

Spring 1978

Spring 1978

Valparaiso University

Follow this and additional works at: http://scholar.valpo.edu/lighter_62-03



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Valparaiso University, "Spring 1978" (1978). *The Lighter, 1962-2003*. Paper 67.
http://scholar.valpo.edu/lighter_62-03/67

This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by the Department of English at ValpoScholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Lighter, 1962-2003 by an authorized administrator of ValpoScholar. For more information, please contact a ValpoScholar staff member at scholar@valpo.edu.

Lighter



spring 1978



THE LIGHTER

The literary-variety magazine of Valparaiso University

Spring 1978 Volume 20, No. 2 Copyright 1978 by A. G. Huegli

Editor-in-chief: **John F. Messerschmidt**

Assistant Editor: **Mary Beth Willis**

Graphics: **Paul Mielke** (coordinator): Front cover, back cover, inside back cover, p. 17-25, 31 (photo), 32;

Jeff Albrecht: p. 2-10; **Norman Doering**: p. 11-16;

Linda Whitton: Format, inside front cover, p. 1 , p. 26-31.

Copy Editor: **Susan Holman**

Publicity: **Tracy Cassidy, Sue Bailey**

Staff: **John Bales, Kim Bridgford, Linda Frost, Anne Guida, Jackie Krentz, Paula Scholl, Mik Snider, Terri Wolfe**

Faculty Advisor: **Richard Brauer**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1 (Looking Backward) A Forword**
- 2 Su Holman, A Poem, of Late Winter**
- 2 Lori Heyl, Of a Robin's Egg**
- 3 Arthur Steiger, On the Birth of Man**
- 4 Kim Bridgford, Go for the Moment**
- 4 Lee Miller, Grasmere**
- 5 Gary Kjorvestad, The File on Mycroft**
- 10 John F. Messerschmidt, Eye*Witness**
- 10 Darsha Primich, Swenson's**
- 11 James Clifton Hale, Patent Medicine**
- 17 Paul Wachholz, For Dad, Most Wonderful**
- 20 Kim Bridgford, No Fair for my Father**
- 21 Steve Gerse, Pilgrimage**
- 26 Cindy Jacobs, Lights Out**
- 26 Steve Hatter, August 12**
- 27 Paul Henry, A Golden Dream**
- 28 John Gehm, The All New Identity Game—**
- 30 John F. Messerschmidt, Typical**
And the Word Became Flesh . . .
- 31 Su Holman, Poppies**
- 33 Kim Bridgford, Full Circle**

(Looking Backward) A FOREWORD

The 1978 Lighter staff proudly presents the Spring 1978 issue to the campus community. We are pleased in that we firmly believe that there is something for everyone within these covers. We publish here for your reading pleasure poetry, short story and an essay reflecting on such diverse concerns as *contemplations of potential life, the death of a father, the future of a University, life in Hoosier country a century ago, a summer in France, shattered boyhood dreams, futuristic visions of society, meditations on the home country of Wordsworth, and second thoughts on some incidents in the life of Jesus. It is the hope of the staff that you, the reader, after having tasted the fruits of these authors' labors, will return to savor them again on a mellow night by candlelight or on a sunny beach this summer. The contents of this issue may seem to some to be nostalgic or sentimental; if this is, indeed, true, so be it. We ask that you walk in the shoes of those of us who complete another semester, another year, another career at the University, and who, before greeting the uncertain future, pause to reflect on those sometimes troubled, sometimes halcyon, days. We offer here for you the Spring 1978 Lighter with the hope and belief that He who has given us Light in days past will continue to Himself be our Light for the future.

ner
 for din-
 just in time
 bring salvation
 for him who was to
 amore, did, going out on a limb
 he, finding a syc-
 told him, so
 they
 tree"
 imb a
 "Go cl

A poem for short people only
 (to be read from the bottom up)

John F. Messerschmidt

a poem, of late winter

I do not find the winter dawn as cruel
Or hard-bitten and grey as some have seen.
I do not find it dead—though perhaps cool
and quiet—though what does quiet mean?

It is with the subtlest beauty-paint
That winter morning dons her pastel face;
As if from some sleeping loved one she would feign
Simply, gently, the marks of sleep erase.

The yellow-bluish whiteness of the sky
Blends softly with the grey clouds of the snow,
And through the cold chill of the morning, flutters fly
And chick-a-dees go cooing winter's know.

Perhaps the long, dark nights are sharp and raw,
And cruel within their callous, blinding cold,
But etched against the morning sky I saw
A tale of life—like mine, just waking—told.

Su

two

of a robin's egg

delicate shell (china)
blue
breath of life
wi(in)th
you.

privileged

I cradle

the fresh blood of spring
bound by translucent armour
in the sanctuary
of my
upturned palm.

with calloused fingertips
i caress thee—
very undeserving this
summons to resurrection

knowing that he who seeks to
build a nest of
pride and skill
is thwarted
in his own vain attempt @ Glory.

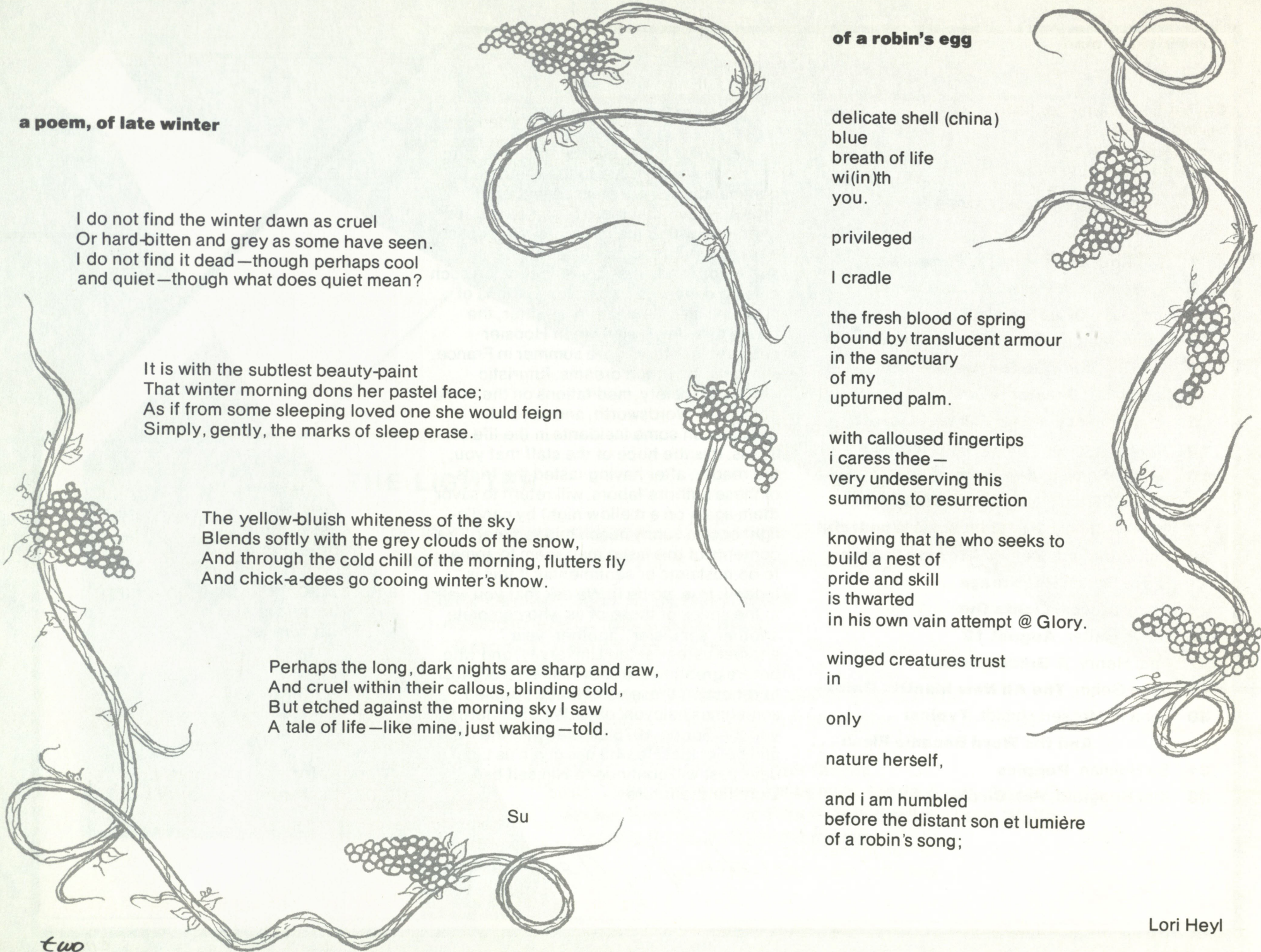
winged creatures trust
in

only

nature herself,

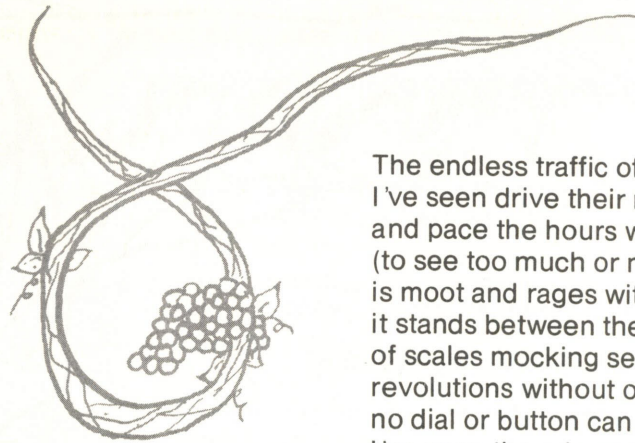
and i am humbled
before the distant son et lumière
of a robin's song;

Lori Heyl

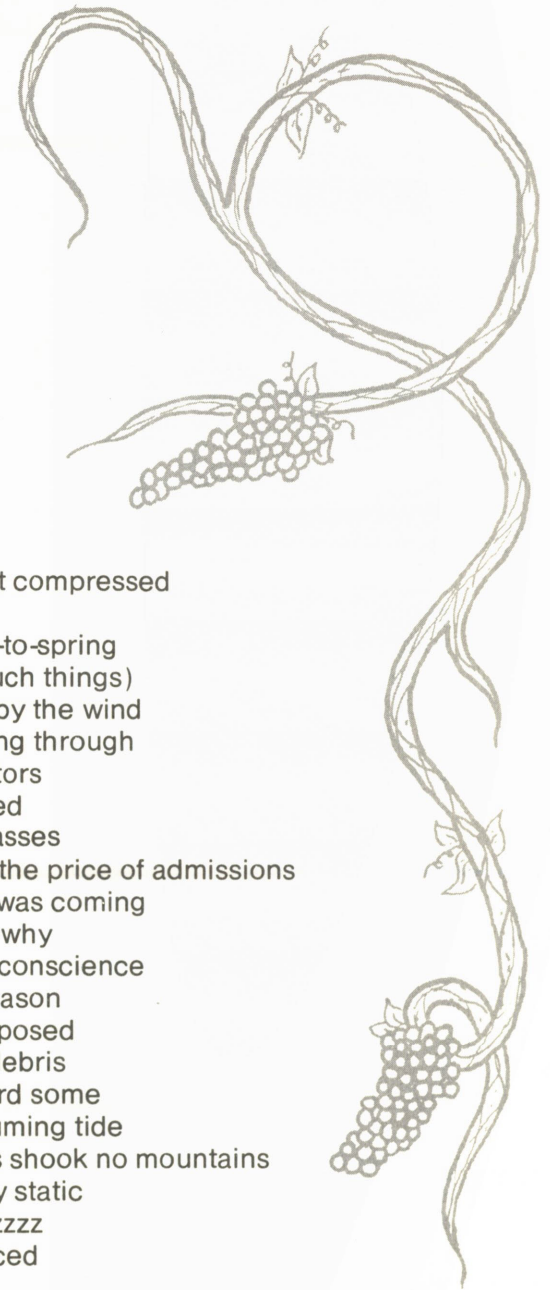


on the birth of man

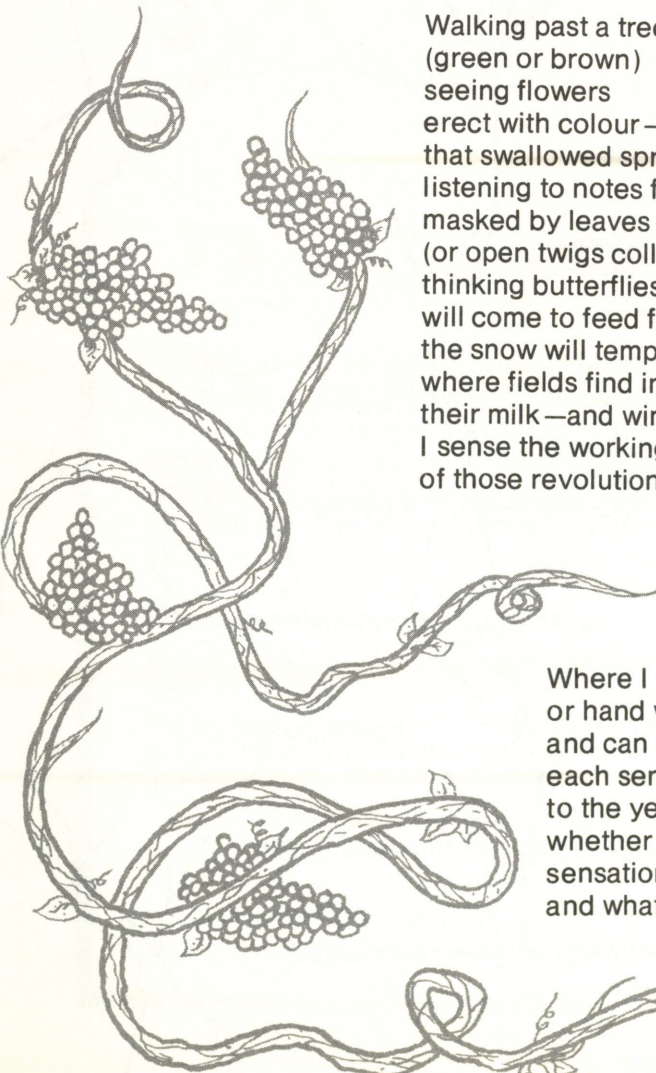
The earth spins another year
around an oasis of light
the seasons unravel
what each makes the other claims
their colours fill an eye today
and wink from that another
once more and forever
revolutions see them go



