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A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

# WESTVIEW

VOLUME 16

NUMBER 1

FALL/WINTER 1996

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• PHOTOGRAPHY •



A JOURNAL OF WESTERN OKLAHOMA

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VOLUME 16

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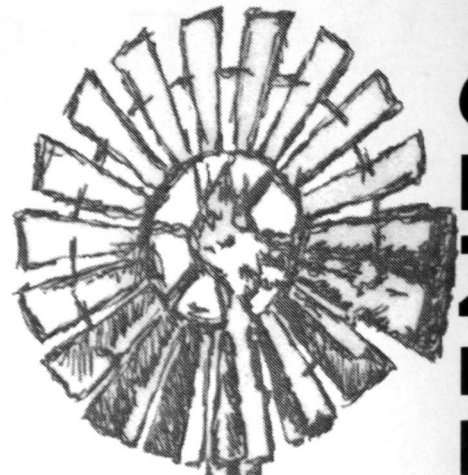
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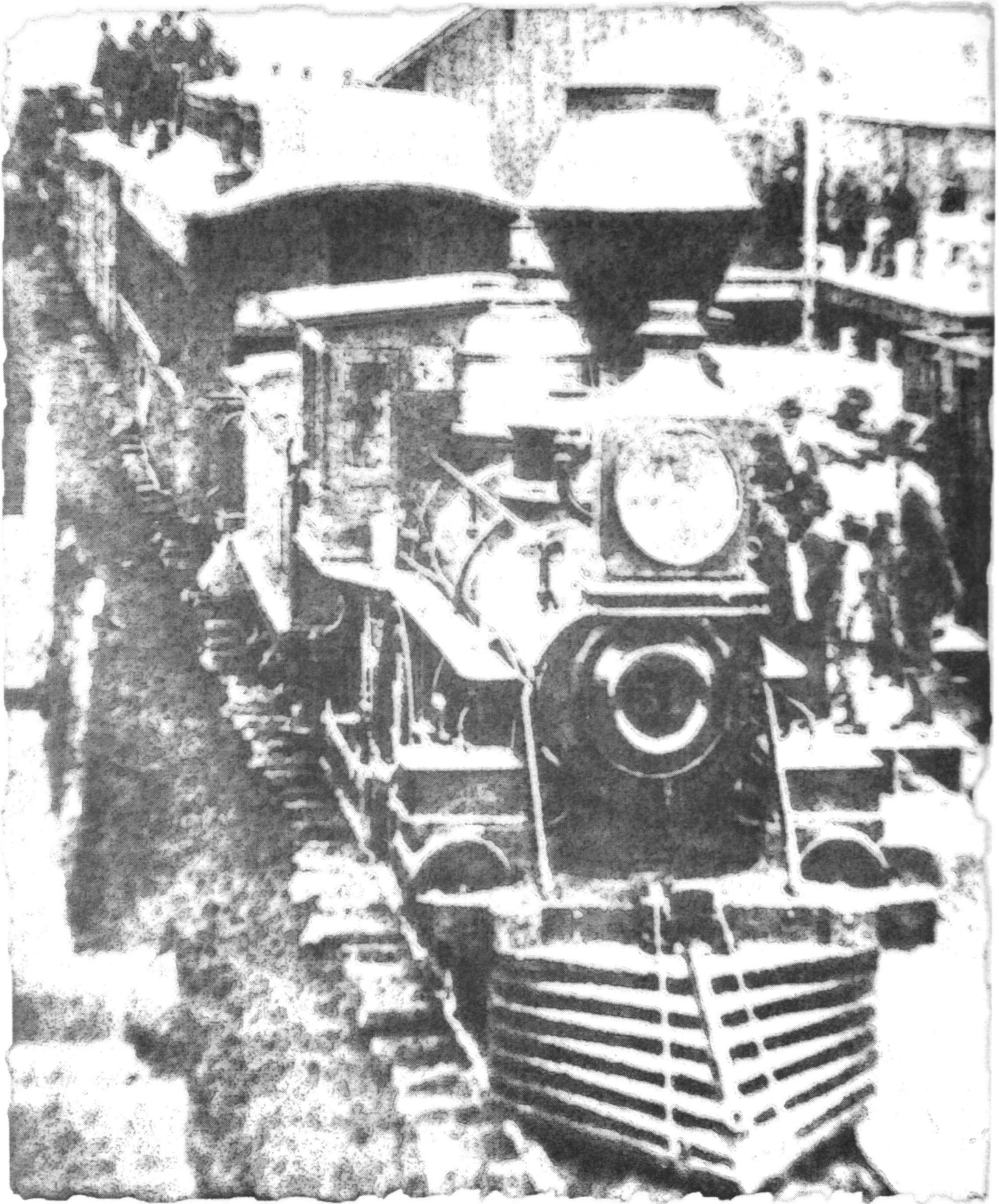


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STAFF ILLUSTRATION



**SOPHIA STARLING WRITES TO HER SISTER IN ENGLAND, FROM DENVER,  
SEPTEMBER, 1873**

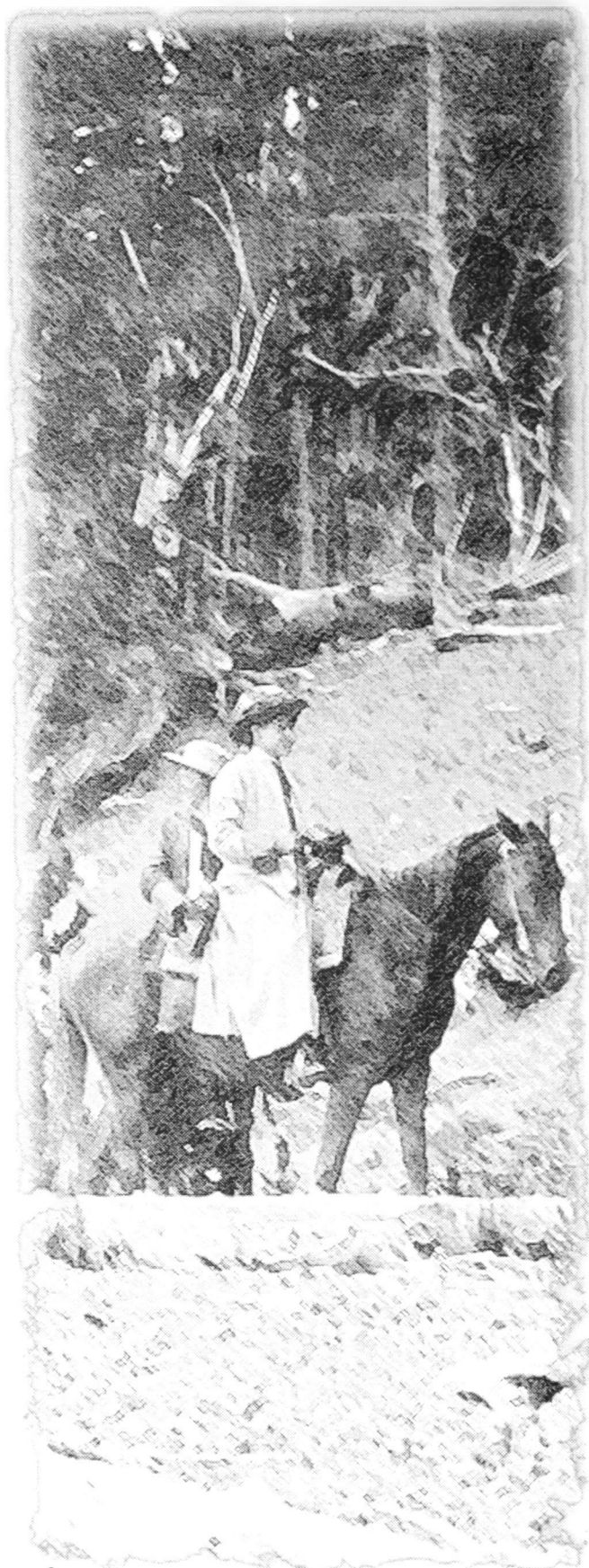
Dear Aggie,  
The dust is thick as gnats  
lunging down one's throat  
through mosquito netting.  
Still, I love the mountains that thunder  
above this rail and cattle head,  
our train outrunning a tribe of Sioux  
into the depot.

I shall find a guide, some local eccentric  
or ruined son of Confederate aristocracy  
fleeing terrible memories of lost Virginia.  
Failing that, I shall set off alone,  
on as sturdy and well-mannered a mare or gelding  
as I can afford in this town  
of slaughterhouses, tanning factories, and assayers.

I only wish you could share this trip,  
but a husband and children,  
much as I want them someday, are shackles:  
homemakers' keys symbols of the sweet domestic prison.  
Kiss the children for me; I shall write  
with news of the badmen it moons their eyes  
to whisper of when they should be asleep.  
How I longed to be Maid Marian as a girl,  
sleeping on hard, romantic ground  
with noble bandits chaste beside me.  
Some of the men I see staggering, swaggering  
from saloons more populous than churches  
look no strangers to murder, to forcing a lady  
to do what she cannot live with for having done.

Never fear. My purse hides a truncheon,  
a gift from a New York City policeman,  
most courteous one rainy afternoon:  
Fifth Avenue muddier than the flooding Thames.  
When I told him my destination, he gasped,  
and handed me this weapon, saying,  
"You'll be needing this more than me,  
even in the halls of Murderer's Row."  
I would hesitate not one blink to use it  
but remain your loving sister  
even at so great a distance  
it seems I have traveled back to the brutish  
crimson-beautiful dawn of society.

*by Robert Cooperman*



STAFF ILLUSTRATION

## **SOPHIA STARLING FINDS A GUIDE: LETTER TO HER SISTER IN ENGLAND**

Dear Aggie,  
I've found him! Just when I despaired  
none of these rough trappers would stop laughing,  
a writer of dime tales—to call him "novelist" defiles  
the memory of beloved Mr. Dickens—  
told me of one John Sprockett, unmistakable  
for the scars etched into his face by a bear.  
He went on for hours, the scribbler,  
about the battle, liquor kindling imagination,  
but finally divulged where I might find  
this wild man who quotes poetry  
and shoots anyone who stares  
at his empty socket and the hideous trails  
leading nowhere down his face  
but "to a lead-filled death."

I intercepted Mr. Sprockett Sunday last,  
after church; he was staggering from a saloon.  
My heart beat like a snared rabbit;  
my mouth dry as a foothill gully.  
"You're the Englishwoman," he growled,  
a lycanthrope with aspect angelic  
on the good side of his face.  
"O to be in England," he bowed so charmingly  
I thrust my hand out to shake his.  
He examined his greasy fist.  
"If you'll forgive me," he said,  
"I'll not dirty your dainty fingers."  
He'll guide me up Long's Peak  
and into the heart of the Rockies.  
Never worry. He's gentle as a unicorn.

Oh Aggie, we ride at dawn.  
My heart echoes mustangs' galloping hooves.  
I can't sleep, my best sister, my darling:  
to think that I, Sophia Starling  
of Pleasant Cottage, Summervale, Hampshire,  
will soon be standing 14,000 feet above the sea!

*by Robert Cooperman*



**FROM THE BADMAN AND THE LADY, A DIME NOVEL BY  
PERCY GILLMORE**

STAFF ILLUSTRATION

"Sprockett's heart pounded like Lancelot's at his first glance of Queen Guinevere, to catch sight of Miss Sophia Starling astraddle her Arabian mare like a Bedouin born holding a hackamore. Sprockett bowed low, flourished his stetson like a cavalier in King Charles' doomed army, and holstered his .45, blood pumping from Shorty Cameron's forehead. Townspeople peeked out like prairie dogs after a hawk has taken its afternoon kill.

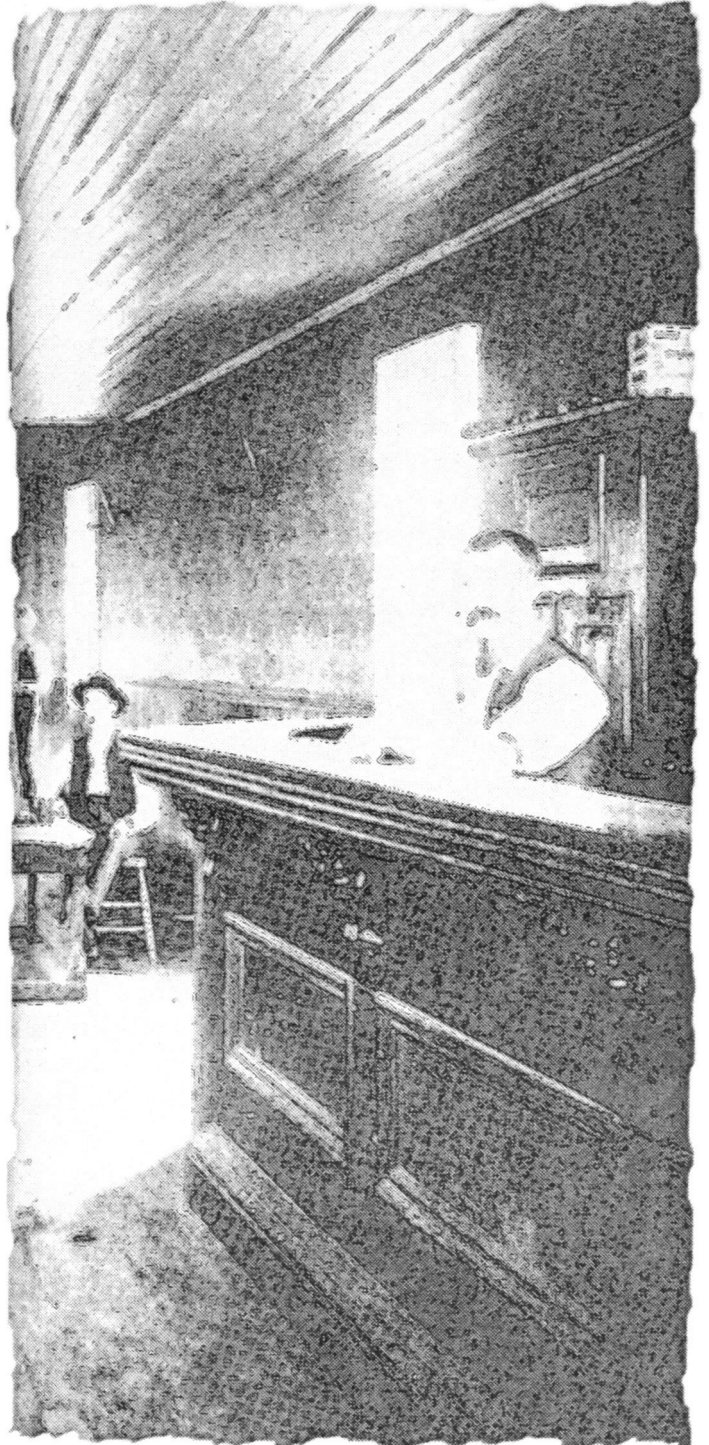
"She rode up, staring just above the scars a grizzly had raked down Sprockett's face--Satan's forked lightning.  
'My 'pologies, Ma'am,' he drawled, 'for this unseemly stain upon your sojourn,' a ruined Southern gentleman who had ridden with Quantrill in Kansas.

"'Did he have family?' she nodded at the corpse.  
'Not as I know of,' Sprockett replied, solemn as a preacher at a senator's grave. A double eagle spiraled to his feet.  
'See that he receives a fitting obsequy.'

"That night, in the Abandoned Hope Saloon while Sprockett drank facing the door, Miss Starling strode in, wearing the white cambric dress of an angel.  
'I need a guide, sir,' her words hat pins.  
'If you can stay sober  
I pay five dollars a week.  
If you murder again, I'll see you hanged.'  
Quick as a copperhead, she smashed his bottle.  
'Be saddled by six tomorrow morning.'

"Alone, John Sprockett--cavalry scout, rebel raider, gunfighter par excellence--sat like a smitten boy, his empty socket sprouting miracle tears of love."

*by Robert Cooperman*



## JOHN SPROCKETT REMINISCES ABOUT HIS CONVERSION IN 1868

When I robbed the Salida stage—  
my one descent into outright thievery—  
a lady clung to a book as if jewels.  
One glance at my slashed face  
and she dropped that collection of poems.  
My mother's school-marm voice,  
quoting Shakespeare, streamed back to me.  
I left the strong box, watches, and cash,  
apologized to that trembling angel,  
and rode off, leafing the pages.

I'd not gone three miles—laughing, crying  
to be in such uplifting company again—  
when I spied a farmer drowning kittens.  
Without a thought, I drew and fired.  
"Nothing ill come near thee!" I roared.  
Cradling his shattered arm and cursing,  
he shambled off like an African ape.  
I hope he died in his barley field.

I scooped the burlap—  
all but one kitten drowned—  
and dried the whimpering thing,  
gave it to a whore, to help her forget  
the gold-rats making her bed creak  
like mine walls about to buckle.

When the sheriff asked  
about my earlier whereabouts,  
I turned the grizzly-ripped side  
of my face to him, growled  
that manners shouldn't be abandoned  
when a man steps into a saloon  
for a small, social drink.

