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A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

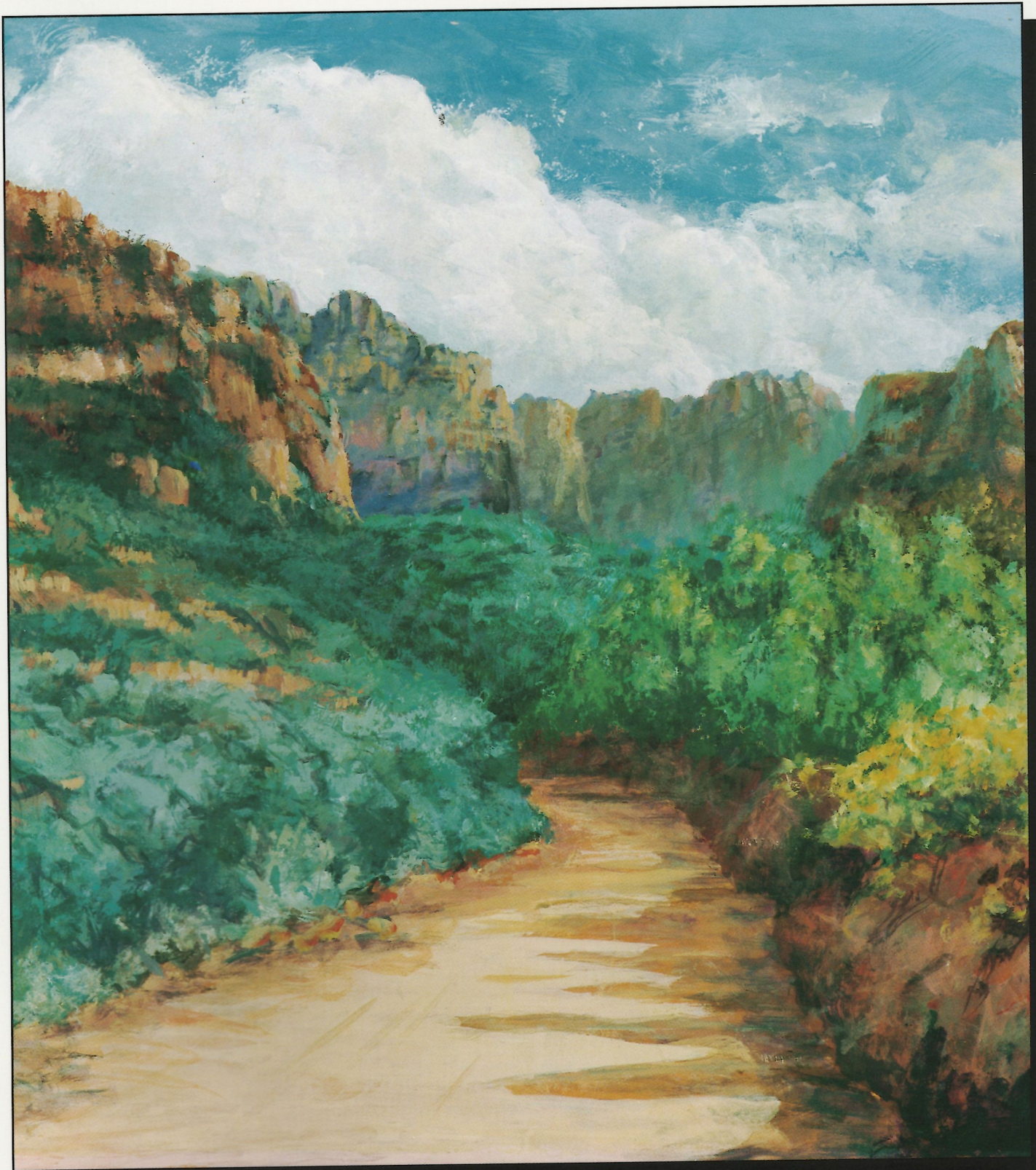
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NUMBER 1

FALL/WINTER 1998

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A J o u r n a l O f W e s t e r n O k l a h o m a

W E S T V I E W

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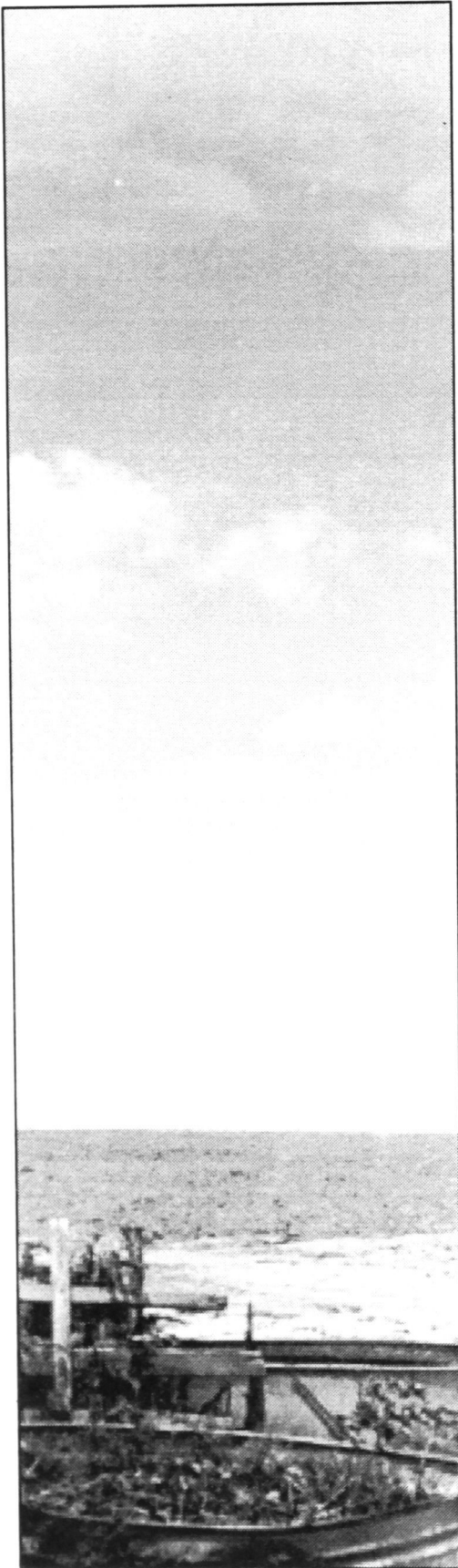
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Photograph by Richard Garrity

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2. Submitted artwork should be suitable for black and white reproduction. Work should be no larger than 8.5" x 14". However, photographs or slides of larger work may be submitted. Submitted artwork with a SASE will be returned.
3. We accept and enjoy formal verse, free verse, and prose poems.
4. Include a brief biographical sketch for our contributor's notes.
5. We welcome submissions on a 3.5" disk formatted for IBM or Macintosh. Please include a hard copy of your submission.
6. Submissions and correspondence may be sent to:
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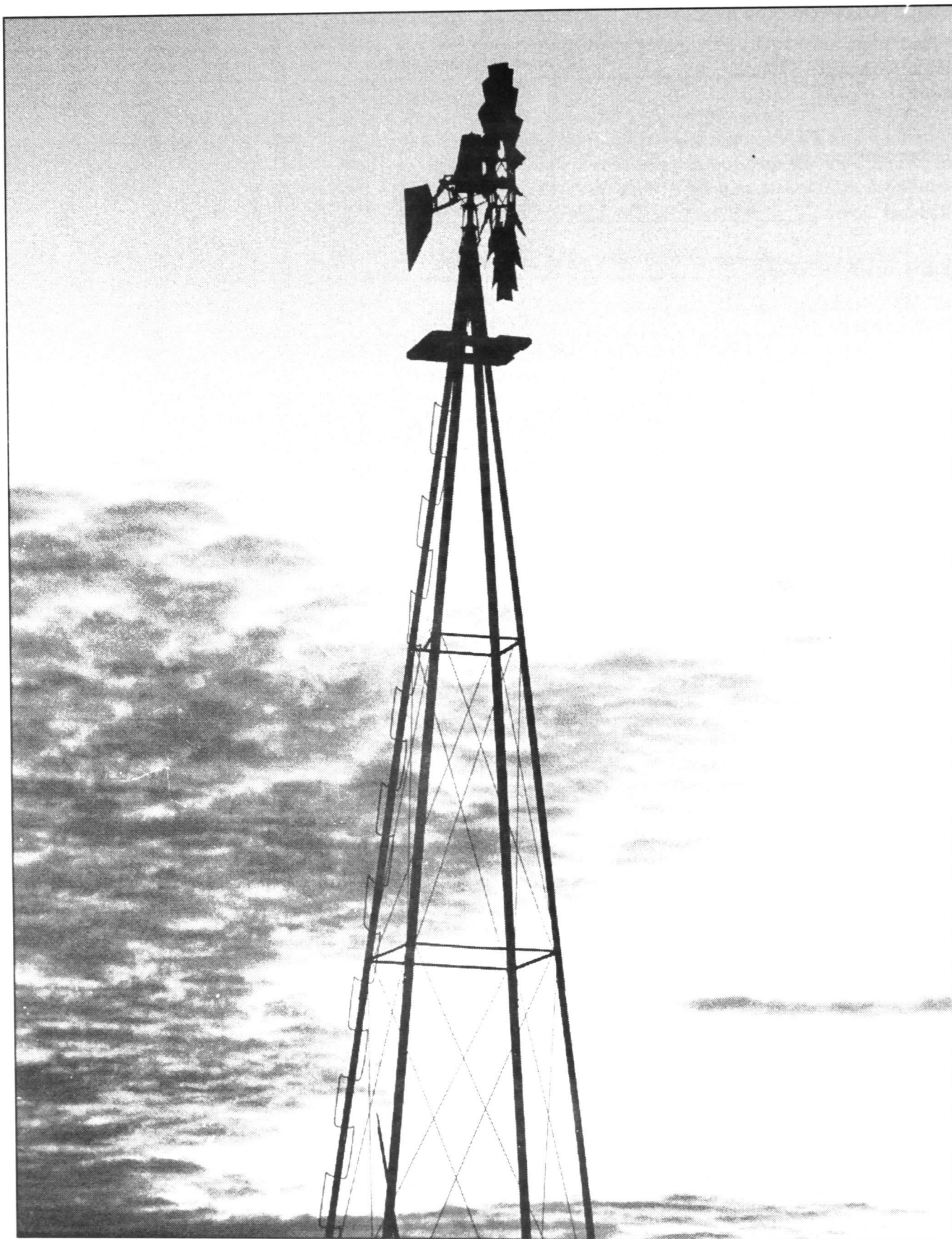
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* Cover painting, *Sedona Trail*, is of mountains near Sedona, Arizona by Kim Pankhurst.

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Photograph by Steve Lounsbury

Early Weatherford, 1898-1919

by Vonda McPhearson with John Donley
excerpted by Joyce Stoffers
from Chapter Two of *Weatherford, Oklahoma: 1898-1998*

Before examining the origins of Weatherford, it is important to remember that prior to its founding, there was an earlier nearby settlement of homesteads, "the Missouri Settlement," organized in 1894 in the northeast corner of Washita county, about five miles south of the future town of Weatherford. The school founded there, "the Missouri School," opened in 1896, and continued educating students until its closing in 1952. Moreover, early settlers there, such as the Auxier family, later became residents of Weatherford.

As with many towns, Weatherford owes its beginnings to the expansion of the railroads. When the Choctaw, Oklahoma, and Gulf Railroad moved west from Geary, it selected the route along Big Deer Creek and Little Deer Creek to avoid the higher hills which would have made the grading of the road bed more difficult. The town that would be situated at this westernmost point would become the terminus of the railroad.

As for the founding of Weatherford proper, the townsite manager, Beeks Erick, chose the site for the town and John W. McLoud, "General Solicitor in charge of town-site," purchased four tracts of the original townsite in July, 1898. The company then sold 250 acres of land which they had platted into town lots. About \$40,000 worth of permanent improvements had been made in the grading of streets, the building of a permanent bridge across Deer Creek, and the placing of a dam across the creek to ensure an abundant water supply. The plat was filed at the Custer Register of Deeds on August 15, 1898.

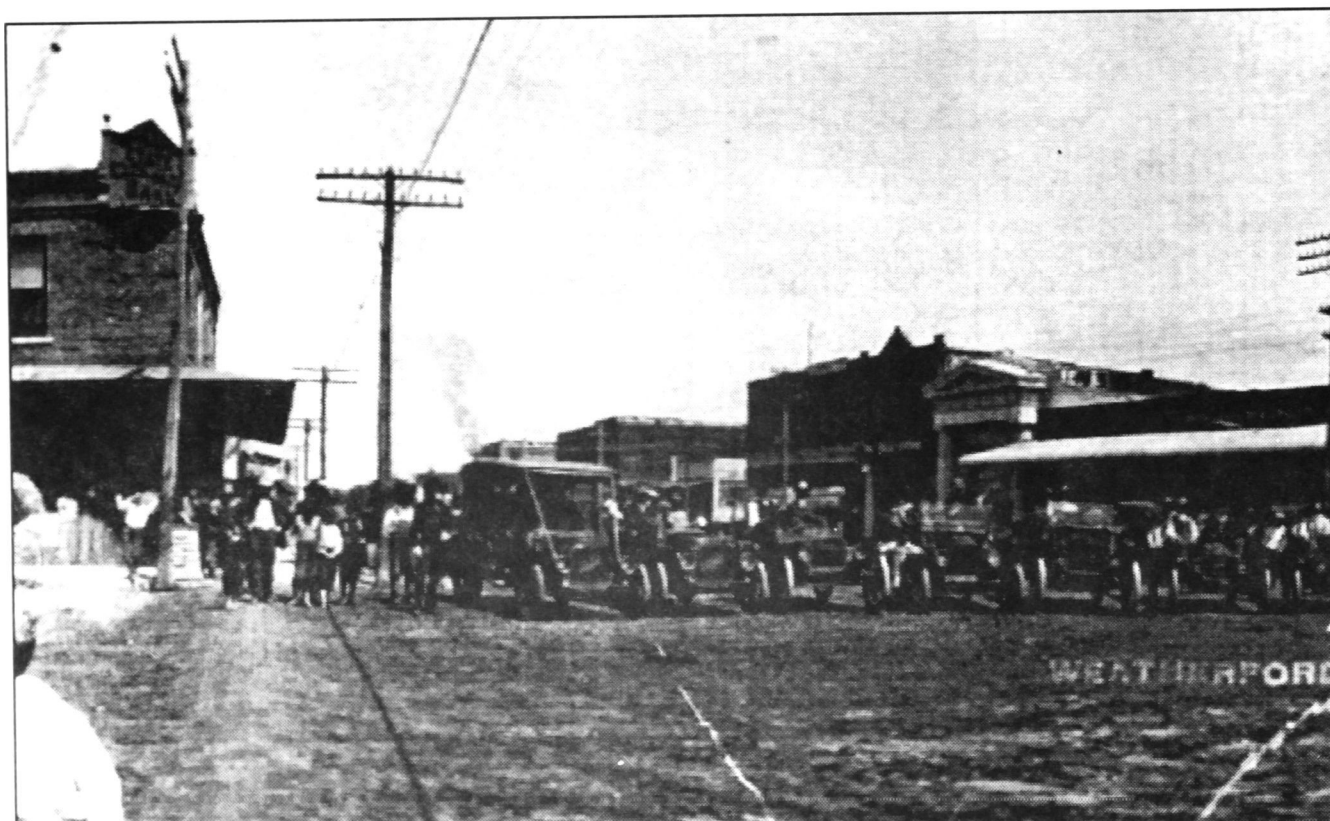
On July 22, 1898 it was announced that the new town in Custer County was to be named Dewey, and an application for a post office was

sent to Washington, D.C.; however, there was already a Dewey in Indian Territory so this name could not be used. Some say the town was named for Lorinda Powell Weatherford who, despite being able to only sign her name with an "X," became the first postmistress for the settlement in August of 1893 when she established a post office on the Weatherford homestead. Others say the town was named after her spouse, William J. "Bill" Weatherford, but either way, the town was named after the Weatherford family.

On August 3, 1898, in what was then a seventy-five acre cornfield owned by John Jones, the present site of Weatherford was established as construction workers completed the Weatherford State Bank by mid-afternoon. In August, J. W. Rice arrived in Weatherford as the new postmaster and within six months, the "town of dirty tents" boasted a population of 2,000. One of those early tents housed Ed Sullivan's Hotel—probably the area's first restaurant.

Other businesses were quick to get started, such as the Cottonwood Mill, a water-powered saw mill on Deer Creek so named because of all the Cottonwood trees. Nonetheless, the bustling heart of Weatherford's business section in late 1898 was Eighth Street, and the corners of Eighth and Main. The Patterson and Fowler General Store was a huge wooden building later used as an opera house, and across the street was Howard Bonebrake's hardware store. Nearby was Frank Toothacker's saloon, Curly Caldwell's hardware store, a blacksmith shop, a wagon yard, J.E. Keep's hotel, and Demming's grocery store. Allie Patterson, reported to be the first customer, remembered the grocer had to open cases and crates to fill her order.





Early day Weatherford taken looking east from the corner of Broadway and Main

By October of 1898, although Weatherford's streets were filled with ankle deep dust from the cornfield, there were eight lumber yards, fifteen wagon yards, fourteen saloons, and five dance halls. The new community had the reputation of the roughest and wildest town in western Oklahoma Territory. Anheuser Busch, founder of the famous brewing company, heard of the town and visited Weatherford in December, 1898, as did an assortment of gamblers, real estate agents, and pioneer farmers. With the arrival of the railroad in Weatherford, the business section moved to East and West Main Street, where it remains today.

