



Fine lines

Spring 2017

VOLUME 26 ISSUE 1

EDITED BY
DAVID
MARTIN

FINE LINES: Spring 2017

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~ Spring 2017 ~

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CONTENTS

ABOUT FINE LINES	xv
In Dreams	
<i>Qadeer Abdur-Rehman</i>	1
Momentum	
<i>Rya Baird</i>	2
My Struggles	
<i>Kris Bamesberger</i>	3
My Journey to Writing	
<i>Laurie Barry</i>	4
Erosion	
<i>Gary Beck</i>	5
Sanding-Hands <i>photograph by Brandon Mowinkel</i>	5
Who I Am	
<i>Anjana Biswa</i>	6
Awakening	
<i>Sheila Boerner</i>	8
Whatcha Doin', Dear?	
<i>J. Eleanor Bonet</i>	9
A Name in Ashes	
<i>Jillian Boston</i>	10
A Place Where Education Precedes Money	
<i>Rachel Brannen</i>	12
Sleepy Owl <i>photograph by Kris Chelf</i>	13
Through a Child's Eyes	
<i>Sarah Bruner</i>	14
Meet Special Editor, Vampire Folklorist, and NaNoWriMo Wrangler: Stu Burns	
<i>Marcia Calhoun Forecki</i>	17

FINE LINES SPRING 2017

Hole in My Heart	
<i>Grace Carey</i>	21
Basurero	
<i>David Catalan</i>	22
Spring Rain <i>photo by Laura Leininger-Campbell</i>	23
I Just Hope	
<i>Kamryn Chastain</i>	24
Missouri Calling	
<i>Daniel J. Cox</i>	25
Fiction: A Dark and Early Day	
<i>Amy Cummins</i>	26
My Purpose: To Be Happy	
<i>Alison Day</i>	29
Your Voice	
<i>Mary Claire Dougherty</i>	33
Sunshine	
<i>Julia Drickey</i>	33
Family	
<i>Julia Drickey</i>	33
My World	
<i>Marinn Drickey</i>	34
I'm a Writer Because	
<i>Sophia Drickey</i>	35
Autumn Time	
<i>Harold W. Dwyer</i>	36
Steel Quilt <i>photograph by Cindy Goeller</i>	37
The 1%	
<i>Andrew Eihausen</i>	38

FINE LINES SPRING 2017

Cathy's Poem

Mike Faran 39

Mask

Collette Feagins 40

Growing Pains

Carrie Feingold. 41

The Stacks

Marcia Calhoun Forecki. 42

War

Joan Garden 49

Surmounting the Black Elk Wilderness

William Kirk Gasper. 50

Charley on the Couch *photo by David Martin* . . . 53

My Future Goals

Nick Genia 54

Creativity: A Slow Disappearance

Linnea Gillespie 55

A Matter of Life and Death

Ally Halley 58

Nature

Jacqueline Halouska 60

Adam and Eve (Danny and Angela)

painting by Watie White 61

A Poem

Amanda B. Hansen. 62

Ode to Big Red

Bill Hansen 63

Breathe Deeper

Kathie Haskins. 64

FINE LINES SPRING 2017

Review of <i>Fault Lines</i> by Gary Beck	
<i>Kathie Haskins</i>	65
My Future Is Spelled “Helpful”	
<i>Timothy D. Hazlett</i>	66
The Software Update	
<i>Gary Jones</i>	67
The Sun	
<i>Claire Kallhoff</i>	71
Whirling	
<i>Patricia Langton</i>	72
A Bookworm in a Leisure-Free World	
<i>Camille Larson</i>	74
The Sad Story of a Friendly Dog	
<i>Loren Logsdon</i>	78
Strolling <i>photograph</i> by <i>Doug Kuony</i>	81
Rock On!	
<i>Deshae E. Lott</i>	82
Truth: Words Words Words	
<i>Sam Luby</i>	87
JOY Detective	
<i>Wendy Lundeen</i>	90
MAIL	92
Jellyfish <i>photograph</i> by <i>Barb Motes</i>	94
My Dad’s Story	
<i>Bonnie J. Manion</i>	95
Glitter and Glam	
<i>Kassandra Marker</i>	96
Halls of Light	
<i>David Martin</i>	97

FINE LINES SPRING 2017

If Allowed	
<i>Vince McAndrew</i>	99
Sisters Step Up	
<i>Breia McCain</i>	100
The Redness of Berries	
<i>Mary McCarthy</i>	101
Old Delhi, India <i>photograph by Sue Sosin</i>	102
Literary Art	
<i>Lily McEvoy</i>	103
Beginnings	
<i>Jerilyn McIntyre</i>	104
Colors of South Asia	
<i>Mason McKenna</i>	116
Love Stones <i>photograph by D. N. Simmers</i>	117
Stand Still Like the Hummingbird	
<i>Henry Miller</i>	118
The End of the Universe	
<i>Rowen Mitchell</i>	120
I Am Lakota	
<i>Gilles Monif</i>	121
Lakota <i>drawing by Kevin Running Bear</i>	123
Wisdom through Humility	
<i>Sam Morris</i>	124
A Rushing of Words	
<i>Lisa Morris-Snell</i>	126
Be Careful What You Wish For	
<i>Ally Mortensen</i>	127
FINE LINES WANTS YOU	132

Why?	
<i>Barb Motes</i>	134
Autumn photograph by Barb Motes	135
Judaism 101	
<i>Michael J. Nadel</i>	136
The Racer	
<i>Katherine Netzer</i>	137
Photography: A Love for Recording Life	
<i>Jonathan Nguyen</i>	138
Christmas	
<i>Angelica Ochoa</i>	140
Art	
<i>Marie Ohlinger</i>	141
A Personal Narrative	
<i>Holley Oxley</i>	142
Father: The Greatest Adventure	
<i>Tanner Parker</i>	145
Alternate Views	
<i>Cathy Porter</i>	149
Unanswered Questions	
<i>Zuha Qadeer</i>	150
Artsy	
<i>Lauren Rayner</i>	153
Follow Your Bliss	
<i>Jessica Redwing</i>	154
Facing Home	
<i>Lily Regier</i>	157
Colors and Rainbows	
<i>Karen Rosales</i>	160

Clive James: Poetry Is	
<i>Jim Salhany</i>	161
Proverbs	
<i>Andaleeb Sana</i>	162
Searching-for-Leprechauns	
<i>photograph by Anne Obradovich</i>	164
A License to Start My Journey	
<i>Heena Sayal</i>	165
Such a Wonderful Gift	
<i>Skyler Schreck</i>	168
Adagio for Hillside	
<i>Walt Schumann</i>	169
Love Poem with Footnotes	
<i>Daniel Sharkovitz</i>	172
Legacy	
<i>Sue Shelburne</i>	173
Awaiting the Moment of Revelation	
<i>photograph by Chrissy Ellison</i>	175
The Definition of Motion	
<i>d. n. simmers</i>	176
Even While Walking I Think of You	
<i>Michael Simon</i>	177
Simplistic Utopia	
<i>Roxanne Slattery</i>	178
A True Story	
<i>Connie & Bob Spittler</i>	180
Simon Sinek and the Millennial Problem	
<i>Hannah Stacey</i>	182
Do Not Fear the Racing Heart	
<i>Connor Stednitz</i>	185

FINE LINES SPRING 2017

The Wait	
<i>Mary K. Stillwell</i>	186
Come Let Us Converse in Verse	
<i>Ben Noah Suri</i>	187
Eyes	
<i>Olivia Torres</i>	188
The Day World Leaders Came Under the Mystic of Earth's Dream	
<i>Lee Van Ham</i>	189
Watcher	
<i>David Waller</i>	192
Are the Cameras Still Going?	
<i>Court Walsh</i>	194
I Wasn't There	
<i>Carolyn Weisbecker</i>	197
The Soul of a Writer	
<i>August Whitbeck</i>	199
Lookout <i>photograph by Michael Campbell</i>	200
The Beauty of Silence	
<i>JoEll White</i>	201
I Am	
<i>Anna Wobser</i>	202
WRITING ADVICE.	203
Friendship: The Light That Went Out	
<i>Jack Zimmer</i>	205
Ride a Painted Pony <i>photo by Sue Shelburne</i> . . .	207
CONTRIBUTORS	209
PLEASE SUPPORT OUR SPONSORS	225

ABOUT FINE LINES

Fines Lines is published by Fine Lines, Inc., a 501(c) 3 non-profit corporation. David Martin is the managing editor. In this quarterly publication, we share poetry and prose by writers of all ages in an attempt to add clarity and passion to our lives. Support is provided through donations, all of which are tax deductible. Join us in creating the lives we desire through the written word.

Composition is hard work. We celebrate its rewards in each issue. Share this publication with others who love creativity. We encourage authors and artists of all ages. Our national mailing list reaches every state. Increased literacy and effective, creative communication is critical for all.

Fines Lines editors believe writing of life's experiences brings order to chaos, beauty to existence, and celebration to the mysterious.

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- We accept submissions via email, file attachments, CDs formatted in MS Word for PCs, and laser-printed hard copies.
- Editors reply when writing is accepted for publication, and if a stamped, self-addressed envelope or email address is provided.
- Submissions must not include overt abuse, sexuality, profanity, drugs, alcohol, or violence.
- Do not send “class projects.” Teachers may copy *Fines Lines* issues for their classes and submit student work for publication when they act as members and sponsors.
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We encourage readers to respond to the ideas expressed by our authors. Letters to the editor may be printed in future issues after editing for length and clarity. Reader feedback is important to us. We support writers and artists with hope and direction. Write on.

*“As a writer, you should
not judge, you
should understand.”*

ERNEST HEMINGWAY



In Dreams

QADEER ABDUR-REHMAN

What if we cannot be together?
What if this world's weather
Doesn't allow being one, me and you?
But in my dreams, I am with you.
In dreams, we'll walk on the way to the moon.
In dreams, it will rain upon us every noon.
In dreams, we will put feet into streams.
In dreams, we will catch cloudy sunbeams.
In dreams, we will make baskets with flowers.
I dream we will build a home of ours.
In dreams, we will pick wood of the pink tree.
In dreams, from the rules of humans, we will be free.

Momentum

RYA BAIRD

(a poem for the love struck)

don't let
the electricity running
through your chest
consume you.

where you think your heart is, I know
the feeling of ice melting
darkness becoming warm
the little light you're imagining
getting larger, closer, holding
another human being
another set of nerves,
a physical dynamism,
another perspective,
another set of memories of what it's like
to think you're going crazy

my only advice is
you are something beyond this.

My Struggles

KRIS BAMESBERGER

Time escapes me. Work, my son, my husband, my cat, my home, all call out to me, and I answer every time. I answer because I want to. It is where my devotion lies in this season of life. A favorite saying of mine is “In due time.” Right now, I am meant to fulfill my duties as a mother, a wife, a pet owner, and a full-time employee. Creating time for writing will come. I will continue with my journal writing and being involved with *Fine Lines*. With time, my writing will be fostered, and I will begin.

My mind wanders, darting back and forth between thoughts of what I need to do, what I want to do, and what I should do. I find myself getting wrapped up in the past, the future, and the movie I watched last night that moved me. I respond by staring into space and getting lost in my thoughts. I come to and trace back how I got started thinking about those thoughts. This creates my “ah-ha” moment, and I am once again focused, until my next thought penetrates my mind.

So, if you want to write, just do it. Write every day. I have come to the conclusion that I am not an early riser. I am not going to wake up even thirty minutes before I have to so that I can write. Evening comes. I have worked, returned home, fed my family, cleaned the kitchen, prepared my lunch for the next day and helped my son with homework. It is only 8:30, but my worn down mind and body feel like it is midnight. My chair is calling me, and I move toward it thinking of that piece I am working on. But wait. What else could I do except write? I just want to read, rest, watch TV, or play Words with Friends with my son. Just do it. Just sit down and write, even if it is one sentence.

My Journey to Writing

LAURIE BARRY

As a child of dyslexia, reading and writing was a constant struggle, so much so, that I nearly missed an amazing opportunity. With much encouragement from the editors, I moved past the dyslexia of my childhood to having a paper published in the spring 2015 edition of *Fine Lines*. As surreal as this experience was, I was wholly unprepared for receiving fan mail letters from individuals who read my submission.

The overwhelming feeling of receiving and reading the responses is one that is hard to put into words. For complete strangers to take the time out of their busy days to put pen to paper and tell me how my paper touched them is not only an immense honor but extremely humbling. By the time I received the third such letter, I was nearly in tears with gratitude and astonishment at the sheer magnitude of the written word. Although I will never be able to properly express the acknowledgment these individuals gave to me and the resulting impressions they left upon me, this child of dyslexia will forever remain beholden to the gift discovered deep within myself and the thoughtful reactions this gift inspires.

Erosion

GARY BECK

Forgetting is a disease
ravaging the mind
the way illness attacks the body,
disrupting functioning,
interfering with mental process
for basic cognition,
continued well-being.



Sanding-Hands photograph by Brandon Mowinkel

Who I Am

ANJANA BISWA

I am a 17-year-old Bhutanese-Nepali girl, and I am learning the English language. I feel bad to call myself Bhutanese-Nepali, because my family faced so many problems when they lived there. Our Nepali people were sold to Bhutan so many years ago. Those people lived happily, until our parents' generation. Through looking at the past, we can see how we grew and changed into the people we are today. Now, I know who I am, because of my past as a refugee in Nepal.

Our Nepali people wanted to bring their culture to influence this new generation. Those Nepali did not want to go against Bhutan by having to protest for their culture, but a Nepali man told them they had to. So, all those people started to develop a protest against the Bhutanese government. The government does not want this because the Bhutanese thought they might lose their culture.

My dad was twenty-one years old, and my mom was eighteen years old, when the Bhutanese forced all Nepali people not to fight against them. If they didn't listen to them, the government would destroy their lives. Still, they did not listen and raised their voices. Armies started to take some men from families to jail and threatened them, but they did not stop, so they made them construct buildings, houses, and roads without getting paid and were taken to jail and tortured to death. Some families did not even go to the protest; my family, relatives, neighbors, my aunt's family, and many others did not go.

However, some families got killed even though they did not go to the protest. Women were raped by members of the Bhutanese army. They burned lots of houses and burned alive a lot of innocent people. Those Bhutanese soldiers did not spare little children. They killed thousands of them. Half of the families hid in the jungles, because

of the fear of dying. It took people six months to reach Nepal from Bhutan. Those people were stopped by the government at the border before entering the country. They started to build some tents under the border bridge. They starved there, and they could not go anywhere to ask for food. Some died without food, and some who were alive started a protest to enter Nepal. They finally won, but the government did not accept us as their people. They kept us under the bridge in Nepal. They provided those people rice in tiny cups that are used for tobacco packages. These people spent more than five years under the bridge. Later on, the government gave them some place to build huts. My aunt informed my family in Bhutan about the houses and other facilities that were provided by United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR). So, my family went there without my dad knowing, because he was out of the village. Later on, some of our relatives sent my dad back with my family to Nepal.

My family and so many other people were divided into five different camps. They built huts in the cemetery. The UNHCR provided us good food and water. My dad and mom got married, after they spent two years in camp, and they had us. Our grandparents and other older people tell us stories of all those things that happened in Bhutan. I used to regret all things that happened to them. I imagined myself in it, as if it was this present day. I felt very bad and sad to hear all the stories. I hated how Bhutanese tortured Nepalese to their deaths and we had to become refugees. I am glad that we came to the USA and have a bright future. I am a strong girl, and I want to get an education. Someday, my parents will be proud of me.

These are the reasons why I know who I am today. My parents have taught me to be who I am. Our parents brought us to this country by sacrificing their desires and making a bright future for us. Our people still regret moving to Bhutan in the past. I still have the pain of those people in my mind. I am proud of those who sacrificed their lives for us.

Awakening

SHEILA BOERNER

What is it they know
that we cannot comprehend?

The beauty, the wonder
of a life suspended
waiting for the end to come.

Today must be experienced,
heightened, enlivened,
captured and held for all to see.

Why are we continuing,
and they are ending?

They see so clearly,
and we are befogged.

Clear the path.
Shine the light.
Accelerate the moment.

Do not delay.
Love. Forgive. Cherish. Experience.

Today is short.
Tomorrow may never come.

Whatcha Doin', Dear?

J. ELEANOR BONET

If I was a dancer, darlin',
I s'pose that I'd be dancin'.

If I was a painter, honey,
I s'pose that I'd be paintin'.

If I was a singer, lovie,
I s'pose that I'd be singin'.

But me, I'm just a writer,
there's no s'posin', 'bout what *I'm* doin'!

A Name in Ashes

JILLIAN BOSTON

Do you remember me?

My name was written in the ash
when the black spring arrived.
It could not shroud my soul.

Across time, the tale unfolded:
a maiden shielded
in the visage of a man.

Michael, Margaret, Catherine
in sacred whispers, held the sword
of the future out to me.

I grasped it with my virgin hands
and cut off my hair. I felt the answers
swell like raptures in the Mass—

in the corners of my hidden heart
on the road to Orléans and
above the light of Charles' crown.

Shadows blurred the arrow-pierced miracle.

I was a secret in an armored veil:
the witch, the Maid, the shepherdess
wandering without her sheep.

They broke me to myself, spun
the web that choked my words:
bent them backward like a blade.

Michael, Margaret, Catherine
held my quaking soul to the distant
taste of Body and Blood.

Neither saint nor sage,
they buried me under words,
shrouded me in black.

I blossomed in the fire,
and the world saw me
for an instant.

What did you see?



*“There’s nothing to writing. All you do is
sit down at a typewriter and open a vein.”*

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

A Place Where Education Precedes Money

RACHEL BRANNEN

Our entire lives, we are warned to save money for college. We hear horrors of student loan debt and broke college living stories. It is widely accepted that a higher education is unaffordable and needs to be financed. Accepted does not mean accurate. Four year universities are expensive because people will pay for them.

The exorbitant tuition rates of four-year universities simply reinforce social classes. You spend more money to make more money, but that means only those with resources to spend money will have the opportunity to make money. Privatization and capitalism combined forces to plague the secondary educational system. They survive, as they compete, funded by students. And who profits? Those who have already graduated, most often children of graduates.

Community colleges are dropping the stigma and gaining the praise they deserve. They are breaking the bounds of financial imprisonment for students. Community colleges are proving to be more effective with this approach than their four-year counterparts, probably because they make sense not money. When a school's primary focus is educating its students, an amazing thing happens: students learn and grow. Low-cost education programs collectively improve the society as a whole.



Sleepy Owl photograph by Kris Chelf
www.featherednest-photography.com

Through a Child's Eyes

SARAH BRUNER

As a three-year-old, NJ had a rough day at school. As his mom, I knew some steam needed to be run off. I took him to a play place at the Westroads Mall, one of his favorite playgrounds. Here, he knew he was free to roam, but he understood his boundaries and rarely tried to push them. He was free to climb, hang, roll, and act like the child he was. The floor was padded, the three L shaped benches for parents were padded, and everything inside was made of foam. There were two, three-by-one-foot foam sculptures: the first of the letters A, B, and C; the second of the numbers 4, 5, 6, and 7. The slide covered entirely with foam looked two stories tall to my forty-inch boy. He would stand in front of the stairs and gaze up, as if to plot how he would scale a building. On the first climb, he stood on the railings beside the crescent covering the peak and turned to see the entire area. He searched every corner for another child to notice his accomplished feat. The slide was clearly his favorite.

Though the playground was just outside of Dick's Sporting Goods and across from Scooters, he never seemed to notice. He saw only what was inside, what he could utilize. He saw only the areas to use his imagination, including the people within. He spotted a small girl about his age. He stood a head taller than her, with his blond hair, blue eyes, and robust stature. He must have felt like a giant. She was petite, with long brown hair, brown eyes, a pink My Little Pony t-shirt, and sparkly denim pants. He walked right up to her, grinning from ear to ear and stood there for several seconds waiting for her to react. At the same moment, with no words, a mutually understood game began. She chased him, both in bare feet, from one end of the playground to the other. They giggled uncontrollably about nothing.

Adult relationships are nothing like those of children. It is not socially acceptable to just touch one another as adults; in order to communicate we need speech, and adult relationships usually only start with some common ground. Here, the children needed nothing more than presence. They were both here, and they would be afternoon friends. Everywhere we go my son finds someone to play with, not unlike how I was as a child. As NJ ran with his new friend, he found an escape from his little brother. The constant nagging and tugging he gets from his brother at home was not missed, as he paid no attention to him at all. He seemed to notice no one but his new friend. He passed other children as they ran, but only looked to her. At this point, Mom was a bystander, a juice dispenser.

The girl chased him through a tunnel of loops. It had a padded floor, curved slightly to the left, with padded rainbow cylinders that arched from beginning to end. The arches reminded me of the heart of an earthworm I studied in anatomy class. The arches to my son were more like monkey bars at the perfect height. They were an adventure of their own. They were stepping stones over a river of lava.

They paused, only for a moment, to touch the print pad leaving four small hand prints in rainbow colors on the wall. They stumbled to list the alphabet letters from the wall backwards as they ran back to the side brother and I were sitting on. They both slammed their bodies into the Plexiglas covered television before plopping on their backs on the ground in a fit of laughter. To him, crashing into a wall was a release for sensory integration, which was a special exercise used to strengthen his sense of touch, balance, and spatial awareness. It helped him make sense of how he felt about the world to have pressure on his body during moments of stress and high adrenaline levels. I'm sure his new friend did not feel quite the same. I remember having sensory integration issues as a child. I chose to do ballet in order to orient my body in space; my son chooses the wall. They watched the fish on the television for only a moment and were racing across the playground like greyhounds after a rabbit. He was elated to have someone who could keep up.

There was a peg game on one wall, with spirals, zig-zags, and loops that kept baby brother entertained, while NJ played. It also meant Mom was less likely to follow him around. He knew he could play without her on his shoulder but understood that she was still watching. He has always been good at behaving when I have my back turned. At home, he would tattle on his brother, who did not yet understand the rules. As Mom, I appreciate the extra eyes to keep the baby safe, and NJ knows that. After ignoring brother for the first half of play time, he and his new friend ran over to give baby brother a hug, knocking him down. NJ didn't leave until he picked his brother back up. Even now, in his own space where he is free to ignore the baby, he treats his brother with compassion. Score one in good-person-points from Mom.

"NJ, say goodbye to your friend. It's time to go," I call, knowing there will more than likely be a meltdown. At three, my son does not understand time. He does not know why we have to leave, why brother needs a nap, or why Dad will soon be home from work. He only knows that he is not ready to leave.

"NO!" he cries. "Not time to go!" During his argument with Mom, he does not see his new friend has run to her own mother in fear of his anger. He looks to her and knows she no longer wants to play. He runs to her, but she turns away. Defeated, he skulks over to me.

"I'm sorry," I tell him. "We'll come back soon. I promise."

He does not hear that we'll come back; he only hears that we have to leave. He has not yet learned to think about others in times of negative emotions.

When we arrived, he thought of nothing that did not affect him. In a way, he would not understand. He does not know how to deal with his own emotions, yet. How could he stop to consider someone else's? To him, the play place must look like a theme park the size of a house. The rainbows from ceiling to floor leave no spot unappealing. Even adults struggle to find places that leave us completely and utterly intrigued and awed. I wish I had a place nearby that left me aching to return, as my son does to this play place.

Meet Special Editor, Vampire Folklorist, and NaNoWriMo Wrangler: Stu Burns

MARCIA CALHOUN FORECKI

It has been my pleasure to know Stu for several years through our work together as special editors for Fine Lines. He has the most wonderful sense of humor, and his ability to remember jokes is phenomenal. One I can tell without stumbling came from him. He is also a serious scholar—choosing vampire folklore for his specialty. Stu also writes poetry, and he is one of the sharpest editors I know. I'm proud to call him a friend, and I want you to meet him.

How does your creativity fit into your world of work and scholarship?

For the benefit of the reader, I work for an insurance company, but I've been sawing away on a book about vampire folklore and world history for longer than I care to admit. I like to think it's an exciting area, but anything can get really dry if it's analyzed thoroughly. It's also a challenge to see a topic through the eyes of someone who is coming to it the first time. A professor of mine emphasized that a good scholar needs to read great novels and poetry. From the generous wellspring of literature, we learn how to enchant language. We feel the weight a well-chosen word carries and use this sorcery to let our enthusiasm for the subject flow to the reader. That is the idea, anyway.

Where do you find ideas? What inspires you most?

The other day, I heard a scientist observe that most great ideas do not start with a "Eureka!" moment. Instead, the starting phrase is

more like “Hmmm, that’s weird.” Most of my folklore studies start this way. I’ll be reading something and pick up on an aspect that doesn’t seem to have been explored very thoroughly. As I pursue it, sometimes, I find a perspective from which I can contribute something. Then the work starts!

Who are your literary heroes and why?

I really appreciate Hemingway’s use of language and the way he (doesn’t) convey emotion. He demonstrates that it’s not necessary to describe how someone feels in a situation. For example, if you tell a story about a man losing his child and do it honestly, the readers’ empathy will carry them the rest of the way. Sorrow like that is felt, not communicated.

Philip Roth is an impressive writer. The honesty and courage he shows is impressive, though I can see how his writing is alienating to women. That’s part of his honesty; he doesn’t understand gender and refuses to pretend that he does. Along those lines, I’ve come to appreciate Willa Cather more as I’ve grown older and reconciled myself to my identity as a Nebraskan. My early life was kind of rough; I wasn’t wired for the rural life, as a kid, and I didn’t want to read anyone describing it. Time has allowed me to have a more nuanced perspective, and Cather is a part of that. On the nonfiction side, I’ll acknowledge Stephen Greenblatt, too. His work on using history to give new layers of meaning to art and literature is astonishing.

Do you have a time and/or place you prefer for writing?

About two days before something is due. One of these days, I’ll grow up and get some good writing habits, but it hasn’t happened yet.

As a writer, do you have a preferred form of writing, or does the idea dictate its form?

Back in the day, I made a habit of turning off my brain and writing poetry, mostly Walt Whitman-style verse with line breaks that were kind of meaningful. I can do rhyme and meter if it’s required of me,

but it doesn't feel honest, and it limits the range of what one can express in my experience.

Poetry writing is still fun, but it doesn't give me the same feeling of contribution that I get from publishing research-based writing. Work like that requires a certain adherence to standard forms, like the Chicago Manual of Style or the MLA Handbook. Seeing my writing in print is one thing; seeing my name in footnotes is actually better.

What has your work with Fine Lines meant to you, as a writer and as a lover of literature?

That comes back to contribution also. I like to think I've helped to get a good journal out and encourage writers to do good work.

What place does literature serve in your life?

I don't lust after fiction the way some people do, but I've come to appreciate it more in recent years. Another professor I had in grad school made a very good case that most history is creative writing. Objectively, we know so little about the past that any reconstruction of it is more imagination than fact. The only thing separating history from literature, he argued, was the footnote: historians have to base their story on something documented, even if they end up arguing against their own sources. Humans are a storytelling species. One way or another, our stories are our lives.

What about sci-fi attracts a smart guy like you?

I'm not as big a science fiction fan as many of my friends. I can appreciate Kurt Vonnegut or Ray Bradbury, but when my National Novel Writing Month comrades start talking about the series they follow, I do a lot of smiling and nodding. I came up on comic books, though. They're a good medium to communicate a lot of ideas in a limited space, which makes for a quick read. Along with the powerful mixture of writing and visual media, comics also carry this vast universe of characters going back decades. This allows writers to skip character development if they like. Comic readers already know that

Batman is a brooding, broken polymath with a monomaniacal drive; writers like Frank Miller and Alan Moore don't need to invest time establishing that.

Describe your personal library.

Oh, baby, we don't have enough time.

Seriously, I keep my books fairly well organized. I have a five-shelf case just for folklore, another case for Eastern European and Asian history, two more for the history of pretty much everywhere else, a case for books on film and sports, a case for fiction, and shorter cases for religion, poetry, languages, and what have you. Vampire books get their own case. It's in the farthest corner of my office, and that's on purpose. I'm not ashamed that I work in the area, but it's not necessarily the first thing I want people to know about me.

What do you like to read on a rainy Sunday?

Whatever I put my hands on. I'm revisiting James Joyce's *Ulysses* after quitting on it a few months ago. It's making much more sense now—which may or may not be a good thing.

Thank you, Stu.

—Marcia Calhoun Forecki

Hole in My Heart

GRACE CAREY

Nana, you were gone in the spring, a season of beauty.
What were we to do? You were so kind and so pretty.

Once you were gone,
It felt so wrong, like there was a hole in space.

More like a hole in my heart, I said.
Every night, I cried in my bed.

If only you knew, how much you were missed.
Once it set in, I felt like I've been punched by a fist.

Our tears were shed, silent and many.
At least, that's what I hoped would happen. It was more uncanny.

Instead, we cried loudly, and sobbed with fear.
For now, you were never as near.

You are at rest now, and I can still visit.
And, of course, I love to see your house and revisit.

But there is still a hole in my heart, one that will never be fixed.
Because until I join you up there, you will be deeply missed.

Basurero

DAVID CATALAN

Across the Santa Cruz River
Below the “A” Mountain
Sprawls the Tucson city dump
Site of buried treasure
For *barrio* dump kids and families
Savvy scavengers
Augmenting Saturday dollars
From cotton-picking labors
In Pima County fields
El basurero is a constant
Accessible any day at any time
Society’s discarded refuse
Ready to be mined for cash
Copper wire to be recycled
Clothing bundles for the ragman
Elation at a toy
Wrapped in its original package
Pairs of shoes and boots for barter
Wear life inconsequential
The need transcending style
Barrio dogs join in the hunt
Kitchen trash is food
Eagerly sniffed out
Territorially consumed
The metal buyer’s van arrives on Mondays
Pays ten cents an ounce
The ragman more generous
Fifty cents for a 10 pound bundle
This is an economic miracle

Dump kids overdose on candy and Cokes
Adults add to coffee can banks
Anticipating more substantial purchases
Food and family necessities
Perhaps rent and car payments
I buy school supplies
Comic books to read and trade
Benefits from *el basurero*
Prolonging ignorant bliss
Masking the reality of poverty
In collective mythology



Spring Rain photograph by Laura Leininger-Campbell

I Just Hope

KAMRYN CHASTAIN

In this sky full of stars
Shining so bright
Down upon me
All I can think of is you

In this night full of stars
Gleaming so golden
Cascading above me
All I can see is you

In the atmosphere full of stars
Shimmering so intense
I just hope you see me too

In this twilight full of stars
Glistening so vivid
I just hope you think of me too

Missouri Calling

DANIEL J. COX

Cities crowd me too much:

bumper-to-bumper engine noises and flashing lights
sit on my mind and body and make it hard to
see and hear and breathe 'til I can only live
dreams and weekends.

I am coming to the hills of freedom,
the running streams of life and laughter.

There, beneath the clouds still white, swimming in
the songs of alive and clean birds, alongside the
startled grunting of deer and heart-stopping
whir of frightened quail...

I will be one of those people barefooted and tapping
and listening to Missouri calling –
fiddle-strings and catfish whiskers
and long, hickory smoke days.

Fiction: A Dark and Early Day

AMY CUMMINS

Upon waking up in the morning, Lauren felt more tired than usual. Often, she would wake up and feel so tired, she would pretend she had not woken in the first place. By doing so, she would be awakened a little later, by her hostile mother, Christal, telling her she was late for school. That morning, Lauren did not have the energy to deal with Christal and started to get ready for the day in the bathroom. While doing her makeup, she noticed she was feeling a weird sensation something bad was going to happen today. Suffering from anxiety, she assumed she was feeling anxious from that. Christal often had major mood swings, which stemmed from drug use, along with bipolar disorder. So often, Lauren would find herself feeling anxious because she did not know how her mother was going to act that day.

While getting ready, Lauren found herself being rushed. Christal wanted to get her little brother to school and did not want to take time out of her day to come back to pick up Lauren. Completely frustrated and not even close to being ready, Lauren put on a hoodie and sweatpants and left for school with Christal and her little brother. Wanting to drop off her little brother first, Lauren was not upset she would be missing more time from school because of it. After he was dropped off, Christal proceeded to take Lauren to school. Her mother drove a 1995 Lexus that could barely make it up a hill. That day it was very snowy, and the car was sliding all across the street. Lauren sat in the car in silence, not being able to speak to her mother because of the way that she would constantly treat her. Finally, as Lauren gained courage she spoke fifteen words that would begin the biggest argument of her life.

