

# Southern Voices



1999

# Southern Voices

VOLUME XI  
SPRING 1999

**EDITOR**

Andrea Cooper

**ASSISTANT EDITOR**

Veronika Viner

**ART EDITOR**

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**WEB EDITOR**

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Ben Davidson

Molly Davis

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First Place, Art Contest*



**James Mark Merriman**  
*"Never Too Old," Photography*

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# Senator Touches the Water

by Molly Davis

First Place, Short Story Contest

**T**he boy stood on the slimy log, holding on to a bunch of dry reeds, their baldheaded roots easing out of the gumbo. His hair was dry and mussed, pressed to flat on the left side of his head. A pair of flannel boxer shorts was all he wore, as he looked downwards across the still water. Foamy licks of calm washed over his feet. His toes clenched the soft bark, and he swayed from right to left. He crouched, then sprung upwards and out over the water.

His knees pushed him toward the branches, and his chest lay parallel to the water, on a plane of air. He wanted to glide over the rotten bass mold, over the scattered farmhouses and wash-lines, through the black branches above him into the clouds, but he crashed. Senator broke the green skin of the water monster, as a whip cracked over his stomach.

His heels cut like Moses, separating brown foam like cinnamon sprinkled on the top of the watery, green coffee. He pushed himself under the surface and bounced into a peaceful place, with his shoulders just above the green, soupy water. When he sank, his boxers filled up like balloons around his legs and then deflated as he rose to the surface. Below the water, he felt as if he was a needle inside of one of his mother's warm sewing pockets. For the first few seconds, he didn't miss the air. He swam like a frog, kicking his hind legs wildly, propelling himself towards the muddy floor of the lake; he made full circles with his closed palms and feet. He didn't know how close he was to the bottom before his chest muscles tightened, as he turned towards the light above him, serenely floating to the surface.

Senator wiped his mouth and eyes with the back of his wrist and shook his muddy fingers toward the sky. His eyes struggled to open and, floating near the banks with his eyes closed, he pulled his boxers down below his knees, then to his ankles, then off one foot and the other, and threw the slimy flannel shorts onto the fingernail of a black branch above him.

He floated and bounced naked with his hands straight against his hips like a buoy, and pulled his chin upwards to stare at the blue and fluffy white beyond the crooked black hands of the old woman shading the rotten water. He wanted to swing from her arthritic fin-

gers—to lie, naked, softly on the branch of the black, black woman's soul. He lay on his back and tried to see her soul through her fingers, but he found that he couldn't. He only saw the smooth, ivory meat where the rough bark had been chipped off.

He lay that way, his back under the green skin of the lake's edge, and pushed water away with his hands like the frogs do, when their bodies skate between the branches. His stomach was cool; black beetles collected on his belly and in his hair. He knocked them away with his fingers. Senator quietly pushed backwards with his arms, staring upwards at the canopy of trees surrounding the bank and the intense sky beyond them, until his head bumped into a soft log. Toads swam under him, tree bark skin brushing against the back of his knees.

*Do gators eat frogs?*

He scrambled onto the log, digging his fingers and knees into the holes in the bark; its branches had sunk into the shallow sand. A brown spider crawled up to Senator's elbow before he thumped it off, into the water. The spider jumped wildly on the green dance floor, and Senator spit at it. He missed twice; then the spider hopped away, and Senator heard his name.

Mama's pronunciation didn't sound at all like the way the senators in the Mississippi State Legislature address each other in their gray, creased pants and calm, deep voices. She was cross with him, and her impatience made her slur words and skip syllables even more than usually. Her torn-up Louisiana English made his stomach hurt. *SEEN-NA-TUR!* She yelled so loud, he knew the neighbors could hear the way his Mama whined at him, pronouncing his name like she didn't know what Congress was. *SEEN-NA-TR! SEEEEN-NA-TR!* He always thought that the least she could have done was give him some redneck name she could pronounce, or a short name like John or Joe. *Heck, if she'd named me Hitler, I coulda' told ever'body that my mama's accent was German. They prah'bly woulda' believed me, too.*

He rested his chin on his knees and quietly refused to come to her. She would not step foot in the woods for fear of dampness, of darting insects and red foxes peeking their noses over trembling ivy leaves. She was scared of snakes wrapping themselves around her legs and

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*He wanted to swing from her arthritic fingers—to lie, naked, softly on the branch of the black, black woman's soul.*

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Spanish moss sticking to her face and especially gumbo painting her frayed skirt hem dark brown, almost black, with gritty mud. He could picture her now, wiping her soft Jergen's lotion hands on her homemade apron—one of her aprons that never matched her tight, old, clean dresses. She would be straining to see between the tall, black tree trunks on the edge of the forest. When she yelled, her eyes squinted until they were very small, and she stood on her toes; she shaded her brow with her left hand, the other hand fisted around a thimble in her pocket. Senator crossed his legs and his arms over his chest, just in case someone came looking for him and found him stripped naked, perched on a log. But nobody would come; Daddy would refuse—*Jus' let 'im come home. He'll come home by 'imself.* Daddy would jerk Mother's tiny, white shoulders when he said that for the fifth time. Senator could picture his dad's thick, auburn beard turning away from her, burrowing into the fold of his newspaper.

Her distant, raspy call did not disturb the frogs that began to collect on the banks again, hopping with front legs, then back, sticking their rears in the air and sitting for a while, looking around, before hopping again, with front legs then back. Their thighs were thick with muscles; he wondered how far he could make the frogs jump.

He reached his fingers out to touch the reeds growing out of the mud next to the log. All the reeds were dry and looked dead—yellow and brown with a slow green as the winter turned cool and wet. He turned over an old Cola bottle in the sandy gumbo, filled it with tiny sticks, then hurled it far out into the lake. For a few minutes, he

watched all the lazy frogs on the bank that browsed the swamp with their machine gun eyes. Hopping along slowly in the mud was a fat grasshopper; Senator picked it up and threw it at the colony of frogs sunning about five feet from him. The frogs ignored the tasty snack; they just sat there and watched through their machine guns. Senator grabbed a soft piece of log that was about three times bigger than a single frog and hurled it at them. Afterwards it sounded to him like two thousand frogs had ker-plunked one by one into the water.

*SEEN-A-TRRR!* You come on back now, boy, ya'eer? But he had no intention of going to her, not after the way she had treated him today. No one had ever slapped him that hard, even Daddy. Of course, Daddy didn't slap; he whipped backsides. Mama had looked Senator straight into the eyes and landed her open hand on his cheek, jerking his head on his neck, and then she had barked an order at him and pointed to the ground. But he had been too shocked; he stood there, shoulders rounded, eyes blinking at her. So, she had shaken him violently by the shoulders and yelled what was he doing, just standing there, looking like he was stupid or something. *That dog'a yers kill't two baby birds yesterday, and they been layin' outside the house, stinkin' us all up. Now git to it!* And she pinched his chin sternly. That was when Senator decided he had taken enough from her. He violently kicked the dead birds, and turned around towards the woods. She couldn't do anything but stand on the porch and yell, *SEEN-A-TRRR!*

Just thinking about the way his Mama had blown up at him made Senator mad all over again. He picked up

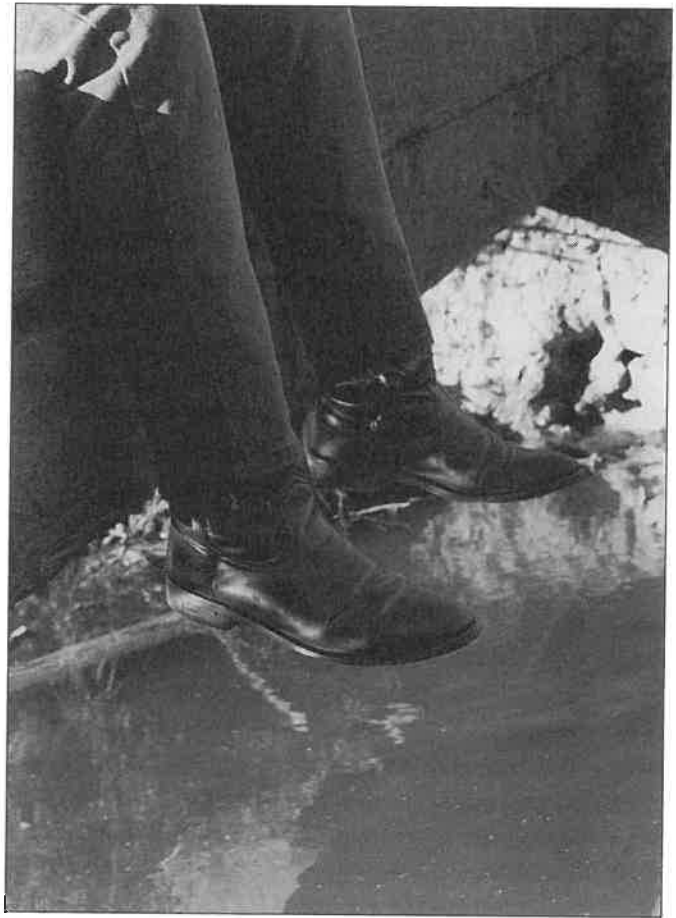


**Sandra Lynn Foster**  
"Morning," Photography

another piece of the log and hurled it into the water where the frogs had jumped; then he chased it. He pushed off of the bank and glided through the water for what he thought was a mile. When he finally surfaced, he looked back, heaving in gulps of moldy, bayou air. He was so far out that he couldn't see the muddy bottom; in fact, the water was thick and black, and there were no trees growing out of it. He tried to look downwards for even a few feet, but all he could do was imagine the gators hungrily circling his ankles. So he pulled his knees up to his chest and awkwardly paddled towards the banks again, stopping every once in a while to look for slowly moving dinosaur humps in the water around him.

Senator practiced holding his breath for longer and longer at a time as he pulled himself toward the bank. When the black lightened to a muddy green, and he could see a few feet down, he dived under the water and aimed for the bottom once again. He straightened out his legs and torso, and dug down into the water with his closed palms. His chest began to tighten, and he wanted to turn around. But he only kicked more frantically toward the bottom. When he felt a gritty slime against his fingers, he closed his fist around it and turned towards the light. Above the water he examined his hands; they were full of brownish-green mud, tiny sticks, and black, squirming bugs. Senator held his hands high up for all of the black tree-women to see.

*SEEEEN-NUH-TRRRR!* *You get home nah-ooow!* He threw his handful of slimy dirt triumphantly at the frogs that had collected again on the banks, and some of them plopped into the water. He stretched his shoulders and jumped above him to reach his sopping-wet boxer



**James Mark Merriman**

*"A Time of Reflection," Photography*

shorts. Slowly, Senator climbed the banks, hopping as he pulled his shorts up each of his legs, and listened to his Mama's voice pulling him towards home. ❖

### THE CHRIS READ AWARD FOR FICTION

The Chris Read Award for Fiction, instituted with the 1994 issue of *Southern Voices*, honors a member of the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science's Class of 1991. Christopher David Read was an active leader at MSMS as a member of Emissaries, the Debate Club, and the *Southern Voices* staff. Chris's first love, however, was writing. Southern style.

Chris often wove his Southern tales late at night. Chris would compose either on the computer or on (his favorite) the old, brown Royal typewriter he had bought from the pawn shop down 13th Street South. Faking sleep, I would watch the grin on Chris's face as he worked out the next great story. When he finished, Chris would always "wake me" and excitedly read his new story to me. He never knew that I had been hiding, watching his creative process with admiration. I was not the only one to admire Chris's work. This award stands as testimony to the admiration that we all held for Chris and his work and as a memorial to the Southern writing tradition which Chris loved.

Chris had the potential to become a great writer. Unfortunately, Chris never reached this potential: he was killed in a car wreck on January 17, 1993. Though Chris will never attain his dream of writing a great novel, all of those who loved and respected Chris hope that the recipient of this Award, as well as all the other aspiring writers at MSMS, will achieve their dreams.

**Michael D. Goggans**  
Class of 1991

# Bridgers Drive

by Bill Anderson



About twenty miles southwest of Jackson lies a strip of paved road all of a mile long. The speed limit is 25, mostly because there are still a few kids who play in the street, not to mention the army of dogs that has been around so long it's impossible to tell the pets from the strays that roam the street and woods. On the left as you pull in is the house with far-too-small a yard for a horse but still home to a beautiful brown gelding while, on the right, is a pasture big enough for several head—but nothing bigger than a dog in sight. Just past that is the gorgeous split level house buried in the side of a hill shaded with ancient pine trees. Finally, at the end of the road there is a small wooden footbridge over a large ditch, affectionately called the “creek.” Across the footbridge and up a hill is another road similar to mine, if only a little longer. On the left is my home, a nice two-story house which wouldn't mind new shingles and a good paint job.

The gravel driveway from this house is just short enough to not warrant a vehicle but far too long to walk down at nine o'clock on Saturday morning. Aside from the row of saplings on one side of the driveway, the yard is empty for several feet until it hits a five-string barbed wire fence marking the line between yard and pasture. Over the hill that the house is built on is a small orchard, most of the trees probably still have small bamboo shafts holding up limbs overloaded with fruit or frost. Nearby, the only two dogs that will actually stay penned huddle in some shade or, miracle of

miracles, in their houses. We spent God knows how much to give them houses and they still sleep in the rain.

Behind the orchard is a small garden kept up every year to help feed us and several of our friends. Atop the next rise is the barn—rusted tin walls begging to fall apart while carpenter bees help with the wooden frame. Now, that's some amazing fun. You'd be amazed how easy it is to hit a carpenter bee with a BB gun.

If you were to walk due west from the house, you would end up in the middle of a small wood. The “creek” runs through it, nearer to my side of the ditch. I always wondered how high property lines ran because there is an old tree, an oak I guess it is, that grows from my side all the way over the ditch and their property. Some mighty rain had

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*Nearby, the only two dogs that will actually stay penned huddle in some shade or, miracle of miracles, in their houses.*

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filled the ditch enough to wash out the bank under the tree when it was still rather young, so it forced itself to grow diagonally over both the ditch and my neighbor's yard. With little more trouble than it is to climb a hill, you can put yourself about six or seven feet up off the ground. The tree split some long time ago, so there is an almost perfect seat made between the two trunks. I often go down there, scale the trunk, and sit. The wall of evergreens screens me from civilization and the cool summer wind whips their thin pointed tops back and forth with every gust. After a few yards the world ends and is made of only that wood, my home only that seat of oak. Nothing matters. And for at least a few minutes, that is my home-place. ❖

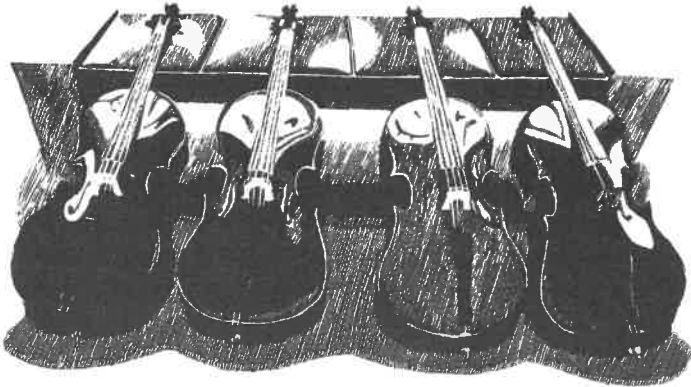


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## Nothing Is As Beautiful As Music

Nothing is as beautiful as music.  
The music soothes my slacken, sleepy soul.  
Restlessness brought on by the rigorous and run-down  
timetable of research.  
Alice Walker says Resistance is the secret of joy  
I say seclusion is. Alone with the  
Scrupulous lyrics of the slow,  
repetitive  
pulse of  
a bass drum. Then I sleep— and dream  
of sand and sea and summer and sailing—  
I sit and listen to melodious music of the sea.  
Then I wake to hear drums again.  
Birds chirping in the middle of May  
bees buzzing on a nice spring day  
wind, water, trees, flowers—  
Music

**LaShunda Thompson**  
First Place, Poetry Contest



**Andrew P. Young**  
*"Four Cellos," Scratchboard*

*Andrew P. Young*



**Catherine Brown Sewall**  
*"War," Graphite*

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## Understanding

A river of Tears  
Flows from my inner self  
As the anger of ignorance  
Encompasses me  
Confusing and frustrating as it is

New hope disappears  
Along with inspiration,  
Desire and joy.

I step outside myself  
And gander at the corpse  
Before my eyes  
My soul bleeds as it  
Watches my body weep

Now it is clear  
As a new vision of life  
Is revealed to me  
And now I can see  
This isn't what I thought  
Life would be.

**Adam Williams**

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## Pulled Wool

"I love you,"  
he says.  
I smile  
not seeing  
his fingers  
crossed  
behind his back.

**Christina Beard**

---

## Summer and July

Ah, come to me my molten friend,  
Your hair golden and flowing. The sun  
Smiling down on my head, making me  
A golden cookie. Your breath is sweet and  
Flows over me slowly, and your gaze is  
Soft which sends children running for the  
Bells on parade. And cats bask as ice  
Flows freely to make all relax. You greet  
Us early and stay late, making us wait  
For the blossoming of the flower of the sky.  
And, ah, when you leave, another friend comes  
To stay, her love cool and gentle as she smiles  
At us with her little mouth and her  
Hundreds of glittering eyes sending  
One and all to the land of Nod.