While no surviving copies can be found of Weatherford's first newspaper, *The Weatherford Independent*, copies have been found of *The Republican* which was first published on January 12, 1899. Others followed and were ready to report on events such as the election of Weatherford's city officers, and the completion of the first brick build-

ings: the State Exchange Bank, and the Weatherford State Bank building — into the rear of which J. J. Williams, M.D., who had his medical practice in a dugout southwest of Weatherford, moved his office and living quarters. By 1904, local residents could read announcements about the home delivery of breads, cakes, pies, and fruits: a service offered by two different bread wagons.

Perhaps one of the most important businesses in an age before refrigeration, was an ice plant. In September, 1901, the Weatherford City Council granted F. A. Wheeler, John Butler, and Willard Weaver a five year franchise to operate the Weatherford Ice Company. Under the franchise the plant had to have a capacity of ten tons per day and a storage of twenty carloads as well as a building outfitted with approved machinery for the manufacture of ice. Furthermore, the ice was not to be sold at a higher price than charged by com-

panies outside Weatherford.

In 1906, the Weatherford Ice Company's wagons were equipped with gongs, which the drivers sounded while making their rounds so that customers would be reminded to put cards in their windows allowing the driver to know how much ice they wanted. Customers were encouraged to weigh the ice in front of the driver. Blocks of ice were to be fifty pounds or more at one delivery to one address for \$.50 per one hundred pounds, less than that would be \$.60 per hundred, with no sale less than \$.10. By 1913 Weatherford had its own municipal ice plant.

Because of the stress caused by the Wall Street panic of 1907, Territorial Governor Frank Franz closed Weatherford's German National Bank and the First National Bank. The citizens of Weatherford treated the matter as a joke and patiently waited for the banks to reopen. When they did, Weatherford banks issued certified checks in denominations of \$1, \$5, \$10, and \$20 to be used as money for as long as needed.

Farm implement merchants had a "good harvest" in 1902. They sold 132 binders and headers, 122,000 pounds of twine, two steam engines, and numerous thrashing outfits for nearly \$73,000 in income. The importance of area farming prompted M. A. Farr to announce in 1904, plans to build a grain elevator with a capacity of 20,000 bushels. Two years later Weatherford built another mill and elevator plant. Area wheat farmers purchased stock in the corporation to operate the Citizens Independent Mill and Elevator Company. (The Co-op Elevator currently operates at the same location.)

With the demand for cotton, the retail dealers association opened a cotton yard. Cotton farmers, not ready to sell their crops, could have it ginned, baled, and then stored at the cotton yard until they were ready to sell. In turn, cotton farming became an important industry and by 1918 Weatherford had its own cotton gin as well and a number of new brick buildings too. In 1919, Dr. D. Gaede built a new brick veneer building on the southwest

corner of State and Main Streets. The basement contained ten treatment rooms and baths. Gaede specialized in hydrotherapy and homeopathic medicine and gave electric baths, Russian baths, hot air baths, sea salt baths, Swedish movement massage, and electric massages and tonic rubs.

In the days of predominately wooden buildings, fires were all too common. On July 3, 1901, a fire destroyed the wagon yard, Baldwin and West Lumber Company, and two homes. Another fire burned two grocery stores, a harness shop, and the City Drug store on February 17, 1909. After John Thacker's general store burned in October 1911, a \$40,000 fire swept through the business district on February 14, 1912 destroying six buildings. The town's water system pumped 1,200 gallons of water per minute for four hours in order to control the flames. In the wake of these and other fires, insurers threatened rate hikes if the city did not provide better fire protection, so residents loaned the city sufficient money to purchase a fire truck.

Community leaders also encouraged non-wooden buildings in an effort to reduce the fire hazard, so the new Nicholas "Nick" Hermes' brick plant, located one mile southeast of the Custer Street bridge was a welcome addition. The plant manufactured the brick for many homes, commercial buildings, the Southwestern Normal School administration building, and the first brick school house in Weatherford. By 1903 Hermes employed thirty workers.

The Weatherford farming community kept in step with the changing times. In 1904, O. B. Kee and Howard Bonebrake bought their first cars. Both men were proud of their automobiles and planned a race up the hill to the Normal school. A large crowd gathered to watch, but surprisingly, no one was sure who won the race. Cars were indeed making inroads into Weatherford, and although blacksmiths still enjoyed a profitable business, by 1916, the impact of automobiles became evident as the city installed "Keep to the Right" and "10 mph" street signs and declared that all cars had to be parked at an angle of 45 degrees. With

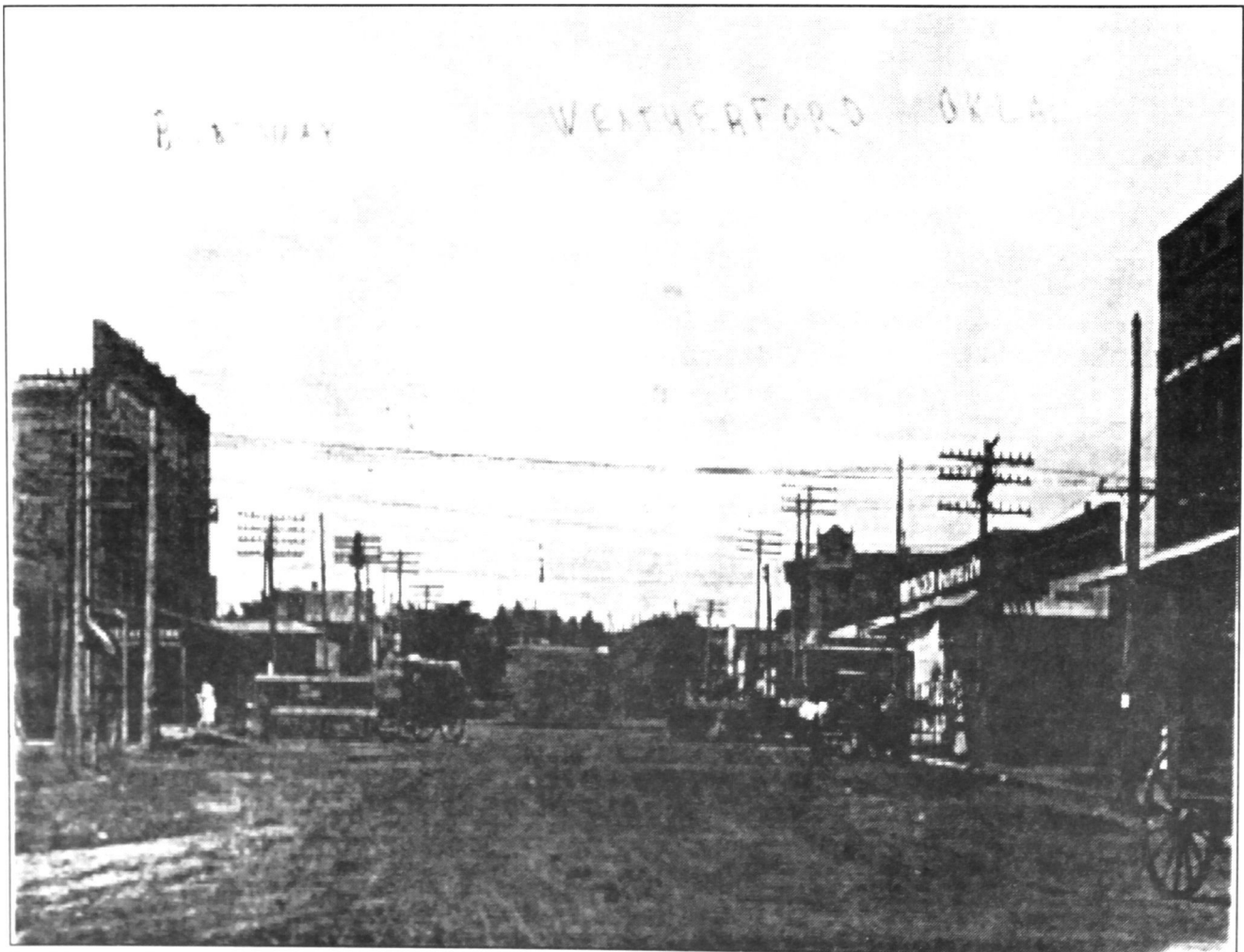


the popularity of the automobile climbing, the timing was right for John Sallaska to open a new Buick showroom and garage November 1, 1917.

As the new century arrived, the formation of civic and social clubs, and educational and religious institutions joined the establishment of businesses as high priority items. In February, 1900, J. J. Williams was a founding director of the Commercial Club, now known as the Chamber of Commerce. The Commercial Club was instrumental in securing the telephone line from Cloud Chief, but efforts to develop an electric railroad line from Colony and to locate the power plant in Weatherford never were realized.

As one might expect, the growing town experienced some pangs as some citizens felt the need to rein in certain activities. So, in July, 1902 the city council passed an ordinance providing a fine of \$50 and not more than \$100 for running saloons on Sunday or after 12:00 a.m. and for gambling, playing games, or racing on Sunday. Moreover, the founding of the Probiren Club in 1900, sought to make Weatherford a more "appropriate" community for Southwestern Normal School by influencing city officials to remove saloons and houses of prostitution.

By 1906, the club joined the women of Weatherford in trying to replace the town's "wild and wooly" reputation. The two groups worked to



Looking north up Broadway

influence additional local ordinances. Since women were not allowed to vote, they circulated a petition to abolish liquor and "other activities" that were associated with it. Nearly every woman in Weatherford signed the petition, and when the city council met on July 6, 1906, George T. Webster presented the petition. George Ruddell, moved that the city attorney and Webster draw up an ordinance abolishing all forms of prostitution. Thus, Weatherford became a dry and "sin free" city even before statehood, positioning itself at the forefront of conservative Oklahoma communities early in its history.

The fall of 1904 brought the Probiren Club into action again when it established a woman's "rest room" located at 33 Broadway. The object was to provide for women who accompanied their families into town a free room with comfortable chairs, a sofa, drinking water, and reading material. Women could also eat lunches brought from home. The room was opened every weekday from seven a.m. to seven p.m.

Over the next decade, local women and the Probiren continued to influence local ordinances with their views of what constituted appropriate behavior. For example, they influenced the election held on June 2, 1914 to express their concerns about pool halls. The election was held without expense to the town, as both newspapers printed the election proclamations, the Democrats furnished the ballots, John Carter furnished the building, and C. C. Penn, Charles Houk, J. P. Randal, and Eugene Forbes gave their services on the election board. The vote was 79 for the pool halls and 185 against.

With the assistance of the Circle of Mercy, the Commercial Club began work in 1909 on a solution to the "problem of tramps and beggars." The club mailed cards explaining that all beggars and tramps should be referred to the Circle of Mercy and that the city would give every beggar a meal in exchange for work.

During Weatherford's first decade, there were some famous (or infamous) violent incidents. At a

City Council meeting in July of 1903, recently deposed City Marshall John Isom shot Bill Weatherford in his left thigh because he was angered by what Weatherford had said about him to the council. Weatherford responded by pulling a gun from under his shirt and chasing Isom. When the acting city marshall tried to restrain Weatherford, Weatherford's gun went off, setting his pants on fire and leaving him with a nasty powder burn on his abdomen. He then surrendered his weapon and later recovered from his injuries. Meanwhile, John Isom was never charged with a crime. Plainly, it appears that the old-time town of Weatherford really could boast an image that was part wild, wild west given the number of prostitutes, salons, and public gunfights like this one!

On July 8, 1905, Kate James was shot to death south of Deer Creek, approximately two and one-half miles northeast of Weatherford, and the mystery surrounding her murder has long since become the stuff of local legend with a site close to where her body was found now known as "Dead Woman's Crossing." While traveling to visit relatives, James and her thirteen month old daughter, Lulu Blanche James, met for the first time Fanny Norton, and the three spent the evening of July 7 with the A.R. Moore family in Weatherford before heading to Hydro early the next morning. Katie James probably did not know that Norton had been tried and acquitted for shooting a Weatherford bartender in the back. Later on the morning of July 8, a woman left a baby, who turned out to be Lulu, with John Bierschied's family, and pitched a bundle of what turned out to be bloody clothes in nearby bushes before driving away. While Lulu was unharmed, Kate James could not be found, and when private detectives questioned Norton about the disappearance, she claimed James had abandoned the baby with her. Then, stunningly, in the midst of the questioning, Norton excused herself to the bathroom where she poisoned herself to death.

In late August, George Cornell stumbled upon what turned out to be the severed skull of Kate James with a bullet hole behind the right ear, and



her badly decomposed body was found "hidden in a clump of bushes" one mile north of the Morton School House. Norton's .38 caliber revolver with one of two cartridges missing was found nearby. In September, a coroners' jury concluded that Fanny Norton had murdered Kate James in order to rob her. Nevertheless, until this day, uncertainty over the possible involvement of potential accomplices such as Martin James, the husband of Kate James, or William Moore, Norton's brother-in-law, and questions regarding why Kate James even joined up with Fanny Norton to travel with her in the first place continue. Thus, while the coroners' jury ostensibly closed the case, for many locals, the story of Kate James remains one of Weatherford's great mysteries. She is buried in Greenwood Cemetery.

Citizens of Weatherford met in early 1912 and elected a board of eight freeholders to write a new city charter to forward to Governor Lee Cruce. Three unpaid officials, a mayor, a commissioner of public utilities, and a commissioner of public highways, were elected to manage the affairs of the city. Their first official act was to reduce the number of city employees from thirteen to six. The first election after the new amendment went into effect in 1915 divided Weatherford into two wards—the one east of Custer street comprised Ward One, and west of Custer comprised Ward Two. J.H. Anderson was elected Mayor under the new form of government.

Frontier communities always demanded entertainment. By 1902 there were enough interested parties in Weatherford to form a city band. But since most musicians could not afford to buy their own instruments, residents raised money to purchase the instruments and uniforms which in turn would officially belong to the city. Band members gave a thirty minute concert every Saturday

afternoon at the park.

There were two theaters in Weatherford when G.K. Harris sold the old Opera House on West Main Street to J. E. Riley in 1919. Riley promptly tore down the landmark which long had been the place of public gatherings and entertainments such as dancing, skating, theatrical performances, and political speeches.

Fairs were also a popular form of entertainment in rural areas. In 1902 the Weatherford Fair Association held their first annual fair and races at



Early day Main Street when the streets were just dust

the fairground. A regulation half-mile track featured pony races, Indian races, foot races, bicycle races, and a three-minute trotting race.

The first Indian Fair held by the Cheyenne and Arapaho in Oklahoma took place southeast of Weatherford during the fall of 1910. Two thousand tribal members were camped near the fairgrounds when the fair opened. Later estimates suggest five thousand were in attendance. In addition to a parade every morning with the Indians dressed in their native costumes, feathers, paint, bangles, and beads, there were races, merry-go-rounds, and peanut and lemonade stands.

The exhibits and displays, including embroidered dresses and war bonnets handed down from

generation to generation, came from Darlington, Redmon, Colony, Cantonment, Indian Mission, and Mohunk Lodge at Colony. In the Indian Mission, there were exhibitions of Navajo work, pottery, elegantly made baby cradles and baskets.

The Indian Fair of 1912 proved to be the largest to date with several thousand tepees staked at the fairgrounds south of town. The program consisted of horse racing, foot racing, arrow throwing, mock battles, and Indian dances. In attendance was Old Cedar Woman, a 114-year-old Arapaho living near Bridgeport.

Two years earlier, the Chautauqua had come to Weatherford for the first time providing a week-long series of events. Top liner of the event, former Democratic Presidential nominee William Jennings Bryant, spoke on Wednesday afternoon. The program featured musical entertainment as well as other noted speakers. There were also playground experts, individuals conducting hiking trips and bird studies, and storytellers. In 1912, the second annual Chautauqua arrived with entertainers like the Harmony Concert Company, the Boston Journalist, and the Venetian Troubadours.

Weatherford locals even turned the domestic challenges World War I posed into a form of entertainment. The war brought a shortage of wheat and flour, so in order to encourage homemakers to use other grains for baking Weatherford held an "Emergency Bread" contest in 1917. All Custer County cooks were encouraged to enter the competition by using a substitute for part of the wheat flour, such as kaffir meal, corn meal, rye, cottonseed meal, oatmeal, or peanuts. Prizes were awarded in the categories of best loaf of bread, best quick bread, best cookies, and best wafers.

The towns of Mangum, Mountain View, and Granite were in competition with Weatherford in 1900 as sites for the proposed Southwestern Normal School. In Weatherford, Beeks Erick had deeded the Territory of Oklahoma a forty-acre site at the top of the hill, but the decision for the site would rest with a territorial board. Matters were

complicated by the existence of two territorial boards: one of the boards was named by Governor C. M. Barnes shortly before he retired, whereas the other was named by the new Governor, W. M. Jenkins.

The Barnes Committee visited Weatherford and cast three votes in its favor, with only one vote each for Granite and Cordell. The Jenkins Committee selected Granite in Greer County as the site for the Normal School. Weatherford believed that since it was chosen first, the school should be located in Weatherford. Residents raised \$10,000 for the legal fight. On October 5, 1902, steam whistles sounded and the firebell rang. People rushing to the expected fire were surprised by the good news, "We have got the Normal!" Beeks Erick had sent the message from Guthrie to J.W. Walters that the courts had decided in favor of Weatherford. All night the bells tolled, the whistles blew, shotguns and pistols popped, and anvils boomed.