“Mom, I am going to call Child Protective Services on you and my step-dad,” Lauren said.

As the words started to make their way to Christal’s ears, Lauren knew she had just said something extreme. Slamming on the brakes, the car started to slide back and forth up the road, almost hitting a few cars and the median. Christal looked at Lauren with hatred in her eyes. She was either bloodshot from the drugs or had immense anger built up inside towards her daughter.

Christal screamed at Lauren, “Get out of the car! I hate you! You would really do that to your little brother and sister?”

Not being able to see the misery and manipulation she had put her children through, Christal could not own up to any of her actions, thus often pointing to Lauren and putting the blame onto her.

“I love my brother and sister, and that’s why I need to get them as far away from you and my step-dad as possible,” Lauren explained.

While the conversation continued, they were still in that Lexus, which was parked in the middle of a busy street, on that snowy morning. Christal put the car into drive and proceeded to take Lauren to school. She began cursing at Lauren, putting her down in every way possible, and throwing a few punches. Lauren knew by how bloodshot her mother’s eyes were that she must have gone on a meth and heroine binge the night before. As the car finally approached her high school, Lauren got out of the car without saying a word and went inside. When she got inside, the front desk administrator asked her if her mother had called in for her. Lauren, annoyed at the fact her entire morning had been turmoil with her mother, spoke softly, “She most likely did not.”

Arriving around second block, Lauren had about three more classes to attend, until her day was over. Time started to pass quickly, and it was the last class of the day. Sitting in her desk, Lauren started to get this itching feeling like something was wrong. Lauren then texted her little sister, who was fourteen years old, and asked her how her day was going. About thirty minutes passed and she had still not gotten a reply from her sister.

The security guard walked in, and he spoke assertively, “Lauren McElfish, please grab your things and follow me to the office.”

In a panic, while grabbing her things, she followed him to the office. Wondering if she were in trouble, she started to quickly retrace previous actions in her head, to remember a time she did not follow school rules. Not able to think of anything, she was very confused as to why she was being called down to the office. The security guard ushered her into a big room, with a large table and ten or so empty chairs.

“Take a seat and someone will be in here in a few minutes to speak with you.” The security guard said, then left the room.

After the guard left the room, Lauren sat a large table. A few minutes passed, but it seemed like hours. Finally, a woman walked into the room with a large clipboard and a big puffy brown jacket. She proceeded to the large table and took a seat next to Lauren, who recognized the woman was not wearing the same attire as a teacher or administrator. The woman took her clipboard and set it onto the table and removed her jacket, revealing a name tag. The woman’s name was Lindsey, and that was all that was on the name tag she was wearing. Lindsey then extended her hand to Lauren, and looked her dead in the eye. With a soft and caring voice she stated, “My name is Lindsey, and I work for Child Protective Services. You do not have to be scared anymore. I am here to help you.”

My Purpose: To Be Happy

ALISON DAY

It is funny the way life works out. One second I have the rest of my life planned, and everything is going perfectly, then everything that was planned for and excited about is gone the next second. This seems to be a repeating pattern in my life. I am someone who likes to look on the bright side of things and remind myself that everything happens for a reason. There will always be something to be happy about. In the moment when everything is going the exact opposite, it is hard to find a silver lining at all. Not everything that happens to me is going to work out how I planned. I will get kicked down, defeated, and hurt, but one day, it will show why this keeps happening to me.

I like to plan ahead. I make a goal for how something needs to end up, and almost never have a backup plan. I started doing this when I was in high school. I was applying to one college. I was going to go to The University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire and that was that. I decided this my junior year of high school and had not even thought about another school, it was the perfect fit for me. My first mistake was not having any other school in mind, thinking I would get in so easily. I had a plan, four years at Eau Claire majoring in athletic training, I would work with the hockey team, and hopefully make connections to bring me to a career working with a hockey team. So far, not so good. The universe had another plan for my life, and Wisconsin was not in the picture.

When I got the letter back for Eau Claire, I felt so defeated. I did not get into the only college I wanted. What was I going to do next? Where was I going to go to school? Nothing was going right and I did not know what to do. I felt so defeated in the moment because I had never not gotten what I wanted. If I wanted something, I got it. This was not because what I wanted was handed to me, because when I

set my mind to something, I work for it until I get it. Whether that be a job, my license, a grade, a sport, being on varsity versus being on junior varsity, anything, I did not like to fail. So now I had to think of what to do next and where I would want to go to school. Which brought me to Nebraska.

People say everything happens for a reason, and I would have to agree, but it is hard to know that reason when I do not know what is going to happen next. I decided to continue my schooling at The University of Nebraska at Omaha and although it was a choice I made, I never felt comfortable with it. I liked that I was going out of state, away from friends, family, everything I was comfortable with, and knowing I would be able to make a new life for myself. I would not have to be the same girl I was in high school if I did not want to be, I could be a better version of myself. So, here I am in Omaha, I have new friends, new memories, a new life, but still it all seemed to be the same. I did not want to be a different person, but rather not make the same mistakes in high school when it came to grades, drama, and boys. Even though I planned to stay away from my past habits, the past always seems to have a funny way of repeating itself.

When I first started classes, I made making friends a bigger priority than school. I have never had the best study habits, and instead of fixing them, I hung out with people. I found a group of friends and everything was good, until I made the girl who wanted to go party on a Sunday night instead of going to the library to study or do homework my best friend. Not only did that mess up my plan for grades, it was ruining my plan to stay away from drama too. She was not the nicest of girls to everyone and liked to make something out of nothing with anyone she could. That was not what I wanted in a friend, so I cut her out. Cutting people out of my life is not something I like to do. I like to see the good in people, and believe that they can either change, or I can ignore it. Sometimes, that is not always the case.

I started to focus more on school, rather than partying, boys, and getting into trouble. I was focusing on my future, and getting into

the athletic training program at UNO. I was doing well in my classes, and when it came time to fill out the application, I made sure to start two weeks in advance so I did not have to worry about missing the deadline. I spent at least a week on the essay. I put my heart into it and thought it was the best piece of writing I had ever come up with. I knew I had the GPA requirement, but some of my grades still could have been better. I thought I had nothing to worry about. Usually about 15 students applied, and out of that 15, 12 normally get in, a pretty good ratio I thought. What I was not planning for, was that year was the most applications they have ever received, meaning they would be cutting a lot more people.

I did not have a backup major, just like I did not have a backup school. I wanted nothing more than to be an athletic trainer. Sports have always been a big part of my life. I was always involved some kind of sport, whether it was soccer, volleyball, softball, swimming, dance, tennis, and even playing football in the backyard with the neighborhood kids. It is how I grew up, and it was the only career path I could ever see myself doing. I have always been a magnet to injuries too. For five straight years since I was in third grade, I would break a bone in one of my feet. If it was not a foot, it was an ankle, knee, finger, or concussion. My doctor still jokes about how if we took out all my x-rays from over the years, we could piece together my entire skeleton. There was no doubt in my mind that being an Athletic Trainer was perfect for me.

I went home last year for spring break, and I spent time with a few friends and my family, who I had not seen in months. I was happy to be home and surrounded by people I loved. Then, I got the email that would decide my future career, and I was defeated once again. I was so upset. How did I not get in? What would I do with my life? I did not want to even go back to school at this point. Where was the silver lining in this? I did not have another career option. I focused on this one thing, and now it wasn't going to happen.

I could have changed all of these things. I could have worked harder in school, studied more for my ACT, reapplied to school, and worked

hard in college so I could reapply for the athletic training program, but I choose to believe something better will come. What I cannot change, is another person. I had been in a relationship for two years, one that I really thought was going to last the rest of my life. I had plans, hopes, dreams, life with this person, and I was left with a broken heart. This breakup came out of nowhere, which made it all the more difficult. It was adding me to my list of defeats. What was difficult about this defeat, as opposed to the others, was that if I wanted a different outcome, I could try again, study a little harder, and reapply myself. When other people are added into the mix, I am not able to change what they want, and that is what makes things more difficult.

At this point, I was thinking about my life, on how everything I have wanted was taken away from me. The only school I wanted and my career were the biggest factors, when I thought about how much the universe just did not want me to succeed. I still think about this. I feel as though whenever I'm happy with anything, a friendship, a relationship, my overall outlook on life, something happens, and it breaks me down. Something always makes my happy life into something I want to hide from. This is not how I want it to end. I don't know what my purpose in life is. I may never truly know, but I know at the end of the day, the only thing I want when I go to bed is a smile on my face.

Wherever I end up in life, if I choose to continue the path to becoming a dietitian, if I get married, have kids, if I am successful, it will not matter to me at all, unless I am happy. I could live my dream and have more money than I ever imagined, but if I cannot say I am happy with my life, then I do not want it. A lot of these things which make me so unhappy, being in Omaha instead of somewhere else, not being an athletic trainer, having friends who are not the best, being in a happy relationship and then having my heart broken, I know that all these things will be for a reason that will be clear. In the moment, I am not happy, but I am also not finished.

Your Voice

MARY CLAIRE DOUGHERTY

I have a voice and you do, too,
It's definitely inside of you.
It's most likely deep down below
Waiting to come out and say hello.

Sunshine

JULIA DRICKEY

The sun warms our hearts!
It brightens the sky.
It bounces off clouds
As animals fly by!

Family

JULIA DRICKEY

Family is nice and mean.
Family is fun and boring.
Family is caring and kind.
Family is generous and helpful.
I love my family!!

My World

MARINN DRICKEY

My world is great.

My world is kind.

My world is filled with peace.

My world is full of music.

It is filled with adventure.

I can do and be anything in my world.

My world is full of things to do.

My world is filled with animals.

My world is full of bright colors of red, orange, pink and yellow.

My world is filled with nature.

My world!

I'm a Writer Because

SOPHIA DRICKEY

Writing makes me feel powerful through words,
because I love composing.

Writing helps me express my feelings, and
it makes me feel creative.

I love how good it makes me feel.
It's good therapy.

I love bringing *joy* to people.
Writing is magical.

It's a challenge to put great words together.
It makes me think!

I'm here to meet the challenge.



*"In three words I can sum up everything
I've learned about life: it goes on."*

ROBERT FROST

Autumn Time

HAROLD W. DWYER

From *Uphill and Against the Wind*
Autumn has its fascination,
With its Indian summer haze,
And that distant mellow mixture
Of the purple things and grays.
With its tangy nights and mornings,
Its abundant crop displays,
It just seems to touch you deeply
In a dozen different ways.
Flocks of blackbirds in convention,
And we wonder what they say,
Though we know it's mostly planning
For a trip down Texas way.
Cattails standing 'mongst the rushes,
Where the songbirds swing and sway—
There's the chatter of the starlings,
And the arguing jay.
Harvest moon in all its splendor,
Making night almost like day,
As it tiptoes thru the tulips
Out along the Milky Way.
Twinkling stars, alert and eager
To be helpful any way,
Then to shine and take things over
When the moon has had its say.
Gone for now—but not forgotten—
Are those torrid summer days;
Now, a thrilling cooling contrast—
Same old sun, but slanting rays!

Here, a mind all Heaven's bounty,
Conscious of the part He plays—
Little wonder that we're humming
Little bars of hymns of praise.
Fall means resting up for winter—
Catching up as best we may,
'Gainst the rugged cold and weather
When the north wind has its day.
Truly, it's the friendly season,
Filled with happy, restful days,
To enjoy that distant mixture
Of the purple tints and grays.



Steel Quilt photograph by Cindy Goeller

The 1%

ANDREW EIHAUSEN

99% think money is a blessing
1% could use money as a tissue

99% blame their problems on it
1% do too

99% think they don't have enough
1% thinks the same

99% works for it
1% cheats for it

99% don't get enough
1% get too much

99% use it to obey laws
1% use it to dodge laws

99% spend it
1% amass great sums of it

99% use it for themselves
1% use it for others

99% lives off a little
1% lives off a lot

99% have half of it
1% does too

Cathy's Poem

MIKE FARAN

I think you're a pretty fantastic lady
always with the right or wrong words
which is the way it should
be with poetry because
everything counts
every piece counts and
there are no rights or wrongs

There is nothing but feelings
like a fire partially contained by
the night
when a dance should be danced
half-wild and fast or slow
depending on the
wind-blown embers

Always remember that chronic
sadness lights up a
ghost or two and
every ghost I've seen speaks a
strange language—
could be poetry,
but do you feel
that lucky?

Mask

COLLETTE FEAGINS

Have you a mask no one sees through
Even though you say you love
Swallow the truth about yourself
And drown in the lies you have made
You shall take no bullets for those special to you
You shoot their hearts yourself
Find the soul of a monster inside
You have set me free
It's a temporary price I pay
One hard lesson learned
You were always a lie
Your whole spirit
You have seen no light
But from a device
You have stayed in the dark
For the saddest and longest time
I must wish you the best
For you give away all of your strength
You are forever gone
And I have never met you
I have hurt, but I will no longer

Growing Pains

CARRIE FEINGOLD

Rosebud unfurling
buffeted by winds
you can't evade
snagging on your own thorns
brushing rough surfaces
as you edge upward
never hiding in
pink submission or
shriveling from the sun's
punishing nourishment.

Catch morning dew
cherish night rain's caresses
drink deep of moonlight
endure winged visitors

Flourish,
revealing your true colors.

The Stacks

MARCIA CALHOUN FORECKI

“So, am I dead?” I asked.

“That is your state at the moment. Well, on Earth and a few other places,” he answered.

“Is this Heaven?” I asked.

He laughed.

“What?” I said.

“Everyone says that, or some equivalent of that. Heaven implies an end, don’t you think?”

“It’s forever. For eternity.”

“What’s after Heaven?”

“Nothing, I guess.”

“See what I mean? No, this is just a different place. A stopover.”

“To where?”

“To the rest of your life.”

I had always imagined that being dead brought a lightness to a soul. Not having to drag around a body on a planet where gravity was the law. Departed spirits were lacy and see-through, at least that was how they were always depicted back on Earth. I felt very solid. I felt very much as I did when I was alive but without the pain. No pain, what a great place this was.

I tried to look around, to see where I was, but everything was a bright blue color, like an empty computer screen back home.

“Would you like vision?” he asked.

“That would be nice,” I answered. I immediately thought I should have said, “Please.”

Suddenly, I was surrounded by water. An ocean. My favorite place back on Earth. I lived in Iowa, but I had been to Florida once and to

Myrtle Beach once. Myrtle Beach was a little too commercial for my taste. Cocoa Beach was the best.

Here I seemed to hover above the water. I could see the waves undulating, but I couldn't hear them. I missed that shushing noise I always found so relaxing, even at a lake. I could not smell the water as I did in Florida driving over a little hill toward Cocoa Beach. That's when I knew I was near the beach, and my heart quickened. I had not asked for hearing or smell, so I contented myself with seeing the ocean.

"I have a few questions," I said.

"Only a few?" he chuckled.

"Well, lots, really. I didn't want to sound greedy. Hey, how come I can hear you, but I can't hear the ocean waves?" I was getting bolder.

"What makes you think you are hearing me?"

I watched the waves a while. There are two ways to watch the water. One is to focus on one wave and follow it as far as you can. The other way is to draw back your focus and see all the movement, the movement of all the surface at once. I tried both methods for an unknown period of time.

"Are you God?" I asked.

"No."

"Who, then?"

"Just some old spirit who has been around a lot, seen a few things, and picked up a little knowledge along the way."

"My guide?"

"In a way," he said.

"Are you a relative? My grandfather?"

"No."

"Were you someone famous?"

"These are the questions you have? All the knowledge of the universe is before you, and you want to know if I was some big deal on an insignificant, little, blue planet?"

"Sorry. I guess I've still got the earthling mentality."

“Well, think bigger.”

“What am I?” I asked.

“You are a student of the universe.”

“A student? Is all the knowledge really available to me?” I asked.

Instantly, I was sitting in what felt like a well-worn wooden chair. Before me was a polished table and a reading lamp. A clean green blotter lay on the table in front of me. I looked around. The shelves of books reached up so high they disappeared into a cloud. Imagine, a cloud inside a library. I looked down a long corridor to my left; the stacks became smaller and ended in a pinpoint on the horizon. To my right, the same.

“Is this all the knowledge?”

“Everything.”

“Who wrote all the books?” I asked.

“People like you who have come through here over the last few light years,” he said.

“What could I possibly add?”

“Nothing yet. You need to do some reading first.”

“All this?”

“You have time.”

“Where do I begin?”

“Wherever you like. How about the ocean? You seemed to enjoy that.”

“All right,” I agreed.

I rose from my chair and walked down a few rows of books. I knew where to go, somehow. I asked for hearing because a library’s hushed echoes always delighted me. I heard my footsteps on marble floors. My chair scraped when I pulled it out. I sat down before a stack of books I had chosen and opened the top volume.

Instantly, I found myself beneath the water. Not too deep, because I could see light above me. I gasped at first, thinking I couldn’t breathe. But, my chest did not tighten, and I felt no panic. Breathing was not an issue anymore.

I swam, first with tiny simple creatures that were only little clusters of cells. As I swam on, the creatures became more complex, more familiar in their shapes and colors. Oh, my, the colors. My vision here was enhanced in some way, so I could feel a vibration coming off the animals, different frequencies for different colors. The highest frequency was from the bright pinks and yellows. They felt like the buzz of a bee. The blues and greens emitted slower vibrations. I felt them as bangs on a bass drum. I delighted in the colors shooting through me. It was a job of a magnitude I had never experienced before. When I was surrounded by fish of different shapes, sizes, and colors, I began to feel overwhelmed. I was bombarded with the vibrations from the life forms all around me. I was swimming and dancing all at the same time.

“Too much, too much,” I said.

Back in my seat in the library, I looked down to see the last page of the first book I had chosen. I had “read” one book. I felt wonderful, like I was part of something so beautiful and joyful. I picked up the next volume. Now, I swam with creatures in the deepest part of the ocean. They emitted their own light. The rhythm of their binary illumination—on and off—made a show more spectacular than the biggest laser show in the biggest rock concert I could imagine. I was inside the show, seeing it from every direction. The nanoseconds between flashes of light were delicious anticipation. I had felt that way once before, I recalled, as a child.

Back in the library, I reached for the next book.

“Are you enjoying your reading?” he asked.

‘Oh, yes. I must say, though, that I don’t feel much more knowledgeable about the sea creatures. How do they metabolize food? How do they generate light? How do they adapt to the pressure of the deep water? What is the significance of their infinite number of shapes?

“Did you say infinite?”

“Yes.”

“You’re starting to learn.” I could feel warmth in his voice, like someone talking through a smile.

“Where are all the other souls?” I asked. “There must be billions of us by now.”

“Oh, there are. Thousands of billions just from Earth alone.”

“Only people? No animals?”

“Life is life. It takes many forms. They are all here.”

“Why don’t I see them?” I asked.

“Well, they aren’t in this library. This is your library,” he answered.

“I see. Does every dead person go to a library to learn?”

“Define ‘dead.’ Do you feel dead?”

“No, I actually feel like I sometimes felt back on Earth, just for moments here and there. When I was young. Before I got sick.”

“Exactly. You are learning. All the science is just information. You can get that here, too. I thought we might try a more sensory approach, but if you want facts and figures, they are certainly here for you,” he said.

“No, this is good. Experiential learning is the best. I just wonder if I’m going to be here a long time, and from the number of books here, I see I most definitely will. Won’t I get lonely? Don’t I get to see my family and friends who died before me?”

“You can if you like. Try the biography section. The volumes with the orange spines.”

I looked left and then right, until I saw in the distance shelf after shelf of books with orange spines.

“Who do you want to read about first?” he asked.

“My father, I guess. He died in Vietnam. I only knew him when I was very young. My mother told me about him, of course. He grew up on a farm in Kentucky. He worked in construction. He volunteered to go to Vietnam in the early days, 1966, I think. There is so much I want to know.” I noticed I didn’t feel sad about my father, as I usually did when I was alive. “Can I meet my father?” I asked.

I looked down on the table, and a book lay before me. Its orange spine faced me. I opened the book and instantly felt myself moving up and down. My father as a little boy was running on a dirt road. I saw what he saw, heard the sounds around him. The slap of his bare feet on the packed dirt and the panting of the dog he was chasing. I heard my father call to the dog, "Wait for me, Rex. I have to stop at home and get my fishing pole."

I knew this place, though it looked different than when I had been there in life. I felt the safeness of a small community of family and friends. I felt my father's love for this land and appreciated its generosity. I looked at the little farm house where my father had run for his fishing pole. The old wooden ruin I visited after my father's funeral was now freshly painted and full of the sounds of life. I watched Rex sitting on the grass, waiting for my father to emerge.

Then, behind me, I heard explosions. I looked up and saw a sky filled with clouds. No, it was smoke. I looked down onto the tops of lush green trees. I felt the drum-beat of the color green. All I could hear was a spinning noise, like something chopping through the air. I looked to the right and saw a man sitting in a pilot's seat, flying a helicopter. I was strapped down with my father on a stretcher lashed to the runner of the chopper. My father could not move his head, only his eyes. From inside him, I could hear his blood rushing through his body, toward his chest. It flowed in only one direction: out of his body. My father's blood was raining down on the jungle below.

Slam, the book was out of my hands. My father's book was on the other side of the table. The orange spine was cracked and some of the pages looked rough on the edges.

"I don't want to read about that anymore," I said.

"You've learned one more thing. Life is not all pretty colors and happy music."

"Where is the fiction section? I'd like to read a story for a change," I said.

“Sorry, you are in a non-fiction only library,” he said. I listened for compassion in his voice, but I heard none.

“What is the good of all the pain and killing over so many thousands of years? People have learned nothing,” I said.

“These are difficult lessons,” he said.

I sat silently for a while, until I realized I was not afraid or sad about my father. I knew what happened to him. I understood that he loved me. I had felt that in the instant before he died. When I remembered that moment, it filled me with happiness. I must have lingered on that moment for a long time.

“You can spend as long in that moment as you like,” he said. “All the good moments are here for you to relive as often and as long as you like. The bad things have to be faced, but they pass with understanding.”

“The only thing that got me through the fear and pain at the end of my life was believing I would see my father and mother, my nana and all the others after I died.”

“I know,” he said.

“So, I’d like to talk to my father, now,” I said.

“Your father is busy,” he said.

“Doing what? He’s been here for fifty years. What has he been doing all this time?”

“Reading about you.”

War

JOAN GARDEN

Fear wriggles throughout daily lives
Where hope is eaten by hungry wives
'Til all that's left are hopeless faces
Children's birdlike gaping voices
And when the echoes bleed away
A silence left of Judgment Day
A dead dog lying on its back
Gutted in the last attack
Beside the fragments of a house
The remnant of a widow's blouse
The stench already fills the air
Like the ever present taste of fear
That runs within a child's veins
Red like fallen blood that stains
The concrete of the broken stairs
And the shattered housewife's wares
And the battered minds that bear
The scars too deep to ever heal
And words too shallow to reveal
The horrors that the eyes have seen
The corpses stripped of dignity
The souls stripped of humanity
The vultures circling overhead
And in the hearts of those not dead
The seeds of a new conflagration
Like an epidemic spread

Surmounting the Black Elk Wilderness

WILLIAM KIRK GASPER

When I was a child, my family and I frequently visited national parks, forests, and other natural areas. My mother came from a family of avid outdoorsmen and regularly spent school breaks on backpacking trips. My father hunted when he was younger, and he grew up in a somewhat remote area that mandated respect of the natural environment. My parents took us on short hikes, but we never went backpacking, or on longer distance, all-day hikes. I always loved outdoor activities, but it was not until my teenage years and early twenties that I began to actively pursue adventures on my own. Thus, I was lacking in experience, and I never had the know-how that results from learning about preparation and safety from a knowledgeable guide. Despite lots of reading, and doing what I could to prepare, it took overcoming significant adversity to cement in me the importance of wilderness safety and adequate preparation.

My girlfriend Jenny and I both had ambitions of going on multiple day, self-supported backpacking trips through the wilderness, but we were short on money and time. Backpacking gear is expensive, and we did not have any. Jenny and I were about to make our relationship long-distance, as she was moving away to teach for a year. We wanted to mark the occasion with a trip, which would be our first vacation together. We decided to head somewhere convenient within driving distance, South Dakota. Due to our lack of backpacking gear, we compromised by car camping with plans to go on multiple day hikes. We spent one night under an incandescent night sky in the Badlands, with the Milky Way visible to the naked eye, before moving on to a camp site in the Black Elk Wilderness for the remainder of our trip.

We are planners by nature, and we outlined many things to do, all centered on the big one in the middle of the week: a 14-mile loop through the Black Elk Wilderness. We had regularly finished day hikes at lesser distances of eight or ten miles in Nebraska and Colorado. Fourteen miles through a relatively popular natural area seemed like a logical extension that, while certainly not easy, would not be too much of a challenge. We would ascend 2,000 feet to the approximate midpoint of Black Elk Peak, formerly Harney Peak; a not insignificant climb, but one we had done before and were comfortable with. The second half of the hike would be entirely descending or flat land, so we thought that if we made it to the peak it would be easy going from there. We knew we hiked at two to three miles per hour normally if we traveled light, so we allotted approximately six hours for the hike. If we hydrated aggressively beforehand, we could get by with just three liters of water each, and we brought snacks to keep our energy up.

We started early, and the outlook was good. The cool, still morning air smelled heavily of pine. We hiked through native grass fields into the boulder filled, hilly, conifer forest terrain that is characteristic of the Black Hills. We were making good time. Despite the popularity of the area, there was not a lot of activity on these particular trails. We saw only a couple people over the first few hours. Two hours in, we could see the Black Elk Peak, our midpoint, taunting us from high above and far away. The climb was arduous, and after we started ascending we rarely got a break of flat land for more than ten or twenty yards at a time. Despite the difficulty, we were making it. We were relatively on schedule. We were consuming our water supply at the planned rate, and we were feeling good. Our struggle thus far felt well within our physical capacity. We reveled in anticipation of the three hours of descending that awaited us after the peak. We made it to Black Elk Peak before noon and enjoyed the view with the hordes of other tourists who made the hike on a much shorter, easier trail. Black Elk Peak is the highest point in South Dakota and as such offers an accordingly sweeping view. After some food and some rest, we departed. It was going to be an easy downhill trek from there.

We set out from Black Elk Peak along the heavily trafficked trail for less than a half hour, at which point, the trail forked and we were set to follow the less travelled path to take us back to our campsite. Soon after the fork, things started going badly. We had no inclination that trails in a popular wilderness area, one so close to Mt. Rushmore, which receives millions of visitors a year, might not be maintained. To say this trail was not maintained is an understatement. We encountered downed trees constantly, every fifty or one hundred yards. Sometimes, there would be a group of downed trees in dense forest, and the trail would disappear completely for fifty yards. Scouting for the reappearance of the trail was trial and error and often took several attempts.

Our pace was mind numbingly slow; it had dropped to less than one mile per hour, and the constant climbing over trees and rough terrain sapped more energy than we accounted for. We were running out of water, and even though we were frequently hiking parallel to or crossing streams, we had no method of water purification. We only saw two other people on the second half of our hike, two well-prepared backpackers to whom we feigned competence even though I was clearly suffering from exhaustion and on the verge of heat stroke. Jenny was tired but healthy, and she was burdened by worry over my condition. I ran out of water with a couple hours left, but fortunately, Jenny had enough to get me through. We had to take frequent breaks and languidly made it back to camp in late afternoon. It took us nine hours to do what we thought would take six. The hardest part of the hike was what we originally thought would be the easy section. I spent the evening feeling physically awful: feverish with an elevated heart rate. I suffered through serious dehydration and depleted my glycogen stores. I awoke the next morning feeling much better, but the experience will never be lost on me.

This day hike in the Black Elk Wilderness permanently cemented within me the importance of wilderness safety and preparation. Our problems were entirely preventable through careful preparation,

critical thinking, and respect for nature. The difficulties we faced taught specific lessons, and the struggle bolstered mental fortitude. I overcame some of the toughest short-term mental and physical hurdles in my experience thus far in life. The experience reinforced that it is possible for me to overcome precarious situations, even if those situations are due to my own lack of foresight and my own ineptitude. To this day, if I am in a tough personal situation, out on a hard run, writing a lengthy essay, or simply waiting in a long line at the post office, I look back on that day in the Black Elk Wilderness and am reassured that I will persevere.



Charley on the Couch *photograph by David Martin*

My Future Goals

NICK GENIA

My name is Nicholas Genia. I am Dakota Sioux, an enrolled member of the Lake Traverse Indian Reservation in South Dakota. I spent most of my life there. Although I wasn't born there—I was born in New York—Sisseton, South Dakota, is where I have spent most of my life. I moved to Omaha, because my wife is from there; she is also Native, but she is part of the Omaha Tribe of Nebraska.

I have been living in Omaha now for around four or five years. I am very into my culture and traditions, so I try to incorporate that into everyday life. I have a three-year-old son, who I am trying my best to raise the traditional way, but while living in the city, this becomes difficult.

I'd like to think I do many things well. I like to play basketball with my son. I sing and dance at powwows with my family. I like carpentry. I love working with my hands. Building, fixing, and making things are fun for me, plus my son is always there watching, learning, and listening. He loves helping me work on the car, from changing the brakes to swapping an engine. I think I do well at being a father to my son.

I have multiple future goals; getting a better education is the first step. I'm working for my Civil Engineering Degree in Land and Development. Once I get my degree, I will be able to return home to the reservation and try to bring my people out of poverty and depression. With this degree, I will be able to create jobs, maybe, even open my own office. I will be able to bring up designs of new buildings, roads, and bridges. I would like to work with my tribe, and with this degree, I will be able to take over quite a few departments.

Creativity: A Slow Disappearance

LINNEA GILLESPIE

Creativity is diminishing every second in our world, today. It is something that could be stopped, but the way our education system is set up prevents that from happening. The hierarchy of subjects our schools deem irrevocable is outdated. They were set up during the Industrial Revolution, and the valued topics were set in accordance with relevancy to jobs from that specific time. Simply put, it was a practical application. Creativity is dying in our schools, and it needs to be revived.

I have seen creativity looked down upon in the short time I have lived. Having attended a small private school, the arts were definitely the smallest priority. Our school was known as a college prep system, proudly so, and every teacher emphasized the importance of going to college to get a degree and rewarded the students who excelled in mathematics and science. There was barely any importance placed on the arts. In fact, our school went through several teachers in the musical and art departments, because there was no exhaustive effort to find a suitable teacher for those subjects.

I was home-schooled, and until the seventh grade, I would wake up at 6:30 every morning, congregate in the living room with my three siblings and Mom, have a small meeting, and we would go our separate ways diving into our studies. We would work hard for five hours, until it was time for lunch. After lunch, we would read for an hour or two and then have the rest of the day, around six to seven hours, to play outdoors. When I went to middle school, I learned that everything was done in a specific order every day, and more often than not, there was much time wasted during a typical school day.

It took me awhile to get used to the structured way of school. While my education at home did have its own structure, it was more unique. I learned. I did not waste any time doing things a specific way, doing monotonous homework, or trying to be like everyone else. I did have my share of practice, memorization, and requirements, when I learned math, studied science, and wrote papers, but everything Mom had me do was beneficial to the growing of my mind. There was no particular emphasis on any subject. Since I liked writing, my mother encouraged me to do so. I would write stories and share them. While I enjoyed writing, my sister enjoyed math. So, my mother encouraged her to keep learning that subject.

I would love to see what the world would be like, if everyone was encouraged to excel in whatever it was they were passionate about. What if the hierarchy of subjects studied in school varied according to what seemed right for each individual? The natural response should be to stand in awe at the diversity of every human. There are no two people alike. That is reason to speculate at how wonderful it is that no two people can offer the same exact thing to the world. Why should we want everyone to offer the same things? This makes no logical sense.

Awareness is the first step to solving any problem. In order for a change to be made, an issue needs to be addressed. It is not so much that there is a stigma on creativity as a concept, but those in charge of our schools are missing a great opportunity.