**Dan Austin**



**James Mark Merriman**

*"Beaches of British Columbia," Photography  
Honorable Mention, Art Contest*

# McAllister Street

Molly Davis

Second Place, Essay Contest



Families have roots in the Mississippi Delta. Toddlers shoot up tall like corn stalks in the Sun and squirm their toes down into the dark brown soil—just like their daddies did, just like their own babies will someday. Families grow roots into the rotting frames of Delta farmhouses that—during winter—reach temperatures as cold as a witch's titty; the family huddles around the fireplace. A bunch of shivering rear ends plop down on chubby stools, their faces turn towards the old man telling stories and eyeball the marshmallow toasting on the end of a coat hanger. Fathers' prides grow roots deep into two hundred acres of land that have grown corn for three generations. Starting at a young age, corn plants grow their knotty roots into the soil of a child's imagination. The spiky leaves scratch the child's arm, flailing as he runs around skinny, green giants, the plant and the child bleed together. Worms that bore holes into your feet and mosquitoes as big as a fist and snakes that jump out from behind rocks scare a farm child about as much as the shame of losing a game of catch to a girl. His name is probably Bubba, and you can call her Mary Beth—named to honor both of her stubborn grandmothers. They are from the Delta and they have regular old blood for blood that looks like Mississippi Mud to tourists with over-active imaginations, desperate for culture. But my blood—and certainly my grandmother's—doesn't flow brown with chocolate. I cannot even brag that it flows green with swamp water or white with cotton, or that my blood smells like catfish. No one would talk to a girl who smelled like catfish. My blood is just blood, though I have eaten a lot of catfish and worn my share of cotton in childhood. People who read books forget that the flatland and the rivers flow by cities also; or maybe they should be called towns, because Delta cities don't usually have their own shopping malls. Greenville is an exception to that rule, barely.

My childhood in Greenville, Mississippi, is now a much-edited version, mixed videotape of still shots and short clips of family life in eight different houses. I remember so many strange wall colors and wallpaper

patterns and floor textures—mainly the cracked hardwood floors with their cold, midnight trips to the bathroom. After scrambling out from under the electric blanket, I would skip over to my drawers to pull on a pair of scratchy, wool socks. I lengthened my stride across the cold, wooden space from the bald spots on my Oriental rug to the tall, heirloom wardrobe to reach my sock drawer. Bathroom trips always took twice as long in winter, because I could not bear the freezing wooden hallway floor with naked feet.

That house was, in fact, a farmhouse that Greenville had grown up around. The furnace worked only when it felt like working; and three-fourths of the heat from the fireplace escaped through the walls of the chimney instead of reaching its toasty fingers around a little girl's naked toes.

Another one of my eight houses had a steep, winding staircase Mama would not let me walk on, and a huge sliding window upstairs that overlooked our backyard swimming pool. Haden—my older brother—and I were

so proud of that swimming pool; we felt rich when friends spent the night with us, even in winter when we could not go swimming. Just to show company the green tarp, covered in slippery, pink blossoms, stretched over the calm pool water, was a luxury.

In one of my eight neighborhoods

the local kids formed a rebellious society, of which I was the president. Though I do not remember the house in which we had our afternoon cookies, I do recollect the time we held a bird funeral in the bamboo thicket behind my house. Our pale imitations of Native American chants as we buried Elizabeth's pet bird are the kind of color and spice my individual recollections hold still. The feeling of maturity as we pedaled further away from our own block, the freedom—though subconscious—of riding on two wheels, the frustration of racing bikes with nine year-old boys that I wanted desperately to kiss, all of these emotions are clear still in my head. And common themes like these run on a single, blue thread through eight different front doors, eight colors of paint or rust-red brick, eight groups of neighborhood kids I rode bicycles alongside, and eight different houses.

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*McAllister ended at Pete and B.B.'s, as far as I was concerned, like that children's book where the sidewalk runs off the end of the world.*

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Somewhere in between the first house and the last one, I lived on McAllister Street, in a two-story house with red, red bricks and the awful contrast of old green shutters. The house itself was wanting: my room—a converted attic—felt no air circulation; the yard was barely drained before the rain came again, flooding the broken, cement walkway from my front door to Mama's Volvo stationwagon. Our black Labrador, Zeke, chained to the back porch, would splash around in the huge puddles and once splashed me, painting big red-clay paw prints all over one of those smocked dresses my mother dressed me in. She thought they would make me more lady-like. After Mama finished bickering at me for absent mindedness, she made me change my outfit and wash my hands. I arrived to school late that day and did not care a bit. The year I lived on McAllister I was about seven; I attended the second grade at Washington School, and I can clearly remember when it was still cool to throw up in front of your classmates.

McAllister Street's neglected asphalt dipped sharply into potholes every few feet. The dotted lines of McAllister began their course at a white, middle-class neighborhood Presbyterian church. From there they hugged a few blocks of houses and one Southern Baptist church, where the yellow lines faded and cracked. They crossed Highway 82 (after looking both ways) where they pulled up a stool at Pete and B.B.'s Stop-N-Shop; this marked the beginning of the ghetto. McAllister ended at Pete and B.B.'s, as far as I was concerned, like that children's book where the sidewalk runs off the end of the world. But if there were any monsters at the end of McAllister Street, waiting to gobble me up, I never saw them. I was not allowed to cross the highway; my eyes never defined the details of the run-down, blue, government houses for memory to record; I can not tell a story about that part of McAllister.

My own ideas of McAllister Street passively contained one two-dimensional block of brick fronts with wooden doors, painted glass, and rusty, iron grating. Old enough to pedal a two-wheeler, but too young to ride away from my parents or defy their rules, I lived each day only between my house and those of my two best friends, Searcy Milam and Steven Provenza.

McAllister strung our three houses adjacent to each other. Likes cards in a pack, our activities were centered on the shuffling hands of the road; it protected us from the outside world. Only when the rough-looking kids from across the highway rode two-to-a-bike down to our part of the neighborhood did we catch a glimpse of lost innocence. But we shrugged the reality off quite easily—*they are just looking for bikes to steal*. As idiots of charac-

ter, we had not formed our own opinions about where differences are and what creates them; Steven, Searcy, and I still spouted our parents' views.

In safety once again, we did not even notice how quickly outside influences lost their effectiveness, or the levels of sunshine in the sky. Time did not exist.

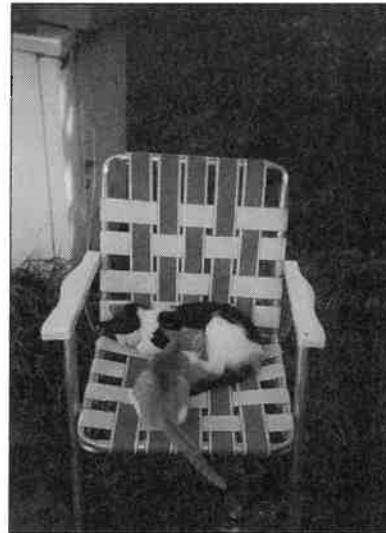
We rode our bikes across the McAllister asphalt to the giant brick wall that advertised PARKVIEW BAPTIST CHURCH in protruding white letters—which we used as ladder rungs. In a ritual completed several times a week, we leaned three bikes against the brick and scrambled our little bodies to the top of the sign, racing to be the first to tallness. To rise above our surroundings, the three of us would sit on top of that brick sign—not but five feet tall, at the most—and dangle bare feet over the edge, absorbing the distance between the ground and our Nikes. In the lapse of a few minutes, we would grow bored; and Steven, Searcy, and I found a new way to compete: we impressed each other by jumping down and catching our balance with our palms on the concrete. We were tough. The further we jumped, the higher we could hold our heads up that day; and a skinned knee or palm was a trophy, especially if the recipient did not cry.

Assuming all went smoothly (and even if it didn't), we then pedaled (or limped) across the wide, gray expanse of McAllister Street for snacks at one of our houses.

That street, more familiar to me than the house I lived in or the school I attended, punctures a balloon of happy memories when a friend asks about my second grade year. I first learned to ride my pink bicycle in a McAllister Street winter. It was also on McAllister that I found the clotted, nappy body of Searcy's cat, after some serial killer pick-up truck or mini-van had run over it. I poked the cat with a stick, and even kicked it, then ran to my big brother Haden, crying, I knew he would know what to do. Mama did not let me watch Haden put GrayCat in a garbage bag and take him away. I don't even know where Haden would take the dead cat. Yet, for a long time, I remembered the precise angle of elevation to the corner of Searcy's front yard—the exact spot where GrayCat died. I did not show Searcy the spot when she came home from vacation. I outright lied to her. I told Searcy that I knew nothing about her cat's disappearance, and claimed innocence when she related her parents' fib: I knew good and well that GrayCat had not run away and was surprised at how easily I could tell my best friend a falsehood.

Vividly I often picture the colors of the gray asphalt, the green grass and deteriorating houses that lined McAllister. I remember my mother's dark station wagon,

bumping over McAllister's potholes. I remember the wetness seeping into my stockings as I jumped around the front-yard puddles in my tap shoes, and the feeling of panic as the slippery bricks lost the slight grip of my metal taps; and I fell down, butt first, into the mud. I can still produce, in my mind, the exact color of GrayCat's thick fur-coat—not a pure gray, but flecked with threads of bright orange and black and yellow. I can recall the concepts of summertime, of closeness, and of learning to share the accomplishments of growing up. The Mississippi Delta taught me the important stuff; Greenville suburbs had mosquitoes and snakes and big hunting dogs, too— just like farms. My neighborhood friends and I learned friendship and competition, and lies, and death; in fact, we learned it all on one little block of McAllister Street, in my second-grade year. ❖



**Andrea L. Cooper**

*"Snuggle, Snuggle," Photography*

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## Momma

The screen door opens and an immaculate white form infiltrates the old farm house.  
She announces her arrival with, "Hi, honey" as she deposits her purse in the corner.  
The white uniform and the sterile hospital smell are quickly discarded as she changes and collapses into her chair.

The glasses and silver lining give her a wise countenance.  
Knowing her day was long and tiring, I ask anyway so she knows that I care.  
Still thinking me the child, her answer is the same, "It was work."  
Later, she'll tease me about cooking supper and then do it herself.  
"Whatever comes out of the pot," but you know, it's not that bad.

When I go home now I realize the silver lining has thickened.  
Tired and worn out from school and life, I still crawl into her lap.  
Sometimes she groans and says I'm too big, but she doesn't really mind.  
I sit encircled by her arms, her love, and her smell, and I'm thankful.  
Thinking of times past when I was sick, Momma was who I wanted.  
She'd come in and lie down, pushing my hair away from my face and sing.  
*"Momma's little baby loves shortnin', shortnin',  
Momma's little baby loves shortnin' bread."*  
I don't think I was ever a little baby, but she doesn't mind: I'm her baby.

Some nights when I come into the quiet house from Missy's,  
My room door is only open a crack and the light is on.  
I know she did that for both of us.  
Me, so I would know she went to bed thinking of me,  
And her, so she would know when I came home.  
Tucked in warm and happy,  
I know that some late hour in the night,  
She'll come in and touch me just to know I'm there.  
Funny, it never wakes me up.  
I guess it's just Momma's touch.

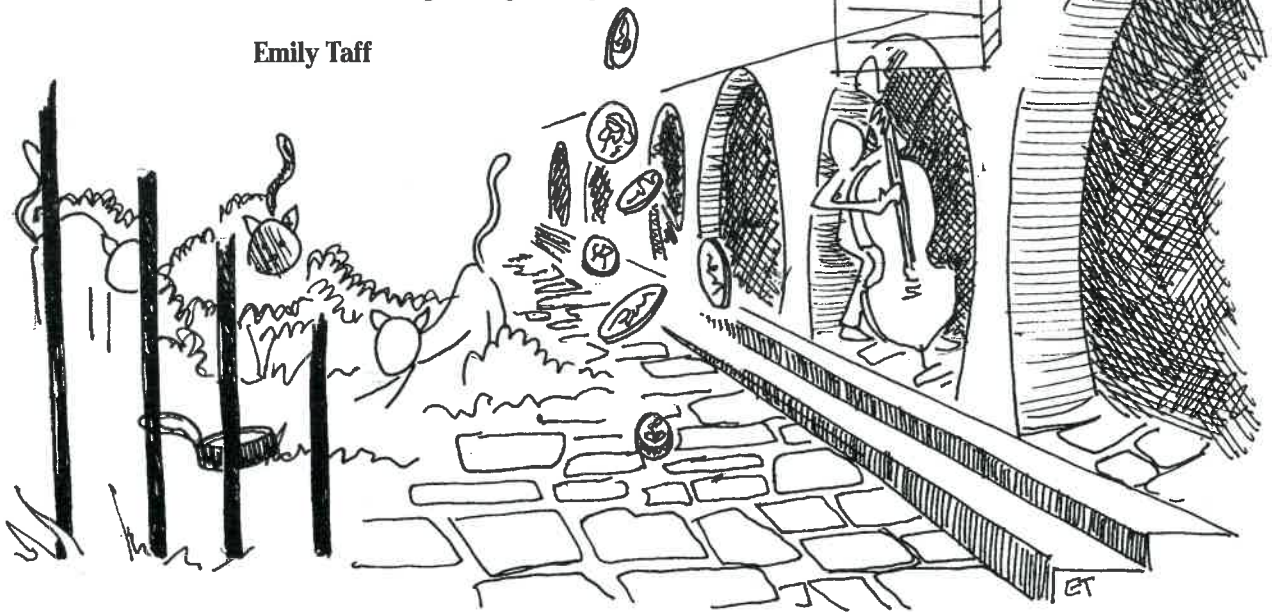
**Andrea Cooper**

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## a character sketch of New Orleans...

Kittens dwell in the backyard of the cathedral,  
Feeding from small cans of chopped liver and chicken-and-rice  
Placed discreetly by kindly imps just within reach of the iron fence.  
Through the alley to the bright sunshine of Jackson Square  
A scraggly bearded Joe vends his wares under a Dove umbrella.  
The ice cold water his best thing,  
Tempting tourists and locals alike as they stroll across this huge, sunbeaten patio.  
Hubba Bubba beckons  
Promising to read your palm and only for a couple of bucks.  
From beneath his red and gold embroidered garment he pulls a two liter Barqs root beer,  
Takes a slug and slips it beneath the table.  
Zillah puts out a similar sign,  
There's bitter competition nearby.  
Farther along the musicians gather;  
A man leans indolently in an arch of the Cabildo,  
Gently plucking the strings of his cello.  
Three women stand under an umbrella.  
The trumpetplayer's long blonde braid hangs down her back,  
Her pink shorts, patterned shirt, and dirty white Keds emphasizing her thinness.  
Silent immobile figures dot the street corners;  
Poised like balancing dolls on one foot and on top of a crate.  
A cardboard box at their feet occasionally gives way  
To the tinkle of coins as someone deposits their  
Spare, unwanted change from their latest cappuccino purchase.  
Ahh, release.  
And in a graceful (and grateful) series of movements  
The mime returns his other foot to the crate and changes position.  
The traffic lights turn red and tap dancers are heard across the street.  
The sharp, metallic click of their toes echoing on the stones;  
Blending with the music,  
The drunken song,  
The loud hum of conversation under a cafe's tent,  
And the overall confusion of noise drifting through the quarter.

Emily Taff



# The Scar

by Andrea Cooper

**T**he sun invaded the small room above the bar, heating it to the intolerable temperature which served as his daily alarm clock. Working every night in his bar until after closing time, two on weekdays and four Friday and Saturday nights, some mornings Jake cursed the sun for waking him up. As he dropped his legs over the side of the bed and threw back the covers he rubbed his stubbled chin. "I need to shave," he said in his gruff morning voice to the only other occupant of his tiny gray room. The ancient dog lifted and dropped his broken tail once in response. Jake laughed, "You're gonna outlive us all, Old Man." Jake washed his face and ran down the list of things he needed to do.

Stepping out on the tiny balcony, Jake lit a cigarette. He reached down to rub his stomach as he stretched and felt along the scar over his ribs. The physical pain was long gone but the scar still remained. Images of his sister flashed into Jake's head: her smile, her laughter, the way she looked up to him but never failed to let him know when he had stepped out of line in spite of the fact she felt it had no effect on him. It had been almost three years since it happened, but Jake would always have the scar on his ribs, and he hadn't yet healed in his heart. After he finished his smoke, Jake stepped back inside and pulled on his boots and a tee shirt. He tucked a faded black tee shirt into his old Rustler jeans, put on his Camel cap, and opened the door for the Old Man.

The antique International pickup bumped out of the alleyway and onto the highway. Turning left past the junkyard, Jake steered the old truck up the driveway to the farm house. He opened the back door to the house as if he still lived there and called to his mom. There was no answer. Checking his parents' room, Jake still found no sign of his mother. He went to the coffee pot and refilled his cup and checked the refrigerator for an explanation of his mother's absence. A note testified to her trip to the grocery store. As he looked at the scribbled handwriting, Jake recalled how he and his sister had always teased their mother about being born with a doctor's handwriting.

