

1988

Expressions 1988

Karen Gray

Diana Findley

Ed Birmingham

Brian Swisher

Sue Ellen Homes

See next page for additional authors

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Authors

Karen Gray, Diana Findley, Ed Birmingham, Brian Swisher, Sue Ellen Homes, Julie Vannordstrand, Pat Underwood, Rick Walker, Jeff McDowell, Wes Pranschke, Gail A. Carey, Kim Corder, Polly Steele, Patty Wagner, Tom DeVries, Eddie Hegstrom, Keith Adams, Kathy Tyler, Jim Russell, Muriel Pietsch, Scott Koeneman, Troy Overstreet, Judy Mouzakis, L.A. Trimble, Gregory Turner, Cindy Cole, Todd Casey, Edward L. Bradford, David Blitz, Robert Ward, and Nancy St. Clair

LIE
ANKE

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EXPRESSIONS XI

In addition to celebrating the student talents at Des Moines Area Community College, Expressions would like to share the work of an Iowa artist, James Schell Hearst.

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STAFF:

Editor: Michelle Smiley
Art Director: Troy Clark
Art Assistants: Cathie Van Wert, Rick Walker
Editorial Assistants: Keith Adams, Kim Corder,
Cindy Gates, Scott Koeneman, Jeff McDowell,
Styles Sass, Mimi Senn, Kathy Tyler
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Cover Illustration By
Karen Gray

MY FRIEND

I love my friend
She's just like me
Or is it
That in her, I see
The things that I
Would like to be

