



Fall 2002

The Forum: Fall 2002

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the Forum

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Amanda Licht

In the Dark

A strange thing happens to Terry after midnight: she wakes up. Not that she's spent the whole day sleeping. Terry's been conscious and aware for eighteen hours when she watches the hour and minute hand of the living room clock snap together at the top. This change is not a matter of wakefulness; it is a much more subtle alteration in her mental state. At 12 a.m., Terry can feel the timed porch light douse itself, and she knows that the darkness has her trapped in the living room, far away from her bed. Her senses snap into sudden focus as she stares at the clock's hands. She can see the minute hand quivering just before it lurches forward to indicate the passage of midnight's first minute. Her ears seem to quiver too, reaching out from the sides of her head to pick up the faintest hum of electricity in the walls. She can feel every lash on her lids, every hair in her head. The draft from the hall door creeps over the high back of her chair to sigh against her neck and she shivers violently, jerking around to search for the source of this disturbance with dilated eyes, certain that a strange man has snapped the lock on her screen and is waiting to jump her in the darkness. Terry loses her certainty—her security—after midnight. In the darkness, Terry becomes a hunted animal.

Her eyes cannot penetrate the darkness beyond the living room doorway. It is inky black like a cartoon tunnel. She jumps in surprise and snaps her book shut. But there is nothing to be startled by, only the humming walls and quivering clock hands. Terry mutters to herself that it is too late for studying in any case and there's always early class in the morning. She forces herself to stand and expose her back to the unknown. An intense shiver ripples up her spine and across her shoulders. Her teeth chatter as she shuffles her stocking feet across the hardwood floor. She lets her right hand drag across the end table beside her chair and rubs her left hand on the denim leg of her jeans.

Terry stands in front of the door, looking into the black hallway with her hand on the living room's light switch. She is afraid to close her eyes even long enough to let them adjust. She sucks a deep gulp of air into her lungs and flips the switch, bringing the darkness down on herself. She finds herself suddenly suffocating, the gulp of air she took a moment ago had disappeared with the light. A tiny yelp escapes her throat and she bolts

down the hallway, running blindly past the black windows and the swinging screen door's snapped lock. Terry darts through her bedroom door and slams it shut. In her clumsy fear she knocks her knee against her dresser and tumbles headlong into her unmade bed. Gasping, she struggles under the sheets and pulls them tight around herself. Terry stares at the darkness in front of her eyes, breath coming ragged from her mouth, heart banging against her ribs.

A smile pulls at the corner of her mouth, and she chokes on breathless laughter. She calls herself a stupid, stupid baby and rolls onto her stomach, tucking her arms under her chest. She is sure that those thumps in the hallway are just her imagination.

Aaron Zimmerman

The Venture

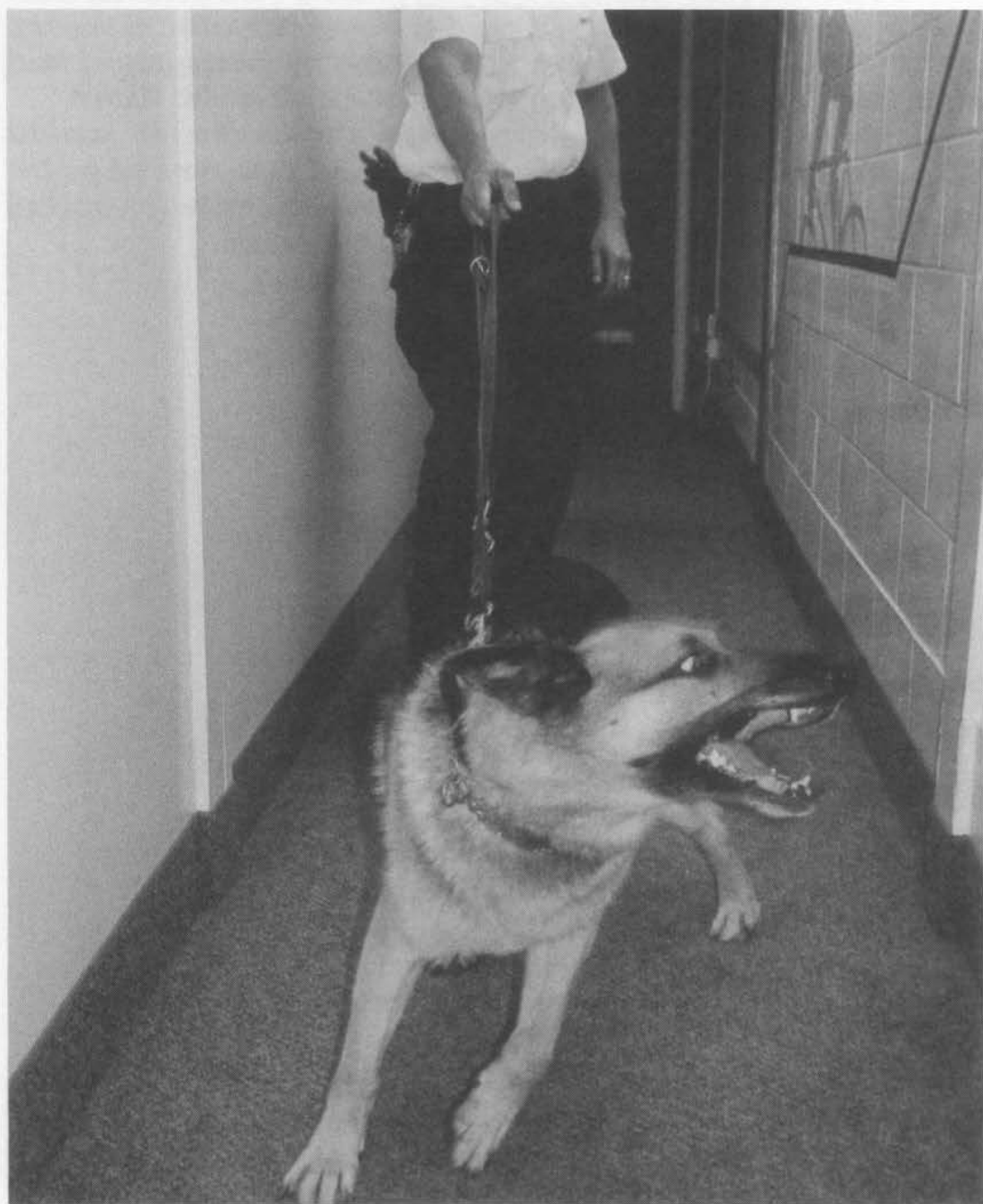
Aroused by the silent wail of moonlight
fire dancing in your eyes
Perhaps you knew not it was within you
but I saw it hiding under guise.