The endless traffic of peoples
I've seen drive their minds away
and pace the hours with gears
(to see too much or not enough
is moot and rages within —
it stands between the value
of scales mocking sense with gears)
revolutions without oil cause decay
no dial or button can repair —
I've seen them burn to steam and know
these vanities are lame



Walking past a tree
(green or brown)
seeing flowers
erect with colour—or the dirt
that swallowed spring
listening to notes frantic or calm
masked by leaves where singers hid
(or open twigs collapse with ice)
thinking butterflies from cocoons
will come to feed from winds
the snow will temper and endow
where fields find in clouds
their milk—and wine—(for a week)
I sense the workings
of those revolutions



Where I walk I touch with foot
or hand with eye or mind
and can but be touched
each sensation adds a wrinkle
to the year or day it saw
whether high or low it knows
sensations here are brief
and what was valued once is dust

Because my mind is not compressed
within a vacuum-tube
I've sought from spring-to-spring
(among the rubble of such things)
for those unfrightened by the wind
from tree-to-tree treading through
the maze of lost transistors
wires broken and tangled
heaped in unending masses
always being asked for the price of admissions
not knowing what year was coming
nor what to run from or why
what collective-coin-of-conscience
was valued most this season
part of my heart decomposed
in that pile of updated debris
pleading miracles I heard some
shout against the consuming tide
the joining of our hands shook no mountains
but was only mocked by static
ramfram nipshod zzzzzzzz
—we left almost unnoticed
to try our pitiful brevity
against the engulfing revolutions

Arthur Steiger

grasmere – 1978

all of anyone's breathing here
here, where this high summit stands
 is sacrilege, inexplicable;
not only for the ascent,
stretched windsweeping
slow, in steeping terror pace,
but more for the lack
of a vaster comprehension,
accented, cut clear in
jagged rock,
 that expands over the
misty tree-top heights
of the fells
and spreads upwards
in great mountainous sighs
to the final encounter
of clouds which brush
the jugged crags.

here the passage of time is standstill —
the patient stony solitude
cannot be contained;
it lapses into
the logic of a dream,
can be felt only silent
within the softened limits
of memory.

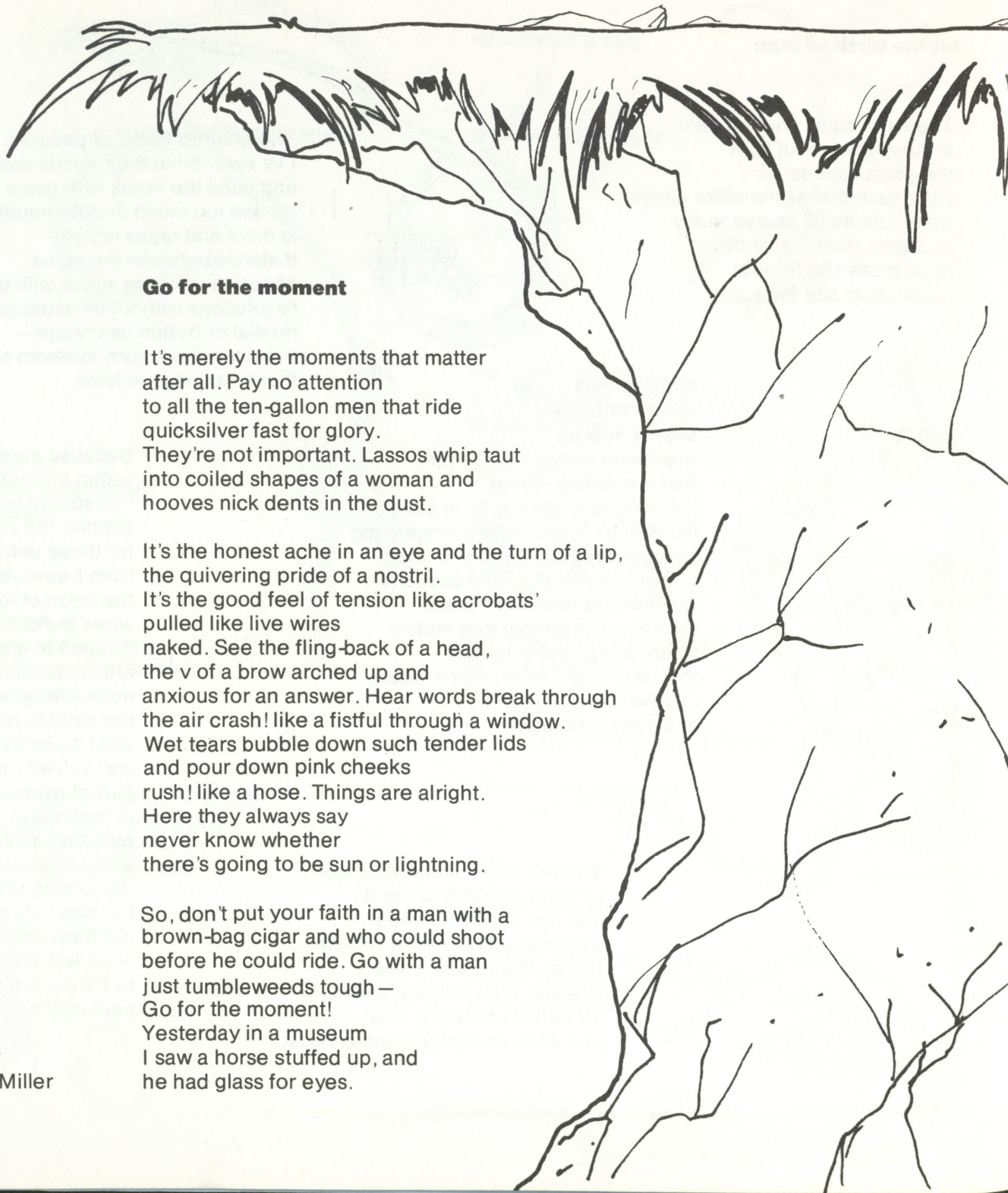
Lee Miller

Go for the moment

It's merely the moments that matter
after all. Pay no attention
to all the ten-gallon men that ride
quicksilver fast for glory.
They're not important. Lassos whip taut
into coiled shapes of a woman and
hooves nick dents in the dust.

It's the honest ache in an eye and the turn of a lip,
the quivering pride of a nostril.
It's the good feel of tension like acrobats'
pulled like live wires
naked. See the fling-back of a head,
the v of a brow arched up and
anxious for an answer. Hear words break through
the air crash! like a fistful through a window.
Wet tears bubble down such tender lids
and pour down pink cheeks
rush! like a hose. Things are alright.
Here they always say
never know whether
there's going to be sun or lightning.

So, don't put your faith in a man with a
brown-bag cigar and who could shoot
before he could ride. Go with a man
just tumbleweeds tough —
Go for the moment!
Yesterday in a museum
I saw a horse stuffed up, and
he had glass for eyes.



THE FILE ON MYCROFT

The 8th day of Leninmonth, 32 years after the Last International Revolution.

1.

"The Director wants to see you Mycroft. Right away." The messenger walked off.

Mycroft wearily rose from his work bench, turned off the power switch to the press, and prepared to face the Director. Before he went into the Office, situated on the thirty-seventh floor of the Peoples' Screw Factory, he made a brief visit to the unisex bathroom and relieved himself. Five minutes later, as he knocked on the Director's door, Mycroft could sense the furtive glances aimed at him by his fellow Citizen Workers dragging through the corridor.

Not Mycroft! / What did he do? / I hope I haven't been too friendly to him!

The sickeningly sweet tone of the computer spoke. "You may enter Citizen Worker

Mycroft. Isn't this a beautiful, revolutionary day! Don't you feel like-"

Mycroft opened the door quickly to shut off the vocal unit. The Director's drab, grey office walls, plastered with posters of the First Citizen and other Heroes of the New Order, greeted Mycroft with proper revolutionary countenances. The Director laid down the dossier he had been reading and motioned with his right arm for Mycroft to sit in the plain, metallic chair standing before the desk.

The Director was a short, chubby man with very little hair and a ruddy complexion. The bathroom graffiti called him the "Fat Tomato" and the description was very apt and even kind, in the sense that a tomato is limited in the ways in which it can offend you.

"Mycroft, let me put this matter to you bluntly, agreed?"

Mycroft nodded in agreement, being too nervous to speak.

"Good." The Director fought his way out of his chair and began pacing around the room. "You've been with us for eight years, Mycroft, and you've always made your quota, rather easily in fact. But not lately. Lately, by that I mean this past month, you have slipped far below quota for no apparent reason. You are expected to turn out 173.8 of the L-11 screws per day, and you are currently turning out about . . . about," the Director fumbled for a sheet of paper in the dossier, ". . . Yes, here it is. You've tumbled down to ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE POINT THREE FIVE SCREWS PER DAY! Any excuses?"

Mycroft felt a wave of panic, but it passed in a moment and he spoke in a dry, quiet voice. "I've been depressed lately, for no single reason. Nothing really serious, I



hope."

"Has anyone cut back on your food or cigarette ration?"

"No."

"Housed you in a filthy dormitory?"

"No."

"Eliminated your sexual rights with the State girls?"

"No."

"Then what in hell have you got to be depressed about?"

Mycroft shrugged and muttered, "I don't know, Citizen Director, I really don't. It's everything and nothing, so to speak." He thought of last night and his desperate search for a sharp knife. Too bad he hadn't found one.

"Cut out the sentimental looks and the introspection." The Director belched loudly and then recovered his official demeanor. "My solution to this problem is simple, Citizen Worker. I will give you one month to improve, to reach quota, or else you will be sent to a work camp. Understood?"

Mycroft definitely understood.

*The work camp/cold/starving/
the skeletons hanging on for just
one more bleak evening/the death
camp.*

2.

That night Mycroft poured a quart of ten-credit whisky down his throat, and he looked it. Stumbling out of the bar, and turning around two or three times in order to get his bearings, Mycroft accepted the fact that he was hopelessly lost, and so he headed south, down the darkened, trash-littered boulevard towards points unknown.

Two hours later, after blurred images of passing vehicles, cheap lights peeking out

from blockhouse buildings, and pencil-thin children digging through his pockets, Mycroft found himself laying face down on a grassy lawn in Old Town. Old Town was the deserted section of the city which had not yet been "architecturally liberated", the region still populated by family homes with lawns conquered by weeds and ancient cars rusting in driveways. There were even trees in Old Town; huge, gnarled characters bent grotesquely over the crumbling paved streets, streets with names like "Alameda Court" and "LaSalle Boulevard". Not a single Revolutionary element in sight and therefore doomed to extinction.

With queer gracefulness, in that curious state when the alcohol in one's body asserts itself only when one makes a move, Mycroft danced/stumbled into a vacant nearby home guarded by two immense bushes.

Mycroft wandered through the living room-

*-I saw three chairs/and my father
sitting on the sofa/he was smiling
but his glasses were broken/shattered/the
painting above the table was gone-*

and stepped over a pile of carpet into a kitchen boasting a sink-full of broken dishes covered with filth and rat droppings.

Mycroft wheeled about in disgust, came close to vomiting up his paycheck, and walked back through the living room. Seeing a closed door interrupting the north wall of the living room, he weaved over to the door and turned the knob, which came off in his hand. He kicked the door down, giving himself a slight muscle pull in the heroic process.

It was a den, the walls covered by bookshelves laden with knowledge bound in paper and liberated in ink. This was a rare sight in the New Order because most pre-Revolutionary books had been confiscated

and destroyed. A sudden urge to read everything in the dark room, even the magazines, possessed the Citizen Worker. But, alcoholic visions or not, he knew that to do so was impossible—too many books and too damn many police agents running around.

Mycroft thought about the discussion with the Director and the work camp and all of these books. He picked one out, a small black book with a dangling cloth marker, and he shoved it into the deep pocket of his pants.

3.

Mycroft was very fortunate that the next day, the second Marxday of the month, was his day off from work. He woke after noon and spent the day nursing a headache and reading the small black book, which was obviously some sort of archaic ideological work, complete with instructions for handling organizational ceremonies. The words in the book brought back long-dead memories from his early childhood.

4.

The next day at work Mycroft processed 137 screws.

The second day he manufactured 151 of the notorious L-11's.

The fifth day, even with a two-hour vacation in honor of the 87 Martyrs massacred in the Revolution, Mycroft made quota and was seen smiling at work. This behaviour was noted by the Director.

By the end of the month, Mycroft was turning out over 200 L-11 screws per day and he was encouraging his fellow workers to have fun as they labored. The turnaround was so dramatic that Mycroft was honored



as the Most Patriotic Worker in the factory, an honor which included a 3 credit pay increase per week.

At the honor ceremony, held in the lounge of the Che Guevara Cafeteria, nearly every worker, bureaucrat, and spy in the factory was in attendance. The Director gave his usual banal speech and then he introduced Mycroft to the audience, brining the smiling worker to the platform with his arm draped over the worker's slouched back. He pinned the plastic medal on Mycroft's most immaculae workshirt and asked him to say a few encouraging words.

Mycroft stepped up to the microphone, coughed a few times, and said, "Thank you for this honor, fellow Citizens and Patriots. I wish that I could give you some great message, some magic formula, but I can't because I don't have one!" Mycroft swallowed very hard before continuing with his speech. "I believe I can attribute my recent success to the simple fact that I just don't care about work at all!"

The audience stirred noticeably; a few people actually laughed aloud.

"I mean that in a good way, Citizens. You see, the Director was going to send me to a work camp, and I was distraught about the whole thing, but then I decided not to worry because it would only hurt me, and that I would be better. . ."

The Director clumsily knocked Mycroft aside, grabbed the microphone, and shouted, "THANK YOU, Citizen Worker Mycroft. THANK YOU. Work begins in twelve minutes, everyone is dismissed!"

Everyone headed for the porno ping-pong games in the lounge, everyone, that is, except Mycroft and the seventeen police agents surrounding him.

5.