By
Diana Bindley



By
Ed Birmingham

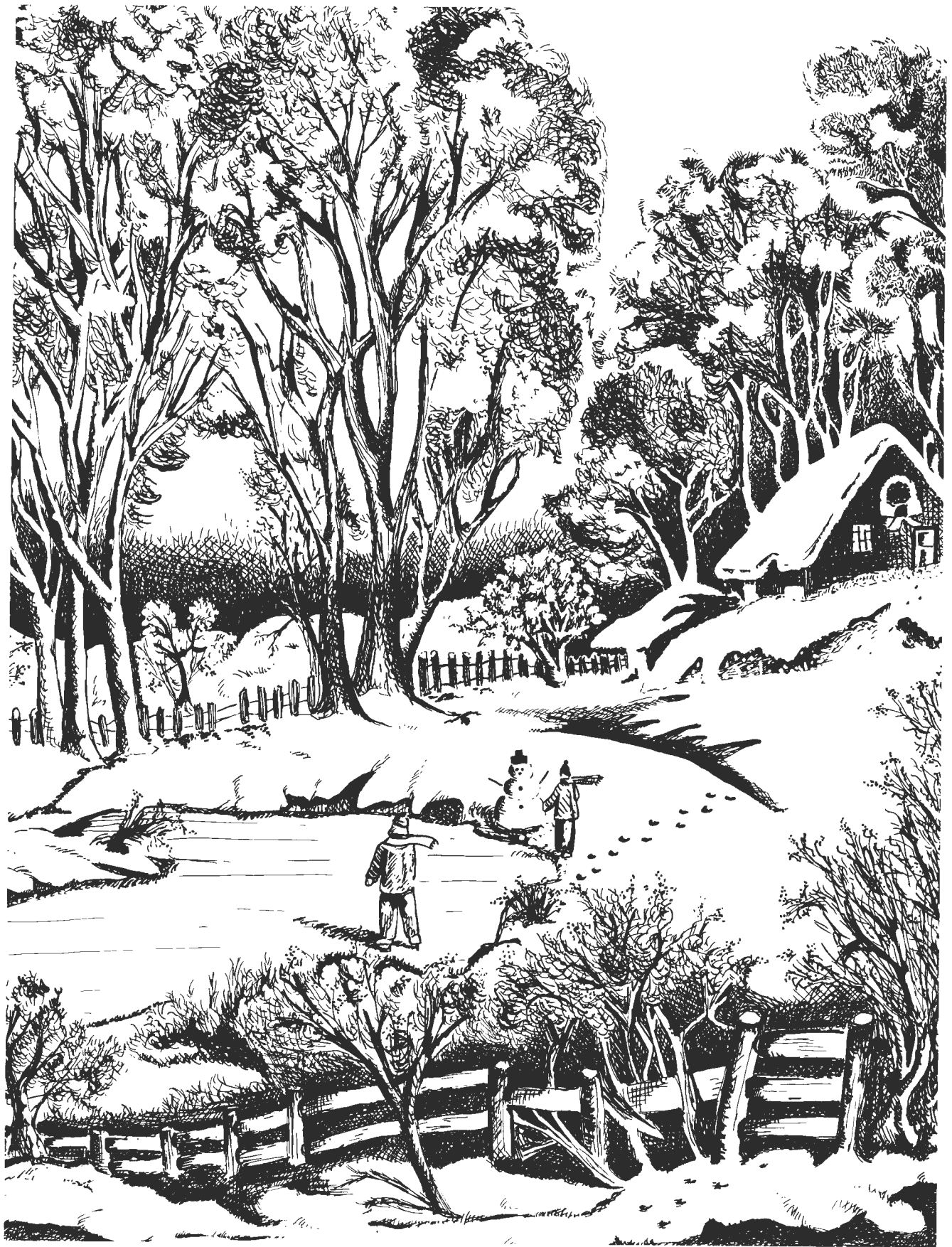


By
Brian Swisher

RAW VISION

If time were not a factor
And I owned a big red tractor,
I'd tear down doors to bureaucrats,
Shake the halls of phony fat cats,
Smash the so-called elite of deceit,
Then ride a wind, to a place
I've never been,
And start again.

By
Sue Ellen Homes



By
Julie Vannordstrand

OF SNOWS LONG PAST

Tonight, it has stopped snowing.
The easy flakes have clung
to stark black stems,
leaving underbellies naked,
while frosting each arm with alabaster.

Just there,
the moonlight catches
upon its breast and
I see you playing,
running through the lightness
of the Iowa snow; calling me.
Of course, I followed you --
your only sister and playmate then.
We built a snowman,
placing the broom carefully under his arm.
Sometimes we dug holes deep in the snow
and pretended we were pilots,
bracing our arms stiffly as if wings,
making motor-sounds deep in our throats.

I had almost forgotten the day we skied
down the neighbor's frozen field
picked by you because it was long and smooth.
We laughed as the long stokes
sliced into the silver sheen,
and you glided swiftly,
as a dancer.
I fell spread-eagle upon the brittle ground;
it was a nuisance to feel so foolish.
I remember. You didn't laugh.

Tonight, as I clear the drive,
inhaling winter's briskness,
I hear distant murmurings --
snows long past --
and feel your arm helping me from my fall.
The snows pass,
and you are good to me.

By
Pat Underwood

CANOEING

One thing is for sure - some are outdoorspeople, and some are not. For instance, there's my brother-in-law Mark. Mark fancies himself as a real "man of the open air." He has a real passion for canoeing. And there are people such as myself: The details of my fishing TRIP, and hunting TRIP are family legend. They will be spared the reader here.

Recently, my wife Mary Lou and I visited Mark and my sister Jenny at their home in Arkansas. The canoeing trip was, of course, his idea. He decided on the Illinois River. "It's only about a five mile trip," he said confidently, "and we should be able to make it in about three hours." He assured us that the water was shallow, and we would have good life jackets. I didn't really want to go, but since we were guests in their home for a week, and it was only three hours, we should oblige. My sleep that night was still uneasy.

Upon arriving we found that the water was only waist-deep, and even I started to breathe a little easier. We had two canoes. Mark and Jenny would be in one, Mary Lou and I in the other. Since my wife was the one with some experience (although not for years), she elected to "steer" the boat. Mark gave us a push, and we were underway. Turning to Mary Lou to tell her this might not be so bad after all, we hit something that felt like a brick wall - knocking me out of the canoe completely. We had gone maybe 15 feet, and rammed a tree stump. "Only five more miles to go," I thought as Mark helped pull me from the water.