I longed so much to touch those lips
to drink the fire within
I saw I heard, I all but felt
the longing grew herein.

Searching deep into your eyes
begging you to come
Pulling close with force unseen
I tried to bring you home.

I ventured forth toward these lips
blazing paths under the mist
A trail of love in somber light
and toward some utter bliss.

Touch brought forth that fire to me
it burned with thunder heat
Removed the chill, melting ice
and made me feel complete.



Dustin Kouba

Angela Fitzpatrick

*Pillsbury Park:
The Scene of a Subterranean
Counterculture*

Downtown Grand Forks is not nearly the bustling center of cultural diversity that one might find in other downtown areas, but it does possess a certain amount of charm given the overall climate of the city; in fact, it has become the stomping ground of a minority group of high school students and young adults who strive to transcend the mundane existence of Mid-Western life. In an obscure park known as "Pillsbury," situated on an empty lot between a coffee house and a printing shop, these kids gather to play hackey-sack, exchange political views, and organize subversive political activities, among other things. They annoy local business owners, law enforcers and passersby with their on-goings.

However, what the kids' adversaries do not realize is that the kids have been there since the inception of the park and are practically integral to its continued existence. Grand Forks native and long-time "punk rocker" Nate Marshall was able to offer a few words on this subject. According to him, when the coffee shop scene hit Grand Forks, circa 1993, the Urban Stampede opened and many of the high school kids from Central (the high school downtown) sought refuge from school authorities in this coffee shop and the park next door, i.e. Pillsbury. A year later another downtown coffee house, the Cappuccino Garden, opened and provided yet another hangout for the area youth. Local bands began to play at the Garden or the French Connection (yet another downtown coffee house), and the atmosphere around the Urban was very mellow at this time. The park soon turned into a meeting place for those who were waiting to go to a show; they would sit at tables outside of the coffee shop, playing chess, drinking coffee, and conversing. In 1996 there was actually a show in the park itself with maybe six or seven local bands that drew a crowd from outside of the esoteric crowd of kids. Around this same time the Cappuccino Garden closed and people started hanging out around the Urban Stampede and the park more frequently. Furthermore, local artist Adam Kemp was more active in the scene, and the downtown art scene began to develop as a result of all this. This period seems to be crucial in the formation of the park as

an enduring scene in itself.

The flood of 1997, which devastated the entire town, would test the park's staying power as people began to leave the city in search for drier land that would foster their subcultural identities. Incidentally, some argue that the flood killed the local music scene which had previously been thriving in a small venue across town, and the scene did indeed go through a period of stagnancy from 1997-1999. Nate, on the other hand, merely saw a transformation in the scene; for instance the downtown area became the "place to be" rather than the place to meet. Reasons for this include the restructuring of the downtown area, the close walking distance for those who lived in the area, and the establishment of a profit-free coffee shop. The last element seems to be the real guiding force behind the transformation.

Following the aforementioned stagnancy of the scene, Kosmos was created as a place for kids to hang out and see shows in a drug-free environment. Nate saw it as a "cultural oasis" of sorts--a place where the kids could find refuge from the harsh outside world from which they had been banned. However there were some patrons who attended the shows intoxicated, despite the sobriety rule of the café and for this reason there was a great deal of criticism from the outside. Still, although some of these kids may have been under the influence of drugs, they were very involved in Kosmos and did what they could to keep it running, such as working the counter, cooking food, booking bands, hanging up flyers, etc. In fact, oftentimes their involvement amounted to a lot more than the adult involvement did, primarily because this place carried a great deal of significance for a population that had hitherto been deprived of any underground music venues.

As Kosmos began to grow in popularity, a new group of kids inhabited the park: the "Kosmos kids," as Nate fondly refers to them. These kids mainly came from the high school as the older "kids" were initially prohibited from attending events based on the "under 21" policy established by the management. So the first generation of park kids, now in college, faded from the scene and the newer generation filled their place.

The kids of this second generation were primarily punk rockers. They wore spiky bracelets, formed mosh pits at shows, attempted to squat in the park, and drank massive amounts of vodka. They believed in anarchy and, being more political than the first generation, held events in the park, such as barter fairs, that they thought would bring them closer to realizing their social ideals. They wrote "Big Brother is watching" on the walls of downtown buildings and covered the sidewalks of the park with messages criticizing our government and our society. At this time there were two politically active figures who frequented the park. One was a transient male in his early twenties who had an impressive knowledge of

social policy and philosophy--he initiated the barter fair and the graffiti. The other, a male in his thirties, was a local politician who had the kids campaigning for him at one point. One aspect of this man's platform involved raising the local wage to a living wage, which he thought would lead to a decrease in out migration. On one occasion he led the kids to a city council meeting where they declared that they would leave the state in search of fair wages when they became legal adults.

During their attempts at squatting, a few of them actually brought their tents down to the park and slept there for the night. On at least one occasion, the local law enforcement was called and the kids were removed from the park for the night. There was also another conflict with the police when they came to remove a couch that the kids had brought to the park. In a moving attempt to regain their couch, the kids wrote letters to the local newspaper, not for the sake of a couch itself, but for the sake of their rights to freedom.

The contemporary scene in the park is slightly different. The kids have gone rave crazy and traded their spiky bracelets for bracelets made of brightly colored charms, often referred to as "candy bracelets." They've crossed out the paranoid caution of "Big Brother" and instead posted the acronym PLUR: peace, love, unity, respect. Over the past summer, they constructed a city made from cardboard--the maintenance people threw this out--and held a community give away of their unwanted items. This is the last organized event that they held in park and the cops showed up for it when the coffee shop manager called them and complained of a brewing domestic dispute that was never even conceived.