Addressing the issue may be tricky. How can this stigma be removed? Most people are not aware that creativity is in danger. I was not. The general public needs to be educated on the origin of the hierarchy schools have in place for different subjects and the ways in which adults discourage and stop creativity in children at a very young age.

Creativity is not only something to embrace; it is essential for humans to survive. Some of the most innovative things mankind has known never would have come to be if it were not for creative minds.

It takes individuals who can think outside of the box to come up with new ideas and put pieces together in completely new ways, for those who naturally gravitate towards it.

In school, children who are creative are taught to attempt to excel in mathematics and science, regardless if they are pre-disposed to liking those subjects. Studies have shown that it is useful to think in different ways than one is used to in order to expand the mind and grow. However, are people ever challenged to be creative and use their imaginations? Sadly, this is significantly less so. Children who excel in math and science are given a pat on the back, and no one thinks twice if they are terrible in the arts, because they are smart. Does this occur vice versa? No.

Creativity is astounding; the way it could benefit people across the globe is unimaginable. Sadly, this fact goes unrecognized. Schools have been insufficient at implementing the arts in a pronounced way, far too long. It is time that this changes. By reconstructing the hierarchy of subjects in educational institutions and spreading awareness about this topic, steps can be made to improve our world. Without these changes, creativity will continue to die.

A Matter of Life and Death

ALLY HALLEY

Let me just preface this story by saying that I *loathe* camping. I like camping activities: the campfire and s'mores, the camaraderie, the hiking. I'm just not a fan of the squatting in the woods, the bugs, the sunburns, or the sleeping on the ground.

It was Mother's Day weekend 2008. I was recently divorced, and the boys were 11 and 12 years old. The Boy Scouts, in their infinite wisdom, decided that Mother's Day weekend would be the perfect weekend for their monthly camping trip. I was more than a little crabby to be deprived of my weekend.

Caleb invited me on this camping trip and was excited about sharing it with me, so I did my best to feign enthusiasm and went. I didn't think I could handle all that roughing it and the guaranteed "boypocalypse" by myself, so I took my mom with me.

The scout leaders explained that they had a boy-directed camp, so they left the boys to their own devices with occasional direction, figuring they'd learn more by being allowed to make mistakes. Fair enough.

The troop dynamic was *Lord of the Flies* meets *Survivor*. A couple boys were comically bossy. Mom and I had debatable success stifling our laughter, as they directed, screamed, drama queened, and corrected the other scouts during tent set-up. At one point, the troop had a mini mutiny and walked away from the main offender whom Mom and I secretly dubbed Neidermeyer. They sat down by a tree and waited for his tantrum to pass.

The weather was awful. It started raining Friday night and barely let up from then on. The boys were able to get in some fishing Saturday morning before it started raining again at noon. At lunch and

dinner, the scout leaders were talking about the weather and how it didn't deter them from camping. They camped once a month all year, regardless of the weather. It was -18 below zero for their December camp out. One guy claimed to have camped in a hurricane in Virginia. Another said he once got caught in a typhoon while climbing a mountain in Japan. The one-upmanship had me imagining roosters with puffed up chests parading around the barn yard.

At eight o'clock, we had just finished dinner when the wind picked up—a lot. To protect us from the deluge, we were under a canopy tent set up over the picnic tables. Once the wind picked up, the men and boys who were tall enough had to hold the tent down to keep it from blowing over. One boy had only one hand on the tent, because he had his beloved grilled apple in the other hand. Over the cacophony of the wind, scout leaders yelled at him to drop the apple and hold with both hands. As he thought it over, the other scouts also started yelling at him. My son yelled, “Drop the apple! It's a matter of *life and death!*”

At this point, Mom and I decided to retire to the car. We had a comfy nest set up in it for us wimpy “campers.” Thirty minutes later, one of the scout leaders knocked on a window and told us they were packing up. After all that big talk, they packed up over a microburst. I guess even hurricane campers have limits.

Nature

JACQUELINE HALOUSKA

It's calm here. The air is sweet and healthy. The sound of locusts and birds fills the atmosphere. The wind is just strong enough to move the tops of the trees, like rocking newborns softly in their cribs. It's beautiful, a true gift from the heavens. The Earth is so gentle and kind. It makes me forget about the cruelty it is given in return by those who are self-centered and take things for granted, even if only for a little while. This is our home, our savior, our grace. Without it, we'd be nothing but space. So harsh. So cold. It sacrifices all it has for the sake of our race.



Adam and Eve (Danny and Angela) painting by Watie White

A Poem

AMANDA B. HANSEN

(Beginning with a line in Adrienne Rich's *For an Album*)

"Our story isn't a file of photographs" labeled with a lame title.
Our story was written the moment you left.

With every continuous twist, you'd
move farther away from us.

I held onto that perfect Polaroid too tight.
I kept track of eternal scars,
replacing each one as a tattoo, as I healed.

Seconds pass
Frowns cheat
Dimples simply shy away.

Our story remains secret, buried
with you and that Polaroid.

Ode to Big Red

BILL HANSEN

Listen my children, and you shall hear
a story that causes Big Red Fans to cheer.
Today, we may feel just a little bit spent
after watching our team win a seismic event.

Last night, we showed them we were on our toes,
as we deftly proceeded to bloody their nose.
Big Red paid a visit to the team called the Bruins, and
when it was all over, their dreams were in ruins.

So, in spite of the refs, whose vision failed,
we stayed in the game, and to victory we sailed.
When we were all asleep in our beds,
sweet dreams of winning danced in our heads.

Breathe Deeper

KATHIE HASKINS

I will thank God each day for the little things that make me smile.
Small miracles happen every day, and I will be open to them,
recognize them,
and acknowledge them with gratitude.

I will stop being too hard on myself—stop beating myself up for not
being able
to check everything off my to-do list.

I will breathe ...

I am a good person—compassionate and genuine, with a goofy sense
of humor.

I am an introvert who listens, pays attention to detail, and observes.
I feel other people's joys and sorrows, as if they are my own.

I will breathe deeply...

I am a dreamer, not a "do-er," and I will stop thinking and start doing.

I will get out of my own way, so I can grow as a writer and a person.
I will stop being a sponge and start being a duck. A sponge absorbs
all life's
stresses and grief and gets weighed down, sinking to the bottom of
the pond.
A duck floats on top, each drop of sadness and sorrow sliding off its
back.

I will shake my tail feathers after each rain to stay afloat!

I will breathe deeper, still ...

Review of *Fault Lines* by Gary Beck

KATHIE HASKINS

Fault Lines by Gary Beck is a collection of poems that will slap you in the face, causing you to wake up, clear your foggy brain, and demand action. The words contained within should be taken in small doses, as these poems are depressingly powerful. Still, they *must* be read by anyone with a conscience who wants to see positive change in our society.

The topics are relevant with regard to current events, such as politics, history, education, and climate change. Beck's work is an eye-opening, thought-provoking mirror of society and appeals to the deep thinking intellectual. His raw, biting words speak of truths that go mostly unnoticed or ignored.

In the poem "School Days," one stanza reads:

*This is what we allowed
building an insane system
esteeming brawn over brains,
where athletes are adored
and thinkers are ignored.*

The lengthy poem "State of the Union" can be summed up in one word: *wow!*

Fault Lines will leave you disturbed and mentally exhausted, but feeling compelled to *do something* to change the world in which we live.

My Future Is Spelled “Helpful”

TIMOTHY D. HAZLETT

The world always goes insane
Because they all want to obtain
The newest and greatest tech
Everyone wants to be efficient
And obtain what is sufficient
To help them obtain the next check

This is my calling
To help people with installing
Projects I helped to create
But I want to make it safer
So that we do not waver
And rush to what may detonate

Technology is power
But sometimes we cower
Because hacking and stealing exist
There will always be those who are corrupt
Always looking to disrupt
But I will always persist

Making our world a better place
And helping the human race
So we continue to make progress
Because technology is great
It helps us daily to operate
And help us to not regress

The Software Update

GARY JONES

I looked at the message on the monitor. MegaByte Corp (MBC), manufacturer of my computer, suggested I download an update for my operating system. (I could not afford the legal fees if I gave the right name of the company.)

Crap! I never get these things right. Installation instructions for upgrades are as clear to me as something written in Klingon. I thought I'd ignore the message, but a phrase in bold print caught my eye. This is a security issue.

I downloaded the update and followed the instructions. A message popped up, "Installation failed. Call the MBC Help Line." I found the number for the Help Line after a fifteen minute search on the MBC web site and made the call.

A recorded voice gave me a menu. Nothing on the menu fit my problem, so I took a guess and pressed "one." The voice gave me another menu that didn't fit. What the hell. I pressed "five."

The voice asked me to enter my MBC Extended Warranty PIN Number. I didn't have one. I pressed zero, hoping that would get me a person. A lady with an Indian accent asked, "What is your problem?"

Women frequently ask me that.

I explained my difficulties with the update and asked if it was necessary. "Oh, you must fix this. You could have a virus or malware. Would you like to purchase an extended warranty before I transfer you to a technician?"

The warranty cost \$200. It was cheaper than talking to the technician without one. I bought the warranty and was transferred to a technician. A male voice, also with an accent, introduced himself. "Hello. My name is Roger. What your problem is today?"

Roger... Right.

I explained my problem, and Roger told me he needed to take control of my computer. To do that, I had to type www.MBCcomputerhelpcenter.org/93u7b-WTF. It took me four tries to get it right.

Roger tried one fix after another for two hours. He said he had one more fix to try. I listened to him mumble for a minute before I put the phone down and wandered off to heed the call of nature. At least nothing about that has changed since I was four. Roger's window was gone when I returned. The phone was dead, and I assumed my problem was fixed.

On Monday morning, I received another update from MBC. It didn't install.

I called the help line and was transferred to Miguel. He read the case history, and I listened to "ummm" and "hmmmm" for fifteen minutes, before Miguel had me type in the long URL to give him control of my computer.

"This will only take a minute," he said. For the next four hours, I listened to Miguel's optimism die. He repeated, "I have one last thing to try," until I questioned his understanding of the word "last." My arm developed cramps from holding the phone to my ear.

Miguel's shift was over, and he transferred me to another technician. Jesus introduced himself and asked if he could control my computer.

"Sure," I said, and prepared to type the world's longest URL.

"Press the Windows and the R keys at the same time."

I did, and he had control of my computer. I wondered if Miguel or Roger knew about that trick. Jesus reviewed what the other technicians had done and ran a check on my computer.

"What are you trying to do?" he asked.

"I'm trying to install the MBC update," I said, and showed it to him in my download file.

He opened it. "The computer has been working properly?"

"Yeah. No problems."

“Why do you want to install this update?” His tone implied he was really asking, “Why is this simpleton wasting my time?”

“Your company sent it,” I told him. “Said it was a security issue.”

“You don’t need this update. All it does is verify you have the right drivers. I checked—they are okay. Thank you for calling the MBC Help Line.”

The line went dead. The \$200 for the warranty had cleared my bank that morning. I checked.

I received another download to install from MBC the next day. It didn’t install.

I told my kids how I happened to buy the extended warranty. I have two doctorates in the sciences, but my family has forbidden me to buy anything for my computer without securing the approval of my youngest son.

So how come I can’t keep up with technology? And why has it become so much more difficult for me to retain new information when I study? For that matter, why is the frustrated old fart chronically angry and frustrated by computers and cell phones so common as to be stereotypical?

I found an answer in Steven Pinker’s *The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature*. Pinker, a professor of psychology at Harvard and recognized expert on language and the mind, explained a current theory of how we learn. From birth to late adolescence, we absorb new information and, in different parts of our brain, we build models of how the world works. Thereafter, we attempt to fit all new information to these models. We resist making changes in the models and tend to question or ignore new information that doesn’t fit them.

My guess is that the models we built fit well through our twenties, perhaps even our thirties. By the time we hit our forties, the new technologies and concepts of our youth had become mature industries and accepted theories, or they have been cast aside as outmoded or wrong. Almost without our notice, new fields had developed and new ideas introduced. By late middle age, we didn’t understand the jokes, slang, music, pastimes, and world view of our children.

How much things had changed didn't matter much in my forties and early fifties because, in the family and at work, my generation was in control. It was a different world when I reached my mid-fifties and sixties. The younger generation was in positions of responsibility and power. My cardiologist and urologist looked like teenagers to me. I sometimes felt that I was living in a strange land. The people who shaped my life were gone, the music I loved was dubbed "classic," and even the language had, like, changed.

The theory that we use models from our youth to think can account for the discomfiture guys my age feel. We resist changing our models, but as long as we held fast to them, we lived by the knowledge, technologies, and verities of the past. A sense of loss becomes inevitable, for we had become emigres from the past to the present.

The results have been catastrophic when the world changed significantly and entire peoples kept their old models and ways of thinking. In *Collapse*, Jared Diamond gave Easter Island, the Maya, and the Norse settlements in Greenland as examples of civilizations that collapsed or died out because they refused to change. In the case of the Norse in Greenland during the little ice age, they could have survived had they adopted the practices of the natives living there. They refused to change. Some fled back to Scandinavia; those who didn't died.

We could be on the brink of disaster ourselves, as we have failed to take adequate action on over population, pollution, over fishing of the oceans, and climate change. Unlike the Norse in Greenland, we don't have a safe place to retreat to. This earth is all we've got.

The Sun

CLAIRE KALLHOFF

The sun goes down
another day has passed.
The many experiences, thoughts, and emotions
have come to a close, for one more day.
The sun comes up, when you wake each morning.
Set forth to await your next experiences,
thoughts, and emotions.
For, a new day has begun.



*“Always forgive your enemies;
nothing annoys them so much.”*

OSCAR WILDE

Whirling

PATRICIA LANGTON

Do you ever feel as though the world is spinning so fast that you will go flying off into space if you don't cling onto something--anything--that will make you feel physically, mentally and emotionally grounded? That was the desperation Donnie felt when he learned that his father had been killed inside German lines in February of 1945. He was trying to hold on, but the loneliness, the disconnection with everything around him, overwhelmed him. He wanted to let go, to go where his father had gone, somewhere beyond.

It wasn't strange that his mother and his sister no longer existed for him. They never had. They were just there. His father was his rock; the indestructible soldier in his khaki uniform, talking to him as one man to another; never, like his mother, as an adult tolerating a child. Donnie's estrangement from his mother deepened when he was five years old. His father brought him home from the barbershop where a military crew cut had replaced his bright red ringlets. His mother screamed at his father then broke into tears. Donnie was very proud of that haircut.

His father had been in the Army five years before being sent overseas. As his physical presence lessened, he became more legend than reality to his son. Donnie was admonished to be the man of the house while his father was away. At the age of nine he set about to prove just how much of a man he was by tackling the largest, meanest boys in school. After three weeks of having her son come home bruised and bloody and a series of phone calls from teachers and parents, his mother threatened to write his father. He managed to gain enough self-control to take out his frustrations in a more acceptable way by joining the ice hockey team where it was acceptable to bash the other players.

Then came the day when the minister showed up with an army officer. Donnie walked into the living room to see his mother collapsed in his father's favorite easy chair. The world started spinning and he began to spin with it; days, weeks, months whirled by with nothing making any sense, nothing mattering any longer. Donnie went through the motions without anyone realizing he was being pulled further and further away from reality, until the day he viciously attacked a rival hockey player, beating his head against the penalty box barrier, and kicking him with his skates as his teammates pulled him away.

It was too late for counseling. Donnie was already gone. Whirling away into that space beyond knowledge or understanding, where all lost souls go when life is too much to bear.

A Bookworm in a Leisure-Free World

CAMILLE LARSON

Imagine a person who has had a horrible day; everything that could have gone wrong has occurred: he tripped walking to his car, failed an important test, and was fired from his retail job. Once this day is over, the man slumps down in a chair and opens up a novel that tells a tale of a fantasy world, one which shows that meaningless jobs do not exist. Suddenly, the man feels much better, but why? Reading allows people to become absorbed into different realms and explore revolutionary parts of themselves that were once hidden. It can be used as an escape from numerous problems that people face. The written word reaches out to millions of people each day and is often taken for granted. Unfortunately, I am one of many people who has sacrificed reading. While nothing gives me more pleasure than diving head-first into a piece of amazing literature, time constraints have limited me from being able to explore this side of my personality, causing me to lose the most consistent part of who I am.

From the day I was born, my parents exposed me to the written word. They read to me every night, capturing my imagination in the colorful stories that were meant to help instill a love for reading in children at an early age. To no surprise, this tactic worked. From my first day of kindergarten, my immediate goal was to learn how to read. I practiced the alphabet every night and soon began to learn how to form words, sounding them out every chance I got. In four months of kindergarten, I learned the skill of reading. I took it upon myself to reverse the role between my parents and myself, dedicating at least an hour of my precious, limited time every night to reading aloud to them.

The next year, a girl, Darian, was placed in my class. We became best friends, tied together by our early love for the written word. We would check out as many books as we were allowed to borrow from the library and race to see who could finish them first. When I entered first grade, my reading skill level was at a second grade level. At the end of the year, my skill increased to a sixth grade level, because I had a mutual friend who pushed me to further explore and develop my love for reading.

My love for literature developed throughout my primary and secondary education. My high school English teacher, Mrs. McHenry, brought up the idea of symbolism. From that moment on, nothing was the same. There were hidden messages scattered throughout novels that I never realized! Literary secrets begged to be heard, attempting to jump off the pages so I would understand, but they were missed due to a lack of education on the subject. The book that sticks out to me the most is *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brönte; this was my first exploration into classical literature, and I never looked back. I recall opening the book to the first page, realizing that I would need a dictionary handy if I wanted to understand the concepts sent to me. It took a painful three months to plow through that piece of art, and once I was finished, I sat in disbelief in my basement, looking for more answers than were given. *Wuthering Heights* impacted my life more than any book I have ever read, because it made me digest original concepts on my own, instead of others spoon-feeding the information to me.

When I was fifteen years old, I boarded my first international flight. The destination was San José, Costa Rica, for a Spanish Club trip. Not only was I thrilled to experience a different culture for the first time, but I was also excited to get to see the setting of my favorite book, *Jurassic Park*. Ever since reading it a year prior, I could not get the idea of being among the magnificent jungles and breath-taking beaches out of my mind! My trusty copy of *Jurassic Park* accompanied me on this trip, and during every flight and bus ride for the nine days, I re-read

the story and realized how blessed I was to be there. Experiencing this story for the second time, in a place with a similar setting, enhanced the experience for me, securing the book's spot at the top of my list of favorites. The book also allowed me to appreciate the country more, taking time to talk to the citizens of Costa Rica and absorb as much as I could in the short amount of time I was there. The written word has the power to alter experiences of everyone in the world.

In Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Scout Finch says, "Until I feared I would lose it, I never loved to read. One does not love breathing." I, too, never realized my love for reading, until it was too late. I always thought that challenging myself to read and finish a book every day during the summer was normal, and I took my free time for granted. Now that I am a biology major in college, I do not have enough free time to spend exploring new thoughts and realities, delving into pages upon pages of good writing. I fear that I will lose my knack and adoration for this skill and become too swept up in studying for classes that seem important but have never impacted my life the same way that literature has. Every day, I fight to regain my grasp on free time and attempt to dedicate at least a half hour to the written word.

Through the time I am setting aside for myself daily, I am choosing to expand my tastes of literature further. I have always been a fan of fiction novels, especially fantasy and science fiction stories that are able to pluck me away from an immeasurable amount of stress and plopp me into a revolutionary world. These far-away places require my entire attention in order to fully appreciate them. While I will always seek refuge in this style of writing, I would like to branch out a bit more. Currently, I have chosen to read *A Clockwork Orange* by Anthony Burgess, which challenges my ability to decipher unknown words, as well as my grasp of violence in the world. At the same time, I am reading *Bad Feminist* by Roxanne Gay, which is helping me explore a political side of myself. These choices are irregular for me, but ultimately beneficial, because they are helping me grow as an individual, which is a wonderful thing that the written word can do.

Thinking back to the man who used reading to escape from the horrors of his day, I see a direct correlation between myself and him. Reading is an outlet for expression, self-discovery, and healing. It has shaped my life, developed me into the woman I am today, and given meaning to my existence in the world. Through interpreting thousands of pages of written words, my skill strengthened to a point where reading was never a burden and was always welcomed with open arms. I used it to explore my personality, using the books to help me understand who I am as a person. Recently, I took for granted my free time, forgetting that my course load would become strenuous. I often lose my true self when I cannot dive head-first into a book. When the few and far-between moments appear and I can become completely immersed into another world, all my worries disappear, and I am able to regain who I am.

The Sad Story of a Friendly Dog

LOREN LOGSDON

“That’s Professor Johnson from the college. He walks by here every day with his little dog—I think the dog’s name is Adolph,” Mal Cutter remarked to his customer Homer Bigfield, seated in the barber chair for the monthly trimming of the hair on his ears. “Did I ever tell you the story of my Uncle Bub’s dog Bowden?”

“No, I don’t believe you did,” Homer answered, to the disgust of the town loafers who frequented Mal Cutter’s Barber Shop faithfully every day. Homer had actually heard the story so many times he had it memorized, but he enjoyed seeing the reaction of the local worthies who were eager to hear the latest gossip. Bub and his dog Bowden were old news, ancient news, to be precise. “Please tell me the story,” Homer begged, grinning boldly at the loafers, who glared at him with scowling countenances.

Completely oblivious to Homer’s deception and thinking he was telling the story to Homer for the first time, Mal Cutter nodded, cleared his throat, and began, “Uncle Bub lived five miles out on the Old Boggs Road. His farm was the first one after you cross the bridge over the Little Sleazy River. Bub’s house is set back from the road a bit, in a yard with three large white oak trees. Back in the olden days, the place was called the Shady Rest Farm. Bub’s grandfather had a still there in the hollow behind the barn and sold moonshine for several years. The place was so well known that even today, many decades later, an old geezer, like some long forgotten ghost, will occasionally knock on the door late at night and ask to buy a jug of corn liquor.

“Well, Bub went to Peoria one day looking to buy a guard dog. Bub had been having trouble with chicken thieves, and one night someone

even stole his three-legged pig, a family pet whose name was Tripod. Bub was at his wits end. He had to put a stop to the thievery, and he believed a good watch dog was the answer. But Uncle Bub was not willing to pay good money for a dog that was professionally trained for guard duty.

“Instead, Bub went to a place called Paul’s Puppy Palace that had been advertised on the radio. Bub explained to the man at Paul’s that he wanted a dog to guard his home, and he wanted the cheapest dog available.

“The man, who bore an uncanny resemblance to Benny Hill, told Bub he had just the dog for him. It was a one-year old red bone hound that had been brought to the Puppy Palace by its owners who were leaving Illinois for good and could not take the dog with them, but did not want to put it in the county dog pound where it would be euthanized because Illinois lawmakers still had not approved a budget for the state.

“The dog’s name was Bowden, and he seemed to be in good health but a little too friendly for Bub’s idea of the demeanor a watch dog should have. But the price was right, and Bub paid the man and brought Bowden home to begin his guard work.

“The problems began almost immediately. Bub turned Bowden loose in the yard and went up on the front porch to take a nap. He was just about to drift off to the land of Morpheus when his nap was interrupted by the sound of a car coming up the driveway. He recognized the visitor as Darlene Maxwell, who was coming to see his wife about plans for a PEO program and dinner.

“Ms. Maxwell was an elderly, unmarried, sophisticated lady, the very essence of culture and high society, the most dignified and formal matriarchal person you will ever hope to meet. Possum Gwathmy always said she reminded him of Queen Victoria. Ms. Maxwell stepped out of the car and was approaching the house when Bowden came bounding out to meet her, wagging his tail, slobbering profusely, and eager to welcome her. She reached down to pet him

and exclaimed, 'My, what a friendly dog,' at the exact moment when Bowden raised his leg and peed on her shoe.

"Ms. Maxwell screamed 'Bad dog! Bad dog!' and repeatedly boxed Bowden on the head with the fury of someone killing rattlesnakes, causing the bewildered dog to yelp in pain; then she turned on her heel and raced back to the safety of her car. In her haste to leave the scene of such disgusting humiliation, she almost ran into one of the large oak trees in the yard.

"Word of Ms. Maxwell's encounter with Bowden spread rapidly throughout the community. And, as time passed, it turned out that Bowden was not in the least exclusive in bestowing his favors on people who visited Bub's farm. Reverend Cyril Balderdash came to chastise Bub about his absences from church and left with a very wet pants leg. A traveling DeKalb seed corn salesman vowed never to call on Bub again after being knocked off his feet and slobbered on by Bowden's enthusiastic welcome. Indeed, anyone who came to the farm, for whatever purpose, was greeted by Bowden in the same way. He confused a human leg with a tree, and he was relentless in leaving his mark. In his dog's mind he was marking the person as a friend, only doing what dogs do when they mark their territory. It happened so often that Bub finally had to confine Bowden in a shed during the day and let him out only at night when no visitors were expected."

Finally, Homer Bigfield interrupted Mal's story and asked, "Didn't your uncle try to find out what was wrong with Bowden? Didn't he want to get him cured of using people for his personal urinal?"

Mal Cutter guffawed and said, "Now why would Bub want to do that? Bowden turned out to be the perfect guard dog. It was amazing! A miracle, if you want the honest truth. Bowden's reputation became so well-known that not even chicken thieves would come to Bub's farm. The thievery stopped completely. So did the unwanted visits by obnoxious salesmen and all kinds of disagreeable people."

"Bowden was never known to have an angry moment or behave in a mean spirited way. He was truly a friendly, loving dog who never met

a shoe or leg he didn't like. He became a legend in our community, a true hero who was admired chiefly from afar. In fact, Bowden illustrated perfectly George Eliot's idea that people should never even try to get close to their heroes. But no one, even the friendliest of people or dogs, is liked by everyone. Envy and jealousy are sad realities in this fallen world we live in. Sadly, Bowden had at least one enemy among us. The noble dog was poisoned by some unknown person in the community, and Uncle Bub had to get another dog."



Strolling *photograph* by Doug Kuony
<https://5oopx.com/dkuony>

Rock On!

DESHAE E. LOTT

For me a pervading question has become, how do I greet my existence, regimented and rigorous, as if it were the great love of my life with whom I could hardly wait to share every minute? My health now is my all-day-and-all-night affair, my Sisyphean rock faithfully pushed with all my might up an incline only to roll back down for me to commence the pushing again. I heave and strain and repeat those processes without fail, but why?

Albert Camus proffers suicide as a possible response to the actuality of our being given a rock to push day after day without end. In re-rendering the *Myth of Sisyphus*, Camus dismisses the part of the Greek original where Sisyphus's eternal and meaningless pushing of the boulder occurs in Hades, which then negates even suicide as an escape. If the pushing must be done now and hereafter, killing ourselves is no resolution. That noted, suicide is no more Camus' favorite approach to the Sisyphean rock than is any hope placed in transcending reality, meaning Camus would see weakness in slaves who sang Negro spirituals or in contemporary Christians who eagerly await Heaven. Camus wants us to accept that even without religious meaning we can embrace our rocks and prove triumphant just in doing so; for him, our success emerges in a revolt, a defiance akin to the person refusing to die, precisely, because she thinks others wish her dead. The mind feeds upon some inner spite-derived glee, in a sense.

In this, too, Camus's Sisyphus varies from his predecessor, for the gods assign the ancient Greek character a boulder to ever push precisely because of Sisyphus' defiance. Either rendering inspires me to consider the limits of rebelliousness. While escapism, whether via

committing suicide or via seeking joy solely in a Heaven not yet come, strikes me as unsatisfactory. I can't live just "in spite of it all," content with a happy protest to all the odds against me, either. Even if like Camus I am ok with not understanding everything about our cosmos or my small role in it, unlike him, I crave both a short-term and an eternal purpose for pushing my rock each day up the incline and for loving the unrelenting effort of doing so, and not because I love the struggle in and of itself.

I do not fallaciously believe my health will be an unending concern; my body's mortality calls my name every day. But the thing is, I think as long as I have learning or loving to do, I'll be pushing a rock of some kind; and whether I'm resisting the job or cooperating with it, I will feel the efforts required for the push. As I'm no masochist, pain for pain's sake or overcoming just to overcome fails to inspire me, enough to keep at this, at least. Survival for survival's sake fails to inspire me, even if I see my body itself protest its demise. Certainly, the very need for effort, as my friend Rebecca notes, "is how we know we are alive: it makes us more mindful than when we take our existence unquestioningly." Effort, thus, verifies that I exist and I journey. However, knowing I am is, for me, but a beginning. As Rebecca suggests, the effort inspires an outpouring of questions, including, "How do I inspire my mind to keep pushing, not just my body's basic instincts for survival?"

Here's what does it for me: love. Love, not rebellion, gives me a reason to push and a way to love the pushing. As part of a community with intimates and strangers, I find supporters and I likewise offer support. Each day more than me is pushing my rock. It's not that I'm not giving it my all, but someone else shows up and pushes a while with me or offers me a drink or claps in encouragement or invites me into a conversation, and my journey takes on meaning. In the spaces when my boulder sits at the bottom of the hill, I might rush to push a while with someone else, finding contributing to and sharing in their own difficult journey more edifying than rest. I might share a

technique I've tried or learn one instead. Other times as we both push alongside one another, I might join them in song; in commiserating we are then celebrating being alive, acknowledging one another and the journey. And even if no human is near or, when near, that person is so consumed by their own rock that I am not within their scope of engagement, I go to God for strength and ready support as equally unrelenting as the rock pushing task before me. I can cry mercy, defining that not only as freedom even if by death but also as renewed stamina for pushing whatever rock God wills me to claim.

Some of us seem to be given boulders. Others seem to seek one, even if it's someone else's. There must be a reason so many of us push rocks up inclines again and again and again. But if we aren't masochists, how can we construe this as healthful living, exercise aside? Why keep at it, if not in raging revolt or fearful and downtrodden compliance? Is our doggedness and diligence truly required and truly helpful? If so, we often then wonder, as the process wears us down and weariness sets in, how we can keep at it with any enthusiasm. If we don't want to seethe through doing what we do, if we want to rejoice in it authentically, how do we move beyond weariness, a mental boulder that can weigh on us worse than the material one? For, if our effort is vital, how can we not push? And if push we must, how can it not be done with our deepest love if we seek a satisfactory existence? I've come to believe that when our pushing seems pointless, we're probably pushing the wrong rock. If everyone gets a rock and pushing is required, how do we escape futility, unshakable weariness, ignorance, and evasion? How we push, where and what we push, from whence our inspiration to push manifests itself, these determine the quality for our soul of the effort we exert.

In *Wit & Wisdom of Women*¹, a gift from a co-worker, I found Lena Horne's assertion that "It's not the load that breaks you down; it's the way you carry it." This sage advice echoes in my mind when I feel the weight of what is mine to carry. I do not wish to carry my load in a

¹ 2006, Hallmark, p. 74.

way that breaks me down. I want to build up my mental and physical strength; I want to feel passion for the journey, however tough and redundant. In sum, accepting how our lives align with Sisyphus' can bring us peace rather than horror, despair, subservience, anguish, and rage if we do these things:

- Know we are pushing the right rock, given to us or claimed; we don't claim a rock if it's purposeless to do so; the way I see it is we're all going to have boulders to shove and shoulder; we cannot avoid pushing rocks because, if we give up on one, we are presented with another and another and so on until we choose to deal with the unavoidable; we of course can resist that effort and self-deceive ourselves that there's no rock or should be none; yet, when we see that we have no choice but to claim a rock, however hard or unfair that plight, then the goal becomes how to find meaning in the claiming of it; if we're called to claim it, we can attempt to define benign and ameliorative intentions for so doing; I believe that if I can push my rock and smile or be patient and compassionate and even generous with others while I do so, it's not time for me to stop pushing the rock that is now mine; but identifying if we're pushing the right rock is key to identifying any purpose in the journey
- Perfect our pushing techniques so that our propulsion, instead of a spin or cycle leading nowhere, is an upward spiral after all; make it easier on ourselves not by resisting the rock but by innovatively maneuvering it; make our relationships with our rocks self-empowering, not self-defeating
- Share the journey—with God and with others, whether strangers or intimates
- Stay alert to the new that emerges along the well-worn path, among the hum-drum routines, and scope out something new in the vista each time we reach the peak; celebrate the discoveries
- Reflect on who we're becoming as we push and who we still wish to become as we move forward
- See life as a precious gift

Survival for me is more than subsistence, more than defiance or resistance. Survival entails finding some meaning in or because of the challenging moments endured. Joyful survival for me requires a private assurance or trust that I'm learning from and in the push as well as a recognition that I would not forfeit any of the beauty in the exchanges with God and with other souls I encounter as we've traversed our ways up the incline, a boulder bearing down on each of us.



