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1998 Spring Quiz and Quill Magazine

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Quiz and Quill



Spring 1998

Quiz and Quill

Otterbein College
Westerville, Ohio

Spring 1998

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Editor's Note

We are proud to present the 1998 *Quiz and Quill*. A vast tradition of writing excellence continues at Otterbein and you'll see that reflected throughout the following pages.

We are simply writers with similar passions for writing well and often. From these passions come many results -- perhaps the most exciting is the magazine itself. To the staff, thank you for your courage and open-mindedness as you have created a support group, a safe haven, a magazine. Keep thriving with your creativity!

We wish to thank Dr. Rittenhouse for his knowing silences that guided us from week to week, poem to poem, onward and onward. Also, words of thanks must be given to Dr. James Bailey for his support as Dr. Rittenhouse took a much-deserved sabbatical. Thank you for listening to Madonna monologues and ad nauseum accounts from the Vanilla Ice Fan Club.

Special thanks must also be given to Kimberly Steehler Garee, who brought patience and rationality to an otherwise chaotic creative process. Thank you for not only being a colorful guru, but also, a friend. And, thank you also to Patti Kennedy for her gracious help with the layout and design of the magazine. We couldn't have done it without you!

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Dedication

This edition of the *Quiz and Quill* is dedicated to
the memory of

Anita Rittenhouse

for teaching Dr. Rittenhouse to teach.

Without him, we'd be less enriched.

1998 Quiz and Quill Writing Contest Winners

Poetry

- First Place "Brent at Dusk" by Kimberly Steehler Garee
 Second Place "Even Harold Said It Was Crap" by Mark Snyder
 Third Place "Her Epic" by Sara Sowers
 Honorable Mention: "I Won't Play By Your Rules"
 by Keira Lee Kiley

Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

- First Place "Clock Man" by Ben Hauck
 Second Place "Palm Reading" by Matt Sharpless
 Third Place "Meditation Rant" Amanda Greaves
 Honorable Mention: "Spirituality in Traffic"
 by Kyle Mossman

Personal Essay Contest

- First Place "Red Trolls" by Kimberly Steehler Garee
 Second Place "Like Apples and Pears" by Kyle Mossman
 Third Place "Kiss of Knowledge" by Amanda Greaves
 Honorable Mention: "A Carving of Names" by Carrie Leonard,
 "The Price of Patchouli" by Mark Snyder, "I Love Lewis" by
 Kimberly Steehler Garee

Short Story Contest

- First Place "The Gettysburg Ghost Walk Guide"
 by Kimberly Steehler Garee
 Second Place "The Traveling Teller"
 by Kimberly Steehler Garee
 Third Place "The Year Visions of Sugar Plums Stopped
 Dancing in My Head" by Kyle Mossman
 Honorable Mention: "Gerald Pletcher's Still Life" by Kimberly
 Steehler Garee, "Riding in the Hood" by Nikki Schuler, "Painting
 With Father" by Matt Sharpless

Louise Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

- First Place Carrie Troup
 Second Place Kristy Edgell
 Third Place Carrie Troup

Brent at Dusk*First Place, Poetry Contest*

In about ten minutes
 all of that green will be shadowed
 and lit up with fireflies.
 It longs to be lit
 in some new way,
 not just brightly.

I will still be beside
 the evening breezy window
 in about ten minutes
 sniffing these old yellowed pages
 under a sky dying to
 get pastel messy,
 not just blue.

In about ten minutes
 I will just strain to hear his hammer,
 six point eight miles from here.
 I want to tell him in his tool belt
 that I am bored with the sun.
 He squints, pounds, sides, roofs.
 Nails held awkwardly
 between his lips,
 he dreams me lit.

by Kimberly Steehler Garee

Jamie

A ring of trees
leaves me an air hole
to breathe out a sigh.
A bonfire cooks
our arm hairs.
We are alone
in a bustling camp.
My heart yearns
for a tender touch.
An accidental brush of legs
sends goose bumps prickling up.
Sitting in the dirt
made our shorts as dusty
as the summer evening.
Your lips glisten
in the fire's glow.
I chew mine apart
anxiously.

by Anthony Fulton

The Night of Wine and Roses

I sat facing you,
Watching your sky eyes
Register my face —
Trace the contours softly,
Pausing on swollen lips
Then drifting to hopeful eyes.

You half-smiled, so slowly
Before taking a gentle hand
And placing it against my face —
The heel of your palm
Resting softly on my chin
Your fingers cupping my cheek,
Your thumb tracing my lips
Stale cigarette as I lightly
Kiss and nibble.

I sat facing you
As you brought your sweet
Red wine to mingle with mine ...

And oh — it was bittersweet,
Wasn't it.

by Abigail Bowers

Every Day

every day with you
 was a search for fairy dust and pirate's gold
 exploring old cemeteries tangled in overgrowth
 rolling up your pants legs to reach for fossils lodged in mountain
 streams

every day with you
 was a summer Sunday afternoon
 seeing how long you could swim underwater
 and searching out rattlesnakes to skin
 stealing their noise to wear around our necks

every day with you
 was an Indiana Jones movie
 crawling across old bridges
 that dangled by fraying ropes
 and climbing 300 stairs in watch towers
 for a peep at the whole world

every day with you
 was honey on the tongue of my mind
 playing with frogs
 wading in clear blue brooks
 dancing beneath waterfalls

your long legs rocking the glider as the rain fell

every day with you

was a day

with you

by Beth Honeycutt

Kiss of Knowledge

by Amanda Greaves

Third Place, Personal Essay Contest

"Some minds remain open long enough for the truth not only to enter but to pass on through by way of a ready exit without pausing anywhere along the route."

Elizabeth Kenny

Australian Nurse

Let me bring you into The Garage (The Gay-Rage) with me.

You enter through double doors and the first thing you feel is the heat. It's subzero weather outside and your red face, in the short minute since you've entered, has already begun to become spotted with the droplets of condensation born from the humidity in the room. All you can feel is pure pulsation. The hard downbeat of the music pulsates in your chest — makes your heart feel like it is going to leap out of the quiet peace you maintain in your body. You strain your eyes to make out faces, but, with the jagged lighting, you can only make out a sea of black and silver and red. A sea of anxieties being let loose from the hair of a group of people who have come to gather — who have come to "Dance our asses off!"

You stop for a moment. The last phrase that echoes in your ears is her advice: "Keep an open mind." You remember how she stood up there and told you to vanquish preconceived notions. You remember thinking how open your mind was...

But you also remember your friends' stories of the last time they were here. You remember them telling you how they had been felt up in the restroom. You remember hearing things like, "She put her hand on my breast and squeezed as hard as she could," or, "He was flaming. Wearin' that tight shirt and talkin' with his hands." You remember your friends' vivid descriptions about how they were "molested" by the bartender. You recall all of this. But what hangs out vividly, what really stops you in your tracks, is that girl who kissed you full on the mouth in a drunken stupor last week. The smell of her perfume and the feel of her hair brushing against yours.

Did you put those feelings aside to come here? Or did you come here to figure out if you really liked the way that felt? Did you question your sexuality after that kiss? Or did you just go about your heterosexual relationship, not speaking a word of it to your boyfriend. . .not speaking a word of it to your heart?

So you stop for a moment, the memory of that kiss in your head. You stop right in your place and you can only think about leaving. Right now you realize how afraid you are, only you don't know that it is not this group of people you're afraid of. It is yourself you fear. You fear the expansion of your mind. You fear the places your mind can take you.

You don't want to break down the constructs of familiarity. And you just stand there with that kiss fresh on your lips. And your stomach begins to turn a pale shade of green.

Your heart is still pulsating... And you feel that beat. Feel it moving toward your mind. Feel that beat overtaking preconceived notions about the group of people you are about to meet. You feel the music in your soul. That is when you truly know that what that beat in your heart and that music in your soul want you to do is to be free. Free to be with these new people.

So you take your first step toward the dance floor, and then your second. You walk into that sea of red and black and silver anxiety. There are no faces looking at you. Only hands, and bodies, and extreme heat... You stand there for a second, perched to take your third step when you see them — two women kissing in a well-lit corner of the dance floor. *Keep an open mind ...* but you're just stopped there. No hands, no bodies, just heat. You think it's the heat of embarrassment, but it's not. It's the heat of something radical and truly new being burned into your brain. It's the heat of muscles moving to accept something so new.

And then you realize that you looked that way last week, with her lips on yours. You realize that a kiss is meaningful — only sometimes. You realize that people who kiss each other do so for different reasons. And you realize that it was perfectly fine to feel joy in that kiss because it was something new that opened your mind to new schools of thought. You learned from that kiss. You learned, but not until now.

Were you dancing when you realized all of this? No, but everybody else was. Wheeling and reeling in the joy of having time away from the prejudice of others. And this is what The Garage became to you at that moment. A place away from the anxieties and actions of others, and a time away from your own censorship. So you take your first step of motion and begin to dance. And finally you see faces, three hundred beautiful faces. They are smiling and laughing — not at your kiss, not at your motions. Just laughing — living!

So you're dancing. Caught up in one moment of time with these three hundred beautiful people. And you realize that these are people — not men, not women. You realize that they have a right to be together to celebrate. To make joy together. To make love together. To fit together. To fit with you.

You go to bed that evening satisfied. You think of what it'll be like to be a teacher. And you see yourself teaching your students to see the beauty in faces, not in the sexes, because you know that prejudices aren't born in the sexes, they are born in the mind. You see yourself showing your students how to celebrate each other. You teach them how to make joy. You hope in your mind they'll make love. You teach them how to fit together. You teach them how to fit with you. Because they can all dance, and they can all love.

And you fall asleep, as knowledge kisses your lips, and you are dancing...