After the Director stopped screaming at Mycroft, he allowed the worker to muster up a defense.

"Citizen Director, with no disrespect intended, you misunderstand what I said. I am not against Revolutionary ethics. I merely don't worry about them, or you", (the Director stared at him with piggish eyes,) "or even about myself. I just don't have any cares. Is that wrong?"

"You're damn right it's wrong! We cannot control—I mean lead—the people if they aren't worried about this life and losing certain privileges, like cigarette rations. You're a damn subversive! Where did you get this . . . FREEDOM?" He spat out the last word in derision.

Mycroft pondered about the sanity of telling the truth—

"What the hell/He can't rob my soul/I've still got my eyes—
—and he went ahead anyway.

"It's this little book I've been reading lately." Mycroft pulled the volume out of his rear pocket.

"The police didn't find it when they searched you a few minutes ago?"

"They searched me everywhere except my pockets," Mycroft explained sheepishly.

"Go ahead."

"This book talks about having no fear and trusting in a harmony in the world. A harmony above the Revolution. Old-fashioned harmony. Here on pages 189 it says, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him because he first loved us.'"

"What in the hell are you reading there?" The Fat Tomato dove for the book, wrenched it from Mycroft's hands, and turned it to the title page. "Just as I thought. Superstitious trash, that old religion! The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments' . . . this is disgusting. Say something, Mycroft. Anything!"

Mycroft grinned naively and said, "I like the book. The words are gentle and nice."

"NICE!" The Director leaned over his desk and pressed the intercom button. "Get me in touch with the Interrogator."

6.

The Interrogator's office was done in a breezy, bourgeoisie style replete with colorful prints, a patterned rug, light blue walls, and comfortable furniture. Definitely not Revolutionary.

Mycroft was sitting on the sofa with the Interrogator, a severely thin man with a milk-white face and longish grey hair reaching to the collar of his jacket. He wore no uniform, not even a State ring.

"Don't worry about all of this, Mycroft. It's something I deal with a thousand times a year. Religious conversions are a fact of life, we just have to get you straightened out, that's all." His tone was friendly and warm, far beyond any perfunctory courtesy. He even put his hand on Mycroft's knee and patted it.

"I don't know if I've had a conversion or not, Citizen Interrogator. I just like to read the book. Makes me feel pleasant." Mycroft never looked up, keeping his eyes concentrated on the scuffed-up tops of his work boots. "I'm a good Citizen, sir."

"I'm sure that you are; very, very sure."

Saying this, the Interrogator rose from the sofa, put the Book of Common Prayer in his jacket pocket, and walked to the wall rack where his raincoat was suspended. "Let's go for a ride, Mycroft. A ride into Old Town."

Mycroft jumped up and yelled, "Not that! Not a ride!"

The Interrogator smiled with obvious amusement. "Not that type of a ride. You're a good worker, we don't want to hurt you."

7.

The black State limousine pulled up in front of an impressive structure featuring white plaster walls, red Spanish tile toofing, and a tall spire knifing into the sky. Mission architecture. A guard stood outside in front of the large, wooden double doors. Mycroft and the Interrogator stepped out of the limousine and walked up the steps toward the doors, doors carved in a dozen small scenarios. The Interrogator unlocked the doors and the two of them quietly walked in.

"This is a church, Mycroft. A holy house, the place of god, etcetera, etcetera. We maintain it for cases such as yours, to let you see the error of your ways. To SAVE you, in a sense."

The Interrogator turned on the lights and began the grand tour. "Here we have the little water bowls to ward off the bogey men floating around in the air—church pews, hard wood so you can't fall asleep—hymnals, the music is generally quite good—these statues are the saints, holy characters who give you a few favors if you light enough candles in front of their idols, statuary isn't too bad, a bit too spiritual, no warts showing—stained glass



windows, beautiful but costly, no concern for the poor, mind you”

The Interrogator continued in his moderately derisive manner, praising the obvious artistic achievements but ridiculing the beliefs behind the work. Mycroft was oblivious to all of his comments, seeing only the colorful images of an ancient order and feeling a kinship with the reverential spirit captured in wood and stone and glass. He was very relaxed and calm. He felt as if he were walking among the stars themselves, caught up in the silent machinery running behind the visible world.

They had reached the altar by now. To the right stood a large icon painted in bright colors and portraying a young woman holding an infant. They were both encased in a glowing, innocent light and surrounded by winged figures playing odd looking musical instruments.

“That’s god’s mother. They called her a queen—class distinction again! They claim that she gave birth, without having any sex whatsoever, to the fellow being tortured up there on that piece of wood.”

Mycroft looked up at the massive Crucifix suspended from the ceiling, a huge wooden carving focusing upon a man in great agony and pain. Mycroft glanced over at the infant smiling on the icon and then quickly concentrated back again on the man on the cross.

The Interrogator said, “Pretty hideous, eh? This is their view of god and his working with humanity. Not very enlightened.”

“Thank you for bringing me here, sir, this has been quite an adventure.”

The Interrogator did not like the joyous note in Mycroft’s remark, so he said, “Cures you of all that dreamy nonsense in the book, right?”

Mycroft shuffled to the foot of the cross, touched it reverently, and turned to face the Interrogator. Almost apologetically, he spoke with brutal kindness. “No sir. I’m sorry, but this whole thing only confirms my feelings. It’s so damn peaceful, even this image above me. Do you see the pity in his eyes? Look.”

The Interrogator put his hands over his eyes in an exaggerated, symbolic gesture. “I am blind to those eyes, Mycroft, and you must ignore them also. Pity is a degrading emotion.”

Mycroft spoke up, almost defiantly. “You’re wrong . . . very wrong. . . . You don’t like it because it’s carefree and light and yet very serious. It’s seriously happy! Not any tension or fear or control to be found anywhere. It’s like one, big carnival, a carnival of God.” Mycroft chuckled as he had not done since his childhood.

“You’re insane, Mycroft.”

“It won’t be the first time. Look up at that man up there on that thing. He’s free, Citizen, he’s free!” Mycroft straightened his shoulders, stopped laughing, and put on a serious face. “He was free enough to die. And I am also . . . I think.”

“You will die, Mycroft. There are no doubts about that,” whispered the Interrogator without any emotion. “Let’s go back to the car.”

8.

Mycroft and the Interrogator sat silently in the back seat watching the chauffeur effortlessly wheel through the crowded avenues. The Interrogator broke the silence rather abruptly.

“You’re going to die. Doesn’t it bother you? To miss out on all of this?”

“All of what? Ugly, grey buildings and ugly, grey people? There’s a lot worse than death. A lot worse. We’re all going to die anyway, so why not go out with a little peace and respectability? There might even be a heaven. You never know.”

The Interrogator retreated back into his silence.

A little while later, the chauffeur, himself a police agent, asked, “Have you destroyed his illegal book yet, Citizen Interrogator?”

The Interrogator felt the book in his jacket pocket and responded in an absent-minded fashion, “Yes, I believe that I did. Burned it in the incinerator before we went for this excursion.”

Mycroft knew that the Interrogator was lying.

The Interrogator forced a yawn and lazily spoke again to the driver. “Take us by Mycroft’s dormitory, Agent Bensonhurst. He needs to pack a few things”, he looked at Mycroft with detachment, “for his vacation. Mycroft has been under a lot of pressure lately; he’s due for a State vacation somewhere nice and warm, maybe the Carribean. When he comes back he should be reassigned to a new labor position, perhaps in our own Ministry. See to all the proper papers, Bensonhurst, after you drop Mycroft at his place.”

“Yes, sir.”

9.

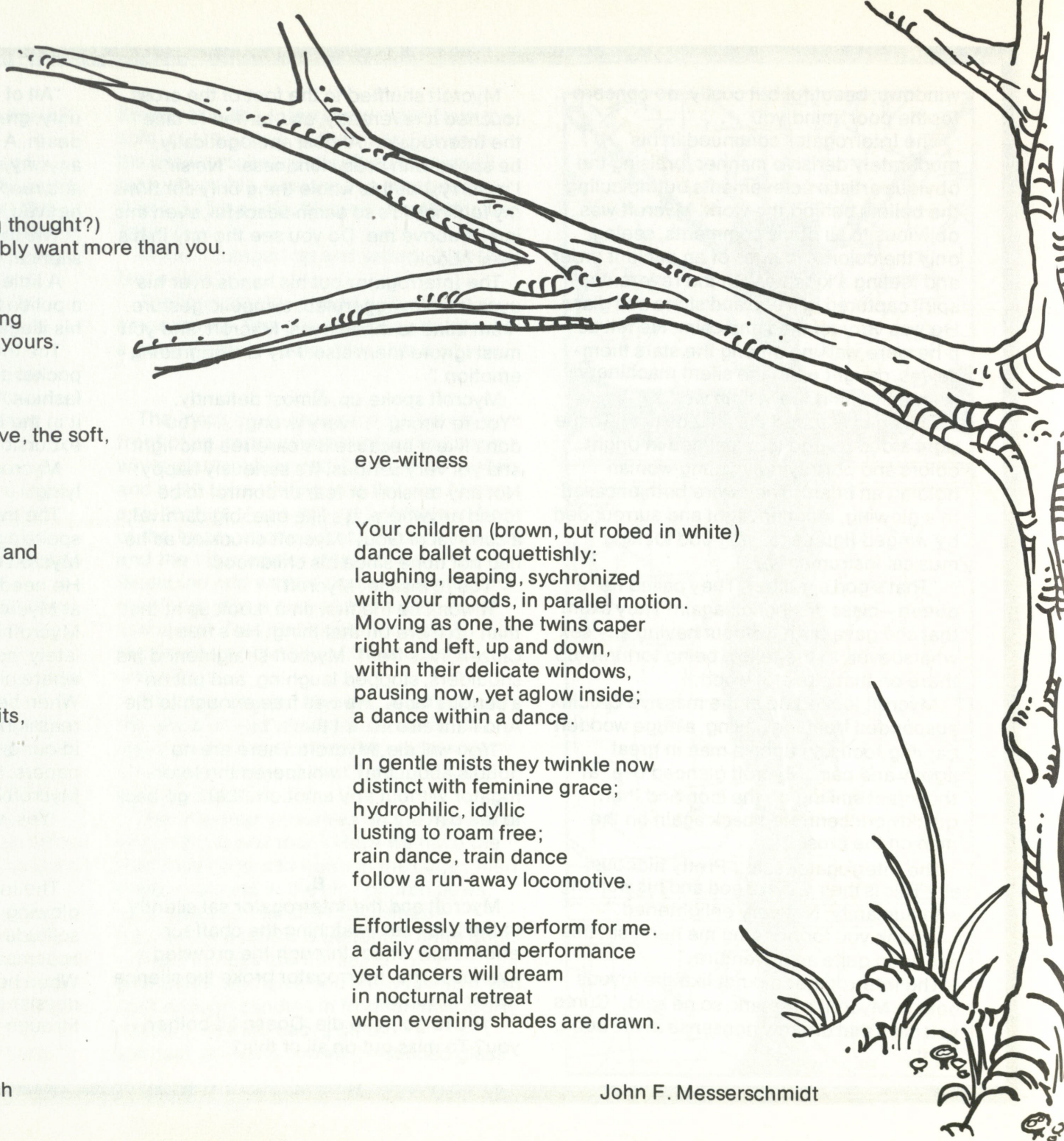
The Interrogator was busily finishing a glowing report on the Mycroft affair in the solitude of his own personal apartment, accompanied by a friendly glass of brandy. When he was done with the file, he put the dossier aside and casually began leafing through the tattered book.

Swenson's

you are all fair
and blue-eyed in Sweden.
my fair friend, my love.
there is distance in your eyes sometimes
that leaves me wondering
(some past sorrow? some comprehending thought?)
yet i tell you there is nothing i could possibly want more than you.
here you are;
as i try to see myself in terms of you i find
that there is so much travelling and learning
i have to do within those fair blue eyes of yours.
here you are:
there is peace in a moment like this
you resting against me.
there is much strength in the line, the curve, the soft,
and the smooth of your body.
sleep
and i will watch.
believe
and i will enclose you in my own strength and
magnetic attraction
i have many gifts for you
yet there is much to be asked for,
conquered, and understood.
a lifetime was created for this.
fairness and strength are ours together.
and yet, this is nothing but the outer limits,
a scratch on the surface of
knowing you and
being us.
the actuality of our being
together
in this cosmos
is fine and sensitive and
easily persuaded.
the force of time is before us.
but i have the need
and you the capability
to make that time joyful.
oh my fair Swede
i love you so!

