Douglas Adams' whimsical *Hitchhiker's Guide* trilogy in four parts — (*The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *The Restaurant at the End of the Universe*, *Life, the Universe and Everything*, and *So Long, and Thanks For All the Fish*)¹, in which Arthur Dent and his friends meander through time and space searching for the Question to the "Ultimate Answer of Life, the Universe, and Everything," and meeting lots of "cool and froody"² people along the way — not to mention the "odd talents" which the travelers acquire through various encounters (Easton 182). The idea of "Forty-Two" (i.e. the Arabic numeral "42") as the Ultimate Answer to the Great Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything, and the idea of the odd talent of flight (i.e. the act of throwing oneself at the ground and missing) play crucial roles in Douglas Adams' illustration of humans' quest for freedom, understanding, and enlightenment.

Humans have turned to computers in the latter half of the past century to free their minds and bodies from rote tasks and trivial thoughts. In the first book, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the reader is exposed to the story of Deep Thought (the second greatest computer ever created), which was built for the sole purpose of computing the answer to life, the universe, and everything, supposedly to free a race of sentient beings (known to humans as "mice") from their continuing search for this answer. The computer found that answer to be "Forty-Two" (i.e. 42).³ The significance of this scene is not that the answer is "Forty-Two," but that the computer was used in order to allow "normal" life processes to continue while the search for the answer was continued at no sacrifice of time or of effort to any member of society, much as computers of today have automated and thereby increased the efficiency of many processes that take place around us: personal computers, videocassette recorders, automatic transmission automobiles, and the supercomputers used

in scientific research all have freed the minds and bodies of people from taxing, trivial, or time-consuming tasks.

Adams presents the Earth as a giant computer (built to compute the "Question" to which the "Answer" is "Forty-Two") as part of the parallel for humans' inexplicable quest for understanding. The feeling that moves humans to search for an answer is due to the fact (unknown to them) that they *are* searching for an answer as part of a massive computer program that incorporates organic life as part of the matrix (see Note³ above). Adams has placed this idea in his text as a subtle presentation of the possible existence of a supreme being — that humans are not the masterful beings they often see themselves as — that there is probably something much larger than the mind of a human that controls life on the planet Earth.

The "numeropsychological" significance of the number "Forty-Two" is explained by Brian Stableford in his *Science Fiction and Fantasy Book Review* critique of *Life, the Universe and Everything*, where he states that by the time a person reaches age forty-two, that person should be aware that it "doesn't matter. . . whether the riddle has an answer. . . or whether there's a riddle at all" (19), meaning that the visions of youth have lost their potency and a sense of the "reality of life" has taken the visions' place. All of the characters in Adams' *Hitchhiker's Guide* books, especially Arthur Dent, are youthful in age and youthful — if not indeed childish — in their outlooks on life.

Adams uses the characters' unmethodical approach to finding the "Question" as a demonstration of the innocence of such youthful attitudes.⁴

In as much as computers have freed human minds, aircraft have freed the souls of humans to soar, literally, above the clouds and to look down upon the Earth defying gravity and returning to the ground only if mid-air refueling of the craft is not possible; but the second idea which pervades Adams' novels is that of flight "*without* [italics added for emphasis] a plane or a glider" (Martin 14). The activity of flight using balloons, zeppelins, gliders, and airplanes has required great focus of purpose and has taken humans years to finally achieve, and humans, as a result, have attained freedom in the skies, with the limit of fuel. Yet in *Life, the Universe and Everything*, Adams presents an idea that humans can fly without these machines.⁵

Arthur Dent literally stumbles upon the ability to fly without the aid of any one or combination of the above-mentioned machines while running from an avalanche of boulders. He trips, hurtles forward, notices a small blue tote-bag that he lost some time ago, wonders how the bag got into the avalanche, and forgets about falling to the

ground, at which point he begins to hover above the ground which he forgot about falling towards (*Life 136*). Adams utilizes this event to demonstrate that an overly observant, easily distracted person may and will have a clearer and freer view of life than a focused individual who sees only one side of an experience.

Adams also uses the flight scenes to show that the human quest for understanding is often interrupted by the feeling that a lack of understanding can be as useful as understanding. Arthur realizes that he “mustn’t try to think about [flying]” because, if he questions what is happening to him, it might stop happening (*Life 146*). This parallels the loss of wonder felt by some humans after learning what makes the grass green, what makes the sky blue, or that there is no Santa Claus (this last has yet to be proven scientifically). Understanding an experience can destroy the sheer wonder of watching, feeling, and experiencing it.