Clock Man

First Place, Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

Profile, he's a cartoon
 of one-thirty & eleven-thirty
 pitching back-and-forth;
 at the three
 the watchers awaken as he
 launders his liquid lingua until
 they vault to high noon, eyes
 spinning like animated wind-up
 punches, the remarkable powers
 of articulated spinach strewn
 from auricle to auricle, then
 all of the clockwatchers gather
 in clumps and muddy their hands
 onto one of gifted glossolalia,
 sending his sinned & spinning
 vessel into what could only
 be called with flexed fingers
 " "

but what we usually call
 "a tile floor";
 that one writhes there underneath
 the undulating arms and tongues come undone,
 the profiled Clock Man
 wrangles the other writhers into
 a zone sponsored by the
 Financial Aid Office of Heaven,
 asking humbly on Their behalf for
 just a little, what you can give,
 a sufferance offering of fifty
 will suffice, and if not fifty,
 then how 'bout twenty; some
 dig down deep and push aside
 their pocket watches, open their
 billfolds and step back as
 doves miraculously fly from them;
 cold, hard showers drench
 the six at Clock Man's feet,
 sending forth a small cuckoo hallelujah
 that each clockwatcher collects
 and takes home and encases
 in his or her respective
 empty medicine cabinet.

by Ben Hauck

Life's 27" canvas

The insomniacs'
AM power nap
ends with drool-glazed
pillows begging
five more minutes
of quality time together
before diluting
customary greetings
by hiding your
lifeless,
glass face.

Through recurring
apparitions of my
final sick day,
I am teased
with temptations
of couch harassment
enhanced by
my favorite
multi-personalities,
27-inch-friend.

With little effort
I predict the pains
of heartless,
lock-jawed,
girlfriends...
burdened with
freezer-burned silences
on afternoon
soap operas.

You respond to
my desires
at once selectively
deciphering the
lonesome expressions,
glued upon my
stressed face.

As I surf through
 your parentally
 guidanced
 invitations,
 I seek a tour
 free from
 alcoholic eyes,
 innocent O.J.'s
 and late night,
 infomercials about
 the self-made fortunes
 of teenage.
 yacht owners.

You challenge
 my sorrowing moods.
 pleading
 Come with me.
 Forget the rain
 rusting upon your car.
 Wade through me.
 Save last minute essays
 for late, Sabbath nights.
 Open up to me.
 Share your ancient,
 Chinese secrets.
 Escort me through
 your secret world.
 Share your desires,
 while exploiting mine.
 Rob me of
 painfully pent-up
 memories and
 nightmares untold.

by Brendan Radtke

Undeferring a Dream -an effort-

The motion wakes. It breaks me.
 The dips, the wind, the God-hand stirred strands of 'Starry Night,"
 And me, the town.
 Once sleeping beneath it,
 I now shudder with the breeze breathing through me.
 Pumping under my skin,
 Chilling my blood,
 My mind's need boils.

This has happened before?
 I thought it had.
 But like so many others:
 Slipped under and strangled.
 Yet in its after-life, it haunts me,
 Molding this play-doh painted ghost,
 A man in a child's world —
 No, a child forced to mind the clock of man.

The denim drape for the desk chair is nice.
 I'll take it.
 I'll wear it.
 I'll wear it out.
 Then I'll be closer to skin, closer to dirt
 And I'll be poor and sick and lost and reborn.
 If only I believed
 That motion could break my mind.

by Jeremy Fulwiler

Like Apples and Pears

by Kyle Mossman

Second Place, Personal Essay Contest

I have a handicap. My affliction is incurable—it can't even be treated. I am color blind. The term "color blindness," at least in my case, is a misnomer. I am not *blind* in any sense of the word. I can see things quite clearly. In fact, I have 20/15 vision with my contact lenses in—that's five whole points better than 20/20.

Also, I see more than just black, white, and grey. A lot of people, when they find out that I'm color blind, assume that seeing the world through my eyes is like watching the first fifteen minutes of the "The Wizard of Oz," over and over again. Not true. I *can see* colors just as well as anyone else. Sometimes I even see colors that aren't there. The trouble starts when I try to identify them.

When I see an object, I am not completely clueless as to its color. In fact, I can name off a whole bunch of colors that it's *not*, but nobody ever seems to be very impressed by that. So I usually come up with a short list of colors that it *might be*. I call these "finalist colors." For instance, I might say to a friend, "Gee, you sure look fetching in that new pink, green, peach, tan, or grey parka. It's much better than that awful brown, green, or grey one you wore the other day. That one clashed with your hair." And, from what I'm told, the actual color usually ends up being one of my finalists.

On rare occasions, I can be absolutely certain about a color by using context clues. For example, when I'm sitting at a stoplight, and the bottom light is on, and the people behind me honk their horns and shout obscenities at me, I know that the light is green.

Like all people of my kind, I was born color blind. Yet, the disability did not rear its ugly head until I reached elementary school, where I quickly learned that the first grade is a place where intelligence is measured by one's ability to choose the correct crayon. When my teacher noticed that I drew pink grass and chartreuse suns, she had a talk with my parents and I was tested for slowness. Well, okay, that wasn't the only warning sign. At that age, I couldn't tell time or tie my shoes, either. So my parents took away my digital watch and my velcro sneakers, but the color blindness was a problem that wouldn't vanish so easily.

As I progressed from grade to grade in school, my disability became less of a problem. Then, just when I thought I had convinced the academic world that I was not retarded, along came Geography and, with it, the color-coded map. No amount of studying could have helped me

overcome this obstacle. Even in high school, after I had become a relatively good student, I invariably failed any task involving a color-coded map.

I was not officially diagnosed with color blindness until I went for a full physical exam three years ago. The nurse showed me a series of pictures from a book and asked me to tell her what I saw. This seemed very silly and unscientific to me, but I complied and gave her a detailed description. I told her that I saw a bunch of dots, that the dots were of all different colors, and that I thought the dots were pretty. Apparently, this was the wrong answer, because she marked a big red "X" on my chart and told me that, while I was otherwise healthy and normal, I had failed the color blindness portion of the test.

This news did not come as much of a surprise to me.

Obviously, I had always suspected that I was color blind. Now, after receiving a professional diagnosis, I *know*. I no longer have to go through life thinking that I'm less of a person just because I fail geography tests and my clothes don't match. I know now that I'm more than just a worthless dolt with no fashion sense; I am a disabled person.

I would like to clear up some common misconceptions about my disability. One cannot contract color blindness from sitting too close to the television, staring at the sun, or sitting on a public toilet, even if that toilet has just been used by a color blind person. But, alas, the public remains fearful and ignorant.

One thing that really irks me is when people try to make a game out of my disability. They'll ask, "What color is my shirt?" "What color is my hair?" "What color is my shoe?" "What color is my other shoe?", etc. To me, this is like asking a quadriplegic to break dance.

At least I know that I'm not alone. Roughly eight percent of all males have some sort of color blindness. The disorder is much less common among women, only 0.5 percent of whom suffer from the disorder. So much for equal opportunity. On certain islands in the East Indies, scientists have discovered a complete lack of color blindness among both males and females. No one is really sure why, but many theorize that all the color blind people died out because they ate the wrong berries.

Several different types of color blindness exist but red/green deficiency is by far the most common, followed by blue/yellow deficiency. I suspect that these classifications are arbitrary to some degree, because my own deficiency does not fit neatly into any of the major categories. However, I know that I do not have what most people would consider normal color vision. I find it entirely possible to have burgundy/periwinkle deficiency, for instance, but the rigid taxonomy of medical science would probably deny me that kind of diagnosis.

Color blind people have no way of knowing what they're missing. I can't experience normal color vision first-hand, and no one can give me a satisfactory description of that experience. Big deal. As far as I can tell,

the only thing I'm missing is the ability to make petty distinctions between colors; that's all. I can still enjoy a sunset and recognize a good painting with the best of 'em.

Besides, it's a known fact that, when one sense is absent or diminished, the other senses become stronger. For example, some blind people can hear a pin drop from across the room during a taping of the Jerry Springer Show. However, since my vision is only slightly impaired, my super-sensory powers are considerably less dramatic. On a good day, I can taste the difference between Coke and Pepsi. Plus, who's to say that color blindness isn't normal? Maybe those other 92% of males and 99.5% of females are the ones with the problem.

There, I feel better.

Wait 15 Minutes

I want a cigarette.
 I want it Bad.
 The drag
 the slow in, the slow
 out, and relief.

The minutes it takes to
 hold
 light
 breathe
 smoke
 that fat rolled white
 stick. Smoke smell
 dirty smell.
 I don't want
 to be clean.

Held between my fingers
 it keeps my hand busy.

It's a ceremony.
 A ritual to share
 with other smokers.
 They bum your cigarette
 you use their lighter.
 Or, they light your cigarette —
 the affectionate smoker.

It's part of your image,
 an attitude.
 It's there for you in times of need
 always in that little, white, hard
 reliable box. I crave to rely on it.

Talking myself into it
 instead of out....

My roommate says wait 15 minutes
 and you'll forget about it.
 5 minutes left.

by Jessica Lee Schultz

Even Harold Said It Was Crap
Second Place, Poetry Contest

So I'm in the National Bookshop,
 In the National Theatre Lobby,
 Next to the National Theatre Stage
 And I'm looking at a book
 (As is my want and inclination).

pause.

The cover is pale blue, like a little boy nursery rhyme,
 And it has that little indenting
 On the binding
 That I love.

sigh

pause.

I've got my VISA/MasterCard in my palm —
 Money's tight, I understand.
 But the face on the cover:
 Unpretentious pensiveness.
 I'm gonna buy —
 I'm gonna buy —
 I'm gonna not gonna buy —
 I'm not gonna try to deny my urge to buy —
 To hear the receipt printer
 So.

Okay.

Here I go —

Around the corner of the aisle,
 Past the scripts and videos,
 Past the program holders
 (Which are cheaper than the programs),
 Past the starving artist students
 (relatable),

Past the hoity-toity garbed patrons and "friends."
 He's a hoot, my Harold Pinter.