darsha primich

ten



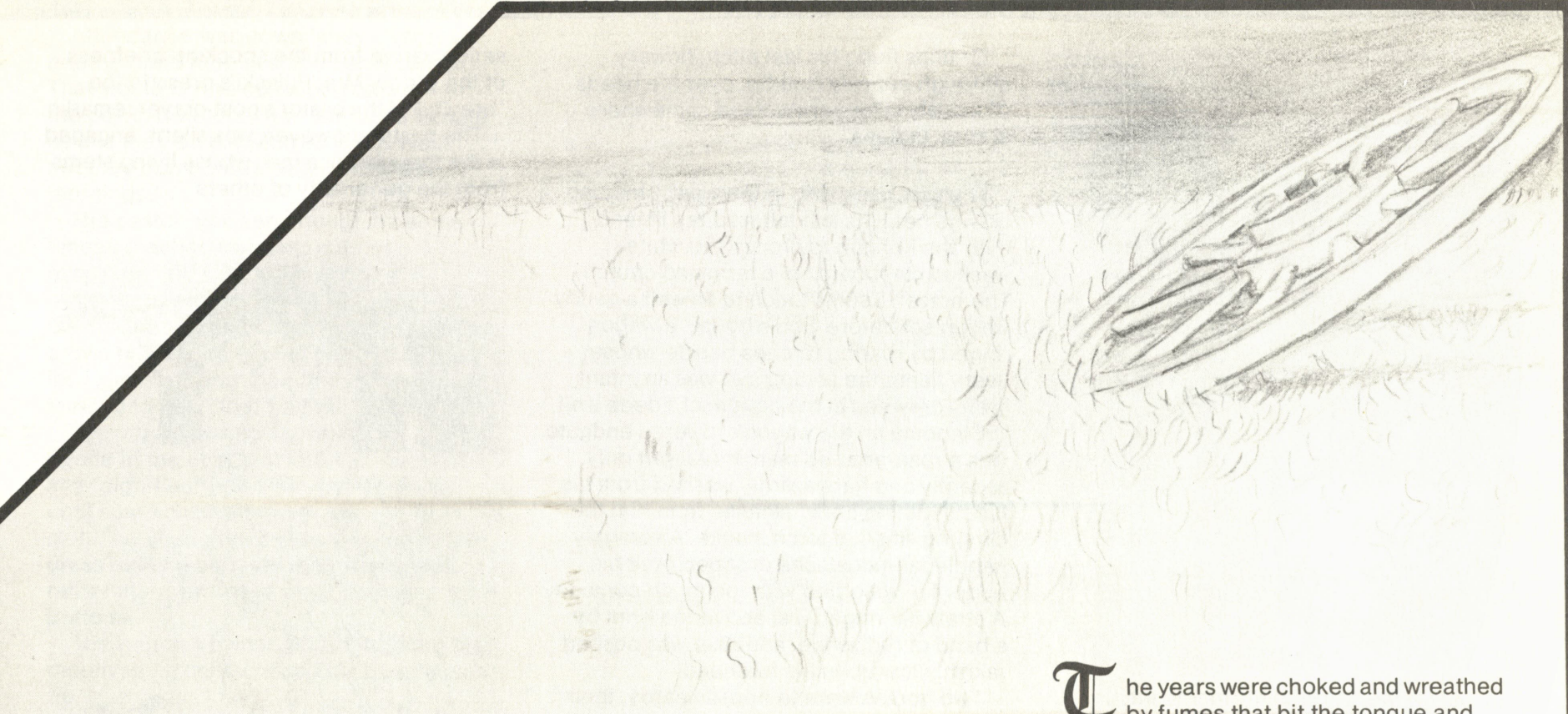
eye-witness

Your children (brown, but robed in white)
dance ballet coquettishly:
laughing, leaping, sychronized
with your moods, in parallel motion.
Moving as one, the twins caper
right and left, up and down,
within their delicate windows,
pausing now, yet aglow inside;
a dance within a dance.

In gentle mists they twinkle now
distinct with feminine grace;
hydrophilic, idyllic
lusting to roam free;
rain dance, train dance
follow a run-away locomotive.

Effortlessly they perform for me.
a daily command performance
yet dancers will dream
in nocturnal retreat
when evening shades are drawn.

John F. Messerschmidt

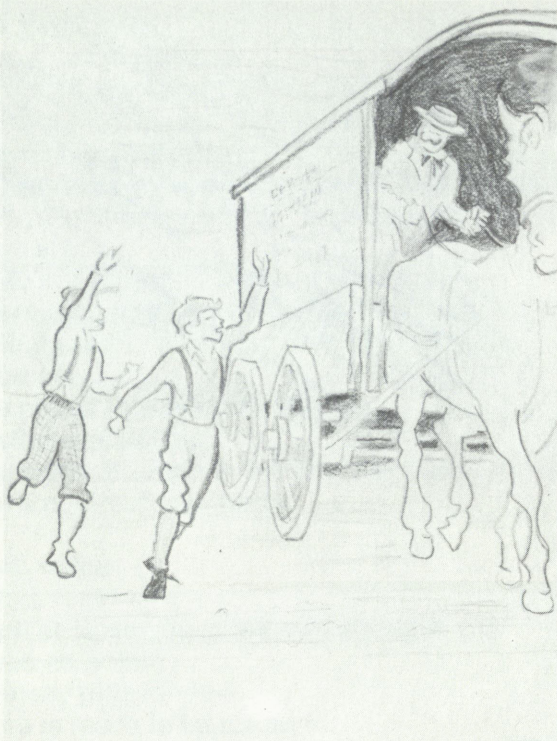


Patent Medicine

James Clifton Hale

The years were choked and wreathed by fumes that bit the tongue and nostrils, nipping with greedy, red-hot teeth. Aloetic laudanum, chloroform and "cologne spirits" cured many a consumptive temperance advocate, staggering her off to a meeting of the Women's Anti-saloon League.

In 1893, my grandfather wore two hats; he called himself a chemist, he claimed to be a doctor. On both counts, Gramps' judgment was perfectly sound, though his stack of headgear tilted precariously from time to time at the attack of the competition, or at the meaningful gaze of an unfriendly sheriff. In short, Gramps' medicine, "Palmer's Panacea," was perfectly legitimate.



Despite the worth of his medicant, Gramps was not a wealthy supplier of hospitals or pharmacies, but a merchant to the masses—bedside manner from the back of a horse-drawn van—a traveling medical orator and nostrum-hawker. The wariness of the licensed medical world confined him to the road, to transience: the degreed often are somewhat less than confident in the efforts of those not, and sometimes hateful of them for having knowledge without the benefit of a sheep-skin. Perhaps this unwarranted mistrust and occasional animosity are what prompted Gramps to advertise his potion so heavily as “a banisher of hatred,” and to lecture so lengthily against this most negative of all emotions to any group willing to listen.

Gramps flung his last pitch, flowery, although entirely truthful, over the heads of a dusty crowd assembled somewhere in rural Indiana.

The sun was dying in the west, bleeding orange heat. Its last tattered ray limped over the horizon to bronze the white-washed clapboards of a farmland church. The brazen beams touched as well a gaudy wagon set before God’s house, a wagon ringed by roaring torches beside whose every flame the setting sun was an infant firefly drowned at the bottom of a deep well.

Standing on the wagon’s lowered endgate was a road-grizzled man, travel-grit only recently and haphazardly washed from his face. Nothing could cleanse from him the clinging smell of torch smoke. A scraggly handlebar moustache drooped over his upper lip, weighted with too much pomade. A straw hat ringed just above the brim by a band of red, white, and blue was pushed rakishly low upon his forehead.

Two horses were tethered nearby, their white manes reflecting the dancing fire of the brands. They whinnied in expectation of a large and irritating group of humans.

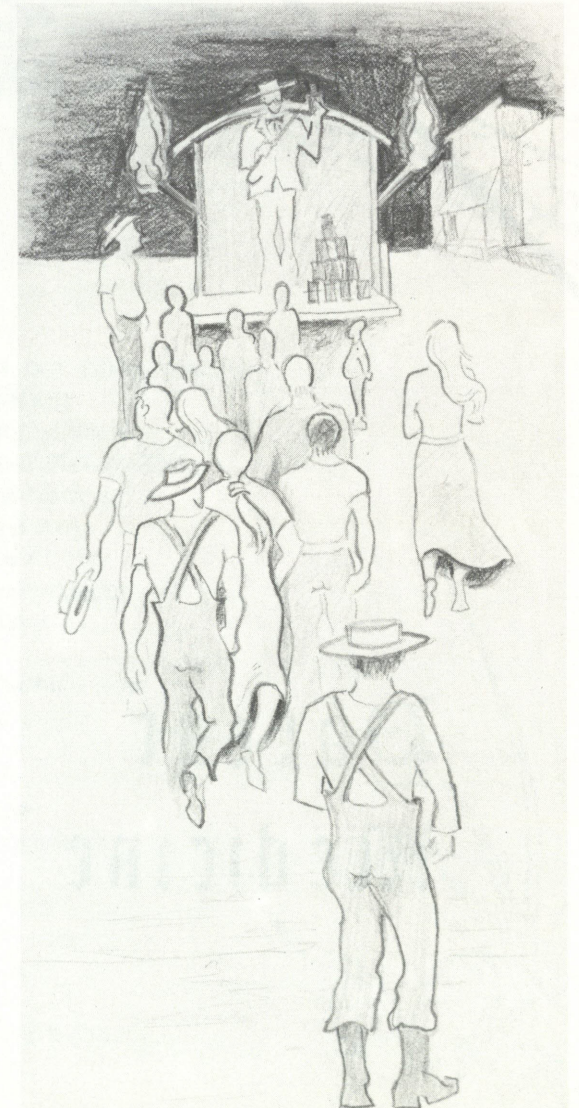
The sun released a last spasm of light, and expired. “Well,” thought the man, “Wednesday evening prayer meeting ought to be about over.”

As though by his command, but more likely best explained by coincidence, the portal mounted in the church’s facade swung open, emitting a crowd headed by a young pastor robed in frayed black. His raiment bore near the seat a patch of dark blue.

The crowd, a few farm families, was busily engaged in the happy colloquy of long-acquainted neighbors. Topics of conver-

sation varied from the shocking briefness of the widow Mrs. Pulaski’s dress to the “brevity” of the pastor’s post-prayer remarks.

The pastor, however, was silent, engaged in the thoughts of a man whose living stems from the generosity of others.



Attendance was down lately. "What we need around here is some persecution! That would fill the collection basket—er, the pews. If we only had someone to hate us like they do the Mormons out West . . . I bet *they* don't 'oversleep' on Sunday mornings."

The pastor, you see, though he sometimes preached frugality, did not especially relish living it.

The pastor broke with a start from his introspection at a sudden stirring from the crowd half a pace behind him. He too stared for a moment, and then found himself moving toward "that wagon over there."

The crowd, sweeping the pastor along, strode in the direction of the conveyance at a "dignified" just-after-service pace, until some children broke running from the clot. The young ones seemed glad to feel grass rushing beneath their flying feet rather than varnished pews itching at their bottoms.

The wagon's owner smiled, twisting his mouth as he corkscrewed his handlebar's tip.

"The kids are always first."

The slower parents read the wagon's emblazoned side, peering at the gilt letters there through he swirling cloud of dust raised by the hurried passage of their progeny. Flanked by trumpeting angels, encompassed by bow-twanging cupids, the broadside flowed verbosely into their eyes, accompanied by brassy trills and singing arrows. Words for torchlight alone were these:

DR PALMER'S PANACEA
REMEDIES THE BODY BY HEALING THE SPIRIT

THE MIGHTY EXILER OF HATRED
WITHOUT DRUGS THWARTS DISEASE
BY BANISHING ITS SOURCE ?

A HEALTHFUL ENVIRONMENT OF
FRIENDSHIP AND COMPASSION
CURES ALL PHYSICAL ILLS AND MENTAL DISORDERS

CONSTIPATION, CONSUMPTION, PALSY, CATARRH, SCORFULA,
DROPSY AND ULCERS

ALL AND MORE CURED BY BROTHERLY LOVE

\$1

A DOLLAR FOR THE BOTTLE

\$1

(That's right, a dollar per bottle. Gramps, though an honest man, one full of integrity, was not one entirely untinged by the sin of avarice.)

About the wagon's endgate, the farming families gathered like crumbling leaves held in a corner by autumnal winds. A strange gate it was, too, swung down on golden hinges and supported by polished chains. It provided a raised speaking platform for the doctor.

Gaudily labeled brown-glazed bottles clinked near his feet, rocking dangerously in their shaky pyramid as the merchant prepared to go into his spiel. Patent leather boots flashed as their owner repositioned his feet, striving for a stance more impressive than the bowlegged slouch into which he'd allowed himself to slip during his wait.

Teeth flashed, and the sales-talk began: "Its ingredients belched from the inner fires of Mother Earth, and gathered from the

igneous slopes of Mount Aetna; harvested by sweating coolies from the ensorcelled paddies of the mystic isles off China; gleaned by aged scholars from the ancient caves of India; in short, garnered from many of the centuries-shrouded locales spread throughout our world, and first blended in the flaming crucible of an obscure 16th Century experimenter, I bring you the Elixir of Life! I have brushed away the cobwebs of nearly four hundred years to introduce to you the greatest healer ever known to Mankind . . . Dr. Palmer's Panacea!"

The doctor paused, interrupting himself to take a deep breath and to sweep an outstretched arm over the audience, thus indicating that his references shifted now to them.

"You are decent, hard-working, God-fearing people, the finest works of the Creator himself. You love your families dearly, treasuring them deeply, embracing them so tightly to your bosoms, that, indeed, you value their lives no less than your very own. You would not hesitate to die for your wives and babes, nor would you deny them of any assistance you could possibly provide.

"If illness stalks any of your loved ones, if deadly disease hovers with poisoned fangs over the throats of your spouses or babes in arm, *I hold the key to their salvation.*" Dr. Palmer lifted a bottle from the pyramid's top. "Will you refuse the help contained within this bottle from they whom you hold most dear? Would you keep this draught of welfare from the mouths of your tiny nurslings?"

Silence reigned as the merchant scanned his audience. They shifted restlessly back and forth; their interest had not germinated in the doctor's speech. A few broke from the

ragged ranks to head for home. The group, it seemed, had begun to find the entire affair rather tiresome.

At their departure, the theatric smile heretofore held there fell from the panacean tradesman's face. He grumbled to himself in complaint before pushing off on a new plan of attack: "They're either unbelievably stupid, or the healthiest damn group I've ever seen."

To the crowd, his comment was but the raspy clearing of a dusty throat. He pulled a smile back onto his face, then began once more.