O. B. Kee, who owned the land adjoining the proposed site for the Normal school, contributed an eighty-foot road around the tract. The town of Weatherford furnished water for twenty-one years at \$5 per year and promised \$5,000 for the beautification of the grounds, including the planting of trees. By 1904, the construction of the Southwestern Territorial Normal School was completed. The territory Board of Regents for the Normal Schools appointed J. R. Campbell, superintendent of the Guthrie city schools, as president.

The Normal School opened with 123 students from eighteen counties of the territory and five states. Tuition was free, and board and lodging could be obtained from \$3.00 to \$3.50 per week. On February 9, 1904, the Normal School Band led the entire faculty and the student body in double file up the hill, from where they had been holding classes in the Weatherford Exchange Bank building on West Main Street, to the new building. In 1908, the Oklahoma legislature appropriated money to construct a science hall. Affectionately known as "Old Science" the building is still in use ninety years later.



A rather colorful scandal of sorts played itself out at the Normal in 1910 and 1911. In the spring of 1910, the Board of Regents purchased statues of Apollo, the Discus Thrower, and Hercules for Southwestern's Art Department. When President J.F. Sharp unpacked the statues and discovered that fig leaves did not cover their sex organs, he took a hammer and chisel and personally removed the offending parts of the statues. The story quickly spread throughout the community. Thereafter, J.F. Sharp was known as "The Sculptor from Tennessee." The statue affair and the election of a new governor, eager to make his own political appointments, influenced the State Board of Education to dismiss Sharp in April of 1911.

While Southwestern Normal School started a student training corps in the fall of 1918 to provide Army officers for America's involvement in World War I, a more serious outgrowth of the war developed. The Oklahoma State Council of Defense authorized the creation of County Councils of Defense for the purpose of making sure all Oklahomans were "100% patriotic." The councils urged citizens to report any disloyal act or utterance. Few bothered to notice that it was left up to the individual patriot to determine what constituted disloyal acts and utterances. Emotions and hysteria

mounted as the search for disloyal citizens swept the community. On May 9, 1918, the Weatherford Council of Defense met secretly to consider charges that C. H. Simpson, Professor of Agriculture at Southwestern Normal, was guilty of making disloyal remarks. Supposedly Simpson had said that Germany possessed a better government than the United States and that Americans had no rights on the seas that Germany had to respect. His accusers were never identified, and Simpson received no hearing. The State Board of Education ordered him dismissed. Simpson, in effect, was found guilty of a crime on the basis of hearsay evidence, without the formality of a trial, and without his having any knowledge of the entire proceedings. Such wartime hysteria, it should be noted, was not peculiar to Weatherford, but in fact gripped other parts of the nation.

When the war ended, Weatherford celebrated the signing of the Armistice by sounding the fire siren at 4:30 on the morning of November 11, 1918. The celebration continued until late in the afternoon with impromptu parades and automobiles rushing wildly through the streets and most people just enjoying themselves now that the burden of war had been lifted. Weatherford was preparing for a new decade.



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Stoking the Logs at Dawn

by Walt McDonald

Ashes drift down like snow, smoke from the chimney
easy to breathe, split piñon from New Mexico.
Decades of nights come back on the breeze,
coils of memories like DNA—Jimmy swinging a rope

from his pony, Susan in bed with teddy bears
and mumps, teaching them ballet and tap
on a pillow stage. Now, from breakfast chairs,
we watch trees bloom before our eyes through the glass

and weeds turn green. So many miles to Susan's house,
an ocean between us and Jimmy's job, Seville a city
we learned meant Spain light years ago in school, a town
where exotic others lived. Grandchildren sleep

without us, now, always holidays to enjoy
scattered throughout the calendar, any excuse
to call, to hear their voices like wind-up toys
deep breathing in the receiver, then *I love you*

Mamaw and Pop, 'Bye, and later, teenage giggles
and granddaughters' often call-waiting clicks
and gushy love goodbyes. Pockets of pine sap sizzle
and pop in the fireplace, the bittersweet

aroma of smoke in the room, like our cabin
in the mountains decades ago, our fingers locked
on the sofa, now, big-knuckled and splotted,
a stiff coupling of fingers that still fit.



Walter McDonald's "Mending the Fence" and Robert Frost's "Mending Wall": One Region Speaks to Another

by Helen Maxson

A professor of English at Texas Tech University, poet Walter McDonald has published over 1600 poems and won several prizes for his work. Raised in Texas, he has lived much of his life there, and his identification with the state figures prominently throughout his verse. Even as he explores the universal in life, he does so in a distinctly Texan context, taking the region itself as a subject. In a recent interview, he elaborated on the power of a "region" in a writer's material:

I discover poems from the regions I own—or which own me. I think a writer finds at least one *region* to keep coming back to. It may be a *place* — Robert Frost's New England, for example, or James Wright's Ohio, or Eudora Welty's Mississippi; or in my case, Texas. A poet keeps prowling a certain region until he or she begins to settle it, homestead and live on it, and eventually own it.

By "region" I don't mean simply *geography* — but regions of the mind, a cluster of images or obsessions that a writer draws on over and over, for poems. When writers accept their regions, they can discover a mother-lode of images. Every poem is a metaphor of how it feels to someone to be alive at that time, at that place. (8)

Every poem, suggests McDonald, explores at least one region, whether topical or geographical, and the experience of dwelling in it. His poem "Mending the Fence," printed in the 1993 volume *Where Skies Are Not Cloudy*, conjures two such dwelling places, one, a geographical location and the other, a perspective on the world. In fact, their parameters assume center stage in a rhetorical ges-

ture of the second and third verses: an extended allusion to Robert Frost's more famous poem "Mending Wall." McDonald's title foretells the move, of course, and signals its centrality to his poem's purposes, suggestions then borne out in forthright borrowing and reenvisioning of Frost's material. The allusion expands McDonald's title to refer to a fence not only between cows of one rancher and cows of another, but also between Texas and New England and between McDonald and the older poet whom he, in many ways, resembles. In one more elaboration, the reference to Frost makes of fence mending not only a separating but also a twisting together of two separate strands. In this ambiguous poem, that is, the regions inhabited by Frost and McDonald are simultaneously defined against each other and conflated into one province.

The poem's ambiguity extends to each of its aspects. "Mending the Fence" explores most obviously the perspective of a rancher who, as he tightens his barbed wire, adds one of many gashes to his work gloves and then meditates on other destructive effects of the fence: cattle cruelly trapped in its barbs, and dogs flung back when chasing a rabbit. The poem's central energies lie in two tensions: one, between the fence and the "something" that, as a force of nature, pushes against it toward a freedom from human constructs, and the other, between the contradictory impulses of the rancher who even as he repairs the fence, is sensitive to its violation of what is natural. Hunters, cows, dogs, and imaginary whirlwind devils cause the fence to sag and break. Pet dogs in packs become wolves, obeying some call of the wild. Buzzards crowd the skies, waiting for the suffering, trapped cattle, among other prey, to die. Against these natural occurrences, the rancher takes

his stand on behalf of his livelihood and, perhaps, a need to assert control, mending his fence even amidst evidence of the cruelty and limited success of his interference.

Mending the Fence

I twist the barbed wire tight
to hold the dumbest cow. Another rip,
these gloves no older than wires I strung
last year, already sagging.

Whirlwinds are devils roaming the fields
for mischief. Something shoves posts down
and makes good neighbors strangers—
hunters mad at the moon

shooting at shadows, cows straining
through barbed wires, a pack of dogs
at night, flung back by wires
losing the track of a rabbit.

I've seen them sometimes in shadows,
stray pets becoming wolves.
Caught in the pickup's headlights, they blink
and slink away through cactus,

flashing their tails in moonlight.
I've found cows bloodied, necks caught
by barbed wires, walleyed and bawling,
their fat tongues purple.

I wave to anyone on horseback
or walking across my pasture
under a sky of buzzards. If he's alone,
if I haven't heard a shot for hours,

I let him go, hoping I'll find
no fence posts broken,
no cow gut-shot and bleeding,
her wild eyes staring at heaven.

At the end of the poem, the rancher speaks of letting trespassers who seem not to be hunters continue across his land, hoping that the destructions

typical of hunters will not later appear. He tells us he waves at anyone he sees. His meditation on the damages of barbed wire has brought the poem to an ending of tentative trust and community in spite of the sterner separations the fence imposes.

The rancher's view of the hunters contributes to the ambiguity of his perspective since their destructiveness hurts both the fence and the cows who are victimized by it. The rancher wants to indulge his friendly feelings for other people, but fears he will pay for doing so. In this poem, relationships, whether among people or between people and nature, fail to unfold along clear lines, taking varying turns like the barbed wire the rancher twists in the first line. The implications of one's actions are similarly complex. Nothing in the poem suggests that the rancher should give up his ownership of the land or the work which demands fences. Yet, its images convey the suffering they inflict with powerful immediacy. The poem does not provide answers or even ask questions. It simply makes observations that are painful to absorb, conveying feeling rather than sorting issues. As a result, issues cluster around McDonald's images more like a surrounding aura than as clearly defined components.

As part of this aura, McDonald's relationship with Frost infuses the poem with a sense of ancestry. The poem's derivative nature is clear. At the same time, McDonald makes his differences from Frost clear too. The interaction he describes evades easy labels. However, literary theory offers us ways of understanding both what it is and what it is not. Harold Bloom, the influential theorist at Yale, has put forth a famous theory about what he calls an "anxiety of influence," according to which strong writers misread those who have come before them to create a space for their own originality. Bloom implies that young writers can feel compromised by the degree to which their work is derivative, and, so, distort the literary context in which they write in order to distinguish themselves more clearly within it. Doubtless, one could read "Mending the Fence" and find evidence of this

anxiety in McDonald's remaking of Frost's poem and, simply, in the directness of his allusion. However, another theory of influence rings more true in this case, especially when one considers how faithfully McDonald reads Frost as a point of reference for his own identity. Certain women theorists have addressed the detrimental lack for women writers of any highly developed tradition within which to work. In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf, the British novelist of the early twentieth century, discusses the tradition of British women writers, many of whom were barely recognized as serious artists and had limited success with their work. Woolf's purpose is not only to explain why no woman has written the plays of Shakespeare, but also to provide women writers with a tradition of mothers through whom to think back as they work, mothers from whom to learn what fathers cannot know about writing as women. Alice Walker, in the essay "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," adapts Woolf's ideas to the situation of black women writers. I believe one can adapt them also to the mentor/student relationship between writers who are men.

The interaction between forebears and descendants in *A Room of One's Own* is primarily one of cooperation rather than competition, and for Woolf, this fact in no way compromises the originality of younger writers. An ideal mother's nurturing is pointed toward the daughter's discovery of herself. In Woolf's process, the daughter might work against her mothers even as Bloom's sons work against their fathers, but the act would involve welcomed guidance from the parent. For Woolf, the important thing for daughters is to "look past Milton's bogey" (118), seeing beyond the male models of the past into "the open sky" (39) of their own creative possibilities. It is interesting to note that it is not only for Woolf but also for Bloom that Milton is a monumental figure beyond whom young poets must see. But for Bloom, Milton represents a father's greatness that incapacitates the

sons who must equal it, whereas for Woolf, he represents a father's way of doing things that, alien to daughters, simply misleads them. Perhaps for Woolf he represents as well a general failure on the part of fathers to nurture. Regardless, for Woolf, Milton's greatness is not the problem. In fact, in her model, greatness in forebears can validate one's self, bestowing power; furthermore, originality can incorporate similarity, adding community to its various components. Both these benefits, rather than anxiety, seem to motivate McDonald's gesture toward Frost.

In "Mending the Fence," McDonald's technique of borrowing from Frost bespeaks a fellowfeeling for the great poet and a sense that for McDonald, membership in the community of American poets is a valued part of his artistic identity. The two verses in which the allusion to Frost is most forthright read like a twisting together of two voices into one. McDonald's "Whirlwinds are devils roaming the fields / for mischief" echoes Frost's "Spring is the mischief in me"; in both cases the consequence of mischief is the weakening of the wall. McDonald's "Something shoves posts down" echoes Frost's "Something there is that doesn't love a wall." McDonald's "and makes good neighbors strangers" echoes Frost's "Good fences make good neighbors," the metrics of the two lines mirroring each other exactly. The hunters in McDonald's poem evoke Frost's line "The work of hunters is another thing," both poems pitting a dog pack chasing a rabbit against the barrier of the wall or fence. McDonald's whirlwind devils evoke Frost's playful "I could say 'elves' to him." The two verses set up a dense echo chamber of phrases, tones, and rhythms in which McDonald says to Frost, much of what you are, I am. Let us, for the moment, make one voice together.

Furthermore, the two poems share themes as well. Both question the thoughtless enactment of a tradition that from certain perspectives might better be dropped; both treat the imposition of un-



natural constructs on natural things; and both question the separation of natural things from each other to reflect human ownership. In another poem of the same volume, McDonald's speaker, referring to cows, mentions

brands on their flanks
better than fences to keep two fools
from quarrels — this calf is mine
that, yours... (80)

The poem, "The Last Good Saddles," evokes these lines from "Mending Wall":

There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines...

In all three poems, the process of fencing serves the demands of human possessiveness more than any need inherent in what is fenced off. McDonald borrows from Frost's treatment of the theme, making the two poets collaborators in the poems about Texas, and suggesting that one region owns its inhabitants as does any other: Texas and Vermont aren't so different after all."

At the same time, McDonald's "Mending the Fence" veers away from Frost's in its other verses, taking as a point of departure Frost's question about walls — "Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it / Where there are cows? But here there are no cows." In Texas, there are cows, and the image of their cruel suffering when caught in the barbed wire or "gut-shot and bleeding" occurs three times in McDonald's short poem, working together with the flinging of the dogs to cast the fence in terms more grim and affective than the philosophical terms Frost's speaker applies to the question of walling in and walling out. One message from McDonald to Frost seems to be that in some places where there are cows, the themes that the two poems explore in common acquire life-and-death dimensions; fixing the fence is no longer, as Frost's speaker puts it, "just another kind of outdoor game." Life in Texas is harsher, McDonald seems to say, and lived

in more basic terms. So, its poetry must be more blunt and concrete. And to be sure, much about McDonald's poem affirms that the day-to-day demands of ranching in Texas are far removed from the abstract epistemological questions Frost likes to ask. For one thing, the contrast in style between the graceful and pensive "Something there is that doesn't love a wall" and the blunt "Something shoves posts down" comments on life in Texas and the kind of poetry such a life can produce. Furthermore, the two allusive verses in McDonald's poem are the only ones in which he talks about life in general. The rest of the poem is built of sentences the grammatical subject of which is "I" and the content of which is the speaker's immediate experience. In an interview, McDonald inveighed against the presence of all but the most effective abstract terms in poetry:

I try to slam abstractions down, and
stomp them; kick, stab them to death, and
gouge out their eyes. If they still crawl
up my legs and bless me like the air I
breathe, then I let them stay.(6)

The power of McDonald's concrete verbs here makes his point well.

And the difference between the dramatic structures of the two poems makes it in another way. In Frost's poem, a philosophical speaker using gently cadenced language thinks out loud about his "old-stone savage" of a neighbor who "will not go behind his father's saying," and who accepts the necessity of the wall on the basis of tradition rather than evidence. Of course, it is the speaker himself who initiates the mending process each year and who repeats the neighbor's platitude about fences and neighbors. His thinking does not question his own attitudes far enough, and so provides the poem with the rich ambiguity that McDonald imports into his own poem.

However, in McDonald's poem, the gracious, philosophical speaker is missing, as is any discussion using abstract terms. The images say it all, revealing the rancher's awareness on some level

that all is not simple or logical or kind in his chosen life. In effect, McDonald twists Frost's philosopher and stone age neighbor into one character who senses pointlessness and inconsistency but cannot formulate or verbalize exactly what it is that doesn't add up. What is more, contrasted to the fluid musings of the philosopher, the reticence of the rancher ironically expresses much more. In Frost's poem, the speaker evades his own failure to question words by hiding behind the wall of language that describes his neighbor's. In "Mending Wall," what is most true is what is not expressed, a point Frost made elsewhere, saying. "If you feel it, let's just exchange glances and not say anything about it" (qtd. in Barry 6). Along with its verbiage, we find a profound mistrust of words in "Mending Wall." In McDonald's poem, however, our reliance on the rancher's concrete imagery leads us to the notion that since the harshness of life in Texas resists falsification, poetry about Texas can achieve a force and an accuracy that poetry about a gentler place cannot. In McDonald, what is true is not what is not expressed, but, rather, what is suggested rather than stated. McDonald is reversing Frost's pessimism here, claiming a power for words in

Texas that Frost's poem has questioned in New England. The absence of the gracious philosopher in McDonald's poem claims the concrete and immediate as McDonald's own province, going Frost one better at his own game.

Still, there is no Bloomian misreading here. McDonald has had to be faithful to Frost in order to go beyond him. Perhaps it is the distance and difference between New England and Texas that permit his faithfulness to the first region even as he remakes it in the second. The young Romantic poets with whom Bloom illustrated the anxiety of influence had a much harder time claiming their own terrain in a country as small as England, particularly when the specter of Milton loomed so large. But in a country containing regions still only partly charted, regions still—in ways—frontiers, poets can embrace what has come before without threat of losing themselves in it. In the open space of Texas, Walter McDonald homesteads his own poetic terrain and pays tribute to an older poet from a different landscape who is a valued part of what he builds.