Your words are mine —

And your pauses —

And your silence —

And your dots —

Now your life and times, too.

silence.

VISA on hand —

Book in other —

Arms outstretched —

Here I am.
 pause (for applause).
 "Hello."
 And, "What are you doing?"
 He asks.
 pause.
 pause.
 silence.
 silence.
 "I'm buying a book!" I loudly and culturally
 Proclaim.
 "No, you're not," he says to me.
 The unpretentious pensiveness,
 Painted on his plate.
 "It's a piece of crap," he says.
 And taps his face with his finger.
 silence.
 My face falls.
 pause.
 I look up.
 "Does this mean no 'life and times'?"
 I ask Harold Pinter.
 pause.
 pause.
 "Not the way he
 pause.
 Writes."
 The VISA retreats back in the pocket.
 pause.
 I eye a shelf that suits this anti-manifesto.
 But wait...
 Not at the National.
 Everything is just
 pause.
 Perfect at the National.

I buy the book.

by Mark Snyder

My Place

The sky is the
exact color of the pavement
so I can't decide
if it is raining
up or down
and the trees
don't have roots
but long trunks
with branches on
each end
and the tall window
doesn't keep the
cold from seeping
into my heart
that is why I
have made this my
place
the cold brings
the words
and the rain
makes them dance

by Carrie Leonard

sitting on the sheets

am i the only 21-year-old who sleeps with a stuffed animal?
 am i the only 21-year-old man who sleeps with a stuffed animal?
 no, i can't be
 can i?
 and my bed sheets are pacman and my pillowcases have pooh on one
 side
 and piglet on the other
 the pillowcases are new
 but the sheets are old
 they're original
 you can even see where my
 little body
 wore out this tiny oval
 from way back when
 but now i fear
 my bigger body
 will wear right through it
 cashing it

this one girl
 a friend of a friend kind of thing
 met me
 and she thought i was gay
 but then the next time she met me
 she realized
 or thought
 that no, it's more just that i act kinda like a child
 child-like?
 childish?
 well, i'm not sure
 but i thought it was peculiar
 no, i thought it was sad
 that someone would equate
 child-like with gay
 or gay with child-like
 (depending on your slant on things)
 i mean
 it's not that i'd be ashamed of being all the way a child or all the way gay
 i don't think
 (i'm a virgin
 and so there we go
 virginity

my god, even the word is white on paper
or equated with some rosary chick
the rosary
the prayer
the prayers i learned as a child
so if it's not white
it's green)

i sleep with charlie and i love to
the sensation
the pulling in
pulling into me
the comfort
so he's black and white
and he's a stuffed cow
and i'm stuffed flesh
moving
beating, ticking
rhythmed
but if i had seams like his i'd be
bursting
flipped out all over
wondering if i were the only 21-year-old guy exposed like a stuffed
animal

by Jeremy Fulwiler

Red Trolls by the Campfire

by Kimberly Steehler Garee

First Place, Personal Essay Contest

My step-dad came from a large group of siblings. They descended from a postal worker who liked his beer often (and in large doses) and a shakey-handed woman who loved in even larger doses. When their hair got white and shiny silver they stuck a camper in a heavily forested campground. While he was drunk, Grandpa would stir the campfire and watch the red of the embers. Alone or surrounded by grandchildren, he was a soggy forest troll who worked his red magic regardless of a market for it.

That was a world of Chinese lanterns and strings of Mardi Gras fruit lights, of plastic fairies planted in seasonal gardens, of towels dripping chlorine beside the worn-out hammock. Darkness was daily as well as nightly, the trees were so thick above our heads. The leaves were their own speckled mini-sky, and blackness came by dinner time, when the camper yard sales were reeled in and the euchre parties began.

We grandchildren came to visit in massive cycles, all experiencing the same camping phenomena. Grandma might have had a checklist by which she conducted us through our stay, primarily leading us out into the scenery. There were long rides on contraptions (that we figured were the forerunners of our modern bicycles) to break our resolve. There was swimming. There were wars fought with sticks in the forest. The campground was its own community of innocent adventure, and I'm certain that everyone saw it as just that. We always waved at the other campers as if we all shared something golden, and back then I figured that must have been what it was like to live in the Fifties. Nothing ever actually *happened* at the campgrounds.

The ritual summer days closed with the roasting of weenies, throwing rocks at squirrels, and pretending Grandpa was a monster. The stubble on his face and the shiny, wet eyes never led us to believe anything different. He took us for rides in his golf cart when he was sober. I think that happened twice.

Those of us fortunate enough to stay the night crammed close together in the camper, listening to Grandpa snore and cough things up every few minutes. In the middle of the night, someone at the grounds came by spraying some foul stuff to kill mosquitoes that would waft in the screen over our sticky young bodies, and we'd cough things up, too. Then we'd get up and start over again.

But one day it was different. It was the day of a family picnic, so we had to contend with parents who broke our pattern of play. It also

meant that most of the kids were present and accounted for. I was at an age, though I can't remember precisely the year, when I still wore grungy tennis shoes and light, cotton tank tops without a bra. I don't think it had occurred to me yet to check if I was pretty or not, so I suppose I was still a child.

The oldest was Mike, who may have been fourteen at the most. We all thought he was quite good looking and heroic. He did, too. My stepsister said he liked her best because she was the second oldest among us, but I didn't see as her claim amounted to much since they were, after all, first cousins. As for me, I was not related to the tall boy by blood. And maybe that makes it okay that, on this day of the family picnic and by the light of a campfire, his was the first penis I ever saw.

In the cousin hierarchy, Mike, Jen and I were the most powerful. The others were way too young and stupid to join in our coalition of superior leadership. The adventures were always the property of the three eldest, and the Youngers were just along to admire us and take orders. Those were very good days at the campgrounds, when we played games like Hitler must have when he was our age.

"Let's walk to the pond," I said, smacking flies around the food preparation.

"Can we, Uncle Bruce?" someone asked. It only took one adult to give us permission, and Uncle Bruce was always the best one to ask. We all had a sneaky suspicion that he sort of *wanted* his kids to die. I think his kids thought so, too. He would let us do anything, so long as we were gone.

The path to the pond was long, dry, and filled with bickering. Some of the Youngers resented the idea of coming in the first place, probably out of fear. Mike entertained us with stories about kids he'd beaten up after school and why they had deserved it.

"You pretty much learn everything adults know in eighth grade. It's an important year, and lots of kids don't make it through," he told us as he beat a clump of tall grass down with a stick. We needed rain badly. Things were turning yellow.

"Is eighth grade really that hard?"

"Sure," he said. "We did *algebra*." He said it like villains say the word "revenge" in the movies, and we were horrified at what our futures held.

"Algebra! I thought that wasn't till college!"

"Well, they only let us smart ones do it. You've gotta be real smart. And, know what? By the end of the year you've gotta decide whether you're gonna even go to college some day! Yep. You gotta take the right classes. They're real hard, and most people don't make it."

"Are you goin' to college, Mike?" One of the little ones had spoken without permission, but the King didn't mind since we were talking about him and since the question was raised with the proper degree of awe.

"I sure am. I'm gonna be a policeman."

We came to the pond then, and it lay there, all buggy in the sunlight. Nothing was moving there under the sun, and scum sat heavy on the water beneath the net of flies. Being around water was supposed to make us cooler, but we became instantaneously parched as we trudged gloomily toward the rocky shores of that green water.

"Bet I can throw farthest!" Jen cried, selecting a stone and directing her comment at me. I knew she was wrong. The fates had decreed that she would be a year older, but there was no way she'd ever be stronger. We threw our stones, and she wasn't happy about the distance of mine, so she invited Mike to beat it and knock me out of first while the chorus of Youngers cheered him.

"No," Mike said with pubescent gallantry. "It wouldn't be fair. I mean, you're girls." We had forgotten, which was easy to do in the woods. I tucked my tank top into the terry cloth shorts that had a little butterfly sewn on them.

The two of us sufficiently feminine now, we all ran off toward a forest we had never explored on the other side of the pond. Before we came to the woods, though, we were compelled by our own intense curiosity to stop. Just behind the pond, bordered by grass as high as Mike was tall, was a smaller pond of dried mud, no more than thirty feet across. Sticks lay baking on the brownness, along with bits of cat tails which had probably blown there. And right in the middle, half-buried, was a bright red snow sled! It looked like a ship that had just begun to sink in what might once have been a soft, gooey ocean. Now, it was dried there in the hardened area like a desert mirage.

"Wow!" someone said for all of us. We were all thinking of some tragic adventure that had ended here in brown, murky death.

"It might have been from Indians," I whispered, certain now that the forest was watching us.

"No. Indians don't have red sleds. They have buffalo hides," said the one who had learned all in the eighth grade.

"Well, let's go get it!" Jen said.

"What would we do with it?"

"We could use it as a boat!" I exclaimed. "We could go sailing on the pond!"

"Well, sure," Mike realized, hands on the hips of his jeans. "Actually, I've been on lots of boats. I guess I could handle a sled all right." We all cheered in expectation. Locusts were loud all around us in the grass, as Mike prepared for the retrieval of the sled. He was *such* a hero. His sneakers stepped out upon the brown turf with confidence. Who would ever have imagined that it wasn't solid? Before he had taken his third step toward the center, his legs began to sink quickly beneath the mud. We were giggling. He'd get in trouble with Aunt Lynn for sure over this one! The clean blue denim was being absolutely gulped down.

"Help me!," he yelled, reaching toward us, fear all over his face.

He was squirming like a fish. Then, it occurred to us to be concerned. Giggles turned to terrified screams as he said, "I've read about this! It's Quick Sand! I'll be dead in minutes!"