He winced at my scar: a greenhorn  
feeling cow-shit beneath his feet.  
I proceeded to finish my bottle,  
poems pouring out of me, to amaze  
whores, miners, and sheriff alike.

*by Robert Cooperman*



**FROM THE JOURNAL OF JOHN SPROCKETT  
DENVER, COLORADO TERRITORY**



STAFF ILLUSTRATION

Why bother scribbling a journal  
when the only things to tell  
are the number of pelts I've taken,  
the drinks I needed  
to give back what I earned,  
the list of men I've glared down  
with my one good eye and a face  
the Devil's laid claim to.

One fellow sneered about "One-eyed cowards  
who prefer poetry to whores and .45s."  
I grabbed his filthy beard  
and slammed his face into the pitted bar,  
his nose spurting like an overripe tomato.  
When he drew, my shot flung him  
so hard against the bar, it buckled.

To the point: today I met the English lady  
who wants to ride the Rockies  
and needs a guide.  
I had to smash my drunk head with my fist,  
to concentrate on what she was asking;  
her own face fawn-frozen to behold  
the violence that can roar out of me  
like volcano or earthquake.

I'll show her the ends of the earth  
if that's what she wants,  
just to listen to that voice—  
a bird's fearless singing.  
She'll need a reliable mare,  
a smart stepper to go all day  
smooth as buttermilk, and fresh at dawn.  
And Satan help the man trying to cheat her  
while I'm her watchdog.

*by Robert Cooperman*

To be continued in future issues

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



## INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT COOPERMAN

by Fred Alsberg

**Alsberg:** What first brought you to the reading and writing of poetry?

**Cooperman:** My mother always read to me. I remember her reading Milne's "Now We Are Six," one poem about hiding behind a sofa particularly intriguing me. Funny I don't remember her reading *Winnie the Pooh*, just the other stuff. Maybe I'm confusing Milne with Stevenson's children's verses, it seems a long time ago now. I wrote "poetry" all through grade school and high school. Then in college I discovered Keats and was totally intimidated. I thought if I can't write that well why bother at all? Then I moved into an artistic neighborhood in Manhattan, painters and musicians abounded in my apartment building. It was a really heady atmosphere. I just started writing again, and talking about art with my neighbors and friends. I joke about one seminal experience: I had stayed up all night before taking a Greyhound to a cousin's wedding in Massachusetts. I'd been to a rock concert and was blindingly alert as the dawn sun hit my eyes in the bus, and I had this probably exhaustion induced revelation that I wanted to be a poet. And that was that. I still think Keats is the benchmark by which I judge every poem I read, by the way.

**Alsberg:** Does writing poetry fulfill a myriad of needs in you or primarily one or two?

**Cooperman:** I've got a fairly unique situation, I'm a house spouse. I'm lucky enough that my wife has a good enough career, which she thankfully loves when her despicable colleagues will let her love it, that I don't have to "work" in the traditional sense of the word. So my life is mostly taking care of her—secretarial stuff at home, shopping, cooking, cleaning (in a very desultory fashion)—and my own writing. And Beth has been incredibly supportive of my writing. We first met in a poetry workshop, and, after she said how horrible one of my poems was, it was love at second sight. So aside from love and its responsibilities, writing is almost everything to me. I used to joke that if I were 6'5" instead of my puny 5'7", on good days, I'd have been a professional basketball player, and if you'd seen the way I play basketball, you'd know what a big (and bad) joke that is. Maybe everyone who lives primarily in his mind and fantasies dreams of success and greatness of the body. But I realize now that was just my youthful fantasy. I've been writing seriously for 20+ years, and I still get just as big a bang when a poem surprises me in some way with its unexpected excellence. I'll still say, "Did you write that? You're pretty good."

**Alsberg:** Where do you find the subjects for your poems, and why are such subjects productive for you?

**Cooperman:** I'm drawn to the quirky, the eccentric, the twisted, the grotesque. I made a bet with someone that I could find at least one poem in any issue of any paper in the country, any in the world, if I could only read the language. He claimed any poem I wrote as a result would be inauthentic or trivial. Only deeply felt poems about deeply felt subjects need apply, he claimed. Which I think is hogwash. It's up to the poet to invest a subject with significance, by his details and diction, so that the reader believes this is of utmost importance and relevance. My second chapbook was based on an article I read in *The Atlanta Journal* about 10-12 years ago, about a teenage girl who had been what we would now call sexually abused by some priests. I created a whole bunch of voices: hers, the priests, neighbors, her father, lawyers, the judge, the verdict, her reaction to it. I thought the moral was fairly obvious.

I'm definitely a storyteller. What I look for is not my emotion to a situation, but what would a character in this situation do and how would he or she react. To me it's much too easy and silly to simply write an anti-war poem or a poem trashing Gingrich and his ilk by merely stating, "You're horrible and despicable. The interesting part is to get into the head of a toad like Gingrich and let him hang himself. Irony is definitely part of the key. Human absurdity tickles me down to the bone. I'm also drawn to the far away and the long ago. When I was in grad school I taught a survey course in World Lit, and the first book on the syllabus was *The Odyssey*. Partly because I'd taught it for something like three quarters in a row and partly because I loved it and partly because I was going through my one bout of writer's block, I wrote a book-length sequence of dramatic monologues based on the characters and situations in it and in *The Iliad*. But what draws me most to a subject is its potential to yield a story. I'll write about my own life and the lives of my family and friends, but I see no point in airing dirty linen. I don't care how unhappy you were as a child because of abusive parents, and I don't expect you to be interested in my unhappiness either. That's for me and my wife and my pillow in the dark night of my own soul. However, a story about a relative who was reputed to be an art forger, now that I find interesting. Or my maternal grandfather, who fought part of two professional bouts and was dragged from the ring by his ear by his mother, I find that interesting. Or my father who was the one Jew in his company at Fort Bragg in the last days of World War II and had to box an anti-Semitic sergeant to prove his honor and right to exist as a human being, that I find interesting and instructive. What I'm trying to say at too great a length is that I'm not a confessional poet.

Again, Keats is my model here, in our desire to be chameleon poets, to change into the skin of any creature we write about. I'm not sure he was successful at that ambition, his lyric poetry being so overwhelmingly gorgeous and poignant, and he didn't live to write with a Shakespearean objectivity, but that's the direction he wanted to take, if he only had the time.

**Alsberg:** How do you decide where to break the lines in your poems?

**Cooperman:** I always try to break a line on an important word, to have the last word of any given line be one that the reader will remember, one that will lead into the next line, the next thought. I've tried formal verse, with indifferent success, but did collect them all into a manuscript that's now making the rounds with, I fear, even less success than any I experienced in the writing of them. I had an argument with a colleague once, when I taught in Denver, about a story by Catherine Anne Porter, "The Grave," I think it was. He rhapsodized, "It's poetry," to which I replied with my usual pre-coffee acid, "Yeah, almost," to which he replied, "Oh, I suppose you think Alexander Pope is poetry?" to which I replied, "You bet, and then some." One thing about poetry: it's got to read better than even the best prose, whether through concision or psychological insight or just the skill and ear of the poet. And one way to achieve that effect is through the line. Also, the first line of a poem will almost always determine how the rest of them will go, what length they will be. It seems to me, in my own poetry, if I start off with a short first line, it's inelegant to jump back and forth between long and short lines. Of course, subject matter will also play a role in determining line length and breaks. I once wrote a triptych of poems based on *The Merchant of Venice*. Shylock spoke in long, bitter complaining lines; Antonio in iambic pentameter rhymed stanzas, and the guy who gets Shylock's daughter (God my mind is going!) in short, staccato lines, indicating he's not the brightest of the three, and also his mind is in the gutter and into his father-in-law's pockets.

**Alsberg:** Have you ever written or considered writing a long poem (hundreds of lines)? What are the pitfalls and attractions of long poems?

**Cooperman:** A long poem is intriguing. I'm envious, in awe of poets like Homer, Milton, Crane, even Edward Young's *Night Thoughts*. I'd consider Andrew Hudgin's *After the Lost War* a glorious example of a long poem, though it's divided up into many poems. In a way, I consider some of my manuscripts to be long poems, divided into many monologues. *The Badman and the Lady*, my second full-length book, I consider a single poem, from many points of view. Actually, I consider it a sort of lazy man's novel, but that's another story.



Part of the problem, though, with a purely long poem is just a reader's attention span. Are you going to break it up into cantos, or sections, and give the reader a break and a breath? Or just fling the whole thing at him and hope for the best, or if you've got a lot of confidence, assume he or she will of course make the effort and leap of faith to read all of it? Another problem with a long poem is that it can't, as far as I can see, be a meditative poem. It has to be a lazy man's novel, with plot, characters, setting, plus that panache of language that prose, even "poetic" prose can't supply, plus a sense of why lines are broken where they're broken. It has to be a narrative, not a lyric. From what I can tell there has been just one successful lyric epic in the language, Wordsworth's *The Prelude*, and what we remember most and best about that poem is the boat stealing incident, the narrative, not the contemplative, philosophical sections.

**Cooperman:** The attraction of a long poem is partly to be able to say I did it. Keats doggedly slogged on through *Endymion*, knowing it stunk, just to say he finished writing a long poem as a kind of apprentice work before he could get onto his real work. It's also a test of imagination and invention to be able to keep your own interest going that long. And of course there's the purely practical problem of will anyone read it, will anyone want to publish it? You see so many journals advertise, "nothing longer than a page." And I confess when I see a really long poem, I'm tempted not to read it simply because it is so long.

**Alsberg:** Does skillful use of so-called free verse require a knowledge of formal technique, or are the two so dissimilar that such knowledge is not needed?

**Cooperman:** There was a Picasso exhibit that took over the entire Museum of Modern Art in New York about 15 years ago. My wife, mother, and I took it in and came out reeling from the sheer volume of canvases. But what I recall most about it was his magnificent *Guernica* and the various studies he did of some of the figures in it before committing them to the final canvas. He drew the bull from a number of different angles, the same for the horse, even some of the less figurative figures. What I'm trying to say is that while some of the objects in that mammoth painting existed only in Picasso's imagination, he had to practice and experiment before he was willing to put them down on canvas for a final, definitive time. I think there's a similar relationship between free and formal verse. You can't run (and I'm not calling free verse running) before you can crawl and walk (and I'd never call formal verse walking or crawling or even just an experiment or apprentice work). But it seems to me that it behooves us as poets to learn the rudiments of our craft, to learn and appreciate our elders and betters, before we launch into our own work. It really irks me that lots of people

in grad school poetry workshops have no idea about the greats of English poetry. You ask them about Chaucer, Milton, Shakespeare, Spenser, and either you get a blank look or a sneer, that these poets are somehow no longer relevant. Piffle! Poetry did not begin with T.S. Eliot. He'd be the first to admit he stood on the shoulders of giants. Where do you think he got the monologue idea for Prufrock from? Browning. And where did Browning get the idea for the monologue? From Shakespeare's soliloquies and Donne's persona poems. I hate it when people claim good free verse is harder to write than good formal verse. They're either fools or liars, and have obviously never tried to write formal verse themselves. You always hear about rock musicians (Phil Lesh of my dearly departed Grateful Dead comes to mind) who extol their classical training, saying it frees them to be able to improvise. If it's good enough for Phil, it should be good enough for us poets. How can a grounding in rhyme and meter be bad for you as a poet?

**Alsberg:** Generally speaking is figurative language overused in American poetry today?

**Cooperman:** Absolutely not. If anything, I see far too much slackness (in my own work and in others) passing itself off for poetry without paying attention to making our poems come alive with imaginative comparisons. We spew words out, thinking to replace our duty of making the reader see with a witty (usually only half so) or arch observation, or a weird yoking of two words. It particularly irks me to see words like "impossible" begin a phrase that will substitute for an image. Poems that contain easy verbal formulations like that one are just plain lazy. What may be overused about figurative language is the forgetting to build images into one coherent and powerful whole. I read a scathing review of a famous first collection, I can't remember where and won't name names, but the reviewer took umbrage that the images went nowhere, didn't build one upon another.

**Alsberg:** What is the place or stature of the love poem in the 90's?

**Cooperman:** There's nothing like a good love poem. Call me an old softy and accuse me of being a hypocrite, in light of everything I said above about lyrical poetry, but I love love poems. Of course, it's really hard to write a really good one, and how many different ways can you say, "I love you?" But that's the challenge, and poetry is about challenges. Of course there's so many aspects of love: first love, lost love, unrequited love, mature love, missing a spouse who's away, the fear of losing a lover through death, the companionship that comes with many years, the better-than-any drug-zoom-in-the-veins of the first ten days of being in love,

adulterous love, you name it. A professor used to joke there are only two subjects to write about: sex and death. Well, substitute love for sex, or add it to sex, or see sex as a part of love, or vice versa, and you've got just about the whole spectrum covered.

**Alsberg:** What contemporary poets would you classify as required reading for today's aspiring poets? Why?

**Cooperman:** Richard Wilbur has always been one of my heroes, for his formal brilliance, his understated imagery. I admire Galway Kinnell greatly, especially his later work, his tender lyricism and quiet eloquence. I thought Anthony Hecht's *The Hard Hours* was one of the finest books I've ever read. I'd read anything that Brendan Galvin wrote, partly because of his endless curiosity in such book-length poems as *Saints in Their Ox-Hide Boats* and *Wanganuog Traveler*. The same almost goes for Linda Pastan, though she seemed to write about the same things over and over, though wonderfully well. Philip Levine's a must read for the way he has apotheosized the working man. His *What Work Is* was simply incredible. I love Ai, for her wicked monologues and twisting of contemporary politics. I love the quiet formal excellence of Miller Williams' later collections. And I'm drawn to the monologue poems of Robert Pack. As a matter of fact, I just read *Faces in a Single Tree* and thought, here's a worthy successor to Frost in the way he depicted the New England "soul." I think JRosellen Brown's Cory Fry collections are must reading, the way she gets into character with a novelist's sensitivity, and the quiet poignance of her language. I'm a great admirer of the Welsh poet and physician Dannie Abse, especially his earlier work. Being a medical doctor seems to have given him a subject and a good dose of humility, not that his poems have anything to be humble about. I greatly admire the wildness of Stephen Dobyns' poetry. I think Daniel Mark Epstein is a must read. And I love Hilary Tham, the way her poetry straddles two cultures, and her absolutely devilish sense of irony and the incongruities of life and her refusal to sentimentalize anything. Talk about love poetry, she wrote a great love poem, "Tigerbone Wine," funny and tender all at once. And last but not least is Robert Lietz, who writes with the most luscious pen of anyone I know. I guess what draws me to all of these poets is that they combine verbal excellence with attention to detail and to character. They know the human heart and portray it in lovely language.



## **YOU THE MAN, FATS DOMINO**

Your fact affectionate smile  
brightened my adolescence.  
If I had been black  
I might have been like you,  
mistreated by women  
in spite of my powerful love,  
wanting to walk them home  
in spite of themselves.  
If I had been fat  
my right hand might have trilled,  
my left hand boogied  
and my diamonds flashed  
to beat the band.  
It's what you did to the word  
"hill" and how the d's  
drop off of "hold" and "hand."  
Do you see what I mean,  
Mister New Orleans?  
When I heard you sing  
I thought, by God with a little luck  
I could almost dance,  
and if I could dance  
Babs Morgan would surely  
fall in love with me.  
Those folks in Greensboro  
sitting at the Woolworth counter,  
those kids in Little Rock  
trying to go to school,  
really, what did we know  
about them? We were both just  
trying to make time.

*by Ron McFarland*

## ACROSS NEVADA

"The loneliest road in America"  
needs no self-proclaiming signs.  
When you travel State Route 50  
you will find no town,  
gas station, traffic  
for fifty, seventy, as many  
as ninety miles at a stretch.  
In the summer the intense shimmer  
off the black top can be intoxicating;  
you have to look left to the unyielding  
desert, right to lifeless hills,  
or, rarely, straight ahead to a  
significant, side-winding snake  
to remember this is a real road,  
world, at all.

The cruise control set at seventy  
or so, the radio off, air conditioner  
working, it is as close to being  
on automatic pilot as you can ever  
get in an automobile.

You will suppose you can make Eli  
with ease, but thankfully stop  
long before at Eureka, strip-mined  
almost off the map, a place  
even ghosts avoid, just to get beyond  
that loneliness, just to see  
the almost human faces of dead-  
town depression.

You will remember the opening of  
a favorite poem: "Afoot and light-  
hearted I take to the open road,"  
and think, with all the ruefulness  
of the disenchanted: "Walt Whitman  
never took a desert; his poem  
works as far, perhaps, as Pennsylvania."  
If I were you I'd mitigate my solitude,  
take a companion, someone you trust,  
across that shimmering silver state.