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Building Fence

By Richard Dixon

Growing up on a dairy farm, there were many daily chores to do, and many other jobs that arose on a semi-regular basis. One of these jobs was building, then mending fence; since the cows had to be pastured in different fields on a rotating schedule, there was plenty of fence on our farm—miles and miles of it. With little exception, all of it was of the barbed-wire variety; three strands nailed to catalpa posts with staples (“steeples” in farmer lingo), and gates also comprised of barbed-wire, with one catalpa post in the middle (catalpa was the least expensive wood for fenceposts). To open or close these gates you had to slip your arm around the gate post, putting your shoulder to it, then grab hold of the end post with your hand, heaving your shoulder into the gate post to create slack in the “latch,” which consisted of several strands of smooth wire looped around and stapled to the end post. Easy enough, if you knew how to do it; built properly, the gate would always be tight, as tight or tighter than the fence.

Building barbed-wire fence was simple, if not easy; plumbing a straight line between both ends or corners, then digging postholes every twelve to fifteen feet apart, usually three to four feet deep; making sure the holes were dug on the outside of the plumbline so that the wire could be stapled to the *inside* of the post, so as to keep the cows from pushing and “popping out” the staples. After the holes were dug, the posts were then put in, and made firm by filling the hole back up with the dug earth, tamping it down hard after every foot or so of filling. The end posts had to be much larger posts, to carry and withstand the tension of the stretched wire. These end posts were usually railroad ties, eight or ten inches square and soaked with creosote: heavy and solid. One railroad tie was put in, then another railroad tie about six feet away, with a horizontal brace (usually a catalpa post) between the two. This whole arrangement

constituted the end post (or corner post), and was sufficiently strong enough to hold high tension on three parallel barbed-wires, for up to a half-mile or more in length (although anything more than a quarter-mile in length was considered very risky). The wire was tightened with wire-stretchers, the most dangerous part of the whole job; if the wire wasn’t well-clamped and locked into the stretchers, and slipped, or if the wire broke while the tightening process was going on, a person could find themselves instantly wrapped in a quarter-mile or so of a sharp, cutting, lethal scissors-machine, kind of like meeting Freddy Kruger on a bad night. Building fence, especially without a mechanized post-hole digger (as was my experience), was hard, dirty, yeoman work, and, conversely, a very satisfying feeling; when the job was finished, to stand there with sweat drying and gaze out and down the expanse of the finished fence, and know that it was good, and know that it was true, and know that it would last at least twenty years, with a little mending; I’ve never forgotten that feeling of supreme satisfaction.

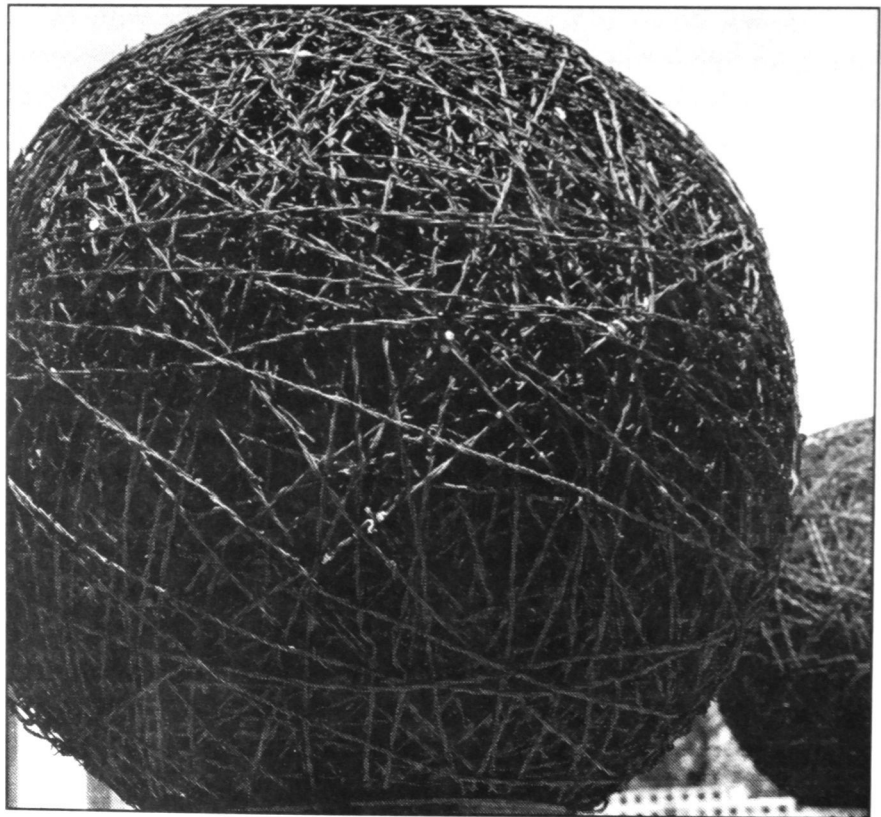
Last summer, staying at the guest ranch in the Sangre de Christo Mountains outside of Las Vegas, New Mexico, when the opportunity to build a little fence presented itself, I couldn’t resist. Walking down from our hillside cabin to Gallinas Creek, near the ranch entrance, to join my wife and son, I noticed the ranch owner’s grown son, Scott and his thirteen-year-old son Wells, building fence by the front gate. I didn’t see my wife and son, (they said they’d be at the creek, by the bridge), and so meandered over to where Scott and Wells were working. I knew them both from previous visits to the ranch, and so fell into an easy conversation, with them working and me standing there. Consequently, I began to feel uncomfortable with the interruption in talk; Scott and Wells would have to stop talking to be able to continue with their job,

leaving me standing there feeling awkward. In order for the work and the conversation *both* to proceed, I felt I needed to join in, so I did.

The fence they were building was not barbed-wire, but rather a pole fence; three slim pine poles, maybe four inches in diameter, nailed into notched l by 4 inch squares of scrap lumber, which were themselves nailed into the fence posts, ten-inch square railroad ties. If there's one thing I know I can still do, it's wield a hammer; driving sixteen-penny nails with a frame hammer was the job required here, and I fell into that job, helping them build fence. We continued our conversation, but more in the way of people doing a job, with the talk coming on mutual pauses, little mini-breaks. For the next two hours we built fence, and although I knew I would pay for it later, the dividends coming in the form of pain from my bad hip (I could feel it already), I didn't care. I worked up a good, healthy sweat in the thin air of that 7,500 feet altitude and wished I had stuck my bandanna in my jeans pocket; I could've used it around my forehead about then. No matter; the pausing to wipe off sweat from my face with my T-shirt sleeve only created one more opportunity for good conversation and camaraderie. I nailed up the last of the pine poles with Scott and Wells loaded up the old, rotted poles in the pickup to haul back to stack behind one of the barns, to be later chainsawed for firewood.

Everything loaded up and finished, I rode in the back of the pickup, on top of the old lumber, to the north side of the barn, where we unloaded it all. As we drove toward the barn, I looked up to see my wife and son sitting on the deck of our

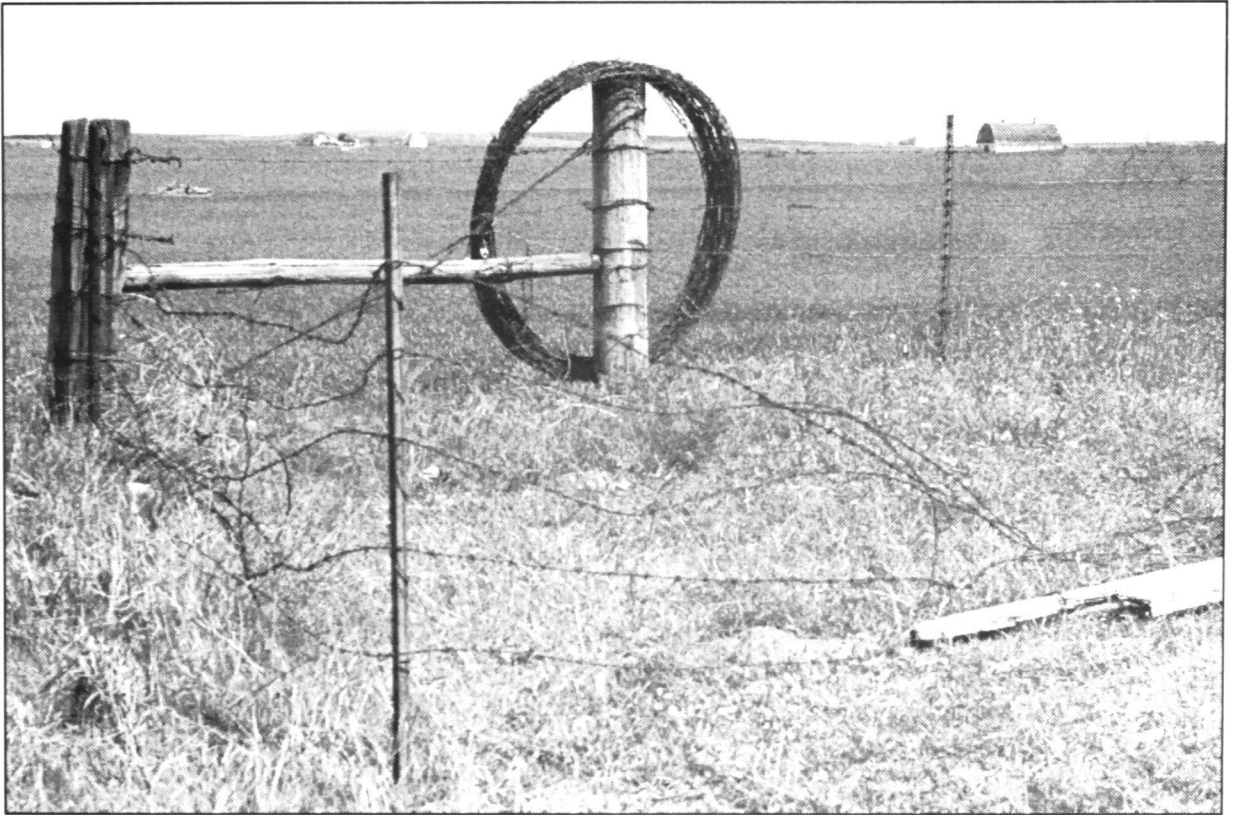
cabin; I waved to them, and they waved back—I never did see them down by the creek. Since Scott's cabin was next to ours, he offered me a lift "home," and I'm sure I was never more grateful for a ride in my life—the soreness and the hip pain were starting to set in. Later, I was a happy but pain-



Photograph by J. Stoffers

fully, sorely tired man, and for most of the next day too, but for the most part it felt just like it did thirty years ago, gazing down at that line of barbed-wire fence, finished and final, at least for a good twenty years, with a little mending. In the years between, I haven't built any fence, but I like to think that I've mended my share, emotionally speaking. Mended my share, and much more. That toil created a lot of soreness too, but it was short-lived and, like the other, original fence-work, I was much better off for having done it.





Photographs by J. Stoffers



Husbands

by Joan Cusack Handler

Sometimes he is Christ reassuring me
that I am loved
but flawed. And like Christ,
he has his biases. But
unlike Christ who loves only
the soul, requiring that I sacrifice
my body and all earthly pleasures
just as the caterpillar must offer
itself as prologue and gateway
to the fuller life of butterfly,
my husband doesn't attend to my soul.
He concentrates on the body
and what the body carries.
Since it is all we can know,
he says, it's the *only* thing
we can count on; it must then
provide its own reward.



Pumpkin Seed

by Tom Hendrix

You make me bow with your green eyes,
your hands are too smooth to hold,
your dress too smooth to take off.
My bed has been unmade for some time,
my pillows are not in place.

Your garden table is set for afternoon tea,
mine is set for nighttime jukebox beer.
Your plane lands in London town,
my pickup never crosses the county line.
But if your kisses are free,
I'll take a couple
just for luck in the rodeo.

Your size is smaller than mine,
Your hair falls shampoo fresh down your back.
your face is pasted down with bright colors.
I have no stories to tell you,
or you to me.
Mine would be lies,
yours would be truth.

I am looking to go nowhere,
you want to go around the world,
your coach leaves at midnight.
Stepmother has her daughters done up in gold twist,
stepsisters find no fault in the chamber mirror.
Your rebel silk fights its way to the floor
and
follows our last dance.

I'll bring your slipper.



Special Delivery

by John Gery

This kindness you offer
like a parcel left on my stoop
for a neighbor I don't know
except to nod to now and then
may well end up

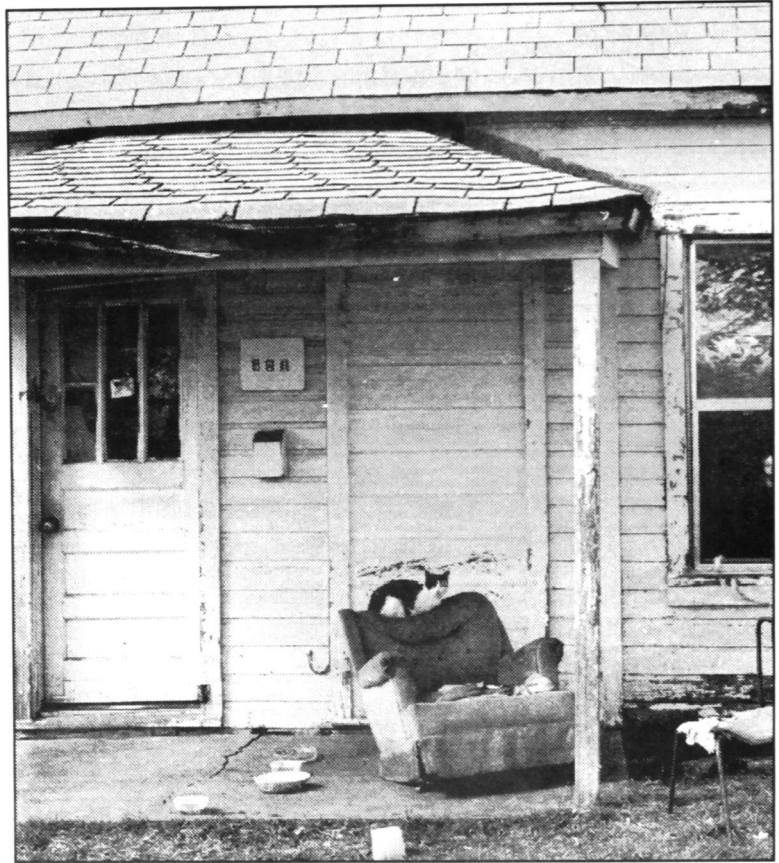
down the street in the mouths
of those roaming pack dogs
we usually report
to higher authorities.
Yet who would care, really,

except you?
And would anyone's kindness
find its way this far
in the first place if
I didn't bother to accept

the burden of its generosity
as provided (and if I may say
so, gingerly, too)?
You and the trouble
you've taken, in the long run,

depend on me regardless
of your motives.
Besides, as busy as I am,
I'm little inclined toward
true acts

of compassion. I care more
for my own bliss in the company
of those I love.
In fact, like the cadre
of cats in the backyard



Photograph by J. Stoffers

of that gray woman across
the alley, your calling me
this way aggravates
the entire neighborhood
of my self-assurance, so

don't expect me to be graceful!
Hey! I didn't ask for this!
It stuns me, a small package
I can't figure out
how to open yet.

Runestone

Chapters 92 and 93

by Don Coldsmith

The land was a little different now. The broad flat food plain along the river had given way to rougher country. Rocky hills and ravines rose in seemingly endless array. The traveling was rougher, but to balance that disadvantage, there were more and better places to hide, or to elude pursuers.

The trail they followed had turned and twisted, branched, and joined others. It was practically impossible to decide which was the main trail, or if such a thing actually existed. All were probably game trails, used since the beginning of time and appropriated for use by whatever humans happened along. This would explain their wandering nature, the seeking for the easiest path in a general direction. Nils thought of an expression from home, "as crooked as a cow path." For the first time he fully understood it. True, the animals involved were deer and elk rather than the cattle and sheep of his homeland, but the principle was the same. The meandering, the search for the easiest way...not a bad way, really.

The network of these dim trails allowed the fugitives to maintain their general direction. Odin insisted that they maintain their northwesterly course, which would eventually bring them closer to the People. It was not a matter of great discussion. Direction was not particularly important anyway, compared to escape. The northwest direction did, however, take them out of the territory of the Shaved-heads. At least, they thought so. There was no way to know for sure.

Twice they had resorted to the sun-stone to re-establish that direction. When the sky had been overcast and fog lay heavy in the hollows, it was hard to maintain a sense of direction. It was at such times that Nils felt enclosed, entrapped by the trees

and rocks around him. He longed for open skies and far horizons, the high seas, with a fast ship under his feet, responding to the wind in her sails.

Increasingly, however, their position seemed to become more hopeless. They had not discussed it, but it was apparent that they could not play cat and mouse in the rocky hills and glens indefinitely. Food was in short supply, and they could not pause for very long because the Shaved-heads dogged at their heels. Several times they had seen the war party behind them, perhaps crossing the bare knob of a hill that they themselves had crossed earlier in the day. It was hard for Nils to estimate distances, because much of the travel now was up and down the hills, rather than across the land.