Man’s quest for enlightenment is exemplified in *So Long, and Thanks For All the Fish* when Arthur returns home to the “Earth Mark Two” (*Guide 162, So Long*).⁶ As he attempts his first flight on his home world, Arthur surely realizes that things, people, and places are the same across the universe (of course, the familiar reader will realize that this *is* Arthur Dent — the same Arthur Dent who almost lost his life over a cup of tea — and that this conclusion about Arthur actually realizing anything of impor-

ance is merely possible, not likely). With this new perspective, the reader is allowed to see that because most practices remain the same across the galaxy and through time, none of it really matters anyway (Lloyd 14). This does seem to be the overall message that Douglas Adams presents to the world through his series. Basically, the major philosophy of Adams’ books suggests that, “All beings are equal in faults and talents, all places are equal in beauty and unsightliness, and all actions are equal in magnitude and impact on the universe, so why doesn’t everyone just cool it and be nice to each other?”⁷ This sentiment is reflected in the easy-going style in which Adams’ has chosen to write the series.

As Arthur Dent and his friends wander about the galaxy, finding freedom and truth, and trying to understand all of the information they come in contact with, they gain a sense of the smallness of their actual existence. Arthur gains an especially immense feeling of minuteness due to the fact that he alone of the group has never before explored the realms beyond his home world, the Earth; he has never heard that the Answer to the Great Question of Life, the Universe, and Everything is “Forty-Two”; and he has never flown without an airplane. As Adams follows Arthur through his travels, the reader is shown that the “Answer” and “flight” are critical components of humans’ continuing quest for freedom, enlightenment, and understanding.

Notes

¹ The series deals with with the intra-galactic adventures of Arthur Dent, Earthman; Ford Prefect, Betelguesian; Zaphod Beeblebrox, Ex-President of the Galaxy; and Tricia McMillan (nicknamed “Trillian”), Earthwoman/Girlfriend to the Ex-President of the Galaxy. Ford and Arthur are picked up by the stolen *Heart of Gold* with its Improbability Drive, piloted by Zaphod and Trillian. In this marvelous ship, the four cruise across the galaxy having outlandish experiences.

² The word *froody* is a term to be defined as describing something similar to “really amazingly together” (*Guide 28*).

³ Deep Thought was built to calculate the meaning of life. The computer undertook this task but required seven and one-half million years to do so. When the answer (Forty-Two) was finally reached, the question could not be clarified. Deep Thought designed another computer that was so large it had to incorporate organic life as its major component. The second computer was called “Earth” (*Guide 166-73 and 175-83*).

⁴ The four characters named in Note¹ are all portrayed as being under the age of twenty-five.

⁵ On page seventy-two of *Life, the Universe and Everything*, the *Hitchhiker’s Guide* defines flight as follows:

There is . . . a knack . . . to flying. . . . All it requires is simply the ability to throw yourself forward with all your weight, and the willingness not to mind that it’s going to hurt. . . if you fail to miss the ground. . . .

. . . You have to miss the ground accidentally. . . . You have to have your attention suddenly distracted by something else when you’re halfway there, so that you are no longer thinking about falling, or about the ground or about how much it’s going to hurt if you fail to miss it.

The *Guide* goes on to explain the more popular ways of distracting oneself from the effects of gravity.

⁷ The phrasing of this quote is intended to resemble the general tone of the series. This quote is this writer’s original interpretation and is not found in any books by Douglas Adams.

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T. Oswalt

at Friendship Cemetery

one stone finger
points accusingly
at God.

the man at rest
underneath it
does not stir;
he has not
for many years.

all that's left of a man
who stood up for
what he knew
are a few words
engraved in stone -
that stand here,
ignored.

Kristen Higgins

The Front Lawn in Fall

Lying on my stomach in a field of dead grass,
My head in crossed arms, the grass appears like
unkempt corn.

The corn fields extend beyond my vision,
Occasionally interrupted by a tree.
The trees are standing over me; safety.

The light from a lamp causes strange highlights.

Yellow, green, red, the trees are dark by the night.
As I turn my head, I see a full moon,
But, in a prayerful state, I think of the Lord
Casting an eye from His luminescent post,
Watching me sleep. He gives me the trees; safety.