Pillsbury park has been home to an underground counterculture in our community since the 1990s and it has prevailed as such despite the shutdown of music venues (the music scene still suffers since Kosmos shut down), the flight of socially progressive characters, and harassment by local authority figures. This scene will continue to prevail as the Urban Development Office reconstructs the park, adding more comfortable and eye-catching features, which will hopefully draw more kids who can learn resistance from the older ones. At present there is no third generation of kids waiting in the wings as the second generation makes plans for college, but hopefully when the time is right, a new group of kids will come forward to play in the park and spread their ideas of social progression.

Kadon Hintz

Ready or Not?
Public Health vs. Bioterrorism

Recent acts of terrorism against the United States have revived questions of safety within our borders to levels that haven't been seen since the Cuban Missile Crisis. The bombing of the World Trade Center Twin Towers and the Pentagon followed by numerous cases of anthrax across the nation have left many Americans fearing for their lives. We have been forced to requestion everything, reanalyzing policies from air travel safety to public health regulation. Like it or not, bioterrorism is a serious threat that is unlike any other that we have had to face before. Fighting an invisible killer spread through the air is something that we are ill prepared to do, but changes are being made to account for that. A major shift in public health policy is being made to prepare us for these biological attacks, but how ready are we? Is there really any way of measuring our preparedness before an actual biological attack takes place?

Locally, in the case of a biological attack our lives are in the hands of Don Shields, the Grand Forks director of public health, and Dr. James Hargreaves, an infectious disease specialist at Altru Hospital, among others. A recent seminar given by these two men entitled "Bioterrorism: Weapons of Mass Destruction Planning" outlined their plan of attack during a bioterrorism outbreak. Although these two men provided ample information regarding diseases of interest to bioterrorists, they were unable to put into words what their specific course of action would be during such an outbreak. The audience was left with information on the diseases, but educationally unfulfilled in how the diseases would be handled. I, for one, found it particularly disheartening to hear Dr. Hargreaves mention repeatedly that the measures taken to stop the spread of such a disease were not standardized and that each case would be handled differently. His efforts to dodge the question with reference to the complexity of such an outbreak did not comfort me in the least. Instead, I was left feeling that our local preparation is inadequate at this point. For a more formal assessment of our bioterrorism preparation, however, we'll have to look further.

In a recent report Dr. Jeffrey Koplan, the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cites "assessment" as the first

part of the process of revamping the public health response system. He states that this process includes "laying out expectations and assessing or measuring where we are in order to provide solid justification for future plans and investments in public health." Koplan mentions nothing of how these measurements are made or can be made, however. He only gives the impression that public health preparedness is widely disparate across the country. This seemingly minor omission, again, worries me. Since the level of preparedness will determine distribution of funds and areas of concentration in future program direction and development, and since our national public health safety level is only as good as the weakest link in the chain, it is of utmost importance that these measurements be accurate. Unfortunately, Dr. Koplan's explanation of assessment was severely inadequate, so the search goes on.

Another link off the CDC website offered me more information on what I was looking for, but again left me hanging in the end. The Office of Domestic Preparedness (ODP) explained the definition of assessment much more thoroughly than Dr. Koplan's report and had links to free training modules online meant to be used by officials in city, county, and state public health departments to assist them in "collecting assessment data, prioritizing jurisdictions for funding, and submitting their assessments and strategies to ODP." In order to access these training modules, however, it is required that you register and are approved by the state contact to ODP and the state public health representative to insure that you are in fact a public health official. Since I am not in public health, I was unable to observe the training modules and therefore unable to assess their validity for myself. Once again, the assessment of bioterrorism preparation has been hidden from the public. I'm beginning to notice a trend, and it is probably not without meaning.

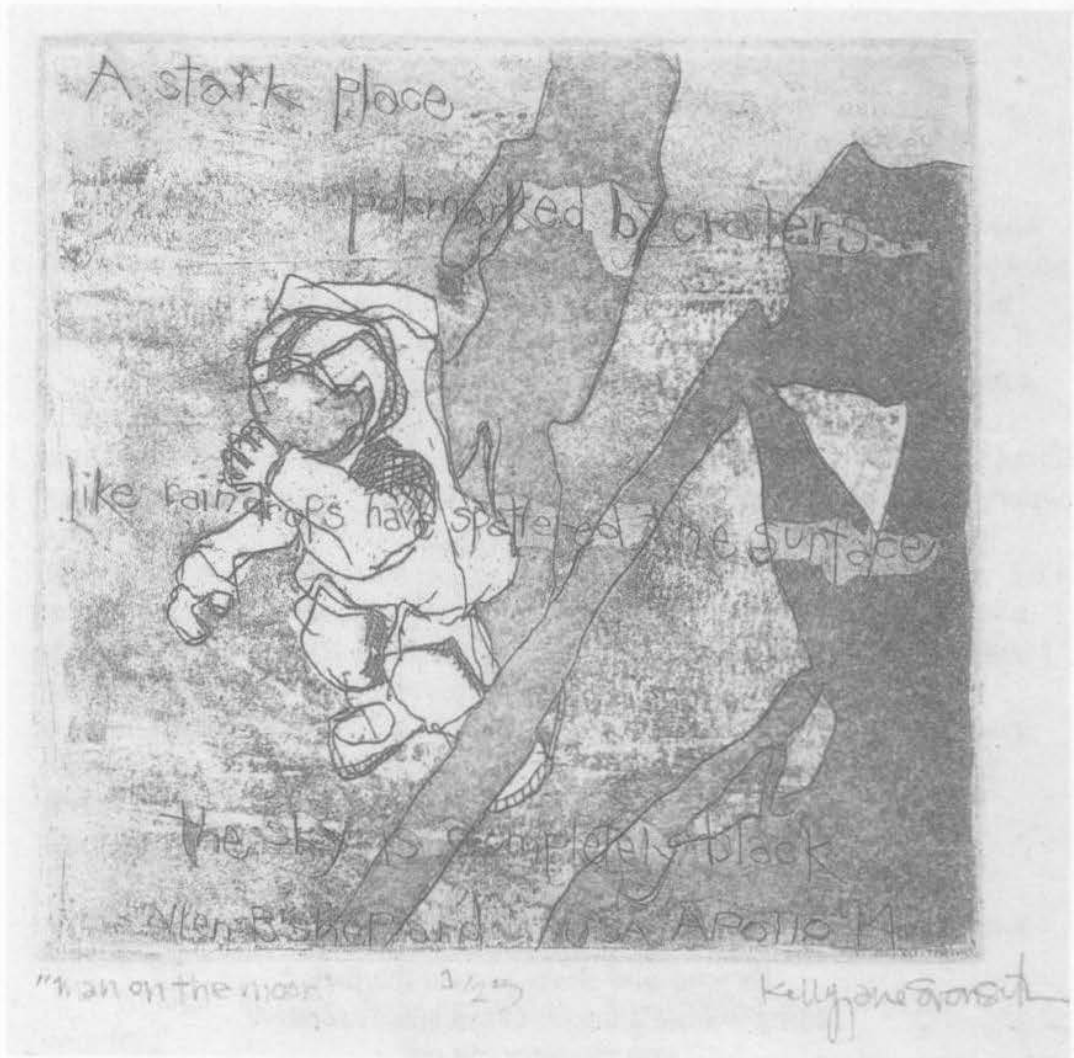
The seemingly intentional omission of information regarding public health preparedness can be viewed from several different angles. First of all, this could be public health officials' way of comforting the general public and keeping the panic level to a minimum. As mentioned earlier, I was worried by Mr. Shields' and Dr. Hargreaves' seminar, but their intent was clearly the opposite. They obviously do not want the local public health department to be viewed as inadequate, and mentioned that they have been training and planning for combating weapons of mass destruction since 1998. I found discomfort not in what was said, however, but what remained unsaid. The fact that they never compared our level of preparation to that of any other state, such as New York, which was formally recognized as being among the best in the nation by Dr. Koplan, leaves the general public with no basis for criticism. If we have no basis for criticism, we therefore have no need to worry and no reason to think that local public health is not doing everything they possibly can to protect