They were tired, bone-tired, gaunt and drawn, and sometimes it seemed that they could not go on. They would stop to rest, and fall asleep for a few moments from sheer exhaustion. Only the fear of what lay behind would thrust them back on their feet to move on.

Each morning, after a fitful night's sleep, things seemed a little brighter. Enough so that they kept moving, at least. All of the adults knew, however, that the time was drawing near when they must choose the place to make the last stand. Probably sooner, rather than later, because each day they grew weaker.

The level, grassy valley was pleasant to see. They came upon it from the south, and it stretched for some distance northward. To their right, the valley was bordered by a ridge of hills like those they had been crossing for several days.

"Wait," said Odin. "Let us consider this."

"The travel will be easier in the open," Nils

observed.

"True. But I am thinking, it places us in the open, where we can be seen."

"We could cross it at night," Dove said. "There should be good moonlight, too."

"Maybe," Odin agreed. "Maybe too good. But the thing is this...how close are those who follow us?"

There was silence for a little while, and then Odin spoke.

"I am made to think we must know. I will go back to see."

"But—," Nils protested.

Odin waved down his objection. "No. You go on, and I will catch up. Stay along the base of these hills to the right, follow them north. See the notch in the ridge, there? Wait for me below that."

He turned and was gone, and the other three plodded on.

Calling Dove was tired, and she knew that the others were, too. Just ahead of her, Bright Sky followed his father doggedly, step after step. The boy had never complained, though she knew this must be very hard for him. It had been hard for them all.

It was well past noon when White Wolf called a halt. They were near the notch in the ridge, and here they would wait for Odin. Then they could decide whether to head west across the valley, move on northward along the shoulder of the ridge, or try to seek refuge in its rolling hills.

They had not waited long before they saw Odin approaching along their back trail. He was running, and it was apparent that something was urgent. He trotted to where they

waited, and stood for a moment, panting from exhaustion.

"They...come...," he gasped, pointing.

Dove could not see the war party, but knew that it must be as Odin said. Once more, the Shaved-heads had gained on the fugitives. The final battle was ever closer. It was apparent that they could not cross the valley now, even by moonlight. Their pursuers were too near, and they would surely be seen. Likewise, to go north along the base of the hills would be too exposed. They must try to find refuge in the hills.

Odin, who was breathing more easily now,



Photograph by Steve Lounsbury



shifted his pack and started up the slope, following a dim path that angled back southeastward along the shoulder. Dove started to speak about the direction, but realized the situation quickly. The quickest path led that way, and direction had now lost all importance. The problem now was simply to find a place to try to hide. Preferably, one that would be defensible.

"Wait," said Odin suddenly. He turned aside and pattered around among the sassafras brushes.

"What is it?" called Nils.

"Maybe nothing. There is a canyon here."

The big, old trees had practically concealed that fact. Oaks, sycamores, nut trees, and the heavy underbrush effectively hid a deep and narrow cleft and rift in the hillside. The tops of the giant oaks that grew from the floor of the rift were below where they stood.

The trail they followed led over practically solid stone, a dark limestone that seemed to be a major part of the entire ridge. But it would not leave tracks!

"Maybe we can fool them one more time," Odin said.

He held aside a sassafras bush, and motioned the others down the steep face of the canyon wall. Nils led the way, turning to help his son.

It was a very dim trail that led downward. Odin followed Dove and tried to make sure that all traces behind them were hidden. They reached the bottom of the canyon, and Dove heard the murmur of water. She was hot and thirsty, and the sound was pleasant. The whole place was peaceful, sheltered, and quiet, with only a birdsong here and there. She felt protected, somehow, in the shelter of these massive gray walls and the canopy of leaves overhead. Even though it was late in the season, ferns and grasses were still green here in this sheltered place.

Dove looked around and gasped aloud. "Look!"

At the very head of the canyon, a massive ledge of stone lay across the rift, forming a cave. Its ceiling was high enough to stand upright, its floor sev-

eral paces across. It would give comfort and shelter. The four weary travelers walked into its mouth and dropped their packs on the sandy floor.

"A fire?" asked Dove.

"Maybe later," Odin said. "Let us wait, for now. We can find water, rest, get some sleep, maybe."

There was a seep spring beside the cave, and a rivulet of water told of larger pools below. Dove picked up a waterskin and made her way down to the pool. She noted the rugged walls of the ravine. In many places, great slabs of stone like that which formed the roof of their cave had fallen away from the rim to slide toward the bottom of the rift. She saw one that must be three paces long, nearly as wide, and as thick as a man's arm is long. That one leaned almost upright against the canyon wall.

Her husband approached.

"It is a strange place," he said quietly.

"Yes. Its spirit is good, though."

He nodded, and they stood there looking around them, unsure what to say. In the power of emotion that they felt here, anything that might be said seemed unnecessary.

Dove was unsure whether it was the depth of the their own emotion or the powerful spirit of the place itself. But she knew that he felt it, too. It was fitting, she thought, to find such a place, on a day that might be their last. That thought itself seemed rather unimportant, somehow, though she knew it must be faced.

Even so, she was startled when her husband voiced a similar thought.

"This," he said calmly, "is not a bad place to make our last fight."

Dove looked at him sharply. She was thinking of the words of the death song, "today is a good day to die."

And a good place, maybe.

"Maybe they will not find us," she said.

He put his arm around her, and held her close for a moment. "Maybe not."

But they both knew.



It was late afternoon when the war party made its way along the path at the canyon's rim. Those below sat quietly, listening to the shuffle of feet and the words of conversation that they did not understand. Odin stood below, directly beneath the point where the rocky path led to the bottom. There was a moment when it seemed that the Shaved-heads had missed the trail and had gone on. Then, a one-word exclamation, and complete stillness.

The sassafras bush at the rim of the canyon was pulled cautiously aside, and a face peered down. There was an instant of recognition as the tracker looked into Odin's eye. Odin's bow twanged, and Ferret had no time to draw back, even. He toppled forward, tumbling and rolling through rocks and bushes, his limp form coming to rest against the trunk of a hickory halfway down the bluff.

Nils hurried quietly to Odin's side. Odin turned, a grim smile on his face.

"That," he said, "would be their tracker."

By the hammer of Thor, thought Nils, he still thinks we will escape!

Chapter 93

"They will attack in the morning," Odin said positively.

"There is not time now, before dark. They will search for any other ways down, probably attack from different directions, if they can."

It was nearly dark, and the fugitives sat in the mouth of the cave, warming themselves at the fire. There was no reason not to enjoy a fire now. Those who sought them already knew their location and their status. They might as well be comfortable on the last night of their lives.

Even Odin seemed to have abandoned any other hope. The Shaved-heads could keep them in the canyon. It would be possible to survive there for a little while, with water and small game. Sooner or later there would come an arrow from ambush, or a knife in the dark, and the fugitives would be one less, then another.

But neither Odin nor Nils felt that it would be that way. It was not the manner in which the Shaved-heads did things. No, in all likelihood, they had explored the canyon rim quite well before dark. They would have noted any possible paths in or out of its depths, and would plan an attack to overwhelm the fugitives.

"Would they wait a day?" Nils asked.

"Maybe," Odin answered. "But we must be ready tomorrow morning. If they do not come then, surely the next day."

Nils nodded, deep in thought. He had been fasting for a day, not entirely of his own choice, but their food supply was nearly nonexistent. He had



Photograph by J. Stoffers



saved his share for the child. Now he found that he was past the hunger pangs of an early fast, and into the next phase. That, as he had experienced before, produced a sharpening of all the senses, a bright, crisp clarity of thought. He still saw no way to survive their present situation, but was able to assess it more objectively.

If they were to meet their pursuers in one last battle, let it be so. He could die with a weapon in hand, like a true Viking. His companions, too. Their ways were, after all, not so different. But if a fight to the death is imminent, let it be on our terms, he thought. The idea was quickly expressed.

"Odin, let us attack them!"

"Attack?"

"Of course. This gives an advantage. Not much, but we do not have much."

"That is true. Attack before they are ready."

"Yes! Before dawn, just before—"

"We can slip up and over the rim. They will have campfire, will be sleepy, just getting up! It is good, Wolf."

Not good, thought Nils, but better than waiting to be killed.

They began to prepare themselves, though there was little to do. Their weapons had hardly left their hands for many days. Most of the preparation was emotional and personal. Calling Dove had indicated immediately that she, too, would go over the rim with them. The way she gripped her heavy war club left no room for argument.

"I do not intend to become a trophy for some Shaved-head's bed," she stated flatly.

She also took Bright Sky aside for a last lesson.

"I can go with you," he pleaded tearfully. "I can help."

"No, no, my son. But listen carefully now. You must stay here in the cave. If we come back for you, it is good. If the Shaved-heads come, your must remember: No matter what you are taught, you are a man of the People. In this you must take

pride, and remember our ways. When you can, go home to the People."

There was much about this that he might not understand, but she hoped that he would remember.

Odin was rebraiding his hair, making himself presentable for the crossing-over. Nils knew that Dove, too, would do so. He found himself wondering about what he should do to prepare for this final event.

He wished that he might send a message to his family. Well, they surely thought him dead anyway. They would have long since mourned for him, and recovered from their loss. Years had passed.

Still, he felt that he should leave some evidence of his passing. Maybe, sometime, another Norseman would come this way, and it might be of interest to note that one Nils Thorsson had been here. A bit of carving on a stone, perhaps. That slab down by the stream, maybe. It was so massive that no one could move it, yet smooth and flat on its face. He could stand to work on it, and sometime in the future someone could stand to read it easily.

A tool . . . all that he had was his short sword. Well, its point, finely tempered, would cut the limestone quite well. It would become dulled, but he could sharpen it. By sunrise it would matter little, anyway.

Now, what to carve? His name? Maybe, though pretty long. It should be something, though, to identify him. The colony at Straumfjord had known that he disappeared into the interior. Thorward Erickson, too, had known. If he could establish an approximate date, and a way to guarantee its truth . . . In the clarity of his fasting condition, he now began to realize, the simplest way to convey that the message was genuine would be to make it in the form of a riddle. One that only another Norseman would understand. He could use the old runes, taught by his grandfather. How pleased Grandfather would be.



Nils returned to the idea of a date. The exact date? He would have to guess because Sven's bark-calendar had been lost in the accident with the canoe. He counted days on his fingers. Early November, it must be, the Moon of Madness for the People. This struck him as an ironic joke, and he chuckled aloud. But did it matter?

"What is it, my husband?"

"It would be hard to explain, Dove. I was thinking of my grandfather. Thoughts that would please him."

"He is probably thinking of you, then."

"Grandfather is long dead, Dove."

"Of course. How else could he help you now?"

The hairs prickled on the back of his neck. The People were so straightforward, so understanding. No, not understanding. One can never understand, he had decided. Accepting. Of course, Dove had said, and she was right. He smiled. "Thank you, Grandfather," he murmured. Then he turned to the others.

"There is a thing I must do," he explained. "I would leave a message on the stone by the stream."

The others nodded. "I will stand watch," Odin said.

Nils approached the stone, stuck his torch in a crevice, and ran his hand over the smooth gray surface, planning the placement of the runic characters. Yes...nine in all, it would take. He placed the sword point on the rock and struck a blow with a hammer stone he had chosen from the stream bed. A chip of limestone flew off, leaving a small linear pit. Another, and another...Each character would be a little taller than the length of a man's finger. Now a careful shaping of each letter in the old alphabet, not in the current one.

Nils could practically feel his grandfather's smiling approval from over his shoulder. In fact, he looked around. There was nothing of his grandfather, but the moon was rising, just past full. He felt a calm, yet at the same time an excitement and exhilaration.

He wondered what the Shaved-heads must be thinking about the clinking metallic sounds that he was making. They would undoubtedly think it a ritual of some sort. In addition, they had been liberally supplied by Odin with the story of the white wolf.

The entire situation now struck him as a great joke, one quite appropriate to the Moon of Madness. He paused in his stonecutting and raised his head to utter a long-drawn quavering wolf howl. That should give the Shaved-heads something to ponder!

Even as he did so, the entire scheme of the thing seemed to fall into place before him. It was still probable that they would all die in the morning. But was that not the entire purpose of the berserker, to go out with honor in a blaze of glory. And was that not also the purpose of the Death Song of the People? It was much the same, except for the frenzy generated in the Norse berserker. Maybe even that, he thought.

As if in answer, there came floating down the ravine the high-pitched, plaintive melody of the Death Song, sung by two voices a little way apart.

"The earth and the sky go on forever..."

Nils raised his head and gave vent to another full-throated wolf howl. He could have sworn that there was an answer from somewhere beyond the next ridge.

"What are they doing?" demanded White Heron of his sentry.

The white of the young man's eyes showed plainly in the moonlight. He was very nervous.

"I do not know, Heron. A ceremony of some sort, maybe. That sound, like striking stones together, has gone on for a long time. I have seen nothing."

"Huh! They try to make powerful medicine, I suppose."

The young warrior nodded. It was plain that he would have preferred to be almost anywhere



else this night.

Now a chanting song rose from another place in the canyon.

"How many are there?" the nervous sentry asked, as if to reassure himself.

Heron snorted indignantly. "You know there are only two men, a woman and a child."

"I...I thought...maybe it sounds like more. Could anyone have joined them?"

"No one of this world," Heron snapped, and promptly wished that he had not said it. "Did you want to look over the edge to see?"

"No, no."

There had not been much incentive to stick one's head over the rim after what had befallen Ferret. His body was still lodged halfway down. At least, from what they had been able to determine from a quick look now and then. Now, with the chanting and the howls, no one cared to take much risk.

"This is all a trick," Heron explained. "We will kill them in the morning, and they know this. They have no magic that can stop six warriors."

He thought he saw doubt in the young man's eyes, but decided to drop the thought.

"Blue Dog is across on the other side," Heron informed the sentry. "We do not know if there is a way out there, but we must watch. I do not want these to escape."

"We will attack them at dawn?" asked the nervous sentry.

"Yes, as soon as it is light," answered Heron, turning on his heel.

Chapter 94

It was well before light, however, that Heron rose. He had not slept, and few of the others had. Soon, the sentry from the other side would join them, and they would be ready for the attack.

They had discovered no other satisfactory place to descend, so he planned to have bowmen on the rim to protect the first man or two into the canyon.

All knew the general attack plan, and would gather as they rose.

The sounds below had ceased some time ago, and there had been nothing but silence from the canyon. He still wondered about the odd clinking sound that had taken place. It had ceased shortly after the chanting and the wolf howls. Those howls had certainly been disconcerting. A chill crept up his spine at the recollection.

There had been a while after that, when a continuous grinding or scraping sound had issued from the canyon, as if someone was rubbing something very hard against a stone. A bone or a flint, maybe. He could not imagine for what purpose. The ritual medicine of the strange, possibly made, holy man, no doubt.

He still found it hard to think of that one as a serious threat, because of his white hair and blue eyes. Those marked him as old, and probably infirm. True, the skin of the holy man appeared young. The facial fur was white, too, and gave an odd appearance. Well, no matter. If the man was human, he would bleed and die like any other man. If he could actually change to a wolf, so be it. Wolves bled and died, too, did they not?

The moon was still giving quite a bit of light as Heron walked again to the sentry near the path's upper end.

"Anything?" he asked.

"No. Some slight sounds below. Nothing like last night."

"It is good. Are you ready for a fight?"

"Yes," came the answer.

At least the young man showed more confidence than he had earlier. "You can be a bowman here at the top," Heron said softly. "The others are rising. Soon, now!"

Heron turned to go, but caught a glimpse of motion at the sassafras bush that marked the head of the path. Something white, coming up and over the edge, a wolflike creature pulling itself up and over by its front legs. Then it saw him, and rose on

hind legs to rush at him. Something—a weapon? was held in its right paw, and its white skin gleamed in the moonlight. The weapon caught the moon's rays and reflected them like the flash of a silvery minnow in a clear stream. Blue fire seemed to flicker along its edges, and the white wolf-man raised it to strike. Heron knew that he was doomed, even before the horrible screaming howl came from a half-human throat. He could feel the creature's hot breath, and looked for an instant into its hairy face. The yes, wild and frightening—blue eyes.

Behind the wolf creature, other dark forms were pouring over the rim, and he heard the chanting, as he had in the night. All of these things were happening at once, flashing through his senses. There was a sound of running feet from the camp-fire, the twang of a bowstring, and the sound of a falling body. From the corner of his eye he saw the sentry struck down by one of the dark forms.

Then the weapon in the naked wolf-man's hand descended. There was no pain for a moment, only a numbness that began where his neck joined his left shoulder. He could not raise the arm. The blue eyes glared into his for another moment and the creature leaped high over Heron as he fell, to attack another foe.

Heron's sight was dimming fast. He tried to count...who was left? Anyone? And in his ears, the strange wail of the chanting mingled with another unearthly howl....

It was quiet now, the sun rising blood red behind the trees on the opposite rim of the canyon. Odin surveyed the scene, the dead bodies, and turned again to White Wolf.

That one sat on the ground, slowly coming out of the trancelike state that had occurred before, many years ago. Odin had doubted that they could survive, this time. Truly, the Norseman must have powerful medicine.

"We are not dead?" Nils asked, dazed. "Where is Dove?"

"Dove is safe. She went down to see about her son."

"It is good. The Shaved-heads?"

Odin looked around the area. "Dead, mostly. I am made to think there was a sentry across the canyon, but we did not see him. That is their chief, whom you struck down." He pointed to a still form a few paces away.

"Will they come back?" Nils asked dully.