*by Joe Benevento*

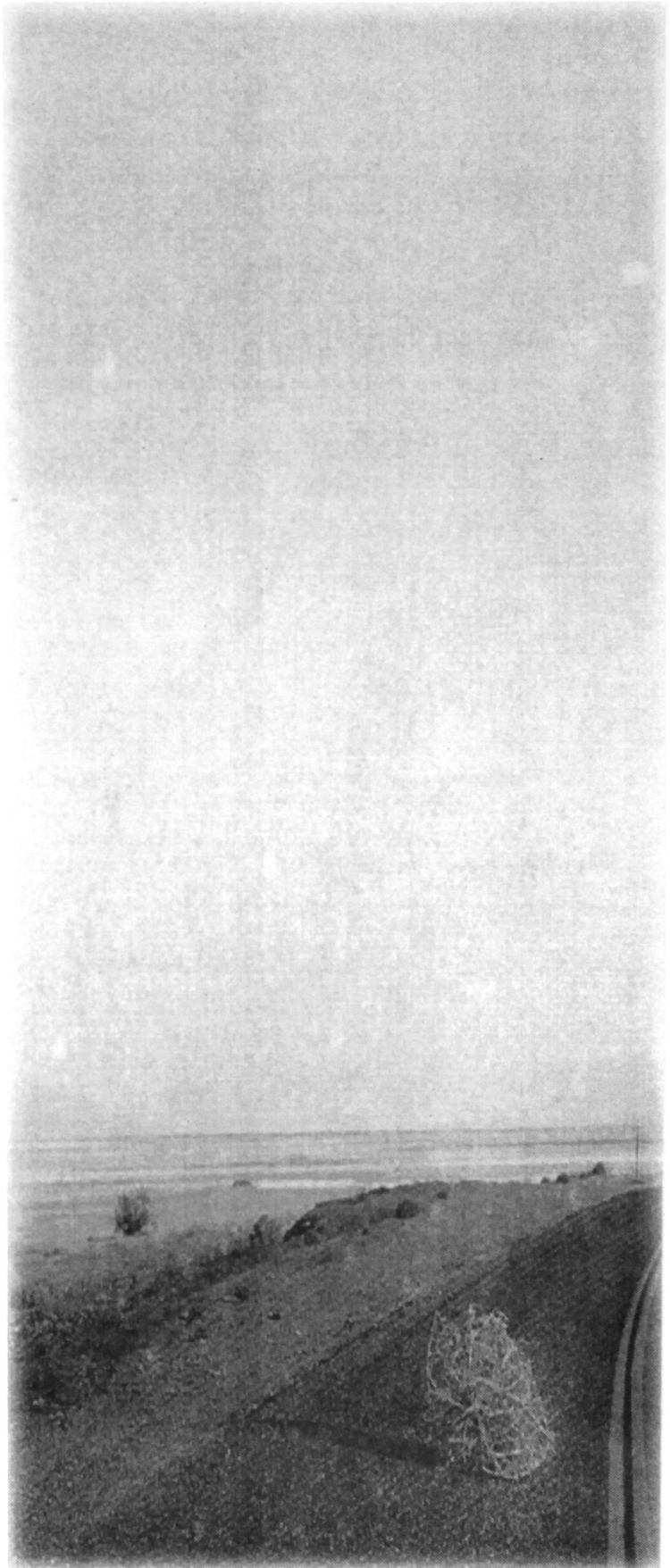


ILLUSTRATION BY HENRY MUENCH

## DARING NOT TO FEAR FEAR

by Leslie Pietrzyk

My mother disappeared before I was old enough to notice she'd been there in the first place. No one knew where she went, or if they knew, they didn't tell me. She left behind more than she took; according to my father, the only things missing were two cookbooks, a crystal vase a great-aunt had given as a wedding gift, some clothing, the Bob Dylan record albums. Her wedding ring she mailed back the next week in a business-size envelope, four cents postage-due. Those were the only details given to me.

She left my father me, and she left me a name impossible to live up to. I hated it, but when I complained, I was told she'd insisted: "Candy, no middle name, just Candy. I always wanted a little girl named Candy."

"Why did she go?" I asked when I considered myself old enough for that sort of question.

My father shrugged. "Why?" he said. "Why anything?"

My Aunt Theresa, who lived with us, was less inclined to be philosophic: "Candy, honey, that woman was trouble from the go. I told your father, I told Vern that some people weren't meant for staying in one place—their roots go wide instead of deep, know what I'm saying? But he wouldn't have anything to do with my advice. Went ahead and married her—how we cried that afternoon. I could have written the book on what happened after, I tell you I could. But one thing I'll not deny, your mother was a beauty in the old-fashioned sense of the word. Had a look to her you couldn't fill up on. And charm beyond the legal limit." Then she drilled into me with a long hard stare, as if maybe some

of that charm had spun itself into me. I hoped so because it was obvious none of the beauty had.

Maybe I was 11, but I recognized a wide flat face that lacked redemption when I saw it in the mirror. My dishwater hair hung limp as if already weary of the long life ahead. I was noticeably short. My head was too round or too big or too something for my body. When I smiled people flashed dirty looks as if I'd done something a polite person would excuse themselves after. And then to be named Candy. It wasn't the situation I'd have chosen for myself.

I spent a great amount of time detailing these unpleasant features and their ramifications in a little notebook that I kept hidden under my mattress. Years later, my aunt confessed she'd browsed through it regularly. "Why didn't you say something to make me feel better?" I asked. She said, "What could I say; it was all true," and that was exactly my aunt.

My father delivered packages for UPS. My aunt, who worked as head clerk in the UPS front office, finalized him the job when we moved in with her. Before my mother left, before he became a delivery man for UPS, my father was working on a Ph.D. in math. That's what I was told, but I couldn't picture it. He didn't even keep the checkbook, Aunt Theresa did. And if I asked for help with story problem homework, he just pushed away the math book and went in the other room to sit and smoke in the dark.

My father was not typical. He kept reminding me to call him Vern, not Dad, as if he thought of me as an acquaintance or, at best, a little sister—someone over whom he had limited responsibility. If I asked permis-



sion to go somewhere or do something, the first words out of his mouth were, "What do you think?"

"What do I think?" I repeated. "I think yes."

"Then yes it is," he'd say.

As a consequence, I was impatient with other girls and their conventional households. "Wait a minute, I have to ask my mom," was a constant whine, the grinding away of time and interest, the inevitable, "She said no; she said to tell you you better go home before you get me in trouble."

So I didn't have a whole lot of friends; the girls at school and around the neighborhood thought I was stuck-up, and their mothers thought I was mildly dangerous. But "stuck-up" and "dangerous" were preferable to "weird," which was my secret fear, both that I was and that people would think I was.

There was one neighborhood girl, Ellen, I sort of hung around with. The others didn't much like her, maybe because even during summer she had a drippy nose. Or her cut-off jeans weren't cut off quite enough. Or maybe because no one's parents liked her parents. Whatever the reasons, she and I ended up together as if we'd been dealt out in a hand of cards.

Iowa was midway through a long, stupid summer. I didn't have the type of family that would think to take a vacation, to go somewhere nipped by cool breezes, somewhere right around an ocean or even a lake. My father and Aunt Theresa just worked on, plodded forward with the grit and determination of people determined to see the thing through, whether it be summer or life.

Ellen and I spent most of our days moving with the circle of shade under the maple tree in her yard. There was talk that she was going to be sent to camp, but no one would come out and admit it, and she was terrified. She'd never been away from home—she didn't even

much like sleeping overnight at my house, so I'd quit inviting her. Secretly I wished someone would come up with the splendid idea of sending me away to camp, and I plotted out a number of semi-reasonable ways I might go in her place.

Day after long hot day Ellen and I sprawled out along an old blanket—we'd both affected a distaste for bugs that seemed appropriate for girls of our age—and read magazines we swiped from her father's sock drawer each morning after he left the house. He had a varied selection that ranged from true-life detective stories full of women hitchhikers and drifters, to girly magazines that made us feel scrawny in most places and fat in the rest, to my favorite, the soldier magazines. The world was one I'd never seen in Iowa: rough men slicing out of jungles as helicopters dangled overhead; on the next page, vast deserts coming at you in a swirl of stinging sand—all sorts of adventures waiting for the fearless, for the brave.

We didn't tell anyone this is what we read, which made it more interesting. We scattered Nancy Drew books around the blanket in case anyone thought to check closely, but no one ever did. Because there were no adults at my house on weekdays, Ellen's mother was responsible for me and making sure I ate a healthy lunch. She was paid \$15 a week for this service; I know because once I peeked inside the envelope before I delivered it to her. Probably those lunches were most responsible for my friendship with Ellen—I was always there sitting across the kitchen table from her. We had to come to an understanding; we figured out fast we didn't have any other options.

While we were outside, we didn't talk much; I guess we spent so much time reading because we recognized we didn't have all that much to say to each other. Though she and I were the same age, she was a year

behind in school, which I felt meant something about how smart I was. She disagreed, thinking it meant something about how much her parents loved her—that they didn't rush her off to school and instead chose to keep her at home with them as long as they possibly could. Under the tree, we had the luxury of thinking as we pleased, of forgetting details like no friends, no mother, no jungles.

"Says here this girl likes skinny dipping," Ellen said one afternoon, reading sideways off the centerfold. Her voice startled me; I was helicoptoring out of Borneo with Rolf and his comrades. "You ever go skinny dipping?"

"Oh, sure," I lied. "Plenty of times."

She believed whatever I told her: "What's it like?"

"Water feels colder when you've got your suit off," I said. "That's about the only difference as far as I can tell."

"Let me go with you next time," she said.

I shrugged. "We'll see. I haven't felt like it lately. Anyway, I doubt you could climb the fence to the pool. You'd be scared." It was an easy assumption since Ellen was afraid of everything, and sneaking out of her house to climb a fence to go swimming naked, combined three scary things. So I was safe in remarking, "It's no big deal to me, skinny dipping."

And I thought that was the end of the matter, until she said, "If you can do it, I can do it."

"Yeah, well, I'm not going this week," I said.

"Then when? When are you going?"

"Soon," I said.

"How soon?"

"Very soon."

There was a moment of silence, and I tried to concentrate on my magazine, but I felt her gathering ammunition for her next assault. The thing about Ellen was

that you couldn't shake loose any ideas once they got implanted in her head. "I don't believe you," she said finally. "You've never done it. You're afraid."

I looked at her. I knew she believed me because she always believed me, even when I told her my mother was a famous artist in Paris, she believed me. And I knew she was saying she didn't believe me because she thought she could make me mad. In spite of all this knowing on my part, her plan worked fine. "I've never been afraid of anything in my life!" I said. "A good soldier dares not fear fear." That was directly from the magazine, and I didn't understand it exactly, but it seemed suitable—it had to do with being brave—though I got kind of lost inside the words when I spoke them.

"Prove it," she said.

"Okay," I said. "Tonight we'll ride our bikes to City Park pool and climb over the fence—if you don't chicken out."

"I won't chicken out," she said. "But maybe you will."

"And I'm not helping you over the fence," I said. "I'll leave you behind for the enemy if it means saving my own skin."

"I don't need your help," she said.

I rolled over to the far edge of the blanket.

"What time?" she asked. Her voice had shrunk a little, and maybe she was starting to feel sorry she'd pushed me.

But I was a relentless soldier who'd accepted a mission and would rather die than back down: "Twenty-three hundred hours," I said. "That means 11:00 to a civilian like you. Or is that too far past your bedtime?"

"I'll be there," she said. "But will you?"

I laughed, a beautiful scoffing laugh I'd been practicing for just such a moment as this. "I'll be there."

We didn't talk for the rest of the afternoon except

when her mother brought out popsicles and we squabbled over who'd get red and who'd get orange. We didn't have a TV at my house because my aunt thought watching them made people go blind. But if I sat on the porch and pretended to be reading under the porch light, I could hear the TV at Ellen's house—that is until her parents started up fighting. Their nasty words draped the whole neighborhood like fireworks that wouldn't sink down into ash. "There they go again," Aunt Theresa said from the kitchen. "They ought to be ashamed, surely they know we can hear every last word and then some. Why don't they pull down their windows and give us all a rest?" But instead of shutting our windows, she hurried out to the porch as quick as she could, leaving the pots to soak till morning. "They should know it's not the way people are out here, spreading out all this unhappiness for the world to review," Aunt Theresa said, and on and on she'd go, until she ran out of words and was left with only her tongue clicking up against the top of her mouth so that it sounded like a typewriter.

The night Ellen and I planned to go skinny dipping, I asked Aunt Theresa, "Why do Ellen's mother and father fight so much?"

"That's how some people are," Aunt Theresa said. "Seems like maybe marriage brings it out." She'd been married once for two weeks when she was sixteen. Then she decided she didn't like it and came back home.

"Don't they love each other? How can they say those horrible things?"

"People say lots of things they don't really mean," she said. "Stop worrying yourself over it. There's no use."

"Did my mother and father fight?" I tried to make the question sound everyday, like I'd once known the answer but had merely forgotten it. I didn't much enjoy

talking about my mother with Aunt Theresa, but she was the only one who might say a thing or two on the subject, if she was in the right mind to come up with something nasty.

"Don't get in the habit of asking questions you don't really want to know the answer to," she said. "Life will be a lot simpler that way, honey."

"Maybe I don't want a simple life," I said. "Maybe I want interesting complications."

"How dare you!" Ellen's mother shrieked.

"That's what's called a 'complication,'" Aunt Theresa said. "No use hoping for something like that. But you'll learn same as your father learned. Takes some people more time. Looks like it takes some people more time than others," and she flipped her hand over towards Ellen's house.

I went inside. There was no point; Aunt Theresa wasn't going to talk about my mother, and I couldn't hear the TV anymore. So I prepared for my upcoming mission. According to the magazine, 98 percent of the success of any mission was due to advance preparation. I'd been reading the magazines all summer, and I still hadn't found out what the other two percent was.

I slipped on my bathing suit—I had the feeling that on the nakedness point if no other Ellen would definitely chicken out—then pulled my nightgown on over it. Pajamas seemed more soldierly, but I didn't own any, only pink-flowered nightgowns. I put out a pair of shorts and a T-shirt to change into later—the nightgown was part of the preparations, in case someone decided to come upstairs to check on me. Then I snuck a towel out of the linen closet, careful not to let the door squeak, and set it on my dresser. "Good-night!" I called down the stairs.

"Good-night," my father and Aunt Theresa called back just as they did every night.

There was nothing else in the way of preparation, just staying awake until 11:00, which I did by playing solitaire so many times in a row that I actually won a game without cheating.

My father was awake, a shadow in the dark living room as I tiptoed out to meet Ellen. "Where are you going?" he asked from his chair. I heard melting ice cubes collapse into his glass.

Caught by the enemy already! "Just over to Ellen's," I said as if it were something I did every night at this exact time, as if they were paying her mother \$15 a week for this too.

"So late?"

"Well," I said, "well," thinking perhaps this moment fell in with that 98 percent of preparation the magazine was so keen on.

Silence stretched out long and thin, and I didn't know who was supposed to snap it. Finally he said, "Don't be too long," and I heard him swirl the ice cubes around his glass. "Be careful," he said.

I don't know what I thought he'd say, but who ever sent off a soldier on a mission with "Don't be gone too long, be careful"? I was embarrassed for my father.

"Okay, Vern," and I left, quietly lifting my bike off the grass in the front and wheeling it next door to where Ellen waited with her arms folded against her chest. I thought she might even then try to back out, but she didn't say anything, just hopped on her bike and sped off, leaving me to follow even though I was supposed to be the leader of this expedition. Then I realized I'd forgotten the towel, so it looked like preparation would do me no good now, and I wished I knew for sure what that other two percent was. Bravery?

I hopped onto my bike to catch up with Ellen.

She didn't speak much as we rode. I chattered until I was breathless from trying to keep up with her pace.

Even when we pumped uphill, I heard her wheel spokes flash tick-tick-tick through the playing card she'd clothes-pinned onto her bicycle. I thought that custom was babyish, so I'd thrown away my card when summer started, but the clicks spread out across the night more effectively than my stupid words could, so eventually I shut up and just concentrated on following the sounds of Ellen racing towards the pool like she'd never been afraid of anything in her life.

The streets stretched empty. Only one car passed us, an open convertible that was a wild smear of music and laughter, girls being rushed home to make their curfews. Would that be me and Ellen one day, flying through the night in a convertible, a boy's arm around our shoulders, the two of us granting wet kisses like a seal of approval? It was how my mother and father started, how Ellen's mother and father started. As I was thinking this, Ellen finally spoke:

"I hate them," she said, slowing down. "I really truly hate them." She was on the shaky edge of tears.

I caught up to her. "What's wrong with you anyway?" I asked. "Why're you going so fast? Who do you hate?"

"My parents," she said, and then she did something I'd never seen her do before, she spat onto the sidewalk. "I'm tired of them always fighting, always screaming at each other. Why are they like that?"

"They don't mean anything," I said.

"What do you know about it?" and I didn't want to tell her I knew quite a bit, that in fact the whole neighborhood knew quite a bit, so I just said what I thought an adult would say:

"Everything will be okay, Ellen." I even made my voice sound like an adult's.

"Nothing is okay anymore," she said. "You don't understand. You don't know anything. Now my father

says he's going back to New York. My mother says she's moving to Chicago." She skidded her bike to a stop even though we weren't at the pool yet. Without the tick-tick of the bicycle spokes, silence piled up too quickly.

"Well, what about you?" I asked. "Where are you going?" It was the kind of thing my father would tell me I should decide by myself, but Ellen's parents would shepherd her along into the right decision. That's the way they were, always right behind her.