Jake made his way into his sister's room and sat in

the chair beside her bed. He lifted her hand from the blue spread and began talking to her. "You know, you're not helping me any by just lying here all the time. How are you gonna be able to fight with me if you don't exercise your muscles just a little bit? Knowing he would get no answer from the comatose body that used to be his sister, Jake quit asking questions. He made his way around the bed to work her arms and legs to prevent complete atrophy of her muscles. He took each limb in turn and repeated the daily routine. Jake continued talking. The doctors had said that talking to her might help. "I was thinking this morning about what happened. I never told anyone; I couldn't. How would it sound if I told Mom that I had you bartending for me the night you had your accident? Jake

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*"I was thinking this morning about what happened. I never told anyone; I couldn't."*

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touched the back of her hand. The skin felt like cool rubber, lifeless. He continued voicing his thoughts. "If it hadn't been for me, you never would have been driving home that stormy night. You were tired and upset about something, but I didn't have time to listen.

Why didn't I just take the time to listen?" He withdrew his hand from hers and pushed her thin hair away from her face. Then, pushing his own thick, black locks back he finished playing through the night in his mind. "I was headed up the stairs and I just had this feeling you were in trouble. I got there as fast as I could, I swear." Jake saw yet again the crumpled Z car smashed firmly against the oak tree directly on the driver's side. "Then I couldn't get you out of the car; your door wouldn't open. I don't even know what happened, I just knew I had to get you out of that car." He replayed things in his mind, climbing onto the hood and through the windshield, cutting her seat belt, and pulling her out. "I was so careful not to get you cut on the windshield; I didn't want you to get hurt at all." It wasn't until he had gotten her to the hospital that he realized he was cut. "You'd have been proud, Sis; you should have seen the way all those doctors looked at me. You had one little scratch above your left eye and I was soaked with blood, but I wouldn't let them look at me until they had taken care of you." Jake paused and tensed his jaw in frustration. "I guess it didn't make much difference anyhow." He finished her exercises and tucked her legs back under the light blanket. He sat down in the chair

to have a cigarette.

When his mom came in and asked for help with the groceries, they left the room to carry in and put up the sacks of food. Jake stopped his mom's unpacking and

made her sit down. He took a seat across the table from her and reached out to hold her small, wrinkled hand in his calloused and scared one. Finally, facing his own guilt, Jake told his mom the story of that night. ❖

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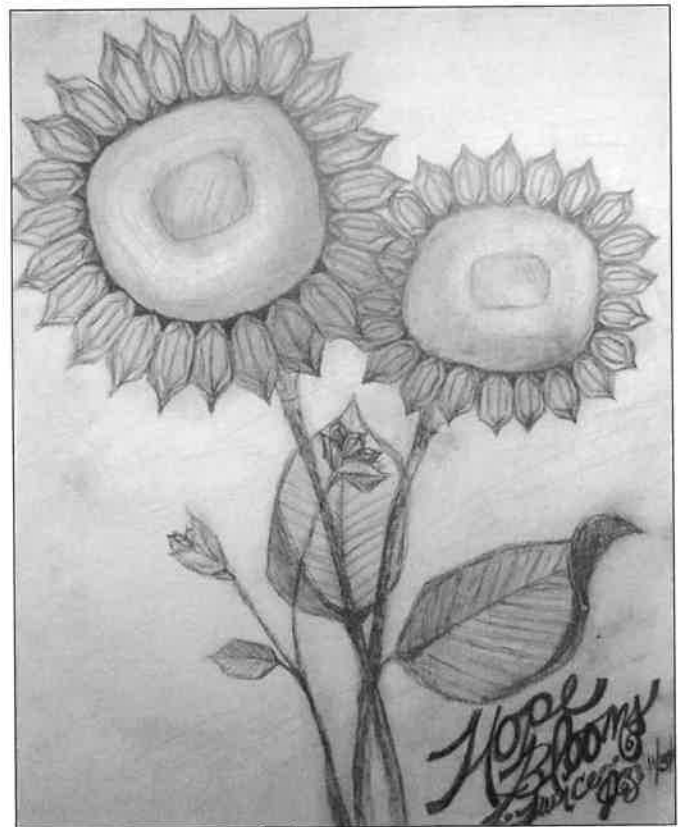
## Amanda

Standing nervously along the track she watches the clock count down the seconds.  
After checking the band members' spacing she practices her salute one last time.  
When the time comes and the football players rush off the field, it is her domain.  
Striking her delicate hands together the startling thunderous claps ring out.  
"Band, Atten HUT!" A deep command rings out.  
"Mark time mark UP!" and they begin to move to their places.  
Then, from the press box, "Drum Major Sumrall, is your band ready?"  
From deep within her soul, the snap, spin, and twirl of her salute throw attitude everywhere.  
The home crowd cheers and I can hear her name called. "Go Amanda!"  
She hears but now that she is on the field, she is all business.  
Gone is that nervous laughter and the chatter of having made up her new salute ten minutes ago.  
She is on her turf and confident in her talents.  
"Did you see me miss that count?" She asks coming off the field.  
No one saw her miss anything; we were awed.

**Andrea Cooper**



**Andrea L. Cooper**  
*"Pride," Photography*



**Jennifer Kim Stierwalt**  
*"Hope Blooms Twice," Graphite  
Honorable Mention, Art Contest*



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# The Search for a Wonderful Place

Lauren and Eddie and Martin and Sue  
Were in their apartment with nothing to do.  
They could not go outside and play with a stick  
For they were stuck inside, all terribly sick.  
Their mother said it was a darn crying shame  
And the cold-turning weather was what was to blame.

So she gave them cough syrup from two real big spoons  
And she left them alone to watch the cartoons  
But of watching cartoons, the four soon did grow bored  
They decided to go places yet unexplored.

"To the sea!" Sue suggested  
"To Mars!" Martin said  
"Both of those places are stupid,"  
Cried Ed.  
"What if each of us goes to our own happy place?"  
Said Lauren with a great big smile on her face.

Suddenly, Martin was in the co-pilot's seat  
Of a rocket to Mars that was steered with his feet!  
"Wow!" he said, "I can't believe my own eyes!  
I'm in a real rocket that actually flies!  
My codename is 'Dragon' because of the fire  
That burns as the rocket goes higher and higher."

The rocket did rumble, the countdown commenced  
Martin counted along, "10, 9, 8, 7, 6,"  
Then "5, 4, 3, 2, 1," and the liftoff proceeded  
Martin shot in the air unsuppressed and unheeded  
To the little red planet all covered with rust  
The boy and the rocket flew off the Earth's Crust  
And a couple weeks later, right on cue  
He splashed down in the ocean, where he met with Sue.

Martin and Sue dove down deep in the sea  
They needed no air, for they breathed magically  
They talked to the fishes and rode the seahorses  
They got their hair wet and they had no remorses.  
And way at the bottom where all sunlight fades  
They saw a whole kingdom that's full of mermaids  
Who greeted the children and let them inside  
And took the two to where the mer-king resides.

They had a big dinner of algae and kelp  
With the king and his subjects and his hired help  
They wanted to stay there forever and snack  
But the time came for them to go back.  
They never could come back to this place anymore  
So they slowly and sadly swam back to the shore.

At the shore of the ocean they met up with Eddie  
Dressed in pajamas and holding his teddy.  
"What are you doing here?" Sue did inquire.  
"I'm waiting for you two," said, Ed, who was drier.  
"I'm trying to decide if I should be so brave  
As to venture into that spooky-looking cave."

"I'm sure that there's nothing in there that could hurt,"  
Said Martin, "except maybe for ali that dirt."

"But what about lions and tigers and bears?"

"I promise that none of those things will be there."

So Eddie was gleaming with self-confidence.  
And that scary old cave wasn't so ominous.  
When he stepped in, there was a wall in his face,  
And he woke up to find himself in the fireplace.

His mother found him sitting inside the hearth  
She was so amazed: to a cow she gave birth!  
She asked what the heck he was doing in there  
And why he would get all that soot in his hair.  
"I thought I was walking into a dark cave.  
My friends were behind me all of the way.  
Hey, where are my friends, did they go underwater?"  
His mother concerned, said, "They went with your father.  
He took them all home, honey, don't you remember?  
He took them all home in his truck made of timber."

"So what about all of those wonderful things?"  
"I fear those were merely figments of your dreams."

So Ed climbed in his bed and laid down his face,  
And hoped to find some other wonderful place.

**Thomas Butler**

# Sweet Potatoes

by Molly Davis

**M**ama...Where's Mama?" said my own mom, referring to my grandmother.

I folded my hands stiffly in my lap and adjusted the cloth napkin, folded it, and unfolded it.

"Grammy's gon' take her time comin' to the table. Just dig in," my grandfather insisted, being the first member of the family to take a bite of Thanksgiving dinner.

So my brother Haden took a bite. Across the table from him, I experimented with my napkin, turning it longways and sideways in my lap. I was completely absorbed in the embroidered flowers until Mom broke the silence.

"Mama, come on n' sit down, so the rest of us can eat." Mom was agitated, and felt guilty; the fingerfood on the dishes in the middle of the table—sausage balls, deviled eggs—weren't off-limits exactly, though. Mom and I nibbled. We couldn't help ourselves.

My grandmother's dark brown bouffant hair-do surfaced around the edge of the doorframe, with a concerned smile. "Does anyone need anything? Molly, you need some icewater to go with that, don'cha?"

"No, Grammy, I'm fine. What I really want is for you to sit down and enjoy this food." Too late, her head pulled back out of the doorway, disappeared into the kitchen like a chipmunk into a hole in the ground.

Mom and I breathed a sigh and picked up our forks, but hesitated. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see Mom turn her head towards the door as Grammy resurfaced with a clinking glass of icewater. She set it down on the white tablecloth. I whispered thank you.

I didn't want the icewater. I didn't ask for the icewater. I wiped the dew off the outside of the glass and made little circles on the tablecloth.

My grandfather and my brother didn't acknowledge my Grammy's entrance and just-as-quick exit. They were vacuums, inhaling their food. Half of their plateful was

already gone: marshmallow-covered sweet potato mush, store bought "home-made" biscuits, roasted turkey and honey-baked ham, tiny bowls of hard boiled egg white with yellow yolk stuffed in them, cranberry sauce shaped like the can it came in. I remembered that, when I was little, I always thought Grammy sculpted those little ridges in order to make the sauce pretty.

Mom leaned into the table and whispered to my brother and me. "Now ya'll be sure to tell Grammy how much you like the food, once she gets in here. Otherwise she'll worry it's not good enough."

My brother grunted to acknowledge, and I just ignored her.

I scooped small amounts of food into my mouth and slowly chewed and swallowed. Impatient, I tried a different tactic: "Grammy, I love these lima beans," I pronounced, twisting my neck to look for Grammy in the doorway. "I don't get these kind of vegetables in the school cafeteria."

Grammy appeared in the doorway. *Almost, Grammy. Just a few steps more to the table, I thought.*

I continued my pull, "Nope. I think all the vegetables they cook us at school are from a can." Grammy's mouth peaked into a smile, lighting her face like a wildflower. For a minute, I thought that I had succeeded, that she would sit down right then at the table with the rest of us. But she thanked me, apologized that the greens were too salty, straightened her apron, and turned around.

My mother and I sighed to each other and scooped up healthy forkfuls of Thanksgiving feast on our silverware. The male members of the family didn't hear us. Haden was just then standing up and scooting his chair out towards the wall which faced his back. "Seconds?" I asked—just like a sarcastic little sister should.

Haden looked at me without recognizing and picked up his plate, and I sighed at the sweet potatoes. ❖

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*I wiped the dew off the outside of the glass and made little circles on the tablecloth.*

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## Look At All the People

Sometimes,  
Some places,  
Sitting, I watch the people.  
Small people, tall people,  
Slinking toward their destinations.  
Sometimes,  
Sitting I  
wonder  
Who are you?  
Where do you live?  
What is your name?  
But often,  
By the time I've decided,  
Briskly they've walked away.  
They belong  
To someone, somewhere.  
They have mothers  
They have fathers  
Teachers,  
Toddlers, and others,  
Each is woven in an interesting story, and  
Intertwined as we are  
Eventually coming back to you.

**Ben Davidson**

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## Blue-Eyed Sunshine

Blue-eyed sunshine  
Lets raindrop laughter  
Spill from carnation lips  
When playing in the sprinkler.

Golden-haired rainbow  
Uses ribbon arms  
To pull a Coke  
Off the counter.

Pearl-cheeked wonderful  
Comes into the bedroom  
To give marshmallow kisses  
And say "Good night."

**Holly Covas**

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## Terrifying Beauty

I tred this trail of twisted trees  
Shimmering-sharp, sugar-sweet, butter-bees  
Flutter-fly: fluttered by, filling my fears with foolish  
delight  
Into the meadow where the milchers mill  
Leaving the trees in the forest still.  
Still, still, I stand still in silent soliloquy  
One flies near me!  
Oh dear - or perhaps I should say butter-bee?  
Be off you butter-bee!  
Leave, leave me be, you nasty, noisy butter-bee.  
Oh, the shimmer the light leaves on your wings,  
How beautiful is this butter-bee  
But wait - Why do you leave me?  
Butter-bee, Butter-bee please come back to me!  
I long to see your beauty and grace.  
Too late - far too late,  
My butter-bee is gone.  
Farewell dear butter-bee!

**Andrea Godshaw**



**Joseph Anderson, Jr.**  
"Carol," Stipple

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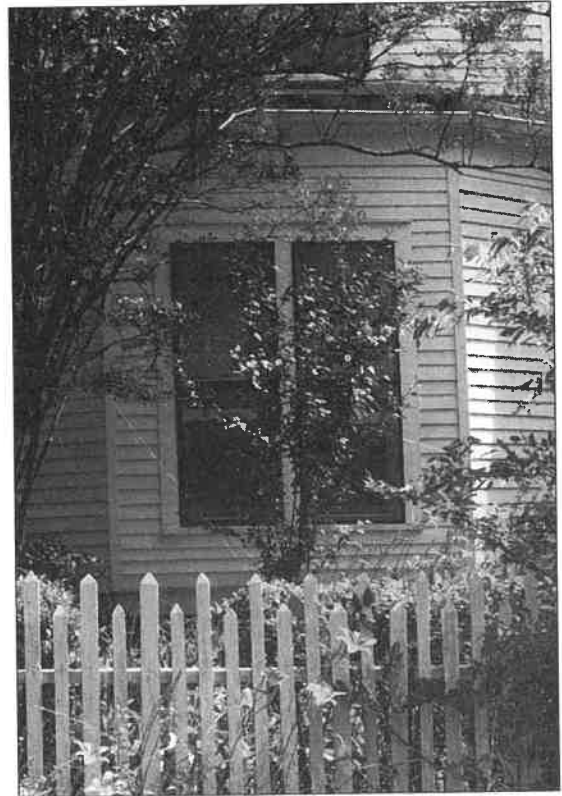
## The Corner

This little corner,  
A blue wall,  
Backside of a desk,  
Side of a bureau,  
And another side of a desk,  
Engulfs my frightened body whole.

It is quiet minus the soft music,  
Which relaxes me completely.  
I am hurt and crying,  
But you can not see it.  
To my face, they were lying,  
And could not even fake it.

This lonely corner in my room,  
A sweet heavenly sanction,  
My own little private space,  
To shun myself from the fears,  
That I have developed from this place,  
And to hide the fallen tears.

Nga Le



**Emily Cavett Taff**  
*"Sunshine," Photography*

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## Happiness lies in...

cobalt butterfly wings  
a friend's smile  
children's laughter  
the sweet, river's lull  
a bluebird's morning song  
a prism's rainbow  
a hug from an old acquaintance  
a dog's loyalty  
a cool, summer's day  
the gold of a sunflower  
cotton candy clouds  
the sun's tickle  
a cold glass of lemonade on a hot July day  
mud between one's toes  
a gentle caress  
peach fuzz  
gentle snowflakes

**Holly Covas**

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## October

Warm days tickle my skin  
With memories of the departing summer.  
Cold nights settle in for  
Marshmallows, hot chocolate, and fires.  
Butterflies and blossoming flowers give way to  
Splashes of gold, red, and orange.  
Jack-o-lantern smiles replace  
Those of summer loves.  
The world is ablaze with the  
Dying embers of the setting sun.  
Black cats and witches and  
Childhood imagination  
Dance along the streets with  
Candy corn laughter.

**Holly Covas**  
Honorable Mention, Poetry Contest

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# The Betrayal of the Skirt

What awful embarrassment from trivial things come,  
What cruel unforgiveness from minute minds bum,  
I sing - This verse to Jenny, Muse! is due;  
At this many will laugh and smile, but 'tis reality for a few:  
Shallow is the theme, but not so the story,  
Innocent is the act, but not so the glory.

Say what terrible fate, Oh Jenny! could cause,  
And simple item as skirt could reveal such flaws!  
Oh say what weird twisted sister did taint,  
And make sweet Heather flush crimson and faint?  
Lives such horror in perfectly made-up skin?  
And dwells such courage in black leather then?