"There is none to come back, Wolf. The sentry is maybe halfway home and still running. He will warn of your power."

Nils shook his head to clear it, and turned to see Dove climbing over the rim, leading Bright Sky by the hand. She smiled and came to kneel beside him.

"Are you feeling better?"

He nodded. "What now, then?" he asked

Odin shrugged. "Whatever we want. I am made to think, though, that this is a sign. When we go away from the People, bad things happen, no?"

"Say more," Nils requested.

Odin hesitated a moment. "Well...do you want to go back through the country of the Shaved-heads to find our canoe?"

Nils thought about it for a little while, his head now beginning to clear. Somehow, it seemed vastly more important that his family was safe.

"We could start to travel," Odin mused, half to himself, "winter with somebody north of here. Anyone can use two extra hunters, and with your powers, Wolf...Then, on north in the spring."

Nils looked at his wife and son. Somehow, it did not seem so important now to learn where the Ericksons might be this season, or the next, or what might have transpired at Straumsford. Or in Stadt. He placed an arm around the shoulders of Calling Dove as she knelt beside him, and the other around Sky.

"It is good," he said huskily. "Let us start home to the People."



Oklahoma Farm

by Kristopher Standley

Rickety truck rumbles through the gate
Sad-eyed cows poking out
of golden, dry wild grass
Dying tree—with wise old wood
Walk on pecan shells—'crack!'
Rusted barn with squeaking door
And the plump bumblebees
greet us, welcome us in their home
Breathe in the country smell of hay
Outside the sun becomes darkened
purple sky—but the cows still
lazily chew, and I still hear
the greetings of the bumblebees
the hum of the land





Photograph courtesy Ann Cates

Class Picture First Grade 1958

by Devorah Namm

No one looks happy except for Jimmie
 Whose coonskin cap hangs low over wooly eyebrows.
 Otherwise, four rows of children
 Stand like notes on sheet music
 Cacophony of striped shirts, bow ties,
 Poodle skirts turned partly round
 Unruly mass of arms mid air.
 In the back row, a halo of cowlicks
 Imprisoned with Brylcreme and water
 Scalps glistening on top.

The shortest of us, including me
 Sit on wooden chairs
 Ten pairs of knees press together
 Socks creeping down over untied shoes
 Ankles cross in salute
 To Miss Crain who stands
 Erect as a soldier
 All starch and patent leather.

Sometimes I stare at the faces of children
 As they pass by my window
 Transfixed by the wings of a butterfly
 Or the armies of ants under foot
 And I wonder what happened to Jimmie
 And the girl, front row center
 Eyes open wide
 Toward the light and the moment.

Crazy Quilt

by Lee Anne Fennell

They buried them in the morning and Tag stood by and watched, and when it was over, he started for the panhandle like he had promised, taking the northwest road out of the city until it turned without warning into a narrow, loping county two-lane. He was in for plenty, he thought, and would have turned back if he hadn't still been half-drunk from the day before, and so dazed and exhausted that the thought of changing course made his gums throb. During the smooth patches he gulped coffee, taking it like medicine, scalding his throat. *The main thing...* he said to himself as he swallowed, and then realized he'd forgotten the rest. *The main thing*, he said to himself again, but it was no use. He kept on driving.

The landscape was appallingly flat and unchanging, and it seemed he was making no progress at all. In every direction, as far as he could see, fields of tall, dead-looking grass were bent to the everlasting wind. Dead grass and red dust. They made him tired. The rental car didn't have a tape deck, and the radio was all static and gospel. He talked to himself out loud and pounded his hands against the steering wheel to keep from dozing off. After a while, he had to shut up because the things he was saying sounded crazy. He hadn't slept at all the past two nights. It was absurd for him to be here, on this road. But the old woman had insisted.

"I'm too old to take no for an answer," she'd said on the telephone, like that settled the matter. She spoke as if they were well acquainted, as if she had something to do with Tag's life. But she was only Jamie's grandmother, whom Tag had never met. Just the crazy old grandmother of the woman who used to be his wife. Jamie had called her BaBa.

Dead grass and red dust. He started speaking out loud again. *Red dust and dead grass. Dead rust and dread gas. Dread gust and red ass.* Any-

thing to make himself smirk, to make the miles pass.

But he returned to it again and again like a damaged tooth. The accident was pure bad luck. Someone in an El Camino had a seizure, crossed a median, hit a Honda Civic head on in plain daylight on a Saturday afternoon. Both cars were totalled, and everyone inside was killed. In the Civic was his wife and her mother, on their way to the shopping mall. His estranged wife, fled to her hometown to escape him; and his estranged mother-in-law, who was taking his estranged wife shopping as a kind of therapy to help her get over him, Tag, the estranged husband. Jamie had just turned twenty-four, and he'd missed her birthday. Death sealed it, he figured. He was estranged for good now. He would never even get an upgrade to ordinary widower.

The road was taking him nowhere, though the speedometer stood above sixty. He paced himself against the odometer for a few miles to see whether the speedometer might be broken, but it wasn't. He opened the window, hoping the wind would wake him up, give him a sense of motion, but it was cold and gusty and full of stinging dust and he had to pull over to rub his eyes.

He'd tried to reason with the crazy old woman. He told her that he'd only been Jamie's husband for a short while, not even two years, and that they had been separated when Jamie died.

"But not divorced?"

"No. Not divorced. Not legally."

"Then you were man and wife till death did you part. Just like God hath ordained."

Tag had never considered that God had anything to do with any of it, but he kept quiet. Instead he said, "I have to get back to Philadelphia. Much as I'd love to meet you, BaBa." The name sounded ridiculous, but she had insisted he call her



that. It made him feel disoriented, like a babbling infant. Maybe that was the point. "The thing is," he said, "it just isn't possible."

"Possible?" laughed the old woman. "Only God knows what's possible and what's impossible. You put your car on the road and drive, and then we'll see whether it's possible. If it's impossible, you'll find that out, too, I expect."

He'd given in at last, probably more from sleep deprivation than anything else. There was no question he was in a unique state. Still, there was something appealing in her words. "Put your car on the road and drive." It was something to do, something he was capable of. So here he was, driving. Only he hadn't expected it to be so bleak, so empty. He hadn't expected it to take so much out of him.

He tried to remember everything Jamie had told him about BaBa. There wasn't much. She lived in the middle of nowhere, on a farm identical to the ones spooling endlessly past him now. A dirt farm, Jamie'd said. "That's the crop? Dirt?" he asked, even though he knew she was trying to be serious, trying to say something serious about her family. She didn't answer him, just went on with more pitiful Dustbowl-era facts. BaBa never learned to drive. She never finished high school. She liked making quilts.

It was a "crazy quilt," of all things, that Tag was summoned to retrieve. BaBa's masterpiece. She'd made it for Jamie, and now she wanted Tag to have it.

There was no sun, and the hard white sky hurt his eyes. There was so much of it, surrounding him on all sides, and there was nothing in it, no clouds, no birds, no blue, just blank, impassive

white. Patterns started to swim before his eyes. The human eye was not set up for this kind of thing. There was no place to look.

Outside Fort Supply, the signs started: Hitchhikers May Be Escaping Mental Patients. Tag remembered Jamie telling him about her family's dark references about people "sent to Supply." He craned his neck to look at the buildings as he passed. He could not see anything particularly crazy about them. He told himself he would pick up any hitchhikers he saw, no matter how insane they looked. He could use the company.

At the funeral, no one had spoken to him, although plenty whispered and some even glared—hard, open, offended glares like they just couldn't believe he had the nerve to go on living. It was what he expected. He was someone to blame, in the flesh, a useful thing to have at a funeral.

At Slapout, Tag stopped for gas and coffee. Jamie'd told him the story of this town, too, told it right in the middle of an all-night convenience store near campus one giddy night when they'd first started dating. The store was out of something or other, some kind of beer, maybe, or his brand of cigarettes, and it reminded her of Slapout, where long ago someone had asked for bologna at the gas station, the town's only going concern, only to have the station attendant say, "Sorry, sir, we're slap out." Jamie told the story very dramatically, first putting her hands on her hips, pretending to be the ravenous bologna-seeker, then dropping her voice into a soft drawl, like Deputy Dawg, for the polite, apologetic station attendant.

The pink-faced man in the station, probably a direct descendent of the one who'd spoken the



Photograph by Steve Lounsbury

immortal words, laughed out loud when Tag tried to pay before pumping. "You aren't from around these parts, are you?"

"No." With an outsider's forced amiability. But he felt a sudden pure hatred for this alien, drawling, godforsaken wasteland. It had nothing to do with him. He went back out and stood in the wind and filled the tank. The wind made it cold, colder than it really was, and his suit jacket wasn't enough and his tie whipped backwards and twisted in the wind. The very fact he was out here was a sign his judgment was broken for good, that this had done him in. He darkly considered how far it was back to Fort Supply.

At last he was underway again. More coffee, scalding hot. It burned his tongue and his throat, and it splashed out of its styrofoam cup and burned his hand and soaked into his dark pants and burned there, too. He watched the horizon, where he could see an actual vanishing point that, over time, yielded up steel windmills and grain elevators and barbed wire fencing and sometimes a clapboard house, abandoned, and sometimes cows, which made him feel better, for some reason.

BaBa had had two children, Tag remembered. Two sons. The older son died as a child from blood poisoning when he cut his own hand with a knife. "I was only testing the blade," the boy cried over and over, thinking he would be punished. He kept on saying it until fever flushed his brain and he stopped making sense. Jamie used to tell this story all the time, even though it drove Tag crazy. She'd had to listen to it from her father her whole life growing up, and she thought she was entitled to tell it as often as she'd been forced to hear it. He'd been on her mind an inordinate amount, Tag thought, this phantom little boy, the uncle-to-be she had never met.

BaBa's younger son was Jamie's father, who had died the summer before last. A massive heart attack, out of the blue, while he was mowing the backyard. Jamie's mother found him on his knees with his head thrown back, the lawnmower churn-

ing on. Jamie was out working in the garden when the call came in that Sunday afternoon. Tag hung up the phone and watched her through the window for a while, working the dirt, oblivious, and then he went outside and said her name.

He gulped at the coffee, already lukewarm, tried to think about something else, tried to focus on the road, the fields, the blank sky. It wasn't any use.

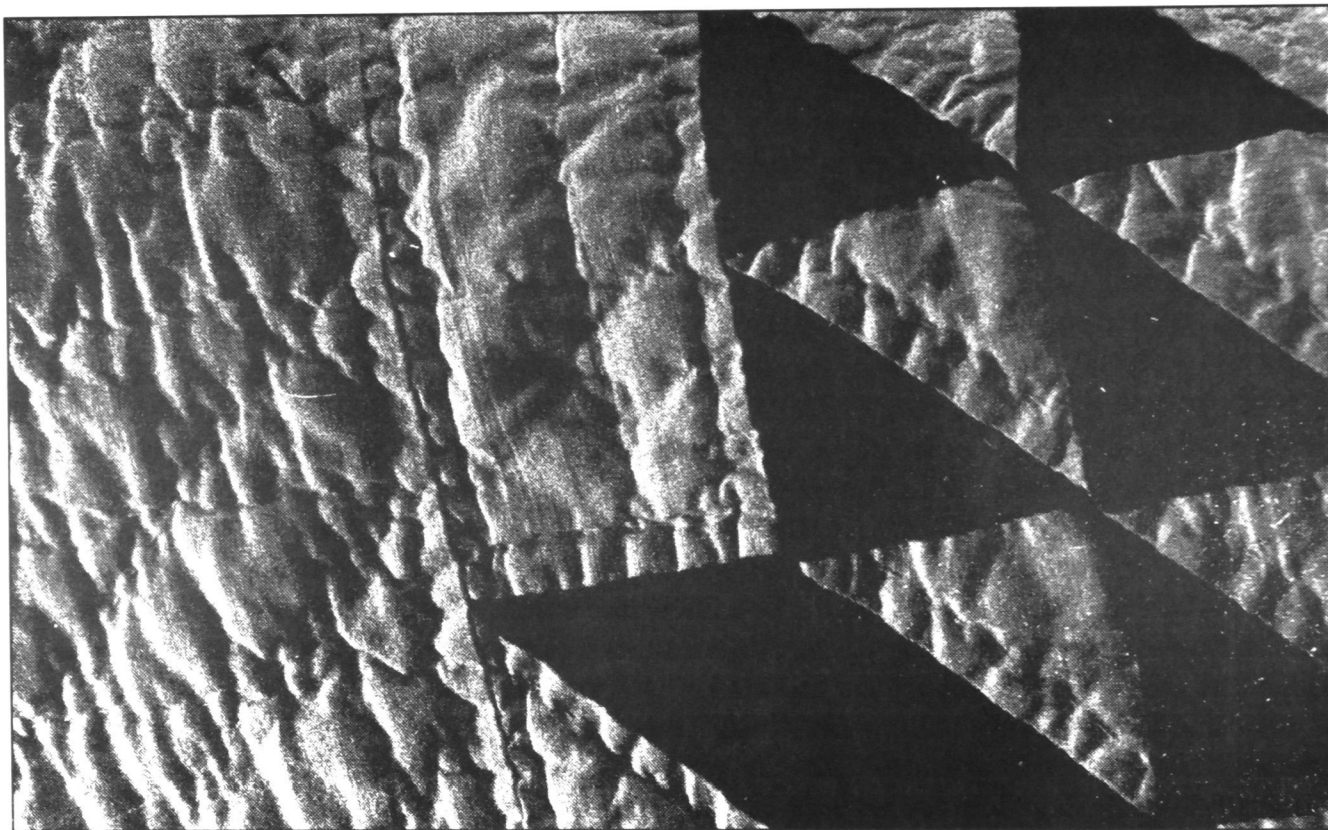
Finally he reached the place where BaBa had told him to turn, and he left the main road for a narrow gravel track which thinned over time into plain dirt. A windmill appeared, and then a farmhouse beside it, a green roof against the blank sky.

An old dog trotted up to the car when he turned in the drive and followed alongside, its tail thwacking against the side of the car. Tag was afraid the dog would get caught up underneath the car somehow, so he slowed and then stopped, a hundred feet from the house. He sat still, his ears ringing. The dog ambled off, tail aloft. It would look odd, furtive to leave the car this far out, Tag thought. He started the engine again and drove up to the house.

The place was so quiet and lifeless that Tag worried for a moment that the old woman might have died. Her health was failing, and she had been too frail to come to the city for the funeral. He rang the bell and waited, knocking dust off the bottoms of his shoes. He waited a long time, and then he tried the door. It was unlocked. He went in tentatively, calling out "BaBa, BaBa, it's me, Taggart." The house was dim inside and once his eyes adjusted, he saw that she was there, huddled in the corner of the sofa, her hands busy on a quilt. It looked like an exploding star, full of brilliant color. She was so much smaller than she had sounded on the phone. He couldn't get over it. She was lost in the cushions.

After a second, she looked up at him and frowned and twisted at her hearing aid. Her face had every possible crease and the frowning cut them deeper, made the corners of her mouth dis-





Photograph by Michael McKinney

appear altogether. Her eyes were strange, pale, almost white. "You took your time about it," she said, and pulled at the couch arm, trying to stand. "But I knew you'd make it yet, God willing." She rocked forward, sank back. Tag moved forward to help her up, started to reach out for her hands, but the skin on them was transparent, paper thin, and he was afraid he would hurt her. He didn't see how she could manage a sewing needle with those hands, or even a knife and fork.

BaBa grabbed at one of his arms with both hands and squeezed, hard, and pulled herself up, and he had to step back to keep his balance. She did not let go even then, just held onto him and looked him over, frowning, appraising.

"You may as well get what you came for," she said at last. She led him with dragging steps to a room in the back of the house that smelled of mothballs and cedar. On the bed was Jamie's crazy quilt.

Tag had never seen anything like it. A chaos

of colors, rich and deep and liquid: saturated blues and turquoises and purples and golds and reds and greens, concentrated, intense colors set off expertly against one another. He ran his fingers over the thick fabrics — corduroys and velvets and heavy flannels. There were thousands of separate pieces, and they were all irregular and perfect, intricately stitched together. It was hypnotic, compelling. It seemed impossible that such a thing could exist in the middle of a landscape so barren, so empty, so blank. Tag found that he wanted it very much, even though until that very moment he had never thought about quilts at all, one way or the other.

"It's beautiful," he said at last.

"It's yours," said BaBa.

"I can't take it. There's too much work in it."

"You don't have a choice."

Tag laughed, but the old woman's face didn't soften. She wasn't joking.

"You think I'm a peaceful old woman, but I'm

not at peace." Her eyes were almost as pale as the sky, and harder to look at. Tag stood there dumbly, staring at the quilt.

"It's just, I'm not family," he said at last.

"You think I don't know?" said BaBa. "I know you aren't my family. You're no kin to me and I don't know you from Adam. I didn't make this quilt out of any love for you, make no mistake, mister."

"I'm sorry," he said. And he was. Sorry for her, sorry for Jamie, sorry for Jamie's mother, and her father, and the uncle she never knew and the children she never had. And sorry for himself, too, for everyone he'd lost. "It's been a strange week," he said at last. "Maybe I shouldn't have come out here."

"The earth is going to close over this family." She stared past Tag. "I'm all that's left, and the earth is going to close over me, and the house will be torn down, and there will be nobody left to remember that such people as us walked on this earth."

"It's the same for everyone," Tag said. "For you and me alike and everybody else everywhere." He hoped she would snap out of this apocalyptic mode before things got any worse, before she broke down, or broke something in herself that he was ill-suited to fix.