our well-being.

Another potential reason why the level of bioterrorism preparedness remains hidden from the public could be that there is no definitive way of assessing it in the absence of outbreak. Without being able to see the ODP online assessment module, I really have no idea of how one would go about assessing how ready a region is to combat bioterrorism when there have simply been no precedent experiences in our country. Although one can indirectly measure knowledge on the subject, training, and resources, this is a distant second place to assessment of how someone carried himself or herself during an actual outbreak and the efficiency with which the outbreak was resolved. The resulting invalidity of these measurements alone may warrant their disregard.

A third potential reason for omission of bioterrorism preparedness levels from public view may be that we simply cannot be prepared for everything, and the assessment scale is therefore rendered useless. With the emergence of drug-resistant contagions through genetic manipulation, it is becoming increasingly obvious that it is simply impossible to be ready for anything. This fact is not a shortcoming of public health, but instead will fall on the shoulders of science to find an effective treatment if a biological weapon of this nature is released. It must be disheartening, to say the least, for public health officials to know that no matter what they do, it may just not be enough.

Public health is a difficult job with responsibilities ranging from health promotion to disease control. In light of the recent acts of terrorism against our country, a new area of focus has been added to their already lengthy list of services. The road to preparation against bioterrorism is a long one, and the first stop on the journey is assessment of current disease response status, which has proven to be a cumbersome step in and of itself for several reasons. Because preparedness is difficult to assess in the absence of an outbreak, since it is simply not possible to be prepared to combat the infinite number of potential biological weapons, and since poor assessment levels may initiate unnecessary panic in the community, the level of preparation for an outbreak of this kind is better left unsaid. We must instead put faith in the leaders of public health to act swiftly and effectively to minimize any threat posed against us. Unfortunately, in this case, ignorance is bliss.



Kelly Swenseth

Maria Kannianen

Wear This

Hanes Her Way
says she does not exist
on a pantyhose chart.

Levis
forget that at 5'8" 175 pounds
a woman still has a
waist.

Victoria's squeezes
and stuffs in pink,
every woman
moves up
three sizes
there.

Tailored shirts
mockingly refuse to button over
healthy breasts.

Dresses and shirts flirt on the rack
hiding behind a tag that says size is relative,
you must try me on.

Try me on, what size are you today?
You are not thin enough.
Wear this Hefty.

Jason Schaefer

Only Love Remains

While living in Spain, I discovered the value of walking. The slower pace allows me to have a better sense of my surroundings. In addition, it is a more intimate experience with my feet touching the ground, breathing the air into my lungs, hearing the many sounds around me while touching tree trunks, flowers, buildings and such. Never was the worthiness of walking demonstrated more clearly for me than one cold autumn night in Missoula, Montana.

I was taking the pedestrian bridge over the Clark Fork River when a homeless man offered to draw me a picture if only I would go to the convenience store across the street and buy him a hotdog. While in Spain I had developed my policies concerning beggars. I stayed away from people just begging, instead saving my small gifts for people willing to offer something in exchange, be it a song, a poem, a drawing, or whatever. So I immediately took this guy up on his offer. I wasn't expecting much of a picture from this man, but I was happy to help him out. However, when I came back with his burritos (they were out of hotdogs), he had the beginnings of what I could already tell was going to be an extraordinary work of art. He asked if he could have a floor to sleep on so he could finish the drawing. It was rather cold that night and his hands were freezing. I was embarrassed that I had not offered first.

As we walked back to my house, he told me that he was known around Missoula as Tommy the Artist. He informed me that he was not homeless.

"In fact," he said, "I am in the top 5% economic bracket in the country."

"What?" I exclaimed. "You live in a tent down by the river!"

"True," he acknowledged, "but I own that tent, I own my sleeping bag and my sketch pad. I have no debts except for one at the hospital, but they won't come after me cuz I own nothing of great value and I don't have a street address."

Tommy's favorite story, judging by the fact that he told it to me five times, was about the big shiner he was sporting. Apparently some "bums" were mad at Tommy for taking business away from them. They were too lazy to do anything but beg, as far as Tommy was concerned. Finally they

confronted Tommy telling him he was "getting in the way of their business."

"What business?" Tommy snapped back, earning himself a pretty good-sized shiner on his right eye.