Kenneth White

November Silhouette

He stands black, between naked trees
underneath the amber sky.
All around him rest fallen leaves —
greedy squirrels hide their acorns;
There is a breeze and a chill in the air
as the sun slides below the horizon,
And his wife
lays a newly sewn quilt on their bed.

John Browning

Siesta in September

Lingering light illuminates the somber sky,
sending silence,
looking, lending solitude.
La luna es linda. . .
sleeping Spanish sky!

SuzAnne Brown

Bus Stop

A young boy stands at the corner
with a backpack slung across his shoulder.
The sun has just begun to pierce the coldness
and his thick winter coat is buttoned
all the way to the top.
With his collar upturned
and his small hands shoved deep into the
pockets of his blue jeans,
he stamps his feet against
the cold cement
and watches the steam
that comes from his short breaths
float across the morning.
He hears the yellow bus
before he sees it top the hill;
his salvation from the brisk morning.

Bradford Rhines

Roadkill

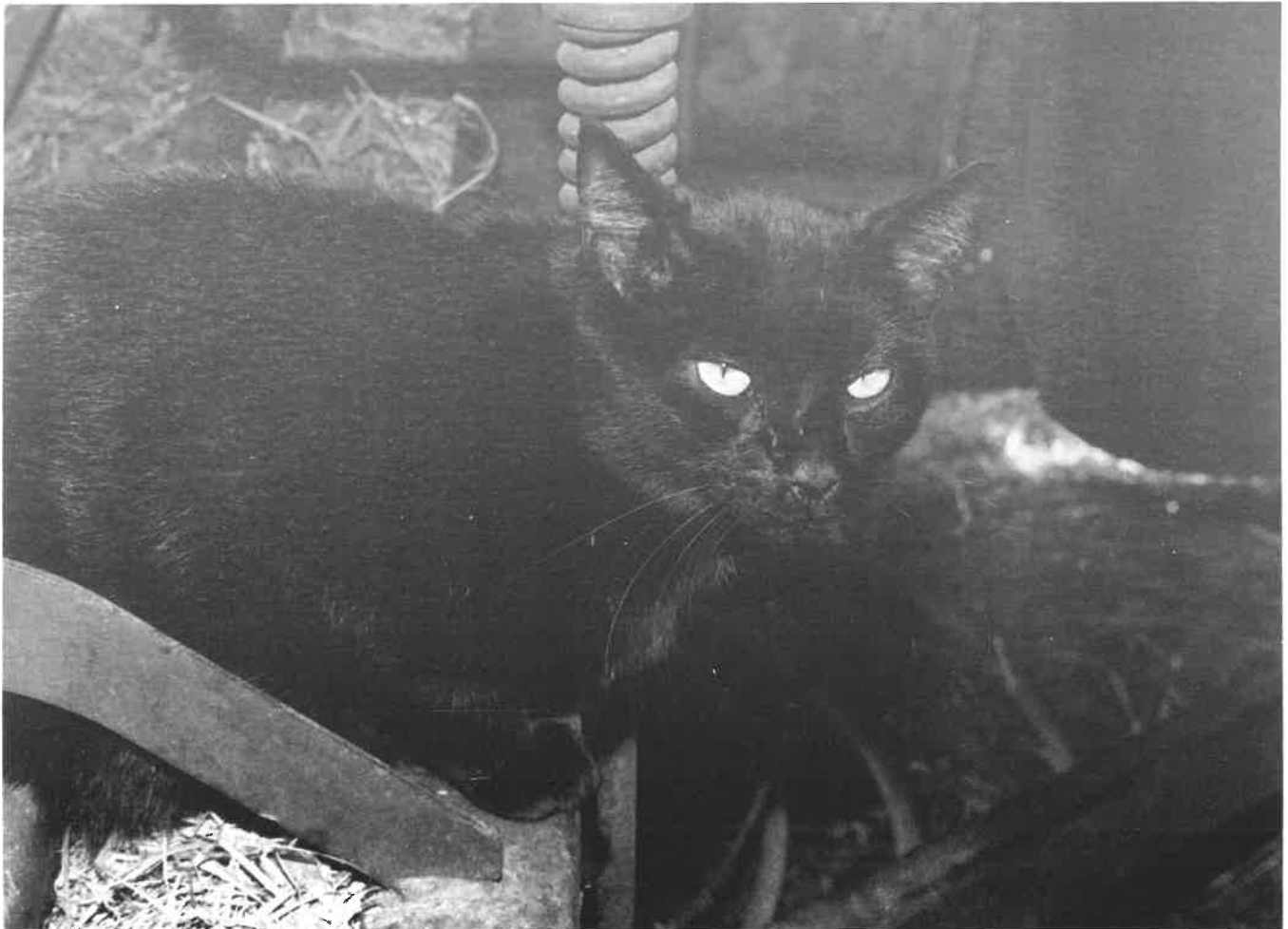
It lies beside the highway.
Battered, broken, and bloody.
Its fur ruffles in the wind
As it emotes a final quiver
When death draws near.
Its eyes are dull marbles,
Like old dolls' sightless orbs.
Its once-playful spirit
Lies exhausted, expended.
The cars whiz by, unseeing.
Past the Roadkill.