"I had a beautiful granddaughter named Jamie that I loved. I made this quilt for her, and it is nothing, just old rags and thread, but it has love in it, and remembering. There was such a one here as Jamie, and she was lovely, and I loved her." She was speaking softly now, almost to herself.

Tag wanted to promise that Jamie would never be forgotten, or BaBa either, but he could see already how things might go. He saw his own great granddaughter, descended from a woman he hadn't even met yet and couldn't imagine meeting, grown up and in charge of dissolving an estate, pulling the crazy quilt out of mothballs in a dusty attic or

dank cellar when an old house had to be sold, touching the fabrics, surprised at the intricacy of the workmanship. If she was a particularly thoughtful soul, which he hoped she would be despite his genetic input, she might ask those still among the living where it had come from, and whose it had been. Would anyone be able to remember the answer? Tag didn't know. All he could do was fold the quilt as carefully as he knew how.

BaBa seemed to have worn herself out. She swayed and reached out for Tag, and he helped her back to the couch and she sank into the cushions.

"You have a long haul back, I expect."

"Yes, ma'am. I should get going." The quilt was in his arms and he wondered what else he should say. He glanced around the room. There were photographs everywhere, all over the walls and standing in frames on every surface the sideboard, the television set, the coffee table. Tag was in some of them. A wedding picture, an unflattering one, his mouth open for cake like a snake with unhinged jaws going for a goose egg. Jamie, beautiful, feeding him. A picture from their honeymoon, his hair wet from swimming, making a face for the camera, for the face behind the camera, Jamie's. There were cards, too, and piles of letters, and he recognized Jamie's peach stationery, her careless printing.

BaBa had gathered the quilt-in-progress into her lap and was examining the edges, her hands moving steady and sure over needlework that would outlast her, that would outlast Tag, too. He watched for a moment, waiting to see if she would say anything else, half hoping she would keep talking, that the two of them could keep talking. But she was absorbed in her work, and there wasn't anything else to say anyway. He stood there, awkward, for a few seconds more, and then he turned and went out into the cold wind, into the blank afternoon, the quilt bright and heavy in his arms.



The Sight of the Blind

by Eileen Hennessy

For those who hunt the country night
(what a beautiful black it is!),
blind guides are best for feeling
its legs and nethers and steaming trunk
and proclaiming it Night in all its parts.
But in the city, where night
is as bright as day,
ah, there the situation becomes unclear.
It was at night in the city that

my glaucoma'd aunt baked a silver knife
into my cousin's wedding cake,
my cataracted mother threw away a spoon
in a collapsing ice-cream box.
What matter that they could still
see themselves in the face
of our hand-polished mirror?
Loss had come to them and gone,
and they had not felt it
brush against their arms.

Katy's Last Apple

by Jack Barry

Cal went over it all again as she headed out to feed the sheep. There's no question about digging a grave, she thought. That much is for sure. But, really, do I dig it now, while she's still alive, or later, when the ground will be frozen like a road. She frowned as she unlatched the gate and passed through the paddock.

Since it had turned cold, Cal had approached the barn more slowly each morning, holding her breath as she counted the heads that were always watching her no matter how quietly she approached.

Her eyes stopped on the shrunken old ewe lingering in the shadows. "Kay-tee," she called, wading through the others. "You, Snow White, Fay Wray," she pointed at two startled-eyed sisters. "You wouldn't even be here if it weren't for Katy." As she knelt in the straw with the old sheep, the others regrouped by the hay rack, watching her closely while they waited for their hay.

She turned her back to them and reached for Katy's white face, molding her hand to the knobby skull, and offering pieces of the apple she always brought now, running her hand through the thick, oily coat which left the warm smell of hay and sheep with her all day. "Well, old gull," she murmured. "There's not much left now, is there?" At last she rose to feed the others, reassured that this was not the day she'd have to call in and tell them that she'd be coming in later.

The six in the barn were the last of a larger flock Cal had raised for ten years, and Katy had been with her from the start, a pure-bred Cheviot and the natural leader, even when there had been thirty big ewes and their wandering lambs. Cal hadn't been able to part with Katy when she'd moved from the old farm, and as attached as she was to the others, she'd taken them to keep Katy company; a sheep's worst fear, she knew, other than being killed, is to be left alone. She had

appointed herself caretaker of these six until they died, and after them there'd be no more. No more lambs, no more auctions, no more butchers. They were all retired.

And now Katy was the first to get ready to go. Cal hadn't thought it would have happened so soon. She'd buried her share of dead lambs, but she'd never had any of her adult ewes die on her. She remembered once a cow dying next door, and the men had come with a backhoe to bury it. They said it wasn't good to eat a cow that just died. It was better to kill it. She'd thought of at least keeping Katy's old skin to remember her by, but she couldn't picture burying her without it. Where Katy's going, she told herself, she'll be needing it worse than I do.

Then the undug grave would return and she'd try to think of something else. Yes, she'd have to dig a hole, and it would have to be dug deep, so the dogs and coyotes couldn't dig it up. But it hadn't seemed right to dig it before Katy died, though she'd only half believed the story her Uncle Stephen had once told her, about digging a grave for his old terrier, who had seen it right after it had been dug and absolutely refused to die afterward, preferring instead to rot alive, bursting, finally, like some furry watermelon left too long in the sun. No, it didn't seem right to dig a grave too soon.

Each morning a thicker frost painted the fields and still she did nothing, living between the anxious days that piled up around her. Cal stiffly maintained her daily routine, going to work, feeding the animals, lighting the fire, going to sleep, not once stopping to consider that she might be hoping to put off the endless passing of time with nothing more than dogged habit.

Soon she could not pass the sheep without feeling that Katy's eyes were on her, either, she was sure, in a mute plea for relief, or with re-





Photograph by J. Stoffers

proach for not preparing the place she would go when she died, until Cal wanted to scream at Katy when she passed, "What do you want from me!" She started avoiding the sheep when she could, walking around the barn on her way to the wood pile, racing past them in her car when she went to work, but all the time she thought of the old girl, patiently waiting in the hard field for the last thing to happen.

It grew colder and Cal saw that Katy would really start suffering soon; there was no fat on her like the others, and her coat had stopped growing in the middle of the summer. For the first time she thought that maybe she'd have to have her killed, and she found herself hoping that Katy would just die. But she feared that she wouldn't die until a grave was dug, and that if a grave was dug she wouldn't die, and then she'd have to kill her, and if she was going to kill her she'd better get a grave dug, and the ground was freezing, and this all went around and around inside her in the middle of the night, and when she had a chance she wondered how it was she'd never gotten any further in life than agonizing over an old sheep while the ground froze beneath her.

Finally, one day at the end of November Katy stopped eating. Until then she'd at least gone through the motions, bending her head to the dead grass like the others, snuffling a few pellets of grain from Cal's hand. All she really showed enthusiasm for were the apples Cal would bring her, grinding them to pulp with her worn-out teeth while Cal fended off the others. And then one day she refused the apple.

The next day was a raw Saturday and Cal spent the morning around the barn, banging down a few loose nails she had noticed and raking out the damp floor. But most of the time she just watched Katy, fearing that she wouldn't be there to watch much longer.

It seemed to her that there had never been a time when she couldn't look out a window and see Katy outside, her head lowered to the grass

like the others, but a little apart, as the flock ebbed around the fields in a ragged tide. She wondered who would step forward when Katy was gone, how it would be decided. There wasn't really much for the leader of a backyard flock to do anyway, she thought; though, every once in a while a neighbor's dog would get in and run them around for a while, until Katy would take a stand, stamping her hoof like an old warrior's spear. She remembered the summer they'd dug a new foundation behind the old barn, and Katy would rush to the fence every morning when the backhoe went by, ears forward, stamping a challenge to that roaring yellow monster until it retreated. Who would do that now?

Katy ambled over to her, sighing as she lowered herself near Cal's feet, gazing after the others with the half-closed eyes of an old tribeswoman, content with her accomplishments and pleased at last that there is nothing more she has to do but wait for the end.

The next morning Cal put an apple in her pocket and went out to the barn. This time, only five heads turned toward her as she peeked inside. She could see Katy's huddled body in the shadows at the back of the barn. Sure, she's only sleeping, she told herself, unlatching the gate slowly, holding back from racing to her. The other sheep didn't crowd her as usual when she stepped in, but darted from her in tight circles, veering away from the still body while Cal knelt down beside her. She placed one hand on the sheep's protruding, half-closed eye, smoothing the short white wool with the other. The grainy dust that the other sheep had kicked up slowly filtered down. She had always thought she would cry when Katy died; she took a breath and tried to close Katy's upturned eye. Behind her, the sheep rustled anxiously in the straw, waiting to be fed.

Her tears didn't come until later, when she carried out a tattered quilt her grandmother had



made her when she'd been a girl. Katy really wasn't going to be there anymore, she realized—one of them wasn't going to be there. She wiped her eyes and chased the sheep out of the barn, carefully spreading the quilt in the straw beside Katy. Like a picnic, she thought, her breath steaming in the dank barn. Her plan was to roll Katy onto the blanket and then drag her into a cart and take her to the woods. She didn't want to ask anyone to help. She wanted to do this her own way.

She winced when she stuck her hands under Katy to roll her over—as cold as the day was, her body was still warm under there. Cal closed her eyes and flipped her, pulling her by the stiff legs onto the quilt. She marched into the other room to find the cart and shovel.

Cal stumbled out to the woods that afternoon, wondering what a good place to dig a grave would look like. She tried digging under the huge white pine, but wherever she started, the roots were too thick. Slowly she gravitated to an open bed of moss. Cozy enough to lie on, she thought, kicking her shovel into the soft earth. In a short time she had dug a rectangular pit in the loose topsoil, slowing down at the next layer of dense gray clay. As she took her coat off, she looked back at Katy lying on the cart; she turned quickly back to the hole, redoubling her efforts through a haze of tears. When the hole grew deep enough, she dropped down inside, flinching as her back pressed against the cold clay. The clay grew harder the deeper she dug. Her hands began to ache and she repeatedly banged her elbows against the steep walls. There were few rocks, but the clay became so dense that she gripped the shovel down near the blade and scratched the walls out, flinging her long hair from her face as she bent and gathered the icy shavings in her bare hands, tossing them out as neatly as if she were scraping her own

dirty oven. Finally, she could dig no deeper. A fine mist had gathered among the branches above her when she pulled herself out, breathing heavily, not bothering to wipe the mud from her hands. She leaned on her shovel, gazing down at the hole, judging its depth and neatness, not thinking of what she had dug it for, until she realized that the woods were slowly growing darker.

She put on her coat and turned at last to Katy. "You've waited patiently all this time," she said. "Just like you always did." She pulled the cart up to the hole. The hole looked deeper now, too deep to put anything in but the dirt that had come out of it. She leaned over and grabbed the quilt, dragging Katy from the cart, the sheep's pulpy organs groaning as she hit the ground. Then Cal rolled her into the hole.

Katy landed on her side, as she had lain on the barn floor that morning, the quilt wrapped around her shoulders like a shawl. Cal stopped before filling the dirt back in, bending to tear some ferns to drop over Katy's body. Like palm fronds, she thought. Then she remembered the apple, still in her pocket from that morning. She trembled as she reached down and placed the apple next to Katy's head, where she could find it if she ever needed it. The red apple looked out of place in the dark hole.

The tears came when the first heavy earth thumped down on Katy's body; she hadn't thought that filling the grave would be harder than digging it. She bent and tossed the next shovelful down, and the next, avoiding the calm white face as long as she could, not daring to stop until a broad mound marked the place where Katy was buried.

It was almost dark when she scraped the heavy clay from the shovel and turned back to the house. It was just about time to feed the sheep.

Visit

by Earl Coleman

There is no drama here
(Although my sister was a snowdrop
Once in PS 41, and once a queen).
The color tiles are green,
Nurse's station cubbyholed
With paperwork, insurance forms.
My sister's form is draped
With something, nightgown,
Shapeless sheet with cotton belt
And holes for arms.
She slumps against the steel
Restraining bar, staring sullenly
Out bolted windows at the moving cars,
No less a prisoner of her cells
Than I of mine.
I set an ice cream bar before her
On a paper plate. Her eyes light up.

The Revenge of the Dingbat

by Billie Preston

Every college dorm has its dingbat . . .
Though intelligent, not altogether,
Who endures the daily digs and jokes
Directed at her expense
For the fun of the rest . . . the totally together
We had ours.
The most fun was when we fixed her
 up with this guy who still wore leisure suits.
She got even by liking him
 . . . and married happily ever after
Some of the totally together are still searching.

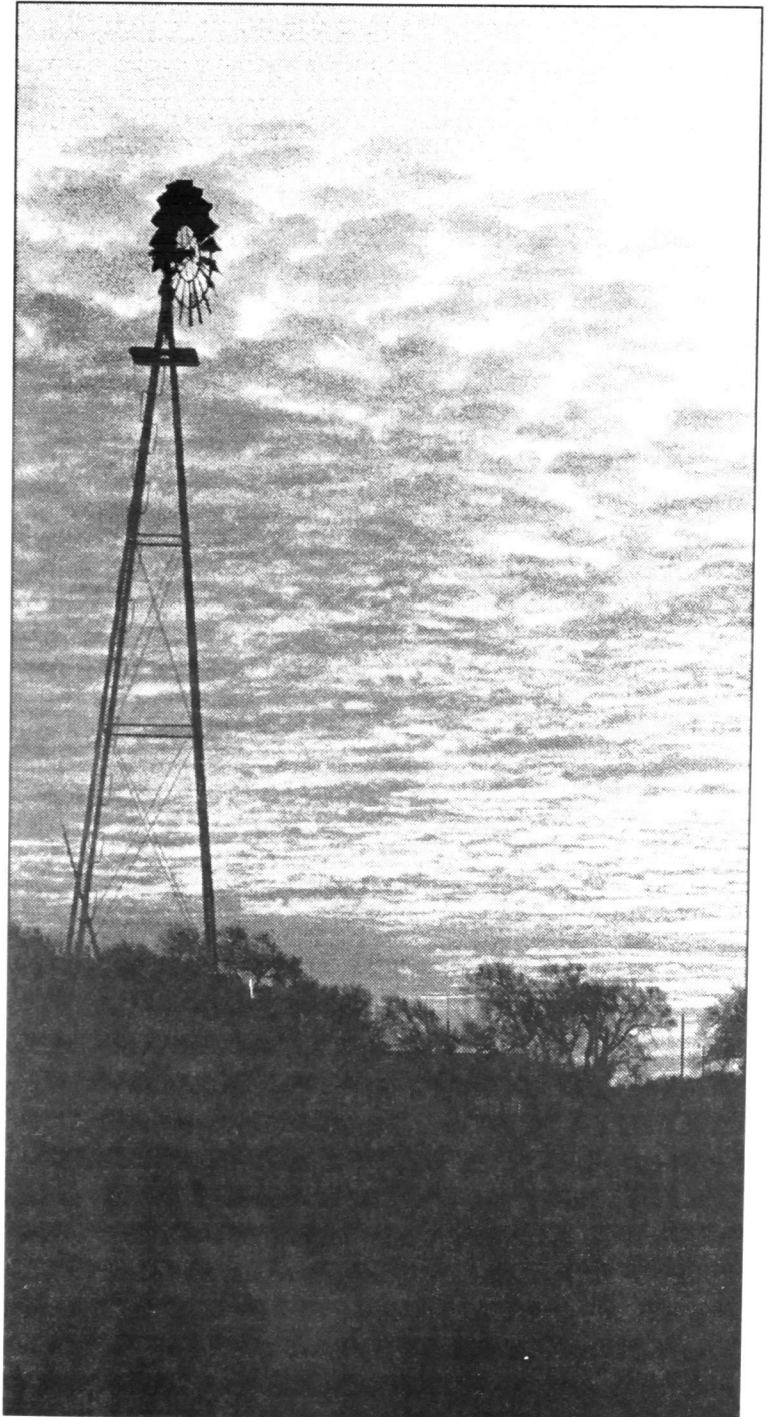
Space

by Jack Rickard

Where a speck in the distance
takes hours to reach his house—
a car appearing where none has been
for months, he watches storms
from his porch, dissipate,

like his chicken coops, his barn
grown humorous around the edges.
Says he's seen rain before—
a flash flood that took his fence,

his wife, declared she was fullup—
of dust and space, no women
to talk with — left a sink full of dishes.
Her apron hangs on the kitchen door,
limp as his days,
painted blank and meaningless—
rushing toward the night
caught in a great net of stars.



Photograph by Steve Lounsbury

John Sprockett: November 1873, A Cabin in South Park

by Robert Cooperman

I'll not commit these thoughts to paper,
for if that spying weasel, Henry Crane,
sneaks a glance, I'll dirty
noose-high drifts with his pig-shitty blood.
He cuckoos nests others have made,
forever blinking big, consumptive eyes
to get Miss Starling to bake him cakes
or read to him, she innocent of his mischief.

Yesterday, while she was attending to
her dried, stiff skirt—snow-thick clouds
fatter than she-bears in August—
I grabbed his fancy Boston gullet.
“Insult Miss Starling’s honor,”
I growled,” and you’re wolf bait.”



Photograph by Richard Garrity

“Beauty and the beast,” he smirked.
I was about to hurl him
through the oil-paper window
when Miss Starling returned;
he coughed, more to snare her sympathy
than from the consumption he whines
sent him west—to get stuck with us,
blizzards like the end of the world,
our food stores dwindling like sand,
and him claiming a convalescent’s tapeworm.