Tommy went on to tell me about Jacobs Island where he usually slept. He said he communicates with the animals on Jacobs Island. The birds aren't scared of him, and he has pet chipmunks and rabbits. He has a good warm sleeping bag and normally enjoys sleeping under the stars. When he doesn't feel like being outside, he exchanges his art for a floor or a couch. Once he was offered a well-paying job to paint a mural in a friend's house in the mountains. He tried it, but he missed the island and didn't like the deadline and pressure to do his work.

We stayed up talking while eating organic almonds and cranberries until 6:00 in the morning. It quickly became apparent that I was talking to one of the most interesting people I would ever meet. And that was before he told me about his well-decorated military friend who told him that extra terrestrials have warned the United States government that nuclear weapons testing is interfering with time travel. When I asked him why a high-ranking military official would ever tell him all of this top secret info, he retorted, "Cuz he knows nobody is going to believe a guy like me!"

As we talked, Tommy continued to work on the drawing. It was really cool to watch it unfold before my eyes. I sifted through his sketchbook, which was full of great drawings and even some poetry. He was reading Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and was inspired to start writing poetry. One really struck me, so much so that I asked him to incorporate it into the face he was drawing me. It was a simple matter of putting in a quote bubble, but Tommy put some time into it, working the following quote into the picture seamlessly. "Time is a definition of the eternal expansion of energy, the nature of which words do not explain. It is what it is. All words are a description of an attempt to control or contain - that is human nature - to control, contain and destroy. Only love remains."

Almost a year later, I continue to see the relevance of Tommy's words illustrated on a daily basis. It was particularly evident to me one day a few weeks ago when I was visiting my dad in the nursing home. A nurse was in there with him helping him practice his swallowing a few days after he had been given the OK to eat after some five months of being tube-fed. The bond between the two of them was undeniable. Like all of the staff at the nursing home, she enjoys working with my dad. He can always be counted on for a smile and likes to joke around. He is very appreciative and always has words of thanks for the help he receives. This lady was leaving the home to take another job in town and was regretful that she could no longer work with my dad. This moment and countless other

moments I have witnessed have me completely convinced that this is the place my dad is supposed to be at this particular time in his life.

I have to admit, however, that it seems like a weird plan to me. If it were in my control, my dad would be at home, healthy and active. But that's just it. It is not in my control. I had no control over my dad getting pneumonia and being in intensive care on the brink of death twice within a matter of weeks. I had no control over his swallowing muscles weakening to the point that it was no longer possible for him to eat or drink, forcing him to be tube fed. Nor did I have much control over him ending up in a nursing home.

I was really bummed for my dad and myself. My dad had already had a tough year. Before the pneumonia he walked with a walker due to a lifelong neurological condition. He was pretty self-sufficient and was usually home alone during the day while my mom and sister worked and I was in school or globetrotting. He had a walk-in shower that he used every day along with a stretching machine and an exercise bike that he was on a couple of times a day. But his favorite thing to do was to ride his three wheel bicycle around the neighborhood. Again, this is something at which he was self-sufficient. Unfortunately, the bike was stolen the fall before he got pneumonia. That spring we were planning on buying a new bike, this one with a motor that could be turned on when needed. My vision was for him to be able to take longer bike rides with the help of the motor. I was planning on trips to area parks with paved trails, such as the Rydell Wildlife Refuge. I had quite a few other plans for my dad. I was anxious to spend more time with him after having been away from Grand Forks for seven months in Spain and Missoula. I was going to get him a dog and we were going to try medical marijuana for his muscle spasms. I had met the leading American researcher on medical marijuana while I was living in Missoula who told me that pot would definitely help with my dad's condition.

I was very excited about these plans that I knew would improve the quality of my dad's life drastically. But that is not the way it worked out. Instead, he ended up in a nursing home before I could pursue those plans. Once he entered the nursing home, I thought that would be the end for him. I figured he would become really depressed and give up. I had forgotten just how much of a fighter my dad is. More importantly, however, I did not realize how amazing the staff at the nursing home was. This is not your stereotypical nursing home. They incorporate what is called the Eden Alternative. This philosophy sees nursing homes as habitats for human beings rather than institutions for the frail and elderly. It seeks to combat loneliness, helplessness, and boredom with companion animals, gardening, and a wide variety of other things that mark an enlivened environment that can succeed where pills and therapies fail.

In my dad's wing alone they have a dog, two birds, and they are getting a cat and some fish. There are all kinds of activities. Words of encouragement from staff members are never too far away. There are many incredible people in my dad's life including his nurses (the sweetest people you could ever meet!), physical therapists, speech therapists, occupational therapists and many, many more. They make him happy and keep him busy. He smiles, laughs, and jokes with them all the time. Many other patients are not able to talk; some do not have a positive attitude like my dad. I think my dad makes their day sometimes. The more I see him interact with the staff at the nursing home, the more convinced I become that there is a higher power or a greater intelligence with a plan. Call it God, better yet call it Gaia, call it what you will. We had no control over my dad ending up in the nursing home. Yet it seems like he is meant to be there.

This is not to suggest that we should just stand aside void of emotion and let fate run its course. The lesson I have learned is that we should save our precious energy for the things in life that we do have control over such as our attitude. To assume control over that which we cannot is to waste energy and dampen our spirit. I cannot begin to describe how indebted I feel to the many people in my dad's life who are taking such good care of him. Not to mention the many family and friends all over the country who have sent him cards and called us with words of encouragement and love. The fruits of their labor are more apparent as his smile grows every day and continues to brighten so many peoples' lives. He has made what can at times be a tough and agonizing job more bearable and pleasurable for the people who work with him. They have made his life more enjoyable. He is very happy and content. Thanks to these people and their infinite kindness, it has been much easier for my family to accept my dad's situation. ...Only Love remains.

© Time is a definition of the eternal expansion
of Energy, the nature of which words do not
explain. It is what it is. All words are a
description of an attempt to control or contain
that is human nature ~ to control,
contain, and destroy. Only love
remains. ©



Tommy the Artist

2001

Tommy the Artist

Amanda Licht

Long Distance

Lindsey let her backpack roll off her shoulder and thump to the tile floor. She dropped herself into her desk with similar carelessness. The other kids might have noticed, but she didn't raise her eyes. She adjusted her headphones, ran a hand through her hair and slumped down low crossing her arms over her chest. With her eyes closed, she tried to remember what it had felt like to be asleep and dreaming last night. Waking up had pissed her off, as usual, because it separated her from Jason. He was way more interesting than everyday life, even though she could only be with him in her dreams. Not for the first time, an obnoxious voice in the back of her mind wondered if she only liked him because he lived behind a 500 mile buffer of safety.