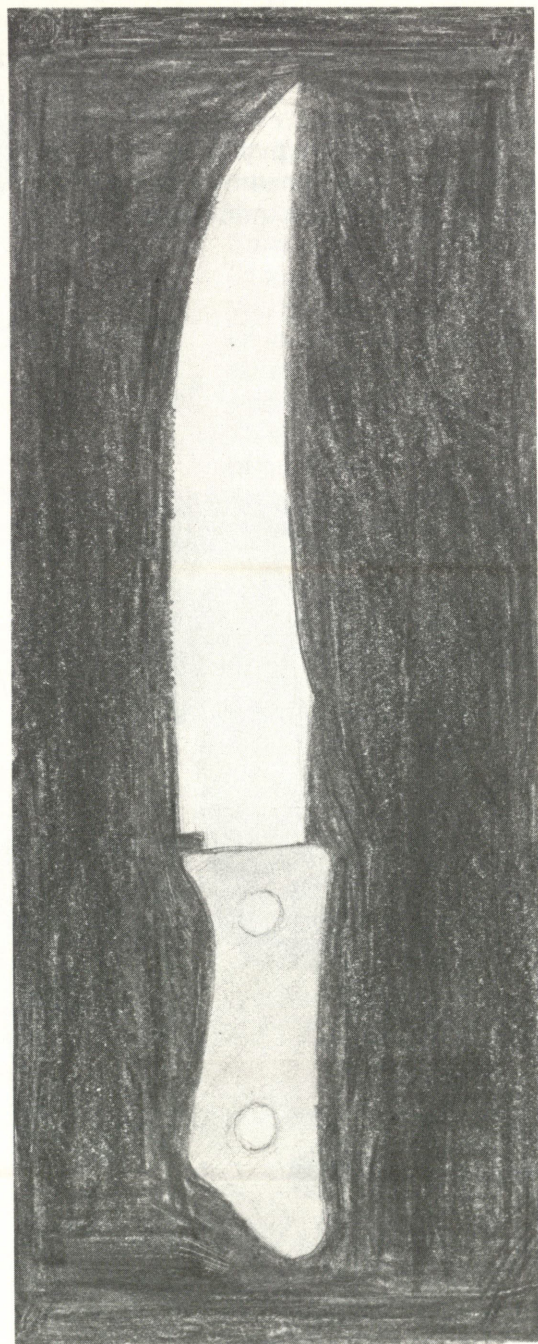
"The people of Indiana are fine people, young at heart and youthful in spirit. But, regardless of how wonderful one's attitude toward life, the passage of time takes its toll on the body of every woman or man born of this world.

"Has age, ever an unwelcome guest, invited itself into your good life? Has this loathesome condition woven an unfortunate, wrinkly web prematurely across your face? Does it, even now, in the prime of your life, fill your joints to the aching brim with the pain and stiffness of rheumatism? Have the years behind you, as few as they may be, ruined your enjoyment of the excellent food of the great Midwest by making your meals difficult for you to digest?

"Ahh, friends, (whoops! He'd nearly said 'old friends,') don't let the devil's—work of age trick you into believing that you're old. With Dr. Palmer's, you're as young as ever!" The doctor winked slyly at an old crone.

The hag must have had her "enjoyment of the excellent food of the great Midwest" ruined by indigestion, for, in her blushing reaction to the handsome young doctor's attention, she let loose a wet-sounding gust of warm, foul air.





An ancient venerable of the community, evidently to prove that rheumatism is indeed an ever-present evil, cracked all of his knuckles, a number of his toes, and, with a strange contortion of his trunk, his bony hip. Another man, seemingly in total agreement with the first, grimaced, coaxing a resounding pop from his toothless jaw.

A little wary interest crept into the crowd: "After all, if Great-Granddad seems to interest in it, the stuff can't be all that bad."

The merchant sensed the growing response of his audience. "Now," he thought, with a well-contented smirk, "for the block-buster! Let's get this thing over with." The voice shifted in tone and began again.

"You men are farmers, the tireless and noble tillers of America's soil. You are the backbone of this great nation!"

A little flattery never hurts, thought the doctor, then went on.

"Through years of fulfilling the difficult task of feeding your families, and yea, the world, you know that a late-sown field is delayed even slightly in gathering the fruits of his fields, before he can collect it, they may be destroyed by killing frost or by heat which rots the greenness from the stalk. You know what the loss of even one day's labor to injury or illness could mean."

A farmer on crutches nodded gravely.

"A day stolen by sickness or by unfortunate accident pushes your crops 24 hours nearer failure! Near the end of the harvest season, a week lost could spell disaster!"

Dr. Palmer mopped his brow, the droplets of sweat sliding obediently into his handkerchief. Dropping some volume from his voice, and adding in its place a modicum of concern, he continued.

"Illness is ever lurking just nearby, crouching in the shadows with its evil

companion, Injury. How many of you men are, even now, stricken with the croup, or congestion of the lungs or head?—With a running nose, watery eyes, or a sore throat?"

Assenting murmurs rippled through the assemblage, emanating for the most part rather nasally from sufferers of summer colds or hay fever. Several, seemingly in greater agreement than the rest, sneezed in affirmation.

"If the answer to any of these questions is yes, or, if, indeed, any of you or yours are harassed by illness or held in the throes of injury," (His hands raised, clenched tightly, Dr. Palmer's voice rose to the height of volume and excitement.) "*your agony is needless!*"

With that, the doctor put a forearm to his forehead, and staggered back to support his "swooning" self on the shining chains which held up the endgate. He leaned there, seeming on the verge of an exhausted collapse.

The hag at whom the merchant had earlier winked whimpered, trying to push through the crowd to his side. She slashed with her cane and pummeled with sharp blows those unfortunate enough to impede her progress.

The merchant hung on to the chain for a few more seconds before straightening with a theatric show of effort. He started to speak yet once more, but this time the voice was hoarse, soft.

"Friends, Dr. Palmer's Panacea will heal you. This relief restores health, not by polluting the body with drugs, but by piercing the side of illness with the Lance of Love!"

The assembly listened intently to this gallant man who had traveled all the way to their small hamlet and worked himself

nearly to the point of falling down dead in a pernicious faint.

"Hatred melts away with a spoonful daily! A cure of fellowship gives health through harmony!"

The voice had begun to rise, and now cracked throatily atop the peak of fervor. "Don't risk your crops by excluding this medical miracle from the medicine cabinet in your hme. *Do not hazard the food on your children's plates!*"

The last command exploded the crowd into a jostling mass. A great cheer went up as each person struggled to reach the wagon's rear. Many rushed with bills already outstretched.

Dr. Palmer, already recovered from his faint of but moments ago, quickly formed the purchasers into a line. Heading it was the cane-brandishing beldame. None challenged her position.

The brown-glazed bottles of Panacea clinked musically, rocking in their pyramid, glinting in the torchlight. The bottles were dangerously swaying wind-chimes blown by the press of the crowd.

The enthusiastic buyers nearly depleted the supply of the good doctor's nostrum before the line's end, but a few bottles remained as the final customer approached the wagon's tail.

Clad in his black Sunday-best, the last patron emerged quietly from the crowd. He was an ebon pearl descending through the clear orange oil of the torchlight.

The crowd unconsciously parted to let the man in black pass. It was far too engrossed in its bottles' labels to note his passage.

The peddler watched as the man stepped unhampered through the clustered grangers and finally reached the back of the wagon. "And how many bottles for you, sir?"

Answering only with a calm stare through eyes of frozen azure, the Wednesday evening supplicator reached a hand into the breast of his dark garment. Apparently searching for a hidden purse-pocket, his hand bulged the fabric of his clothing.

Dr. Palmer turned and knelt, reaching for the remainder of his stock, that is, reaching for the pyramid's lowest tier. "How many was that, sir?"

The purchaser, as if in deep thought, paused for a brief moment. Behind him, the crowd was dispersing. Burrowed into a pocket, his hand was still invisible.

"I think none, thank you," said the customer. He lunged suddenly and buried to the hilt a glittering knife in my Gramps' unprotected back. "I value the 'illness' of hatred much too highly to wish it cured."

The pale horses nearby nickered in equine puzzlement, then reared.



For Dad, Most Wonderful

On mornings
You'd sit at your desk
In your study
Surrounded by mementos
Of a great, rich and long life.
You'd listen to recordings
Of loved and meaningful
Music
And seemed to like
To end your meditation
of gratitude, wonder
And joy
Humming along lovingly
With the organ music
Of Johann Sebastian Bach's
Komm Seusser Tod.

Dad, you've had your wish!
Death, as to all mortals
Came for our dear Dad.
It brought him
Its beautiful serenity
Its peace and dignity.
And for us gathered
In Westfield on Ascension Day '67,
A proud and unforgettable occasion.
Here, it was said:
"Well done,
Good and faithful servant!
Enter into your rest and glory!"
Enter into your rest and glory!"

But the crossing
of the bar
To eternity's Great Sea
Was not without a struggle
As told by those
There with you then.
And Dad, your leaving,
For the rest of us,
Was not without
Twinges of sadness
And sharp sense of loss,
The Dad we could consult
When he was needed
Wasn't around any more.

Now, on All Saints' Day
More than ten years after
I reach back
Deep into my heritage
And recall some of my own
Glorious, happy, fulfilled
And sometimes sad
And troubled life.
I search for warmth
Love, joy and comfort
To take along
Into the oncoming season
Of dreary late fall
Cold and dark winter,
To take along with me
Into the days and years
Of the autumn and winter
Of my life.

At the Church of the Reformation
I hear the rolling verses
Of the Grand Amen
Of Revelations:
Of the new heaven
And the near earth
Where all tears
Are wiped away.
And of no more death
Nor sorrow, crying or pain
When all former things
Have passed.
I hear of the victory procession
Of those come out
Of great tribulations
Wearing splendid shining robes
Washed in the blood
Of the Lamb.

During the sermon
I muse on death:
A bitter passage
For the dying.
Also for those
Left behind
With helpless feelings
Of too late
And never again.

But on All Saints' Day
We remember
Our beloved dead
And take comfort
In their memory.
We feel their presence
As a hovering of joy
And love.
We celebrate
Their memory
With angelic choral strains
From Fauré's *Requiem*
And in the glow
That follows the sip
Of the sacramental wine.

For this coming winter
And for the autumn
And winter of my life

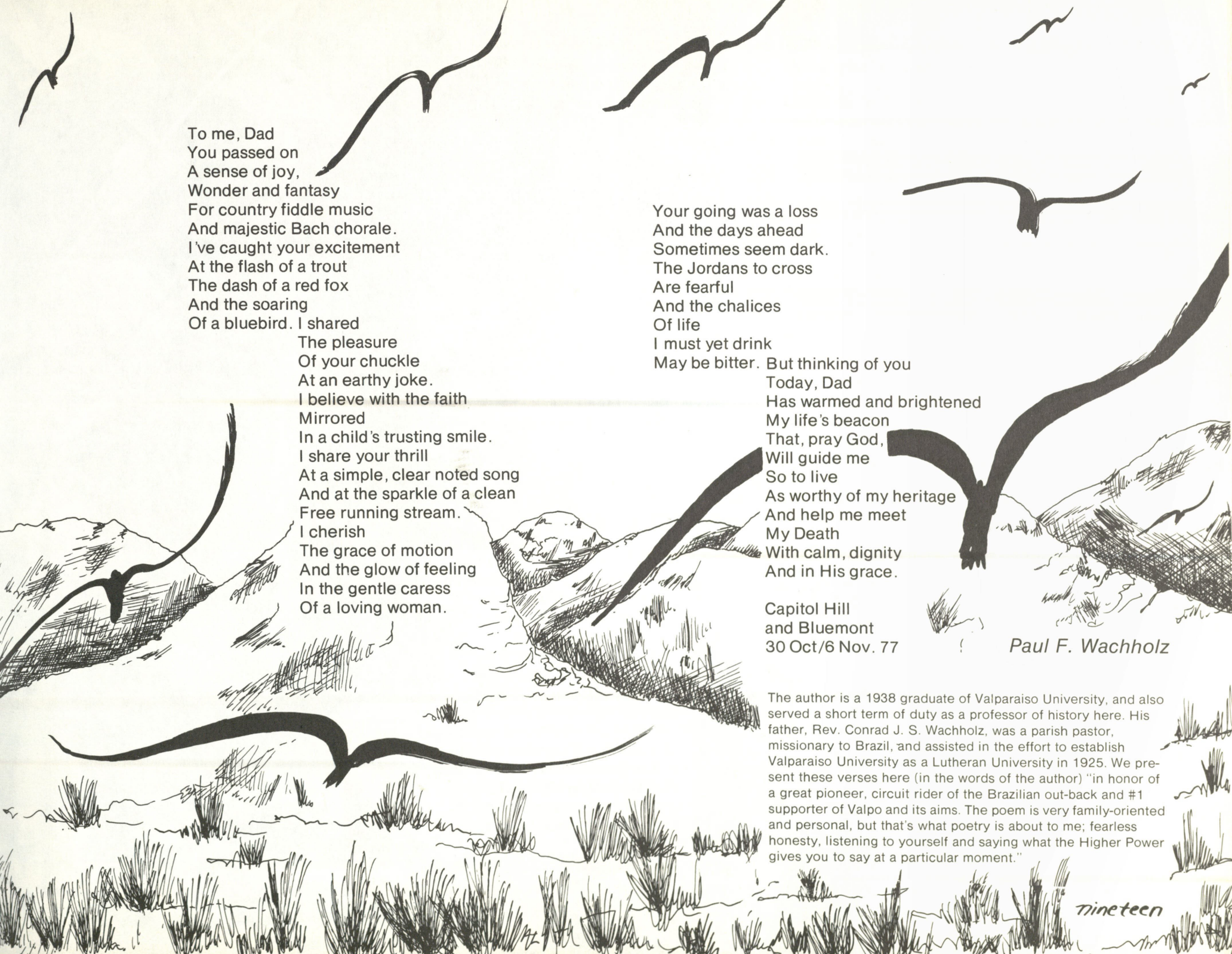
O, Dad, like Isaiah
To his apprentice,
Toss me your mantle
of faith
And leave me a double measure
of your spirit.

On your pilgrimage
And life's quest
You followed His call
Like Abraham.
You spread His seed
On the High Country
of the Paraná pine
And traveled on muleback
At night along surveyors' trails
Under the sparkling skies
Of the Southern Cross
And the Southern Crown
Deep into great forests
And over endless grasslands
Of our beloved Southern Brazil.

You and Mom, with five more,
Returned to your longed for
Land of pine forest, sandhills
And clean lakes
In North America.

Here you wondered again

At the beauty
Of the Aurora
And the Northern Lights.
You celebrated the joy
Of the choral melodies
And the devout and trusting faith
Brought to America
By great-grandpa Fritz
And tiny, but feisty, great grandma
Anna nee Wolff.
They came on the *Fanny Kirchner*
From the Baltic and North Sea
For the rolling maraines, sandhills
Lakes and swamps
Of Central Wisconsin.



To me, Dad
You passed on
A sense of joy,
Wonder and fantasy
For country fiddle music
And majestic Bach chorale.
I've caught your excitement
At the flash of a trout
The dash of a red fox
And the soaring
Of a bluebird. I shared

The pleasure
Of your chuckle
At an earthy joke.
I believe with the faith
Mirrored
In a child's trusting smile.
I share your thrill
At a simple, clear noted song
And at the sparkle of a clean
Free running stream.
I cherish
The grace of motion
And the glow of feeling
In the gentle caress
Of a loving woman.