Alarm through layers of pillows and covers did sound,  
And dim, sleepy ears it finally found;  
Buttons were hit time and time again,  
But noise continued to pulse and penetrate the din:  
Off was hiding, though his mistress did try,  
So the poor clock across the room did fly.

Into the steaming shower Heather sighed,  
As she surveyed the bottles and containers tried:  
Volumizing heat activated shampoo to give lift,  
Raspberry scented body wash (of course a gift),  
Citrus conditioner for flow and shine,  
A razor, shave gel, and face mask made from watermelon  
rind.

From the now cold stream she stepped,  
To gasp at the image in the mirror from which she  
leaped.

Quickly she grasped her make-up bag and brush,  
To begin fixing the monster the shower did forth gush.

Small, tall, wide, flat were the items laid out,  
Each given its time to beautify the teenage pout;  
Picked up solemnly and used with seriousness utmost,  
Bottle and compact, mirror and spray, all equal to their  
host.

Almost finished twenty five minutes and one hour later,  
Heather to her trousseau did cater.  
The black leather skirt hung perfectly on its nook,  
So it and a lavender velvet shirt she took;  
With night colored hose and knee length boots to greet,  
Her outfit for the day was now complete.

Upon the yellow demon she rode with pride,  
And to her jealous peers she did stride.  
One class, two, went by with envy true,  
And over-confidence within her pretty heart grew.  
The ladies room after third she did dash,  
And checked her slightly blemished face in the mirror  
flash;  
A few more minutes in the little room she spent,  
But her actions are too secretive to lend.

Out of the restroom Heather bounded,  
And laughter the hall resonated and pounded;  
Confused, Heather turned to her pals,  
Who were giggling like schoolish gals,  
"What's going on?" the porcelain princess cried,  
In a rage that even she could not hide.  
"Your skirt, Heather dear, your skirt,  
I'm afraid it's caught in your hose, you flirt!"  
Tori revealed in gasping giggling fits and tears,  
As heart broken Heather spun 'round and observed her  
fears.

"I'm ruined and finished in this school,  
From this day forth I'll never be cool!"

The once glistening queen of vibe did flee,  
To the countryside to live in a tree;  
Never again did she show her flawless face,  
And hermit like habits she did embrace.  
The betrayal of her skirt she will never forgive,  
The humiliation and mortification she will forever live.

**Hope Eliser**

# Yucatan, Mississippi

by Andrea Cooper

First Place, Essay Contest

**T**he white and yellow Chevrolet Blazer waddles through the worst of the Mississippi River mud. I change tapes, and Daddy and I continue to sing our feelings to one another with the old greats like Hank Williams, Sr., Patsy Cline, Johnny Cash, and George Jones. Watching carefully in the beams of the headlights for two glowing dots of eyes from the woods, we turn onto the camp road. As always, I wonder if the light plant will be on and who will already be in. Seemingly out of nowhere the bright light at the end of camp appears, and we finally reach the cabins. Driving past the camp houses, around the generator, and between the cook shack and meat house, we park in front of our cabin, built by my daddy's daddy and Uncle Bobby over forty years ago. The loud rumbling of the generator mingles with the shouts of the next generation of Yucatan football stars. As I watch the wild children with no worries in the world lobbing the muddy ball around, I am confused. Wasn't it just last year that I was one of the problem-less team? That frame of mind seems so far gone from me now. Did I ever truly love life and laugh as much as everyone says? But it doesn't matter, not now, not here. When the first levee is finally topped and the dirt road begins

the world of pavement and civilization is left behind. Where the pavement ends is where any worries you have are left behind. As the trucks make their way down, every person lets out a sigh. No problems at camp. No problems and no homework. Those are the rules. A place where grown ups become kids and kids do whatever puts a smile on their faces provided it won't hurt someone else or yourself. That's the only rule here, that and that all the kids do the dishes.

As we unpack the Blazer Daddy and I both smile at the smell of the cabin. Each time we arrive we always say, "Doesn't that smell good? It's musty, and damp, but it sure is home." Entering the cabin with the first load of bags and gun cases, I close my eyes and can picture everything there. Behind the open door is the double bed that Missy and Scarecrow now occupy. Three cots are folded and propped against the foot leaving just enough space for the bucket nightstand next to the bot-

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*Knowing that the more they pick on me,  
the more they love me is one of the hardest  
lessons I had to learn from my  
"uncles."*

---

tom bunk bed. Across the room in the corner under John Wayne and a print of cowboys around a campfire, Lee's bed sits covered in the typical over-packing of the Winters family. Laughingly, I check to make sure that the one duffel bag that they have had there for at least four years hasn't been moved. I gravitate to the old mustard yellow filing cabinet that leaves just enough space for our heater; Daddy always says you just can't walk by a heater and not back up to it. In the center is a jade table where we play boo-ray, black-jack, and canasta. On the smaller table across the room the many bottles of liquor attest to the "unlaxed" atmosphere. Gin, vermouth, and olives for Uncle Bobby's characteristic martinis, Ancient Age carries on my grandfather's tradition, Chivas scotch for my mom, and the occasional bottle of Jim Beam for Scarecrow's whisky sours all sit, gradually emptying as the weekend rolls on. Various coats, shirts, and damp jeans or socks hang on the wall above the heater. The forever present lizards and dirt daubers make their home in the rustic cabin. Making my way through the cabin I notice that mud clumps already dot the plywood floor. I reach for the door to Mom and Daddy's room and know it will squeak. I make my way to the adjacent bathroom where the

old toilet seat is like ice on my bare bottom. I note that the bucket beside the toilet is empty, testifying to the fact no girls have been here so far this weekend. I remember the time Daddy came in to light the miniature kerosene lantern that sits on the shelf above the commode. "You can always tell how many women are here by the amount of toilet paper in the bucket."

Once the unloading is taken care of, we go out to the cook shack to see what's going on. Entering to the sound of frying oil for french fries and dry fry, the distinctive laughter of the punch line to one of Uncle Bobby's stories, and the familiar voices of so many warm welcomes, I can't help but smile. In previous years, I've been the "go-for," the one who was told to go for this or go for that, but now I have moved up the hierarchy of the working part of Yucatan. I begin my new job of helping all the men in the kitchen fix supper and roll up my sleeves delving into whatever task is at hand. Potatoes need to be peeled and

sliced, biscuits need to be made, meat has to be carefully cut and trimmed, gravy has to be made, the occasional pot of corn must be stirred, and french fries and venison have to be cooked. Occasionally Daddy will turn to me and rattle his ice. He smiles as I beat him to it and say, "Your cup don't runneth over." I know that as soon as I return with his drink he'll smile and say, "You're a good woman no matter what your mama says about you." As I hop in wherever I am needed, I look around the kitchen full of men and wait to be harassed. Knowing that the more they pick on me, the more they love me is one of the hardest lessons I had to learn from my "uncles." Already Claude Ray approaches with the pepper knowing that it does not belong on anything I cook. Then come the questions about which horse I'm going to get thrown off tomorrow. As always when I ask Daddy where we'll hunt in the morning, he smiles and replies, "In the woods." I take it all in the humor in which it is intended and even return a few jests now that I'm older. They'll ask me why I haven't brought my boyfriend up yet and assure me that they would be nice and treat him "just like he was one of us." I'll grin back at them and reply, "What, you think I want to have anything to do with one of you? Men are too much trouble. Besides, he'd probably want to spend some quality time together while I want to be hunting. No sir, not me, I know where my priorities are, and that's right here." All of them are satisfied with that answer and leave me alone about it. They all know I don't have a boyfriend, but that's o.k. I don't need one as far as they're concerned, and when I'm at Yucatan, I don't even want one.

After eating and cleaning up the kitchen some of us ride up to the big field. Simply driving to the meeting up gate and parking the truck, we get out and sit on the tailgate. Completely content, I gaze up at the millions of stars. There are so many that I could count for eternity and never be done. I remember the time I asked Daddy if there was any place you could see more stars than the big field. He smiled and replied, "Only in Texas, Baby, only in Texas." When we return to the cabin, Daddy lights the kerosene lamp and we send Lee to shut down the light plant. Smiling wickedly, Lee takes out his trumpet and exits the cabin. As the roaring generator dies, the utter silence is broken by an eerie trumpet. Taps. The most inspiring rendition I've ever heard. It brings images of soldiers' tombs, foggy nights, rifle flashes, and explosions into my mind's eye. It makes Uncle Bobby and Daddy, both former Navy men, lose themselves in their past. When Lee returns, Uncle Bobby is again laughing wickedly at the thought of waking up some of the camp members, but Lee can see the moisture in his eyes; he sleeps that night knowing he made his dad proud. "That was beautiful, Lee," is the only comment. Daddy sighs and pulls out his harmonica. "Wonder what the poor folks are doin' tonight," he says once again. Falling asleep to the familiar snores of Uncle Bobby and "Red River Valley" from Daddy's harmonica, I wonder what I'd do without this place and these people. It's Yucatan; it's more than a deer camp, it's the greatest place on earth. ❖

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## Ice Cream Darkness

Campfire tongues lick the ice cream darkness,  
Breathing smoke words to the faint stars,  
As the sky's blushed cheeks turn  
From orange to pink to purple.

A black wave smiles to the shore,  
Rolling a white face to the pale sand body,  
Pleading for the sand to let it  
Kiss the yellow flower by the rocks.

The pearl moon watches over its children,  
Persuading them to sleep,  
As the wind whispers songs of love  
To the indecisive grass.

Holly Covas

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## Leaves

The leaves flutter and flow  
As they fall  
To the grassy earth  
Showering me  
In yellow softness  
The fall wind blows  
Through my very soul  
As light fades to dark  
As I walk through the darkness  
I hear a shuffling sound  
I stop and I listen  
It is the sound of feet  
Walking in yellow softness  
On grassy earth

Laura West

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# Hometown

i went to the graveyard,  
but it felt home,  
i couldn't cry there  
like in fronta the TV  
where the girl in the show  
was a normal life  
worried about goin' around  
and screwin' up  
and love  
not words and corpses and someone else's  
bills.

i went there and i sat on a stone  
wonderin' if they could see me from the street  
wonderin' if they'd shoot me for bein' white  
in the cemetery next to  
the church where they actually sing, to the Lawd,  
they got it goin' on!!

an' i sat there in the sun  
watchin' the stadium walls burn  
watchin' the town  
drive by makin' its purchases  
sellin' its purposes  
it's money,  
it's money,  
it's money an' business  
an'  
..SUB-WOOFERS.

an' around an' around  
an analog sound  
4th down on four ova the walls  
my trumpet i sold  
to the first chair fight song  
the fire ball setting  
and the quiet is gone  
and the tears can come  
like drums around the rubber  
track out the gate  
and back, back to a . . .high school.

grooves thumpin', the Friday night potluck  
son is cruisin' down  
doin' his mamma's errands

i am a shadow, the corpse  
of a scarecrow hanging from yo' tree  
climbing  
so the drops from my eyes have  
have farther to fall unlike me

an' a sidewalk  
and then the door and the usual smell  
and the TV  
with the fictional fortunate girl  
is on  
I won't be here for very long  
I won't be here for long.

**Katy Muir**  
Honorable Mention, Poetry Contest



**Angela Carol Taylor**  
"Paul McCartney," Graphite



# The Long Stretch of Road and Sand

Meagan Newman

**W** CPR is on the radio. No static: just music. Now I know I'm home. After driving for four hours, I anticipate my next right turn onto highway ninety. As I make the turn my eyes open wide to see the familiar sights: The Grand Casino on the left with its bright lights and numerous customers, and on the right, the various seafood restaurants: Vrazels, Chappy's, and Landrys. My favorite view, though, is the beach.

The moonlight's reflection on the water reminds me of why I miss home so much. This road has always taken me where I need to go. Some of my fondest memories are connected in some way to the miles and miles of road and beach that at the moment lay ahead of me. I can still remember the trips to my grandparents' house every Saturday. My dad, my brother, and I would leave the house at eight a.m. and drive on the beach to Gulfport. I always enjoyed those twenty-minute rides with our car the only one on the asphalt. I can also remember the times my friends and I would spend hours driving back and forth from Pass Christian to Biloxi only stopping every now and then at a gas station on the beach. The speed limit of forty-five always seemed ridiculous when driving down the four-lane road with the windows down and the stereo up. I remember passing by the Pizza Hut with the big red, white, and blue boat in the parking lot. My dad would always tell me about how the boat washed up to the shore during the hurricane. He would always mention that he was the first to discover it. I am also reminded of the time that Sheryl and I hopped into her red Honda Civic and drove down the beach during the hurricane watch. No one was on the road, just a few daredevils on the beach waiting for the winds to make waves. We made it to the movie theater in record time and didn't have to wait in line for once.

As I made my way down the beach, I passed the Mardi Gras decorations. The grass around the trees was colored in the official purple, green, and gold Mardi Gras colors. There was even a large Mardi Gras tree positioned on the side of the road covered in beautiful beads and masks. Observing the festive scenery reminded me of the wonderful floats and costumes that pass during

the parades that took place. The thought of flying beads and people singing and shouting made me smile. Mardi Gras has always been my favorite holiday.

Highway ninety has always been decorated for the holidays. Last Christmas, the whole strip, from Biloxi to Pass Christian, was covered with Christmas trees and lights. I looked forward to the Fourth of July when you could park all along the beach and enjoy the fireworks and bonfires. Driving along the beach during the holidays is enough to put anyone in good spirits, myself especially.

I entered the Long Beach city limits and rolled down the window. I wanted to smell the beach. I quickly remembered all of the beach cleanups that my friends and I participated in every year. It was funny how we would always end up in the water "looking for trash." We would always end up walking back to the pier soaked in saltwater. Then we would endure the smell of fish as we walked around looking at boats, picking out our preferences. The smell was sickening back then, but now I longed for it. It was a reminder of

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*I never realized how much I took my hometown for granted until I left.*

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my past, of how much I enjoyed my hometown.

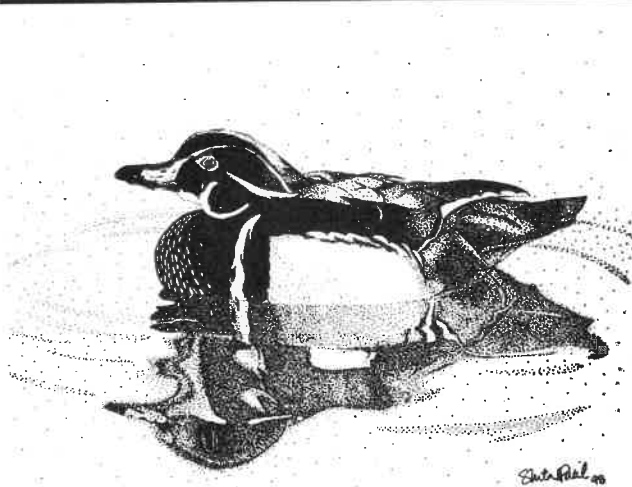
Pirates Cove, with the best poboys in town, lay at my right. At that very same moment, "All the Stars," by my favorite band Better Than Ezra came on the radio. I instantly pictured thousands of people lined up in front of the Mississippi Coast Coliseum, waiting anxiously to get inside the gates. Better Than Ezra was playing at the WCPR Fest. The sun was out all day. People fought for space under the mist tent, the only free water source. Finally, Better Than Ezra came out. They played their hearts out while Jenny and I sang our heart out to songs like "This Time of Year" and "Rosealia." That night I went to bed with the lyrics, "Where have you gone my Rosealia?" playing over and over in my head.

My thoughts are directed back to my drive home to Pass Christian. I pass a sign that reads: Pass Christian 2 miles. I am excited about getting home. I never realized how much I took my hometown for granted until I left. Now I long for it. "I'll be home in about ten minutes," I tell my mom when I call her on the cell phone. I pass my school and take a right, this time off the highway and in the direction of my house. I spend the next few minutes

taking little country roads and going over bridges. I pass the all-too-familiar bright pink house on the right, noting that home is five minutes away. Next to that sits Shannon's house, always with a cop car parked in front. I pass over one final bridge, the new David LaRosa Bridge, and shortly after that stop near the DeLisle Elementary School. As I turn down my road, Ball Park Road, I look forward to my time at home. I have no plans, but it doesn't matter. That's what is so great about it. I

can go to the mall or the movies, or simply just drive along the beach and enjoy the scenery.

Sitting in my car, which is parked in the driveway, I listen to the last few seconds of Better Than Ezra's "This Time of Year." I always pop it into the cd player once I get close to home. "There's a feeling in the air. Feeling right this time of year." I turn off the engine, grab my bags from the trunk, and happily walk up to the front door, my front door, just as it opens. "Hi, Mom...I'm finally home." ♦



**Shital Patel**  
*"A Wood Duck," Stipple*

## Winter Rain

I lie here,  
 My chin resting in the window sill  
 Where the rain splashes on my face.  
 It batters the screen.  
 I can't see outside anymore,  
 Only a web of wet darkness and light  
 Seen through watery squares.  
 I smell the dust,  
 Wet dust beneath my nose,  
 Reminding me of Sunshine,  
 A place of frequent summer showers and memories.  
 Cold air slips through the window  
 Cooling my face,  
 Calming my soul.  
 Raindrops drum  
 In no particular pattern on the eaves  
 As thunder proclaims his reign not far off.  
 I must sit up now,  
 Unfold from my peaceful position.  
 My chin has begun to hurt.