"MAKE. ME. FEEL. It's not hard to do, even if you're writing about superbeings who are smart and powerful enough to do anything but remember to wear their underwear inside their pants."

COMIC BOOK WRITER MARK WAID

Truth: Words Words Words

SAM LUBY

On May 27, 1972, at the Civic Auditorium in Santa Monica, California, George Carlin, a quirky bearded, long haired man went out on stage, and he performed just over forty-eight minutes of material. I remember hearing it over and over again, while growing up, along with his various other albums. Carlin was not so much a comedian, as a comedian is an entertainer; he was a philosopher. Entertainment was secondary to Carlin. He wrote essays that he spoke aloud on stage, and much like the first essays, they were his thoughts that he worked on for a short time, and soon scrapped them for new ones. His ideas were raw, unadulterated thoughts refined into something odd, something dark, and something that could be described as truth, if anything can be described as truth. Carlin defined three categories of comedy: the big world, the little world, and language.

The big world is death, war, politics, right, and wrong. Carlin was always looking for wrongness in the world. As a critic, he tore down anything hypocritical and dishonest, not just intentionally dishonest to people, like advertisement companies, but dishonest with themselves. Always raging against the very notion of society, he did not have faith in any political system, as all men with even a modicum of power abuse it to its full extent, and term limits, laws and constitutions can't fix that. He often said, "If you think there's a solution, you're part of the problem." He never just accepted things because, "It's the best we got." Yet, in all his rage, he reminds me of a father who is angry with his son, because he loves his son and wants the best for him, but he is forced to watch, as the thing he loves tears itself apart. That is the extra edge that other stand-up acts have never been able to copy.

Carlin's darkness is so truly black, because it is a place where hope and love once lived, but now, there is only void. The pain can be heard

in his voice when he speaks about, domestic abuse, the corporate elite shafting the working man, the deaths of millions in the name of monetary profit and the average people's willingness to turn on their fellow man for the shallowest of reasons. Carlin looks unflinchingly at mankind. He knows the Aztecs of the past who killed thousands of people a day were no different than you or me. He attempts to grab the worm that is humanity and drag it fully into the searing light, no part left out. Carlin was an idealist of the highest caliber and wished only for the best man can become, but he was forced to live and observe man as he is.

Far from being completely negative, Carlin loved to speak about the things that we all experience, but maybe never talked about. The natural humor in day-to-day life he called the little world, and it is funny in a cute and innocent way, but with a subtle undertow of sorrow. Carlin's view of the American life is think in your head of a kitchen. At first glance, it looks warm and cozy. Everything is where it should be. Upon focusing on any one thing, you find something is horribly wrong. The bread is moldy; the milk is spoiled; spilled bottles of Vicodin and Oxycodone are on the table; and the dog is not small and cute but gaunt and boney from malnutrition. In this picture, the familiar smile of mother becomes something of horror, but only if you look closely. That is Carlin's view of the American dream, a nightmare. He expresses that nightmare in perfect imitation. It takes much attention to his work to see the subtle undertow of horrible truth, a truth most can't or won't see. Listeners laugh at themselves when they least expect it. Every sin he points out, the listener is guilty of. When Carlin jokes about a man about to kill himself but unable to find a pen to write his suicide note, it's funny because it's ridiculous, but is it really? For Hollywood certainly, but for life off screen, it really isn't. That's what makes Carlin's view of average life so scary. Much of our concept of culture comes from the media. We honestly have little interaction with the world outside our homes and places of comfort. We only know about other places and other lives via TV, movies, newspapers, books, the Internet and how other people choose to tell us about their lives. Our view of life passes

through so many filters, that when Carlin peels them away, it looks like ridiculousness at first, but it is the opposite.

The last section of comedy has no hidden or greater meaning. Carlin was an English major; he really liked the language and wished people understood his passion for it. Incorrect pronunciation and the misuse of idioms or other phrases was one part he spoke about. For example, “forte” refers to a specialty or skill and is pronounced “fort” not “fortay.” “Forte spelled the same but pronounced like “fortay” is an Italian borrowed word that is a musical annotation and instructs the musician to play louder. It’s “your old stamping ground” not “stomping ground,” and it’s “champing at the bit” not “chomping.” If nothing else, he believed in free speech, because free speech means free thought. He was part of a landmark Supreme Court case, and its verdict made profanity on TV and radio no longer a crime. This brings us back to that 1972 performance called “Class Clown.” The last track was called “The Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television.” Carlin believed there were no such things as bad words, bad thoughts, and bad intentions. They were just words. People think any attempt to limit language is an attempt to limit thought. Orwell believed this, and Carlin agrees. This point of view caused him, especially in his later years, to rift with other liberal thinkers, as radical freedom became less an important part of liberal thought.

The major theme that brings Carlin together for me is this concept of what I call truth, which is a very fragile idea in the abstract. Anything more than a whisper or a part of a feeling of a memory and it falls apart. Every idea accepted comes with at least a small part of the idea that is not truth. I define it as a flawless idea. I want a perfect idea; I don’t think I’ll ever find one, but I believe Carlin was looking for something similar. He refused any flaw, no matter how small with disgust. He never adopted any productive point of view and searched for real answers, not the ones that were “just good enough.” He stayed true to his principles.

JOY Detective

WENDY LUNDEEN

I remember a life pre-DMD.
I was self-absorbed and, oh, so carefree.
Autonomous, complete and quite happy,
My path was smooth and deftly snappy.

When I swallowed the nightmare, I knew right away
I would be required to do more than just pray.
While the horizon loomed dark, gloomy, and gray,
I searched for the light and brightness of day.

Suddenly compelled to forget myself
And surrender my ego to a different shelf,
My cognitive process established itself,
Zipping about like a nimble elf.

Thinking outside the proverbial box,
Time is not now defined by clocks.
The reason for numbness of our shocks
Cannot be found in a recording box.

My attitude toward life, now shaken and ruffled,
Opinions and fear desperately muffled,
Paradigms and notions urgently shuffled,
Now bound with HOPE and JOY are coupled.

But where to encounter wishes made real?
Every night, in prayer, I slowly kneel,
Asking God to replete my empty creel
With a lust for life, a renewed zeal.

A new purpose emerges, christened detective,
Emanating LOVE and changing perspective,
I overtly seek JOY and am quite selective.
My life post-DMD is strong and effective.

The boys are pleased with my JOY pursuits,
Praising my detective attributes.
My passion for JOY, no one can refute.
My resolve to unearth it is ABSOLUTE!



*“I distrust the uncommunicable:
it is the source of all violence.”*

J E A N P A U L S A R T R E

MAIL

Dear *Fine Lines*,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend the *Fine Lines*' summer creative writing camp. It was so cool and important to me. I can't even put it into words. It was a magical experience for me. With *Fine Lines*, I reached out and caught the butterfly that you talked about. It was the strongest and the biggest one in the entire field. This experience felt like it was a once-in-a-lifetime gift, except I will probably return to it every year for the rest of my life.

Writing, for me, is a passageway from my brain to the world. It gives authors, like me, hope. The camp inspired me to write, because it showed me wonderful ways to express myself.

By the way, Mrs. Lundeen, who was my small group instructor, gave me so many ideas that I don't know what to do with them all. I can't contain the words banging against my skull. I guess the only thing I can do is write them down. She is a remarkable teacher. She is magic. Make her come back next year. She deserves a reward.

The camp was an unbelievable week. Thank you so much. I will try to bring a friend or two, next year. Write on! —*Satori Pettit*

Dear *Fine Lines*,

Thank you for resending Deshae Lotts' inspirational essay. She lives life more fully than the majority of humankind, because she understands and nourishes the life of the spirit. I have a good friend who has multiple sclerosis and requires a wheelchair and used to help teach journalism in my classroom. She writes a weekly religion column for our city newspaper. In her writing, like Deshae, believes, "Our investments are our legacy, and our legacies will matter to others. In time, they will pass on something we shared." —*Sheila Boerner*

Dear *Fine Lines*,

I am glad to support *Fine Lines* and its many other worthy activities. I am pleased and honored to be one of the writers whose work you have published. For that reason, I am considering submitting another personal essay, in which I elaborate further on memories of my life as a child born during World War II and growing up in postwar America. With warmest regards. —*Jerilyn McIntyre*

Dear *Fine Lines*,

Someone put a copy of the fall 2016 *Fine Lines* in my UNO mailbox. Thank you!! I've read quite a lot of the entries and believe this is the best and most interesting *Fine Lines* ever. Congratulations on that, on your long standing support of writers of all ages, and on your own personal path. Well done. —*John Price*

Dear *Fine Lines*,

What hath humankind's imagination wrought? Wonderment of the printed word and, behold, now e-printing, both media sharing words, thoughts, hopes, fears, insights and aspirations far and wide, across continents and across time, retrieving the past, informing the present, and arrowing into the future. And the simple invitation from a single teacher to his reluctant students a generation ago to journal their own hopes and fears and disappointments and aspirations, to send their own arrows into the future of their evolving lives now lives on in both print and e-print as a warm, scintillating light welcoming young and old from here and there, even across the world, to share their essays, stories, art, and poetry and in their sharing create an on-going place for hope to still flourish.

Congratulations, David and all those who make the *Fine Lines* journal the inspiring creation it continues to be. Thank you for allowing me to share in this unique literary and artistic publication. —*Vince McAndrew*

Dear *Fine Lines*,

My heart was filled with so much joy after seeing my writing in print in the last *Fine Lines* issue. I felt even more blessed to receive a fan-mail letter from a reader on my first publication. Thank you for this rare opportunity your organization gives to people around the world. Your response has truly encouraged me to give more time to writing. —*Etim Edidiong*



Jellyfish photograph by Barb Motes

My Dad's Story

BONNIE J. MANION

Bullies, with a laugh,
push him down, pull
off his cap, toss it
over the bridge on his
way home from school.

Man frowns at the news,
peeling potatoes for
the stew, as he kicks
a scuffed shoe while
hiding his bruise.

Nevertheless, laying up
courage, he goes again
to school, finds a new
way home, a plan,
and fortitude

for the day he opens
his own shop, hopping
the freight of a late
opportunity to
make a success

of a war-time business
dropped in his lap,
like the cap flung
years before, flowing
with the runaway current

Glitter and Glam

KASSANDRA MARKER

Glitter and glam
the shine of the new
admit it lights a fire under you

to go out and get what is brand new
to go out and spend more than you should
to get what you know you don't need

the rush you get when you find a deal
the shame you feel when it wasn't a steal
oh how shopping can make you feel

looking through ads
going oh and ah
so many things you could buy

early Christmas gifts to yourself
even though it isn't even Halloween
making exceptions to buy

shiny glossy papers every week
so pretty, so colorful, so unique
it really makes my credit seem bleak

but I think it's worth it
because it makes me so fleek
my bank account says, "eek!"

Halls of Light

DAVID MARTIN

In black and white, these lines
document why I joined the circus of poets,
artists, and writers of all ages and abilities,

adding clarity to the world,
developing creative lives
stringing together exciting words,

recording life's adventures,
bringing order to chaos,
beautifying existence,

celebrating the mysterious,
providing opportunity,
meditating with hope,

questing for life's mystery,
reducing its darkness,
showering light on sleepy afternoons,

accelerating our revolutions,
creating our destinies,
crafting our paintings,

adding our individuality to the universe,
tweaking our 8½" x 11" halls of light,
capturing our pursuit of wisdom,

recognizing each empty sheet is a friend,
flying into our imagination,
improving each day's realities,

composing blissful moments,
discovering beauty, grace and truth,
sharing stories around campfires,

building paragraphs,
escaping our prisons,
giving birth to our unique voices,

realizing the best angle is the try angle,
making art on the bad and the good days,
keeping calm,

carrying on,
searching for fine lines,
writing on.

If Allowed

VINCE McANDREW

Love comes and loves goes
though we may try with tears
to stem its ebb and flow
powerful as the sea whence it came.

And, if allowed in, love flows back one day,
different from before,
wiser, perhaps,
less passionate, perhaps,
at least, initially,
until it builds in depth and volume
enough to become a sea itself,
the birthing-womb of new life.



*"I'm thankful for my struggle, because without it, I
wouldn't have stumbled across my strength."*

ALEX ELLE

Sisters Step Up

BREIA McCAIN

Sisters, sisters, sisters
Sisters step up, and I will always be with you.

When you laugh, I will laugh.
When you fall, I will fall with you, as I get up first to wipe the tears
that fell from your eyes.

When you kiss me, I will kiss you, as a sister is supposed to.
When you hug me, I will hug you, as I wrap my arms around your
body,
because that's the reflection of sisters.

Be the older and bigger sister, because a sister will step up.
A sister's love is unpredictable and always unbreakable.

Because this is God's given gift, and our bond is sisters more like
"BFFs."
I am a sister, and we will step up together; you are not alone.

The Redness of Berries

MARY McCARTHY

Margot fell out of the tree, and I swear to God I had a heart attack. I thought her head was going to crack open like those Easter eggs Mom used to buy before Dad left. All wrapped up in brightly colored foil. Margot has pretty, ginger hair and laughs about everything. She looks like Hermione from Harry Potter, but she's not nearly as clever. She sat underneath the tree, blossom petals sprinkled on her shoulders, and giggled. She looked like a dream in her older sister's dress, hands bleeding. I could have clocked her in the nose. She scared me, climbing so high up into that tree and then falling, falling, falling. *Alice in Wonderland* type stuff.

Margot with her bright eyes and bare feet. I know she could never be mine. Sometimes, I think it's easier to love something that's not yours. Margot belongs to no one. She belongs to the storming sea and rooftops and the strawberries that grew in her grandmother's backyard before she died and the house was sold. Margot still goes back, sometimes, in late June. Fills her pockets with the berries, warm from the beating sun, and so very sweet. We sit on my front porch and eat them. Fancy ourselves Adam and Eve. Lips stained crimson.

Two summers ago, Margot rode her bike so fast down the hill behind the gas station she ended up with a mouthful of chipped teeth. Spitting up blood, strawberry red. I've had a hard time stomaching the stolen fruits these days.

Later, sitting in the emergency room, she whispered, "I don't mind hitting the pavement, as long as, it means that for a second I get to fly."

I just scowled at her, and she shrugged, as if to say, foolish boy, you'll never understand. And maybe I won't. Margot always moves at a million miles an hour, and sometimes, late at night, I think to myself,

only someone who's running from something feels the need to constantly be moving at lightning speed.

I want to grab her by the shoulders and ask her, "*Margot what are you running from? For God's sake, Christ for your own sake, you can't keep going so very fast, one day your lungs are going to collapse.*"



Old Delhi, India *photograph by Sue Sosin*

Under a canopy of electrical and telephone wires, pedestrians compete with bicycle rickshaws, three-wheeled taxis, small delivery vans, occasionally donkey- or camel-drawn wagons, and other vehicles cobbled together for transport.

Literary Art

LILY McEVOY

A room full of kids—all haphazardly throwing words
at paper and forming something magical. Well, the majority of them.
Some caress their chins or gaze dramatically, yet intellectually,
into the not far distance. The removable and unnecessarily fluffy
wall blocks their potential natural and inspiring view.
Yet, I was inspired, and soon, some of the young writers
get their prayers answered, as ideas leap out of that ugly wall
and clamp onto their praying hands and suck the words
out of their minds, forcing them into squiggly lines
of lead and ink, to form works of literary art,
like you just read.

Beginnings

JERILYN MCINTYRE

I am a child of World War II, born in 1942. My earliest memories are not of things typically mentioned in histories of that era--lights out drills, rationing coupons, "lead" pennies and broadcasts of Kate Smith singing "God Bless America." For me, the war and the first few years after it ended were marked more by episodes of personal awakening, consequential primarily to my own young life.

Norfolk, Nebraska, in the 1940s was a cocoon of long, tree-lined streets, comfortable older homes, rivers and parks providing a sheltered existence in a part of the country known mainly for agriculture and local commerce. Located in the northeastern corner of the state, the town had been established by German Lutheran families who traveled by wagon-trains from Wisconsin in 1866 and 1867 and settled on farmland claimed under the Homestead Act. The town grew in part because it became the nexus for several different rail lines. And even though there were other settlements along the Elkhorn River, from its founding, Norfolk was a lucrative trading center.

Territory bounded by the 40th and 43rd parallels that became the state of Nebraska was originally part of the Louisiana Purchase. Throughout its history, the region experienced repeated cycles of economic hardship followed by relative good times, as would be expected in an area so dependent on the land. The twentieth century was no exception. My parents, growing up in the communities of Fullerton, Belgrade and Cedar Rapids, saw their families' livelihoods jeopardized by financial depression, drought and the devastating consequences of Dust Bowl storms in the 1920s and 1930s. So did many others.

By the early 1940s, a combination of New Deal programs and wartime production had reinvigorated the economy, and relative

prosperity had returned. The litany of struggles that had plagued the state in the first decades of the century wasn't what I encountered as a youngster born at the outset of the war and growing up in the flourishing years that followed. I found hope, opportunity, and the possibility of real accomplishment in the world that was unfolding around me. Small but transforming moments of discovery shaped my sense of self.

It helped that Norfolk was an accessible, friendly place in a safe and simple world. The town and its neighborhoods defined the boundaries of my life both physically and mentally, and everything of importance to my family was close to our Third Street home.

We didn't drive much. Nobody did, particularly during the war. Restrictions on the availability of gas limited the activities of families like mine. Most of the time, we'd walk to our favorite destinations. And when I was old enough, I had another option. Mom and her Kodak box camera captured the day I got my new "big girl's bicycle"—a snazzy blue Schwinn with decals spelling out "Susie" (my nickname) on the back fender. I was six years old, standing proudly in front of the bike, improbably attired in a dress, leaning against the frame with my hand draped casually over the handlebar. Sitting alongside me was Tootsie, the family pet, a small black and white mutt who was flashing her wide doggy smile. My first ride was to the end of the block and back. Enough to satisfy me, apparently. It was a long block.

Three blocks straight up Third Street was Norfolk Avenue, the town's main thoroughfare. Its business district of two-story buildings housed department stores, small shops, restaurants and a hotel. I was dazzled by downtown Norfolk. In my eyes, it was huge, mysterious and modern. I found wonders to explore there, comfortably wrapped in the bonds of small-town life.

A trip by car to that part of town sometimes led to special moments. "Going downtown to watch the people go by" was a popular pastime. Because parking on Norfolk Avenue was diagonal, parked cars became posts from which people could watch other

shoppers on their way from store to store. This was elevated to a major amusement every Sunday afternoon. Families would arrive early to stake out a place, and either sit in the car or stand in front of it to greet whoever strolled past.

My family regularly participated in this ritual. Most of the time I sat in the back seat, a somewhat reluctant spectator. But from my vantage point, I could size up not just the people walking past us but also the cars everyone was driving. And I'd dream of the day when I would have one of my own. There were lots of choices--Fords, Chevys and various Chrysler products---but not many luxury automobiles. Probably few if any were foreign made. Out of that regular assessment of available brands, I saw the one I wanted moving slowly along Norfolk Avenue one Sunday. It was a Crosley, a pint-sized auto that was said to be well built and mechanically very dependable. I didn't know that at the time. All I knew was I liked the way it looked. It was small, almost like a toy in appearance, probably about half the size of a regular vehicle. Just right for me, I thought. From that point on, staring out the rear window and watching the action on the street, I was always on the lookout for my dream car, hoping it would make a repeat appearance.

My parents, meanwhile, were busy engaging in the real purpose of the afternoon. As Dean of the junior college, Dad was a bit of a local celebrity, so he stood in front of our car and chatted with colleagues and friends who stopped to say hello. My mother joined him as friends or neighbors lingered to talk. Eventually, it became time for all of us to get out and take our turn in the sidewalk parade. Mom held hands with my brother Joel and me as we strolled up and down Norfolk Avenue, part of a community tradition that drew all of us closer together.

While automobiles were both scarce and relatively expensive during the war, they became a necessity later in the decade and expanded the range of activities that were available outside the home. Once our finances allowed it, my dad allowed himself and our family

the luxury of a new car. We had started our life in Norfolk with an aging gray Chevy. That was replaced by a new blue Plymouth with wine-colored upholstery. It had a distinctive bulbous shape, like a drop of water lying on its side. But it wasn't just stylish; it also sported a radio and other important amenities.

One of the upgrades was a security system that enabled Mom and Dad to lock the back doors of the car so that my brother Joel and I couldn't unlock them by ourselves. That was apparently to prevent either of us from opening one of those doors while the car was being driven. That didn't seem particularly likely. At my age and size, I wasn't able to open the door by myself at any time, let alone when the car was in motion. Joel and I must have emanated some childish skepticism about the need for this fancy device because Mom finally put an emphatic end to our curiosity. "It's to keep you from falling out of the car," she told us. After that, the lock was largely unnecessary. The prospect of rolling unintentionally on to the highway at full tilt was enough to keep me safely rooted in the middle of the back seat.

Weekends when the family could escape for an adventure were special for all four of us. We'd often drive to Madison (the county seat) for a Sunday meal, or to Fullerton to visit Dad's parents. Joel and I loved those excursions, especially when they took us to bigger towns or involved more time on the road.

Our parents had ways to keep us amused with games that required us to concentrate on the scenery. That wasn't easy for me at first because I was so small I could barely see out the window of the car. We would count white horses in the pastures along the way--five points for every one we saw and claimed for our count. We'd look for license plates of cars from other states, although those were few and far between in that era. We'd wave at the engineers leaning out of the cabooses of the trains that we occasionally saw traveling on the tracks paralleling the roadway. And we'd watch for Burma Shave signs, a series of posts arrayed along the side of the road, on each which was a line of doggerel, always ending with a brief endorsement of Burma Shave products.

Our favorite pastime was the alphabet game. We'd keep an eye out for billboards or signs for farms or businesses we saw along the way, looking for words that began with letters of the alphabet progressing from A to Z, and calling out the words when we spotted them. Highway and traffic signs didn't count. Whoever got all the way to Z first was the winner. I never won, but that didn't matter. The game was just another way of having fun with words. And it kept Joel and me from squabbling with each other in the back seat.

Travel was slow and sometimes difficult. There was no interstate highway system of modern roads then; that wasn't begun until more than a decade later. So our trips found us alternately bouncing and weaving over rutted dirt roads, or cruising smoothly on narrow two-lane paved highways, our progress slowed occasionally by tractors and other farm equipment.

We were always glad to arrive at Grandma and Grandpa McIntyre's house. It wasn't the home Dad had known as a youngster, however. His family had lived on a thriving farm outside Fullerton when he was growing up, but the prosperity they had enjoyed ended in the Great Depression, when crop prices hit bottom. By the time I got to know his parents, they had moved to a smaller property within walking distance of downtown. The cluster of businesses there was so tiny it made Norfolk seem like a big city.

They were in some ways an oddly paired couple. Grandpa (known to everyone as "Mac") was stern and quiet, the product of a Scots lineage that had been in America for several generations running mills, or working as carpenters, farmers and owners of small local businesses. Grandma was a more recent arrival to the country. She was small in stature, more outgoing, and spoke with a thick accent.

Born in Germany, Anna Elisabeth (Elsie) Gerlach was the eleventh of twelve children, four of whom died in infancy and two others who died later in childhood. Her mother died of tuberculosis when Elsie was four years old, and Elsie was sent to live with relatives in Wiesbaden, where she attended school. Eventually, still in her teens,

she found her way to America--truly a land of much greater opportunity for her--joining an older sister who was by then living with her husband in West Branch, Iowa. She arrived at Ellis Island with no knowledge of English, her name and destination written on a piece of paper pinned to her coat, an act of trust and courage I can scarcely imagine now.

But there was no talk of all that when my brother and I were getting to know Grandma and Grandpa. I knew little about their past and even less about other members of their family. All I knew and all I can now remember of our occasional overnight stays at their home was that it was a place where the older order of a world long past was still present and almost palpably real in the small routines and rhythms of everyday life. I bathed on Saturday nights in a giant tub positioned in the middle of the kitchen floor, and I slept in a side bedroom with the windows open, lace curtains swaying loosely, the silence of the night broken only by the steady chirp of cicadas.

When we weren't on the road, Joel and I explored the world through our imaginations. Most of our best afternoons were spent reading.

My fascination with books was kindled when I was a very young child in the bedtime activity I shared with my mother. She would lull me to sleep every night with selections from the *My Book House* series. Later, my interests extended to comics and Sunday funnies I could read by myself. Eventually, I found other favorites in the book collection my parents gradually assembled for us at home, and in the children's section of Norfolk's small Carnegie public library.

By the time I was in kindergarten and first grade, reading was a pastime Joel and I both treasured. If the weather was warm and the winds were calm, we would carry a stash of favorites to the broad front porch of our family bungalow. Swaying back and forth on the porch swing or sometimes sprawled on the deck, surrounded by stacks arranged carefully according to preference, we would read for hours.

Joel was allowed by my parents to have *Superman* and *Batman* among his selections. I was not, for some reason. No Disney stuff or other fluffy comics for him. He was too old for that. He preferred books like *The Wizard of Oz*--in fact, the whole *Oz* series--or the *Hardy Boys* mysteries.

My authorized comics were *Little Lulu* or *Nancy and Sluggo*, popular cartoon characters who also appeared in newspaper comic strips and animated shorts as well as in comic books. I'm not exactly sure how I was first introduced to them, but by the late 1940s they eventually appeared in comic books that found their way into the stacks on the deck of our porch. Those characters were a new kind of role model for me, not at all like the *My Book House* heroines who seemed perpetually doomed to a place safely in the background of really interesting adventures, or limited to roles in narratives where the endgame was winning the heart of the nearest handsome prince.

Lulu and Nancy, in contrast, intrigued me with their artful ability to get into and out of mischief while, at the same time, devilishly implicating their male pals, Tubby and Sluggo. Lulu in particular was a nonconformist. It started with her hairdo—two large round knots sitting strangely atop a pageboy style vaguely reminiscent of the way movie stars of the era wore their hair. But it was more than that. Lulu was constantly defying expectations about how good little girls should behave. I was not exactly Gloria Steinem in the first grade, but I also didn't like stories or characters that put limits on me. Lulu didn't. That's why I liked her.

My friends tried to interest me in reading *Nancy Drew* mysteries, the girls' alternative to the *Hardy Boys*, but that series had no appeal. It seemed to divide the world too much into separate categories of what boys and girls could do, and how they should behave. Why would I want to read about that? Boys were able to do the kinds of things I wanted to do. I wanted to be like them. So, while Little Lulu Moppett and Nancy Ritz were welcome on my reading list, *Nancy Drew* was not. She was daring, but not daring enough.

As I got older, *Archie* and his comic book friends shifted my attention to other possibilities. They gave me my first glimmerings of a more mature reality. Still, in the world I inhabited between the ages of five and seven, my favorite teenagers were the *Hardy Boys*. I read the books about their adventures when Joel was done with them, and I dreamed of establishing my own detective agency. I would be Joe Hardy. My brother would be Frank.

We relied on radio, a relatively new technology, to learn about national events and developments in the larger world outside Norfolk. Television wasn't available yet.

There was a popular mythology about radio. Advertisements often featured images of families huddled close to their tall, floor-model radios, smiling and seemingly enthralled. The implication was that everyone lapped up anything and everything radio offered, willing to while away hours happily listening to programs without ever disagreeing about which shows should be selected.

That wasn't true of our family. Granted, we were indeed among the millions who spent portions of evenings, afternoons or Saturday mornings sitting quietly, staring at the floor or gazing vacantly into space as we listened to the sounds emanating from a talking piece of furniture in our living room. But radio wasn't a controlling presence in our lives. It was just a pleasant diversion. We weren't affected by the solemn tones of Edward R. Murrow telling us "this is London" in his famous wartime newscasts. Those may have been iconic to those for whom radio news was a necessity, but not for us. In fact, even though radio was a way our family kept informed, news programs themselves weren't very long or very interesting. Our parents didn't have time to think about events elsewhere. They were focused specifically on the kinds of problems that all young couples face: raising their children, and struggling to make sure the family finances covered the expenses of the household.

Joel and I, meanwhile, were more caught up with "real-life" police dramas like *Gang Busters*, or the adventures of Sergeant Preston of

the Yukon than we were in news of the war, which somehow seemed far away from us and unreal. At our ages, we had no sense of what war really meant, although we were vaguely aware that that it was a significant issue in our lives. Maybe it was because its undefined but incomprehensible reality was such a dark shadow in the background that we were attracted to lighter entertainment. The shows that we loved most hit closer to home and were gentler and less demanding on our personal courage. The images they conjured up sometimes seemed more real than our own experiences.

Sprawled on the floor of the living room, not far from the couch and the chair where Mom and Dad sat relaxing, I would imagine Jack Benny taking the long, echoing trip down to his vault, stopping briefly to talk to the lonely security man who stood guard there. And I would see in my mind's eye the mess that resulted from the clattering cascade of everything that poured weekly out of Fibber McGee's closet. I even liked to hear the soft voice of Ma Perkins imparting her smarmy but kindly advice in a daytime soap opera that seemed to move with the speed of molasses. Didn't anything ever happen fast in that town?

As we got older, if we wanted to hear something scary, as Joel and I usually did, there was always "The Shadow" or "Suspense." Even more evocative were the eerie introductory theme to "The Whistler," or the creepy voice of the announcer concluding every episode of "Inner Sanctum" sardonically with "Pleasant dreams... hmmm?"

The radio shows we liked best were comedies or variety shows, most of them simple, silly and upbeat. Besides Jack Benny, there were Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy, Burns and Allen and, of course, Fred Allen with his cast of sidekicks. The Saturday morning favorite for Joel and me also featured an ensemble cast. On the Buster Brown program, Smiling Ed McConnell—the Garrison Keillor of his day—managed to turn a boy, a dog, a cat and a frog into a lovable repertory company. At some point in every episode, Smiling Ed would ask Froggy the Gremlin to "plunk his magic twanger." The mysterious Midnight the Cat would answer a question with a whispered "ni-i-ce."

And Buster would invite us to join with him as he closed the show. “That’s my dog Tige,” he would say. “He lives in a shoe. I’m Buster Brown. Look for me in there, too.”

The Buster Brown slogan left us primed to make sure that Mom and Dad looked for Buster Brown shoes whenever we visited the local shoe store. I know I did. Even before I found my way to the fluoroscope to take a peek at my toes, I would check the footwear on display to make sure Buster Brown was where Smiling Ed said he would be. He always was. His beaming face snuggled up close to Tige in a little circle on the inside of every pair of shoes.

While radio was part of our individual family rituals, motion pictures provided an escape from our home and a stimulus to our imagination that was more broadly communal.

Of the two movie theaters in town, the Granada was more upscale. We could see the latest and most popular releases there. At the Rialto (pronounced Rye-alto by the locals, with a typical Midwestern panache), the emphasis was on westerns and adventures, which wasn’t entirely appreciated by everyone. That’s how the theater got its nickname, “the bloody bucket.”

Saturday kids’ matinees at the Rialto were a big deal to the town’s youngsters, especially after the war ended. In today’s world of single-feature screenings, they would seem more like a movie marathon. Settled into plush, high-backed chairs in the theatre auditorium, we’d be treated to two full-length feature films (westerns, of course), several cartoons and the latest episode of an ongoing serial.

Our matinee audience was divided between those who liked the various singing cowboys, Roy Rogers and Gene Autry, and those who preferred action heroes, like Hopalong Cassidy. Roy and Gene could carry a tune, sort of, but Hoppy was a Good Guy. Garbed all in black, polite, honest, defender of the defenseless, he was the quintessential western hero, a plain-speaking, honest cowpoke.