"No one's said." She started riding again, slowly turning into the parking lot where Ellen's mother parked whenever she brought us to the pool, and she stopped under a buzzing fluorescent light. I stopped too. Hundreds of moths swarmed around the light, dodging in and out of each other's circles. I watched them for a while, hoping she'd say something so I wouldn't have to. But she didn't.

"Don't be afraid," I said. "They'll take care of you, they have to because they're your parents."

"Like your parents take care of you," she said. "Your mother isn't even here. And all your father does is sit around the house drinking and smoking and reading the newspaper. No one takes care of you; my mother says it's shameful. You're all alone; you don't even have a family, and now that's the way I'm going to be!"

"That's not true," I said. "I have a family. Take it back."

"I won't. What family? My mother makes you lunch every day."

I wanted to slap her or kick her or grind her face into the gravel underneath us, and that's what a true soldier would have done. Instead I said, "Yeah, well, she's a terrible cook. Who needs someone like that? She makes lousy lunches!" Which wasn't true, which Ellen knew wasn't true. The lunches were fine, and if I didn't

have those, I wouldn't have anything.

I rode my bike across the parking lot to the pool, not caring whether Ellen followed. I dumped my bike on the ground, not bothering to lock it, and I was so angry that climbing the chain link fence was easier than I expected, the clink and clank sounded like Ellen's parents yammering across the night at each other. I didn't bother to stop at the top, just swung over and clamored down, jumping from part way, landing hard so my ribs seemed to jiggle up against each other.

I'd been swimming at night before, but only during regular pool hours, when lights shone into the corners and bright blue wavered along the water's surface like leftover pieces of the afternoon. Now the water was black and endless, something to suck you under and hold you down until you gave in.

I heard Ellen's voice: "You're afraid." I couldn't see her. She must have been standing outside the fence. She sure didn't sound like she was about to climb over to join me, and her fear made me feel a little braver.

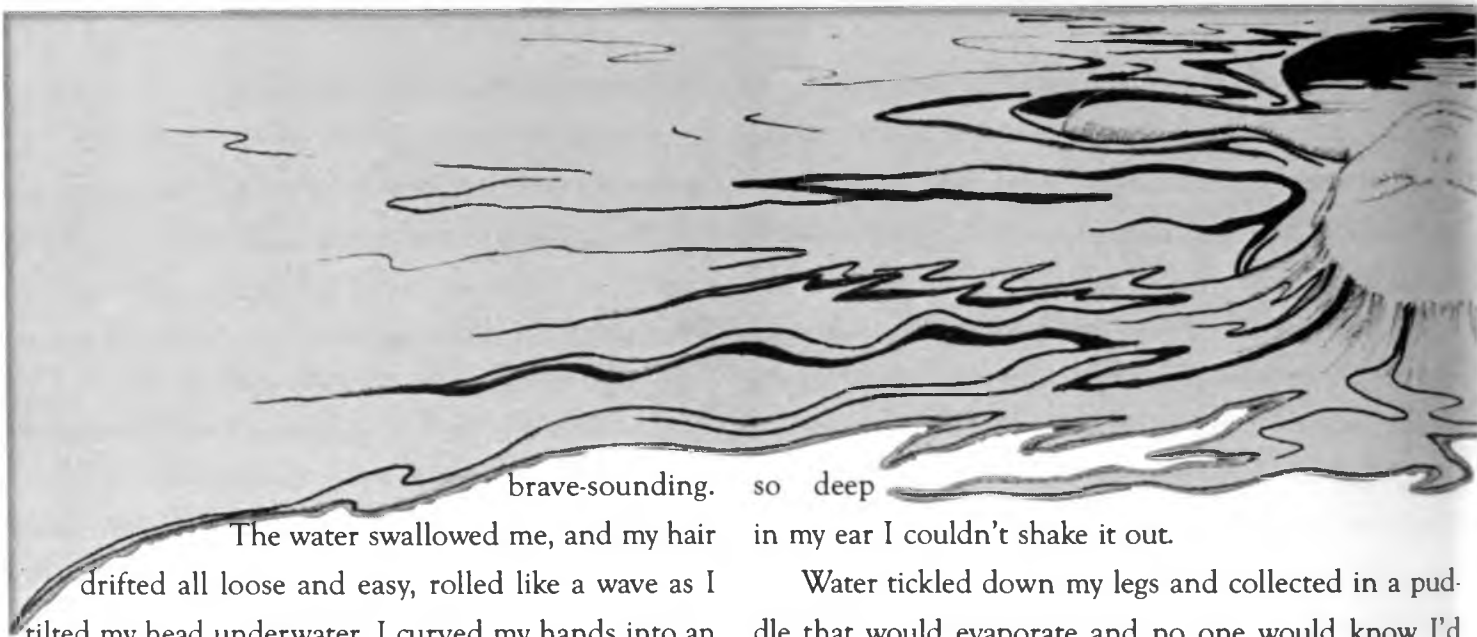
"Am not," I said. But who would think water could get so black! It certainly wasn't black when it came out of the faucet at home.

"You've never done this before," Ellen said. "You're afraid to dive in."

"I'm not afraid of anything," I said, "not like you, scaredy-cat," and I walked to the edge of the pool, kicked off my sandals, and swished my foot in the water to prove I wasn't afraid. I was surprised that the water felt warm like a bathtub. I splashed with my foot and thought about how I wasn't a good soldier because of all the things that secretly scared me: Big spiders. Lighting the gas stove. And something wrapped around me bigger than this swimming pool, twice as dark, twice as deep.

I jumped onto the water, making the splash big and





brave-sounding. so deep

The water swallowed me, and my hair drifted all loose and easy, rolled like a wave as I tilted my head underwater. I curved my hands into an arc and cut through the darkness, listening to the steady swoosh that rose out of my movements.

I didn't care if Ellen joined me; I sort of hoped she'd just disappear and I'd never have to see her again, that I'd never have to face someone who knew about the thing that most scared me. And if I was going to be alone, I had to get used to it, had to get used to a world where there was nothing but me.

I rose to the surface and flipped onto my back, leaving my ears underwater so I could hear the silence, and I kept my body perfectly still, my eyes closed, floating, floating, floating, I could float on my back forever, it was the only part of swimming I was good at, the only part I enjoyed, drifting on top of the water.

So many question marks curved around my mother that I'd never live long enough to see them all answered. Maybe that's why my father stayed silent all these years, he was afraid of answers.

I stayed in the pool long enough that when I finally climbed the ladder out, my fingers and toes were pruned and Ellen didn't answer when I called her. Since my towel was on my dresser at home, I just stood on the cement deck letting water drip off. The pool was still and silent now; all I heard was the scratch of water stuck

in my ear I couldn't shake it out.

Water tickled down my legs and collected in a puddle that would evaporate and no one would know I'd been here, being brave by swimming alone in the dark. Just Ellen, but she'd be gone soon, her parents were going to take her somewhere exciting, New York or Chicago, and that meant there'd be no one to make my lunch during the rest of summer.

When my mother went away, did she know what she left behind her? My father, sitting alone while the room darkened around him, letting himself get tugged along with whatever current pulled strongest. Me, swimming alone at night to prove I wasn't afraid of anything. Was that what she intended to leave?

"Candy?" My father called to me from the other side of the fence, about where Ellen had stood.

"Candy?"

I thought about not saying anything; Ellen must have ratted on me, and it was one more reason not to see her again, the traitor. If I kept quiet my father wouldn't find me, the night was that dark around us.

"Here I am, Vern," I said, surprised at how natural-sounding my voice came out. "I decided to go swimming."

The fence rattled, and then he was there, standing right next to me, and he said: "Do you do this often?"

"First time," I said. So far he didn't sound mad, but

I guess I'd never heard

him sound mad. "Did Ellen tell you where I was?"

Maybe he nodded and I couldn't see; anyway, instead of answering my question, he said, "How's the water? Too cold?"

"Fine," I said.

"Ellen didn't tell me," he said. "I saw your bike out front."

"Well, why—" and he interrupted me:

"Did I ever tell you. . . ." he said, walking from me to sit on the edge of the pool; I heard his feet plunk into the water one after the other, like two stones dropping deep. "Did I ever tell you that your mother and I would swim together at midnight under every full moon of the summer? Her hair turned silver in the moonlight. I thought that was something I'd be doing the rest of my life, swimming under full moons, watching your mother's silver hair."

He stopped talking, but I hung on to the words as if they were about to go away.

"What happened?" I whispered, half-hoping he wouldn't tell me so everything could go on the way it always had—because that was all I knew.

He started to cry, a soft sound you'd make to comfort yourself in the dark. What was I supposed to do; I was a kid, what did I know? I ran to him and wrapped my arms as far around him as they'd go, felt the worn

softness of his T-shirt against my cheek. "Daddy, I'm afraid," I said. "She left me, and I don't have a mother, and I'm so afraid. Everyday I'm afraid."

"Me too, honey," and he held me tight, and in his arms I saw that 98 percent preparation was fine, that being brave was fine, that swimming alone in the dark was fine, but what was finest of all was to huddle close to someone and admit your fear, to admit that you didn't have all the answers and maybe you never would.

Shortly, he said, "You know, your hair's just like hers. Probably no one's told you," and he stroked his hand against the damp clumps so that I felt maybe my hair was like hers, flowing soft and silver around my head like a dream you won't let end. "I always forget," he said. "There's more than one kind of running away. Just as there's more than one way to act brave."

Though there was no moon that night, and I suspected that my hair really did not look silver and never could, my father and I swam together in the big, dark pool, and when we were done, before we climbed the fence to go home, we dried our faces with our T-shirts and tied them around the base of one of the lifeguard chairs to be sure someone would know we'd been here together, and then I rode my bike home while my father followed right behind in the car, keeping a careful watch over me as he drove. ❧

## PROTECTIVE COVERING

Almost everyone wants me to discard  
my old guitar case: my wife  
keeps threatening to buy me  
a new one; my mother wonders  
how I stand the embarrassment;  
my students worry my scarcely contained  
Garcia will tumble, damage its over 25 year  
old wood beyond return;  
total strangers balk at the adhesive  
tape holding that case together,  
giggle or stare or boldly question  
my motives, my sanity even.  
I tell my wife, whoever else listens,  
it seems silly to me to purchase  
a new case for more than the guitar  
itself might garner on the open  
market, its lacquer scratched by my incessant,  
illicit picking on its classical frame;  
its neck microscopically warped by the time  
eighteen years ago I tried steel strings  
to produce the dangerous sound  
I was after in those days.  
But I'll tell you now, if you're  
the type to listen for the truth,  
the way it can play, like a minor chord,  
softly working its way over snow and sorrow,  
I keep the case because, even more  
than its self-contained guitar,  
it has traveled with me, on crowded  
subways to Washington Square jams,  
to too smoky, filled rooms at Folk  
City, or Bernie's Bagels in Columbus  
Ohio, to California and back in the back  
of my small Toyota.  
Faithfully it has kept quiet about  
my longings until I was ready to  
let them out, silently it has  
kept the surprise of my above average  
singing voice, my musical talent,  
my penchant for both the romantic  
and the ridiculous, a secret safe  
with me until I was ready to unveil,  
perform.  
There is no way, it is too late  
to look for a new case now;  
its tape, tatters, threats  
to unravel become me far more  
than most people seem to know.

*by Joe Benevento*

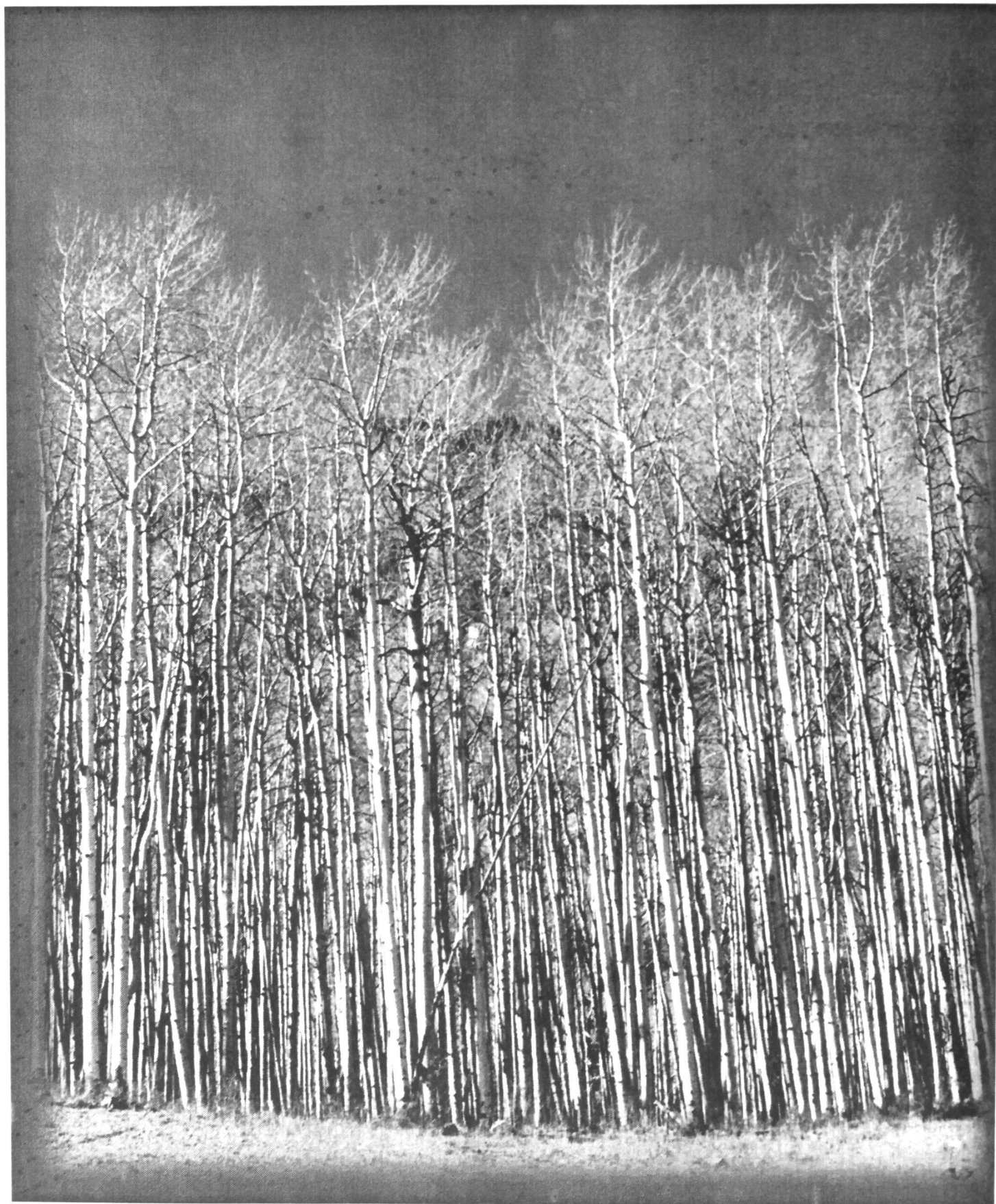


## UNTITLED

strange tree  
standing watch over  
the lawn  
you have withered over the  
years, becoming  
more obscure  
gray and ghostlike  
a victim of  
your own twisted  
growth  
you stand perched  
at odd angles  
like a frightened, awkward  
bird, waiting  
for the fingers of gravity  
to pull you home