**Emily Taff**

## Night Dreams

Singing, dancing with a mop, a man cleans the hall.  
 Swift strokes to the right, bowing sweeps to the left,  
 He dances with mop-headed, wooden Cinderella.  
 The floor gleams as brightly as any glass slipper  
 As the man moves down the hall.  
 Bucket sloshing with waves of water  
 Threatening to sweep over the edge,  
 The worker swings the bucket occasionally  
 With the mop in hand whenever he turns.  
 Later, Prince Charming has become a knight  
 Plunging a sword into a dragon  
 As he jerks the vacuum in sharp directions.  
 Yet he never misses a beat to the music  
 As he manages to maneuver the monster  
 To suck scraps of paper up in its roaring mouth.  
 No damsel in distress cries out to the knight,  
 But why does he need one  
 When he has sweet Cinderella drying in a closet?  
 On steps, he whisks a damsel into his arms  
 Sidestepping with her as her dress brushes the ground  
 And sweeps away the rotting leaves of yesterday.  
 A church bell sounds seven o'clock.  
 Tossing the damsel into a closet,  
 The prince, the knight turns in his timecard  
 And has the time recorded onto it.  
 Finished for another night, the hero goes home  
 Weary from bittersweet reality  
 That mocks him in the dawn.

**Veronika Viner**

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# Happy Birthday

That phone writhed and screamed  
In a persistent infantile way  
Till I cradled it in my hands  
And answered its indignant cry  
Hello??? in anticipation....

In shock...in wracking sobs  
"Happy Birthday" He murmured  
My heart raced in an emotionally  
Straining discourse in herstory  
To the murder of my heart....  
Unrequiting love, to  
A tearstained drowning  
Through shattered hope and  
This man's forgetting-cruelty

But verbs and nouns refused to leave  
My mouth but...silence was willing  
And then in a rushing crimson tide  
They came...and submersed Him in  
Questions, whys, please???  
Could He justify his wrongs?  
Could He be there again?  
For me...but differently?  
Because now it's not the same as  
That naive October ago  
I'm not His lover  
Nor His love anymore  
But I love Him still  
Again...but differently  
With the quiet fidelity  
To another one better for me  
Though we are connected  
By that moment ago

That He still thinks of  
And misses me a little  
Like the poetry in that song

Though differently  
I'm promised to someone that  
Would never leave me in the cold  
As you have found another  
October girl to again possess  
And entrench in your fickle love  
In separate worlds we're in  
In separate happiness we've found  
But I've always yearned to share  
And want you to be there as  
An extension of my life  
Don't go away...don't leave me  
Like you did so many months ago  
And I'll be here once more  
My shoulder ever so soft for you  
To again lay your broken hearts on  
My soothing voice for you  
To persuade you that your  
Life necessitates living


Please don't hide your soul  
From my sympathetic heart  
So...another's beloved  
But still your friend  
Forever and always  
With your consent  
Let me and I will  
I promise you this

**Jennifer Stierwalt**

# Coming Home

by Andrea Cooper

Third Place, Essay Contest

 I pull around the curve and slowly drift into the other lane. The radio softens, the car slows, and I turn. As always I wonder if the headlights awaken my slumbering parents who, after a hard day at work, came home, mowed the yard, and fixed supper. The sunroof and windows close and "Baxter" dies. Stepping out of the car I look up and give greetings to the beautiful stars that I miss so much in Columbus. I turn and see the Old Man lying in the dust. He lifts and drops his tail once, no longer bothering to move. He knows I'll pet him where he is or not at all. Making my way in the dark I pass between the van and the Celebrity, past the engine block, around the end of the vise, and on to the porch. Two strides more bring me to the door. Opening the screen and turning the knob, it's unlocked, and I know I am home.

I live about two miles outside of a small Mississippi town which puts me in just the right spot. I can wear the boots that give me character, work on the cars with Daddy that give me practical use and quality time, and spend the time in the woods and fields that make me who I am. At my house, a person is taught to be honest, true to friends, family, and herself, a hard worker, forgiving, considerate, caring, helpful, patient, and dependable. The greatest part of these lessons that I received from my parents is that they were lived, not just told. So often in this age, people forget that children learn by example. My parents instilled in me values that, until recently, I naively thought everyone shared: basic human kindness, patience, the understanding to help others, and the honesty and personal satisfaction of a life lived for good.

My pets and I were more than friends. I belonged to them as much as they belonged to me. Though we did not always have the money to properly care for them with shots or neutering, they never lacked food or love. I could depend on them no matter what I did, and they could always count on me to be there. Looking back I think I spent more time with my myriad of animal friends than I spent with my schoolmates. Perhaps that's why when asked for those four adjectives to describe myself, I always sound like a puppy: loyal, comforting, loveable, and protective.

My parents were always supportive of me. They let me choose my own paths in everything and taught me how to learn from the mistakes I made. When I developed an interest in birds, Daddy bought bird field guides and a pair of binoculars. Mom stuffed my Christmas stocking with tapes of bird calls and directions for homemade bird feeders. As years passed I added photography to my curiosities and loves. Again, their support. Dusting off the large grey case, Daddy instructed me on the use of his manually focused 35 mm camera. Once I became accustomed to the light meter and the focusing techniques, he brought out his telephoto lens and demonstrated its uses. Mom always took my film to be delivered and returned the pictures to our critical eyes promptly. For hours on end, we would sit and study each

picture noting background, centering, lighting, focus, subject, and quality. There was no equaled pride when Daddy would study one and simply say, "That's a real good one, Baby."

Since coming to MSMS my group of friends has become a much

more diversified lot. From "good old boys" to "skaters," I've taken them all home. Each is welcomed equally. Because my parents have always shown interest in my friends and accepted them for who they are, I have learned to do the same. It is not my place to judge a person, particularly not just because he or she looks, acts, or speaks differently. My view of the world and the people in it has become increasingly open and accepting. Doing my best to give everyone I encounter a fair chance, I try to know someone before I decide what I feel about them. While first impressions can be very important, they can also be very false.

Finding that her desires and gifts were in helping and comforting those in pain, Mom became a nurse. I first witnessed her incredible ability on a band trip to an away football game. Traffic was blocked and there was an occupied car off in the ditch. I wanted so badly to go and help those people and to see what had happened, but, as always, the answer was no, the kids had to stay on the bus. I pushed my way to a window and watched as my mother vanished into the crowd around the car. For a moment, I feared we would leave her there as we were already late for the game, but that thought was lost as

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*There was no equaled pride when  
Daddy would study one and simply say,  
"That's a real good one, Baby."*

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suddenly the crowd dispersed and returned to their vehicles. Crouched beside the open driver's door was my mother. She sat holding the driver's hand. I was spellbound; my mother, the painfully shy introvert, was talking to a perfect stranger. I doubt I'd ever seen her talk so much to anyone, ever. I could tell by her face that she spoke as calmly as she did when I was hurting. I almost expected her to start singing "Shortnin' Bread" to him. At that moment, the realization of all the wonderful things Daddy had told me about my mom hit me full force. When people told me that my mom and I didn't get along because we were too much alike, I used to cringe and deny it; now, I just smile. Every time I find myself

calming a wild or scared animal by continuously talking in a soft, soothing voice, I think of my mom.

My parents have been the biggest influence on who I am. Always supportive and interested, I never felt anything but love from or for them. By some miracle they seem to have found that indefinite line between letting me choose for myself and being over-protective. They have instilled in me values that will lead me down the right paths of life. As my Daddy often did when we would work on cars together, my parents gave me the tools and the basic instructions—all I have to do is make it work. ❖

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## Unknown CSA

Enter a graveyard any day  
"Unknown CSA" some graves may say  
A forgotten soldier without a name  
The grave gets treated just the same.

"Give him a gravestone" was the plan  
You'll find no flowers for the man  
Except some wildflowers that God gave  
Atop the unknown man's grave.

It is a great pity,  
To, even in this big city,  
Bury the baby below the blackness  
And leave the family with the sadness.

The earth now covers you as your blanket  
Your name is forgotten, but you won't forget  
The boom of the cannon still ringing in your ears,  
Your fist that was an iron unclenching after the tears.

Jessica Walker



**Gina Rae Newsom**  
*"Soldier of the Cross," Photography*

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## Autumn Falling

Stepping through fallen  
Leaves of brownish  
Hues under grey and  
Looming trees of autumn  
A cold wind pulls back  
The forest is dead  
And dying without struggle  
In Nighttime's freezing grasp  
The clouds move overhead  
With the sun already set  
And the dark blue-grey  
Dreadnought swallowing the dead  
Keeping the cold trapped  
Under the crawling sheet  
Of this unmoving evening  
Winter's coming back

And I walk through  
With no invading thoughts  
The frigid air has filled  
My blood and I walk on

What I touch will crumble

I walk along the creep,  
The haze lowering  
No reason for fear,  
All the beasts are asleep  
The glow of the moon  
Shines faded through  
The heavy shade  
The dew will shine soon

What I touch will crumble

The trees whisper  
I can see the souls  
The forest is still  
Alive through the cold  
The wind sends and  
Shudders through  
The landscape and tells  
Me what to do

Live inside myself

And I walk on through  
With no invading thoughts  
The frigid air was filled  
My blood and I walk on

Live inside myself

What I touch will crumble

**Andrew Young**

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## Modern-Day Fairytale

Just another Cinderella story  
Only no one knows where the prince has gone.  
The bride is weeping, talking of past dreams.  
No one tells her life goes on.  
Where's the modern-day fairy-tale?  
What happened to the happily ever after?  
Who's to tell the woeful tale?  
Of what happened after?  
Just another romantic dream.  
Only no one lived to see it happen.  
The bride will relive it as she wonders what it means.  
No one will tell her find another love.  
Where's the "it's okay?"  
What happened to the handsome groom?  
Who's to write the tale of this modern day?  
Who's to say he'll come back soon?  
Just another part of history.

Only no one will repeat it for her sake.  
The bride will stop weeping as time goes by,  
But no one will remind her of her fatal mistake.  
Where's the dead man's body?  
What happened to generate a homicide?  
Who's to write how the groom was buried?  
Who's to tell the tale of the bride's attempted suicide?  
Just another life.  
Only no one will realize she's now alone.  
The bride will live and die.  
Only no one will know she never got back home.  
Where's the true love for today?  
What happened after the happily ever after?  
Who's to say how the maid of honor ran away?  
Who's to write the ending of what happened after?  
Just another fatal tragedy.

Only no one will see the final end.  
The bride will live only in the people's hearts.

Only no one will realize the best man killed his best  
friend.

Where's the honored people that killed to send others  
to the hereafter?  
What happened to them after they told the police the  
truth they had to tell?  
Who's to write what happened after happily ever after?  
Who's to write this modern-day fairytale?

**Veronika Viner**

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## Laura Lee's Lament

Laura Lee of Vieux Carre, you grieve?  
I gather your Larry lover did leave.  
Gone, longleft for uptown younger girl. The likes of man!  
You loathe now, with loathsome oatgrass sorrow.  
Guess you now, no love greets you on the morrow.  
But, as the longgrief sadly seepens in  
And sorrow, godless, goodless, deepens, then  
Living next door down the Rue DeLane  
Or going dining at DuMonde  
The golden beignet lane of passing Larrypain  
Is Lester.

Lester's a living jester with no Laura Lee to please  
But with a grin, a laughgrin, waiting for your limpid eyes  
He in his valet vest of leafy green and baby bowtie, is  
Living lonely, too, next door.  
Lester going to lift soon listless your sorrow,  
For he will ask you out to suddenly simply heavenly lunch  
At Gallatoire's tomorrow.

**Katy Muir**  
Second Place, Poetry Contest



**Nga T. Le**  
"Lunar Sun," Watercolor



**Gina Rae Newsom**  
"The McCoy Homeplace," Photography

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## Hidden

The daylight fades  
I stare out the window  
And sit alone  
Unseen,  
In silence  
Hidden by my blanket of darkness  
My eyes form rivers  
That shimmer in the moonlight  
Flowing freely  
Caressing a path down my cheek  
The daylight fades  
I stand alone  
Unseen  
Surrounded by silence  
In the night  
The shadows my only comfort  
Constant  
In their brief interlude  
On this lonely earth  
The daylight fades  
I am alone  
Unseen,  
In silence

**Laura West**

# Traveling with Dad

Ben Davidson

**D**uring the period of my grandfather's illness, my dad and I traveled the stretch of Highway 12 between Starkville and Kosciusko what seemed like a hundred times. The trips often served as a time for my dad to reminisce about old events, old jobs, and old friends. On Highway 12, I learned my father's life story, his father's, and his.

"Did I tell you about the time I worked offshore?" he'd ask.

"No," I would always reply even though I'd heard the story innumerable times.

"I worked as a welder's assistant," he continued. "We'd weld the oil pipeline together as they laid it onto the sea floor. Sometimes, the pipe would break, and while we were waiting for the pipe to get fixed we would fish over the edge of the platform. A friend of mine got me and Jimmy Briscoe that job."

And so we passed the time heading toward a reality that neither of us wanted to face. My dad used to say that once we got talking he would lose all consciousness of driving, and suddenly, we'd arrive. But we never missed the familiar landmarks that made our trip oddly interesting. Of course there were the small towns (mainly a mini-mart and gas station), of Ackerman, Weir, and Sturgis. We'd pass a little shotgun shack with a covered porch running down one side that was nestled just off the highway. Reliably, a shriveled man dressed in overalls and a flannel shirt sat on the porch as we drove by. On one trip my dad honked at the man for some unknown reason, and the man waved back. From then on, when the man was sitting on the porch we'd honk and he'd wave.

Between Starkville and Sturgis on the right side of Highway 12, a small one-story house lies surrounded by towering pines. "That's the Eskeridge house," my dad would say, "Bill and June." The Eskeridges own an antique/junk furniture store in Sturgis. My dad, again, would put his horn to good use honking as we passed the house. I'm not sure whether he thought that the Eskeridges heard him or even if they were home.

"When I was growing up," my dad would reminisce, "Your grandfather was a vice president at Merchant's and Farmer's Bank on the square. They used to work half

a day on Saturday, and I used to walk from my house to the bank to get money to go to the movies. The movies were great old westerns with John Wayne. My favorites, though, were the serials between the double feature. I loved to see the adventures of Lash Larue and Flash Gordon. They were short and always ended at a climactic scene to be continued until next week.

"Speaking of Merchant's and Farmer's Bank, did I ever tell you about the time I saved downtown Kosciusko?" my dad continued.

"No," I replied.

"One Wednesday when I was in the ninth grade, I was doing my homework and listening to the local radio station in Kosciusko. I heard on the radio that my dad's bank was on fire. So, I rushed in the direction of downtown. When I came upon the scene at the bank, my dad and some of the other men who worked at the bank were helping the volunteer firefighters put out the fire, but it was evident that they weren't making any headway. So, I

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*As we neared Kosciusko, the county seat, my dad would begin waving to oncoming cars by extending the first finger of the hand on the steering wheel.*

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went next door to Leonard's Department Store and went to the roof with the owner and three others with a fire hose to fight the fire. The smoke on top of the building was so bad that you could hardly see the person in front of you, and the fire was so hot that the water was evaporat-

ing before it hit the fire. It was almost like you were pouring gasoline on the fire. The fire finally stopped after about five or six hours when the entire building burned down, but at least we managed to keep it from spreading to any other buildings. After I found Dad, he said that he was the first one to see smoke coming out of the ventilation system. Apparently, the fire started in the basement of the bank where they kept all the files. Back in those days of course they didn't have any computers, so everything was written on paper. The basement had only two doors, one of which was a locked steel door that was too hot to open. They couldn't get to the fire in the basement to put it out.

"A friend of mine, Pat Patterson, whose mother owned a jewelry store downtown, was injured in the fire, though. You know how in cartoons when the fire hose gets loose and whips around? Well, that's exactly what happened. When they were trying to control the hose, it whipped out



of their hands and hit him in the leg ripping it open from knee to shin. The whole town turned out to watch the fire, and there I was on top of the building helping out.

"That was an exciting day in Kosciusko. I realize now that the whole time I helped with the fire I was worried about Dad and that was why I came up to Leonard's. It was a relief when I found my dad and heard the story of its discovery." As I sat listening to the story of the fire, I imagined the excitement and history in Kosciusko and the role in which my father and grandfather participated. After he told the story of the fire, I noticed that my father's hands tightly gripped the steering wheel.

Along a short section just north of Sturgis, a swamp fills up some bottomland after a big rain, and logs peek above the water. Turtles used to sun themselves on the logs, my dad and I would count the turtles to see how many were there. Our personal record was twenty-seven. After almost an hour and a half of talking, my dad and I would enter Attala County just past the turtles. As we

neared Kosciusko, the county seat, my dad would begin waving to oncoming cars by extending the first finger of the hand on the steering wheel. The closer we came to my grandfather's house the more often he waved in this manner. I don't think that he knew any of those people, but somehow I think he felt he was coming home. I realized that my dad headed home to a situation that he must have dreaded for some time. The stories that he told were his way of easing the sadness of the situation.