Your going was a loss
And the days ahead
Sometimes seem dark.
The Jordans to cross
Are fearful
And the chalices
Of life

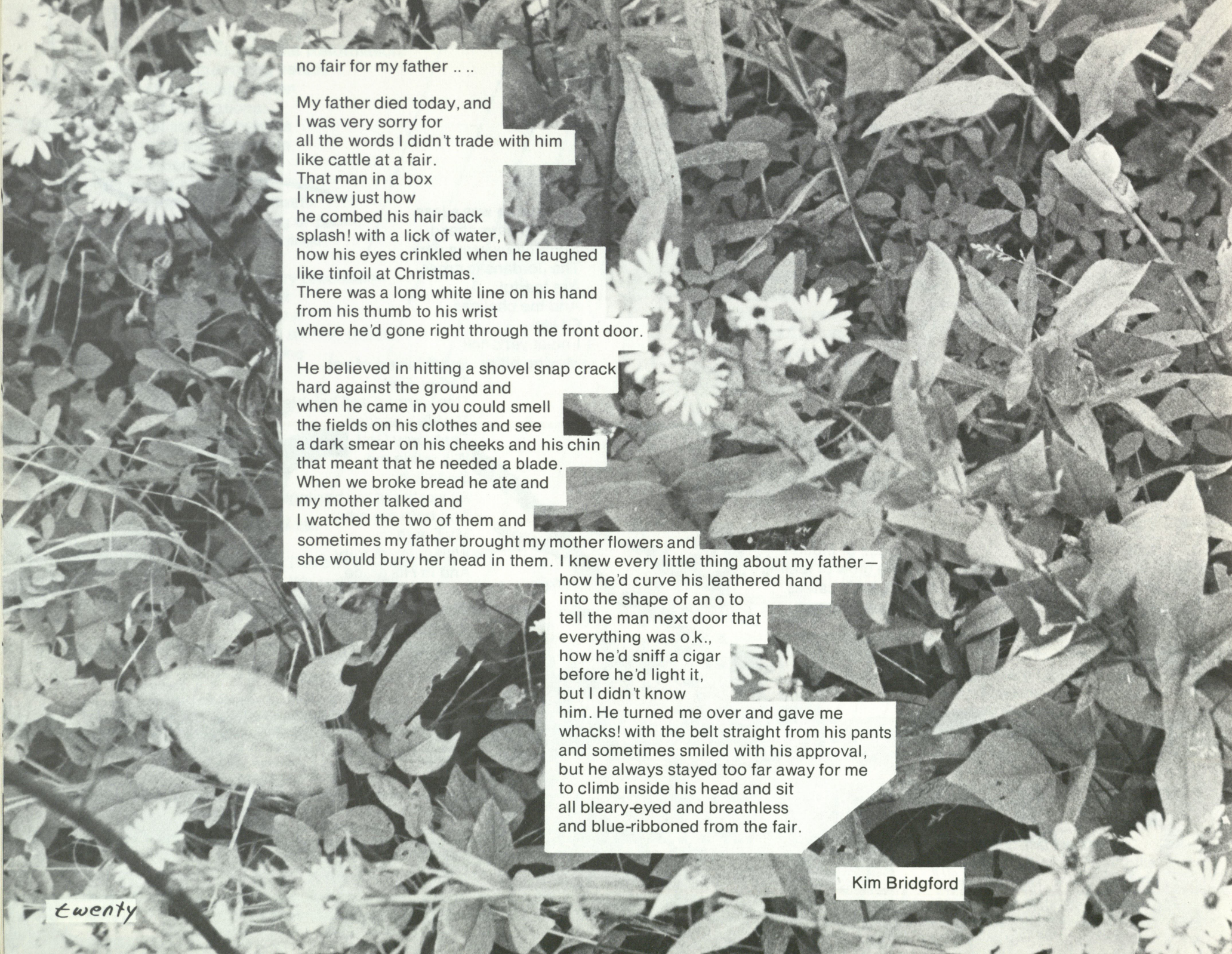
I must yet drink
May be bitter. But thinking of you

Today, Dad
Has warmed and brightened
My life's beacon
That, pray God,
Will guide me
So to live
As worthy of my heritage
And help me meet
My Death
With calm, dignity
And in His grace.

Capitol Hill
and Bluemont
30 Oct/6 Nov. 77

Paul F. Wachholz

The author is a 1938 graduate of Valparaiso University, and also served a short term of duty as a professor of history here. His father, Rev. Conrad J. S. Wachholz, was a parish pastor, missionary to Brazil, and assisted in the effort to establish Valparaiso University as a Lutheran University in 1925. We present these verses here (in the words of the author) "in honor of a great pioneer, circuit rider of the Brazilian out-back and #1 supporter of Valpo and its aims. The poem is very family-oriented and personal, but that's what poetry is about to me; fearless honesty, listening to yourself and saying what the Higher Power gives you to say at a particular moment."



no fair for my father ...

My father died today, and
I was very sorry for
all the words I didn't trade with him
like cattle at a fair.
That man in a box
I knew just how
he combed his hair back
splash! with a lick of water,
how his eyes crinkled when he laughed
like tinfoil at Christmas.
There was a long white line on his hand
from his thumb to his wrist
where he'd gone right through the front door.

He believed in hitting a shovel snap crack
hard against the ground and
when he came in you could smell
the fields on his clothes and see
a dark smear on his cheeks and his chin
that meant that he needed a blade.
When we broke bread he ate and
my mother talked and
I watched the two of them and
sometimes my father brought my mother flowers and
she would bury her head in them. I knew every little thing about my father—
how he'd curve his leathered hand
into the shape of an o to
tell the man next door that
everything was o.k.,
how he'd sniff a cigar
before he'd light it,
but I didn't know
him. He turned me over and gave me
whacks! with the belt straight from his pants
and sometimes smiled with his approval,
but he always stayed too far away for me
to climb inside his head and sit
all bleary-eyed and breathless
and blue-ribboned from the fair.

Kim Bridgford



Pilgrimage

STEVE GERSE

I was haunted by a mysterious feeling of uneasiness. As I returned to the field where I had grown up, I was anxious to walk through it once more, but at the same time I was afraid of what I might see. This field, that I had known and explored since I was a boy, had always been changing faster than I wanted it to. I began to trudge through the tall stalks of grass that signalled the field's border with the fear that as youth was leaving me, it was also leaving this field. Although the embryonic signs of spring could be seen in the blooming milkweed plants and the yellowing dandelions, I could not suppress the feeling that the place was dying.

I stood at the field's edge and scanned the rough landscape that was so familiar. It used to be farm property, but the soil was too rocky for crops and it eventually succumbed to neglect. Overgrown weeds twisted around decaying fence posts, and the swaying grass grew free except for a few narrow trails that I had matted down over the years. Much of the old farm

machinery still sat where it had plowed its last furrow or chopped its last corn stalk, quietly rusting away. I never knew if the family had died or if they had just surrendered, but it was clear that they had left suddenly. Their abandoned property now possessed the haunting stillness of a graveyard bearing the souls of the owners. In a sense, I had been the self-appointed guardian of this place for the past ten years. The field was a testimony to the simple farm life that it had harbored, and because I had experienced so much there, it was also a testimony to my past and my awareness. Just as tombstones crumble and photographs fade, this testimonial was disappearing and taking my past with it. I shuddered for an instant, then walked on.

It was difficult for me to understand why I cherished this piece of earth as I had. It definitely was not beautiful or breathtaking. In fact, the rough terrain created a barren, desolate atmosphere, and on a cloudy day the landscape seemed to be shrouded in gloomy greyness. Large rocks protruded in various spots and some areas were devoid of any grass at all, and at times it more resembled a desert than a Midwestern prairie. Save for a few rabbits and pheasants that occasionally darted from overgrown patches of grass, and birds that circled overhead like vultures, the area was essentially lifeless. Still, there was a phenomenal magic in this field. The landscape curved and twisted in such a way that it was completely detached from its surroundings. The field sloped from each side to a valley in the middle (where a weak stream flowed), and there was a dense clump of trees in the field's distant corner. Once a person crossed the field's boundaries, he became oblivious to the rumbling

super-highways, shopping center, and rows of suburban houses that surrounded it. Wherever one looked, all he could view or hear was this field, as if the noisy neighbors disappeared at command. The area was so distinct from its hectic borders that it seemed to have been dropped there from the sky. The field was an oasis in a desert of technological progress, but now even this oasis was being invaded by progress.

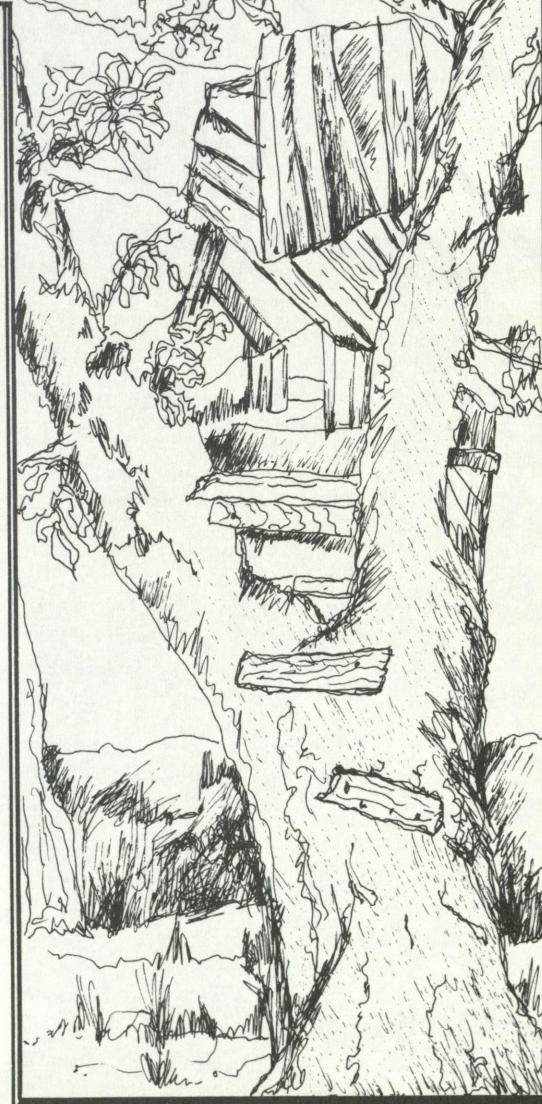
My pace quickened, and at times I would have to stop to unwrap the weeds that had grabbed my ankles. I was careful to step over any remnants of barbed wire remaining from when the county police had erected barbed wire and electric fences. I remembered the shock to my hand that I received when I first unknowingly grabbed the electric fence, but I remembered even stronger the shock to my pride when I realized that someone would be trying to keep me out.

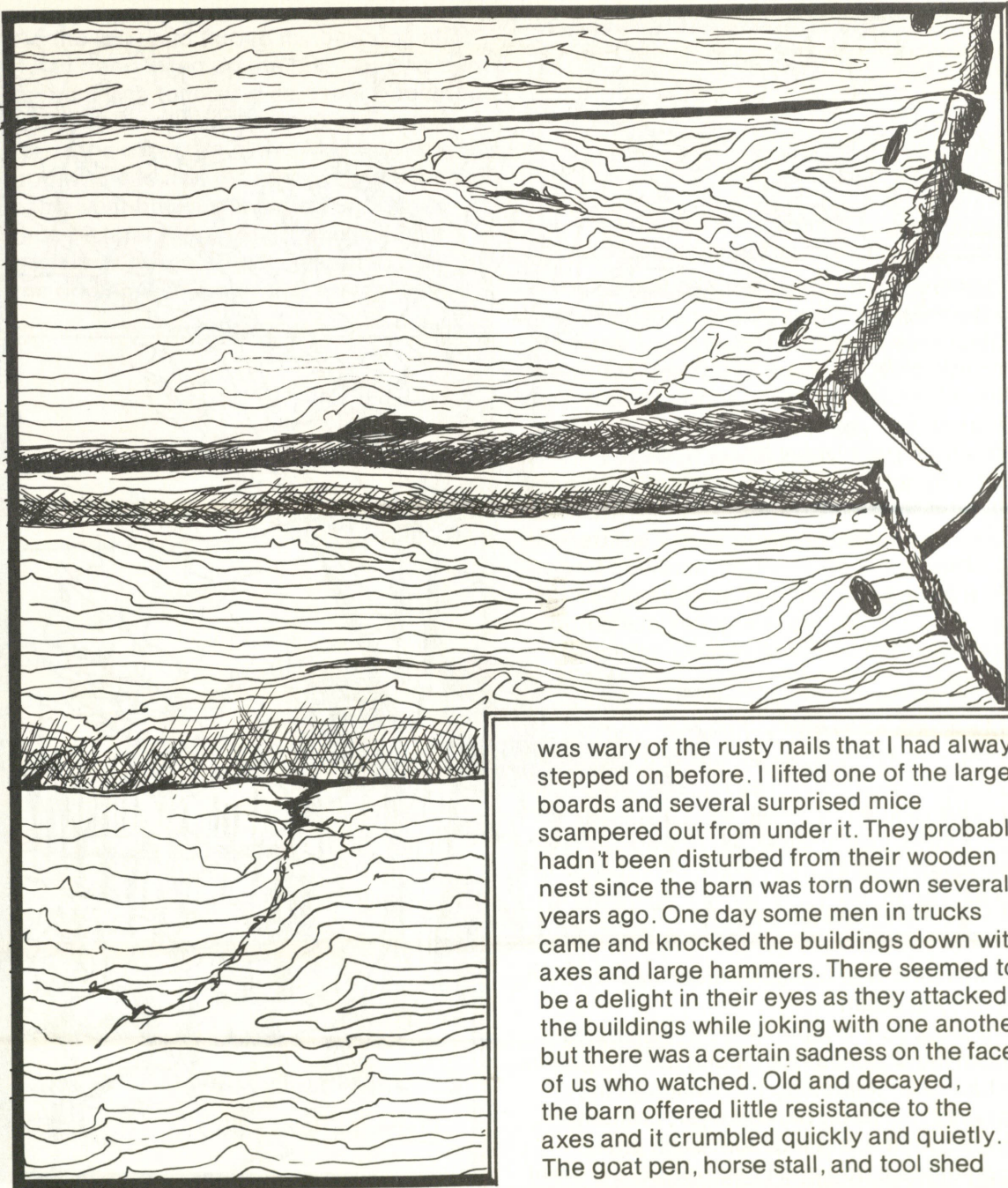
I think it was then that I first feared that this playground would eventually be developed in the name of progress. I walked on, and I noticed that the old red farmer's truck was gone from the outpost it had held in the middle of the field for as long as I could remember. My friends and I used to play on it, crawling in the broken door and sitting on the seat that sprouted springs and sponge. We were afraid that there were rats in it, but we took our chances, sitting in the driver's seat and gazing out the window that had no glass, turning the rusted steering wheel. At that time we couldn't wait until we could drive a real vehicle instead of this truck that never moved. I don't know how they moved that truck out of there; it always seemed to me to have grown right out of the ground.