*by Cole Rachel*

PHOTOGRAPH BY GREG KNABE: ILLUSTRATION BY JAN BRADFIELD



**COLORADO**

*by Daniel Schultz*

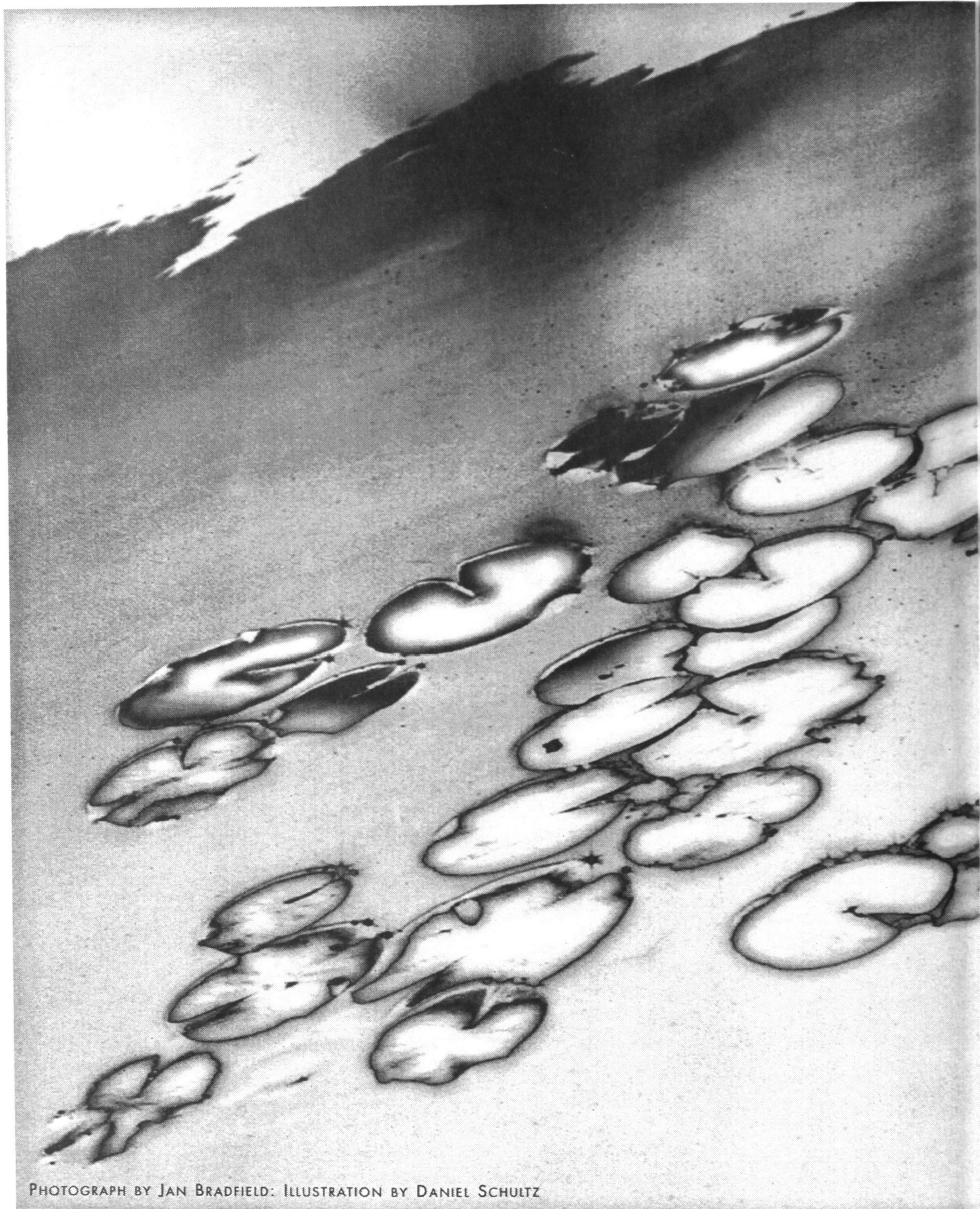




**LANDSCAPE**

*by Greg Knabe*

**W E S T V I E W**



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN BRADFIELD: ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL SCHULTZ



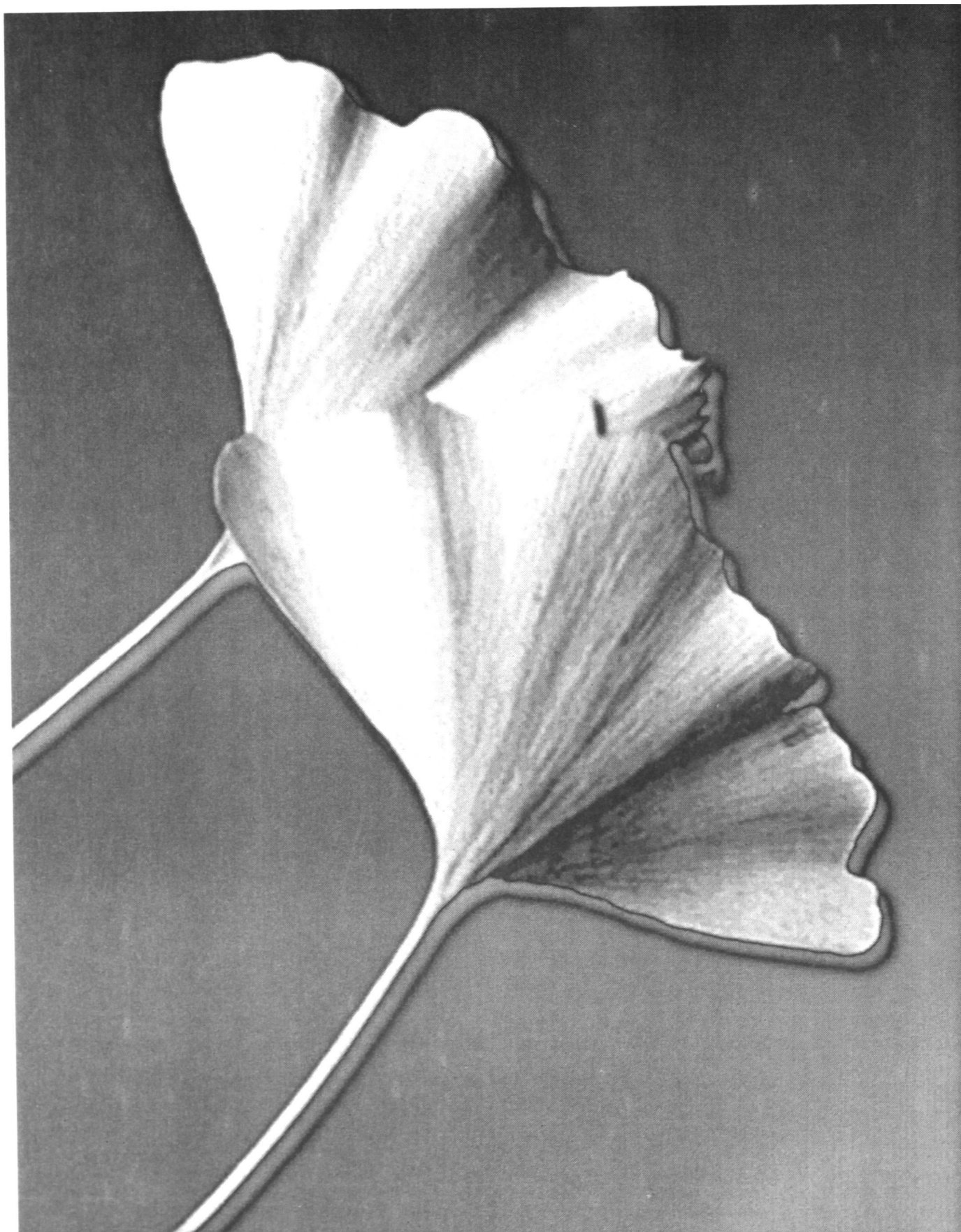


## **POEM**

How usually one must describe love by describing  
the room it lies in, the light  
through a window or darkness out of it,  
the way the cat watched or napped from the edge of the bed.  
Never writing the wholeness of its newness  
and how it grew in comfort like a needed summer.  
How we must talk about the old needs met then abandoned  
-it's always fall or night then  
or some bus station or sad drive.

Or we're in a tavern or a church  
and can't clearly say  
who does what to whom and why,  
too simple for listeners, too difficult for art.

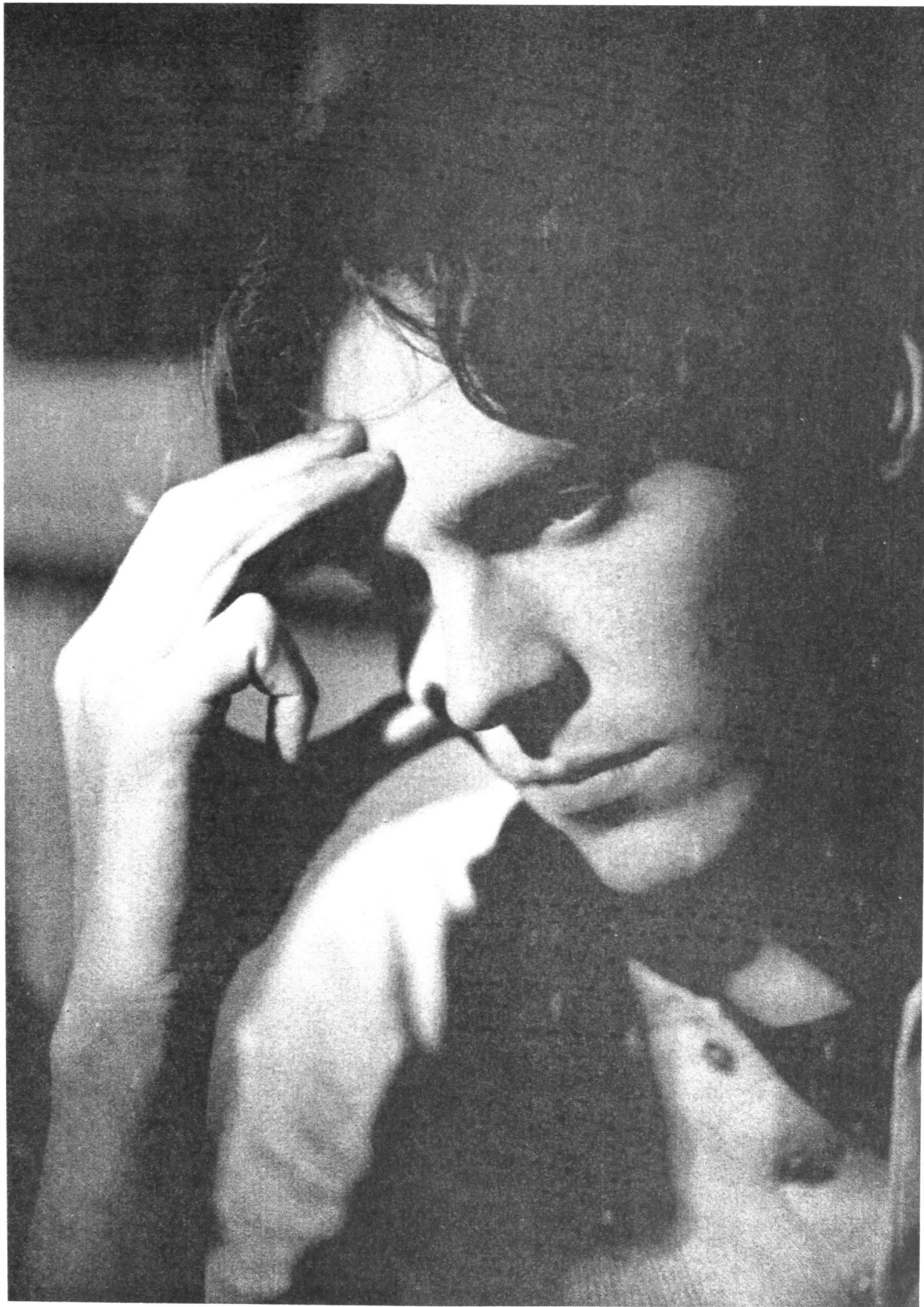
*by Richard Terrill*



**GINKGO LEAVES** by Jan Bradfield



**PORTRAIT OF JERRY** by Rodney Cloud







## **FORGIVENESS**

A poetess writes me after surgery  
That now she must indulge her body,  
Nourish it, scold it, and even punish it  
As she has never had the appetite to do.  
In learning to love her body like an idea  
She has begun to notice the feverish hugeness  
Of oaks and the scarlet wounds of hedges.  
She plods now and will soon jog, in  
Loping penance, past the cloistered convent.  
The idea of the nuns' silent presence — their anonymous  
Prayer — signals healing, and promises her  
A welcome, earthly separation from the body,  
The separation before death, when she will  
Once again float rapturous in her poems.

*by Jacqueline Eis*

PHOTOGRAPH AND ILLUSTRATION BY JAN BRADFELD

## SONS OF SISYPHUS

Worst job I ever had  
but I needed the money  
so when I read the notice  
in the window I showed up  
the next morning in the dark  
and climbed the rattling back  
of an ancient stake bed truck  
with other men who needed money.  
We lugged the telephone poles  
up the hillside on our shoulders  
the way ants stagger to the tune  
of instinct and cooperation.  
When the hill got too steep  
we dragged the poles with chains  
and come alongs tied to trees,  
inched them to their destination.  
We stopped to rest and eat.  
The fingers of the man  
sitting next to me were tattooed  
LOVE and HATE in the blue  
and simple script of jailhouse art.  
When he saw me staring  
he shrugged and said that now  
he wished he hadn't done that.  
We dug the holes by hand  
hauling up the dirt in buckets,  
breaking rock with jackhammers.  
Eight to ten feet down and never  
shored them up, trusting luck  
to be with us for a change.

*by Charles D. Moskus*

## UNTITLED

*by Cole Rachel*

My mother was working at a convenience store at the time, a place at the edge of town called the A&B. One day, after picking me up from the baby sitter, she and I went home to discover that our house had been totally ransacked. Our front door stood wide open, revealing an interior littered with books, broken glass, and the remains of what were once potted plants. We walked through the house quietly, stepping lightly around our scattered and broken belongings. My mother cried and cursed to herself, under her breath. I explored, with a sense of wonder, the chaotic muddle that had previously made up the familiar landscape of our home. It was so much like television, so completely alien. The bedroom walls stood naked with ugly, fist-sized holes punched into them, devoid of the framed family pictures and torn posters that had previously adorned them. My mother's bed lay on its side, still perfectly made. The cracked, brown vinyl couch in the living room rested upside down, flipped at a crazy angle, the worn out cushions scattered randomly throughout the place. The phone had been pulled out of the wall. I picked up the receiver and carried it with me. For a

few minutes we said nothing, my mother and I just stumbled around the house, shocked and confused. Afraid. She grabbed my hand and pulled me quickly along behind her, closing the front door as we left.

After leaving, we walked down the sidewalk towards my grandmother's house, two blocks away. The sidewalk was cracked and uneven under our feet, and the big elm trees that lined the street loomed above us, stripped, their fallen leaves crunching under our feet. I wanted to ask questions, but I didn't. My mother, seeing how confused and nervous I was, said to me, "Don't worry, everything is going to be OK," and upon hearing this, suddenly everything was fine. I believed her, for I had no reason not to. I turned my attention to the phone receiver that I still held in my hand, the twisted cord trailing out behind me, connected to nothing. I spoke into the receiver as we walked. "Did you see that? Did you see what they did to our house?" The bare branches rustled above us. I remember that it was cold that day.

It wasn't until sometime later, when I overheard my mother and grandmother talking, that I realized that my father had been the one who tore up the house. It wasn't

until many years later that I could begin to understand why.

I think about this incident a lot. I think about it whenever I think about what it means to grow up. There comes a point in your life when your sense of security, if you ever have one, begins to feel threatened. This point came early for me. It's funny, when you are a child, your parents will say to you, "Don't worry, everything is going to be fine," and despite the absolute horribleness of everything around you, you believe them. Parents can be a lot like gods in that way, you put your faith in them and hope for the best. They provide the voice of stability and comfort in your life. Unfortunately, you grow up, and as you do you start to question whether or not things really turn out OK. You start to imagine the slightest tone of doubt in your parents' voices when they tell you this. You start to wonder if they truly believe it themselves. There comes a point when you yourself just don't believe it anymore. Eventually you realize that this voice is terribly unreliable. For a lot of us, this is when we grow up. This is when the incredible shortness and intense cruelty of life suddenly becomes real to us. This is when we start to become mysteries to each other and even greater mysteries to ourselves. This is when that voice, that childhood part of us that desperately wants to believe that things will ultimately work out, disappears completely. ✱

ILLUSTRATION BY HENRY MUENCH



## A MAN WHO TAKES CARE OF HIS TOOLS

Sun twists through branches  
of the oak tree overhead,  
heat crouching like an animal,  
& your eyes are on me;  
I struggle in the glare.

Sipping beer & mopping sweat,  
you lean against your truck,  
its compartments open;  
row upon row of tools gleam  
like stars in a black sky,  
the luster filling your glasses . . .  
Lifting wooden-handled knives  
from the dishwater I had put them in  
to soak after dinner last night,  
you shook your head, eyes intent,  
saying the wood was still a sponge  
and would eventually rot away.  
"My father was a carpenter," you added,  
"and he always taught me about  
taking good care of my tools . . ."

You have me move the jack  
for leverage & change my stance  
so that I lift with my legs.  
Your eyes are on me,  
& you tell me how weak I am  
as I strain with the lug nuts.  
I have never had this much trouble.





Taking over, you install  
the fresh battery & wipe  
the carburetor with delicacy;  
as I trip the starter, you spray  
starter fluid down the choke.  
Missing badly on several cylinders,  
the engine gasps, turns over, & catches  
for the first time in two years;  
"It works," you exclaim.

While it warms, you brush out  
the interior with a rag  
as though grooming a horse.  
Settled in, you lurch off  
through the field of the man  
who has stored the car for you,

returning in a rattling cloud,  
happy in the racket you've raised,  
the dust you've kicked up;  
my eyes water, & I cough.