Worst, his “mother me” ways women love.
Devil knows where mothering ends
with a man who studied preaching.
I don’t know how much longer
I can keep from killing him:
a bottle of whiskey hid in the rafters.
For her sake, if not mine or his,
I should golden the snow with it,
but let it lie, hear its fiery whisper.

From the Diary of Sophia Starling
Early December, 1873,
A Cabin in South Park

by Robert Cooperman

A wonder the ink doesn't freeze;
John sometimes gone all day, chopping wood,
lugging the logs like an elk carcass.
What we wouldn't give for a fat buck,
to feed us all winter, if it comes to that.
I'd write Aggie, but I fear the letter
will never be mailed to England
though John says this snow cannot last.
I see fear in his eye, when he returns
with a hare, more fur than meat.

Mr. Crane, our wandering consumptive,
has the look of a card cheat.
My every grudging civility to him
John takes as a sign of love.
He will kill the man unless I tightrope
between amity and indifference.
It's like being adored by a cougar.

We had to take Mr. Crane in, wind howling
like the seven dialects of Hell,
yet I sometimes wish he had perished
in the drifts before he found our wisp of smoke.
My sin is thus blacker than Mr. Crane's lungs
that sound clear as an April stream to me.
God has punished my wanton thoughts
of Mr. Sprockett's rough charms
with the stench of professional helplessness
that clings to Mr. Crane's clothes,
his brain darting for a wedge
between John and me.



26 December 1873: Letter from Sophia Starling To Her Sister

by Robert Cooperman

My Own, My Dear, Dear Aggie,
I am writing in the snow-blind hope
that I will live to post this letter.
We—Mr. Crane, a wandering consumptive;
John Sprockett, and I—
are trapped in a cabin in South Park:
a valley in the maw of ice-dragon peaks.

We spent a miserable Christmas:
rather than sing the Lord's Nativity in joy—
for we're alive, if slowly starving—
it was a day of raging storms,
weather even more fierce inside our cabin:
Mr. Sprockett broke his temperate resolve
and unearthed the bottle he had hid, muttering
curses at Mr. Crane, late of a Boston seminary:
coming west, he claimed, for his lungs.
I suspect a breach of conduct with a chargirl.

Unable, for my sake, to thrash the barking cur,
John drank; the verses he can quote like Keane
slippery as mud on his tongue.
I sobbed at his fall.
Finally, John stormed into the snow
in search of anything to fill our stomachs.

A miracle he returned, bent under
a buck's carcass, but spoiled his gift
by finishing the bottle I had failed to hide.
Still, the meal gave us strength, and better, hope.
I am a lax aunt and godmother,
but shall fill the children's arms with presents,
their heads with tales of terrible John Sprockett,

upon, God willing, my return to England.
If the weather ever clears, we can escape
on the snow-shoes he has fashioned from antlers.
I shall sprint back to Denver,
be it drowning in ten thousand saloons,
companied by the strangest Galahad
I have ever met.



Photograph by Richard Garrity

On the Coldest Night of 1873, Sophia Starling Dreams of Being Deflowered by Her Guide, John Sprockett

by Robert Cooperman

Precious columbines bugle fanfares
under a sky blue as John's eye.
He smiles, holds me with hands
suddenly soft as a peer's, and miracle!
his face healed of the grizzly's ripping.

Our clothes fall like uncinched saddles;
grass tickles my face, my bosom,
and I'm ashamed of nothing.
His kisses wander like a hummingbird
that sips and darts and sips again.

Aching, I wake; the hearth, embers,
Mr. Sprockett hunting before dawn
to keep us from starving one more day.
Mr. Crane whimpers, shakes like a mouse;
I toss him my bedroll, stumble to the hearth;
the siftings of snow I sweep out the door
slap back at my face.

Mr. Crane whines we must lie together
or perish of the cold.
"We'll die then," I tell
the alleged consumptive.
"But first I'll have a cup of tea."
The fire spits like a lynx.
I hide a slab off the last loaf
for John's empty stomach when he returns;
if Mr. Crane noses it out,
I'll flatten his face with the skillet.

Dawn rims the drifts with crimson;
Mr. Crane nibbles a cracker like a rat.
How long, I wonder, before Mr. Sprockett
will kill the whelp and feed on him?
My own starvation would acquiesce,
any love between us flown like a raven—
after partaking of that unholy supper.



Henry Crane, After the Departure Of Sophia Starling and John Sprockett

by Robert Cooperman

I couldn't have Miss Starling
so I settled for this uncaulked shack
and a third of the mule deer carcass
Sprockett carved before they left.
He muttered like a murderous genie,
dying to slice me collarbone to navel
if not for her protectress' eye.

What a pair of chaste lovers:
she a cultured English beauty;
he the most notorious killer
never caught by trembling sheriffs
in the history of the territory.
The tales told of him
make most men foul their trousers.
Consumptive, I had nothing to fear.
Had he shot me if I'd managed to snatch
Miss Starling's maiden treasure,
I'd have thanked him: Paradise
on earth and in the world to come.

A novel pet for a lady
used to lap-dog gentlemen,
he's a grizzly she had safely muzzled
until Christmas afternoon,
when, tormented by my clever barbs
and unable to swat me, and offend
her delicacy with a murder,
he drank off a bottle of whiskey,
then shot the deer that saved us,
provided frames for their snow-shoes,
and left me this cabin in peace.

If only I can induce a Ute squaw
to share it and lighten my last winter,
at least what I'd tell her,
a tear clinging to an eyelash,
if displays of misery work on savages.

Somehow, that brute Sprockett has memorized
more poems than I could intone Scripture
at the seminary I was forced to leave
for exorcising a cleaning girl
of her whorish ways.

To be continued in future issues.

Cooperman's poems are from *The Badman and the Lady* soon to be published by Basfol Books.



Contributors' Notes

Jack Barry grew up outside Boston, Massachusetts. After years of manual labor and hitchhiking around the United States, he surrendered to his cultural legacy, graduating *magna cum laude* from the University of Massachusetts/Amherst in 1989. He now does manual labor and writes, commuting year-round from a tree house above a beaver pond in western Massachusetts.

Don Coldsmith has written more than thirty books, 150 magazine articles, and 1,300 newspaper columns over the last twenty-six years. The bulk of his fiction is in a series of historical novels, the *Spanish Bit Saga* (Bantam/Doubleday) about the Native Americans of the Great Plains beginning with the earliest European contact. There are now more than six million copies in print, as well as British, German, and French editions. Oklahoma University Press will publish upcoming new titles of the saga. Coldsmith is a past president of Western Writers of America, and has taught in the Division of English, Emporia State University. He has been a nominee five times for the Western Writers' Golden Spur Award, and won the Spur for best original paperback of 1990 for *The Changing Wind*. He was chosen Distinguished Kansan of 1993 by the Native Sons and Daughters of Kansas and received the Edgar Wolfe Award for lifetime contribution to literature in 1995.

Earl Maxwell Coleman has published prose in *Esquire*, *Fiction*, *Hawaii Review*, *Talking River Review* and *New Writers 10*. His poetry has been published in *Amelia*, *The Cape Rock*, *Chaminade*, *Fuel*, *Light*, *The Lyric*, *Skylark*, *Small Pond*, and others. His short story "Weight and Weightless" was nominated for this year's Pushcart Prize.

Robert Cooperman's second collection, *The Badman and the Lady*, is forthcoming from Basfol Books. His work has appeared in *The Centennial Review*, *Cimarron Review*, and *North Dakota Quarterly*. His first book, *In the Household of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, was published by the University Press of Florida.

Richard Dixon lives in Norman, Oklahoma. He has spent the last thirty years teaching school, the last fifteen of those as a high school teacher of learning disabilities and as tennis coach. His published work is included in anthologies of poetry and fiction of the Individual Artists of Oklahoma, as well as various other anthologies and chapbooks.

John Donley was born in Weatherford, Oklahoma in September of 1927. He was reared in the Arapaho community and graduated from high school there. He served two years in the Army and then attended the University of Oklahoma for six

years, receiving a law degree in 1954. He was the Custer County Attorney and Assistant County Attorney for six years, and practiced law in Clinton until 1967, when he moved to Weatherford and established his office, where he still practices. He was the chairperson of the Cabin Committee which restored and moved the historic Blair cabin during Weatherford's Centennial in 1998. He is an active member of Weatherford's Museum Committee.

Lee Fennell grew up in Oklahoma City and often visited her paternal grandparents in the panhandle town of Hooker. Before entering the MFA program at the University of Virginia as Henry Hoyns Fellow in fiction, she practiced law for several years. She has previously been published in two law reviews and has a short story forthcoming in the *Antietam Review*. She currently lives in Charlottesville, Virginia with her husband and three dogs.

John Gery's collection, *The Enemies of Leisure*, received a 1995-96 Critic's Choice Award in Poetry and was selected as a Best Book of 1995 by *Publisher's Weekly*. He teaches literature and creative writing at the University of New Orleans and the Ezra Pound Center at Brunnenburg Castle, Italy.

Joan Cusack Handler's work has appeared in *Poetry East*, *Agni*, *Feminist Studies*, *Madison Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and *Wisconsin Review* among others. She was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 1993, 1995, and 1996. She was the first prize winner of the 1992 Chester H. Jones and Gloucester County Competitions. She is a member of the advisory board of the Frost Place in Franconia, New Hampshire and the coordinator of the *Presenting Poetry and Prose* reading series at the John Harms Center for the Arts in Englewood, New Jersey.

Tom Hendrix is a poet, freelance photographer, and song writer. Tom and his wife live at Lake Benton in Central Texas. He has authored two poetry chapbooks, *Love Brackets* and *Find Me a Sand Dollar*. His poetry has been published in various books of poetry, literary journals and magazines, including *Poetry in Motion*, *New Voices*, *Potpourri*, *Oatmeal and Poetry*, and *Poetic Page*.

Eileen Hennessy holds an MA in creative writing from New York University. She is a Ph.D. student in the Arts and Humanities Education program at NYU. She began her professional career as a translator of books but is now an adjunct associate professor in the translation studies program at NYU. Her work has been published in *The Paris Review*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, and *The New York Quarterly*.



Ray Johnson has published two novels: *The In Vitro Madonna and Disappearances*. He also wrote the screenplay for the movie, *Texas Tall Man*. He lives in Clovis, California and is enrolled in the master of fine arts program at Fresno State University.

Helen Maxson is an Associate Professor of English at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. Her publications include critical essays on Virginia Woolf, Oscar Wilde, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Edgar Allan Poe, as well as several personal essays. Raised in New England, she has lived in Oklahoma for nine years and, as a result, is coming to see Robert Frost in a new light.

Walter McDonald's latest book is *Counting Survivors* (University of Massachusetts Press). Two other books are *After the Noise of Saigon* (University of Massachusetts Press) and *Night Landings* (HarperCollins). He has published fifteen collections of poems and one book of fiction for presses such as University of Pittsburgh Press, University of North Texas Press, University of Massachusetts Press, Ohio State University Press, Spoon River Poetry Press, and Texas Tech University Press. He has published more than 1,600 poems in journals and collections, including *American Poetry Review*, *The American Scholar*, *The Antioch Review*, *The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Georgia Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *The Nation*, *New England Review*, *New York Review of Books*, *The Ohio Review*, *The Paris Review*, *Poetry*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Prairie Schooner*, *The Sewanee Review*, *Shenandoah*, *The Southern Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Westview*. His awards include three National Cowboy Hall of Fame's Western Heritage Awards, two National Endowment for the Arts Creative Writing Fellowships, and four Texas Institute of Letters Awards.

Vonda (Ruckman) McPhearson was born in Hydro, Oklahoma. Her roots in Weatherford extend back to before Weatherford was established; her grandmother homesteaded on a farm north of town. She has been devoting her time to the preservation of the history of this area. She has been involved with *Weatherford Families Past and Present* and is currently working on the Hydro history book which will be out in April, 1999. She is president of the Western Plains Weatherford Genealogical Society, a member of the Museum Committee, and is a member of the Cabin Committee which was instrumental in moving a 100-year-old cabin into Weatherford in time for the Centennial Celebration. She was the chairman of the project to inventory the cemeteries in Custer County and get them into book form.

Devorah Namm has a Ph.D. in Communications from the University of Pittsburgh. Several of her plays have been produced, and it has only been recently that she has written poetry. Currently, she is the vice president of Learner Services at Thomas Edison State College.

Kim Pankhurst is a wife, mother of four, English Education major at SWOSU, and artist. Prints for *Sedona Trail* and other works are available at 430 N. Randlett, Hobart, Oklahoma 73651.

Billie Preston is a retired teacher and a graduate of the University of Oklahoma. Her publication experience includes "You Give Me The Willie's," a series of children's short stories; an educational article in *Newsweek*; and an education article in the *National Teacher/Parent Handbook*. One of her poems was published in *the Desert Sun*, while another will be published in *Best Poems of 1997*.

Jack Rickard, a teacher of American and World History, has received a distinguished teacher award from the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, a presidential citation for environmental work in the Grand Canyon in conjunction with the National Parks Service. He is a recipient of a Pablo Neruda prize for poetry from *Nimrod*. He is also an artist of the Southwest, noted for his paintings using a thousand-year-old marbling paper technique.

Kristopher Standley is a full-time advertising manager at Pepperdine University. He enjoys using poetry as a link to his Native American heritage. He finds Sedona, Arizona is an inspiring place for writers, and he tries to visit there often. He has also written two novels and a screenplay.

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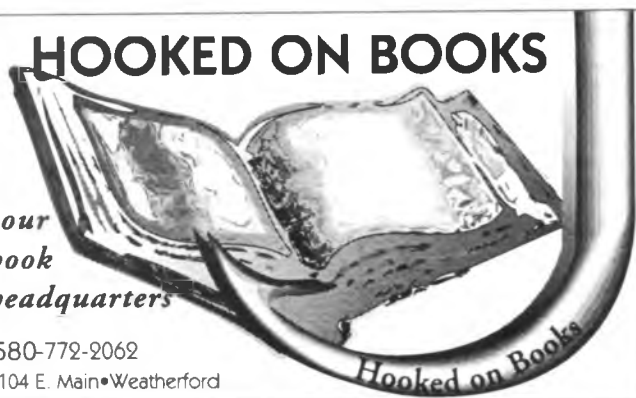
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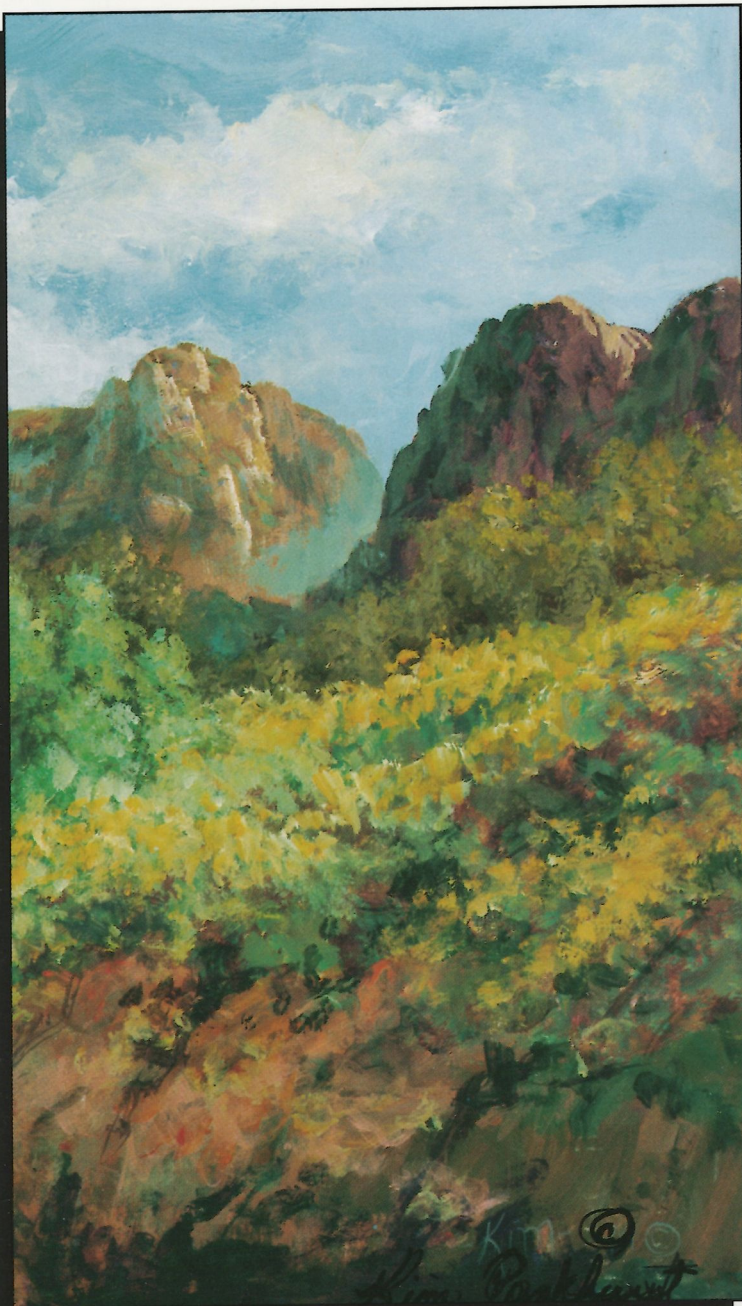
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