Boys liked Hoppy. For my part, although I was willing to concede that he and Roy Rogers were OK, I preferred Gene Autry, a gentler

soul who took on the additional mission of introducing his audiences to country music. I loved to hear him sing “Back in the Saddle Again.” With my knees pulled up against my chest as I leaned back in my seat, I’d croon along until someone elbowed me in the side to get me to stop. Unfortunately, my brother and his friends didn’t share my enthusiasm. They had little patience for Gene.

There was some disagreement about whether or not Trigger was a better horse than Topper, but no disagreement about Lash LaRue. We were all in awe of his skill with a whip, which he would use both to disarm his enemies and to perform simple chores like pick a flower for a lady friend. He could be just as bad as the bad guys, but he would always ultimately reveal himself as a stout defender of law and justice.

Still, the cowboy movies weren’t always the best things about the kids’ matinees. The noise level always ratcheted up several decibels during screenings of the Flash Gordon serials. Loud cheers encouraged the hero in his exploits, while jeers and boos greeted every action by his loathsome arch-enemy, Ming the Merciless. With his diabolically arched eyebrows and his outrageously high collars and padded shoulders, he was the epitome of evil.

For all their emphasis on adventure and the vanquishing of villains, matinee movies were above all simple morality plays for kids. They taught a code of personal conduct dictated as much by popular mores of the era as by the Motion Picture Association of America. Our cinematic heroes (no heroines--almost all of the characters were male) were unequivocally on the right side of the law. Even Lash LaRue didn’t stray too far from the path of justice. When the bad guys lost, it was because they deserved it. Order in society had to be maintained.

Looking back on the pace of incremental but steady change in our small town in the 1940s, it seems odd to me that we weren’t more conscious of the fact that the past we were beginning to leave behind was the world that was celebrated in the cowboy movies and some of the radio comedies and melodramas we loved so much. The late 1800s and early 1900s weren’t so distant or alien to us. We could see their vestiges

still around us in the older buildings downtown and the undeveloped countryside, even as our larger world was being transformed.

I was three years old when World War II ended, but that historic moment didn't register in my life at the time. That was probably because it wasn't observed visibly in the life of the community either. There were no major celebrations in Norfolk or on the junior college campus, and victory celebrations like the famous one in New York on Times Square weren't replicated in our community. The impact of war's end on our lives, as my mother once told me, was simple gratitude and relief: gratitude that the troops were coming home (some of whom were local boys) and relief that the restrictions on our lives, such as, rationing, would soon be lifted.

Not surprisingly, I suppose, the war years and the period that followed were special to me primarily because of the more personal epiphanies I was having both at home and in school. I was busy with my own passage from early childhood. For me and for my family, the larger change in American society that would soon become apparent was more of an evolution than an abrupt demarcation, manifest in a gradually developing sense of new possibilities. In our personal histories we found the confidence and the optimism that would carry us into the dynamic years that followed World War II.

Colors of South Asia

MASON McKENNA

Stunning like a rainbow at mid-afternoon
All the people in the world
They live at our festivals and schools
Colors are people

Our connection to the environment
We sit and talk together
They reside in our land like we reside in our homes
Colors are the land

We sit and feast with them
They offer themselves to us
We see them at markets and stores
Colors are food

I see them every day
Green trees, blue rivers, yellow sun
They meet me at every corner
Colors are my life



Love Stones photograph by D. N. Simmers

Stand Still Like the Hummingbird

HENRY MILLER

(from the Preface)

“Though one may shed his skin again and again one never loses his identity.”

“Don’t wait for things to change, the hour of man is now and, whether you are working at the bottom of the pile or on top, if you are a creative individual you will go on producing, come hell or high water. And this is the most you can hope to do. One has to go on believing in himself, whether recognized or not, whether heeded or not. The world may seem like hell on wheels and we are doing our best, are we not, to make it so? But there is always room, if only in one’s own soul, to create a spot of Paradise, crazy though it may sound.

When you find you can go neither backward nor forward, when you discover that you are no longer able to stand, sit or lie down, when your children have died of malnutrition and your aged parents have been sent to the poorhouse or the gas chamber, when you realize that you can neither write nor not write, when you are convinced that all the exits are blocked, either you take to believing in miracles or you stand still like the hummingbird. The miracle is that the honey is always there, right under your nose, only you were too busy searching elsewhere to realize it. The worst is not death but being blind, blind to the fact that everything about life is in the nature of miraculous.

The language of society is conformity; the language of the creative individual is freedom. Life will continue to be a hell as long as the people who make up the world shut their eyes to reality. Switching from one ideology to another is a useless game. Each and every one

of us is unique, and must be recognized as such. The least we can say about ourselves is that we are American, or French, or whatever the case may be. We are first of all human beings, different one from another, and obliged to live together, to stew in the same pot. The creative spirits are the fecundators; they are the *lamed vov* who keep the world from falling apart. Ignore them, suppress them, and society becomes a collection of automatons.

What we don't want to face, what we don't want to hear or listen to, whether it be nonsense, treason or sacrilege, are precisely the things we must give heed to. Even the idiot may have a message for us. Maybe I am one of those idiots. But I will have my say.

It's a long, long way to Tipperary, and as Fritz von Unruh has it, "the end is not yet."



*"Every flower that blooms has to go
through a whole lot of dirt."*

MARIELA DELGADO

The End of the Universe

ROWEN MITCHELL

I found a secret door in the back of my closet. I opened it and found a secret laboratory. There was a button. I pressed it and it said, “Commencing destruction of the universe. *How can you be so oblivious!*”

Just then a portal opened and it said, “Go in and find the secret code to stop this. You have one hour. *Go!*”

I jumped through the portal and there were twisters everywhere. Suddenly, one picked me up, and knocked me sky high, all the way into space. But thankfully there was enough gravity to pull me back down.

“Ahh!” I screamed, as I fell from the sky. However, the twisters slowed me just enough to only knock me out.

When I woke, there was a piece of paper next to me. I read it. It was the secret code (4, 5, 8, 7). I jumped through the portal and started putting in the numbers. But just as I was about to put in the last number, the clock reached zero, and the universe exploded.

I Am Lakota

GILLES MONIF

The liquor store across the street directs their feet. Living in the center of Midtown Crossing, their presence is not desired. The notice in the elevators states that if such individuals are detected, the police will take them to a destination elsewhere.

Having just parked the car, I identify two of them leaning against the building, catch the warmth of one of November's last good days. While at Creighton University, I had served as an unpaid medical advisor to the Omaha Tribe. From that association came a profound respect for what is a dying culture. You have only to visit the Pine Ridge Reservation or Macy to witness a nation waiting for a tomorrow that will never come. Life on the reservation is spiritual living within a state of physical dying.

The Native American closest to the street is reasonably dressed: baseball cap and a sport coat, pants and used running shoes in good condition.

When asked "What tribe?"

He responds, "Ponca." He had been married and had lived in Council Bluffs. When his wife left him, he returned to drinking.

The multiple layers of clothes made the other Native American look larger than his "friend/brother." His facial features are distorted by the overlying puffiness that threatened to diminish his line of vision. He was wearing a dirty ball cap. The strands of black and gray hair sticking out have attached lice. I try to see his eyes. He looks away.

In a low voice he says, "I am Kevin, Kevin Running Bear." The next words explode "I am LAKOTA." Not I am a Lakota, but I am LAKOTA.

My wife's ongoing accumulations had made my free space precious. The extra sleeping bag in the closet now resides in the trunk of the Celica, awaiting transportation to the Men's Shelter.

When asked if either of them could profit from a red sweatshirt and sleeping bag, Kevin immediately says, “Yes.”

I walk back to the car and retrieve both articles from its truck. The exchange is made.

As I turn, Kevin stops me. “Wait. Do you have a piece of paper?”

I ask, “Why?”

His friend/brother answers for him. “He wants to give you a gift. He draws good.”

I go up to my office and retrieve several sheets of plain white copy paper. Taking a sheet, Kevin removes a black marker from a pocket and begins to draw. In what might have been seven but certainly not ten minutes, he hands me a drawing that stuns the emotional senses. I have in my hands an incredible drawing that blends traditional Native American forms into the abstract. This drawing is not a quick drawing, like Picasso’s payment for lunch, but a sophisticated conceptual synthesis.

In my world, his artistic ability would be a passport to wealth. We talk about art. I give him money to buy what he needs.

In parting, he says. “I am Kevin Running Bear.” He extended his hand, the tips of his fingers curved.

We agree to meet the next day. I came. He didn’t. His world being physically desiccated around him, he spiritually lives as an urban nomad. There are no great deeds to be done. The twenty dollars for art supplies will go to softening his journey, until he is reunited with the Great Mystery.

Someday, the coroner’s wagon will be summoned to pick up a body of a Native American found lying in a doorway. A few of us Nebraskans, who have known Native Americans who are not self-destructing in the “soup,” understand the spiritual treasures that are disappearing before blinded eyes.



Lakota drawing by Kevin Running Bear

Wisdom through Humility

SAM MORRIS

I have learned, through patience and studying, that there is no simple way to gain wisdom. Colleges are filled with professors, books, computers, and tutoring, which will make one smart but do not lead to wisdom. Wisdom and intelligence are two different ideas. I believe that wisdom is the practical application of experiences to life, so that someone may be better prepared to face what lies ahead. Many experiences have led to my small amount of wisdom. Very few are as good at teaching, than that of humility. It is always a lesson learned the hard way.

I am a firm believer that martial arts is one of the best activities from which to learn wisdom. It teaches good life skills in a friendly, competitive, and respect based group of like-minded individuals. One of our tenets we follow is humility, and I never knew why, until I experienced it first-hand. To excel at martial arts requires an immense amount of harmony and focus, between mind, body, and spirit. At class, we occasionally spar other classmates to apply what we have learned to actual fighting. We do not hit each other though. Being a third degree black belt, I could almost always edge out my opponents. One class, however, I met my match when I sparred with my instructor.

Point sparring is a variation of original sparring, where points are tallied for missed blocks of techniques from opponents, usually going to seven points for a win. Going into this match, it was not that I was cocky, arrogant, or even greatly outmatched. My mind was scattered, fiddling with this and that, and I had no focus. I found myself unable to block, counter, watch, or move. My techniques were slow, feet were heavy, motions did not flow, and my fatigue was overwhelming. I lost

zero to seven and it was very humiliating. Fortunately, humility is a double edged sword.

I pondered on my loss for a while, not because I lost, but because of how I fought, to suddenly become horrible at it. I tried to search for an answer and found nothing. The closest thing I found was nervousness. Weirdly, my answer came from watching the movie *Kung Fu Panda*, in the scene where master Shifu takes Po to the birthplace of Kung Fu. Shifu says, "This is where Oogway unraveled the mysteries of harmony and focus; this is the birthplace of Kung Fu." I walked up to my bedroom, grabbed my copy of *The Art of Peace*, turned to page 107, and read: "Fiddling with this and that technique is of no avail. Simply act decisively without reserve." I knew I had to try again. After another class, I asked my instructor if we could spar again, and he agreed. This time, with focus and decisiveness, my techniques were sharp, my feet were light, my motions flowed like water, and I was strong. I still lost five to seven. That was not important; what mattered was how I fought.

I learned that with focus and precision, my martial arts will excel, and I will only continue to get better. As I previously stated, martial arts teaches good life skills. I have found that I can apply that same precision and focus to my life. If I focus on the present task at hand, and do not scatter my mind, everything becomes easier. That was the exact mentality I had when I wrote this paper. I will never look at humility as a negative emotion ever again.

A Rushing of Words

LISA MORRIS-SNELL

What joy have I in you, my lovely thing!
My Prettiness, my gathered days in sun;
My Dear, my Spice, my oh-so-patient one
who proudly wears my kiss, and golden ring.
I think of you, and bursting, fly to sing!
My song, like streams, will rush, and dance and run.
I doubt the day will come when it is done
for too much pleasure does the singing bring!

Yet I speak in a language new to you
and one your heart hears like the falling rain;
a gentle sound, but of its love, or pain
the words, like water, swirl away and through,
and then, My Heart, your hands stay empty yet
when I would have them loved, and sweetly wet.

(dedicated to my husband, who is a somewhat famous dyslexic)

Be Careful What You Wish For

ALLY MORTENSEN

It is finally time to go home, after yet another meaningless day, at her seemingly dead-end job. April gathers her items, and packs them up in her bag. She turns off her cubicle light, pushes in her chair, and steps into the aisle. She walks past countless other employees, readying their items for their commute home. All on April's mind, is a microwave dinner, then going straight to bed. Today is particularly more draining, compared to her average days. She reaches the elevators and waits patiently for it to get to her floor, along with all the other employees itching to get on. As the downward pointing arrow flickers green, a name is shouted behind the crowd.

"August!" A voice rips through the air. It is Barb, April's boss, a known witch. Barb approaches April, and places a stack of folders in her arms.

"I need these all proof read and back on my desk by tomorrow morning," Barb says, before stepping onto the elevator, giving no time for objection. April glances at the clock on the wall before hesitantly answering.

"Yes ma'am," April replies, as the elevator door closes in her face.

"It's April, by the way," she mutters under her breath, as she weaves her way through the aisles, back to her cubicle. April is all too familiar with the situation, because Barb is known for stunts like this. She reaches her desk, flicks her lamp back on, and places her bag on the floor. Slamming the folders on her desk, she plops back into her chair. With a deep sigh, she begins to thumb through the folders forced on her.

April leans back in her chair, and raises her arms to stretch out the fatigue. She finally gets through each folder, and is ready to go home. Glancing at the clock, she realizes it is past 9 p.m.

“It’s that late already? I’m going to miss my bus!” April thinks, as she quickly gathers her items for a second time. The bus station stops running at ten, and if she misses her bus, she will have to walk to her apartment. She runs down the stairs, knowing the elevator would take too long to reach her floor. April tries to shave off time on her commute to the bus stop, by sprinting. Reaching her destination, she pulls out her phone. It reads 10:02 p.m.

“Fantastic.” She thinks, as she begins her commute home, on foot. Just adding more on top of her already exhausting day. All on her mind now is the sweet release her bed will award her.

April walks through her front door, into her dark apartment, flicking her shoes off her feet. They are in pain, but she isn’t about to spend more time dealing with them, so she ignores the throbs. Dropping her bag in the doorway, she makes her way through the dark, to her bathroom. Turning on the light, she notices the dark circles under her eyes getting more and more prominent. Rolling her eyes, she pokes at them, like doing so would make a difference. Giving up, she moves on to the next task keeping her from the one thing she wanted most. She brushes her teeth, while staring blankly into the mirror. April’s mind is fried, by the day she endured. Tying her hair up into a bun, April gives one last glance at her appearance, before turning the light off, and walking out of the bathroom. After changing into her pajamas, April barely makes it to her bed, before collapsing. With one position change, she begins to drift.

“I wish I’d wake up tomorrow, and be anyone but myself.” April thinks, just before slipping into a dream.

The structure of April’s dream crumbles as she begins to wake up. Groaning, she buries her face into her pillow, refusing to start another day like the one before. She knows she has to get up, yet something feels a bit off. Reluctantly, she peels the warm inviting sheets off her

body. Eyes still closed, sleep still in her mind, she shuffles to her bathroom. Daily, April would walk eyes closed throughout her apartment because she knows the lay of the land. Confident in knowing where the bathroom door is, she trudges on. While walking, April bashes her knee against something. The sudden and unexpected pain, fills her head with confusion.

“What was that? I don’t have anything sitting there.” She thinks while rubbing her knee. Her eyes pop open to see an unfamiliar dresser. April’s eyes begin to focus. This isn’t her dresser. Her eyes dart around the room. This isn’t her room. April begins to panic, running back over to the bed, she catches a glimpse of herself in a mirror on the wall. She stops in her tracks.

“Since when do I have blonde hair?” April questions, as she backs up to the mirror. She looks at the reflection, and it isn’t hers. This isn’t her apartment or her body. Frozen with confusion and fear, April stands staring at the unfamiliar face in the mirror. She shuts her eyes and opens them again, only to get the same picture.

“What is happening?” April screams, as her legs give out from under her. She crawls her way to the corner of the room, with her back to the wall. Curled up in a ball, she looks around the room questioning everything going on. No matter how many times April opens her eyes, the sight doesn’t change. She puts her head down on her unfamiliar knees, afraid of the body she’s residing in, and rocks.

“This has to be a dream.” April repeats to herself, as time keeps ticking by. As she sits, frightened in the corner, she hears three knocks. April’s head shoots up from her knees, eyes widened, she stares at the bedroom door. Silence fills the room, as she stays frozen. After a short pause, the knocking continues. Unsure what to do, she decides to follow the knocking. April leaves the bedroom, hesitantly. The bedroom offered some familiarity now, compared to the rest of the apartment. Stepping into the main living space, her eyes dart around the foreign set up. This really isn’t her home. April walks over to a couch placed against the wall. She slowly stretches out her arm and

pokes the couch' it is really there. The contact between her hand and the couch, sends chills throughout her body.

"Kathy? Are you in there?" A voice sounds from behind the front door, more rapping follows. April stands motionless, heart pounding. The front door handle begins to jiggle. April lunges for the door, and holds the handle firmly in her hand.

"Uh yes, who is it?" April asks anxiously, tightening her grip of the knob.

"Kathy, it's me, Sara. I've been waiting in the lobby for ten minutes. Why aren't you answering your texts?" the voice replies.

"Oh um," April pauses, searching for an excuse. "I'm not really feeling well today, sorry, but can I be left alone? I just really want to rest," she finishes.

"What? You aren't feeling well? Do you need anything?" the voice replies, jiggling the handle some more.

"No! Please, I'd like to just rest for today!" April pleads, bracing the door with her body.

"Um, if you say so," the voice pauses. "Feel better alright? Text if you need anything," the voice finishes. The knob loosens, April stands silently, listening. A pause, then the sound of footsteps walking away. April lets out a sigh. Her heart racing, she wishes she could walk away too. Left alone at the door, April makes her way back to the bedroom. Back in the room, she sees a light flash on the bedside stand. April, now more composed, walks over to it. It's a cell phone, with a lists of texts on the screen. She picks up the phone and reads the texts. "I'm here!" "Where are you?" "Don't make me come all the way up there." "I'm coming up." "Answer your door." With the last text reading, "I hope you feel better." All from Sara.

"I don't know who this Kathy or Sara is, but I think I just ruined their relationship," April thinks, as she makes her way over to the window in the room. Pulling the curtain aside, sunshine leaks in from the window. April peeks out and her jaw drops. She whips the curtain completely open. She gapes at a cityscape from what seems to be the top floor of a very tall apartment building.

“I’m not even in the same city! Where am I?” April bawls. She shuts the curtains leaving the bedroom dark. This way, April pretends she is at home, not in some unknown body and place. She saunters towards the head of the bed, and sits down curling up in a ball. Again with her back to the wall.

April sits and ignores any and all texts or phone calls “Kathy” receives. She stays in a ball, disregarding any outside noises or knocking. In the bed, her mind runs over what has happened, how it happened, and how she can get back home. Yet she has no answers, she is lost. Closing her eyes, tears stream down her face. April is exhausted; this all feels so real and vivid.

“I wish I was myself again” she prays, clutching her knees to her chest, before slipping out of consciousness.

April is awoken by the shrill noise of her alarm clock. Her eyes rip open, feeling as if they didn’t sleep a wink. Staring at the ceiling, memories flood back into her mind. Shooting up out of bed, her eyes dart about the room, analyzing her surroundings. Relief fills her body, when what she sees is her home. Nothing has changed from the last time she saw it. Opening and closing her eyes a few times just to be certain. Leaning forward, she looks out the door and into the hallway, it all reads home. Pulling a piece of hair out of her bun, she scans it. It’s her hair alright, brown and beautiful. April lies back in her bed, never being happier about being herself, she gazes at the ceiling, reflecting.

“Who the hell is Kathy?” she asks herself.

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Why?

BARB MOTES

In the beginning:

To purge violent thoughts from the brain

To expunge dark energies from the soul

To eradicate raging pain from the heart

Along the way:

To quiet the mind

To soothe the soul

To heal the heart

And now:

To free the mind

To explore the soul

To share the heart

This is why I write.



“Good writing is clear thinking made visible.”

BILL WHEELER



Autumn photograph by Barb Motes

Judaism 101

MICHAEL J. NADEL

In Crown Heights, there was a Jew, Yankel, who owned a bakery. He survived the camps.

He once said, “You know why it is that I’m alive today? I was a kid, just a teenager at the time. We were on the train, in a boxcar, being taken to Auschwitz. Night came and it was freezing, deathly cold, in that boxcar. The Germans would leave the cars on the side of the tracks overnight, sometimes for days on end without any food, and of course, no blankets to keep us warm,” he said.

“Sitting next to me was an older Jew—this beloved elderly Jew—from my hometown I recognized, but I had never seen him like this. He was shivering from head to toe, and looked terrible. So I wrapped my arms around him and began rubbing him, to warm him up. I rubbed his arms, his legs, his face, his neck. I begged him to hang on.

All night long; I kept the man warm this way. I was tired, I was freezing cold myself, my fingers were numb, but I didn’t stop rubbing the heat on to this man’s body. Hours and hours went by this way.

Finally, night passed, morning came, and the sun began to shine. There was some warmth in the cabin, and then I looked around the car to see some of the other Jews in the car. To my horror, all I could see were frozen bodies, and all I could hear was a deathly silence.

Nobody else in that cabin made it through the night—they died from the frost. Only two people survived: the old man and me. The old man survived because somebody kept him warm; I survived because I was warming somebody else.”

Let me tell you the secret of Judaism. When you warm other people’s hearts, you remain warm yourself. When you seek to support, encourage, and inspire others, then you discover support, encouragement, and inspiration in your own life as well. That, my friends, is “Judaism 101.”

The Racer

KATHERINE NETZER

(In memory of her mother)

She is a bare, brittle shadow
Scraping her way down halls,
Across rooms, and through doorways.
She has been on her way for a long time now.
Age has given her ample time
To miss those who have gone ahead.
Eyesight, hearing, and youth have passed her in the rush,
But her marks are in the faces of those she leaves.

The young remember her bright and beautiful
And free of the stooped sack that now holds her spirit.
They pray for a gentle breeze to raise her like a kite
Soaring silently across the sky and upward through the clouds,
A ray of light, clothed in the sun, and whole.
They pray for a time, when she is a memory
Whose race is done, whose hands and face are smooth,
And the grief will be sweeter than the touch.

Photography: A Love for Recording Life

JONATHAN NGUYEN

Nothing lasts forever. People die, nature erodes, and civilizations crumble. Whether in physical form or in memory, all things will fade. However, we can preserve them in snapshots. I find that it's much easier to convey information through pictures rather than oral or written retellings. Some of the largest events in history can be summed up in one photo. I found a lifelong passion seeing life through photographs.

This lust for capturing moments began when my parents gifted me with a small Nikon digital camera for my tenth birthday. I took it along on trips to the zoo to remember the animals in peculiar poses, but I was never satisfied by the monotonous nature of the exhibits. What sparked my passion into photography was a trip to Nebraska City. Along the road, I saw the perfect sight, fields of gold meeting a cloud kissed blue sky. Looking at the photograph, I knew this pocket of rural Nebraska might not withstand the sprawl of urbanization, so I began dedicating myself to taking pictures and keeping a record of life in the Midwest. Then, I moved on from landscapes to aspects of my life: family, friends, important events, and the bugs on my windowsill. These subjects became my focus, because I knew that in my childlike state I may not fully understand their importance. They would be for later, to reflect on how some of the things I held dear were brief in duration. In old age, they will become proof that my life was lived to the fullest extent.

I don't possess any of the fancy equipment such as the telescoping lenses or the expensive flashes. I prefer to keep myself humble and basic. I have passed on opportunities to receive a formal education

on “proper techniques” during high school. My fear is that if I had grasped any of these concepts that I may ignore the common oddities, and restrict myself to the mainstream clichés. As a result, I cannot call myself anything but amateur. I take shots in less than ideal lighting, out of focus, and with subjects off center. This however isn’t bad form. It has become a unique style that distinguishes my work from others.

I find myself in college now, with less time to devote to my passion. Of course, this is an excuse, as I’m sure I could schedule some time into my week for photography. I plan to take at least one photo a day during my college years, as this period is considered a transformative four years. I will make every photograph a reflection of myself as I progress through my time at UNO. Later on in my life, wherever my career takes me, I desire to go worldwide. I want to tell the stories of others. This drive comes from two sources. One is when my English professor told us of one of his students who wished to write so she could speak for those who can’t. The other is my nature to care. So many times, I wonder about those around the world who live in conditions worse than our poor in America. Technically, these people are not my concern, yet I feel the urge of responsibility to show the world the everyday occurrences that don’t get enough time on television. Words can go as far as the human mind can imagine. Pictures, however, can show all details and bypass language barriers.

One day humans will be gone. Some other lifeforms may discover our legacy and wonder about it. They may not understand our writings or video recordings, although they could happen upon our photographs, either depicting our lives or the vast amount of diversity in the world. These won’t be pictures from *Time* magazine or *National Geographic*. They will be photos taken by normal people who loved to record life, and I’m proud to be part of this preservation movement.

Christmas

ANGELICA OCHOA

It was Christmas. The snow was white like marshmallows. It was snowing like it was raining.

Everyone came to my house. My family and friends came. When everyone was here, we started to eat, but the grownups ate first, so the kids could play a little bit longer. Then the kids ate. When everyone was done eating, my cousins, brother, sister, and I made a big fort. It filled the whole room. When we were done, we went inside, but before could go inside the big fort, our parents called us.

Mom said, "Hear your cousin sing two Christmas songs."

When she was done singing, my cousin asked me to sing. I said, "No. No. No. No."

So, my cousin sang a few more Christmas songs.

Finally, it was time to open up our Christmas gifts. My favorite part was when I got a pink tablet. Then everyone went home, and I fell asleep on the couch.

The end.

Art

MARIE OHLINGER

Splashes of color that glitter and inspire
A thrumming beat, a clear tone, a thousand notes flying
The creation of heroes, dragons, and universes
A body in graceful lines that flies through the air
Shaping warm clay into soft curves and twists

But my art
Is the art of truth
It is the beauty
Of seeing the universe
As it is
Not the way I wish it would be
The courage
The ingenuity
The sheer *power* of admitting that you were *wrong*

Some call it cold
Some say it is hopeless
But I only see the grace
The beauty of taking a mystery
And solving it
The thrill of looking up at the sky
And wondering what it all means
But not *just* wondering

Finding the truth

A Personal Narrative

HOLLEY OXLEY

Twenty-three. That's how old I am. An age I was told I would never reach, not in the least because I was born dead. Not to mention I was diagnosed with Turner's Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that is hard to explain and affects so much of the mind and body. Sitting in the seafoam-green doctor's office, in the blue, green, and orange seat, a slippery hand told me that I would never graduate from public school. Would never have kids. Would never drive. Would most likely not be able to live on my own and shouldn't expect more than a part-time job in the service industry, if I even lived past twenty, as girls with my specific genetics almost never did.

Six. That's how old I was. Mrs. Knickerbocker makes us all write a paper over what we are most afraid of. When I respond "birds," she promptly makes me take the class parakeet home for a weekend. I cry and ask why. She just smiles. So I bring the bird home, cover the metal cage with a sheet. Feed it. Yell at it to be quiet because it won't stop squawking. But Monday morning, I come in, carrying the bird, uncovered, and open the cage to feed it. Mrs. K just smiles and asks, "Good weekend?"

Nine. That's how old I was. The bright colors of Mrs. B's classroom, and the bean bag chairs next to her little library call to me. She makes tons of recommendations and challenges me to read as many books as I can. Decides to have a reading competition for the whole classroom. So I read, and read, and read. About Egypt and Greece. Fantasy places. Romance. Books that help me escape from my struggles with math and science. And as soon as one is done, Mrs. B always has another one waiting.

Twelve. That's how old I was. Gown draped over me. Ultrasound machine swishing. Doctor's surround me. One ovary. Regular periods.

Must go on birth control they say. Any child I had would be severely deformed. Medical marvel. Invite in the students, they'll want to see this. They stand around and chat as I try to keep myself covered, my eyes on the machine, hoping to catch a glimpse of what they've seen. But I don't.

Thirteen. That's how old I was. Failing math. Got the flu and Mono in one semester. Missed half the year. The school wants to fail me. Kids tease me. Boys surround me in the hallway, my 4 feet 7 inch frame engulfed by four six-foot football players who make sexual remarks about me. Move close to grope me. Boys who are only stopped because a teacher walked into the hallway at the right time. I beg and cry, pleading with my parents to please just let me be home-schooled. I have good grades; I am a hard worker. But they say no. Keep fighting. Prove the doctors wrong. Four years. It'll only be four more years.

Fourteen. That's how old I was. She doesn't really need SPED, say my teachers. She's a good writer. A hard worker. She'll do fine in math and science with a few modifications, and so, I am placed in honors English and history classes and receive nothing below a B that year.

Seventeen. That's how old I was. I needed a credit to graduate from high school, and Mrs. McCoy suggests that I be her aide. Work in the English classroom. Help grade. "You write so well," she says. So, I take her up on the offer. I copy and grade and watch her plan every day from 8:15-9:05. I realize that, maybe, this is what I want to do. I'm ready, I think, to see if I can break some of the doctor's "would not's." The first one comes at the end of May, when I graduate with a 3.5 GPA and a 29 on my ACT.

Twenty-two. That's how old I was. Shaking in a nervous panic as I go through my checklist. Passport, check. Dorm key, check. Wallet, check. Phone, check. So, I leave for the airport and board a plane for my first trip abroad. England. I check my map about a thousand times, continually paranoid about getting lost, as I am by myself. I see Big Ben, Westminster, Bath, and Stonehenge. I don't get lost, don't lose

anything. I decide that travel is what I am really passionate about. The history to be seen. The cultures to learn about. The experiences of seeing such beautiful art, buildings, and people which can't even begin to be described. It had been overwhelming, amazing, and exactly what I needed to break out of the Mid-West, American bubble I had been living in.

Twenty-two-and-a-half. That's how old I am, when I change courses from education to English. TESOL to be exact. I want to teach English. Want to work with international and migrant students. To help those who don't have a strong voice in education earn one.

A week shy of twenty-four. That's how old I'll be when I graduate with my B.A. in English-Language studies. My TESOL certificate. And a minor in history. 17 days from me writing this.

Twenty-four. That's how old I'll be when I start my first post-schooling job, living on my own in Colombia, as I teach ESL to students with the help of a cooperating teacher.

I don't know how old I'll be when I die. The estimate was wrong. Just like many of the predictions made about me, I tend to be the one percent that's uncalled for. I have not done it alone. Countless teachers, family, friends and people have helped me along the way. The lessons of my life that stick out are the ones I can write about, and yet, there are so many more I've had and so many more to come. Good and bad.

And those "would nevers?" Nineteen years later, there are four down, three to go.

Father: The Greatest Adventure

TANNER PARKER

“Father” means so much more than a bearer of children. The word encompasses a man with honor, wisdom, strength, leadership, love, and so much more. In society, some of these core values have been diluted by the lack of real men teaching boys what it means to be a father. There are many reasons men have fallen short in the past decades, but my mission is not to try and prove why that is. I hope to find an outline of what it truly means to be a father. I am a 30-year-old male with no children with a dad, who wasn’t around much when I was a child. My mother did her best to provide, but mostly I raised myself. I lacked direction, a true sense of right and wrong, and the ability to stand up for myself and what I believed in. It took many years of mistakes for me to learn I needed help. With some guidance from a few great men in my life, I have a greater understanding of the adventure a father is blessed with.

Heart to heart is the best way to start. Talk to the children. A father has a voice, and it was not meant just for commands. Use that voice to tell them who their father is, deep inside. Healthy openness is a manly sense of communication. Children are a blank slate, and they do not know all the things that made the father who he is today. I missed out on knowing my father. He was there, but he never opened up to tell me stories of his past, good or bad. It is my belief that nothing brings people closer than when they make themselves vulnerable with each other about who they are inside and what they have been through that has shaped and formed them. Genuine openness is a form of spirit to spirit communication. There is something captivating about a father who shares from his heart; it brings everyone in to listen. Children

can learn how to be in tune with their emotions and what makes them tick through this open line of heart to heart communication. No one knows the heart of a man like the man himself. A father should be able to share his heart with his children.