Of course. Quick Sand. I'd seen it in lots of movies. I took his grasschopping stick, stretching it toward him, and he grabbed hold, struggling to get out. What would we tell Aunt Lynn? Would she cry? His screaming was intense. Would they have to dig him out to bury him? No, the Quick Sand would swallow the shovels! Dear God, let him live! Please!

The Youngers had decided amongst themselves, in the midst of total anarchy, to run for Moms. They were gone, sprinting and shrieking past the pond and toward the dirt paths. It was up to Jen and me. We tugged at the stick as he began to cry and thrash around even more. I was just planning what I'd say on National Geographic's special on Jungle Fatalities when I realized that I'd never get the chance. We had freed him, and he crawled to the grass gently.

We didn't know quite what to do then, for Mike was wiping tears away and looking embarrassed. I guess even guys who beat up other guys and who made it through eighth grade still cried. We felt embarrassed, too, and the three of us walked quietly back toward the camper. The day was tired and ready to end, and we knew the light that still dried the grass around us would be dinner time darkness beneath the leaves on the other side of the pond. Mike wiped his eyes and nose off in as manly a way as he could muster as we shuffled along the dust toward our families. His legs didn't move very well, partly because they were heavy from the muck and also because it was drying on the denim quickly. We slipped into the shade of the forest.

There was no hero's welcome, as the adults seemed to know that it was mud and had prepared an old pair of neon swimming trunks especially for him to make his costume change. Like a diaper. They laughed and gave us root beer, telling us to sit and rest for awhile. I sat down on a brick next to a plastic garden troll, listening to the squirrels throw nuts through the branchy dome over our heads. The lanterns came on. The string of tacky plastic fruit lights was plugged in, giving hue to shadows over the newly established euchre game, the table of fly-covered food, and the silhouettes lounging beneath the awning that came off of the camper. I could smell mosquito spray on some of the Youngers as they tripped by me at my troll post in pursuit of fireflies.

Just in front of me, Grandpa was intent on rebuilding the fire ... shaping it into his dreams, even. Every fire was a masterpiece which he circled like the drunk artist he may have been, surveying it from every angle to decide what it needed. A twig here, a log there. There was always the threat to throw one of the Youngers in, some horrendous laughter that could only come from a lifetime of smoking and, maybe, if

we were all lucky, some sort of phenomenal intestinal explosion. Flames climbed from their stone ring. The red magic was underway, and he was something that he might have been before we ever started coming to visit.

Mom brought me a hot dog. Mike ate one, as well. He sat directly opposite me, across the tiny field of flame, on a woven lawn chair. Aunt Lynn sprayed some mosquito junk on him like the little kids, and he talked with Uncle Bruce, in a way that I suddenly realized convinced no one, about the mechanics of a Jeep. The tear stains were no longer obvious on his pink cheeks. His bare legs were long and spread rather casually, and I wasn't certain at first of what I was looking at behind the huge, gaping opening of his baggy swimming trunks.

It was pointing right at me. In the shadowy recesses of those neon trunks lurked something very alien to me. I saw curving shapes. Could this be it? What Jen had told me about? It was round and red.

I stood up quickly, knocking over the plastic garden troll as I threw my hot dog into the trash bag. My root beer followed, making a heavy flopping sound against the other waste because it was still so full. I hoped no one would notice. I doubted they would because it was certainly dark now. The tall boy was just tall. He cried, he wasn't all-knowing. And he had a very ugly thing exposed there on that lawn chair. I went behind the camper where no fireflies were being chased and nothing was being burnt. It was only thick trees, with a rotted dart board on one of the fat trunks.

I knelt down at the base of a tree, away from the camper, until all I could see was the red fire. It was nice not to feel it on my eyes for awhile. Over there things were popping and crackling. Voices echoed in commands and in laughter, fading in and out like the burning acorns and twigs. Chlorine dried into the bleached-out towels. Grandpa limped around the fire, a warrior chief who knew the red magic. I did not want to know the red. I wanted to stay there by the quiet of a lonely tree for awhile and not get big. I did not want eighth grade to come, did not want sleds to float on water, did not want bulbous red boy parts ever. Not ever. I would go to the campgrounds from now on alone, when my cousins were not there. I would walk alone to the pond. I would ask Grandpa about fires.

Poem For All The Nubian Women In My Second Block English Class

I'm going to give birth to you,
and when you're born, you'll scream and
I'll make sure you never stop.

I'll teach you to light things on fire
and keep them burning.
I'll teach you that the fire
will not consume you.
You must take it and use it.

There's an army inside you
that can save your life.

I'll tell you to be tri-sexual,
to try anything,
sleep with, fight with, meditate with
anyone . . .

as long as you feel something.

I'll help you to see
you will not find God
or salvation
in a dark, brick building
built by dead men.

It is better to regret
things you have done,
rather than
those you haven't.

I'll teach you to be whole,
holy,
to be so much,
you don't need me
anymore.

I'll say to you
never forget what they did to you
and don't let them know you remember . . .

never forget what they did to you
and don't let them know you remember.

by Amanda Greaves

Matrilineal

There is a single light on this watermelon picnic table
and a woman sitting at my back in a swing her grandmother built
eating graham crackers dipped in milk

and thinking:

I pushed that tall girl out between these white thighs
so she could hunch over that watermelon picnic table
and try to think how she is like the moon or this cracker,
while I wish I had kept her first frothing sounds
so she might find the words
and then perhaps be able
to close her eyes,
so like my eyes,
my eyes
that have not closed
since I sat that night
hunched over my mother's picnic table.

by Kimberly Steehler Garee

Lineage

"You are so *skinny!*"
 They crowd around me
 Like wide, warm whales,
 These women
 Wrinkled blue eyes blinking at me.

It is not easy to shrug off this
 comment
 From a room full of pale-fleshed elders
 Who "foreignate" me.

Blond cousins,
 Distant — dear to me
 Inspect my almond eyes
 "Where are the craters?"
 They ask in innocence
 I wish I had an answer.

"Adopted" rings, stings my head
 Although the word is never uttered
 It resonates, fills me
 When the gene pool collects for Christmas
 That visual lineage

I watch them too, smiling at timeless mirrors
 of themselves
 It is more difficult to understand the bonds unseen

How to explain the connection
 That passes between those with
 common eyes,
 hands

Or explain the lack thereof
 But with empty words,
 Like
 "Skinny?"

by Sara Sowers

Gerald Pletcher's Still Life

by Kimberly Steehler Garee

Honorable Mention, Short Story Contest

It would have been impossible for Margaret to have guessed what would finally shake her husband out of the claustrophobic, civilized trance he'd been in since retirement. She watched in disbelief as he brandished his cricket bat in the air, as shocked by the misplaced hair on his head as she was by his changed demeanor. The blue jay's frightened wings scuffed against the plaster design on the ceiling.

"Gerald, please," she said in confusion. "Remember yourself!" Her mind, whirling from a nap disrupted, recalled the bird as it had been that very morning. Safe, outside, feeding. Was it the warmth of the house, then? The warmth must have driven the blue jay in, accidentally, away from February. Gerald Pletcher's old, fully carpeted house was, indeed, warm. She knew the attraction of that now as she had fifty years before when they had married at the Methodist Church around the corner. Winds had a tendency to blow off the lake and shake the pines, but the Pletcher house was made of large stones and bordered on most sides by the shaking trees themselves. Inside, there was a hearty furnace, but Margaret knew that the warmth was deceptive and feared for the creature's life as its wings took out her entire thimble collection. "Aaaghh," Gerald screamed. "I'll kill it! I'll smash the devil's head in!"

"Please," she said again, blinking away the effects of her nap. She moved toward her husband, pursuing him in his pursuit of the bird. She knew he was thinking of his still lifes, one room over, sitting vulnerable where they'd been for ten years across from an empty easel. Cereal boxes, colored glass bottles, dried flowers showing a decade of dust. The bird, then Gerald, then Margaret passed into the kitchen, trotting feebly alongside the glass sliding doors which displayed the metropolis of bird houses situated in the fir tree. What are the birds outside thinking?

Margaret wondered this as she gasped for breath, embarrassed by their lack of hospitality for the winged visitor. Gerald was not this type of man. Sometimes it was difficult for Margaret to put people into types when she wrote in her private journal. Sometimes, she wrote, a person was every type and no type, like Alberto. Margaret was quite fond of Alberto and her weekly rumba lessons at the senior center, thinking of them even as she pleaded with her husband to let the poor bird be. I hope I'm not too tired for my lesson tonight, she thought; I hope I can keep up with Alberto. Alberto was not a type of man.

"I know what attracts me to darling Alberto," were the words scrawled across the pages of the journal. "It's not necessarily the way his body moves during the rumba lessons. It's the way he looks right at me. I don't know or care about the color of his eyes or their flecks or any of that nonsense. All I know is that, when I tell him about my day, about the cursed still lifes, about the lovely little birds in the fir tree, he looks right at me. Sometimes, during my rumba lesson, I fancy that I'm better than paintings and symphonies and books." No, Alberto was not a type of man. Gerald clearly was.

"The trick ... is..... Gerald said breathlessly, pausing by the drinking water dispenser. "The trick ... is ... to out ... smart the damned ... thing. Pointed shoulders stuck out through his brown sweater vest as he tried to fill his lungs again. His eyebrows, gray tufts with wiry strands of black, had assumed an attitude of constant alarm.

"Gerald, you are clearly making too much of this," Margaret said with comparative ease, being in better shape because of the rumba lessons that her husband knew nothing about. Rumba was not art, of course, and art was all that mattered now to Gerald. Therefore, it was kept a precious secret in the Pletcher house.

"It will ruin ... everything," he said wildly, his words immediately followed by the sound of an avalanche of chess pieces in the adjacent room. "Aaayy ... damned thing! "

The chase was renewed with more vigor than before. Margaret, momentarily weakened by her concern for the blue jay, leaned against the water tank. Deep inside of her was the stirring of a grateful voice. It was gratitude to the bird, surely, for setting this day apart from the ones around it, the days that had been collapsing on top of her during the ten years since Gerald's retirement. It had been a life-altering event for the both of them, though she hadn't foreseen it in exactly those terms. True, there had been small warning signs in the year preceding his going-away banquet, but she had interpreted them as dreams and whimsy.