Russ Gibson

Cardinals

Swollen birds
Bounce around the yard
All red
Loud
And greedy
Stubbing yellow toes
On frosted flicks of grass
Stiff stemmed
Cold
And weedy
Where others flew
Against a day sky
Cold sunned
Pale
And windy

Aggie Ausborn



Photography

Nicole Smith

Contributors' Notes

Monica Aday, a senior from Iuka, contributed first-place award-winning poetry and an essay. She has been greatly influenced by Robert Frost and Eudora Welty and will be majoring in animal science at Mississippi State University.

Mac Alford, a junior from Liberty, is influenced greatly by Jimmy Carter and enjoys the trumpet, the banjo, gardening, and hiking. Mac quotes W.J. Cruise, "Don't let school get in the way of your education." Mac contributed poetry.

Elizabeth Allgood, a senior from Natchez, hopes to pursue a career in elementary education after graduation from Mississippi State University. She enjoys nature walks and watching animals and feels her mother is her most influential person. Elizabeth contributed artwork.

Aggie Ausborn, a senior from Aberdeen, contributed two award-winning short stories and poetry. She hopes to attend Columbia University in New York. Her favorite authors include Pat Conroy and Colleen McCollough. Aggie served as *Southern Voices'* Art Editor.

Jonathon H. Barlow, a senior from Picayune, will major in computer engineering at MSU next fall. He enjoys playing guitar, tennis, computer programming, and listening to music. Jon, who contributed poetry, was greatly influenced by the author, William Carlos Williams.

Ryan Beckett, a senior from Cleveland, who contributed poetry, hopes to major in pre-law. He is interested in politics, math, and writing and feels he is most influenced by the English and American writers of the Romantic Period.

Michael Buehler, a junior from Starkville, whose hobbies include playing soccer and collecting baseball cards, plans to major in English or mechanical engineering in college. He has been most influenced by his father, George Buehler, and counts Henry David Thoreau as his most influential author.

Brandie Bjorkland, a senior from Corinth, contributed poetry. Most influenced by Reagan Ward and Sylvia Path, Brandie enjoys writing and smiling.

Mary Black, a senior from Columbus, enjoys reading books and sleeping. She plans to attend Furman University and major in computer science. Mary contributed artwork.

Amy Boggan, a senior from Enterprise, enjoys playing piano, guitar, and tennis. She had artwork published in the 1991 issue of *Southern Voices*, with three poems appearing in this issue. Amy will attend the University of Southern Mississippi and will major in journalism and piano.

SuzAnne Brown, a senior from Columbus, plans to major in psychology. She feels that the most negative literary influence on her has been Vachel Lindsay and the most positive influence has been Tennessee Williams. She firmly believes in the theme of the Sundial: "Let others tell of rain or showers; I only count the shining hours."

John R. Browning, a junior who attended Natchez High School, plans to major in engineering and pursue a career in the military. He enjoys golf and reading, and his favorite author is Stephen Crane.

Christy L. Byrd, a senior from D'Iberville, intends to major in animal science at Mississippi State University. She considers Dr. Julia Lytle to have had the greatest influence on her life. Her interests include drawing, music, and writing, with Catherine Marshall having the greatest influence on her as an author.

Malcolm Carstafhnur, a junior from Vicksburg, says that poetry should be able to paint a picture that catches your attention. Malcolm contributed poetry to this edition and feels he is most influenced by William Carlos Williams.

Kissy Dabbs, a junior from Brandon, has contributed poetry to this issue and says that her work has been most influenced by Dr. Tom Poston. Her intended major in college is to be a Duke basketball fan.