There was the old tree fort where we had crudely nailed board steps to reach the lookout at top. The tree grew out of a narrow ditch that made a perfect trench for playing army. In the heat of battle once I lay there for hours on a muggy summer afternoon, hiding from the enemy but not from the bugs that flew in my ears and hair. The beauty of the field was that there you could be whatever you wanted. I think I was someone different each time I went through there, whether an explorer, soldier, hunter, or a young boy who just wanted to walk around. The field was snowy war-torn France, the frontier west, a movie location, the moon, and just the field. There was a peculiar feeling of conquest in trudging through the snow covering the field and returning to find that your footprints were the only ones there. It was imagination and reality at the same time. The imagination was being everything you wanted, and the reality was finding several truckloads of rusty cans filling what used to be our trench.

I changed direction and began to walk up the hill on which the farm buildings used to perch. The walk seemed tiring now, and I wondered how I ever made it when I was younger and skinnier. But in those days the anticipation of adventure was more intense than any physical effort. Now, however, I was aware of every dreary step. The wood from the barn and several shacks still lay scattered among the weeds, and I





was wary of the rusty nails that I had always stepped on before. I lifted one of the larger boards and several surprised mice scampered out from under it. They probably hadn't been disturbed from their wooden nest since the barn was torn down several years ago. One day some men in trucks came and knocked the buildings down with axes and large hammers. There seemed to be a delight in their eyes as they attacked the buildings while joking with one another, but there was a certain sadness on the faces of us who watched. Old and decayed, the barn offered little resistance to the axes and it crumbled quickly and quietly. The goat pen, horse stall, and tool shed

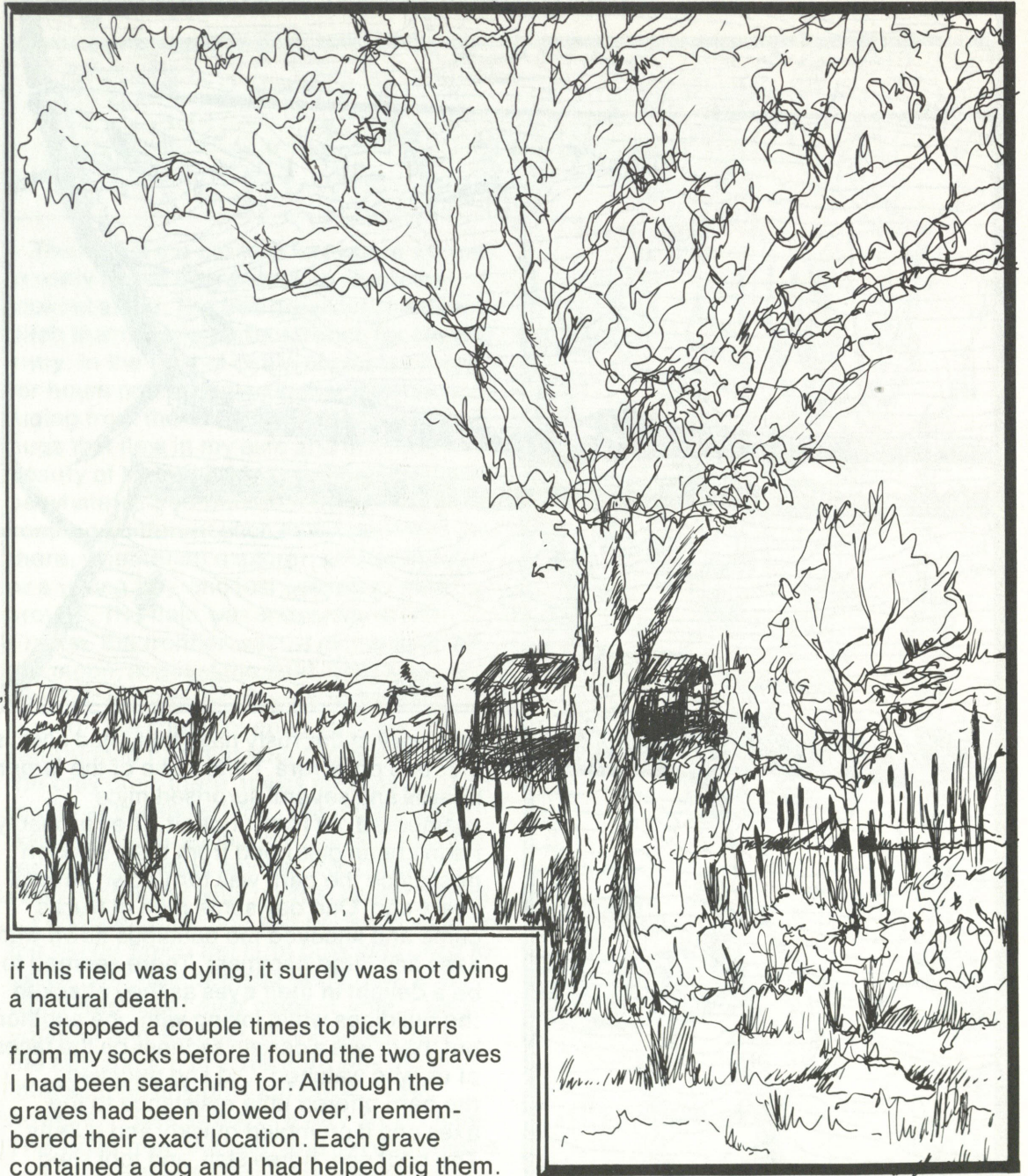
also died without a whimper and the men joked again and told us that someday a nice store would be here.

There were still some relics remaining that no one had cared to clear away. I picked up a rusted horse bridle and remembered the pleasant confusion of loud untamed horses bumping against the door of their stalls, anxious just to be brushed or petted. I even missed the smell of the barn that was never cleaned out. Stepping around the puddles of stagnant water that surrounded the barn like a moat around a castle, I found the spot where a proud black horse had dropped an unwary young rider who hadn't realized that a horse chooses his riders. I didn't break any bones, but I remember my back was sore for a week afterwards. If that horse had been there now, I would have tried to ride him again, not to prove anything to myself, but to see if he had finally accepted me. The bridle I was holding probably belonged to that proud black horse who wouldn't be proud anymore if he saw the garbage and debris that littered his defeated kingdom.

Crossing the stone foundation where the farmhouse once stood, I entered a decaying shack that had been a place of refuge, a shelter from the maturation pains of a teenager. It was just an old chicken coop, but it was also a retreat from the pressures that seemed to intensify during those years. It was a place where my companions and I could declare our independence from parents, school, and expectations. It was that kind of place that every kid has, where he goes to have his first cigarette, not because he likes to smoke but because he knows his parents disapprove. Our chicken coop summit meetings allowed one to defy anything that needed defying.

Now the chicken coop was falling, though, and would probably soon be cleared for a gas station or billboard. The hollow sensation in my stomach reminded me of running to the shack to escape my father after an argument. It was raining, and the raindrops blended with my tears. I remember reaching the shack and trying to warm my soggy body, and I desperately wanted to run away from home. Somehow, however, I realized that I wanted to apologize to my father instead. There was a certain sincerity in that chicken coop.

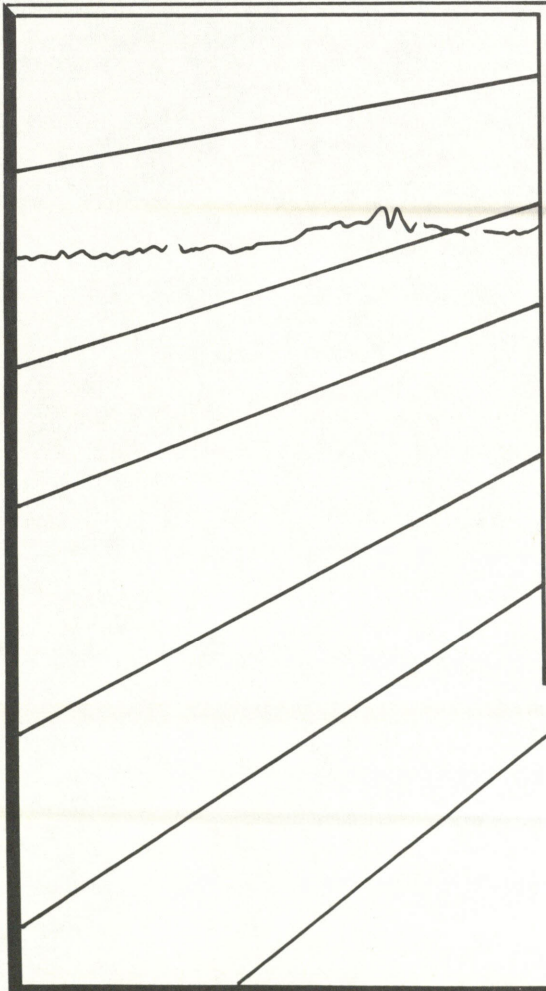
Behind the chicken coop there used to be a small pond. I walked to where it had once been and stood among the marshy weeds, but the area was so overgrown that I couldn't tell exactly where the outline of the pond was. Like the other features of the field that were once distinct and vivid, the pond seemed to have faded into the bleak surroundings and surrendered its identity. The pond wasn't big or deep; it was oddly shaped, and the ugly remains of a rowboat lay sunk in its center. Despite these obstacles, the pond was the focus of my winters, as after school (and sometimes during school) I would tie my skates over my shoulder and complete the cold journey to the pond, sit on the boat's edge to put on my skates, and glide across the pond's frozen, glassy surface for hours. Though the ice was often bumpy, it was glorious enough that I would skate until my ankles ached. Some days I would skate until the premature winter nights approached and I would have trouble finding my path home in the darkness. Then one day I carried my skates to the pond and found only a patch of parched earth. Someone had dumped a drum of oil in the pond and dried it up, and no one would ever skate there again. I realized that



if this field was dying, it surely was not dying a natural death.

I stopped a couple times to pick burrs from my socks before I found the two graves I had been searching for. Although the graves had been plowed over, I remembered their exact location. Each grave contained a dog and I had helped dig them.

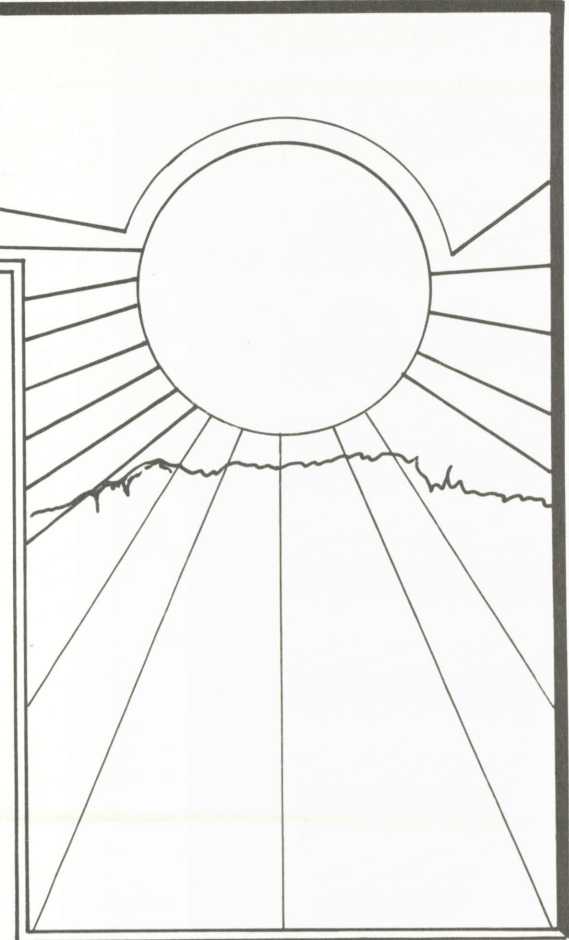
On the left I had buried my own dog after it had been killed on the highway. I remembered trying to forgive cars that killed dogs, but as I shovelled it seemed impossible to do. In the other grave was Major, my friend's dog who had met the same fate earlier the same year but wasn't buried until three months later. When Major was killed, a generous police officer offered to bury the dog himself. Later that winter the two



of us carried our skates to a nearby creek and noticed a tuft of golden hair protruding from the ice. It was Major. The man must have decided not to waste his time. We chiselled Major out of the ice with shovels and placed his frozen corpse in my Radio Flyer wagon. It is still to vivid, watching the dog thaw out in a mixture of water and blood, a hideous grin frozen on his face. I remember trying to say something to my friend but realizing there were no words, so we silently dug Major's grave. I felt a certain loss of innocence.

Quickly I turned away, and since the sun was sinking over the field I thought it best to end my journey. But I had one more stop to make. I came upon the tiny clearing where I had always rested my tired body during my adventures to the field. Here I would lay down and look at the endless sky. I would let the ants crawl over me, and I would lie there in the field's arms, wishing

it would stay the same forever, knowing it would not. This time I laid down again, and my shoulder hit a stake with a red flag on top, warning of the eventual onslaught of big machines. I tried to break the stake but couldn't, and in frustration I hurriedly turned my back and left, knowing that the next time I looked upon this field I probably wouldn't recognize it. The field would finally succumb to progress, and part of me, too, would be buried there.