Lindsey gave up; she was awake and couldn't get the dream back. She opened her eyes and glanced around. Half the room was filled now. The other students sat gossiping, finishing homework, or sleeping with their heads buried in their arms. They had a good five minutes before Mr. Welk was likely to saunter in. Lindsey yawned and stretched. She rubbed her eyes and wished absently that she didn't look so sickly. As long as it seemed like staying up until 3 a.m. talking to Jason every night wasn't making her sick, her mom had no problem with it. But right now, with her eyes burning in the fluorescent light, her brain too dull to focus on detail, and her skin noticeably lacking in luster, she realized that she had a problem. If her mom saw how bruised the flesh under her eyes was, everything would be ruined. She'd have to bum some concealer off one of her friends, buy a couple cappuccinos, and pretend to be perky when she got home.

Lindsey looked down and pulled her t-shirt firmly over the waistband of her jeans. None of her pants fit right anymore; they kept slipping down her waist and bubbling out when she sat down. The compliments rolled in as her friends began to notice the weight she was dropping. But she wasn't a big fan of the situation. She couldn't figure out why it was happening. Sure, she wasn't very hungry lately, but she still ate a little at every meal. She wasn't anorexic. She liked her clothes. And now she'd have to waste

a load of money buying new pants.

She leaned down to grab a piece of gum from her backpack and caught a boy looking at her from across the aisle. She raised an eyebrow. "Did you want a piece of this?" she asked.

"What?"

"Some gum?" she asked.

"Oh, no thanks. I was just wondering what you're listening to."

Lindsey pushed her headphones off. "You haven't heard of them."

"I might have."

"No, not really," Lindsey smiled. "I'm not playing anything. I just leave these on in the morning so people don't talk to me."

"Oh." He leaned back in his desk. "Sorry."

"No reason to be. You might as well keep talking, since you started. I'm Lindsey, by the way."

"I'm Steve. We have like three classes together."

Lindsey raised her eyebrows and crossed her arms. Steve was mostly unmemorable. Brown hair, brown eyes, Nike sneakers—nothing like Jason. She took a wild guess. "Yeah, I think you're in calc with me, right? That class sucks my ass."

Steve shrugged. "It's not so bad. I could help you with it if you want."

"Well, that's damn decent of you, Steven."

"No problem." Steve smiled at her, and Lindsey revised her opinion of him. She would definitely remember that smile. "But," he said, "I am not entirely good-natured. I'm gonna want something in return."

"And what would that be?"

"Oh, I don't know. Do you have plans for Saturday?" he asked.

"Oh." Lindsey grimaced. "I've got a boyfriend."

"Really?" Steve mimicked her grimace. "I've been misinformed."

"Yeah, he doesn't live here."

"So, you don't have plans," he said.

"No, but I have a boyfriend."

Steve sighed and narrowed his eyes as he looked at her. "I don't want to piss you off, but you don't look like a girl with a boyfriend to me."

"And how should I look then?"

"I don't know. Happy, I guess."

Lindsey opened her mouth to reply just as Mr. Welk walked through the door. Steve turned away and opened his notebook.

She put her headphones away and pulled her history books out of her bag. Lindsey took terrible notes, as usual. But instead of drawing flowers and writing Jason's name all over the margins of her paper, she found herself looking over at Steve. She was pretty sure that she was really pissed at him, but she couldn't quite convince herself that he was an asshole. She ground her teeth, glared at her notebook, and tapped her foot

all through class.

When the bell rang, she leaned across the aisle again to pick up her backpack and drop her books in. She stood up and found Steve looking at her. His smile told her that they had calc together next. Lindsey sighed and smiled back.

"So," she sighed, "Saturday it is. What did you have in mind?"

Maria Kannianen

Variations on a Theme: Wayne and Hazel

1

Wayne and Hazel were our neighbors when we both lived on small farms in North Dakota. My parents and I visited their house often when I was small, and that was where I first remember playing with a piano. The adults would talk, and I would go up and down the keyboard carefully, touching every key one time, then all black keys, or all white keys the next. I was very systematic about it, but never melodic. I must have made quite a racket, but I don't remember anyone ever telling me to stop. Sometimes I would play with the old Scrabble board with the metal pegs for scoring, or I would pet one of their cats. It was one of those homes that had seen an entire family raised within its walls. It smelled like it, too. I liked the smell though. When I was little it wasn't an old-people smell yet, it had a smell that just let you know that real people lived there. People who had raised children and cats, people who worked hard for everything they owned, and people who loved that home.

2

It was very important to my parents for me to be very polite, since I was often the only child among adults when we would visit people in the evenings. I became accustomed to holding my tongue in the name of politeness. The most dangerous thing at Wayne and Hazel's house for me was when we had been invited there for supper. I have always been one of those people who needs liquid during my meal in order for me to eat it properly. Supper at Wayne and Hazel's house meant one of two options for me, since they were careful to feed the growing child properly. If we had brought them fresh milk from our cow, they would heat it up for me to have with my supper. If we had not brought milk, Hazel would mix up some powdered milk for me. It was either warm milk or powdered milk for the growing child. I couldn't handle milk either style. But since it was the kind of setting where one is expected to eat whatever is placed on one's plate so one does not insult the cook, asking for water was not an option.

3

Wayne and Hazel decided to move to town. I don't remember what year it was, but I was in high school. I was busy with after school

activities and didn't see them very often. Sometimes if my dad picked me up from school, he would bring me to see them. They had found a nice little house, and were glad that they had moved while they were able to enjoy it. That was when going to their house became difficult. I was in high school, and too conscious of cat hair everywhere, even in the hot cocoa or pop and ancient cookies they always offered visitors. I was self-conscious, and didn't appreciate attempts at conversation, when they always asked difficult questions. My visits slowly tapered off, even though my parents would occasionally ask if I'd been there, and would say that Wayne and Hazel had asked about me.