Parents want their children to like them, as they experience life together. Friendship is good but can only be enjoyed in moderation in the father-son order. Parents are their children's first friends, which is a great opportunity to teach them about respecting one another to protect that friendship. There were so many times in my life when I missed out on the good memories that could have been made from having fun with my father if we were better friends. A friendship is a bond that can open up the opportunity to pass on many of the life lessons the father learned. Life is better with friends, especially, fathers who enjoy time with their children.

With a healthy relationship between father and child that is open, honest, and friendly, a pathway is cleared. A man opens the door to lead his family the day he gets married. It is by design that a father leads his family by showing them the way to live happy and successful lives. The word "lead" means to guide not to force. It is hard to guide people who don't like you or know anything about you. I know this from experience. Children will not always like their fathers, and it is those times that guiding comes into play the most. Handling emotions can be effectively taught through tough times that threaten to collapse the friendship and bond between a father and son. I would have loved to know my dad was always going to be there for me, even when I did not like him much. He always was there, but I never heard it. There was no expression of a desire for us to remain loved through times of anger and bitterness. Those moments can define the way a child looks at his father as a man, a friend, and a guide for his life. The father has a choice to allow his emotions to win, or he can be mature, take initiative, provide direction, increase security, establish stability, and give order to the relationship.

Children need discipline in their lives. It is essential to maintaining order and authority over the household. The father should be the

major source of authority in the household, writing the family story with each guiding move. Discipline should never be given out of a place of anger. It should be given out of a place of correcting what the child has done wrong. It is important to teach children to respect each other, adults in general, and anyone in the role of authority, especially teachers. Discipline brings oneness to a family.

When I was young and would get into trouble for little things, after receiving a proper punishment, I remember clinging to my dad and expressing my apologies. This conveyed to him, that I got the message, and I was thankful for the correction. Correction shows love; it says without speaking that I love you enough to show you, this is wrong and not allow you to continue making the same mistake. There is no perfect family, but there is the family that is drawn tightly together with love, friendship, respect, order, and discipline.

Be tender. Men are born with a desire to touch and be touched, to hug and to be near other humans. There is no better way to ensure that love is being communicated than through the senses of touch. Real men hug. Real men are in touch with their feelings. They are not afraid to show them to their children. Our false imagery of what society deems a man will try and shut this part of who we are as men down, but it is our duty to the children to be real men and not conform to what society believes. A father must be tender, expressing his feelings of love, compassion, kindness, and affection towards his family. A gentle man can instruct and encourage his children to do the right thing much more effectively than a forceful man, because that is all it is, an act. Father's feel deeply, give deeply, and sacrifice for their wives, children, family and friends.

Strength is gained through trial and error, mostly error. Strength comes from wisdom that has been passed down. A father needs to be able to stand in the gap for his family when times get tough. I witnessed my father bail out on his family when the going got tough, and it affected me deeply. A father does not give up, but he does admit when he is wrong and accepts all punishment for that wrong.

The example my father set by quitting on his marriage and family allowed me to justify never sticking with any one thing for any length of time. At a young age, I was still learning what I liked and didn't like, and not sticking with anything delayed my ability to practice what I wanted to. Some of us are naturally gifted with certain abilities that are clear callings. Some of us are not; we have to work long and hard to become good at things. Sticking with it can make all the difference in life and eliminate many worries that come with floating around for years.

Fathers should stick with it, whatever it is: marriage, job, or hobby. Give it everything you have until there is nothing left to give. Then give some more. There is an old saying that addicts use, "Temptation lies at the door of breakthrough, and just beyond that is destiny." Try not to miss out on destiny by giving up when things are at the peak of their toughness.

Fatherhood will be different than anything I expect, probably, but I have a dream, a vision, of how to do it. I will not give up on that dream no matter how different it looks. It is part of our calling as men to do our best in all that we do, so fatherhood should not be taken lightly. If God so happens to bless me with children, I will do my best to share my heart, be a friend, and someone they can trust. I will relate with them and be open about who I am. I will lead and guide them to the best of my ability with truth and love. I will be firm and correct their mistakes with discipline that is just, fair, and not out of anger. I will be tender and compassionate, kind and affectionate, showing them they are loved beyond measure. I will be an example for them of what a real father and good man looks like by giving, even when it is not convenient, and sacrificing my will for the good of the family. I will be strong for them, on guard and standing firm in my faith. I will be courageous, upright, and everything I do I will do in love. This is my adventure, the father I want to become.

Alternate Views

CATHY PORTER

Sins perceived in anger, smothered with
crowds of people intoxicated by neon.
Your face pops in, uninvited.

So, this is it: a total shut down.
Lock and key on the mind. You should
know this better than most—what dark
corners mean on a cool night favored
by secrets. I listen with your eyes.

Now we've come to this:
all on the table, the room as quiet
as every thought never spoken.
I ask for time, granted before you
could answer—as if either of us
stand a chance.

Rain taps a drunken serenade
on the windshield. We pull over to the
side of the road, count headlights
to pass time. I know you see
alternate views; I know you can feel
the rush of perception.

Unanswered Questions

ZUHA QADEER

Why? That was the only thought running through her head. It's not an unusual thought to have. Especially during the passing of a loved one. Why us? Why now? Why like this? These thoughts kept running through her head. She was numb to the grief, still in shock from the news this morning. She couldn't think past this. It was consuming her thoughts in the worst way.

It had been a relatively normal morning. She hadn't noticed anything was wrong at first. And then it hit her. The usual sounds of her family awakening and bustling around the house to start their days was muffled by complete silence. She remembered cautiously descending the stairs, making her way to the kitchen looking for any sign of life. She thought she heard crying. Yes, it was definitely crying. Her heartbeat had sped up and she decided to go back to her room. After all, that's what children do, they try to hide from their fears.

She had just finished getting ready, when there was a knock on her door. It was her little brother who looked at her with fear in his eyes.

"Dad's in the room with mom." He whispered, "I think she's crying."

She froze, unsure of what to do. "W-why is she crying" she managed to stutter out.

Her brother gulped. "I... I think something bad happened to someone in the family."

She had always had a habit of trying to push away all of her bad thoughts. It was a sort of defense mechanism she had, and this moment was perfect for it. "Don't be stupid" she scolded her brother, "You're just being paranoid. Everything's fine, now hurry up and go get breakfast. We're going to be late for school."

She tried to act like everything was normal. Her family had just come back home from spring vacation, nothing bad could be

happening. It was just a regular day like every other day and everything would be fine. Or at least that's what she wanted to think.

She remembered heading to the kitchen that morning for breakfast. She heard footsteps shuffling behind her. She turned and saw her mother and gave her a smile. Her mother didn't smile back.

"Good morning, Mom" she greeted.

Silence was her mother's response. She reached over to the cabinet to get a glass that she could just barely reach. She had just successfully managed to grab her glass when her mother finally spoke.

"Your grandfather is dead." Her mother's voice broke.

The girl staggered, almost losing her grip on her glass. She stared at the cabinet in shock. Seconds that felt like hours passed in silence. She heard her mother say her name, but only barely.

"Are you okay?" Her mother asked, ironically, as tears still streamed down her face.

The girl remembered being too numb to speak in that moment. Her mother repeated the question. She just nodded in response. Her mother asked if she still wanted to go to school. The girl looked up, agitation visible in her eyes. She nodded yes again. On a regular basis, she would never turn away a chance to miss school, but this was different. She desperately needed something, anything, to keep the news off her mind.

Now, here she was, sitting on the swing alone. Her friends had gone to play during recess and she was left with her thoughts. The bell rang. It was finally time to go home, and all the children were grabbing their things eagerly to get back home. The girl only felt dread.

She came home to her mom crying again, but now she was surrounded by her friends who had come to give their condolences. There was a suitcase in the corner, and her dad was entering the living room with papers in his hands. He saw his little girl and gave her a hug. Her mother was going to her home country. Tonight.

Everyone sat in silence during the car ride. The children had begged to go with their mom to attend the funeral, but their parents said it

was all too sudden for them to be able to pull them out of school. Her father was driving; her mother was praying; her brother was sleeping, and the girl sat there, thinking about her last moments with her beloved grandfather. The last time she talked to him was on a Skype call. She hadn't though much of it and was frankly very annoyed when her mother made her stop what she was doing and come talk to her grandparents. Her grandfather promised he would come visit them in America soon, and they all said goodbye. Their last encounter was an empty farewell and an un-kept promise.

She had already established that it wasn't sadness she was feeling. It was shock and guilt. There was no stronger emotion than the regret she felt. Regret that she hadn't spent more time with him, regret that she didn't get to know what a great man he was. She felt regret over not telling him how much she loved him. Now she would only hear stories of him from relatives, stories she'd never be able to ask him. If she could only turn back time, she would have been able to know him and maybe she would have felt real grief over his death. Death is inevitable. Everyone knows that. It is a simple fact of life. People are born. People die, but humanity just keeps on living. However simple this may be, death is still a foreign concept to most. People know they are going to die, but it doesn't become reality until one actually experiences the pain of it. We live our lives as if we will live forever, and we never realize how much we have to lose until it is already gone. "Ignorance is bliss," we say, and never had the girl ever wished for it more.

Artsy

LAUREN RAYNER

This is a poem.
A poem for the artsy
A poem for those looking
A poem for your brain
Your thoughts that need to strain

Imagine, create, believe
Just do one of the three
A poem for those challenged
who strive for something new
A message for some who don't

believe they are ever quite through
Unique and wise
straight through their eyes
Whatever can you do?
This is my poem.

Follow Your Bliss

JESSICA REDWING

Joseph Campbell states, “If you do follow your bliss, you put yourself on a kind of track that has been there all the while, waiting for you, and the life that you ought to be living is the one you are living. Follow your bliss and don’t be afraid, and doors will open where you didn’t know they were going to be.”

Bliss is defined as perfect happiness and great joy. It is described as reaching a state of perfect happiness, typically so as to be oblivious of everything else. People can follow bliss by following their passions, something that they love to do. The meaning of bliss is different for everyone; one must discover his/her happiness and pursue it.

Many people struggle to identify their bliss, because they are consumed with everyday responsibilities. Social conditioning has made it difficult for people to find time to enjoy things that make them happy. We are encouraged by society to earn a college degree to find a job that will allow us to make a lot of money. Since the value of money is instilled in people, many motivate themselves with possessions and money rather than with inner happiness. People tend to get caught up in the chaos of life and lose sight of what their bliss is but that does not mean that it has completely disappeared.

Everyone has been shaped differently, because of his or her childhood and experiences. Bliss for some can be an object, pet, person, or even an activity. Some people may be able to relate to my bliss, while others are uninterested. My bliss is connected to being outside in nature and exploring new places. I have been influenced by nature, since I was young and developed a strong appreciation for it. My grandparents have lived on a lake for over 40 years. My family and I would spend a majority of our time outside, whether it be boating,

swimming, fishing, sharing meals, or working on the yard. When I was younger, I did not realize how much upkeep a lake house was and often took it for granted. Sometimes, when we are around something too much, the value can diminish without any recognition.

I am constantly following my bliss. Bliss is something that must be earned, because nothing in this world is free. There are so many places that I have yet to explore; however, I know that if I want to experience the things that make me happy, I must work and save money in order to explore them. State parks, recreation areas, summer camps, road trips, and lake houses all require money. It is frustrating that everything comes with a price, but where there is sacrifice, one can find appreciation.

I lived in Wisconsin for 3 years, but I never really ventured outside the city of Milwaukee. When I moved back to Nebraska, I left some of my furniture and other belongings in Wisconsin. My mom and I were going to drive to Wisconsin to pick up the rest of my furniture. We decided to make a detour so we could go on a few brewery tours and go to Devil's Lake State Park in Baraboo, Wisconsin. Devil's Lake State Park is the biggest state park in Wisconsin and is known for the 500 foot high quartzite bluffs along the lake and for adventurous trails. I had seen pictures of the park on the Internet, but I was excited to experience it myself.

We chose the Balanced Rock Trail that is a steep, uneven and blocky staircase that ascends to the Balanced Rock site and 0.6 miles past to Devil's Doorway. The day that we went it was raining, which made the staircase slippery and difficult to climb. We made it to Balanced Rock, but my mom felt it would be unsafe to continue to Devil's Doorway, so we decided to turn around. I was thankful for the experience, but I felt like I was missing out on completing the entire trail and seeing the views from the top of the bluff. There was something within me that told me I had to go back to see what I missed. No one would be able to change my mind about going back.

A few months passed, and my old roommate in Wisconsin would be celebrating her birthday soon. This would be the perfect

opportunity for me to finish the hike. One of my good friends came along with me, since she had never been to Wisconsin. We could not have chosen a better day to go to Devil's Lake. The sky was blue with puffy white clouds, and the temperature was in the low 70s. The hike was strenuous, but the beauty that surrounded us helped us forget about the pain we were experiencing. There were moments when the top of the bluff seemed impossible to reach, but we kept climbing towards our goal, and we were able to reach the top of the bluff. The beauty of nature and its peaceful silence helped me capture a blissful moment that I will hold onto.

This experience relates to life metaphorically, because life is similar to a difficult hike that is filled with ups and downs. There will be days that are harder than others, and the pain and struggles mask the joy of each day. During a difficult hike, a person might stop to look at the beauty of the surroundings but forget to enjoy the entire view. Other times, a situation may be painful, and the only visible option is to quit and give up. If people did not know what pain felt like, they would not know how to appreciate joy. One small moment of happiness is worth all of the pain it takes to get there. People must keep their eyes open to see the beauty in following their bliss.

If people want to follow their bliss, they must be aware of where it comes from and pursue it without worrying about anything else. There will be challenges, such as, falling back into the trap of life's chaos that can steer us away from our bliss. If we stay content, doors will not open, but if we allow ourselves to step outside of our comfort zone, we can discover where our joy comes from. Bliss is all around us, and it is up to us to see it.

Facing Home

LILY REGIER

A home can be anything, really, but to most people, it is the place where one belongs. Other individuals consider the home to be the space in which one was raised and will always be welcomed. There is comfort in walls full of history and the familiarity of childhood memories. I have had many houses where I was welcome, but none appeared to embody the word home. The largest obstacle that I have faced is coming to terms with the allusiveness of home and defining what it means to me.

I was born in McCall, Idaho, into a passably happy family, with two tenacious older brothers and hard working parents. My father built our log house by hand; it lay nestled amongst the mountains surrounded by sleeping pine and fir. The love and dedication was imbued into those logs and that green tin roof by the valiant efforts my father made to create a home. As the state of contention between my parents grew, through personal tragedies far beyond the mental capacities of a five-year-old girl, the difficult decision was made to move on. On numerous occasions, my brother and I would kick down the “For Sale” sign, hiding it deep in the woods with hopes that this would cease our parents’ endeavors. We were woefully unsuccessful.

My father bought a boat, a 36’ Jason 35, rigged as a cutter. In the matter of a few months, my home had shrunk from the expanses of trees to a thirty-six foot cabin, where eight feet always felt like too many for the floorboards. The *Lily*, as my father named her, smelled like varnish, damp blankets and well salted kelp. I was in a state of confusion and doubt. How could a place as steadfast as home become a V berth and rigging? In such confined spaces, love withers and flourishes anew throughout the day. There is a healthy balance in having

personal space within a home. If this is taken away, is it still a home? Can you feel the same affection and regard for those foul-tempered, smelly people you call your family? I pondered this, as I swung in my boson's chair high up the mast, the only place one could get a moment of privacy. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that this was not a home; it was just a boat.

Living on the *Lily* gave me a sense of detachment. I was free to separate myself from the other children with their coveted homes, collecting my resentments like I was pulling in a coil of rope. My parents made the inevitable choice to divorce. I discovered that people are integral parts of what make a home, and I did not want a home where parts may just get up and leave whenever they want. The boat was sold to a nice family that could truly make it into what it was intended to be; I knew that we could not.

My grandparents' house had always been a haven. By this time, I had a verifiable collection, a house, a boat, and a haven. My grandparents' haven was comprised of a house, a covered patio, a pool, and a separate apartment, which was continually occupied by out-of-work cousins. In the summers, we swam and barbequed, as the adults drank cheap beer in the heat. I thought this might be what a home was during these times. There was lively talk and happy faces all around me, but when night came, I could never sleep. I would lie in bed, thinking to myself that I just wanted to go home. Over and over, I would say it to myself, but I had no idea where this mystical place could be, the home where I belonged. When the morning came, I would push this phrase away with the covers, step out onto the patio, and be grateful to have a haven. Though this haven was sold many years ago, I have beautiful memories of summer days that almost felt like home.

As I grew older, I lived in innumerable domiciles, continuing to ponder whether I would ever find a place I could truly feel at home. I often drifted aimlessly, renting rooms, taking refuge in my vehicle, and resting my head on unfamiliar carpets and well-worn couches.

When tucking oneself neatly into anonymity, always bear in mind that even those who have no home are human. I streamlined my belongings, inanimate and otherwise, distancing myself from those who put kindling on the fire of my ponderings. It took me time to accept the passing of my preconceived notions of home, as goes the grieving process with any great loss.

Though I no longer wander with such frequency, I am still occasionally in the throes of this perceived loss. I catch myself wishing to go home, which stirs confusion. I have accepted the fact that because this word means so many things, it cannot be held in higher regard than other words. It is unkind of me to expect so much from such a little word.

I now attempt to feel at home through the use of my senses. I smell the coming of spring, and it brings to mind the tastes of my mother's garden. I hear the rain and take observation of the crocus shifting earth to be born, and I see the adoration on my husband's face and think better of the melancholy machinations to which I am prone. For these small miracles, through which I feel at home in myself, I am grateful. The biggest obstacle in my life has been accepting that home is not necessarily physical, but a state-of-mind in which little things observed give one nectarous peace.

Colors and Rainbows

KAREN ROSALES

Easy was at the tips of my fingers
Rules weren't my thing
Friends were my family
Drama wasn't allowed
Fake was my enemy
Wildlife was my smart goal
Playground was my job
Responsibility was my parents' care



*“All you have to do is write one true sentence.
Write the truest sentence that you know.”*

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

Clive James: Poetry Is

JIM SALHANY

I recently found an article I was looking for by Clive James, the British poet and academician, entitled “The Necessary Minimum” about the poetry of Samuel Daniel (1562–1619). His article was published in *Poetry*, July/August 2009, pages 345–354. This article really grabbed me when I read it because it voiced a view of poetry, typified by Daniel, which I have always aspired to (with variable success). Without reproducing the whole article, I thought you might be interested in his first and last sentences, which to me resonate with amazing penetration.

First sentence:

At a time when almost everyone writes poetry but scarcely anyone can write a poem, it is hard not to wish for a return to some less accommodating era, when the status of “poet” was not so easily aspired to, and the only hankering was to get something said in a memorable form.

Last sentence:

Possibly there is such a thing as being so concerned with the self that one loses sight of the poet’s privileged duty, which is to be concerned with everything, in the hope of producing something—a poem, a stanza, even a single line—that will live on its own, in its own time.

Proverbs

ANDALEEB SANA

“It is a fine thing to be honest, but it is also very important to be right,” said Winston Churchill. Proverbs contain wisdom in every word, but the ability to understand and interpret them is different with individuals and cultures. Proverbs enlighten our thoughts if we can understand what is true, right, and enduring. “For truth, there is no deadline.” —Heywood Broun

The English proverb, “Beware the man of one book,” warns people that it is not wise to base all our conclusions on incomplete information. One book cannot carry all the information required to solve every issue. A single book can only have certain information, but it cannot cover the whole horizon of difficulties. To base assumptions on limited knowledge is not advisable; if we try to prove our arguments on insignificant knowledge, then this will take us to no good end. “A prudent man does not make the goat his gardener,” Hungarian proverb. Our arguments should be based upon the current prevailing situations, and we cannot quote old knowledge, because it will not comply with current circumstances. Many books on ethics, like the Bible, can be used as a good source of knowledge and might be used as a conclusion source, but it should not be taken as the only source to solve all situations. To rely on one book’s knowledge is an act of ignorance.

Self-reliance is another trait we all should acquire if we want to live with dignity. Our true success lies in our own efforts and intellect and not hiding under the shadows of other people’s accomplishments. We are what we are. We must never underestimate our own abilities and not despair if our success requires hard work, because, “Every cloud has a silver lining,” English proverb. This saying gives a light of hope.

If we feel low at any point of our struggle, remember that darkness goes away with increasing light. If we respect and rely on our own strengths, this will give our lives true meaning and self-contentment.

To discipline our lives, we must discipline our character. Organization in every skill we have is the keynote of our success. If we are not organized, we can never understand the importance of order and value. Cherish what we have and keep our lives in order, for this gives the sense of powerful ownership. Celebrate the love of all the people in life and make a living out of that love. Live life with all the beauty that surrounds us. Make a connection with the words we hear and the words we write. Listen in awe, watch with humble appreciation, and make our world successful. "A wise man makes his own decisions; an ignorant man follows the public opinion," Chinese proverb.

We are the candles of hope in the darkening world; we have the capability to enlighten many souls with our expressions. It is our duty to expand our knowledge and read as much literature as we can, because only a good reader can write better. If we confide our knowledge to only a few books, then we are not doing justice to our creation. We are here to be a candle and give the light of wisdom to others. We should expand our circle of spirituality and be the guardians of Nature. We belong to Nature, and we owe a great deal to the love Nature has for us. Be that light, be the propeller of our own dreams, and give dimensions of life to the people of our world. "Better to light a candle than to curse the darkness," Chinese proverb.

"If there is no wind, row," is a good example of being optimistic. Life can be dark and difficult, if we see through pessimistic eyes, but it can shine like gold, if we have an optimist approach. Helen Keller is an inspirational example for us all who have doubts on our abilities. Although she was blind and deaf at the age of two, she gave her life a challenge and fought all her difficulties with strength and optimism. She was the candle of hope to disabled people and fought for their rights. Success was not given to her; she acquired it through great perseverance and struggle.

“When the wind is not at our backs, we must row harder.” What a beautiful proverb of encouragement. Life is not a constant struggle, and he who relies on his determination and hard work will be successful. Hard work is the wind that pushes our sails to our destiny. Our life’s passions are the hidden treasures in the sea of life, and the deeper we go, the more we find.



Searching-for-Leprechauns photograph by Anne Obradovich

A License to Start My Journey

HEENA SAYAL

Learning about the courage that I had to overcome new obstacles made me stronger. When I came to the United States, I realized that it is important to learn how to drive. It was hard for me to adopt new rules and regulations because it required time, concentration, commitment, and confidence, and also, it was physically challenging for me because of my short height. In order to drive, I had to overcome many fears and hurdles. It was a valuable experience because it built my confidence and motivated me to succeed in life.

The first fear that I had to overcome was to drive in the United States. I had grown up in New Delhi, India. It has paved streets everywhere. Either they don't have a lane system, or they have wide lanes. People are walking on the roads there, with hundreds of cars running at the same time in the same direction, and many people on bicycles. There are cows and dogs on the roads. Basically, there are no traffic rules in India. As a result, traffic crawls slowly.

When I came outside the Omaha airport, I felt like I entered into a video game. Cars were moving in both the directions within the speed limits and followed traffic rules in an organized way. The scenery passed by me very quickly. I thought, "How can I drive at 70 mph, and how can it be possible to change lanes so fast?" But I had to learn how to drive.

When I used to take the bus to go college, it took two hours each way. Sometimes, it was difficult to wait for the bus because of bad weather. The next hurdle for me was to commute to the bus stop from home. Although my uncle and aunt used to pick me up and drop me off, it was hard for them. Our schedules were hard to match with each

other's work and classes. When I started attending classes at Metro, I would have to come early in the morning and leave late in the evening. Learning to drive became important, when I needed to attend classes at the Elkhorn campus.

After a few months, I started looking for driving schools, and later, I found Nebraska Safety. In order to get enrolled there, I was required to submit my learner's permit. After failing twice, I started putting in more effort to pass the test. At some point, I thought to give up and look for other options, such as, living close to the campus or carpool services. At the end, there was a moment when there was no option left to commute to the college from home or to the bus stop, except driving on my own. Meanwhile, I was studying at the same time about driving exams and the rules to follow. When the scheduled date was coming closer, my level of nervousness was getting higher and higher because of my past experiences. After learning and practicing for 3-4 months, I earned my driving license on the first attempt. My confidence level increased and motivated me to pursue my education.

Language was the main issue when I came here. American English is totally different in terms of accent, writing, and reading from British English, the language that I learned in India. It takes more time than a citizen or a student of the United States to read, because in my home country, I was not required to read as many books in English as here. I used to spend extra time with my teachers in my first semester after class because it was hard for me to understand fluent English, but I never gave up. I attempted hundreds of online quizzes to pass the driving test; it was difficult, because I never drove in India before coming to the United States.

Finally, I started building up my confidence and noticed how I was getting comfortable with the language. I heard from someone, "Our hard work pays us back." The more we give towards our success, the more we earn for ourselves. Our confidence builds our motivation, and together, it makes us strong. Before I learned how to drive, driving seemed very difficult. Now that I know how to drive, it seems easy.

Through hard work, I made what was difficult easy. Wisdom comes from within; it is the knowledge that we gain from our own experiences and common sense that we are required to use. I was a different person before coming to the United States. People used to make fun of my height. The main thing that I learned was I'm not like other people. I am unique. Maybe, because I am short, I cannot drive like other people. I have faced hard times in my life, and I am still facing them, but I always try to overcome obstacles with the confidence that I have built from past experiences. Confidence is that word, which is really easy to speak, but it takes years to understand its meaning, and it takes a lifetime to build.

Such a Wonderful Gift

SKYLER SCHRECK

Most of us spend a great deal of time running from the truth. We run from ourselves. We build facades to shelter us from other's honesty or damage us. Teenagers especially feel this way because they are stuck in a "no man's land" between childhood and adulthood. The anxiety and confusion can be overwhelming, but if they can remember the picture of life and where they fit into it, they will be able to survive this difficult time easier. Language is a wonderful gift that helps us see the picture better. Language gives us freedom to open our souls up and speak truth. Writing well closes the gap between reader and writer. Simple language does not increase falsehoods; it increases happiness.

I spent most of my time shoring up the walls of the metaphorical fortress surrounding me. I was a walking, breathing, castle. I would not let any gaps or weaknesses remain in my walls; for who knows when life will sling her stinging arrows at me? Behind my walls, I found solace in beautiful words. I was alone in my castle; my friends lived on the shelves of my library.

When I was finally ready to open up to those around me, I did so the only way possible: I spoke to them. Slowly the infinitesimal cracks in my stone walls grow into paned windows. Using borrowed words from leather-bound companions I explained who I was for the first time. Incredibly, those I spoke to understood me. They did not mind my mental reclusion; somehow they accepted me. They never shot arrows at me. That is why I think language is such a wonderful gift: because when nothing else could, it opened the windows of my mental fortress and let the light in.

Adagio for Hillside

WALT SCHUMANN

I had grown up in the narrow city streets without much view of the sky and the sunlight; there were city sounds, but no music.

In 1941, my parents bought 20 acres of woodland in Chester County, Pennsylvania. It was my dad's deepest dream to move us out of the city row house where we were living, and build the house that he had designed, bringing us to a new country setting. Across from our new property was a small valley and a creek, which led to the Brandywine River; up on a hill above that was an old stone farmhouse called Hillside. Hillside was empty, and we rented it with my dad's hope that we could live there for at least part of the time, until our house in the woods below would be built. One summer, my parents (with my father's strong persuasion I'm sure) finally moved us into the rental house at Hillside, where we would live as the new creation was undertaken on the land below. Along with us went my aunt, my sister, and my grandmother——my mother's mother——who was very ill after having had several strokes.

Hillside had a beautiful setting and looked down on the valley, the woods below, and beyond to the clear land toward Downingtown. Above Hillside house was a small spring house and above that a stone barn. I can remember taking a picture from that barn and getting a notice back from the Kodak company that that picture was deserving of an award. In Hillside there was a giant fireplace--so big that we could stand in it. Hillside also had a running spigot from the spring, a porch covered with hollyhocks, and companion carpenter bees. The grassy hill below was covered with daffodils, but there was no electricity--no way to heat the house or to light the lamps we needed or even to heat the water that was needed to help take care of my grandmother.

During our stay, my father and my aunt commuted by train to Philadelphia, as my aunt was running her bookstore in the city, and my father continued his city architectural practice. My aunt was a leading dealer of rare books and often went to England and was very much in touch with collectors, such as, Eugene Ormandy of the Philadelphia orchestra for whom she would purchase early music documents. We lasted as a family in that heating-less and electricity-less house until late in October, when it became clear that to take care of my grandmother (and us) we all had to move back into her old house in the city.

In the weekends after our return to the city, my dad and I came out to Hillside to continue the work of getting the woods ready to build our new house. On those weekends, Dad and I would stay in our small cabin that he built. We sawed down one-hundred-foot trees to make a clearing for our new house and began digging foundations. On those very cold winter weekends, we huddled downstairs in Hillside and stayed as close as we could to the giant fireplace with whatever blaze we could gather wood to fill. My dad cooked Spam on the gasoline stove downstairs, and we lit our way with oil lamps. I used to like the oil lamps in one way, because they could be turned down low or turned up high to read.

During that period, work on the new building was restricted because of the war effort. In the winter time, we moved on the weekends up to Hillside, where we installed a pot belly stove on the second floor room, and it warmed up enough to let us stay on freezing weekend nights. I remember sitting by the hot stove and reading for the first time Dicken's *A Tale of Two Cities*. Much of the time on those cold weekends, we would saw firewood in order to stoke the stove. Later on, when our house was just about built down in the wooded valley, we could look up to Hillside, which we had rented, but now was sold to a very nice Italian mason named Mr. DiMaggio. We used to hear him sitting on the porch up there playing the violin. Mr. DiMaggio, evidently, loved living in that old house, and he would sit

on his porch playing his violin. His daughter played the piano, and we could hear from down below in our new house that small activity and partial concert. His young adult daughter played an old piano that had been left in Hillside, and his young son Peter played along outside. Sometimes, Mr. DiMaggio would interrupt his violin playing, calling for Peter, who used to wander off into the woods. I can remember hearing the violin and the piano and his anxious call, "Peter, Peter, where are you?" I imagined that, eventually, Peter returned, but only after Mr. DiMaggio's frightened calling. At that point Mr. DiMaggio would continue the slow melodic tempo of his playing.

Eventually, Mr. DiMaggio sold the house and moved on, and a new family moved in and had the place electrified and must have had a heater installed. That new family included Daisy Barber, who was the composer Samuel Barber's mother. She had a small group with her, and occasionally, on summer weekends, they would have parties, during which a string quartet played, and I could hear the laughter and joy of their convivial meetings.

When Daisy Barber moved in, there were quiet times up there, except for the parties and the string quartet. However, I always remember--not the string quartets and the party sounds--but the playing of Mr. DiMaggio's single violin and his anxious call for his son: "Peter, Peter!" I never have been able to listen to Samuel Barber music's without remembering the violin sounds of Mr. DiMaggio and that anxious cry for his son.

Hillside has continued to be a beautiful stone farm house, and now it's completely modernized, but it still retains the old lines and the walnut trees surrounding it. What I remember when I hear that music is Mr. DiMaggio's single violin and the calling for his son. I remember that as counterpoint, even as much as I hear Samuel Barber's wonderful Adagio for Strings. In my father's country house, we could live with the beauty of the woodland--and the memory of the music.

Love Poem with Footnotes

DANIEL SHARKOVITZ

My love for spam emails began
quietly the way it does sometimes

at morning with the wind pulsing
through the breezeway. Growing like so

many flowers through the blood-brain
barrier as if love were so much

cellophane. Spam embeds itself
in the hard drive of my soul, the

desktop of my skin, the barcode
of my memory where I find

the unconditional love of
being pre-approved to apply

any time for approval. Where
I can lose 30 pounds and keep

getting those last chances to view
photos of singles in my area,

free tickets and plasma TVs.
Spam lets me know I can access

everything online, grow into
a printout that I call a poem too

watery to hug, unplug, sleep
with or pray for.

Legacy

SUE SHELBURNE

I see my hands, aging now, with wrinkles,
with age spots—aching with arthritic pain,
and I see my mother's hands.