*by John Graves Morris*

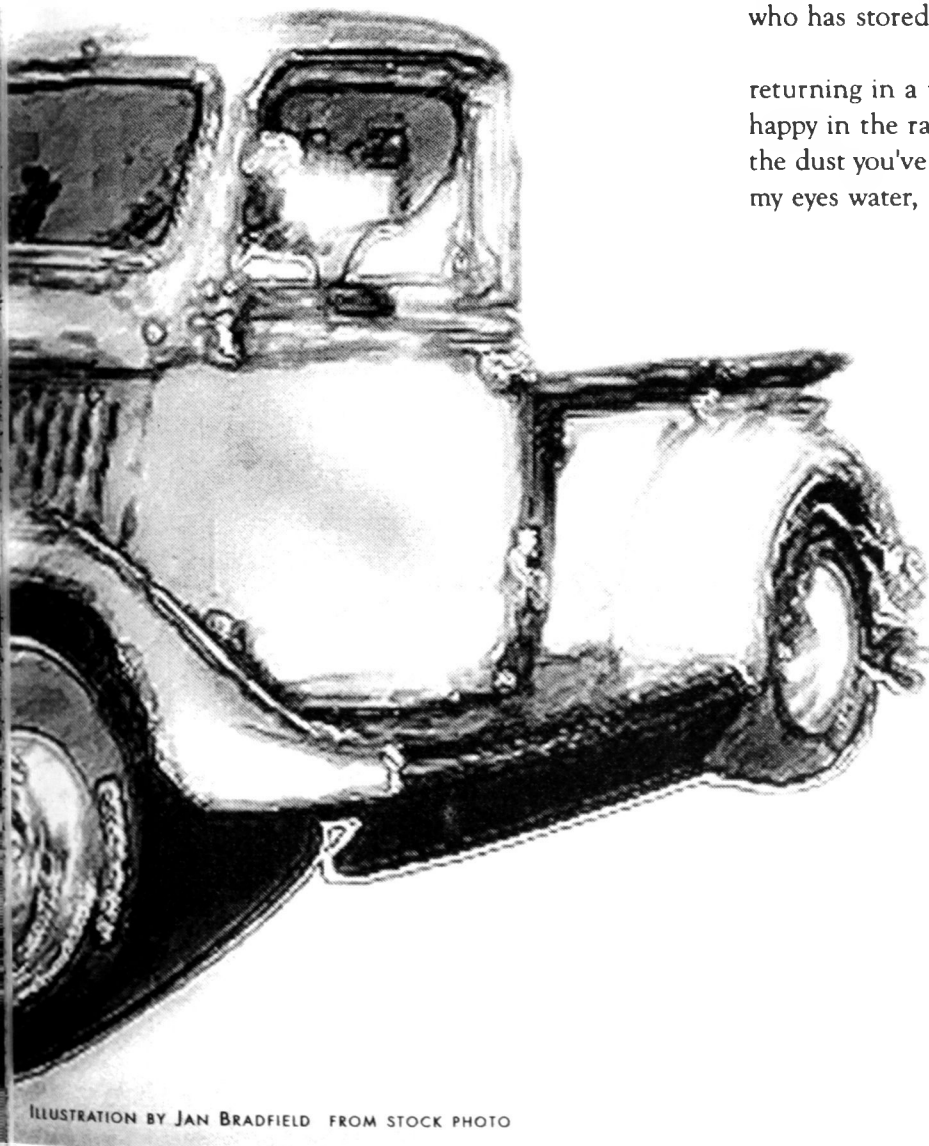


ILLUSTRATION BY JAN BRADFIELD FROM STOCK PHOTO

## SCRIMSHAW

*by John Erickson, Jr.*

Scrimshaw is an art as well as a craft. It is the scribing of a design onto ivory, bone, horn or even man-made materials such as plastics or polymers. Regardless of the medium, the technique and results are all similar. A design is drawn on the polished surface and scribed with a needle or small sharp blade. Once the design is incised, ink, dye, or oil paint is applied to the lines or dots and wiped away. After allowing time for the pigment to dry, the surface is once again polished with fine steel wool. The area incised will hold the color revealing the desired design.

Scrimshaw as an art form has been with us for the better part of three centuries. Usually associated with the Maritime industry of whaling, scrimshaw became the folk art of the American whaler. The average time at sea in pursuit of whales was three years, and on those extended voyages, time was a commodity. When the men were not caught up in the excitement of the chase and capture of the whale, there were long periods of shipboard routine and boredom. Scrimshaw was a relief from the tedium and monotony that occupied the sailor's daily life. Indeed, the word scrimshaw seems to have its root in the Dutch word "skrimshander," meaning one who spends much time laying around or a "lazy fellow." Obviously, most of the scrimshaw produced during those lulls was of a nautical theme, depicting harbor scenes, great battles at sea, or men and ships in pursuit of the mighty whale.

Generally speaking, there were three types of whale ivory used by the New England whalers in their

scrimshaw: teeth, panbone and baleen whalebone. The Sperm whale is the only one with teeth, from 24 to 40 in its lower jaw. These teeth were usually scrimshawed whole or were cut into smaller pieces for inlay work and smaller articles. These teeth were considered the whaler's trophy from the hunt, and often the designs scribed on them reflect a definite masculine character: whaling scenes, grand ships, or naval battles. Scrimshawed Sperm whale teeth are among the most prized and valuable examples of whaling art collected today.

The panbone is the bone from the lower jaw. The large, heavy pieces are often twelve to eighteen feet long but comparatively thin. This was the "hardware store" of the scrimshander. Not only could carvers have a large surface for whaling or other scenes, but also the bone could be cut into pieces for clothes pins, needle cases, knife handles, mallets, or even yard sticks.

Baleen whalebone is an appendage that is actually a giant sieve used to strain plankton and shell crustacea from the sea water. Once removed, it was scraped, cleaned, and dried or "seasoned." Baleen was commonly used in women's corsets. In fact, some of the more romantic type of scrimshaw became the frontal stay or "busk" of a lady's corset. Often, these "busks" would display verse, geometric designs, or designs symbolic of the home and lady left behind.

The discovery of "rock oil" (kerosene as refined from petroleum), spelled the end of the whaling industry. Sperm oil as used for lubrication and oil

lamps and spermaceti wax as used in the manufacture of candles now had serious competition. Although the petroleum industry was in its infancy, it rapidly replaced those products associated with the whaling industry. That, coupled with raids by the Confederate Navy on Union whalers during the American Civil War and the disasters to the Arctic Fleet, contributed heavily to the end of American Whaling. With the demise of the whaling industry, scrimshawed ivory from the whales virtually ceased, closing a colorful chapter in American maritime history, as well as art.

Another form of scrimshaw from early America is the powder horn. Though not normally associated with the nautical theme, some examples do exist. Engraved or scrimshawed powder horns of antiquity are rare. These horns are usually classified into the categories of those made prior to, and those made after, 1800. These categories can be further divided by style, architecture, and the engraving or scrimshaw on them. As with any art form, the work often reflected the individual's thoughts, emotions, and times in which they lived. Many of the horns produced were engraved by professionals, just as was the nautical art described earlier. However, the vast majority of the horns were done by the soldier, trapper, or hunter who used them in daily life. As with the whaling scrimshaw, these horns vary from the unattractive to the absolutely exquisite.

Engraved powder horns prior to 1800 are usually from the French and Indian War and the Revolutionary War period and are considered to be from the "Golden Age Of Horns." During this period that spans approximately fifty years, horns produced are considered by collectors to be the ultimate in style, elegance, and decoration. Horns of this period are of

many themes. Many are military campaign horns and are documented as significant sources of history that may otherwise have been lost. Map horns (as there were few maps and fewer roads) are especially valuable from the historical viewpoint, as are horns showing forts (or fortifications) and facades of towns that no longer exist. Rhyme horns were also a popular theme. These horns had a brief verse (two to six lines) that ranged from the patriotic to the tender, followed by the name of the owner and the words "HIS HORN." Some of the horns had ships, flowers and vines, Indians, trees, animals (real and mythical), or combinations thereof. Many of these horns saw very little practical use and have survived the years because they were made as keepsakes or mementos and are in excellent condition. Even the plainer, less decorative horns that have seen the usage that they were intended for have survived due in large part to the durability of the cattle or oxen horn.

In rather sharp contrast are the horns made from 1800 up to the American Civil War, when powder horns were replaced by metal flasks, cartridge pouches and the rolled cartridge. Horns of this period were carried in the westward expansion and exploration of America. These horns were essential, functional equipment as centers of commerce were few and far between. Consequently, they were plainer than those of the earlier era, as keepsakes were a luxury. These were the horns of explorers and trappers of beaver such as John Colter (who discovered the Yellowstone country), Kit Carson, Jedediah Smith, James Beckworth, Jim Bridger, and Hugh Glass to name but



a very few. Some of the horns from the Fur Trade Era were scrimshawed, probably around a campfire or cabin while waiting out the winter.



*Scrimshaw and Scrimshanders, Whales and Whalemen*, by E. Norman Flayderman. These books allowed the reader to tour and inspect

The vast majority, however, were inexpensive and produced in quantity for the pilgrims headed west. Though not as attractive to the collector, these horns of the fur trade era retain an important place in history. Horns of this period can still be found in antique shops and are usually relatively inexpensive. I have a horn I found in Stillwater, Oklahoma about three years ago. The only design on the horn is "4T." Typical of horns after 1800, there is no reference as to the maker, no date as to when it was made, and no significance to the "4T" has been found to date. It may be interesting to note that when this horn was purchased, it was about one-third full of gunpowder, dry and still viable for the purpose intended.

Just as technology had closed the door on the whaling industry and its associated art, the same became true for the powder horn. The metallic cartridge and the repeating rifles of Spencer, Henry, and Winchester rendered the single shot muzzle loading rifle obsolete in a very short time, and once again an interesting chapter in American folk art all but disappeared. Scrimshaw as an art form faded into mild obscurity, sought only by collectors and kept somewhat alive by oriental artists producing trinkets for the tourist and mass marketing with little regard for fine art. For almost one hundred years, very little was produced and public awareness was minimal at best.

In the late 1960's and early 1970's two events of note revived the interest in scrimshaw. The first event was the publication of two books entitled *John F. Kennedy: Scrimshaw Collector*, by Clare Barnes and

collections of scrimshaw, thereby creating an awareness of this unique art form. The second major event came in the form of legislation: the Marine Mammals Protection Act of 1972 and the Endangered Species Act of 1973. These two pieces of federal legislation controlled, and in some cases, prohibited traffic in ivory artifacts and art work. This legislation also created more interest and awareness in this almost lost American folk art. With the awareness this legislation created, scrimshaw became collectable and valuable as an investment in art.

In addition to the awareness in maritime scrimshaw, the renewed interest in muzzle loading rifles for target shooting, "living history" exhibitions and sport hunting sparked a renewed interest in the powder horn. The National Muzzle Loading Rifle Association sponsors competitive shooting events, and participants are encouraged to dress in costume of the times complete with the proper accouterments. Similar events are carried out by the Oklahoma State Muzzle Loading Rifle Association, and it's quite a spectacle to behold some bearded geezer with flintlock, powder horn, and 'hawk dressed like he just stepped out of 1830. Most states now have big game hunting seasons specifically for primitive arms, and this has also been a great contributor to interest in powder horns, but mostly to the traditionalist. Some collect the art, never to take the engraved horn to the range or the field.

My interest in scrimshaw began seventeen years ago when I wanted a powder horn to compliment my muzzle loading rifle. Being a "user" rather than a col-

lector, I wanted a nice, personalized horn in the style of the fur trade era with some decoration that is not usually found on horns of that period. To my surprise and amazement, I found that they were available, but the cost was much more than I could afford. I decided then that I would make my own powder horn and scribe it with whatever I wanted. I had no idea of where this path would lead and the events that would follow.

Initial research for this project was difficult. Few museums have powder horns in their collections to view and study. Similarly, libraries have little if no literature on the subject. In fact, there is very little in the way of available literature anywhere on this specific subject. The few books that are available are excellent in every respect in this field of American folk art. From a muzzleloading supply house, I purchased half a dozen raw cow horns and two books, one on scrimshaw and one on old powder horns. After reading the books, I assembled a small quantity of sand paper of various grades, fine steel wool, an exacto knife and the blades I thought most appropriate. From these modest beginnings, I began.

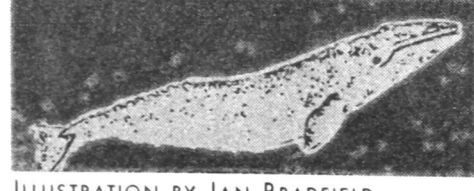
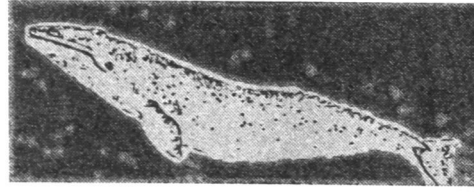
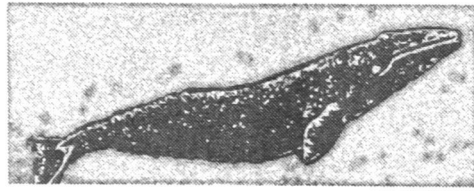
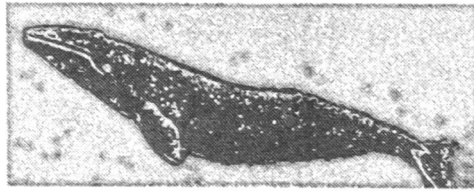
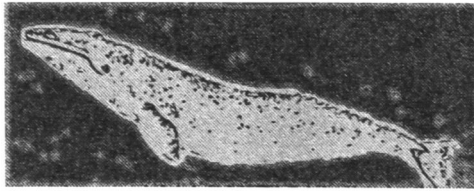
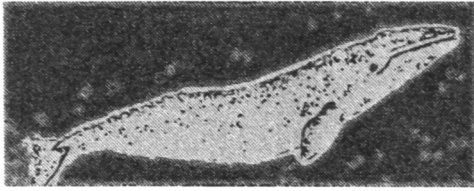
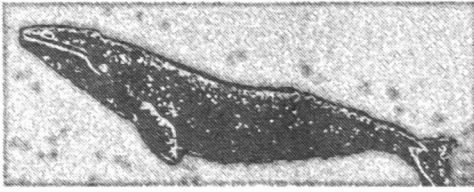
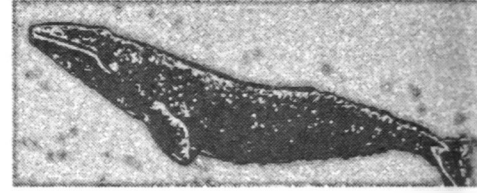
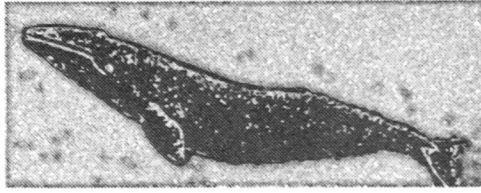
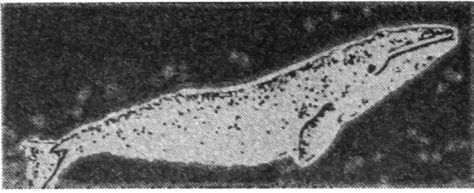
Having no real artistic training, progress was a little slow. I experimented with different blades, styles of typography, inks, and technique. One of the nice things about working with horn is that if you don't like the results of your experimentation or if you make a mistake, you can sand the horn and begin anew. I probably worked those six horns to destruction before settling on a technique and style. I also used those horns to work on the ends (butt and spout) that were similar to horns from the post 1800 period. The butt end was filled with a close fitting wood plug that was glued and nailed in place. Turned fittings or wrought

nails provided a place to attach the strap. The spout end was drilled and formed or capped with brass or copper as those metals will not spark. A very close fitting cap or tapered stopper completed the spout end. I purchased more horns and sought out horns from local sources to further pursue this endeavor.

As time went on, I was making horns for friends who were fellow shooters and was encouraged to diversify. Ivory from any source is expensive, and the legality of the ivory must be established before purchasing. White paper micarta can be substituted for ivory and is generally more accepted by the public. It is also more available, less expensive, and legality is never an issue. Cast polymer can also be substituted for ivory and lends itself to larger scenic motifs. I've purchased and used these three mediums for a variety of work ranging from earrings and pendants to wildlife portraits and land/seascapes. As my horizons broadened with diversification, my library grew accordingly, as did my artistic ability.

Currently, I work with all of the mediums mentioned and incorporate exotic woods or metals into the project. Scrimshaw today is no longer bound by the traditional themes and is as innovative as the artist that creates it. All forms of wildlife, creatures of fantasy and mythology, American Indians, portraiture, and nudes have become fare for the contemporary scrimshander. The range of contemporary scrimshaw is quite vast, and the expansion of themes by the innovative artist is responsible for the growth and widespread acceptance of contemporary scrimshaw. \*





## THE WHALE

*Save all who nurture  
Save all who sing*

How could she float her ton-heavy body so gracefully  
When displaced from the ocean into Sea World's tiny concrete  
pool?

I wondered as I watched the whale.

I can't remember her name,

But she flashed her glossy black body, her white comma eye  
marks,

And slapped her tail on command, soaking the front row  
audience.

I bet she liked that.

I bet she had one whale of a time.

She was a mammal.

I learned that in fourth grade when the teacher made me look  
her up.

I tried to read the *World Book's* bunched up words printed in  
dense columns,

But I could only remember one other word—*ambergris*.

I loved the way it sounded.

The substance, waxy, was used in perfume to make the scent  
last longer.

Maybe the Joy I bought in Paris had it.

Sometimes it washed to shore and sometimes people removed it.

"What part does it come from?" my classmates asked.

I watched their faces.

"The intestines," I replied with directness.