Dyan Dawson is a senior from Ocean Springs who enjoys writing and playing her flute. She plans to attend Trinity University in San Antonio and will major in secondary education and music. Dyan contributed poetry to this edition which she feels was most influenced by Mercedes Lackey.

Jarvis DeBerry, a junior from Holly Springs, hopes to major in medicine and enjoys reading, writing, listening to jazz, and playing the sax. Jarvis, who was most influenced by Richard Wright, friends, and family, contributed poetry.

Russ Gibson is a junior from McComb who enjoys reading, physics, running, and judo. He says his poetry has been most influenced by Louis L'Amour and Dean R. Koontz.

Sarah Gill, a senior from Columbus, contributed artwork and will be a student at MSU next fall majoring in biological engineering. Sarah's most influential author is Edgar Allan Poe.

Donna M. Hardy, a junior from Bay St. Louis, is Assistant Editor of this edition of *Southern Voices*. She has contributed several poems. Her favorite author is Ray Bradbury and she feels she has been influenced by Dr. Seuss and *Archie* comic books.

Kristen Higgins is a junior from Florence who enjoys photography and reading. He has contributed poetry to this edition and feels his work has been most influenced by Tennessee Williams and Rod McKuen.

Carla Hosch is a senior from Gulfport who plans to major in cognitive science. She feels that she has been influenced by the poem "Red Wheelbarrow" by William Carlos Williams.

Aaron Lauve is a junior from McComb. He enjoys basketball, volleyball, and writing. He contributed artwork to the magazine.

Steven Mitchell, a senior from Pascagoula, will be attending UNC at Chapel Hill majoring in English and physics next year. Steven, who contributed poetry, enjoys writing, reading, and programming and feels most influenced by the author, Larry Brown.

Katy Montgomery is a senior from Tupelo who plans to major in political science and pursue a law career. Her favorite author is Alice Walker and she enjoys student government.

Michael Moss, a senior from Hattiesburg, intends to major in architecture at LSU. He contributed artwork to the magazine.

Thomas D. Oswalt, Jr. (T.) is this year's Editor of *Southern Voices*. He is a senior from Florence who plans to major in chemistry at Louisiana State University. He writes poetry, stories, and music.

Jim Owens is a junior from Hurley who contributed poetry to the magazine. He feels that the author who has influenced him most is Stephen Crane.

Bradford Rhines, a junior from Jackson, is the Assistant Art Editor of *Southern Voices*. He has both poetry and artwork included in this issue. Artists who have influenced him the most are Bob Dylan, Rod McKuen, Jack Kerouac, Andy Warhol, and Claude Monet.

Justin Rose, a senior from Caledonia, plans to attend the University of Alabama at Huntsville, majoring in aerospace engineering. He feels his writing has been influenced by Coleridge, T.H. White, and Tolkien.

Keith Schwager, a senior from Natchez, feels his writing has been influenced by Anne Rice. Keith plans to major in chemical engineering at LSU and enjoys playing the guitar.

Nicole Smith is a senior from Moss Point and will attend Oglethorpe University. Although her college major is undecided, she is interested in photography, writing, reading (anything), and playing the piano. Her favorite author is Ken Kesey; she has been influenced by Captain Kangaroo.

Sandi Thomas is a senior from New Albany who plans to major in chemistry next year at Boston University. This is the second year that Sandi's poetry has been included in the magazine.

Lori Trussell is a junior from Vicksburg. She feels that her writing has been influenced by Sylvia Plath. Her poetry and artwork are featured in this year's magazine.

Dawn Tyler is a junior from Wiggins who plans to major in biology. She says that Helen Keller is the most influential person in her life, and that Carl Sandburg has influenced her writing. Dawn contributed artwork in this issue.

Adam Weathersby is a junior from McComb and contributed artwork to this issue of *Southern Voices*. His hobbies include sports, drawing, photography, and reading.

Lewis West, a senior from Gautier, contributed artwork and will be a student at MSU next fall majoring in mechanical engineering. Lewis enjoys drawing and is most influenced by his father.

Kenneth White is a senior from Pascagoula who plans to major in graphic design/illustration at the University of Tennessee. Kenneth contributed poems and artwork and says that Jesus Christ is the most influential person in his life.

David Williamson is a senior from Hattiesburg who plans to major in medical genetics at LSU. David lists John Donne and Stephen King among writers who have influenced him; he contributed poems and short stories to *Southern Voices*.



Photography

Adam Weathersby