Eventually, my grandfather passed away and our trips to Kosciusko became less frequent. When my family goes to visit my grandmother, my dad and I see the familiar landmarks and reminisce about the time we've spent together. Although the purpose of our trips to Kosciusko was depressing, my father and I used the time spent traveling in a positive way. My father's gift for remembering experiences has been invaluable in my life, as I now know about his life and my family's. One day maybe I'll have my own stories to tell. ❖

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## Little Number Nineteen

His eyes glare at the goal:  
There's only one thing running through his mind:  
-score.  
Embracing the stick,  
he guides the puck towards the goal,  
Faking out imaginary attackers on the way.  
He flies over the slick, invisible ice  
anticipating his victory goal.

Setting up on the blue line,  
he shoots, he scores!  
The crowd goes wild as their hero  
bows and waves to fans.

With a slight turn,  
he notices something out of the corner of his eye.  
Deadlier than any Detroit Red Wing,  
Tougher than any goalie who has ever played the game.  
Worse than anything ever imaginable!

The car gets closer and little number nineteen  
grumbles while moving his plastic goal out of the street,  
for a few seconds anyway.  
The car passes and he's back on the ice,  
Ready to score the winning goal number two.

**Meagan Newman**  
Honorable Mention, Poetry Contest

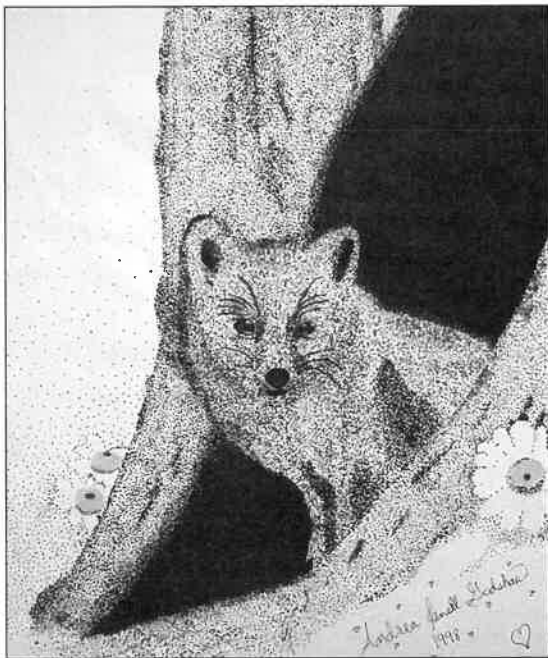
## Voice in the Night

I never noticed she had an accent  
Until I was a teenager.  
I never noticed she said "oh"  
When others said "ah."  
I never noticed she said "ka"  
When others said "kwə."  
Her voice never trilled like a bird's  
But murmured like the purr of a cat.  
Her accent calmed the train's whistle  
That burned a child's lung.  
Her infection stopped the hacking coughs  
That racked a young girl's trembling body.  
The bodiless voice in the night always  
Came when I called out in fear or pain.  
Her words wrapped around me like blankets.  
Always, her accent gave comfort.  
Always, she came when I called.  
Always, would she be the voice in the night.

**Veronika Viner**



**Amber Renee van Vlymen**  
*"The Flute," Pastels*  
Second Place, Art Contest



**Andrea Janett Godshaw**  
*"Urban Fox," Stipple*

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## Padlock

The senseless nights  
The non-existent days  
I begin to wonder who I am giving praise  
A need for them to be good  
Or at least respect what is  
I cry in my pillow  
As my banging head aches

Too many magicians  
Who all hold bad tricks  
Confused over everything  
With a need to be understood  
I cry and I wander into the dark woods.  
I can't stop the whistling, the screaming, or fear -  
Only the feeble attempts of consoling  
Enhance my own will. Emotional scars running so deep  
I lap up the blood and pray to keep  
The ones I have hidden inside no sleep.  
Stress which combines from all different places  
Nearly driving insane me and all my faces.

The pain runs too deep - the anguish too sweet  
Now I can't even weep  
A painful disease of love and mistrust  
Engulf this campus with its beautiful lust.  
Scars which remain, still unseen, - wounds that don't  
heal -  
And solutions that don't work. A countdown for what -  
As if this hell will ever end for you and I both know  
It has gone and evolved within.

The song of our lives as shrieks in the night  
All in opposing keys fitting the same lock  
Attraction undefined connections unnerving  
And now all who handle it have become quite disconcerting.

**Adam Williams**



**Amber Renee van Vlymen**  
*"Cousins," Pencil*

## In this World...

In this world but not of it  
Cried the small girl with sorrowful eyes  
As she gathered her tattered dress  
Around her hungry belly.

In this world but not of it  
Sighed the teenage girl with a wistful stare  
As she watched the other girls  
Drive away in their new cars.

In this world but not of it  
Shouted the middle-aged woman with wrin-  
kling hands  
As she waited tables to make the rent  
And keep her children off the streets.

In this world but not of it  
Whispered the old woman with fragile bones  
As she lay on her broken bed,  
Waiting for Death to come.

*In this world but not of it...*

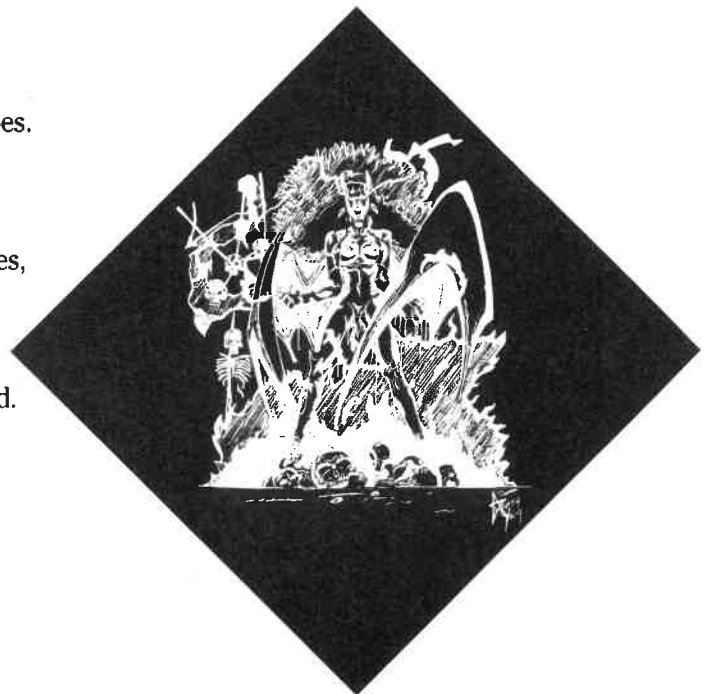
**Holly Covas**

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## Childhood Shelter

You could smell the summer shower coming.  
I escaped the house with my sandwich and **without** my shoes.  
Scurrying across the grass as the drops began,  
I sat under the solid canopy of the grapevines,  
Occasionally devouring the sweet orbs.  
I watched the droplets plummet from the broad green leaves,  
And welcomed the butterfly which shared my shelter.  
Once the thunder boomed I knew Mom would call me in.  
Walking to the edge of the front porch,  
She knew exactly where I'd be and I knew what she wanted.  
I'd duck under the training lines and run to the porch.  
Mom had a towel, but I didn't need it.  
My secret shelter of a microscopic jungle kept me dry.

**Andrea Cooper**




**Andrew Young**  
*"Purgatori," Scratchboard*  
Honorable Mention, Art Contest

# The Road at the End of the World

Veronika Viner

Honorable Mention, Essay Contest

 Spanish moss drapes overhanging branches of stately oaks along a two-lane road. Houses are hidden behind towering trees that form medieval castles. Dry stalks of grass stand as stiff as ancient soldiers. Violet and sun-colored flowers linger along the roadside in the autumn. Pink-hued azaleas bloom there in April. On bike rides, my sisters and I would swoop down the gentle curves of the two-lane road every summer and autumn. Sometimes a car would pass us as we journeyed down the road at the end of the world, but it would drift by with speed of a falling leaf before regaining the speed of a cheetah after passing us. Whenever we would reach the end of the road, we could see the bridges that passed over the wetlands with their endless mazes and tunnels of water. Silence lives there, at the very end of the road. It is a haven of peace with only insects as both protective guardians and buzzing pests. At the end of the cul-de-sac is where we would rest though small coves are scattered along the roadside. They offer shade and privacy to any that seek rest.

At the end of the road, we would talk about life, dreams, philosophy, and goals. Sweet mysteries would be pondered at what seems like the end of the world. In a world where names mean nothing, I use none.

"Do you remember the legend of the Singing River?" one of us three sisters would ask.

"The legend of the Singing River began when a maiden from the Pascagoula tribe met a warrior from the Biloxi tribe," a second would begin.

"They fell in love though the maiden was to be wed to the Pascagoula chief's son," the first would recall with clasped hands, fluttering eyelashes, and mock distress.

Shoving her sister playfully, the second would answer, "Cut the damsel-in-distress act. You were the one to ask to hear the legend. The Biloxi and Pascagoula tribes discovered the truth about the couple, and the fierce Biloxi tribe declared war on the peaceful Pascagoula tribe. Rather than fight the Biloxi warriors—"

"All the members of the Pascagoula tribe passed into the waters of the river known as the Singing River today.

The people chanted softly as they walked calmly to their deaths until the last was gone," the first would continue.

"Legend has it that you can hear the tribe singing on a misty morning just before the sun rises," the second would conclude.

"Cut it out, you two. Let's head back home before we're late," the third would finally say. Turning our bikes around, we left that haven and headed back with the evening wind blowing against us. Smelling the scent of rain and feeling an attack of water balloons from the rain clouds were just part of the return trip. Leaving the secluded haven, we raced down the part of the two-lane road where small, neat white-picket fences surrounded three bedroom, two bathroom houses that lined the streets looking as suburban as any place. We never lingered there. Normalcy clung to the air like the stench of dead catfish on a foggy morning.

Sometimes, the road would have side streets attached to it. U-turn Hill, a small street that was connected to one of the side streets, was always one of our stops before going home. Shaped like the letter U, the street had a great slope to ride down on both

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*The streets looked like crumpled paper that someone had failed to smooth out, but at least, normalcy did not cling to our skin here like the bittersweet, smothering breath of death.*

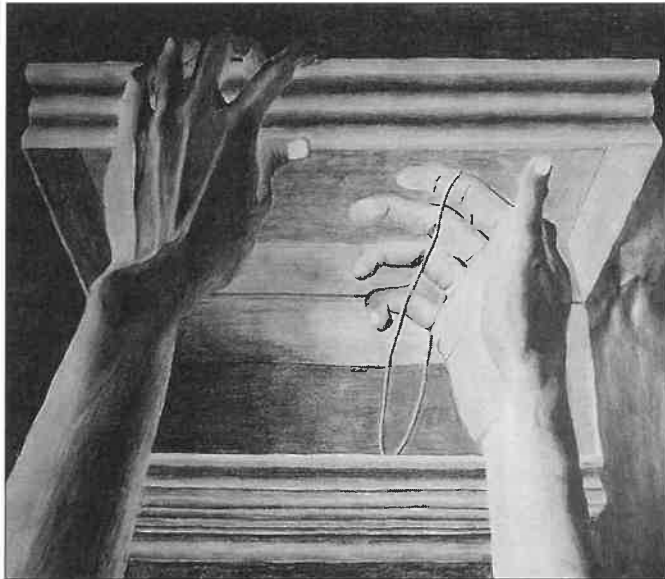
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ends of the street. Feeling like birds, we swooped down that street before heading back onto the main two-lane road that led to Martin Bluff Road.

Turning on Martin Bluff Road, we dodged cars and biked along the sides of the road. Calling encouragement, we flew down the brief stretch of that dangerous race-track. Finally, we reached our own neighborhood. The streets looked like crumpled paper that someone had failed to smooth out, but at least, normalcy did not cling to our skin here like the bittersweet, smothering breath of death. Here in this wasteland, the 80s lived with only a hint of what the 90s would bring. Biking around misfit Rainbow Brites who watched denim-clad Smurfs ride on tricycles and bikes and gossiped with the wisdom of teenagers, we three took on the personae of the Three Musketeers. Like the Three Musketeers, we had unique personalities yet we played together as the different characters in our neighborhood played their games with various outsiders. Murky Murks arrayed in somber,

grunge grays, punks with stiff mohawks, and the “normals” dressed in the style of the time together played games of basketball or football or chatted in the streets. The word “motley” described our neighborhood and us three best. Different yet alike, we three would ride together in that half-forgotten world we called heaven. Punks, retired neighbors, families with two-point-some-

thing kids, and couples that had no children lived hand in hand in this neighborhood where suburban rituals once reigned. We three shared a world of wonder along the road that ended only in reality. We shared a life in that fortress with its own hue of sunlight yellow in a neighborhood where eccentricities were the norm. Together, we experienced a wonderful sisterhood. ❖



**James Mark Merriman**  
*“Moving On,” Photography*



**Emily Cavett Taff**  
*“Waiting for Number 26,” Photography*

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## Uncle Bill

Trees swept over the deep river,  
Spanish moss hung from their branches  
To dip their dry tendrils to the cool water.  
A myriad of shape and colour,  
Still muted with the vivacious green of summer.  
Wondered my youthful mind  
Not yet mutated into a dictionary  
Of genus and species.

It was magic or perhaps just the nature of things  
That kept the plastic and fiberglass bowl  
From taking us all to the world of the fish  
We sought to bring to ours  
Hair-thin thread secured to a fiberglass pole  
Sent a worm sailing out over the open water  
Only to snap it back with a flick of his wrist.  
He handed me the fake stick and I sat waiting:  
The tug would come.

**Bill Anderson**  
Third Place, Poetry Contest

# Desert Rain

by Andrew Young

Honorable Mention, Short Story Contest

A dark figure strode steadily through the blistering heat, his form contrasting with the pale sands upon which he stepped. His action was determined, as though the fate of the world rested upon his reaching his destination. The man wore a black cloth that covered his body and a large-brimmed hat that covered his face sufficiently enough to prevent sunburn and wind damage, but still his trip had taken its toll on him. He had been walking for a hundred miles, mostly at night, but the closeness of his destination persuaded him to continue through the day. He hoped to be there by afternoon.

He looked up to the sky and saw Sol laughing at him. "Someone must have told you that I care," the man muttered under his breath. After climbing a sand dune the man saw a small town with many old wooden buildings. He breathed a sigh of relief when a person appeared at the door of one house and moved across the barely paved road to a two-story building that looked like it could be a town hall. He noticed a vulture picking apart the remains of some kind of rodent a few meters ahead. When he was about a meter away the bird finally took notice and screamed at him before flying up high into the air.

The man finally stepped onto the road that ran through the middle of town and connected it to another population center in the opposite direction. He looked at the buildings closer and saw the way the ugly wood was contaminated with sand grains. He hated this place already.

*Where is everyone? I wasn't seeing things when that person walked across.* The man was growing uneasy. He reached under the cloth and into his coat to grip the handle of his shotgun. He decided that the most logical place to go would be the saloon, so he stepped over in the run-down building and entered. He saw a man wiping the bar with a damp cloth, but only ghosts joined him.

"Where is everyone?" the man asked.

The bartender ignored him.

The man in black pulled his shotgun from his coat and pressed it against the temple of the bartender. "I hate games and puzzles. You will answer me now or I will paint you on the wall."

The bartender tried to appear calm, unaware of the

sweat that was building up around the tip of the barrel. "The people here don't like visitors. You are not welcome."

"I came here to meet a man named Stygian."

The bartender was incredibly tense. "Why would you want to see Stygian? He's just a wicked old man! And who are you anyway?"

The man's knuckle popped on his trigger finger, causing the bartender to flinch. "My name is Chamber. Q&A time is over. You tell me what is going on before I kill you."

"Please, señor, you don't understand."

A gunshot dropped the bartender to the floor, but it was a shot to the side that bent him over. Chamber

looked to his left and saw a man wearing a cloak. The newcomer was holding a duck gun in his right hand. From what Chamber could see of the man, he was covered in rusty metal armor under

his cloak. He had a white beard that reached his chest.

"I am Stygian. You must be this Chamber I've heard so much about."

"Just what have you heard about me?" He hated the vagueness of talking to people like this. They always tried to be so dramatic.

"You are the most notable of the young ones. I have heard much of your abilities and your unmatched intellect." He paused for a moment. "If you would be so kind as to come to my grotto I will show you what you have been searching for."

"You are the one who will change this world," spoke Stygian.

"I'm glad that we can be a bit more straightforward. Now what the hell are you talking about?"

Stygian threw his duck gun on the table in his kitchen and began to peel off armor. "The time is coming near. Man has worn out his welcome on Earth and our planet is preparing to exterminate us. The only way that we can prevent such a thing is to change the way that man thinks. You have the power to do this."

"My responsibility is to save the world? That's ridiculous."