AUGUST

LIGHTS OUT

August 12

Frozen glows of
a reticent snow
Sparkles of flakes
the roommate awakes
Windows are winter-closed
Callous to frost-pain
Floor can't compare with

Summer has begun
to fall
into reruns.

icicled air
Faucet is dripping
Noisiness leaks
out.
The room is shambles
Wet boots on the chair
Matted hair

Soon
Fall will begin
its preview.

Papery remnants of telephone notes
scribbled, but now
I forgot what I wrote
Cardboard nightstand sags
from the weight
of patient books that were
tortured so late,
last night flung
in cumbersome rage of eyeballs
flipping off the page.

Schools open
their doors to dehydrated brains,
spitwads

and the flu;
while mothers worry

Resumed sleeping
a task never won
Dreamed of cleaning
the room; never done.

over pencils

and shoes.

Twenty six

Cindy Jacobs



A GOLDEN DREAM

The golden rippling field of wheat
The stalks
They stand erect like nipples
of bronzed idols in a Himalayan temple,
They saw in the warm breeze
Drinking the heat of Ra
I saw the glint of light on a supple thigh
They are ripe,
They are golden.

Paul Henry

**"The All-New Identity Game—
But first a word from our sponsor . . ."**

"The vital question today is not whether there will be life after death, but whether there was life before death."

Marshall McLuhan
Understanding Media

John Gehm

Why, indeed, this modern fixation on "Identity?" This global quest for "roots?" This frenetic search for self? Is it not, in fact, obsolete, this inward-turning? It is terrifying, certainly, to look so deeply and see nothing. But worse, it's so horribly *inefficient*.

If we truly wish to know, these days, just who we *really* are we need only ask at the nearest marketing research center. *The New York Times* research department, for example, can provide us instantly with our children's ages, household size, family member occupations and employment, income, home ownership, membership in company boards of directors, amounts spent weekly on food and groceries, car year (whether purchased new or used), air-conditioning data, car rental experience, credit cards, life insurance, personal and household product purchases, securities

owned, TV sets, vacations and travel.

Why, indeed, the great identity crisis? Even as we play at nonconformity, writes Dr. Wilson Key, we find our places in the appropriate demographic niche, moving between work, stores, television and the bedroom, appropriately taking time out to consume food, beverages, recreation and sex. Why, indeed, this monophobia? This fear of being alone?

As Jacques Ellul observes in *Propaganda*, "Democracy is based on the concept that man is rational and capable of seeing clearly what is in his own interest, but the study of public opinion suggests this is a highly doubtful proposition."

Only by questioning and challenge (*not* confrontation) of the ordained coordinates of society, the "givens" by which we order our perception, may we begin, perhaps, to perceive some of the realities which make this search today for the self the matter of life and death that it is. Only by first realizing the global constraints under which modern man "lives" can we step outside of them to examine the binding web spun in the name of "freedom."

Certainly it can no longer be argued that the university or university student still remains outside of this web of constraints. It is naive to believe for a moment even that the college still retains its almost mythical position as Examiner, Interlocutor and Seeker of Truth in this era of economic dictatorship whose ends of power lie embedded in the common faith in the universal goodness of "progress" and "higher standard of living" for all God's creatures great and small.

Not only are the universities no longer able to answer the questions of the man who has split the atom and found only a

bottomless black hole, not only are the universities unable to answer the questions, they cannot formulate the questions to be asked at all. The "Great Questions" of this age are articulated by the consumer civilization which is global and which sends its young to colleges turned turtle—harmless, remote "examiners"—to learn, first-hand, the ethic of consumption. And how to apply it.

Where college is at and where it is going, and likewise the student, is defined—determined—by global necessities; by necessities made virtuous by material comforts, longer lives, greater crop yields, healthier babies, social securities undreamed of fifty years ago; by the necessity of *growth*; by an economy of expansion; by a Gross National Product increasing as a function of *global* investment and corporate internationalism.

But why *should* college be any different from any other corporate structure today? To be specific, why *not* "Forward to the Eighties?" It is simply not realistic to believe that this or any other university is not operating under the same constraints as IBM, Burger King or Tenneco. A bastion of intellectual freedom and inquiry? Hardly.

The Twentieth century *agora*? University, Incorporated must abide today by the same First Law as any other economic entity: grow or die.

The University must, somehow, provide major medical insurance for its faculty; it must, somehow, produce Jobs for its graduates and it must justify these "necessities" in terms that the world can relate to—in Division I athletics and, hopefully, Division I revenues; in B.S.W. degrees to replace last year's BA (SW); in accreditation for the College of Business; in a more efficient computer network; in short, in

terms of growth—Forward to the Eighties!

This is not an apology for the liberal arts. If it is an apology for anything it is an apology for human fullness. It is one thing to concede the fact that, of course, the university *is* a business proposition. It must build a better mousetrap (or at least offer as good a one) or it will lose its share of a shrinking market and, hence, its economic "viability." The university must, of course, remain solvent. (If not, where would our children attend?!) It is, however, quite another matter when faculty, administrators and students, operating under the Necessity of offering a highly marketable, competitive, product, believe otherwise.

The university no longer has the luxury of cultivating the liberal arts or humanities. Mobil, Xerox, MacDonald's and Hallmark do. It is dead idealism to believe today that the university is a place for the free interchange of ideas and still remains the guarantor of intellectual freedom. The very same global necessity which forces the university to turn its attention to building a competitive program which will capture an acceptable share of the new vocational education market—engineering, business, Computer and the other vocational sciences—is the same necessity that drives students to seek out those areas in the first place. Namely, the universal regarding as an *unquestionable* Good a higher and higher standard of living (standard of consumption) and the universal worship of order, from grade school to management training, from Monday through Sunday. It is quite understandable that our unshakable faith in progress is manifest in the firm belief that history is witness to the ascent of man, á la "technique."

Undoubtedly it will seem less and less

ironic, as we move forward to the Eighties, that as one enters this campus one must pass by, first, on the left, the College of Engineering, and on the right, the College of Business Administration.

As commencement approaches, humanities majors are consoled with the fact that even liberal arts graduates have marketable skills—translation: managerial potential. As the university moves into the Eighties it will play the major role in "creating" the new managerial class—men and women happy to have found a niche in the corporate family. It is conservatively estimated that by 1980 *two hundred* multinational corporations will control *in excess of 70 percent* of the wealth of the western hemisphere. In exchange for freedom, individualness and access to the highest circles of power, we become the recipients of comfort, security, and a pleasantly spiralling standard of living.

The way of the world is order, rigidity and death. "Self-definition" in such a world is not possible. Student and faculty are bound up together in the wholesale denial of this reality. The university and university student—all of us—continue to insist that the freedom and security offered by the nation-state and technology are compatible when they are not. Modern man—the college student—no longer in search of *anything* does not want, nor can cope with the awesome responsibility of freedom.

We have been saved, finally, the "great anxiety and terrible agony" involved in making a free decision. And we are happy. It is indeed a happy relief to meekly live out the "ethic" of consumption, modern man, today, the consumer, *par excellence*. It is a happy relief to be able to worship, in technology, at last, an authority which

transcends colony and generation—an authority holding out miracles far more real than curtain-raisers at wedding feasts. It is a happy relief to "know" that history, the final judge and arbiter, shows man adult. There is a happy relief in letting go. Colleges, shopping malls and churches are happy places today. We are happy.

We are sad. We are glad. We are eroticized, legalized, schematized, magnified, moralized, anesthetized and miniaturized. We are unhappy. We are happy. I'm okay. You are, too. We are good. We are evil.

We have reached beyond good or evil. We have given back the knowledge of the forbidden fruit in exchange for our daily bread. We are sheep guided by unseen hands, consoled at night by unrecognizable voices. We make no decisions—none—in this golden age of social security, consortium, corporate families and the global constraints of the consumption ethic. These are the realities as we move Forward to the Eighties. Who am I?

"Listen to your
laxative's propaganda and you
learn who and how you are."

*Wilhelm Reich
Listen Little Man*



TYPICAL*

"Didn't you remember what I told you
about bringing your smelly fishing buddies
home with you?"

she called from her sickbed.
But the fever was soon to leave her,
and she, just like a mother,
(and a Jewish one, at that)
arose to serve dinner
to her son-in-law, Simon,
two of his friends,
and a "fishing buddy"
who had just become her new Physician.

*Mark 1:29-31

John F: Messerschmidt

AND THE WORD BECAME FLESH
AND DWELT AMONG US . . .

Well, shucks—
y'all may like it
when she sends ya a letter
and ya kin read her hand writin',
or when she calls on the phone
and ya kin hear her voice,

But I likes it
when she comes to visit
jist to set a spell
with me on the front porch.

John F. Messerschmidt

Poppies

There were poppies in the wheat—
A brilliant flash of reds among the gold
Beneath the lead-grey sky
One summer.

And days were only mildly hot,
Though through the mile-long walk,
Along that ancient, asphalt-country road,
Between the Jura and the Lake,
The summer afternoons were very warm.

The greyness of the cellar there was cool,
The wooden door and old stone steps led down
Beneath the level of the barn,
And there we worked.

And slowly, peacefully, we worked 'til three,
And then began the backward walk again,
Beyond the blooming, growing, pushing corn,
And by a farmhouse pasture—full of sheep;
Under the swishing trees and up the grassy, cement steps
To wait there for the train to take us home
To Gland, or to the city and its shops.

It was a peaceful, gentle, quiet summer,
Interspersed with both anxieties and laughter.
The Lord was with me there, and brought me there
To learn to love Him better, and to trust
His guidance in that modern-ancient place.

The poppies are such brilliant fragile things—
They died before the summer was half-gone.
The corn matured—we ate wheat from the head;
The Lake glittered with sailboats and with sun.
But more often the days were cool and grey,
And early mornings rose cold from the Lake,
While Mont Blanc's snowcap glittered in the dawn
To fade during the day.

There was an evening fireworks one night,
And bonfire—all the townspeople were there,
And with each flashing, brilliant, pastel starburst,
The children cried in wonder

It was a grand occasion—seven hundred
independent, prospering years had passed.

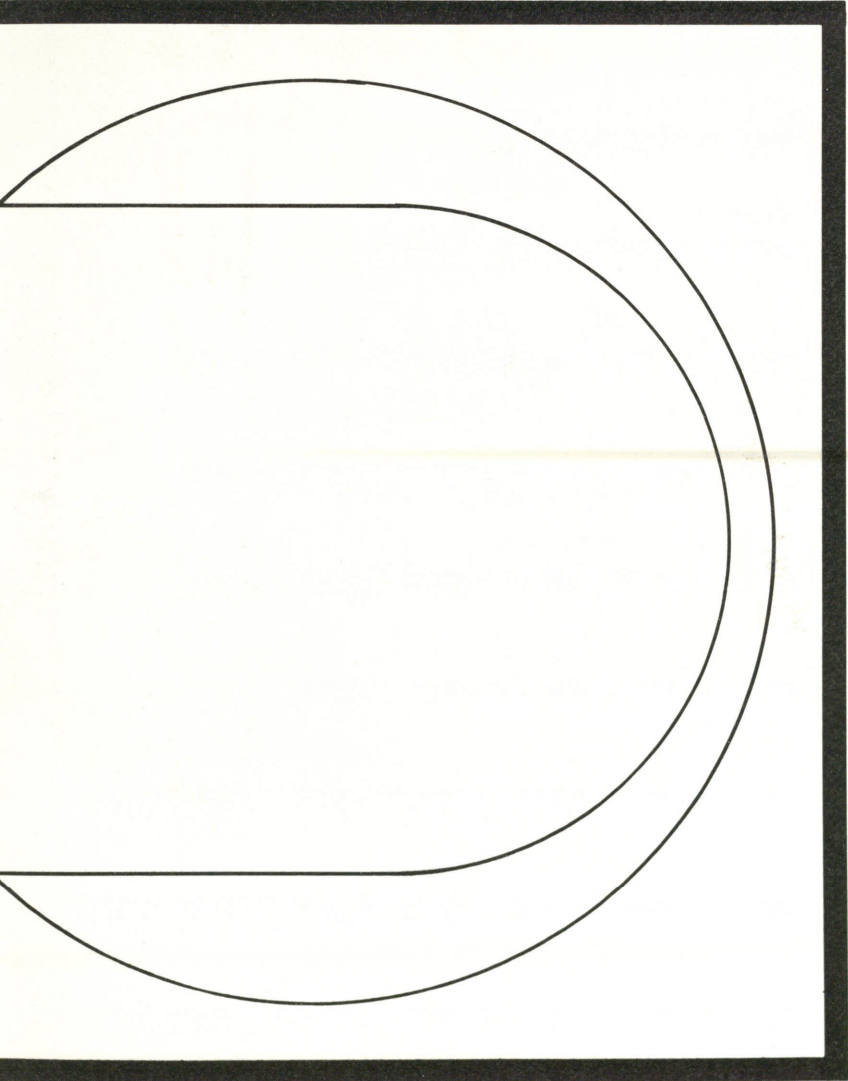
My independence in the Lord increased,
And with the passing of the wheat and grapes,
The felling of the corn,
I knew that freedom to obey was infinite
And, like the poppies, my time there had passed.

Su Holman

and in French.

thirty one





FULL CIRCLE

At first I could not get used to the great granite church
With its geometric Jesus
(Leaving no shapes out:
Triangular toes, hexagonal hands, circular crucifix)
And its pews that were blackly polished for the sake of modern art.

I was used to a white-board church
In a valley town,
Where women's lace collars still stood straight up
Over every indiscriminate print —
Muted plums and purpled grapes, a faded carpet tweed —
Where men reached deep into oversized pants
For silver money. The children knew
Just who dropped dimes and who dropped dollars
By face as well as hand.

And communion . . . Ah communion! Our wine wasn't vintage.
We drank grape juice for Christ in cups that clinked
Then hushed to silence solemn.
Our bread? It was the Friday special —
Cut neat and small and square —
So fine! Its softness melted easily on the roughness of our tongues.

No, at first I could not get used to that grey hulk of a church
With its thirty thousand Sunday comers.
No, not until I chanced into the church one day
And heard the organ player practicing —
An aesthetic youth, thin like candles.
I felt sound, felt drowned, by the music that he piped.
(Christ was here, too.)
The geometrics appeared less angular
As he pumped, pumped, pumped.

Kim Bridgford