"I'm going to immerse myself in culture," he had declared over salad one evening. "Art, music, literature, dance, theater. . .you know, dear, *everything*. I'll turn the house into a museum, a concert hall, a library! After forty-five years of banking I feel I've a right to indulge myself in *real life*, Margaret. Don't you agree?"

"But people have different ideas about real..."

"It's too bad, I must say, that you fail to share my enthusiasm for culture and refinement," he'd scolded, inspecting her through his small glasses. "I do hate to move to a higher level than you, but I'm sure you're more than happy to sacrifice me for the sake of my own salvation. It lies in increased awareness of the higher, more expressive pursuits, you know...salvation, that is. Yes, it's a pity. A pity you should want to plod on along a dusty path of the commonplace while I hitch my wagon...I mean, after all these years. To split like this in missions."

"In missions?" she had asked, picking mushrooms out of his salad for him.

"What? You haven't even got a mission, Margaret? Good God."

That was the day, the evening, the minute in which they had ceased to be the couple in what she called the black and white, cardboard moon photograph. It was mounted on their living room wall in a gilded frame (the frame a wedding gift which had never actually held their wedding portrait). They were very young in it, both of them in gaudy hats with slight sunburns that were evident even in shades of gray, sitting on an enormous, sliver of a moon. It had been displayed there for countless years and then at their anniversary party last weekend at the conservatory, leaving a temporary and indifferent vacancy on the wall. Margaret could have cared less about it by the day of the bird, though it had long been her favorite possession. In the early pages of her journal she had identified it as such because it was the only photograph in which they were both smiling. She had insisted, her one emphatic desire in their entire married life, that the portrait be displayed for everyone who entered their home. It seemed to stand, in her mind, as a representation of a relationship that she wanted to be a part of. She wondered sometimes, did they have that relationship, that one she wanted, on the day that the photograph was taken?

"Gerald, where was that picture done?" she had asked her husband some years before.

"What picture are you referring to? I mean, are we talking Ansel Adams or what? Do you realize how many photographs ... ?"

"The cardboard moon picture," she interrupted, not prepared for a lecture on the rise of photography as a genre of visual art. "The one of us ... you know, smiling."

"Oh. That," he said, returning to his potato. They had spoken only at supper since he undertook his cultural project. "I haven't the slightest notion."

"I can't remember either," she said, narrowing her eyes in frustration.

"Whatever would have made you wonder such a thing, Margaret?"

"Someone asked me the other day, and I couldn't say for sure." This was a lie. No one came to their house anymore. "I told them it was probably Nelly Beck's New Year's party, but I know that's not it."

"Nelly Beck ... ! What the devil would Nelly Beck have a cardboard moon at her party for ... to say nothing of a professional photographer?" She could tell Gerald was getting indigestion at the very mention of something he couldn't control, so she had finished her creamed corn in silence.

"Dear Journal" she had written once, "my husband is a type. I am sad at discovering this, in discovering that of all the people I know he is the only one who is very definitely a type. He is the type to think and not feel, the type who hears but doesn't listen ... the type that doesn't even

notice I've stopped talking."

"Gerald, would you let that poor bird *be*?" she cried, back in pursuit. The fact that she knew the bird intimately, studying it since winter had set in, made her all the more frustrated.

"How did this *happen*?" her husband roared at her with a reckless wave of his bat, taking out yet another expensive lamp. She could offer no easy answers, nor would she have if she'd been able. "This is good for him," she thought. "He needs to learn, even at this late date, that he can't control everything. That his plans and comfort can and will be disturbed ... should be! He needs to see that life is ... well, that it isn't one big subject you can study and ..."

"Damn it," he yelled as a clay relief of Athena crashed to the desk below it and the bird made for the stairway. Margaret loved the blue jay. She was at one with its wild wings as she had never been with anything or anyone else. Except, maybe, Alberto. Remembering her nightly rumba lesson again, Margaret began to feel irritated.

"This will stop right now," she exclaimed, stomping on the plush carpet for emphasis. How ridiculous it sounded, *her* forming declaratives! "We cannot kill ourselves in this way, Gerald. Are you listening? There are people we can call to come remove the bird peacefully. Let's do that. Gerald?" His narrow head, rather crimson, poked out from behind the banister on the landing of the stairway. He was glaring.

"So ... like you. Think for one ... minute, Margaret! Think of the sculptures! The record collections ... and ... still lifes! It'll ... upset my still lifes! I cannot wait... for someone to ... come!" It was destroying the intricacy of his life. She felt both pleased and disturbed at once. But his head had disappeared up the stairs, and another crash forced Margaret back into the reality of the situation.

She'd been napping, resting for her rumba class, when it made itself known. Opening her eyes slowly from a dream about herself dancing among the creatures of a jungle, she heard the flapping before the bird came into focus. It moved quickly, nervously, so that she couldn't make out what it was at first. Then she recognized it, a favorite patron of the bird houses she spent such a lot of time watching — bird houses that Gerald had modelled in the shape of the Parthenon. He'd spent months shaping the pillars and the forms of gods and goddesses, then arranged them carefully in the tree in accordance with each building's position on the original site. He had recently discussed a plan for one long bird gathering place fashioned after the British Museum, but that was still in the research phase.

"What was that crash?" She heard his civilized voice from his study, where he'd been reading about shrubbery design. She delayed responding to his question, as though sensing the disaster which was to follow.

Now, breathless in the upstairs hallway, she felt an exhilarating

enjoyment. Was it because she was in better shape than Gerald? Was it because the bird was clearly triumphing in every room, in every minor battle? Was it the blue, bloodless pallor creeping into her husband's skin? She felt like laughing, an odd sensation in her bowels that was creeping toward a higher, deliciously ticklish part of her. But she wasn't to get the chance.

Deftly, the small bird turned back down the stairway, and Margaret hoped for one bright moment that he would find freedom before Gerald could get to him. But hope was replaced with horror as she paused at the top of the stairway and watched the confused, disoriented bird crash headfirst into the wall of the landing. It had been travelling at such a high speed that the narrow beak stuck right into the drywall, its dead body hanging below it like a sack of marbles pinned to a cork board.

"NO!" Margaret cried in despair. In a final act of deviation from his civilized self, Gerald let out a triumphant grunt, flinging the bat ferociously down the steps after his enemy. Margaret, as though she could somehow comfort the poor bird, rushed down toward him. Her foot landed on the cricket paddle, and she saw the ceiling go spinning up before her.

She became aware of a sharp pain in her hip. Blinking fuzziness from her eyes, she found herself lying against the wall at the base of the stairway, the dead bird hanging just above her head. So he had tried to finish them both. Gerald had seen her own animal spirit coming through lately, recognized the threat to his pristine existence, and taken the necessary steps to finish her off. Two birds with one paddle. Only, she had lived. She narrowed her eyes as the pain throbbed. She saw Gerald's shocked face moving cautiously down the stairway toward her.

"My hip," she growled. "You've broken my hip! Now I can't rumba!"

"Margaret, Margaret. Come, now. You're talking crazy. I will call the ambulance for you." His calm seemed the final insult after he had shown such passion for the blue jay. As he rushed down the last step toward her, she hoisted her unhurt leg and sent it barrelling into his stomach. Slumped beside her on the landing, Gerald breathed heavily and stared at his wife. She stared back, thinking what a lovely still life they would make: the fallen old man, the injured old woman who would have to miss her rumba class indefinitely, and the dead bird dangling above them. Only, it wasn't a still life because she and Gerald lived on. Suddenly, perhaps from hitting her head when she fell, Margaret remembered having her picture taken with Gerald fifty years before. It had been at the State Fair on a very hot August day. She pleaded with him to sit on the cardboard moon with her. There had been a debate over whether or not they should smile — a fight about it, really.

"No one smiles," he had said, "in a photograph. It doesn't look very sophisticated."

"This isn't art, Gerald," she had answered. Remembering this on the stair landing, Margaret laughed.

Her Epic
Third Place, Poetry Contest

The epic in her head
 She lived the epic in her head
 The maiden, the prize, the creature
 To which tall tales were fed.

He, with his sword,
 Went to distant lands
 Fighting battles that brought him fierce glory
 While she fought, taught her spirit to wither
 Tamed it to rise with the bread.

Her epic, in her head
 Making meaning of meals instead
 In solitude, in no man's land
 Were inward roads to tread

He cannot know millennia
 of resignation's
 quiet
 fervor

These lessons belong to the second sex

Embedded yet in the second X.

In a voice seldom heard in tales
 Her wisdom whispers somewhere
 In the turbulent depths of psyche,
 A pity if left unsaid.

by Sara Sowers

Progressive Barbie

When I was six
my Barbie was having sex with Ken.
When I was sixteen
my Barbie was getting tattooed.

My best friend and I
found an old Barbie—
unaged
untouched
a perfect
defective American woman.
Frame finely formed
by a hungry man
a deprived woman. skin
sticky, string-like lips, legs
bend half way, arthritis?
Of course not.
Her medium tits round
her anorexic torso set
standards for perfect
boobs, face, style, fingers
perfect, perfect, perfect.

From egos bruised, we
pulled, chopped, cut
to a spike
her slim silky strands.
We cheered for Barbie's
rebirth—"Progressive Barbie"!