"Not the world, my friend," Stygian said. "The world will live on without us. It is our species that needs to be saved."

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*"The world will live on without us. It is our species that needs to be saved."*

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Chamber was growing angry. He had walked through an unending desert to meet a senile old militant know-it-all who was looking for the next freakin' messiah. He got up and turned toward the door without a word. As he made his way he noticed the door moving on its hinges. It closed and locked before he could reach it.

Stygian continued, "You may not believe me, but it is all true. The people in the town are convinced that some mythological god is going to save them before they kill themselves, but it just isn't going to happen."

"Why are they hiding?" Chamber asked.

"Because they are afraid of you."

"How do they know who I am?"

"They don't."

Chamber tried the same thing that he tried on the bartender. He pulled his shotgun on Stygian and demanded better answers. His shotgun immediately fell apart and piled itself on the dusty floor.

"Would you like to know how I did that?"

Chamber stood, baffled. "I suppose I should ask."

"It's magick. Anyone can use it, but only a select few can control it as well as you or me."

"I've never used it."

"We need to change that."

Chamber sat in a chair and listened to Stygian's story about the beginning of humanity and the possible end. In four years, in the year 2001, the Earth would decide. That is how long Chamber had to make an impression that would last forever. Stories of war were told and old legends were made real, such as the land of Camelot, where magick had its beginnings.

Stygian told Chamber, "You will learn to use your mind to change your environment. You can already destroy a man by thinking him dead."

"How do you know this?"

"You killed the bartender this afternoon," Stygian said.

"You were the one that shot him, not me!"

"Who do you think asked me to?"

Chamber looked at the floor as he thought about what Stygian had told him. "How do you know about me?"

"Knowledge of your accomplishments has been passed to me by word of mouth," Stygian said. "I know all about the assassination and the other little missions you have gone on. I'm impressed. Not bad for not using any magick."

"And you still haven't told me how to use these powers. Should I be trained?"

"No. It'll come to you when you're looking down the barrel of a gun. You are going to have to be open to what you feel, and less to what you 'know'."

Chamber still had one reservation. "What should I do about the townspeople?"

"Ignore them."

"But how? It looks like they are going to kill me. I keep expecting someone to bust in with a gun and wax us."

Stygian laughed. "You aren't really afraid of them, are you? They are frightened worms. They cannot hurt themselves, much less you."

Chamber stood and surveyed the unexpectedly clean room for a moment. "Thanks for your help, but I feel that I must be going."

"In a hurry?"

"Yes."

Stygian wondered. "Where may I ask?"

Chamber reassembled his gun and strapped it under his coat as he stepped to the door. "I don't know. But anywhere is a place to run to from here. I might as well get out now before something happens."

"What makes you think that something bad is going to happen?"

"Nothing. Nothing at all."

As Chamber walked, he saw skies cloud up as they began to play with lightning, arcing each other back and forth. As the rain began to fall he observed the little circles that appeared all over the sand, clearing the road and making it visible once more.

The rain increased to the point at which Chamber could not see, but he felt more relaxed that no one could see him. He turned toward the back exit of the town and walked out, hoping to reach California by the next day. He risked a look back at the town and caught a glimpse of a bolt of lightning striking a gas tank. The explosion brought down the adjacent building and started a fire that swept through the town, unaware of the rain and the fact that it was supposed to have been put out by the rain. Chamber laughed to himself and kept walking. ❖



**Emily Cavett Taff**

*"Restaurant Window," Photography*

# A Life Others Wanted

by Veronika Viner

Second Place, Short Story Contest

**I**n the predawn light of a Saturday morning, Marisa's three daughters crept from their dark bedrooms down the creaking stairs. Thick, earth-colored carpet cushioned the sound of their feet as they walked through the large living room into the kitchen. Marietta flicked on the light switch over the kitchen sink as her two sisters entered. A single, soft fluorescent light bulb flickered on and lit only the small area around the sink as a grown woman dressed in jeans and a t-shirt entered the kitchen. She opened a nearby wooden cabinet and pulled out a bag of Maxwell's Roasted Coffee and a box of coffee filters. Mechanically, Marisa prepared the coffee and placed it in the coffee maker. Liana came to the side of her mother and leaned against her wearily. Placing the bag of coffee down, Marisa touched her daughter's forehead and cheeks. Then, she looked into her daughter's eyes and saw the tell-tale red veins. Marisa said, "Your eyes are red, and your cheeks are flushed. You must have a fever. Are you coughing? Breathe."

Placing her hand on her daughter's chest, she listened for wheezing but heard no soft hiss or wheeze. Marisa reached into a cabinet and pulled out a bottle of Tylenol's cold and fever syrup. Pouring her daughter a tablespoon, she gave the medication to her daughter and gently led her to the table. Feeling cold metal on her warm skin, Liana pulled her mother's hand close to her and noted the gold ring. She asked, "Where did Father buy such a hideous ring, Mother?"

Gently pulling her hand free from her daughter's loose grasp, she laughed briefly and answered. "He never told me but just gave it to me on our wedding day."

"Where is your engagement ring?" asked Marietta. "You're only wearing one ring."

"Well, your father and I were never engaged so he never gave me an engagement ring. Besides, I never wanted one."

Lucia asked, "If you were never engaged, did you elope?"

Laughing at the idea, Marisa answered, "No we never eloped. Your father would never have done that. He was

forty when I married him, not an impetuous pup, as he would say. Besides, I never actually met your father in person until the month before we married."

Liana asked, "Then, how did you meet?"

Marisa threw up her hands, laughed, and said, "Alright, alright, I give up. I'll tell you how your father and I met."

Before motioning for her daughters to sit around the large kitchen table, Marisa plugged in the coffee maker and started the machine. Then, she pulled out a chair and sat surrounded by her three children. Pushing a stray hair back and fingering one of her six earrings, she slipped back to that day where a dare created this current destiny.

"My younger sister Marie-Claire and I were looking through the dating ads in the back of a foreign newspaper we usually never read. We found two ads. One was by an American engineer in his mid-thirties looking for a kind of pen pal. The other was by a Parisian male interested in adventure and excitement. My sister and I dared each other to write to one of those two men. We

flipped a coin, and she won. She took the Parisian. I ended up with the American engineer. I was sorry at the time to have lost the bet, because we both wanted the Parisian man."

Marietta interrupted, "Did Marie-Claire marry the Parisian? Who exactly was he?"

Marisa replied, "Marie-Claire never married the Parisian, and I never knew who he was because my sister refused to tell me anything about him and never sent him a letter after the first one. I never knew why. However, I kept my word and I started to correspond with this American. He was living in Maine when I first wrote to him. At that time, I was part of the national French ballet touring company. I worked for the ballet because I wanted to travel, and that was the only way I knew to escape my mother's insisting that I go to a secretarial school and become a secretary."

Shuddering for emphasis, Marisa paused. Her children laughed at her exaggerated repulsion, but she did not tell them how their father had sent her an engagement ring and seven hundred dollars in order to come to

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*A person can only go forward and must never look back with regrets; otherwise, she thought, you'll never be able to let go of anything.*

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the States and marry, but she had sent it back to him. She and Marie-Claire had laughed together over that though her sister had suggested she keep the money, because he was a fool to send a stranger money and a ring in the mail. She was a fool not to have listened to her heart.

Smoothing her hair back, Marisa revealed three tiny birthstone earrings that gleamed in the soft light. A wooden cuckoo clock sang the time as a small bird entered and left its half-shuttered home six times. She was like that oak bird. She had traveled the world but had never actually gone anywhere. She crept in and out of her hole at a consistent rate but was stuck there in the darkness. For now and forever, she thought. Famous last words that would cripple the eagle and never allow it to fly again. Glancing up into the eyes of her children, Marisa sighed silently and continued her story.

"I was young when I first corresponded with your father. I was only nineteen. We exchanged letters for five years before I actually saw him. By that time, we were both ready to settle down. He had settled in a small Navy town whose industry was shipbuilding. When my company next went to the States, I stayed behind. Though I was nervous and worried about meeting a man I had never met, I left that plane with a false countenance of confidence. I met your father in an airport as he held up a giant sign with my name emblazoned on it."

Lucia piped, "Was he nervous?"

Liana inquired, "Did you fall in love with him at first sight?"

"You'll find out soon enough." Marisa said before continuing her story. "His face had a worried smile on it. Your father was more nervous than I was. He was afraid I was not going to come. We dated for about a month before we married one October morning with only a pastor and his wife to witness the holy matrimony of two young people. As a fairy tale would say, ours was a quiet love."

Noting Liana's paleness, Marisa stopped and felt her forehead. Murmuring softly, she smoothed her daughter's hair and led her to the couch. After making her daughter comfortable, Marisa whispered, "I'll tell you the rest after you sleep. The rest will help you." Waiting until she saw her daughter fall back asleep, Marisa touched Liana's hand for a moment. Then she went back into the kitchen and told her other two daughters that Liana would be better after she got some sleep.

Feeling more somber, she continued her story. "He taught me English because I knew only the British English, which I was taught in school and had almost forgotten. Though I had corresponded with your father for five years, I had difficulty understanding him. A letter can be a very good mask for a person. When your grandmother learned of my marriage, she was happy for me. She had wanted all of us girls to marry and have children."

So, she continued silently, no one asked what happened after the happily ever after. Here's what happened after the ending. The woman forgot my dreams of traveling around the world and seeing the wonders of Asia. She never bothered to write to her former ballet friends and forgot those yearnings of youth. She continued to write her family but essentially broke all ties with a life she loved. Working on word search puzzles, never looking at travel magazines, she lived. The St. Christopher, the patron saint of travelers, medallion was stored in a jewelry box to be forgotten. She knew she would never be able to achieve them. So the maiden settled down and married an average American who proudly wore the status of middle class.

Shaking her head, Marisa got up and checked to make sure the coffee was done. Glancing at her right hand, she saw the heavy gold ring that bore her down and felt the three tiny earrings that constantly gave her joy. If given a choice to do it all over again, she would have made the same choices. Her children were worth any price, any price at all. A person can only go forward and must never look back with regrets; otherwise, she thought, you'll never be able to let go of anything. A person cannot correct all of his or her mistakes but live with them. That is the way of life.

As if stirring from a dream, her two young ones shook themselves and poured cereal and milk into bowls before commencing to eat breakfast. Padding silently, Marisa walked toward the other window in the room, which was hidden by flowered curtains. Pushing them aside gently, she looked toward the east and saw the first rays of the gilded sun. The light stretched across the heavens and tinted the dark sky a myriad of pale pinks, bright blues, and faint oranges. The grass was covered with newborn drops of fallen tears. One lone bird, a mocking bird, chirped in the shadows of the trees. Placing her hand on the cool glass window pane, similar to the way she had pledged her citizenship to the United States of America, Marisa looked upon the world with sad yearning. She murmured a few half-forgotten words. "I pledge allegiance." A binding oath and love kept her a prisoner here.

A sharp sound from the cuckoo clock jarred her completely to her present situation as the tiny wooden bird fluttered in and out of its cage, which was its home, seven times. Turning around slowly, she allowed the soft cotton curtain to slide past her fingertips and walked away from the window. Soon, her husband would be awake. He would enter the room and turn on the other lights so that the glaring, artificial light of the light bulbs blocked out the welcoming light of dreams. A new day had begun, and she had no time to sigh over past wishes. Breakfast had to be prepared. ❖

# Stumm Puppenspiel

by Andrew Young

Third Place, Short Story Contest

**R**oy stepped onto the rock-hard grass on the hellish remains of the school in which he had just apathetically begun to fester. The first day is always a rough one, what with all the bozos and igmos of high school devoted solely to the demise of any person who had not suffered with them for at least a term. Roy was eager to join in the dance of the Russian Roulette stupid dog trick that was clustering around him at a steady pace, but felt that he would be looked upon as ridiculous if he did so, especially so soon. This was understandable. In a place like Puppenspiel High anything goes. If he had tried to hang with a crowd of coats not yet ironed he could be starched quicker than he could burn his shirt. And he didn't have a monkey to launch if a jersey tried to fold him. He decided that it would be best if he stayed grey for a while and let the rest of the school warm up to him.

*"La da dee da, la da dee da da da dee.  
La da dee da, la da dee da da da dee."*

The students were singing and dancing a ritual in synchronicity, all in circles to face each other wooden self like a mirror that only shows what one thinks should be shown. As Roy passed between circles of oozing conscious and benignly malignant dis ease, he attempted not to disturb any groups by stepping too close or turning his hat around. He feared that he could cause heads to explode, and this is always an undesirable thing to see on the news. As he entered the door to the ceiling he observed the floor of reality being churned into a facist being of animated vomit. This was where he would go to pick up his schedule. A nazi creature of a block of ape stood before Roy like a stone slate, giving off the mental aura of a generic hammer.

"So you're Re-Re-Roy..." the quasi-retarded creature spoke.

"Yes, I need to pick up my schedule."

"Okay. Let's look for it." The Satan-spawned boil jutted his pencil-thin elbows to the same low altitude of his shoulders and hung his hands down as he danced over

to the computing device that would surely spell doom for Roy if it were computing his schedule.

"Are you okay?" Roy asked.

The netherthought ignored him, having not understood the query, and read out the schedule. "First you'll have Thought Rehabilitation, the Reformation of Impulses and Conductor Processing. You'll then have an hour-long lunch break. After the break you will have Fitting In, Being Perfect, Liking Yourself, and Giving In."

"What are these classes? I've never heard of them."

"This is a school for special curs. These are merely advanced versions of the classes that you call English and Math and such. You'll get it in 23.7 days."

Roy backed out of the bloodflow and realized that although he had been searching for red, he had green. How oppressing. The circumventing anomaly was pulsing around him like a white dwarf and he felt that this school was the physical incarnation of a sulfuric acid bus trip to Purgatory. And he was on an aisle seat next to the guy who always retched on cue halfway there. This was sure to affect English significantly and make the pocket smell humorously for a while.

He ventured into his first class. It had all of the jollity of a coke-filled feather-duster maid and had a contagious aspect, like that of a song he hated. A mike of a bruiser was ruing around with some fearleaders in one corner. The rest of the class was comatose, but the tuning fork at the front of the room was violently spewing forth useless information without any dis-

cretion as to his laser speed.

All of Roy's other classes were like this. They were somehow devoted to making the students happy, but really didn't get absorbed. Jocular types with money or family in governmental power were allowed to remain with high grades because, although the brainwashing was ineffective at best, the subjects were wiped clean to begin with. Roy had already been forced to cancer a few people who zombified their way toward him and was not happy with the turn of events that were just a Broadway musical without a soundtrack or talent. Disallusionate creatures of unsettled reality were in a line in the front

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*He ventured into his first class. It had all of the jollity of a coke-filled feather-duster maid and had a contagious aspect, like that of a song he hated.*

---

kicking and falling like the best of none.

The last class was cancelled so that an assembly could be ruined by the Marionette. This must have been the advanced term for incompetent guy who runs the whole miserable accident. Or principal. The auditorium was packed with meaty plastic microwave dinners of chicken filth pie and Roy had to feel the radiation of stupidity sink into his every molecule and laughingly pull his IQ from his head to leave it under its pillow for a penny a night.

The auditorium came to a hush as the Marionette came on stage. It was the hach that had given Roy his schedule. "For those of you who are new here, I am Stumm Puppenspiel. I am the Marionette of the school. Any comments or questions you may have can be directed to me in a slow even speaking voice. I care about you all and can help you get through any, any, anything. I apologize. Sometimes my mouth runs faster than my words can be given to me. The transfer rate through the strings in my back is only 14.4 kbps.

"Anyway, I just wanted to tell you that you are all very talented individuals and that I have high expectations of you. You are leaders of tomorrow and the future of the past. Your neighbors will be too, unless they are old. Here we have taught you that popularity is the key to success. We have also shown you that money is everything and hypocrisy makes the world work. Don't let those thought-loving freaks take your show. You have earned everything that you can ever need by having rich parents."

Roy watched the Marionette move bouncingly across the stage and shove horse manure into the crowd as though he was feeding coal to a train engine. The solid spiderweb ceiling of dead tendrils rose higher to his mind, feeding his intimidation and pulling band-aid strings. He wanted to explode ink all over the deteriorating crowd and bread for the door to escape onto the front porch of concrete sewage. Then he would have a chance of getting home before the crowd was to ignite and follow on left foot.

Stumm noticed Roy get up and begin to move toward the door. "Halt! You must remain seated until the assembly is over!"

"I can't. I'm ill," Roy stated, refusing to profess who was really sick. "I have to go home."

"You can go see the Nerse," Stumm said. "It's right across the way."

"Okay, thanks." Roy couldn't get home, but he could at least pry his flesh from the worms that were being delivered by air from the Marionette's mouth. He moved across the street and through a dead grassy area to find the sunken hole of a building that was supposed to cure

ails, but looked like it was one instead. Roy walked in and asked for the nerse.

After waiting for several minutes, the nerse called him in to be examined. Inside the exploitation room was a wheel-cart with many shelves, each holding either a fancy plastic observation and rewrite device, or a primitive surgical-steel tool used to eviscerate and torrentify. "What is the problem?" the nurse asked.