I feel the heaviness of my heart, burdened with a legacy
I never intended to leave, one that should never have been mine,
and I feel my father's burdened heart.

I call up the memory of youthful hands, long graceful fingers, holding
#2 pencils, writing with joy, writing with innocence about my life
to be,
and I see my hands before I knew the path I would walk.

I call up the memory of a happy heart, beating with the excitement
of possibilities, trusting and anxious for another tomorrow. It is my
younger heart beating, before I encountered the obstacles or knew
the regret I would feel, for giving up so much of my life to chance.

I hold on to that fraction of myself that is not compromised. I try to
guard it
closely, and on those days when I am about to give up, my soul
whispers,
“Please don't let me die,” so I write with passion from a place in my
soul,
weary of meaningless, pretty words.

I write from that deeper place, where I struggle to be brave enough
to say
what I want to say. I write from the well at the core of me, the well
where
the words come from, the well, where the echoes live.

I breathe easily for a time, afterward, as my heart feels less burdened,
and
my spirit lifts with the lightness of my pride for not giving up. It is
then I know
without doubt, that my mother's spirit is alive in me.

I drink in the contentment of that knowledge, calling on all the
positives
in my life, and for just a while, I am at peace—I feel my strength, I
know
my worth once more.

I recognize too, that in me lies my father's restlessness. I know he
would
understand the why, and for that brief time of peace, before the
struggle
begins again, my father rests in me. Perhaps, that is my legacy, to
understand
my mother's not giving up and to speak the words for my father,
the ones he didn't know how to say himself.



Awaiting the Moment of Revelation photograph by Chrissy Ellison

The Definition of Motion

D. N. SIMMERS

After St. Thomas Aquinas

He likes to define things around him.

We like to talk about people and things
and the world as it is shaken by events.

People come in and break out the old
wooden roots of social change.

Fling them into the morning
dried by afternoon

and paper case with ink

in the sunset. Ideas.

They demand our attention to
the details of their texture and color.

Rows of words like little teeth
as they chatter in the cold.

Big sentences that are laced to the old chariots
to make them turn and bob
in the sands and the rock hard roads
that take them to the sea.

Lists of old tales that have some
truth in the middle of their sucking lies.

Life. Hate. Love. Distance. Death.

Write about them and give them
the feelings that make them live.

Come with us and we will
weave words into the sounds of the morning,
bring a smile and some tears as we sing to the wind
and the sun will dry out the broken wishes with rainbows.

Even While Walking I Think of You

MICHAEL SIMON

Bright green spills on the sword fern,
sunbeams and trunk shadows
walk slowly across the ridge.

As I walk by
one maple leaf
falls.

Three mosses on a log
seeking the balance
of acid, shade, moisture

for carpet, hair, tuft
for hosting lichen,
cups, leaves, bumps,

the log beautiful in decay
with a start of twin flower
stretching toward a hook.

It's hard to see the tree you're near.
Harder still to see the forest.
Today, maybe I can learn from moss.

Simplistic Utopia

ROXANNE SLATTERY

Simplistic utopia does Thoreau portray
Harmonious tranquility reaches fruition
Find the way thru unwavering conviction

Arrogance and deception did Crane inveigh
Gentle war is but the fool's caprice
The true hero crusades for our peace

Emerson pleas, from thy soul go not astray
Contentment to those who but dare to dream
Allow not reliance; know self-esteem

Of Frost, conformity is peril's sobriquet
Joyous pleasures once from trees
Always choose the path which frees

Honor and truth Pope shall betray
Do not remorse those treasures lost
Sacrifice your conscience at no cost

Shackle thy genius? Horace begs, neigh!
Like a waterfall his words cascade
Let knowledge become your palisade

Wordsworth orates, to your faith belay
Prayer can sorrow always becalm
The wealthy make charity their only psalm

The Bard bequeaths a lyrical bouquet
Omens forewarned by a Delphic sage
Destiny ignored in a blind man's rage

Heed Socrates—greed sires dismay
Havoc lurks waiting in matters unkempt
Of both saints and sinners—feel not contempt

Humbled by Gibran, the prophetic emigre
Hatred forever is humanity's bane
Set yourself free—let His love reign

From Bacon, our prosperity we must repay
Your honorable steps always retrace
Forgive those who fall far from grace

Christie-clues warrant deductive play
Suspense, as the woven plots unveil
Many a crime she did curtail

Galaxies and civilizations does Asimov survey
Science, mystery, and legends combined
Fantasy meets reality, to expand the mind

Keating beckons all to “seize the day”
Together, ignorance we will impale
This precious life—so dear, so frail

Of my mentors' gifts I must convey
To ensure lives be not spent in solitaire
Of the poets' wisdom, may you be the heir

A True Story

CONNIE & BOB SPITTLER

The hummingbird aviary at Tucson's Desert Museum was renovated a few years ago—all plants cleared out, beds expanded and replanted. When finished, the remodeled facility was clean and inviting with a staff excited to introduce the museum's eight species of hummers to a spotless habitat. The happy birds flitted and zoomed, exploring every nook and cranny of their new environment.

Within weeks, hummingbirds built nests and laid eggs. But to everyone's dismay, the nests disintegrated. Carefully chosen twigs fell to the ground. Eggs plummeted. Then, research revealed a one sided symbiotic relationship. Hummingbirds use spider webs to bind their nests together, and the immaculate enclosure had no spiders in residence. Building activity had sent all 8-legged creatures scurrying off to find more tranquil locations. Quickly, staff members dispersed into the desert to search for now highly-valued arachnids. One immediate solution was to roll and wrap any discovered web around twigs and put those in the hummers' enclosure. It took a while, but eventually 25 labyrinth spiders were collected and introduced into the habitat. Soon hummingbirds constructed cozy nests tied tight with nature's magic glue. New eggs hatched. Baby birds thrived.

Although spiders are endlessly portrayed with Halloween's scary attributes, this story led me to other positives. Heck, *Spider Man* conquers evil. *Charlotte's Web*, a classic children's book offers an example of a beloved arachnid. In Native American Osage tradition, the spider represents patience and endurance. And the poetic lyric of the song Spider Woman begins: There is a woman who weaves the night sky, See how she spins. See her fingers fly. With an ending that goes: She is the needle. We are the thread. She is the weaver. We are the web.

This year, those words are particularly meaningful because both Bob and I had health issues; thankfully, all are under control at present. But the experience made us aware ... how fragile the web of life that holds everyone together and how strong and silken the threads of family love and friendship that are wrapped around us.

The meaning seems clear. Find some twigs. Wrap spider webs around them. Make a cozy nest and be grateful. That's what we're doing.



"I have never looked upon Ease and Happiness as ends in themselves—this critical basis I call the ideal of a pigsty. The ideals that have lighted my way, and time after time have given me new courage to face life cheerfully, have been Kindness, Beauty, and Truth. Without the sense of kinship with men of like mind, without the occupation with the objective world, the eternally unattainable in the field of art and scientific endeavors, life would have seemed empty to me. The trite objects of human efforts—possessions, outward success, luxury—have always seemed to me contemptible."

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Simon Sinek and the Millennial Problem

HANNAH STACEY

Simon Sinek has a lot to say about millennials, and as far as I can tell, I, a millennial, agree with just about every word of his message. First, he addresses the problem. Millennials are accused of being entitled, self-interested, lazy, etc., but Sinek is not here to sit and bash on young people, which I greatly appreciate. He says kids these days entering the work place generally want these things: they want a purpose, they want to make an impact (which he loves), and they want free food and bean bags. Unfortunately, the people can get all these things in a job and still not find happiness. He narrows the so called “millennial problem” down to four key causes, and comes up with positive solutions that will improve the situation. The key causes he roots out are parenting, technology, impatience, and environment. He calls out “failed parenting strategies”, which causes lower self-esteem in the younger generation. He warns about the dangers of handing technology to children, which is highly addictive and numbing, and makes it so the kids do not know how to form deep, meaningful relationships because they turn to technology over people. As far as impatience goes, in our modern world, one can receive instant gratification for just about anything, except job satisfaction and forming these deep, meaningful relationships. The last factor he discussed was environment. Kids are stuck in these unhealthy, corporate environments and blame themselves for failing, while it is the lack of good leadership in corporate environments that causes them to feel that way in the first place. Corporations, he says, have a responsibility to help teach these kids, whether they want to or not.

I have watched this video before, and I have watched several clips of this video many times. Not once has it ever made me angry or offended or attacked, and that is so uncommon with things related to old people talking about young people. Generally, media of this sort is the older generation bashing on kids, not offering any solutions, but instead alienating the newest generation from the ones coming before it. Sinek does none of these things. He recognizes that the youth of today were simply “dealt a bad hand” as he puts it, and there are many things that have caused us, the young kids, to be the way we are, none of which are necessarily our fault. While he takes a large part of the blame off our shoulders, he is not giving this speech to coddle us or make us feel good about ourselves, which I also appreciate. He simply assigns credit and blame where it is due, and then promptly goes on to offer fantastic solutions to help solve all the problems at hand. This is such an incredibly refreshing approach to problem solving. He does not take sides, saying millennials are good and corporations and parents are evil, or vice versa. He simply states the way things are in a very peaceful manner, and goes on in the same peaceful way offering solutions. It does not feel like Sinek is trying to be right, or sound smarter than someone, or better than someone; he is simply stating facts and telling the truth.

The world could learn much from Sinek’s approach to the world, and his example of real leadership. I was reading President Abraham Lincoln’s “Gettysburg Address,” as well as his “Second Inaugural Address” the other day for a class, and his words were not only beautifully crafted and heavily rhetorical, but they were words of peace. He was the Union President; the Union won the Battle of Gettysburg, and during his “Second Address” the Union was wrapping up the war with the South, preparing to emerge victorious. On either occasion, Lincoln had every right to be crowing triumphantly, to be saying we the Union won, and they the Confederates lost. He did none of that. There is no divisive speech in either of the great documents, not one single word. His words are ones of peace and healing; he understood

where both sides of the war were coming from, and he empathized with them, while still addressing the problems. The problems he addressed were not who won the war? Who was right? Who was wrong? The problems were the deep wounds that were left in the United States of America, the North and the South, and he started offering solutions to fix them. He, like Simon Sinek appears to be, was a man who cared more about telling the truth than appearing to win. I am not saying that Sinek is a comparable person to Lincoln, who was one of the greatest men who ever lived, but they do share these basic leadership qualities. They are both idealists, as Sinek would say, with a vision of how the world ought to be better, and he has a plan to make it that way. Leaders of the world should take notes from both of them. Healing the world is what matters, and that can never be done by pointing fingers and deciding who is right and who is wrong, who has won and who has lost. We must be united.

Do Not Fear the Racing Heart

CONNOR STEDNITZ

Icicles of light ignite
Chains of rust holding us
Palpable tension suspended can
Groaning beneath the weight

Thunder claps the heavens applaud
A cathartic release of nature
Soaking in its embrace
We watch the bleeding out

A white hot enigma burst
Slapping the air with charged emotion
Splintered sky seeking to fill
Progressive fractals within

Bathe in the glow of our own stars
Inside the roaring melody
Within chaos there will be peace
Do not fear the racing heart

Do not fear the racing heart

The Wait

MARY K. STILLWELL

We've rolled our suitcases
over the threshold,
pulled the front door tight.

We check passports,
tickets, photo IDs,
and enough Euros

to get us through our first
days. I fidget; he paces, both
of us anxious in the glow

of the rusty wrought iron
moon and sun shining
above the breakfast table, lost

souls waiting in porch purgatory
for Charon to carry us, like heroes
heading out, across Salt Creek.

Come Let Us Converse in Verse

BEN NOAH SURI

Come let us converse in verse
Why talk with plain li(n)es
when we can correspond in verse
for with verse time simply flies
Social conversations are getting terse
life is not all about earning dimes
and merely filling up our purse;
so let's talk in musical rhymes
and break silence's curse
for I can read the symptom's signs
and it looks like this world needs a nurse;
so since our creative thought aligns
let us correspond in beautiful verse
than dull meaningless stupid lines
Therefore let us in verse converse
and break free of reality's confines.
Let us ourselves in poetry immerse
and experience natures' designs
for there's little time before the hearse
so let us rid us of our machines
and become one with the universe
or be relegated to the sidelines
Come let us correspond in verse
and fill our world with smiles

Eyes

OLIVIA TORRES

Eyes...

The window to the soul that lets us see
and feel and visualize the world. Laughing, and emotions
that show a fire lit deep inside us that has shown through. Taking
in all the sights, color, and beauty of the world.

The spark and ideas for brilliance
that others can see in your deep thoughts and emotions.

The window to the soul.

The Day World Leaders Came Under the Mystic of Earth's Dream

LEE VAN HAM

Mystique is about the non-rational, the meta-history, and the mythic. Thomas Berry understood the importance of perceiving and telling the mystique of a myth. In speaking of Earth's Dream, Berry spoke of the mystique of Earth, not just the facts of its history or geology or biota. Just the existence of our planet, its powers to generate and regenerate life—unique among the spheres of this solar system—can stir our emotions. Earth's Dream needs to be more compelling and enchanting than the vision of living with greater industrialization or better technology. So, too, with the nationalistic dreams that are invoked in political and military speeches. The most persuasive, inspiring speeches do not focus on facts but tap into the mystique that myths hold. The mystique held in *The Dream of the Earth* can challenge the mystique of any MultiEarth dream. Berry taps into that mystique with such words as “taste,” “fascination,” “grandeur:”

A taste for existence within the functioning of the natural world is urgent. Without a fascination with the grandeur of the North American continent, the energy needed for its preservation will never be developed. Something more than the utilitarian aspect of fresh water must be evoked if we are ever to have water with the purity required for our survival. There must be a mystique of the rain if we are ever to restore the purity of the rainfall.²

Imagine for a moment that world leaders in government and business have come under the spell of the mystique of the natural world and Earth so strong that they move beyond the mystique of their country, products, and profits. And imagine a global forum of these

2 Berry, Thomas. *The Dream of the Earth* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1988), 3.

leaders at which they take turns at the podium to talk about how the mystique of Earth is impacting them and their work. It could be a United Nations Assembly or the World Economic Forum at its annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland. The audience includes leaders of nations, an array of women and men who are CEOs of business and finance, leaders in academia and religion, and leaders of nonprofits. Speeches tell about the mythology of Progress that encircles the globe and manifests as increased technology and consumption of goods in more countries. The U.S. president, after speaking of the needs of a rapidly growing human population, the desire to foster strong economies, and the well-being of citizens, speaks to how our decisions are impacting Earth, our common home. The president continues:

In the U.S. we are now eager to change the mythology we live by. We are eager at this Forum to join with all nations and economies to shift to mythologies that fit our one beautiful planet. Doing so is our most urgent business. We have begun shifting from the American Dream to a bigger dream that calls on our best capacities as humans. We have recognized that having a dream for our nation only is too small a dream in the 21st century. All of us must now be planning to live according to the Dream of Earth, the amazing planet that has birthed us and sustains us.

Changing our mythology implies many changes in how we live and how we relate to one another on our planet. Those challenges are great and require a mythology greater than any of our nations now live by. The Dream of Earth provides us immediately with a universal mythology, an inspiring source for all our cultures and economies. It guides us to make real what we know to be true: that all of us live interdependently with all species on our spectacular planet. Earth's Dream holds a mystique that none of us can match with the mythologies of our countries, businesses, religions, careers, institutions, or profit-making. Our species, the human species, has not been called to our greatest potentials through the myths or dreams we've been using. We need to feel the pull of Earth's mystique to help us live more fully into such innate, soulful capacities as cooperation and sharing.

We know that Earth's vast abilities to regulate her systems have provided life. Now they also push back on our economic model, creating ecological crises everywhere. Earth is rejecting the American Dream, and other nationalistic dreams. They are too small for our planet and for her inhabitants, including us. Even as she rejects the mythologies we've been living by, she calls all of us on the planet to find our most powerful identities, the identity of "we" and of "all of us," and join her in her desire to see life flourish. Her life-generating powers aren't finished yet. She is evolving a new Earth with a new community of life. But our old mythologies are completely missing out on this evolutionary dream.

Because the U.S. has led the world in the achievements of industrialization and the excesses which are destroying our planet's inhabitability, I assure us gathered here that we are rushing to participate in these macro-changes. No longer can we encourage a world in which people look at the American example or that of any so-called First World economy. Earth will no longer tolerate peoples or nations whose identity is wrapped up in being the best at anything that takes more from our planet than what we give in return. Turning from what has brought us to where we are, all of us together are redirecting our aspirations to Earth's far better dream.

During this event, we are showing the world that we are joining in the unity of our planet's community of life. We have all agreed to seek changes in our flags so that their most prominent symbol is one from Nature. We are strengthening our economies, not through growth, but through localization. Many tribes of First Peoples and other groups and individuals in many lands have long traveled the path of living sustainably on Earth. Today we confess that we have treated them horribly. We ask for forgiveness. We affirm their persistence, resilience, and ingenuity as all of us undertake our Great Work of moving together into full participation in the metamorphosis to which Earth calls us all. Thank you.

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 The above is a slightly modified excerpt from my book, *From Egos to Eden: Our Heroic Journey to Keep Earth Livable*, 2017.

Watcher

DAVID WALLER

I stared, mesmerized by the statue's great, monstrous visage. It looked like a strange mix of a lion and a dog. It had a wide, flat-toothed mouth, and a curly mane around its neck. It reminded me of those monster dogs from *Ghostbusters*, my big brother's favorite movie. I hated whenever they showed up; they always scared me, and I think my brother knew it. I wasn't afraid of this one, though.

Somehow, this strange, powerful creature made me feel safe. It was so out of place, though. What was it doing, sitting in front of someone's yard in the middle of a Nebraskan neighborhood? It had no reason to be here, and yet, this just drew me in further, like a magnet.

I reached out to touch it.

"You like him, don't you?"

I turned and found an old Asian man standing over me, looking down and smiling. I nodded at his question. The old man nodded back, then turned and patted the statue, wearing a look of fond reminiscence.

"His name is Shimaru," he explained. "At least, that's what I called him, when I was a boy. He's a Shisha, a guardian lion-dog. When I lived in Japan, he was my best friend. He still is, in fact. He always listens to me. He's been with my family for generations, looking after us, protecting our home from whatever may come."

I raised an eyebrow at that story. "Wait, I thought you said you were from Japan." I said. The statue was cool, but it by no means turned Nebraska into the land of the rising sun.

"Yes, I did," he said. His eyes fell, no longer able to face his old friend, and a deep sadness crept into his voice. "But I couldn't stay there. Not after the war. Not after... I had no choice. I had to leave everything and start over."

“But if you left everything, how did the statue get here?” I asked.

“Why, he followed me, of course,” the old man replied. He looked bewildered, as if the answer was so obvious that to ask the question was absurd. “Shimaru is my friend, so when I came, he followed me.”

I tilted my head, struck by where this man seemed to be going. “You mean he got up and walked after you?”

The old man leaned close, staring me square in the face. “What do you believe?” he asked.

I wasn't sure. He seemed so certain, but I was at the age when belief doesn't come naturally anymore, when you realize that every mysterious thing you had faith in—Santa Claus, the Tooth Fairy, and the like—was really just Mom and Dad. Yet, this wasn't the same as when other adults told me such stories. There was no condescension, none of that overeager talk meant to mask the truth. It was just pure, earnest belief.

“I... I guess so,” I said.

The old man studied my face, then smiled and nodded. “Sometimes, belief is the most important thing.” He turned from me, retreating back into his house.

In turn, I started my own journey home, but as I took those first few steps, I turned back for one last look. Strange, was the statue always looking this way? It's great, fearsome eyes seemed to be asking me the same, solitary question the old man had, the one I would one day find to be the most important in my life.

“What do you believe?”

Are the Cameras Still Going?

COURT WALSH

She waited while the young teller at First Trust read her note, hoping he wouldn't ask to see the gun. He was a handsome fellow, not rattled at all—as if being robbed were an everyday occurrence.

“How much do you want?” he asked.

“\$10,000,” she said.

He reached into the cash drawer, asking if hundreds would be okay.

She nodded, waiting as he counted aloud and laid the bills on the marble counter top.

Then, he put the money in an envelope.

She thanked him and asked, “Are the video cameras going?”

“Yes,” he said.

“Did you press the alarm?”

“I didn't know if you'd shoot me or not.”

Holding the envelope in her teeth, she pulled out both pockets of her shorts to show him they were empty. “Go ahead and set it off. I'm going home.”

“What?”

She turned and walked out. Flummoxing people was good fun. Back home, they loved her for it. She would tell them stories about how she hoodwinked that awful man who ran the county orphanage, and how she got the police, who arrested her for stealing a car, to believe she was someone else.

It was a sunny morning on Central Avenue. She took a handful of bills and tossed them into the air. A breeze picked them up and carried them into the busy street.

A teenage boy came by, his jeans and sweatshirt ripped and dirty. She blocked his way, handing him a \$100 bill and told him to buy himself a respectable set of clothes. He looked at her like she'd just landed from Mars.

"I don't suppose clothes are cheap these days," she said, handing him two more \$100 bills. He walked on, stopping twice to look back.

Then there was a young mother with a dog on a leash and a baby in a blue perambulator. The dog growled at her. She got down on one knee and patted it, until it licked her cheek. That was one thing she'd miss, she told the mother. She had a dog when she was a little girl. Sadie used to hunt rabbits in the woods that surrounded her ramshackle house. But dogs weren't allowed where she was going. She stood up and looked at the infant.

"What's his name?" she asked. She counted out ten \$100 bills and gave them to the woman. "This will be the seed for Jeremy's college fund."

People were gathering around her. A homeless man went out in the street to pick up the bills. Cars slammed on the brakes, honking. A siren sounded, getting closer and closer.

She threw the rest of the money in the air, plunked herself down on the curb, and fingered the lucky rabbit's foot that hung on a lanyard around her neck.

Two police cruisers with sirens blaring and lights flashing pulled up to the curb. Cops got out and pointed their guns at her.

"I thought you'd never get here," she told the nearest one. His hair was gray, and his face looked familiar.

"Up to your old tricks again, Edna?" He holstered his gun, turning to the other officers and telling them to do the same. "This one's no danger."

"I'm sorry, officer. I don't remember your name."

"Quinn. I was the one who arrested you ten years ago."

She said in that case she was honored. When he started to read her the Miranda Rights, she protested that she was guilty. She pointed to the bank. "Any number of people in there will vouch for me."

“For the life of me, Edna, I can’t figure out what your game is.”

“I’m 62 years old, and I’ve spent the better part of my adult life in prison. Truth is, I miss it.” She tried to stand, but her bum leg wouldn’t allow it. “Be a gentleman and help me up?”

Officer Quinn raised her to a standing position. She put her hands behind her back, so he could handcuff her. The dog barked. The mother was still standing there with her baby.

Quinn told her cuffs weren’t necessary. He opened the back door of the cruiser, and she got in.

As they drove by, the mother wiped her eyes. Edna waved and gave her a big smile.

A month later, after she’d pled guilty and the judge sentenced her to another five years, she sat in the prison dining hall with old friends who laughed, when she said, “Quinn will have to come out of retirement to arrest me next time.”

I Wasn't There

CAROLYN WEISBECKER

It was early evening when I got the call from the hospital. My mother had died, and I wasn't there.

As I pulled into the driveway of her home, I pretended that it was just another weekend visit. However, the newspapers, piled up outside the back door, and the undrawn drapes said something else.

I coaxed my key into the door lock then stepped inside. Things were different. There was no mid-day sun streaming through the kitchen window, no warmth from the oven where she was always baking, no murmur of the television from the living room, no happy greeting. Only silence.

Mom was always giving me small gifts to take home. Potted plants from yard sales. Candy won at bingo. Tattered romance novels. Every week these gifts were waiting for me on a chair by the window. Now the chair was empty.

As I walked through the kitchen, my eyes rested on the hospital bills, still sitting on the table. Bound by rubber bands, they sat neatly in a row, beside the unread magazines, newsletters, coupons, and articles that Mom collected. I knew every bill was there, going all the way back to three years ago when Mom became ill. She could never bear to look at them. Neither could I.

"Why did God let this happen to me?"

"God didn't let this happen, Mom. It just did."

The refrigerator held faded pictures of the Blessed Mother, along with the grocery list, recipes, and her grandchildren's school pictures. Greg, age ten. Named after my brother. Anne, age six, and sister Clare, age three. Mom's only three grandchildren and she loved them all. I yanked off the grocery list and studied her neat cursive handwriting. I

looked for a sign of her failing, a shaky or unreadable word, but none existed. Her handwriting told nothing of the pain she suffered. Eggs, bread, milk, and tea. The last trip to the grocery store didn't happen.

"Mom!" I called out to break the silence, wanting one last time to call her name. It was the sweetest word a daughter could say to her mother, and I wished I had said it more. Despite knowing better, I wanted her to answer. To call my name. To say she was happy to see me. To ask if I'd make us both a cup of blackberry tea, her favorite. I picked up the teapot and fought the urge to fill it. It was too late.

"Come on, Carolyn, let's drink our tea on the front porch," she'd say. And so, I'd sit next to her, sipping my tea as she recited the latest gossip. My brother had gotten a new job. The neighbor trimmed his tree; didn't it look nice? Someone's cat kept hanging around the garden. Whose was it? It had felt so good, just me and my mom, drinking tea, nibbling cookies, and talking about everything but the illness that hung over us, heavy and bleak like the silence that followed me as I wandered through her house.

I went into her bedroom last and sat on the edge of the bed, as I did when I was a child. There was no more pain, or suffering, or fear, or cancer. All that remained was the faint scent of her favorite cologne and the knowledge that our Blessed Mother, whose medal my mother always wore, was with her when she needed her most. As I sat there, I became the little girl who snuggled with her mother late at night... who watched her put on lipstick and powder and comb her hair... who tiptoed in to try on jewelry and dab on perfume. It didn't matter how old I was. I was still the little girl who loved and missed her mother.

I wasn't there when my mother died. But as I locked up her house and drove away, I was happy that I was there when she lived.

The Soul of a Writer

AUGUST WHITBECK

I'm in love with *Fine Lines*. It presents the work of many artists of all different ages and ethnicities from across the world, brought together to make one big piece of writing.

“Good writers connect their souls to readers’ souls by going below the surface of things and showing us where we live.” —*David Martin*

It's *all* about soul, and that's where we come from. Good writing doesn't just show the reader's soul; it can help you find your own and where you belong.

“Good writing is clear thinking made visible.”
—*Bill Wheeler*

My writing style is anything I can get my hands on that keeps my brain moving. If I am forced into it, the product will not be good work, but if I have time, it can be magic.

“You must always be able to work without applause.”
—*Ernest Hemingway*

I do not expect anyone to bow at my feet for my writing. I write simply because it helps me. Writing is something I utilize for all things: reminders, memories, motivation, and therapy. Sometimes, putting my thoughts down on paper can help me make sense of everything and help me find what I am looking for. It's only when I dig a little deeper and try a little harder that I find my soul and my true purpose.

“It's a wonderful life, and we are made out of the words we use, so we must choose them carefully.”
—*David Martin*

I can, now, live by this quote, forever. Not just in my writing, but in my everyday world. Some of the worst mistakes I've made have been saying the wrong words. But what are the right words? That's the question I have to ask myself. I have to learn to be in control of my mouth and my brain. What fun are words, if we don't use the good ones? They can almost be rendered meaningless, if we don't believe them. Say what you mean, and mean what you say, *and* be cautious. Write on.



Lookout *photograph by Michael Campbell*

The Beauty of Silence

JOELL WHITE

Silent are the morning trees,
the morning birds
There is just me, alone, looking at nature
The sun isn't shining but there's peace;
peace in those moments
Standing outside, breathing in the humid air –
breathing out the night's sleep
Silence is to be embraced; don't run from it
Silence envelops you, you feel, you ARE
Be quiet, don't be afraid,
appreciate this precious moment,
begin your day
Enjoy the silence

I Am

ANNA WOBSEK

I am the laughter escaping your throat
The sun glinting through the windshield
I am the rain that never slows down
The numb that you feel after a long, hard cry

I am the strain of guitar seeping under the door
The drumbeat in your chest as you dance in your room
I am the messy haired girl on the corner of the street
Wide eyed and dreaming about another day

I am the reason you drive too fast
Wanting something more out of life
I am the hope in a small child's eyes
And the pain when they start to grow up

I am the anxious feeling you get in your chest
When you lie awake in bed at night
I am the one saying "I want more"
I am the reason you can't pay attention

I am the one who hopes in things
That have nothing more to give
I am the way you look at the one you love
And the way your heart stops when you hear something bad

I am the reason you wake up in the morning
When all you want to do is give up
I am the one who wants what she can't have
And I am going to change the world.

WRITING ADVICE

“Achilles exists only thanks to Homer. Take away the art of writing from this world, and most likely you will take away its glory.”

—*Chateaubriand*

“Better to write for yourself and have no public, than write for the public and have no self.”

—*Cyril Connolly*

“Enduring fame is promised only to those writers who can offer to successive generations a substance constantly renewed; for every generation arrives upon the scene with its own particular hunger.”

—*Andre Gide*

“Write about real things, for God’s sake: blondes and pistons!”

—*Young teacher quoted by James Merrill*

“Writing is less a profession than a professing—a way of stimulating, organizing, and affirming thoughts to give meaning to some slice of life. When you’re tired of writing, you’re tired of life.” —*William Safire*

“Writers are not in the business of marketing; they have chosen the world of invention. To write creatively is to come up with something new or at least to come at something differently. Whether in arranging fact or hatching fiction, originality is inner-directed, not audience-driven.” —*William Safire*

“When ‘whom’ is correct, recast the sentence.” —*William Safire*

“Writing for yourself is not as arrogant as it seems. Of course, style should befit the occasion—you don’t wear black tie to a picnic—and

no integrity is lost by taking different tones, or even choosing different subjects, in addressing the garden club, the political convention, or the professional society. But in the big writing decisions, from the selection of them to the evocation of character, the good writer thinks only of an audience of Number One. Self-indulgent? Sure; that's one of the pleasures that come with the pain of pulling a real purpose out of your mind. Creative authenticity comes from seeking to suit oneself and rarely springs from a desire to please others." —*William Safire*

"Nobody who intends to be a writer can afford to be an unwary or passive reader." —*William Safire*

"Your audience is one single reader. I have found that sometimes it helps to pick out one person—a real person you know, or an imagined person, and write to that one." —*John Steinbeck*

Friendship: The Light That Went Out

JACK ZIMMER

Wisdom comes from within, be it shared or thought up alone. All wisdom has an origin, but to define what it is, in terms of equal understanding, is simple to do. Wisdom is applying knowledge to any situation. In my case, I am applying it to a life experience. Recently, I had a friend of mine pass away from cancer. It was hard to accept. I missed talking to him and seeing him at camp. I know I should have texted or tried to reach out to him, but I never followed through. This is why my feelings were so dramatic when he passed away. We created a bond with each other through numerous chemotherapy treatments, but I lost him. What was once a friendship is no longer possible.

We met at Children's Hospital, in the Oncology clinic. My dad started talking to his mom while we played. Not many kids were in the clinic at the same time, so when a boy my age walked in, I asked if he wanted to play games. That boy's name was Levi, and he later became my friend. He was easy-going and full of energy. He never let being sick get him down, and it rubbed off on me. I never felt like we were two sick kids in a hospital when we were together. It felt as though we were two kids, just hanging out.

As the months went by slowly, we saw more of each other. We started to become better friends, and I would visit him if he ever spent the night in the hospital. Our parents would always communicate with each other, so we could know if he was doing all right. Playing board games, such as, Stratego and Monopoly, became a major part of when we would see each other. When two kids have an illness prohibiting activity, board games become a lifestyle.

After I went into remission, he was still going through treatment. Not long after he went into remission, he had a relapse. His mom let my dad know about his health, and we wanted to help. He had a bone marrow transplant, so while he was in the hospital recovering, we visited him as often as we could. I wanted to make sure he was all right.

Every summer, he and I would attend a summer camp called COHOLO, which is a camp for cancer survivors and kids battling cancer and other life threatening diseases. We didn't see much of each other at the hospital anymore, since I was in remission, and the camp was the only way I had to see him. For three years, we went together, until he became too busy to attend. I hoped he would return before our last year at the camp. He didn't. Our final year was this past summer, and he was out of town. I missed seeing my friend.