4

I went to college. Although I visited my family occasionally, I never went to see Wayne and Hazel until guilt finally caught up with me. Guilt is not always a bad thing. It has a purpose, and that is to lead us to honest examination of ourselves. Sometimes the guilt we feel comes from irrational accusations by ourselves or others, but sometimes guilt can prod us to take necessary action. Any bit of guilt I have ever felt for not visiting someone, for not reaching out to someone, has been a positive influence in my life. (I'm not including ex-boyfriends or ex-girlfriends in this statement.) So it was ultimately guilt, not any higher motivating factor, which put me outside their door, ringing the doorbell. Of course one of the ancient cats was twining about my feet, wanting to get back inside. And of course the cat didn't match whatever color pants I happened to be wearing. Damn. I never announced my visits to them; I knew they preferred surprises. That day when Wayne answered the door I didn't dare exhale for fear the poor man would fall over in happy shock. He smiled and he might have even hugged me. I honestly don't remember, but I know that after that visit I hugged them every chance I got. He invited me inside, where they had so many questions for me that they forgot to offer the customary beverage and hard cookie. I don't remember if I ever did make it to my chiropractor appointment that afternoon, but I don't remember caring either.

5

Hazel died last night, and I dreamt of pigeons. I worked until one, then stayed up until two answering e-mail. Then dreamt of pigeons, of all things. Jake and I were transporting pigeons, not telling anyone, using a school bus. Then somehow I was named Ellen, and he was named Ted. One of the pigeons was friends with a mouse, and when I left the mouse it was afraid of a cat, so it trained the pigeon to place little pieces of wood over it to make an escape tunnel if needed. It was odd and confusing. Somehow two doves came into the picture. Then the phone rang and my mother said that Hazel died last night. And I thought...and went out on the balcony and thought and got cold and went back to bed and cried because

Wayne loves her so much and I don't know any other happy marriages and he is going to miss her so much, like he wrote in a letter to me. I'm so glad I went to see her. What a beautiful soul. So thankful for her helpful daughters, indeed, the very fact that everyone is so faithful speaks volumes about the kind of woman she was. Now she's more than that. Now she knows her answers. All of them. Perhaps she sees me as I write this, she knows what the future holds for me, she knows that time spent with her is very precious to me. I feel a bit of shame when I think of all she might know now. She knows now what I wonder, if I will write and write and live to see it appreciated, if it is or can be. She knows if I will find a love, or perhaps be blessed by more than one. I fall back to sleep, relaxed by gentle tears.

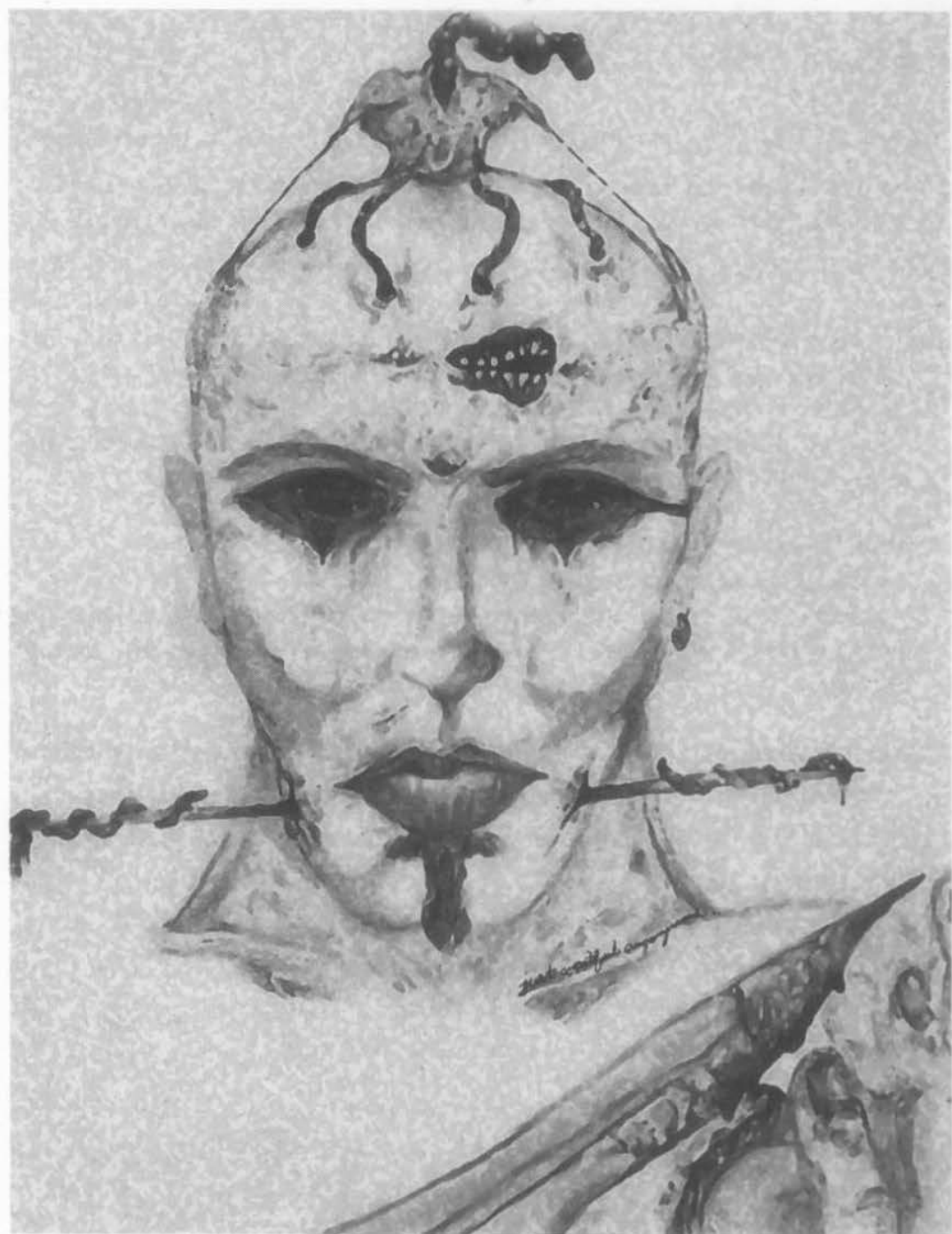
6

Wayne died when Hazel died. I saw him at her funeral and knew. I wasn't able to talk to him much then; he was protectively surrounded by family. I only got a moment alone with him then, and it confirmed my worst fears. I wanted to be wrong, I wanted him to be my Morrie, to approve my choice of life partner, to answer questions about life and love and death. I was able to visit him a few times, but he was a shell of the man I knew. He died the next year on Christmas Eve. His children said that the holiday cards were just too much for him to handle alone. I wasn't able to attend his funeral. I missed introducing him to my boyfriend by a few days. I had so many questions...