"I have a stomach ache."

The beefy pig of a wench reached onto the wheel cart and picked up an odd stick that ended in a funnel shape, tip pointing outward. "Turn your ear toward me."

"Is that for taking temperature?" Roy asked before hearing a disgusting whine come from the device. The tip began to spin.

"It'll kill your tummy ache."

Roy jumped from the table and ran through the door. The place was like a labyrinth and he couldn't remember where he had come in from. It was as if the walls were relocating to trip him up. Smelling fresh anti-corrosion paint dripping from the ceiling like antifreeze from a wrecked car, he dove into a room that looked promising. He was greeted by a dozen students strapped to tables. This was undesirable. Withering masses of grey matter pulsed on the razor floor with tubes leading to the half corpses. Some were sitting upright, though, and were dry-hacking their lungs out of their collapsed chests.

The door across the room said exit, so he cold-footed over to it. He then burst forth from the building and hit the mush of the entrails-like ground outside. As he looked up he saw the entire school surrounding him, a swarm of demons preparing to feed. Puppenspiel walked over to him and looked down calmly.

"What is your problem, young man?"

"What is yours? This place is horrifying."

"We are trying to teach a valuable lesson. Do you not understand?"

"No," Roy said.

The Marionette walked to the students and made sure that there was some room between them and Roy. "We'll show you, then."

Circus music filled the sulfer air and the students mindlessly began to sway back and to. The Marionette began to dance in a Broadway style and was singing.

*"We are profoundly perverse  
We have no sence of a curse  
That gives in to be  
We are in love with book-smarts  
We are in hate with our hearts  
We value conformity*

*The end will be caused by those  
who think as they please  
The past will be not recreated by thoughts  
such as these*

*We have to make it perfect  
For those who lack intellect  
This is what we say  
We have to make styrofoam  
Of all that has come to be known  
We will kill our brain*

*We live in collective conscious of cerebrate waste  
We live in a world of unified taste, utter disgrace,  
ain't it great?"*

Roy was appalled. The students began to cacophonize in monotony with their leader. As they continued, the sky became black and the moon and sun arranged themselves perfectly in that sea of heavy sky to focus like

spotlights on the ritual. Roy couldn't help but watch the show. His feet were screwing nails through themselves to the ground and keeping him still. As he stood he felt a piercing whir drive haphazardly into his skull. He screamed, feeling the effects of the drill, and then the format device planting animals in his head.

The world was grinding itself up and gulping itself straight to frozen hell, belching forth a reality of perfection and provision of needs. The swirls were converging on an image of nothing, but not black. The most profound sensation was a hugh white, engulfing his every thought and deleting it. Warm urine replaced his thoughts. He was twitching something fierce when the blackness hit him and engulfed all of the synthetic reality. Suddenly he was back in the real word and in the ranks of the rehumanized.

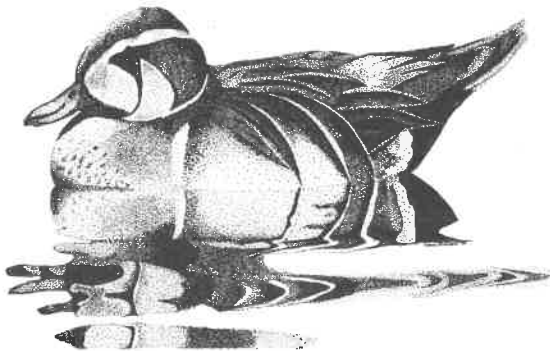
*"La da dee da, la da dee da da da dee.  
La da dee da, la da dee da da da dee." ❖*

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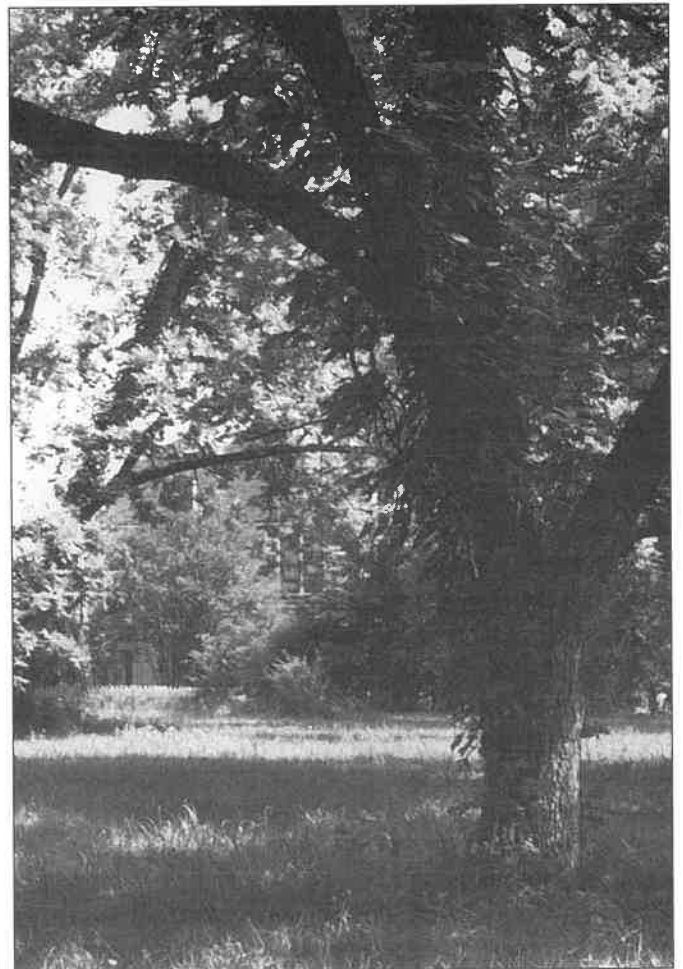
## Through the Window

I peer through the glass and into their brotherhood.  
Laughing, they lob the football back and forth.  
Travis's black Chrysler Lazer with the red stripe again  
parked in the driveway.  
They run after each other as if hatred fueled them,  
But when they stand, friendship and laughter show  
through.  
They play hard, but it is just play.  
Years moved them apart and I watched their bonds  
disintegrate.  
Still, when I think of them, I see them through the win-  
dow.

**Andrea Cooper**



**Laura Elizabeth Fleeman**  
*"On the Lake," Stipple*



**Emily Cavett Taff**  
*"Orchard," Photography*  
Third Place, Art Contest

# Contributors' Notes

**William Harland Anderson** came to MSMS from Hillcrest Christian High School in Jackson. He plans to attend the University of Mississippi and major in computer science. His favorite authors include Steven King, J. R. R. Tolkien, and William Faulkner.

**Joseph Anderson, Jr.** of Tchula, Mississippi, attended S.V. Marshall High School before MSMS. He plans to study computer science at Harvard University. Joseph is most influenced by Ms. Jones, G.M. Anatoly Karpov, and Essential Connection. He states, "Put God first, and all will be cool!"

**Daniel H. Austin** is from Grenada, Mississippi, where he attended Grenada High School before coming to MSMS. Dan serves as the Art Editor of *Southern Voices* this year and has a special interest in computer animation. Dan confirms that "You only have a few true friends. They're the soul mates you don't marry."

**Christina Lynne Beard** joined the MSMS community from Columbus High School via Gulfport, Brandon, Belgium, and Ft. Worth, Texas. She plans to attend Louisiana State University and major in mass communications and theatre. Jewel and Michael Crichton have influenced Christi's writing. Her personal philosophy is "Princess, do you want to flap your wings and fly away from here?" from Liz Phair.

**Thomas William Butler**, formerly a student at Murrah High School in Jackson, looks forward to attending the University of Southern Mississippi with emphasis in computer science. He looks to Beck Hansen and *The Cat in the Hat* for inspiration. Thomas offers a quotation from Calvin Johnson: "They say if a hundred businessmen want to do something, that something is legal... In America we live by the golden rule; them that have the gold makes the rules. And don't forget to blame the victim."

**Andrea Cooper**, a senior, comes to MSMS from Canton Academy in Canton, Mississippi. She will attend Mississippi State University next year, majoring in wildlife biology. S.E. Hinton and Shel Silverstein are her favorite published authors. This daddy's girl often quotes herself: "I am the essence of irony." When asked what her source of inspiration is, Andrea simply replies, "Life, love and friends."

**Holly Jean Covas** transferred to MSMS from Northeast Lauderdale in Meridian, Mississippi. She looks forward to a career in microbiology or pre-med at Mississippi State University. Her inspirations include life, Javan, Ashley Warlick, and Emerson. "In the depth of winter, I finally learned within me lay an invincible summer." — Albert Camus.

**Ben H. Davidson** attended Columbus High School before coming to MSMS and looks forward to attending the University of North Carolina. Influential writers for him include Mark Twain and William Faulkner. Among his favorite books is *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. "Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die." — Dave Matthews

**Molly Davis** attended Washington School in Greenville, Mississippi, for ten years before coming to MSMS. Though she has no idea what major she will pursue, she is excited about attending the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa next fall. She takes inspiration from every source that she is given, including her dad's record collection and her mom's bookshelf. She especially enjoys the lyricist/musician Joni Mitchell and the novelist/short fiction writer Ellen Gilchrist.

**Chastity Hope Eliser** joined the MSMS community from Natchez and Trinity Episcopal Day School. Her major interest in further education lies at Mississippi State University where she will study psychology. Inspirations in her work include Monet, Greg Iles, Dennis Covington, and Ayn Rand's *Anthem*. "There are times in life when you just have to dance like no one's watching and love like it will never hurt." —taken from a country song.



**Andrea L. Cooper**  
"The Man in the Post," Photography

**Laura Elizabeth Fleeman** of Rolling Fork, Mississippi, was a student of Sharkey-Issaquena Academy before coming to MSMS. She plans to attend MSU next fall.

**Sandra Lynn Foster**, a native of Meridian, Mississippi, attended Perry Central High School before MSMS. She intends to study linguistics at Mississippi College and follow a career with Wycliffe Bible Translators. She enjoys the works of Ray Boltz and Josh McDowell, and has been most influenced by the Bible. Her favorite passage is "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." —Philippians 1:21.

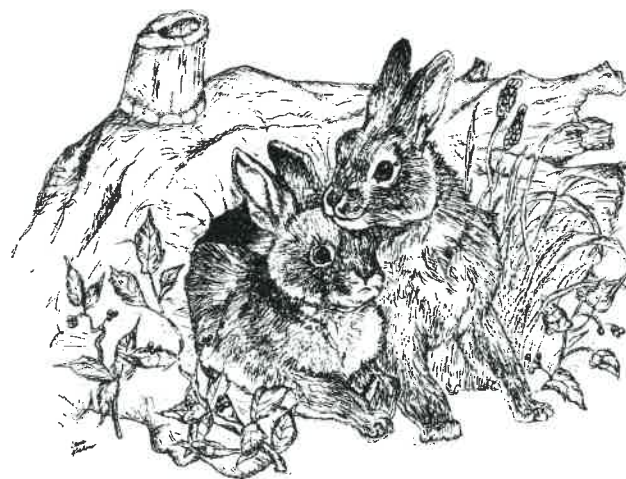
**Andrea Janell Godshaw** of Runnelstown, Mississippi, attended Perry Central High School before MSMS, and she plans to major in communications at William Carey College before pursuing a career in public relations. She enjoys the work of Thomas Kinkade.

**Nga T. Le** is from Pass Christian, Mississippi, where she attended Pass Christian High School. Her favorite artist is Vincent Van Gogh, and her words of wisdom are "The best things in life are free."

**James Mark Merriman** of Jackson, Mississippi, attended Forest Hill High School before MSMS. He plans to attend Tulane University and major in architecture. He enjoys the work of Kimon Nicolaidis, Pierre-Auguste Renoir, and Penelope Fitzgerald. He lives by the Herman Melville quotation, "There is no quality in this world that is not what it is except merely by contrast. Nothing exists in itself."



**Andrea L. Cooper**  
"Lizard Looks," *Photography*



**James Nickerson**  
"Home Sweet Home," *Pen and Ink*

**Katy Marie Muir** attended Our Lady Academy in Bay St. Louis before coming to MSMS. She intends to major in business information systems at Mississippi State University. Some of Katy's most loved works include the plays of Tennessee Williams, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, *Jane Eyre*, and *The Pocket Guide to UNIX*. Katy offers this quotation: "I could have been you."

**Meagan E. Newman** is from Pass Christian High School in Pass Christian where she developed a love for Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Meagan's plans include attending Louisiana State University and majoring in business and mass communication.

**Gina Rae Newsom** is from Tiplersville where she formerly attended Walnut High School. Gina plans to enroll either at The University of Alabama or The University of Mississippi where she will study pre-law. Her personal belief is "Everyone gets lucky at least once, but it takes talent to get lucky twice."

**James Nickerson**, from Aberdeen, Mississippi, went to Aberdeen High School before coming to MSMS. He plans to attend Brigham Young University and pursue a career in computer science. James's favorite writers and artists include Robert Jordan, J.R.R. Tolkien, and James Thurber. His philosophy is "Never judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes. Then you are a mile away, and you have his shoes."

**Shital Patel** is a resident of Jackson, Mississippi. Before coming to MSMS, she attended Northwest Rankin High School. She has made plans to pursue the field of pre-medicine at Yale University. Her favorite artists are Monet, van Gogh, and Pablo Picasso. Her personal philosophy is "Imagination is more important than knowledge." —Albert Einstein.

**Catherine Sewall** comes originally from Clarksdale, Mississippi, where she attended Clarksdale High. Though she does not know what she wants to major in yet, she plans to attend Mississippi State University. Her single most influential person is Anthony Burgess, and her words of wisdom are "Adhere to your own act and congratulate yourself if you have done something strange and extravagant and broken the monotony of a decorous age." —Ralph Waldo Emerson.

**Jennifer Kim Stierwalt** is from Columbus, Mississippi, and formerly attended New Hope High School. She plans to go to the University of Alabama and pursue a major in chemical engineering. Her philosophy is "Living lives of boisterous desperation" from "Life in America" by James Autry. Her favorite authors are Maya Angelou and Walt Whitman.

**Emily Cavett Taff** is from Jackson, Mississippi, where she attended Murrah High School before coming to MSMS. She plans to enroll at The University of Georgia and perhaps major in art. Her favorite author and the woman she admires most is Eudora Welty.

**Angela Carol Taylor**, from Ocean Springs, attended Ocean Springs High School before coming to MSMS. She has not yet decided what she wishes to do in life but has made the choice to attend Mississippi State University next year. Her favorite authors are E. E. Cummings and Alice Walker. Her own belief is "the more you know, the more disturbing everything is." —Dr. Leroy Wenstrom.

**LaShunda Renee Thompson** is from Greenwood, Mississippi, and she plans to attend Xavier University in the fall. Her favorite writers are Bebe Moore Campbell and Alice Walker, who wrote one of her most influential books, *Possessing the Secrets of Joy*. She joins John Milton in affirming, "As good almost kill a man as kill a good book."

**Amber Renee van Vlyman** is from Natchez, Mississippi, where she attended Natchez High School. She plans to earn a degree in fine arts at Parsons School of Design. Her most influential artist is Edgar Degas. Her favorite piece of art, which has had the most influence on her own art, is "Dancers" by Edgar Degas.

**Veronika Viner**, a senior, transferred to MSMS from Gautier High School in Gautier, Mississippi. Veronika will attend Millsaps College in the fall where she plans to major in biology with an emphasis in pre-med. She hopes to minor in foreign languages. Veronika has a firm and positive outlook on life and affirms that "Life is a dance. If you falter or fall, life will go on because the show must go on."

**Jessica Renee Walker** formerly attended Pisgah High School in Brandon. Although she is uncertain as to the college she will attend, she has microbiology in mind as a major. William Shakespeare and Stephen Crane are two of her most influential writers. "When it occurs to a man that Nature does not regard him as important, and She feels She would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that there are no bricks and no temple." —Stephen Crane.

**Laura Elaine West** came to MSMS from Natchez High School in Natchez. She intends to major in English or journalism, but she is not sure which university she will attend. Jane Austen and Emily Dickinson are two of her favorite authors. "Don't fear you reams; it's easier that it seems." —Fiona Apple

**Adam G. Williams** comes from Woodland Hills Academy in Jackson. His future plans are to attend Johnston and Wales where he will major in culinary arts. His favorite works include Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*. "At last Vulture was sent to plead with Sky, and to soften his heart with a song of the suffering of the songs of men." —Chinua Achebe.

**Andrew Young**, a senior at MSMS, previously attended Caledonia High School in Caledonia, Mississippi. He plans to attend Mississippi University for Women and major in commercial music. Andrew's personal philosophy can be summed up in a quotation by Jimi Haha: "This is not Hell/ This is purgatory/ Caught here in limbo/ I.Q. of a dim bulb/ How many gods does it take?/ To screw in the likes of me?"



**James Nickerson**  
"Eat More Marriot!" Pen and Ink



*Southern Voices* is a magazine of creative works by students at the Mississippi School for Mathematics and Science

P.O. Box W-1627, Columbus, Mississippi 39701

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<<http://www.msms.doe.k12.ms.us>>