The Fuck-it Barbie
The Rebel Barbie
The Bitch Barbie.
We colored in her thin limbs
with tattoos, everywhere
wet on her new attitude.

by Jessica Lee Schultz

Letter to Ida Bell

I remember
as a child
looking at your picture on the wall
a drawing,
copied from the only photo
you were ever in

swathed in a miniature white nightgown
like a cabbage patch preemie
face wide and serene
content, lying in her arms
you might have been anyone's baby
secure and loved,
no sign of sickness

but you were hers

and I wondered about you
a mysterious entity I couldn't
quite fathom
then

I could not comprehend
her loss
or the solitude of it —
she was the only one left
to mourn you
the only one you left
behind

I never saw her mourn for you
though the shoebox in the attic
proved she didn't forget

I wonder if she crept up there
still nights
 (after family gatherings
 when children and grandchildren had returned home)
and opened it carefully
as though it contained a sacred relic

I used to picture her
pressing the cottony nightgown to her nose

breathing in your babyscent
holding your tiny shoes in her hands
trying to feel the weight of you

did she hold your rattle,
eyes squeezed shut
imagining what you might have been like
tottering around on stiff legs
that didn't know how to bend yet

I used to picture her
pressing your photo to her face
pretending she could feel your warmth

but I like to picture it now
the two of you together
cradling you against her heart
love shining from her pores
your cheeks pressed together
smiles on both your radiant faces
a puzzle finally complete

by Beth Honeycutt

Practical Fantasies

by Sara Sowers

"I want to go to bed next to my fantasy, and wake up in the morning next to my best friend." This from the mouth of the most dull, conservative man that I know, my best friend's fiancé, on the eve of their wedding day. I stood a few feet away from the two, and for a moment I envied her, not knowing how it would feel to look into a person's eyes, and hear those words. Her eyes were bright with joy, her cheeks flushed. They pulled together in a tight embrace. I looked away, and caught my reflection in the full-length mirror, and it startled me to find myself wearing a ruffled mauve gown. I looked ridiculous, and a feeling of dread crept into my chest.

The wedding day came and went. Finally, afterwards, I was alone, and left to my private thoughts. I felt strangely frustrated, because I realized that they had been building up in me like an angry one-sided conversation for about a week. Driving home from the reception late that night, still a little bit warm from the champagne, I supposed that they were well on their way to a wedding night fantasy at this hour. And to the rest of their lives. Did she tell me she was wearing the red teddy, or the lavender gown from the bridal shower? An unexpected red light found my foot on the screeching brakes, and I reproached myself that such sickening questions were running through my mind. Who cared? Soon enough they would be in a little house in the suburbs, feeding the dog every morning and night, reading the paper together on Sunday, and sex would be little more than a means of reproduction, or a quick, passionless release from the banalities of the nine to five job.

Wordlessly, I had kissed my friend goodbye before her depart. I wished I had had the correct words to say, but in my misery, the only word that came to mind was a stiff "congratulations." At that point it was not jealousy that stole my good will away, but a disbelief that life as we knew it was gone forever. What about me?

Monday I was back at school, my final year at college, drowning myself in the safe intellectual atmosphere, telling myself I could reach for the clouds, and that philosophy would enlighten me to the point where I would no longer need a man, desperation would be extinguished.

I am the quiet girl at the back of the classroom, the one who shows up on time every day, never misses an assignment, and always has paper and pen ready before the hour begins. I find refuge in the papers I perfect, the predictable grade at the top of the exam, and knowing that there is no man to cloud up my otherwise sanitary lifestyle.

Yet there is a problem. Over the years spent in the classroom, finding passion in the ideas and thoughts of great men, the tendency to let my mind wander to more dangerous subjects grew worse and worse.

I have a friend who goes through boyfriends like tissues. She collects them, enjoys their soft texture, then discards them. And starts over again. She tells me of her conquests, in a restroom, on her kitchen counter, speeding down 1-71 going sixty-five miles an hour. Her vehicle stories predominate, and it suits her quick lifestyle, I guess. We joke a lot about needing to get laid, like girls sometimes do. The difference between us is that she does exactly what she knows she needs. Of course, it is common knowledge that the more promiscuous types tend to have a low opinion of themselves.

I think that the role of sexuality for women in society is confused. There is no place for the sex-crazed young woman in "decent" society. Yet television programs would lead a person to think that all women need sex, all the time. Can there be a middle ground? Sitting in class, surrounded by students in jeans and baggy tee-shirts, I wonder if I am the only one who looks around, and wonders what the guy in the front row looks like naked. It is harmless, amusing fun, a private diversion from the lecture. I also wonder why, when the pretty girl in the front row shows up for class in a short skirt one day, most male eyes, in admiration, turn her way, but she receives catty sideways glances from half of the girls in the room.

"I like your outfit," I hear one sterile female voice say, and the pretty girl looks as if she wishes her legs were covered. She does not feel violated; ironically, she feels like the offender. It is frustrating moments like these when I wish class would break out in a wild orgy. We could close the curtains, lock the door, and forget the rules.

I once saw a historical documentary on ancient Rome. The narrator told the story about an emperor's wife who worked as a prostitute. This was not a necessity, but a choice. She liked to see how many men she could handle in a day, and actually had a competition going on with a colleague. She enjoyed the sybaritic lifestyle. Her husband had no idea about this part-time job.

Today we might say that she must have been an emotional basket-case, perhaps had a bad relationship with her father, and needed to find self-worth and solace in male companionship to accommodate for her lack of love and approval. Or one might say she was a "slut."

Two weeks after my friend's wedding, I received a call from her, back from her long honeymoon. She sounded refreshed, excited, and very content. We talked a long while about the weather in Cancun (or rather, she did), and told me she had brought me back a sombrero. She said that she had fried herself on the beach, and so did Tom, and their skin was all peeled off. I cut our conversation short because I had a midterm to study for. I fell asleep that night on the couch next to the window. Before slumber took me, I could feel the cold seeping through the window panes, and watched lazily as the light shades of gray in the sky turned darker, until finally, the dark fell all around.

That night I had a memorable dream. It was summer, a black, liquid night when the humidity created the feeling that I was swimming in a sea of energy. I felt myself walking to the piano, guided by the light of a moonbeam splashed across the floor, and there, I found a little bit of satiation. My favorite piece is not by a well-known composer. It involves a slow, meticulous, almost sinful exploration of every single key. I wanted to break into a crescendo at any given moment, but something held me back. I always prefer the moody piano to the raucous sound of human voice when I want to think. It is a private seduction with two hands— anyone who has ever had a midnight serenade would understand. Just before I broke into the final, dying measure, I was awakened with a start, possibly by a noise.

I carried the dulled memory of this dream to class the next day. It was my morning class, and the sound of piano music ran—in my head. I sat next to the blond, anonymous guy with the nice voice. I am feeling restless today. The sun is streaming in the windows, and the fluorescent lights give the room that familiar artificial glow. I am brave today. He is someone I would like to know. Today is different, it has to be different.

The initiation is clearly up to me, and I feel it, and make an attempt, with quivering nerves and a fast-beating heart. Eye contact is the most painful of procedures, yet necessary, made more so when I realize that his are a prettier blue than I had thought.

"Did you start your paper?"

To my delight, he hears me, in the midst of the morning buzz all around us. I avoid his immediate glance, and hear him reply,

"Yeah, just started yesterday." Chuckle. His body twists awkwardly in the desk towards me, and I feel obliged to entertain him further with something witty to say. Palms sweating, we start to dance.

"You've had this professor before?" he asks. I nod, and find the courage to look him in the eyes again. Drawn to him, I can smell the remnants of shaving lotion radiating off of his body, and can almost feel the warmth of him, so close. He pulls me even closer, and his lips fall gently onto mine.

"I had him last year for an intro course, did you?" I ask in a breathy voice that is not my own, but who can speak after such an unexpected kiss? I uncross my legs, maintaining eye-contact, and slowly begin to unbutton his flannel shirt, the collar down.

"Yes, I really like this guy, I've had him a few times." He reaches out his hand, and tousles my hair. I pull his shirt open, and the lights go down; somewhere a fire is lit, because his skin glows like gold, and my incredible desire to know him mounts.

"Is philosophy your major?"

I am wearing a skirt, and I can feel his palms on my legs, running gently up and down my calf, leaving a trail of fire, and he whispers in

my ear, "No, it's my minor. But I'm thinking of going all the way with it."

"Oh," I say, my lips moving down his chest, "You should."

He smiles, and tells me in his gravelly voice, "But it's been a long time that I've been here. I've got to graduate sometime. Besides, it's not practical." I am eyeing the button on the fly of his jeans, like a sparkling jewel, a tempting threat to my mission.

"You should do what you like," and I smile, thrilled with him, his voice, easy manner, when all too suddenly, the sound of the professor's voice interrupts my reverie, and I am slapped back, in my hard desk, back to my private island. My checks are flushed, my heartbeat in my ears, and I realize I have never left my seat. Breathe deep, but don't shudder when you let it out, I tell myself, and I feign an earnest smile at the professor.

My poor imagination curls her tail back in, and I am laughing inside at my pitiful state.

My mind operating back in reality, I harness my intensity on the lecture, and hope that those around me don't notice the silly expression on my face. I let my hair fall around my face as a dark shield, cross my legs, and wait for the end of lecture.