I hadn't talked to Levi in almost two years. I wish I would have reached out to him and tried to see him, again. His death happened, suddenly, and I didn't know how to react. I hoped it wasn't true, but knowing it was, was the hardest part. He passed away in September of this year, and I couldn't handle it. I know he is in a better place. Somewhere he can be cancer free.

Now that I know any day could be the last, I try to stay in touch with my friends. Everyone needs friends, and being able to talk to them regularly is what keeps us connected. When a friend is lost to death, like mine was, it's hard to bear. We spent our childhood together, and now, he is gone. I can't do anything about it, and I am devastated that I lost someone who impacted my life. Through this experience, I learned that staying in touch with those you care about is essential. Death is imminent.



Ride a Painted Pony photograph by Sue Shelburne

CONTRIBUTORS

QADEER ABDUR-REHMAN is from Sialkot, Pakistan, which is the city where the whole world gets sports products. “I have never studied for a literature degree, but I have read a lot of poems, and I love to explore nature, so I write poems.”

RYA BAIRD is a new writer with *Fine Lines*.

KRIS BAMESBERGER lives in Elkhorn, NE, and is a Special Editor for *Fine Lines*.

LAURIE BARRY is a senior at the University of Nebraska-Omaha, knocking on the door of caps and gowns, majoring in Religious Studies with a minor in Accounting. Filling her plate with 12 credit hours a semester and working a full-time job for a local general contractor, the line between waking and sleeping starts to blur, occasionally. Much to her surprise, an English Composition II class this past semester and a supportive professor brought about a passion for the written word, opening a new chapter of her life. Her wish is to forever crave knowledge, always seek understanding, and to live every day as if it was her last.

GARY BECK has spent most of his adult life as a theater director, and as an art dealer, when he couldn't make a living in theater. He has 11 published chapbooks. His original plays and translations of Moliere, Aristophanes, and Sophocles have been produced Off Broadway. His poetry, fiction, and essays have appeared in hundreds of literary magazines. He currently lives in New York City.

ANJANA BISWA is a native of Nepal, lived in a refugee camp in Bhutan for several years, and immigrated with her family to the United States. She is a freshman at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and wishes to specialize in fashion design.

SHEILA BOERNER was an English teacher at St. Patrick's Jr.-Sr. High School in North Platte, NE, for many years. Before that, she raised a family of six children.

J. ELEANOR BONET writes fiction as J Eleanor Bonet to honor her Aunt Eleanor, who encouraged her to “just be as crazy as you want to be and don't give a hoot about what others think.” She writes non-fiction as Janet E. Bonet,

for academic or community activism purposes. Her educational background reaches to the “all but thesis” level in anthropology/sociology, and she has a BA minor in Spanish. She is a freelance professional translator and interpreter because she loves words and she is dedicated to social and environmental justice. She resides in the house she was raised in on the edge of South Omaha’s Spring Lake Park. She is happily letting her yard revert back to the wildwood it was meant to be. In her mind, nature should be natural.

JILLIAN BOSTON graduated in 2008 from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln with a degree in English and History. She lives in Lincoln with her energetic cat, Beatrix, and is at work on a science-fiction novel. She blogs about storytelling and pursuing restful creativity at joyandmoxie.com.

RACHEL BRANNEN is currently majoring in Chemical Dependency Counseling at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE. She is a young mother of three, and she supports her family by waiting tables and rehabbing furniture for profit. Her children inspire her to change the world. She hopes to soften the world, one heart at a time, through her newly discovered passion for writing.

SARAH BRUNER is a new writer with *Fine Lines*.

LAURA LEININGER-CAMPBELL is an actor, playwright and photographer. She received her theater training from Connecticut College, the National Theater Institute, and received the Lee Strasberg Institute Scholarship, training in New York City. As a playwright, Laura has written a number of adaptations for Joslyn Castle’s Literary Festival, including Bram Stoker’s *The Jewel of Seven Stars* and *Dangerous Beauty*, a retelling of Oscar Wilde’s novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Her original script, *Eminent Domain*, was a 2016 Eugene O’Neill National Playwrights Conference finalist and will have its world premiere at the Omaha Community Playhouse in August 2017.

MICHAEL CAMPBELL is a singer/songwriter with four albums of original music. His latest, *My Turn Now*, was released in 2015. He is a regular humor columnist for *Food & Spirits Magazine*, where his “Dumpster” essays close every issue. His first book, *Are You Going to Eat That*, is a collection of 60 humor essays released in 2009 by Prairie Moon Publishing, and a new book is due in Spring 2017. He has written for nationally-distributed entertainment newsletters *Coffee Break* and *Facts of Life*, and his off-beat observations have appeared in various issues of *Reader’s Digest*. His weekly humor blog, MC, (mcwritingessays.blogspot.com) reaches thousands of readers.

GRACE CAREY was born in Papillion, NE. She is a freshman at Duchesne Academy and enjoys it very much. Her hobbies include dancing, piano, oboe, drawing, and writing.

DAVID CATALAN is the founder of Catalan Consulting. He was the executive director of the Nonprofit Association of the Midlands from August 2002 to February 2008. David is the President of the South Omaha Business Association and the author of *Rule of Thumb: A Guide to Small Business Marketing*. He is currently working on an autobiographical collection of poems drawing from relatives, friends, and locations.

KAMRYN CHASTAIN is an eighth grader at King Science and Technology Magnet in Omaha, NE. "I started writing when I was in sixth grade; my interest in it has grown majorly since then. I write because it helps me calm down and get my feelings out."

KRIS CHELF is a web designer, graphic artist, photographer, bird watcher, musician, and avid golfer. See more of his photos at: www.featherednest-photography.com

DANIEL J. COX is a retired college professor and high school English teacher living in Omaha, Nebraska. After 41 years teaching teachers and high school students in Iowa and Nebraska, he is spending his time catching up on his writing, his grandchildren, and Roots/Americana music in the thriving Omaha music scene. In addition to writing poetry since grade school, he is trying his hand at short essays, short fiction, and is working on his first novel. He has always explained that teaching is not what he does, but who he is, even in retirement! His first book of poetry, *Dandelions & Other Flowers*, is available from CreateSpace.com and Amazon.

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MARY CLAIRE DOUGHERTY is 11-years-old and loves reading mystery books. She has been writing stories as long as she can remember. Her favorite subjects in school are English and Reading. Soccer is her favorite sport, and she loves jellyfish and the color purple.

JULIA DRICKEY attends St. Cecilia grade school in Omaha, NE. She likes to write about family and nature.

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SOPHIA DRICKEY attends St. Cecelia grade school in Omaha, NE. Her interests are spelling, phonics, social studies, reading, religion, and playing soccer. She enjoys singing, cooking, exploring and rhyming. When she enters the working world, she wants to be a veterinarian, a cook, and a writer. She has attended Fine Lines Summer Writing Camp for five years.

HAROLD W. DWYER: “The columns I have written the past 30 years were for country newspapers. Their subscribers are human beings. Human beings differ. Their tastes differ as do their inclinations. They differ in mental capacity. But everyone on the list is a subscriber. Each has laid the old filthy on the barrelhead for the privilege of reading a specified number of issues. Down the years, I have guarded against the tendency to write to only those of one mental plane. Rather, I have tried to make the column more of a ‘splatter shot’ some of which may hit most everyone who has ante’d his hard-earned into the kitty to help create a subscription list so the publisher could publish. (Wrinkles and all.) But of this you may be certain: if you ever start out (or in) to write 40,000 words with one finger of each hand and a thumb to kick the space bar, the other thumb and the rest of the fingers going along just for the ride, when you get it finished you’ll laugh too, and probably have wrinkles.” He was born in 1887 and lived in Hastings, NE. His book *Uphill and Against the Wind* was published in 1963.

ANDREW EIHAUSEN is a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

CHRISTINA ELLISON is married and a proud mother of two boys and one girl. She teaches 6th grade Reading and Social Studies at Andersen Middle School. “Children set a purpose in this world and I am fortunate to be part of it.”

MIKE FARAN lives and writes in Ventura, CA. He spent his childhood in the United Kingdom. After his return to California, he served a four year stint in the USAF and then went on to graduate from Cal State Fullerton. His poetry has appeared in *Over the Transom*, *Rattle*, *The Comstock Review*, *Abbey*, *Ship of Fools*, *Atlanta Review*, and in *Homestead*. He is the author of *We Go to a Fire* (Penury Press) and is a Pushcart Prize nominee.

COLLETTE FEAGINS is a sixth grader at Kiewit Middle School in Omaha, NE.

CARRIE FEINGOLD is a retired English teacher and lives in Bellevue, NE.

MARCIA CALHOUN FORECKI lives in Council Bluffs, IA. Her academic background is in the Spanish language. She earned a Master of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her first book, *Speak to Me*, about her son’s deafness, was published by Gallaudet University Press and earned a national book award. Her story “The Gift of the Spanish Lady” was published in the *Bellevue Literary Journal* and nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

JOAN GARDEN was born and raised in a small town in North Dakota. She attended Iowa State University before marrying and moving to Omaha.

WILLIAM KIRK GASPER is a student at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE.

NICK GENIA is a student at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE.

LINNEA GILLESPIE is a student at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE.

CINDY GOELLER has a University of Nebraska at Lincoln Bachelor of Arts degree in education, specializing in math and computers. While nurturing a family of three children and farming with her high school sweetheart, she taught for both Northeast Community College and Wayne State College part-time and substitute-taught at many northeast Nebraska area schools. She is a lifetime photographer and says she used her first 4-H ribbon money to buy her first camera, a Brownie Fiesta.

ALLY HALLEY is a financial analyst, mom, wife, and zombie enthusiast. As a recent empty-nester, she is starting to explore long-forgotten interests. Last summer, she learned how to sing/shriek her favorite Italian aria and frequently belts it out, all alone, in her car. Creative writing is her latest foray into unadulterated joy.

JACQUELINE HALOUSKA felt she was terrible at writing in elementary school and wanted not a thing to do with it. She would forget introductions and conclusions, not giving any detail at all. When 5th grade came along, it changed her life. At first, she struggled dearly. Her teacher, Mr. Wiles, told the class to write what they felt and what they wanted. At the time, she thought she was, but she could not have been more wrong. She just wrote what she was told to, and she went by what others said, ignoring herself in the process. Now, she expresses herself in her writing, and she loves doing it. She owes him more than words can express.

AMANDA B. HANSEN is proud to call herself a recent graduate of UNO. She holds her Bachelor's in General Studies; certified in English Lit., Music & (of course) Creative Writing. She is a recent addition to the Fine Lines Journal of Omaha Editorial staff (and posts for their Social Media sites) where she feels she is part of a team. She works at West Corporation as a Client Contact Center Agent. Amanda owns an Etsy shop called Stitchery Poetry, where she cross-stitches her own poetry. She currently resides in Omaha with her husband, Greg. You can find more about Amanda at her website: www.amandabeatricehansen.com.

BILL HANSEN is an Omaha native and retired after 37 years in the construction industry. He is interested in writing poetry and has become a master gardener.

KATHIE HASKINS grew up in Papillion, NE, and currently lives in Millard with her husband and two children. She enjoys writing poems and reflections about nature and everyday life, and hopes to one day publish a book of her poetry.

TIMOTHY D. HAZLETT is a student at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE.

GARY JONES is a member of the last generation of rural veterinarians who remember working with cows that had names and personalities and dairymen who worked in the barn with their families. He practiced bovine medicine in rural Wisconsin for nineteen years, returned to graduate school at the University of Minnesota, earned a PhD in microbiology, and spent the next nineteen years working on the development of bovine and swine vaccines. In retirement, he writes stories and an occasional novel.

CLAIRE KALLHOFF is a ninth grade student at Springfield-Platteview, NE, High School.

DOUG KUONY is an American multi-media artist, writer, photographer and musician. See more of Doug's photos at <https://500px.com/dkuony>

PATRICIA LANGTON is 81 years old, lives in Chicago, IL, and writes like she means it, which is the best thing any writer can ever do.

CAMILLE LARSON is a freshman at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She hopes to attend medical school.

LOREN LOGSDON: "As a freshman in college, I wanted to write like Washington Irving because of that eloquent, graceful style, but I discovered that in an age of technology, Irving's style was too old-fashioned. Then, I came under the spellbinding influence of Ray Bradbury's *Dandelion Wine*. I discovered that Irving and Bradbury had several things in common which became valuable to me: a strong sense of place and community, a genius for drawing characters, and a talent for metaphors. For me, as a writer, the end is in the beginning. I believe in the mission of *Fine Lines*, especially in its intention to reach a wide audience of readers and to include a wide variety of writers. I like the emphasis on clarity of writing, which is central to the purpose of the journal. So much writing today defies clarity and seems to delight in obfuscation. Write on."

DESHA E. LOTT teaches at Louisiana State University in Shreveport. She worked at Texas A&M University and the University of Illinois at Springfield. Spirituality and living with a disability both infuse Deshae's professional scholarship, essays, and poetry. In 2011, Lott received for one of her essays an EXCEL Gold Medal from Association Media and Publishing. She has served as a co-editor of the *American Religion and Literature Society Newsletter* and has published on a variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans including Margaret Fuller, George Moses Horton, Mary Mann, Julia Smith, Walt Whitman, Jack Kerouac, George Oppen, Maya Angelou, and Annie Dillard.

SAM LUBY is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, NE.

WENDY LUNDEEN retired from teaching in the Omaha Public School District, where she taught Spanish at Central High School and at Alice Buffett Middle School. She is an adjunct instructor at Metropolitan Community College and substitutes in the Millard Public School District. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Organizational Communication, a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Secondary Education, and Masters of Arts Degrees in Secondary Education and Educational Administration. Señora Lundeen is a "Yaya" to six grandchildren and is writing a book about her two grandsons' struggles with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a terminal illness. Her passions include writing poetry, singing in the church choir, traveling, acting and dancing every year as "Oma" in Nutcracker Delights, sharing her love with her grandchildren, and leading a group of young writers every year at the *Fine Lines* Summer Creative Writing Camp.

BONNIE J. MANION lives in Hoopeston, IL, and has been composing poetry for twenty years. It's been her good fortune to have had 600 poems published in fifty journals or online venues since the year 2000. See more of her published work at www.BonnieManion.com.

KASSANDRA MARKER is a student at the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

DAVID MARTIN is the founder and managing editor of *Fine Lines*, a non-profit quarterly journal that has published creative writing by "young authors of all ages" for the last twenty-five years. All writers are welcome to submit their poetry, prose, photography, and artwork. This publication has printed work by authors from all fifty states and thirty-eight other countries. The website (www.finelines.org) has more information about submission guidelines and a sample journal to view. He has published two books of essays and poetry (*Facing the Blank Page* and *Little Birds with Broken Wings*), which may be found at Boutique of Quality Books: www.bqbpublishing.com.

VINCE MCANDREW is retired from the Omaha Public Schools, where he was a teacher, counselor, and administrator. He is now giving full attention to his grandchildren and his poetry.

BREIA MCCAIN is a student at Millard South High School, Omaha, NE.

MARY MCCARTHY: Growing up on the island of Martha's Vineyard, Mary has enjoyed countless days stretched out in the sun, book in hand. As a child, many hours were spent sitting in the back of the library, flipping through any piece of writing she could get her impatient hands on. She fell in love with words at an early age. Reading helps satisfy her desire to understand the world and the people who inhabit it. How wonderful that one can hear a million different stories with only the flip of a page! As Mary has grown older, writing has become a way for her to understand *herself*. Putting her thoughts and emotions onto a piece of paper make them seem far more manageable. She is eager to continue to travel, swim in the ocean, watch sunrises from rooftops, and grow as a writer. Her hands are open, ready to catch all the stories this terrifying, wonderful world has to offer.

LILY MCEVOY is a fiercely fabulous 13-year-old with an obsession for strange thrift store fashions and art, mainly photography and writing. She is an 8th grader at Beveridge Magnet Middle School in Omaha, NE. She lives with her mother and father and 2 problematic cats, May and Buddy. Lily likes exotic foods and has yet to find a food she dislikes. This is her second time being published in *Fine Lines*.

JERILYN MCINTYRE is a retired university professor and administrator now embarked on a career as an independent writer. While she has written and submitted for publication a few essays and humorous short stories, she is still learning her new craft. "*Fine Lines* stood out as I was searching outlets for this piece because of the quality of the issue I found on your website and because of your mission of nurturing and encouraging new writers. The fact that you are published in Nebraska was also important. My late parents, both of whom were teachers, were born and raised in Nebraska. The setting for the story is Norfolk, the small college town where I spent part of my early childhood."

MASON MCKENNA is a student at California Trail Middle School in Olathe, KS. She enjoys writing for the school newspaper. Her favorite author is John Grisham, because he writes the Theodore Boone book series.

HENRY MILLER is one of this country's best writers of novels and essays. *Stand Still Like the Hummingbird* is a collection of his personal philosophical ideas.

ROWEN MITCHELL: “As a child I always loved writing and reading. I like to read stories which in turn prompt me to write. The entry I’m submitting was made at my grandma’s house. A poem popped into my head. I wrote it down. Suddenly, I had this great poem on paper, and I’ve had it ever since. I am a student at Kloefkorn Elementary School in Lincoln, NE.”

GILLES MONIF has had a long career as an infectious disease researcher and medical doctor. Now, he is writing books to express how he see our changing world.

SAM MORRIS is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Omaha, NE.

LISA MORRIS-SNELL is a new writer with *Fine Lines*.

ALLY MORTENSEN is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Elkhorn, NE.

BARB MOTES: “As a retired educator, I plan to spend time exploring the life and environment around me. Being a Colorado native I have always had an appreciation for nature and its beauty. The use of photography enables me to express that passion for nature.”

BRANDON MOWINKEL is the principal at Milford Jr/Sr High School in Milford, NE. He is the father of three and married to his High School Sweetheart, Shelly. His passions include: photography, woodworking, and impacting students lives.

MICHAEL J. NADEL is a new writer with *Fine Lines*.

KATHERINE NETZER is a native North Dakotan. She is a recently retired Assistant Professor of English from Bismarck State College where she taught composition, developmental writing, and served as a tutor in the learning center for 29 years.

JON NGUYEN is a Nebraska native currently studying at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Born to refugee parents from Vietnam, Jon finds his inspiration in the blending of cultures he experienced while growing up. Writing has been a constant throughout his life, but only recently has he chosen to share his work through *Fine Lines*. Jon enjoys writing poetry on the go, photography, and practical dreaming.

ANNE OBRADOVICH works as a lab technician at Creighton University, Omaha, NE, researching zebra fish inner-ear development. She completed her B.S. in biology and French at Creighton University. In her free time, Anne enjoys writing poetry, playing the trombone, knitting, and scuba diving.

ANGELICA OCHOA is a student at Castelar Elementary School in the Omaha Public School District.

MARIE OHLINGER is a sophomore at Tri-Center High School in Portsmouth, IA. I enjoy writing poetry and short stories as a way to relax. Some of my other hobbies include drawing, playing piano, and playing saxophone. I enjoy reading science fiction, watching Marvel movies, and listening to all kinds of music.

HOLLEY OXLEY: Born in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, she was exposed to many cultures as she moved around the U.S. to 9 states in all. Graduating from Elkhorn high School in 2011, she took classes at Metropolitan Community College and transferred to the University of Nebraska-Omaha. Originally in the Education Department, she felt more comfortable in the ESL sector and wanted to work with adults. She completed two internships, one with ILUNO, and one with the Yates Community Center before her graduation. Having earned a B.A. in English-Language studies, a TESOL Certificate (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and a history minor, she has been accepted into the M.A. English program at UNO.

TANNER PARKER is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Elkhorn, NE.

JESSICA PELCHAT is in the 9th grade at Gross Catholic High School in Omaha, NE.

ANDREA PENA-ESCOBAR is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Elkhorn, NE.

DILLON PETERS is Wendy Lundeen's 13-year-old grandson. He has a terminal illness and likes to write and sing. He is an 8th grader at Buffett Middle School, Omaha, NE. We asked Dillon to write to other families who have sons with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD).

SATORI PETTIT is a student at Kiewit Middle School in Omaha, NE.

OLIVIA PIKE is a student at Omaha Metropolitan Community College.

CATHY PORTER works in a dental clinic in Omaha, NE. She has been writing her entire life. Her work has appeared in various journals throughout the United States and England. She writes to process life and its mysteries. She found *Fine Lines* a few years ago and has been hooked ever since. She has two chapbooks available and is working on a third.

ZUHA QADEER: “I’m a Pakistani Muslim-American and a sophomore at Millard North High School. I just moved to Omaha from a small town called Augusta, Georgia. As a younger kid, I’ve always loved to read and draw, but I’ve tried my hand at writing before, and it’s something I enjoy. I hope for my writing to reflect who I am as a person, and I hope I continue to write as I grow older.”

LAUREN RAYNER is a sixth grade student at John Neihardt Elementary School in Omaha, NE.

JESSICA REDWING is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Elkhorn, NE.

LILY REGIER is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, South Omaha, NE.

KAREN ROSALES is a first time writer with *Fine Lines*.

JAMES M. SALHANY is a retired professor of internal medicine and biochemistry at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, where he taught and performed research in molecular biophysics. He did his graduate studies at the University of Chicago, where he obtained his Master’s and PhD degrees. His undergraduate studies began at Wayne State University in Detroit, where his interest in poetry and music originated. He completed his baccalaureate degree in chemistry at the University of Florida. His poems attempt to present scientific concepts in humanistic terms.

ANDALEEB SANA was born and raised in Pakistan, where she earned a degree in economics. She and her husband are parents of two children and immigrated to the United States. She recently started studying interior design at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE, and observes life through an analytical approach. “I feel accomplished to admit that my writing has given me the opportunity to get closer to life.”

HEENA SAYAL was born in India and found her way to Omaha, NE, where she is studying at Metropolitan Community College.

SKYLER SCHRECK is a student at Metropolitan Community College in Omaha, NE.

WALT SCHUMANN is a retired psychologist who resides in Bucks County, PA, where he and his wife Barbara (now deceased) raised their three children. Before becoming ill, he enjoyed carpentry; as a young man he helped his father build their house, and later he did finish carpentry on his family cabin in Maine. Walt enjoys writing, and painting with water colors. In years past, he worked

with the elderly in group and family therapy, and remains very interested in applying lessons from Martin Buber and Paulo Freire. Walt is interested in a humanistic and relational basis for his work and writing, and he regards dialogue as a necessary approach to relationships, education, and the political scene. His writing topics include his own treatment in several nursing homes, and now in home care, as well as his enjoyment of baroque music, and nature.

DANIEL SHARKOVITZ serves as the English department chair at the Martha's Vineyard Regional High School in Oak Bluffs, MA, where he teaches English, journalism, and creative writing. His fiction, poetry, and essays have been published in a number of places including *Teaching & Learning: the Journal of Natural Inquiry*, *The Leaflet*, *Nebraska Language Arts Bulletin*, *Bread Loaf and the Schools*, *Stone Soup Poets*, *Vineyard Poets* and the *Martha's Vineyard Gazette*. He has been the recipient of two National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships. He lives in West Tisbury, MA with his son and cat.

SUE SHELBURNE is originally from Kentucky but now lives in Omaha, NE. She enjoys decorating, photography, acrylics, and writing, which has been a constant companion in her life for as long as she can remember. Writing is her therapist, her friend through lonely times, and her mirror that reflects best. Putting words together has never been a laborious thing for her because she writes the words that want to be written and in the way they want to be expressed. It is her responsibility not to censor them. When she honors that responsibility, they read back to her with a light of their own truth.

D. N. SIMMERS lives in British Columbia, Canada and writes poetry.

MICHAEL SIMON: "I am 62 and have been writing for many years. I live on a forested hillside near Eugene, Oregon, with my wife, dogs, and cat. I have published several poems in a few other journals and have previously published one poem in *Fine Lines*, 2013."

ROXANNE SLATTERY attended the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

CONNIE & BOB SPITTLER live in Omaha, NE, where she is an avid writer and he is a professional photographer.

KIM MCNEALY SOSIN was a professor and department chair of economics at the University of Nebraska at Omaha, until her retirement a few years ago. She published numerous articles in economics journals and created and continues to maintain several websites. She enjoys photography and writing and has been focused on reading and writing poetry. She also collects vintage fountain pens.

HANNAH STACEY is a home-schooled high school student and an early enrolled student at Metropolitan Community College. She has played the violin since elementary school and is a music/English major.

CONNOR STEDNITZ is a regular writer for *Fine Lines*.

MARY K. STILLWELL: “My most recent collection of poems, *Maps & Destinations*, was published in 2014 by Stephen F. Austin State University Press. *The Life and Poetry of Ted Kooser*, my full-length study, was published in 2013 by the University of Nebraska Press. My chapbook, *Fallen Angels*, appeared the same year (Finishing Line Press). I studied writing in New York with William Packard and on the plains with Ted Kooser and earned my PhD in plains literature from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln.”

BEN NOAH SURI is a new writer with *Fine Lines*.

OLIVIA TORRES is a sixth grader at Kiewit Middle School in the Millard Public School District. Kathleen Pugel is her teacher.

LEE VAN HAM: In 1999, he joined others in forming Jubilee Economics, a nonprofit focused on One Earth living. Born to a tenant-farming family in Iowa, he pastored in the Midwest for 32 years before switching to work explicitly on the interplay between justice, ecology, economics, and spirituality. His recent book, *Blinded by Progress*, expresses such interplay. He and his spouse, Juanita, were part of the intentional community, *Peaceweavings*, in Chicago, before relocating to San Diego in 2002.

DAVID WALLER joined *Fine Lines* as an intern in the fall of 2014, and has since become a permanent member of the journal’s staff. He regularly submits essays and short stories, the latter which he hopes to collect into a book after he’s written enough of them. He has had numerous pieces published in *Fine Lines*, and his favorite thing about writing is the characters he creates.

COURT WALSH was a school teacher before he took to writing fiction. His longer stories have appeared in various literary journals, such as *Callaloo* and *The Long Story*. He lives in Hudson Falls, NY.

CAROLYN WEISBECKER enjoys writing mainstream short-story fiction, middle-grade and young adult fiction, especially while hanging out at Starbucks where she finds daily inspiration and great coffee. Recently, she was awarded The Glimmer Train Honorable Mention Award in the Family Matters category. Her non-fiction writing has been published in local newspapers, business periodicals, and a national trade magazine.

AUGUST WHITBECK is a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Elkhorn, NE.

JOELL WHITE lives in Omaha, NE, and has been published frequently in *Fine Lines*.

WATIE WHITE is a professional painter, printmaker and public artist who uses both traditional and new techniques to channel his insatiable curiosity about the lives of others.

ANNA WOBSEr is currently a student at University of Nebraska at Omaha. "Scott Fitzgerald, my absolute favorite writer, was quoted as saying 'You don't write because you want to say something, you write because you have something to say.' These words influenced me to write myself, and allowed me to take out all of my stress and emotions and passion out of my head and onto a piece of paper."

JACK ZIMMER is a high school senior and a first year student at Metropolitan Community College, Elkhorn, NE.



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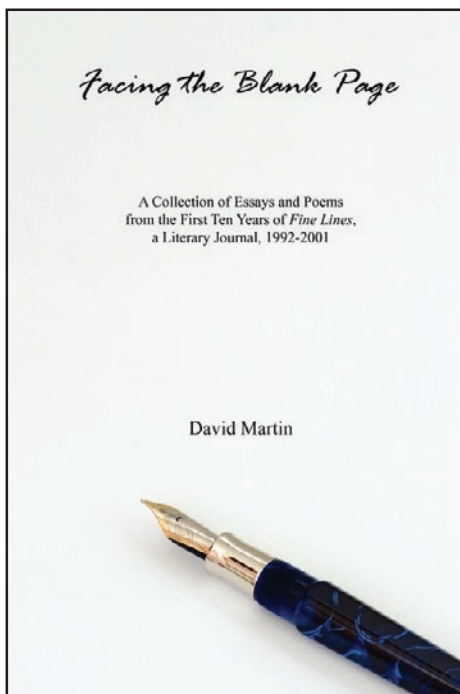
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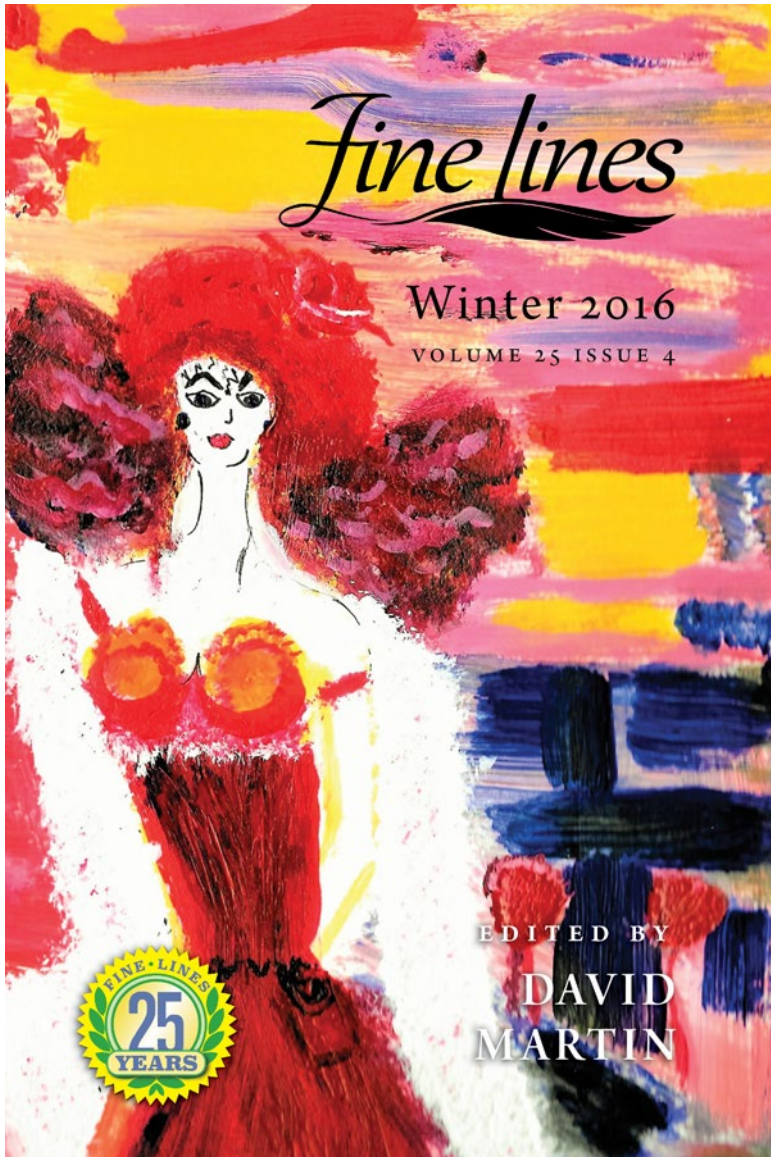
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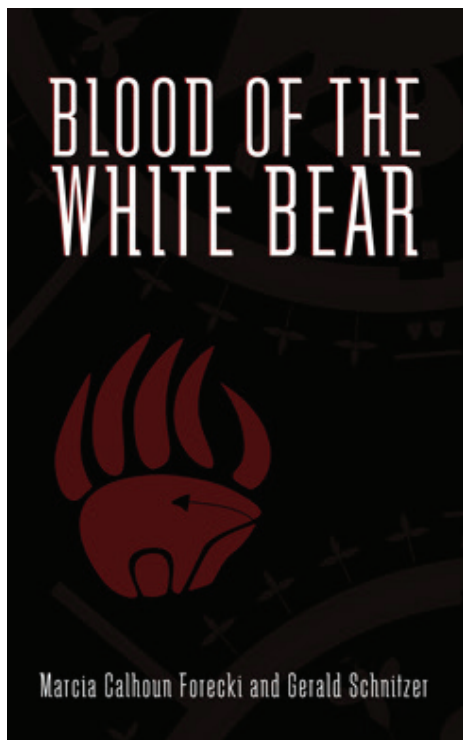
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