"It's from the bowels of the whale."

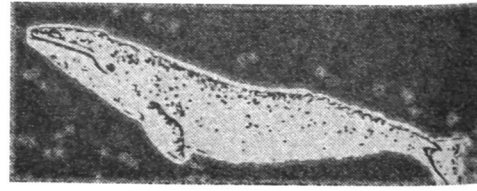
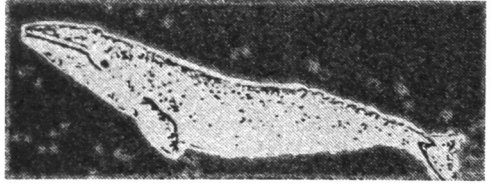
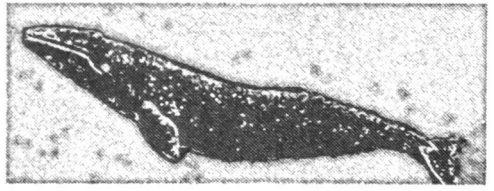
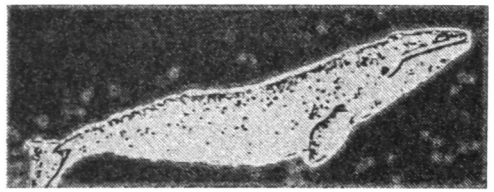
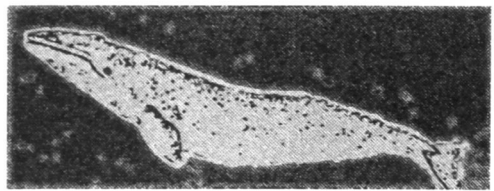
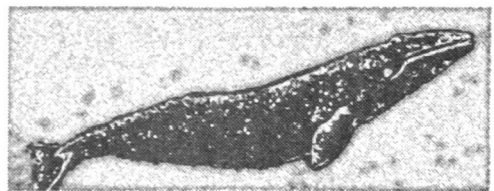
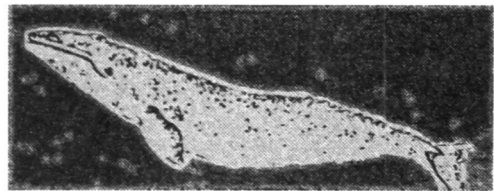
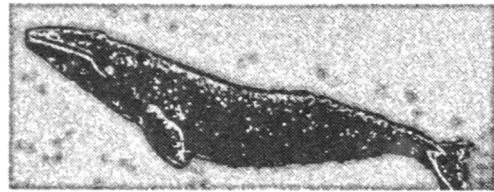
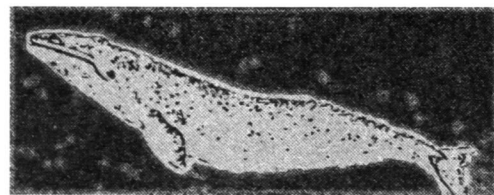
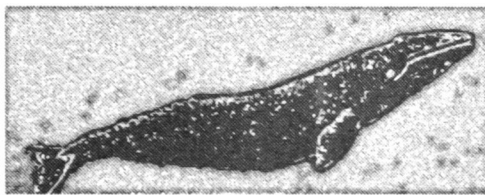
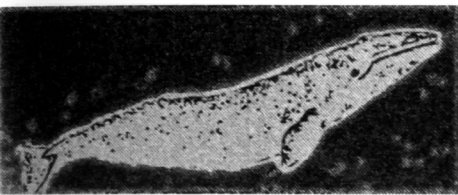


ILLUSTRATION BY JAN BRADFIELD



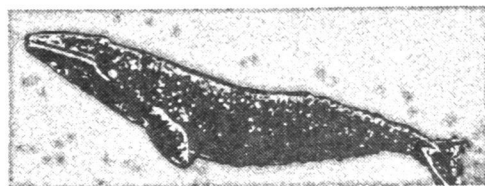
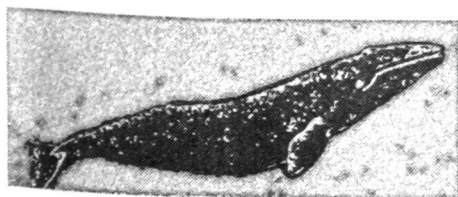
This would not have been the same part Jonah filled.  
No, he must have been in the stomach.  
Gepetto too.  
I saw his picture inside the whale with a table, chair, paper  
and candle when I read *Pinnocchio*.  
That was a full color page.

The announcer told us this whale was expecting.  
I'd done that twice and felt as big as a whale.  
Not even whalebone stays could have trimmed me then.  
I wondered if she'd have morning sickness, crave something  
sour like pickles,  
And think sometimes she couldn't come up for air.

She'd have her baby in captivity,  
But I guess we're all born that way in some respect.  
We all get used up somehow.  
The Eskimos take the blubber and bone,  
Now European margarine and American scrimshaw.  
Sightseer's binoculars, and Ahab's harpoon.

Sometimes though the using up means  
Being guided when disoriented,  
Being rescued when beached,  
And sometimes when glycerine is extracted from the oil,  
It isn't always made into explosives.  
Once it was used for the glycerine balm I smoothed gently on  
my mother's lips  
As she breathed for the last time.

by Vivian Nida



## DUMPING A STRAY ON SMOKE-RISE ROAD



Once, before we grew hearts  
too sore for such an act,  
we hauled a big sorry dog

miles down Smoke-Rise Road.  
Sick of cleaning up trash  
and scavenged fieldmice

from our porch — sick  
of seeing him hungry,  
and thinking he loved us

in all our disgust  
of his ulcers, and filth  
and fleas, we tricked him

into the back of the truck  
with half a baloney sandwich.  
Paws, up on the squeaking side-rail

he rode the long way  
with wind in his nose,  
and I tried not to see his elegance

towering in the rearview mirror.  
You were small then, not  
three years old. And dressed,

I remember, in blue overalls and  
a bright-striped sweater with  
pockets. Riding in my lap,

you chewed on the other  
half-sandwich, and took no  
notice of the quiet trip

out on the country road.  
Just past Gilliland Hill, the sky swelled  
and fat drops swatted

the pickup windows. This oughtta do it,  
and your father pulled the truck to the side  
of the gravel road, where an old sign

for BlueStem Cattle hung  
by one side of its fragile neck,  
whining, in the heightening

winds. The dog jumped dumbly  
to the road beside us, wagging.  
I didn't put my eyes

on him — thinking I'd spared  
myself a good look  
at what we were doing —

not knowing then, how hard  
he'd run behind us, when we moved away.  
And how long.

Not guessing how shaken I'd become  
at the sight of him back there, wild, and striving,  
and panicked to reach us.

But mostly not knowing that you,  
your small weight leaning against me,  
would see it all —

wise eyes staring  
out the cracked  
back window.

*by Lori DeLozier*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY STACI HEADRICK

## THE LAKE THAT GREW OUT OF A WELL DENVER 1861



Imagine a man, Mr. Sloan, waking up one day,  
the day Sloans Lake was born,  
thinking he still owned the land on which he lived.



Proud of it. Lifting his spade from the corner  
of his shed, hefting it onto his shoulder to keep  
the sun, just come up, out of his face,



whistling down the brown slope where the well  
should go, gauging with his eyes the best spot,  
and cutting in, lifting up that fresh ground.

And lifting up some more.  
Pitching it over his side.  
Building a sizable pile.

Soon water bubbles up, hesitant.  
The next morning, a large pool.  
Mr. Sloan stands near its wobbly edge,

scratching his wonderstruck head.  
And scratching it some more.  
Over the weeks, the lake grows, gently—



The underground spring waiting eons for an outlet  
finds one in the slice of a spade.  
And takes its time, not wanting to turn to shock

what it must have known would be at least surprise.  
To watch a well become a giant lake.  
To watch a wide depression, previous buffalo stomp,



track where Indian ponies raced, long last stretch  
of stagecoach line, fill up its bowl-rimmed sides.  
Mr. Sloan vacates his house before the water

laps its porch. With his pioneer humor sense,  
he relents, giving up to higher purpose the land  
he thought he owned, though all he might envision



ILLUSTRATION BY HENRY MUENCH



would be rowboats or canoes, a swimming hole,  
skating in winter, eventual stocked trout,  
not steamboats, amusement parks, theaters, zoos,

acres of picnic grass, summer concerts, concessions,  
even brothels and saloons. Still he's more willing  
to attach his name to a lake

than to a piece of land sown in beans or wheat  
likely to be wiped out every other year  
by hords of locust or by drought,

to something sprawling, less contained  
than a brick-walled well, lake constantly tapping  
its changeable edge. Mr. Sloan, no longer farmer,

follows the lake's example, expanding himself  
like a hot-air balloon. He harvests the lake's ice,  
chunking it out during the cold winter months

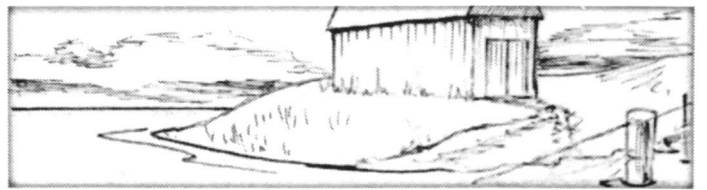
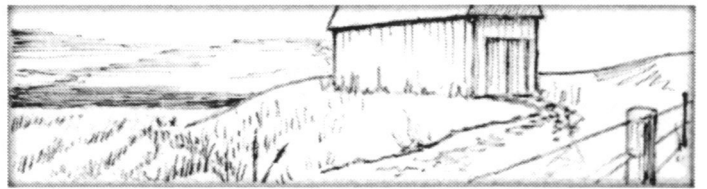
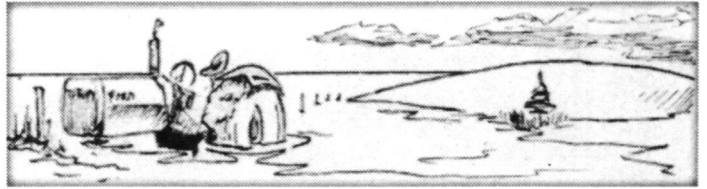
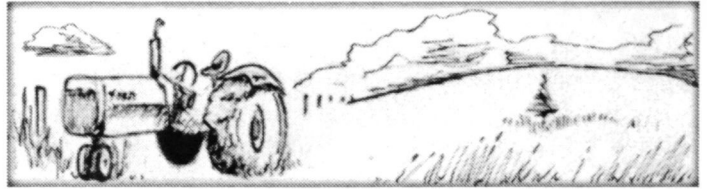
and storing it, large sawdust marshmallows,  
in a shore-built ice-house. Those cubes end up  
in breweries as far as Cheyenne, besides cooling off

the local folk. Had he lived, old Sloan may have become  
a geological surveyor or celebrated pastry chef.  
As it was, he could only stand on the sandbar

dividing Cooper Lake from the lake of his own name  
and dream of marrying up those sister waterways,  
broadening Sloans, creating an island

for a permanent colony of then-migrating ducks,  
ducks the kids could fatten with dried out bread,  
year-round harvest, roasted and succulent.

*by Susan Richardson*



## ONE GOOD SHOT

by Keith Long

As an aspiring journalism student twenty years ago, I took a photography class during which I had to construct a box camera that actually took photos. I used black construction paper, black electrician's tape, black paper clips, and black shoe polish to make sure the inside of my camera was completely black. Black is a big color for box cameras. I pricked a hole in the "lens" side of the camera, went into the darkroom and loaded a sheet of photographic paper, went back outside, pointed my camera at a photography classmate while he stood under an evergreen tree, and moved my shutter, thus catching the moment inside my camera.

An hour or so later, I came out of the dark room with my newly-developed box-camera photo. My instructor looked at it.

"What's this?" he asked.

"That's either Jenkins or an evergreen tree," I answered. Together, he and I decided the lump in the photo most resembled Jenkins. His face was blurry, his knees were knocking, he leaned precariously to one side as though he might fall off the edge of the paper, a mad black streak ran diagonally across the photo, and all four corners of the photo sported a strange-looking orangeish-gray hue.

It's the last good picture I've taken.

When Anna and I got married, some years after the box-camera deal, we made a subconscious effort to catch our lives together on film. I bought a

Pentax 35mm with a 70x210 zoom lens so that our lives could be caught at long distance. We even thought about investing in dark-room equipment, but decided it might be better to try to learn how to run the camera first.

So we did.

Try to run the camera, I mean.

We took rolls and rolls of film. We studied the resulting compositions, judging whether we had stood too far off, or too close up, or too far to the right or left. We wondered about the lighting, and if the shutter speed needed to be faster or slower, and whether the aperture needed to be wider or narrower. We argued, we harangued. We spent more money on rolls of film.

Fortunately, we've borrowed enough photos from relatives to put together a couple of bulky family albums. Several shots in the Long family album even catch me in the background, trying to load another roll of film into my camera. Actually, we have three photo albums nearly completed: one of my side of the family, one of her side of the family, and another one devoted entirely to my finger.

"What's that?" someone is apt to ask when they open up the "My Finger" album.

"That's the Grand Canyon," I say, lurking over their shoulder.

"No," they say, "I mean that huge, orange thing hovering menacingly in the sky?"

"Oh. That's my finger. It keeps sliding over the

lens."

I have photos of my finger along the parkway of the Kern River in California, with Anna, Parker, and Mossie beside the sign welcoming visitors to Big Stone Gap, Virginia, in panoramic renderings of the Rocky and Smoky Mountains, standing on a corner in Winslow, Arizona, and even with the "Big Texan" statue outside a restaurant in Amarillo where I watched a 400-pound man try to eat a 72-ounce steak in six minutes.

Those are the glamorous shots.

I also have pics of my finger washing dishes with Anna in our kitchen, sleeping beside Parker when he was only two weeks old, teaching Boone the Setter Wunderkind to fetch in the backyard, and shoveling snow out of our driveway. I point with pride to the fact that I've consistently gotten the best side of my finger in all of those photos.

It should hardly surprise anyone, then, that with my extensive knowledge of all things photographic, along with my naturally helpful nature, I readily volunteered to teach the new photography class on campus.

"Hmmm," my chairman hummed, slowly shaking his head. "I'm not so sure that would . . ."

"Be glad to," I told him. "Say, did I ever show you the photo I took with a self-made box camera back in my old 101 photography class?"

"Gosh, but times flies!" my chairman said, tapping his wrist watch and holding it to his ear.

"I've got it real handy," I said, reaching in a drawer, pulling it out, and sticking it under his nose.

"What's that?" he asked.

"That's my friend Jenkins," I said.

The chairman looked more closely at the photo. "Jenkins kind of looked like a finger, didn't he?" he said.

I promptly re-assigned the photo to my finger album. ✂

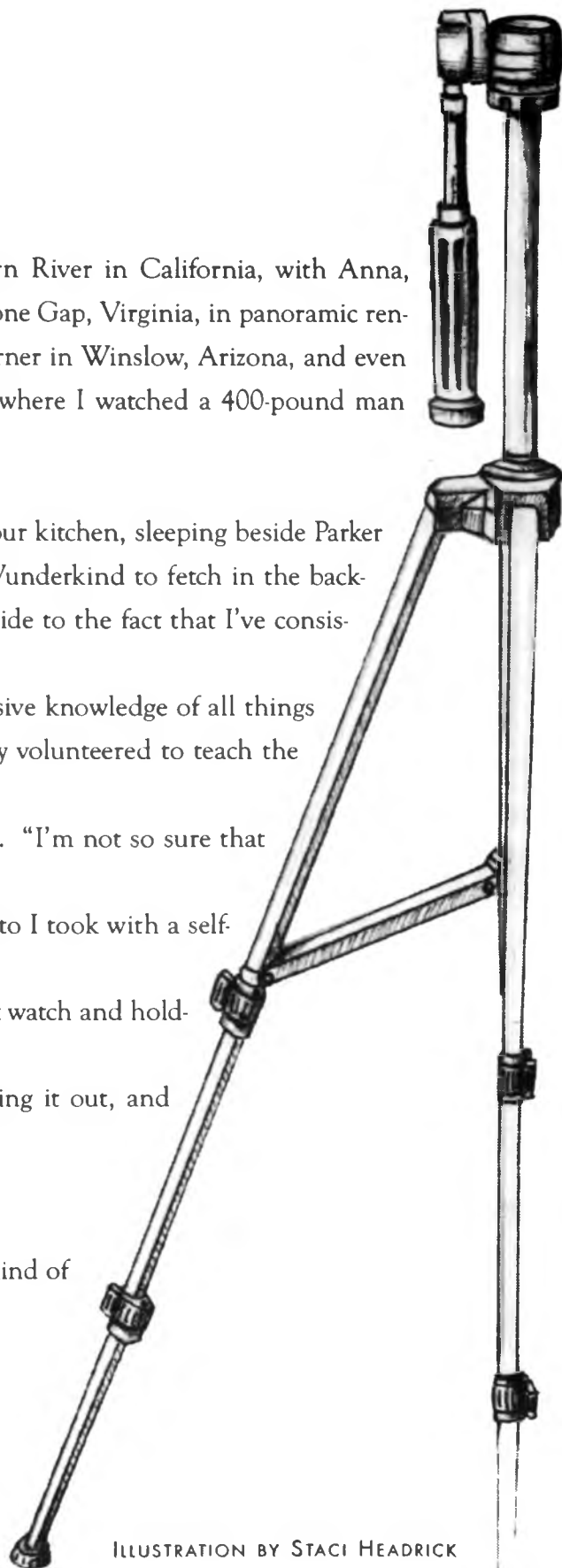


ILLUSTRATION BY STACI HEADRICK

## ROUTINELY SPEAKING

by Keith Long

A co-worker stepped into my office the other day and slumped into a chair under my non-working cuckoo clock.