Palm Reading

Second Place, Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

I think that my secret is being revealed in the box underneath my
 eyelids,
 she gazed at my hand and saw the scars left over by the last one,
 broken hearts and broken dreams chiseling marks into my skin,
 "what happened there?" she pointed to my left hand,
 "she dug her fingernails into my skin while we wrestled."
 Her fingers ran over it, gently
 I was reminded of an old feeling
 she remarked how the outer skin seemed to get sucked into the patch of
 damaged
 tissue,
 "yes, I think it was that way," I responded
 I drank some of my wine
 she ate an olive
 we listened to the violin slicing through the layers of smoke
 "how deep was the cut?" she asked.
 "It healed quickly," I said.
 I looked at the scar on my right hand
 "yes, I think it was that way."
 She poured a glass of the wine stirring in another olive
 "what time does the movie start?" she asked
 "It starts at 9:00."
 "I heard it's lovely," she commented.
 "Yes, I've heard quite the same." I cleared my throat
 "it's about Jesus and the crucifixion," she continued
 "there's a man with some scars," I said with a smile
 "I like your smile," she said
 I finished the wine
 "we should probably be going. It's almost time for the movie to start," I
 put my coat on.
 "yes, it's almost time."
 I could feel her eyes prying at my thoughts
 I touched the scar on my left hand.
 "yes, it's almost time," I said softly to myself
 I returned her gaze.

by Matt Sharpless

Spirituality in Traffic

Honorable Mention, Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

Sometimes
the turn signal blinks in time
with the song on the radio
but usually it doesn't.
Nice when it happens but
you can't count on it
because a lot of cars are
made in Japan nowadays
by people who have
completely different
ideas about religion.

by Kyle Mossman

Meditation Rant: Greaves to Ginsberg

Third Place, Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

"I sit inside the shell of the old Me," — Allen Ginsberg
I sit because the bus lags
I sit because nobody makes me
I sit because I am the cosmopolitan bodhisattva with an
urban vision
I sit in Columbus because I can't afford Chicago
I sit and wear my bikini on the inside
I sit because my blossoming gut told me to
I sit because I learned in Chemistry that I breathe Buddha's
air from Lumbini
I sit because I fear the side effects of vitamins
I sit because I don't know what else to do like you
I sit for diversity
I sit to bring humanity into humanity's hands
I sit and sit and sit

by Amanda Greaves

Stuck on the Ignorance Turnpike

by Kyle Mossman

Technology is a scary thing. I would rather be whacked in the head with a croquet mallet than stare, slack-jawed, into a cold, alien computer screen.

When people ask me if I know anything about computers, I tell them that I know how to type papers and print them out. After all, that is *something*. But considering the full capabilities of computers these days (I have *heard* about it), it's not much. That's like answering the question,

"Do you know how to play chess?" by saying, "Well, I like to stick the pieces in my mouth."

A friend of mine owns a computer that makes the one I use look like an Etch-A-Sketch. He calls it his baby. I call it the Super Ultra Mega XL2000 w/ Cheese. This thing can do his taxes, talk to another computer in Tokyo, program his VCR, make a chef salad and play the banjo all at the same time.

As far as I'm concerned, technological progress should have come to a screeching halt right after the invention of Atari. I could handle Atari. I was an Atari guru. I remember playing Pole Position after school one day, zooming along that video road thinking, "Wow, I'm a genius. I have embraced and subsequently mastered technology. Now I shall rule the world." I realize now that I made a tragic mistake. I actually thought that the road in that game was that "Information Superhighway" everyone likes to talk about. Now, four months later, I realize that I was wrong. I have since been demoted from champion race car driver to Frogger on that highway, and there's nothing I can do about it but bitch.

I can't go outside my room anymore without hearing about the Internet and E-mail and America Online and Compuserve and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That's the actual sound I hear in my head whenever I'm subjected to that kind of fancy computer lingo. Nowadays, it seems like everyone and their dog has his own Web Site (whatever the hell that means).

Is all this really necessary? Or is it all just part of an elaborate, global scheme to make me feel stupid. I have to wonder.

Poser

by Jeremy Fulwiler

I am the poser. I can tell, now. I will be sitting there, just minding my own, and then I'll look at myself or think about how I'm sitting or standing and I'll think, "My god, what am I doing in this pose?" And then I'll realize why: because it kinda looks good, or mysterious, or something attention fetching. It's not even a conscious decision. It happens as if I'm meant to be that way. And who knows? Maybe I am. Some of my friends say I'm good looking. I like to believe them. Maybe this is my way of verifying it, of completing it.

But the question remains: how do I get in these such poses? I never went to school for it, or took a chair and placed it in front of a mirror and tried to find complementary positions. But I have watched pretty many movies. And I was a theatre major for a while. Oh, I think that did it. Acting classes. You sit there in those classes and then look around, and everyone's assumed characters from *A Chorus Line* or *Fame* or something. It's so ridiculous. Not only were we trying to learn how to act, but we were trying to learn how to try to learn how to act and look good while doing it. If you ask me, it got in the way.

However, there is also the issue of cause and effect. Was I a theatre major because I was good at posing? Or did being a theatre major teach me how to pose? I don't remember too well if I posed a lot before college. I do remember one day, probably when I was ten or so, that my mom was talking to me and when she looked up at me, I was in this crazy position, balancing on one leg with my extremities all facing my left, similar to the letter "E." Perhaps that's when it all happened. I learned then that balancing on one leg was perhaps too aggressive a way to get attention. I learned the necessity for a subtler pose, a less obtrusive way to attain and maintain attention. So from then on, my posing took on a more subconscious feel. Then I tried to become an actor and exploit it. And now I am trying to be a writer, exploiting it again, but on paper.

I could share other possibilities for the origin of my posing, but I'd really like to get into my next pose. Think what you will. Just smile and nod if you see me sitting somewhere trying to be all suave or something. It will rub off eventually. At least, won't it?

I Won't Play By Your Rules
Honorable Mention, Poetry Contest

I don't need this drama
I am not an actress
I did not try out for this part

I won't wear your costumes
I refuse to hide behind these masks
I can't memorize your every line

I don't need these games
I am not a player
I did not try out for this team

I don't have protective gear for my head or my heart
I refuse to wear this uniform
I won't play by your rules

by Kiera Lee Kiley

Promiscuity

you look sleazy tonight
bright red halter
ribbed for my pleasure
black, patent leather mini-skirt
enhancing my libido
aphrodisiacal cleavage
antagonizing my desires
cheesy, Sears tower-hair
concur your stiling pumps
mission accomplished
"where's this going?" you ask
I pause... what am I thinking?
I don't like whores
I decide to let her know
now how to say nicely
"take your hoed ass back to the corner"
I got it!
I'll give her a dollar.

by Brendan Radtke

mama's boy

it's been awhile since i've thought about you
 tragic, beautiful boy,
 with your crack-fiend eyes
 and your dripping nose
 your beat-up arm
 and your slack-jawed, hang-dog look.

you with the beautiful blue eyes
 once so clear and bright
 i remember asking you what you thought
 of mother nature that day
 last February in
 Consumer Education
 and you replied,
 "I love nature, but I love my mother more."
 that scene still plays in my mind, mama's boy,
 when your eyes weren't glossed,
 your pupils not dilated with
 lysergicacidethyhlamide
 your nose not dripping with
 white powder
 your lungs not black with sticky tar
 your arm not coursing with

o

p

i

u

m

yes, it's been awhile since
 i've let myself remember
 my tragic, beautiful, blue-eyed
 baby.

and still the pain lingers ...

by Abigail Bowers

We're the Bad Kids

from an ABC after school special.
We smoke and
we spit.
We make fun of the retarded kids.
We know the f-word
and why it's dirty.
We pick fights
with the minister's son.
It's fun
'cause no matter how much we do it,
he just keeps turning his
fat Presbyterian cheeks
like the book told him to —
head swinging back and forth,
riding the blows
like a busy saloon door,
and we laugh.

by Kyle Mossman

Slip and Slide and Sunset Pink

by Abigail Bowers

I remember being ten and declaring I wanted to go to summer camp—not the YMCA Horse Camp I normally went to every year, but the United Methodist Church horse camp. Unfortunately, I was a grade short—you had to be entering sixth. Disappointed but not defeated, I leafed through the camp brochure, my eyes lighting on Camp Wesley in Bellefontaine, Ohio. Camp Wesley had it all: tents, games, hikes ... jubilation was mine. I coerced my best friend Rachel into joining me, and off we went during those scorching July days.

I was unprepared, however, for the massive platform tents, Goliath Wolf spiders, odoriferous outhouse, and the Slip-and-Slide. Our camp Slip-and-Slide wasn't a real one—not what you saw advertised on television, with a massive yellow sheet of plastic and awesome sprinklers where children would run and do kamikaze stomach slides. No, ours consisted of long, ratty, clear plastic stretching down a short slope. Discarded bottles of Joy and Dawn liquid soaps dotted the tiny mountain—bubbles, of course, to achieve the “slip.” Bonnie and Dave, our over-friendly counselors, liberally poured soap on the plastic. Because the grass had just been mowed, the scent of fresh cut greenery combined with lemony soap, giving the air a strange sort of greenhouse, Florida-esque odor.

After the seemingly long preparation (in reality, about ten minutes), we were ready to begin our sojourn down the slide. Jacob, a blond daredevil, proclaimed he would be the one to go first. Bonnie was our send-off at the top. Dave positioned himself at the bottom to catch us, lest we gathered so much speed that we flew into the lake, located about ten feet from the bottom of the slide.

Bonnie gave Jacob a hearty shove, and we watched in fascination as he flew to the right, collecting grass and other debris on his wet body. He righted himself, and as Dave bent down to catch him, we were dazzled by another sight: Dave's penis spilled out of his neon pink shorts.

We girls looked at each other in disbelief, and concluded that it must just be the neon color of his shorts reflecting off his leg. We decided to watch again.

Shelby, a shy blonde, volunteered to go next, and we knew then there was no denying the truth. As Dave crouched down to snag her, out popped his “one-eyed pirate” again. She walked back up the hill, suppressing a giggle, and exploded into laughter when she reached our tight little group. Rachel and I looked at each other. “It's sorta pink,” Rachel commented. “Yeah,” I agreed, “sort of a Sunset Pink!” We

exploded into laughter again.