Erin McCleary

Headache

.
i have a headache
why they come
i haven't the faintest.
perhaps the lack of sleep i got last night,
or the mountains of work
that procrastination has left at my door.
maybe i think too much, or maybe not enough
i have become unaccustomed.
i lie in bed at night,
and feel them walking
with painfully subtle steps
-slowly
to my doorstep.
and hear them enter in,
trying not to get caught by my waking light.
they slowly take off their shoes
and get comfortable on the couch
and start to talk in quiet voices.
but then
something humorous is said
they forget they are supposed to be silent
and laugh out loud
in thundering voices and shake the foundations.
i become sick to my stomach,
bolstered around on their cackles.
i yell down the stairs
praying that they go to sleep
in separate beds.
leaving me to lie awake
wondering
where it is that they decided to lie
their sleeping heads.



Jeff Schroeder

Dear Forum Readers,

We hope you have enjoyed this issue of the Forum. Our goal is to encourage good writing and creative expression among Honors students. Share your talent by having your work published in the Forum. Just follow these simple steps when submitting written work or photographs:

1. Print a hard copy of your work.
2. Save it to disk as a text (.txt) file.
3. Complete a Submission Release Form.
4. Drop the above three items in a submission drop box found either in the Honors lounge or in the mailboxes.

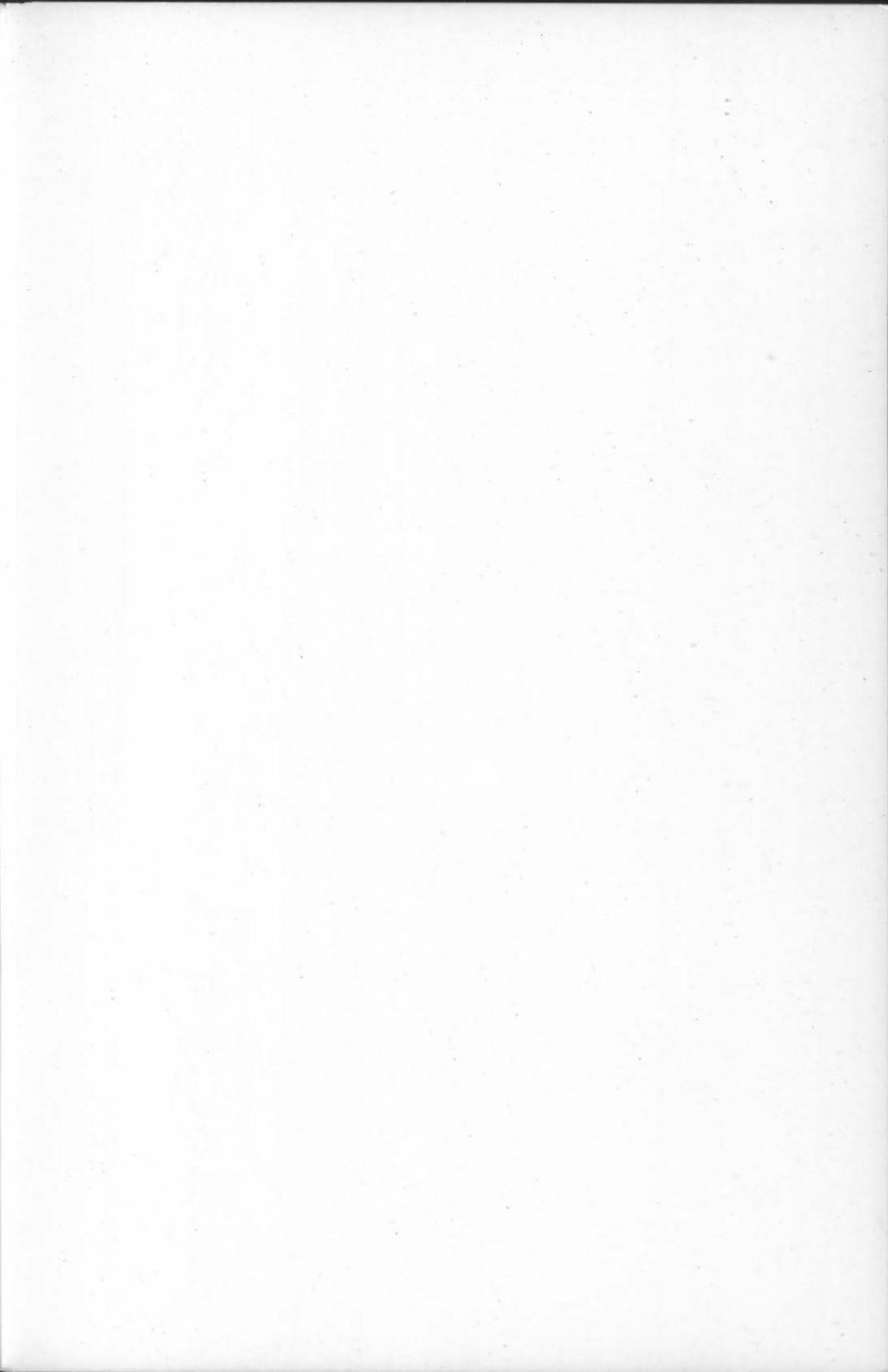
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You can also submit work via e-mail. Please submit documents as attachments in text format (.txt) and images in tiff format (.tif). Send submissions to honorsforum@yahoo.com. You will also need to complete a Submission Release Form.

Thank you,

the Forum Editorial Board



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