"My life is boring," she said. "What a rut: eat, work, and sleep. It's the same old routine."

"Oh, sure," I said. "Boast if you must."

I've been trying to establish a routine for 20 years now with absolutely no result. I guess I'm just not a routine guy. Once upon a time, when I watched baseball the announcer sometimes would exclaim "that's a routine fly ball," or "that's a routine double-play ball." A routine double-play ball, I've come to understand, is a ball hit to either the shortstop or second baseman when there's a runner on first. The ball goes to second for the first out, and then to first for the second out. Double play.

Routine.

When I was in high school, our "routine" double-play ball went something like this:

*One out, runner on second. The batter swings at a third strike in the dirt and the catcher misses the ball. The batter is allowed to run to first base and reaches safely, but the runner on second rounded third base too widely and a throw down there nabs him. One out. The batter, now on first, attempts to take second on the play at third but gets caught in a rundown and is eventually tagged out by the center fielder. Two outs.*

Routine.

It's been that way ever since. For example, breakfast

breakfast.

"Everything," I responded.

"No," she said. "I mean this morning."

"Two eggs, one fried and one scrambled, toast, Spam, and apple juice."

"And yesterday?"

"A Hardee's sausage and egg biscuit and Mountain Dew."

"And the day before?"

"Salmon and crackers."

"And before?"

"Spaghettios."

Because of academics, my "routine" day never happens twice in a row. On Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays I have an eight o'clock class, so I'm up and sort of about by 6:45. On Tuesdays and Thursdays I don't have a class under eleven o'clock, so I push the snoozer right up to 10 o'clock.

I've made getting to work an art in non-routine. For instance, this morning I got up at 6:53 a.m. sharp in order to meet my eight o'clock class. I stepped into the shower and attempted to cleanse myself, which wasn't easy since I'd left the lawn sprinkler running all night and the water pressure was minimal on the upstairs floor. I could cup my hands until I got enough liquid out of the shower spout to dampen one spot, and then I soaped it, and then I cupped my hands for enough water to rinse. About fifteen minutes into my shower, Anna turned off the sprinkler and



my day was enhanced by a sudden rush of frigid water which I was unable to dodge.

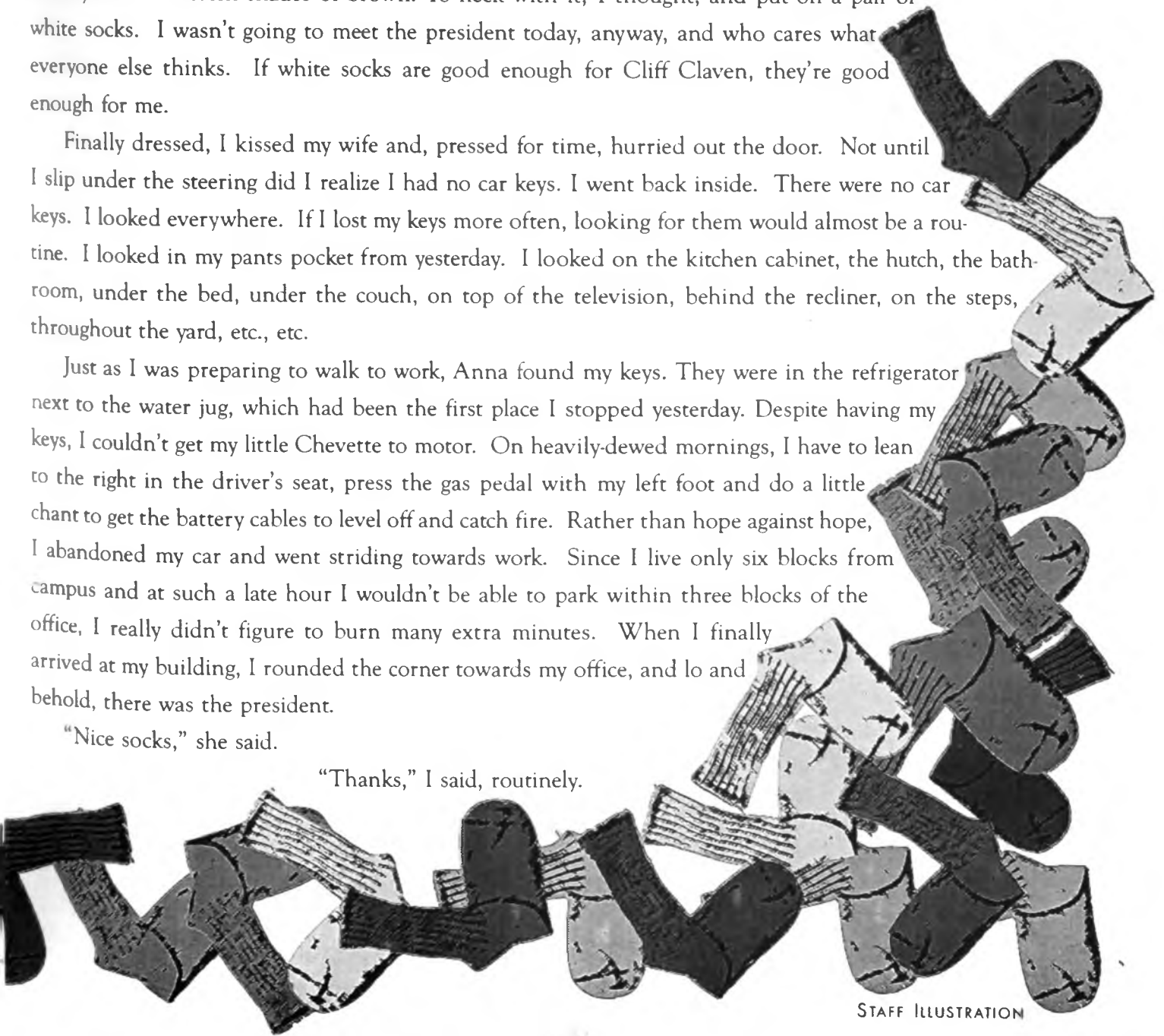
When I got out of the shower, I ran dripping downstairs to find a towel. By the time I located one in the downstairs bathroom, I was pretty much dry and in no need for it. I attempted to clothe myself at that point and was doing a pretty good job until it came to the socks. I rifled through the sock drawer only to find socks in twenty-seven different shades of brown. To heck with it, I thought, and put on a pair of white socks. I wasn't going to meet the president today, anyway, and who cares what everyone else thinks. If white socks are good enough for Cliff Claven, they're good enough for me.

Finally dressed, I kissed my wife and, pressed for time, hurried out the door. Not until I slip under the steering did I realize I had no car keys. I went back inside. There were no car keys. I looked everywhere. If I lost my keys more often, looking for them would almost be a routine. I looked in my pants pocket from yesterday. I looked on the kitchen cabinet, the hutch, the bathroom, under the bed, under the couch, on top of the television, behind the recliner, on the steps, throughout the yard, etc., etc.

Just as I was preparing to walk to work, Anna found my keys. They were in the refrigerator next to the water jug, which had been the first place I stopped yesterday. Despite having my keys, I couldn't get my little Chevette to motor. On heavily-dewed mornings, I have to lean to the right in the driver's seat, press the gas pedal with my left foot and do a little chant to get the battery cables to level off and catch fire. Rather than hope against hope, I abandoned my car and went striding towards work. Since I live only six blocks from campus and at such a late hour I wouldn't be able to park within three blocks of the office, I really didn't figure to burn many extra minutes. When I finally arrived at my building, I rounded the corner towards my office, and lo and behold, there was the president.

"Nice socks," she said.

"Thanks," I said, routinely.



STAFF ILLUSTRATION



## SWOSU ARCHIVES

*Dr. Michael Kerley*

Antiques and photographs from Southwestern's past are located in the Y Chapel Museum. These relics may be viewed by contacting Dr. Kerley at 774-3293.



### THE 1907-08 GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

•back row: Mattie Roof (guard), Jaunita James (center), Edward Hickox (Coach), Verle Wolverton (goal and Team Captain), Amy McCutcheon (goal) •front row: Iva Sylvester (center), Lillie Beck (guard)



### 1916-17 GIRLS' BASKETBALL TEAM

back row

Leta Riley (center),

Carrie Cornelson (forward),

Magnolia Gee (Coach),

Mary Jane Winters (guard),

Mildred Smith (forward)

front row (left to right)

Nellie Brady (forward),

Marguerite Anderson (guard and Team Captain),

Gladys Anderson (center)

Games

SWN...55 .....Clinton High School...8

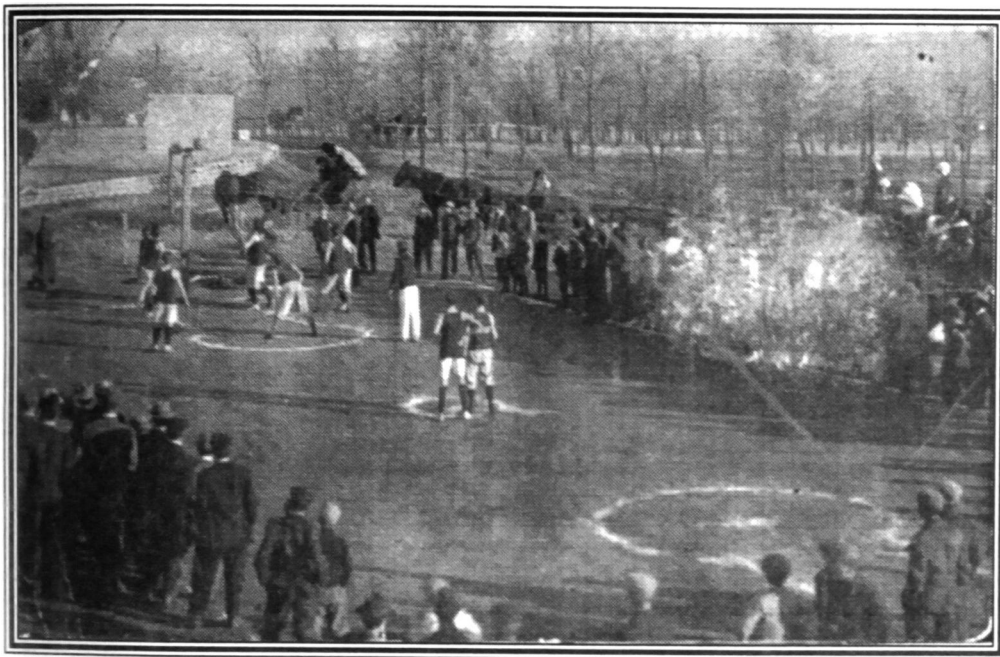
SWN...9 .....Erick High School...10

SWN...34 .....Geary High School\*...5

SWN...26 .....Alva High School\*...16

SWN...30 .....Alva High School\*...15

\*home games



## OUTDOOR BASKETBALL COURT

(WEST OF ADMINISTRATION BUILDING)

Southwestern Normal boys' basketball team defeated Elk City High School 32-17, November 24, 1911.

### Team

Captain	Richard Cloyd
Forward	Wilbur Randle
Guard	James Steele
Guard	Taylor Martin
Guard	Major Reynolds
Center	John Steward
Coach	Earl Wiley



## BIOLOGY CLUB FIELD TRIP

Biology Club trip to Carlsbad Caverns, May 20-25, 1935. Specimens were also collected for the Biology Department Museum. Professor Audubon H. Neff, Club Sponsor, is kneeling at far right.



### **SOUTHWESTERN NORMAL ADMINISTRATION BUILDING**

First building on campus completed February 1904. The structure originally consisted of eighteen recitation rooms, two office rooms, a library, five music rooms, a science laboratory, and a commercial room. An auditorium (also used as a gymnasium) occupied the top floor. Total cost for the structure was about \$55,000.



### **ADMINISTRATION BUILDING DESTROYED BY FIRE**

Several hours following the evening summer commencement exercises, July 27, 1939, a fire of unknown origin destroyed the old normal building. Only the school financial records and student transcripts were saved as these items were stored in a fire-safe vault.

# CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Fred Alsberg teaches at Southwestern Oklahoma State University and edits *Westview*. His work has appeared in *Blue Unicorn*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *The Greensboro Review*, *Rhino*, *Oregon East*, and elsewhere. Currently, he is working on a series of interviews with contributors to *Westview*.

Joe Benevento teaches creative writing at Northeast Missouri State University and is the poetry editor for the *Green Hills Literary Lantern*. His work has previously been published in over four dozen publications including *The Chattahoochee Review*, *Footwork*, *Fennel Stalk*, and *The Wisconsin Review*.

Robert Cooperman's second collection, *The Badman and the Lady*, is forthcoming from Basfal 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.

Lori DeLozier writes from Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Her poems have appeared in *Ripples Poetry Magazine*, *Tantra Press*, and *Rural Heritage*. She has just recently been accepted for publication in *Midland Review's* spring issue, *Potpourri* and *ZuZu's Petals Annual Anthology*.

Jacqueline Eis sends her publication from Fort Collins, Colorado. Her work has appeared in a number of literary magazines, most notably, *The Georgia Review*, *Southern Humanities Review*, *Writer's Forum*, *Crosscurrents*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Whole Notes*, and *The MacGuffin*. Her story "Imaginary Lives" was honored among "One Hundred Other Distinguished Short Stories" in *Best American Short Stories*, 1987. She was also a recipient of *Prairie Schooner's* Bernice Slote Award.

Jack Erickson is a machinist for HB Company of Oklahoma City. He has been pursuing scrimshaw for fourteen years.

Keith Long is a regular contributor to *Westview*, and during the past year his columns have also appeared in the *Antique Almanac*, *Update*, and *The Oak Ridge News*, as well as other newspapers. Long's writing has appeared in such national publications as *Cimarron Review*, *Midland Review*, *Weber Studies*, *Pegasus*, and *Living With Teenagers*. He has written more than 700 articles for his home-town newspaper, *The Marlow Review*, over the past fourteen years.

Ron McFarland teaches 17th-century and modern poetry, creative writing, and Contemporary Northwest Writers at the University of Idaho in Moscow. His most recent book is *The Haunting Familiarity of Things*, a collection of poems published in 1993 by Singular Speech Press.

John Graves Morris is an associate professor of English at Cameron University in Lawton. He has had poems published in *None of the Above*, *Upriver*, and *The Wisconsin Review*. He recently read his poetry at the fifth annual *Westview Writers' Festival*.

## CONTRIBUTOR'S NOTES

Charles D. Moskus lives in Phoenix and has had his poetry appear in *Borderlands: The Texas Poetry Review* and *Lullwater Review*. He has work forthcoming in *The Hiram Poetry Review*.

---

Vivian Nida teaches Advanced Composition and Creative Writing at Putnam City North High School in Oklahoma City. She is a Teacher Consultant with the Oklahoma Writing Project. "The Whale" was included in the article, "Poetry: An Introduction, Three Exercises," in the spring '96 *Oklahoma English Journal*.

---

Leslie Pietrzyk from Alexandria, Virginia has been published in *The Gettysburg Review*, *High Plains Literary Review*, *Sou'wester*, as well as many other literary publications not mentioned. She also has been awarded The Virginia Prize for Fiction, 1990, second place; *The Nebraska Review*, Pushcart Prize nomination, 1992; *Nimrod*, Katherine Anne Porter Fiction Contest, 1993, finalist; and The University of Alaska Southeast Fiction Contest, 1995, first place. Her upcoming publications will appear in the *New England Review*, *The Iowa Review*, and *The Nebraska Review*.

---

Cole Rachel is a student at Southwestern Oklahoma State University. He is a creative writer, working in both poetry and prose. He has served as a staff member and editor of *Chapbook* for three years, as well as contributing illustrations to previous issues of *Westview*.

---

Susan Richardson's work has been published in *The Wisconsin Review*, *CQ*, *The MacGuffin*, *Mediphors*, and *Calliope*. She is the founding editor of *Calypso*. Her chapbook, *Rapunzel's Short Hair: Unmythical Women*, won the fifth annual contest sponsored by Embers and appeared there in 1994.

---

Richard Terrill's most recent work has been in what's come to be called "creative non-fiction." His books are *Saturday Night in Baoding: A China Memoir* (University of Arkansas Press, 1990), which won the Associated Writing Programs Award for Nonfiction; and *The Cross and the Red Star: John Foster Travels to the Eighth Route Army* (Asian Pacific Foundation, 1994). His poems and essays have appeared in journals such as *North American Review*, *New Letters*, and *Northwest Review*. He teaches creative writing at Mankato State University in Minnesota.

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