I was called next. Gathering my courage, I approached the precarious piece of plastic. Bonnie smiled reassuringly at me, the sun glinting off her glasses and momentarily blinding me. I swallowed hard and looked down at Dave, who was wildly cheering and chanting my name: "Abby! Abby! Abby!" He kept repeating to "come down!" Come down and what ... ? Be one on one with his maleness, which should have been but wasn't neatly tucked away? This was church camp, for God's sake. CHURCH CAMP! As I sat to begin my journey into the unknown, several situations clouded my mind. I could careen off the side before he caught me. I could just say I didn't want to do it — maybe it could be against my religion. The worst case scenario, however, was if he didn't catch me and I slid between his squatting form. Would I smack my forehead on his dangling third leg? Would his freely swinging penis hit me in the eye, rendering me sightless so I'd have to wear an eye patch and explain to all my friends that I was blinded by a Sunset Pink penis? As I opened my mouth to offer an excuse, Bonnie gave me a shove, and down I flew.

I screamed the whole way down. The world whizzed by so quickly, and I saw my young life flash before my eyes. Various images pervaded my senses: how the water sparkled in the lake, the smell of soap and grass, the sticks under the plastic biting into my tender flesh, and smiling Dave ready to catch me. As I neared the target, his arms jutted out.

He snagged me just in time. I stared into his laughing eyes, carefully avoiding those damn neon shorts and what they held. As he righted my prone body, he asked if I was all right. I nodded mutely, wandered up the hill, and exploded into laughter with Rachel. As she was called, her golden eyes opened wide and her mouth dropped down. Perhaps she was having the same nightmarish thoughts that I had... a sightless future by Sunset Pinky.

Coming From. . . WYWY

by Laura Vallejo

First Place, I.S. Festival Essay Contest

I was a very shy girl, the weirdest kid who lived in her own world. My appearance, short and skinny made me look like a weak person; I don't think that word (*weakness*) has ever existed in my vocabulary.

I come from a very big family. My dad has six brothers and my mom has six sisters. They met each other in some strange circumstances since they lived in different cities. People in my mom's town are so warm and joyful, probably because it is right on the coast. My dad is from a very small town. They got married when they were twenty-six years old. At the beginning they had problems having babies. They prayed, I know, and they got seven children, eventually. I am the fourth: I have two older and two younger sisters and an older as well as a younger brother. I am right in the middle, and I think that was an advantage for me. I learned to see things in two different ways: I got the experienced views of the older ones, but I rather thought like the younger ones from whom I learned to enjoy my childhood. I think my position in the family, made me be the referee among my brothers and sisters. I was the conscience, the wisest one. It was hard, sometimes, because I had to think in a neutral way, but as time passed by I started to belong to the "*club of the younger ones.*"

When I was four years old, my dad had a very good job and he used to take us on vacation every summer, but I didn't like to leave my untouchable world, so, I stayed at home with my mom. I remember that my older brother and sisters always had the best things: clothing, shoes, dolls, toys, bikes, everything they wanted. The little ones used to play with the things the older ones didn't want to use any more. But we were children, and I never cared about material things, because I never liked toys. I used to collect stones, stones of all kinds. My mom says that I seemed to be on the moon all the time; so little, so skinny, with the curliest and blackest hair she had ever seen, at least among the members of our whole family. She was worried because I didn't like to interact with people.

One day, my dad lost his job. Due to injustices in life he was in jail for three weeks. His boss wanted him to help him to cheat at the enterprise where they were working but he didn't accept. Consequently, that man accused my dad of trying to defraud the company. He was found not guilty after a few days, but nothing could erase the scar that this situation brought into our family. I was very young and I don't remember anything about it. I have learned it from my mom some years ago. My

mom says that at that moment our life had completely changed.

We left our house and moved to a smaller one in the same town. My mom started working as a teacher at a secondary school. My dad began to buy and sell things like cars and houses: we started a new life. My brothers, sisters and I never felt the hard time my parents were going through, because they always tried to raise us as well as they could, and we were always surrounded by all their love. We were not a wealthy family, but instead, we always had joy and happiness. Their support and comprehension were crucial in our lives.

I grew up in a small city called Huamantla which was founded four hundred and seventy-one years ago. It is located in the southern part of the smallest state of the Mexican Republic. It is a place full of history and magic. Most of the people over there are nice, and know each other very well. They immediately know if someone is new in town. It seems to me that they recognize foreigners by their smell, like when you find an orange in a basket of apples with your eyes closed. My mom had a hard time living in that small place. She was a stranger.

We were raised with the typical strictness of Mexican parents, but also with plenty of freedom. My parents gave us the best examples of moral values and of education. They always cared about that. We used to go to school without any money in our pockets, but with all the faith and hope in our hearts. We were the poor ones in the family, which helped us to learn how to value every single thing and every single experience in our lives.

In elementary school my professors always asked me to read poems and I always ended with my eyes wet. It was funny because everybody ended up crying as well. I think I was afraid of being in front of an audience. The little shy girl still lived in me. I remember my brothers' and sisters' efforts to change me, and some other people's laughs and jokes concerning my personality.

Mexican people have always been characterized as friendly because of their hospitality. In our case many people were very envious of us. We grew up and we always got very good grades at school. My parents deserved that and we wanted to be the best for them. It was not always possible, but at least it gave us a lot of satisfaction when we reached our goal. However, it was not easy to deal with the kind of people that were always trying to make me feel bad and who used to think that I had good grades because I was the teacher's daughter! Back in my country, in some public schools, students are supposed to take a test to see which one is the best. The winner has the right to carry the Mexican flag in the military parades for a year, but I had to refuse carrying it to avoid gossiping among my school-mates. My mother always told me that the most important was to keep the truth in our hearts, because all the things we do are reversible, and we always have what we deserve depending on our good or bad actions in life. By the way, the man who accused my

dad is now in jail since last year. These kinds of unfair situations made me work hard with tenacity in order to get all the things that I wanted to have and that I wanted to do.

I got a scholarship in a private high school in a city located half an hour from my hometown. I found wealthy, frivolous and materialistic kids who did not have anything in their minds, neither in their hearts. Thus, I decided to go to a public high school back in my town where I met my best friend. I did change my personality being around her. She showed me how to see life through her eyes. Everything seemed so perfect. With her, I was an open person and we used to spend a lot of time together. One morning I woke up with a pain in my heart: she was an angel now. She was only sixteen but she had known that she would die from her sickness since she was seven. From her, I learned to live and enjoy every day as if it were the last one. Once more, I entered my silent world, but I gained the experience that she left with me. My heart was empty and I was looking for protection in my silence. A few weeks after her death, I understood that she was the light that I needed to direct my life. I still believe that she would have followed the same studies I did.

I went to college and started my life in another city which used to scare me. I had to do a daily trip by bus to get there. I hate buses because they are always crowded and you never know what kind of person will be sitting next to you. After a few days, I realized that Tlaxcala is a very nice and quiet place, located an hour from my city. It is really amazing that cities which are so close to each other can be so different in their people, customs, habits, food, relationships, everything.

Mexican parents do not worry if their children stay at home until they get married. They enjoy helping their "kids" until they get a job, and start to earn some money. That is not a problem. But my parents got an apartment for the "*club of the younger ones*" in this new city and we went to live there.

It was hard for me to be away from my parents but it was not difficult to get used to freedom. So, my sisters, brother and I liked the idea of living on our own. Through many sacrifices I got a car, and so did my sister. My performance as a student in the Foreign Languages Faculty gave me the opportunity to work for the University where I studied after graduation. I started to teach English and the very shy girl inside of me started to walk away. I learned how to face an audience. As time passed by I felt more and more comfortable with myself and with my job. I enjoyed it a lot. I wanted to transmit to my students my desire to learn another language, another culture. I wanted them to know how important it is to take advantage of every thing we do in every day of our life. This philosophy gave me the chance to be selected among some other people to come to Otterbein College.

My life changed since I stepped on American lands, maybe even before I left my dear Mexico. Although I left my family, my job, my

friends and everything, I know I made the right decision. I was so scared. I studied English for a long time but I knew that what you learn at school is not enough. It was necessary to face it in real life. I planned my trip very carefully. I had to sell my car to get the ticket and some extra money. I dreamed of my new life in a different country and the only thing I had was my enormous appetite for learning as much as possible. Everybody at home was amazed — "You, the shyest girl in the world is going alone to an unknown place?" Yet, they supported me a lot.

I left my heart in Mexico the day I took the plane to come here for the very first time. I was so excited that I lost my English in migration. I had a very hard time in understanding the different accents that I heard after asking people for the right gate.

The first week I went to bed thinking in English and I woke up speaking Spanish! I missed my family. I was sick for two weeks because of the food, but I kept trying to do my best, as always. I started to meet people and I realized that there is a lot of discrimination among the people in this country. It is not only against me because I am Mexican, but also against many other people. That is something that I will never understand, but being in a place where everybody cares about the color of the skin, there is no choice: you'd better learn to live with that. I do not complain, though, because I have met some really nice people who have helped me and who have made me feel loved.

I have learned to see life from a different point of view. I have felt lonely sometimes, but I thank God for all the good experiences that I have lived since I was a child. I also thank God for all the bad experiences and failures from which I have taken the positive outcomes in order to apply them in my new life in America.

I still remember the first time I took an English course, I was ten. It was like discovering a new world for me. I liked it so much that I promised myself to go to the United States to learn about another culture, to understand the feeling of being abroad and to keep in my heart all the wonderful things I could live. That is exactly what I am doing since I came here.

1998 Judges

Poetry and Roy Burkhart Religious Poetry Contest

Doug Gray, a published poet, works at Prentice-Hall and teaches part-time in the Otterbein English Department.

Personal Essay Contest

Candyce Barnes has had many pieces of short fiction published. Her essay, "Boots, Saddle, to Horse, and Away!" will soon appear in a collection titled, *Horse People*. She has two full-grown male sheep dogs named Boots and Todd.

Short Story Contest

Michael Olin-Hitt, a 1986 graduate of Otterbein College, is currently in the English Department at Mount Union College.

Lousie Gleim Williams Newswriting Contest

Patty Bitler is currently a copy editor at *The Columbus Dispatch* and has over twenty years of journalism experience to her credit.