Soaking wet, paddling crookedly downstream in a desperate effort to keep pace, I was plenty angry at that moment. But not quite as angry as I WOULD get - when we found out that Mark had not actually been down this river himself, but only heard about it from friends. He had only GUESSED how far to the bridge where the car was parked. From that point on, my sister did not speak a word. I think she was too embarrassed to talk to us, and too angry even to look at her husband.

We took a few spills here and there of course, but Mary Lou stayed in good spirits. She loves a challenge. At least until the "white water."

"White water" shows you where the water moves or dips quite fast. Like little rapids. In the middle was a very large, old tree - lying down on its side. "We'll never make it!" I shouted

to Mary Lou. "Yes we will!" came her reply, "Mark and Jenny made it - get down low and paddle as hard as you can!" For one of the few times in our marriage - I was right.

The collision was like all of the others - rolled into one. I pulled out of the cold, muddy water and found Mary Lou clinging to one of the branches. Everything she had brought along, except for her favorite hat she bought on a trip to Hawaii, had washed out of the canoe. A very-sheepish looking Mark helped me peel her from the tree. Suddenly, she turned and gave me "THE LOOK."

Among Mary Lou's friends and relatives, "THE LOOK" is a thing of terror. It has been suggested that she patent it. It is a cold, penetrating, stern stare that bores into your very soul. Rarely seen, but never forgotten. Combine Superman's X-ray vision with standing shirtless in a 50 below wind chill, and you begin to get the picture. Pure displeasure. But was it directed at me or Mark? Our lives could depend on it.

She turned to me and gritted through her teeth, "I - hate - this!!!" Helpless, I turned to scowl at my brother-in-law, but he quickly looked away. My "LOOK" needs practice.

By now we had been out for at least four hours, the water getting deeper and danker, with still no bridge in sight. The two of us felt as tired as we had ever been, but had to keep on. Heading under the brush of yet another tree, I lifted it so we could just float underneath. Then, out of nowhere, came a huge tree limb, aimed right for my head. I only had time to shout, "Duck!," and let go. It wasn't enough warning for my wife. The branches snapped back - hitting her in the face - and knocking her backwards. Not quite out of the canoe, but enough that her hat dropped into the water, and floated just out of reach.

The look on my face became a little like Stan Laurel's after another "fine mess." I began to cringe, ready for some kind of violent act. What I got was even worse. Oh no! "THE LOOK!" For the second time in one day! Had anyone ever survived this before? And where is Mark? Shouldn't he be getting a little of this?

"That does it!," her voice echoed in the water, "I've had it! I'm sick of this Do....you....hear....me?? I....am....sick...."



By
Rick Walker

of....this!!!” She paused for a moment as if she had lost her voice, and then pointed - the bridge! That beautiful, rusty-looking bridge! Quickly forgetting our troubles, aches, and pains, we paddled to shore with an energy not displayed since the beginning of the trip. Only the theme to “Chariots Of Fire” was missing.

Well, we are both speaking to Mark again, and a few days later Jenny filled us in on the details. We had gone over NINE miles, not five. And paddled over SIX hours, not three. I was glad to have made it, but even more glad just to be alive. Go on another one? I’ve been asked, but nothing doing. I’ve been to the mountain-top. Survived both the Illinois River and “THE LOOK.” I am officially retired.

By
Jeff McDowell



By
Wes Pranschke

THREES

three wise men	three bags full	three blind mice
trios		
tripods		
tripletts		
three musketeers	three is a crowd	third time's a charm
triangles		
tricycles		
triads		
three little pigs	three stooges	three bears
Trinity		
trilogy		
trinomial		
three French hens	we three kings	the three R's
three strikes - you're out		

By
Gail A. Carey

POPSICLES

One was chunky
One was thin
and one was just down right fat.

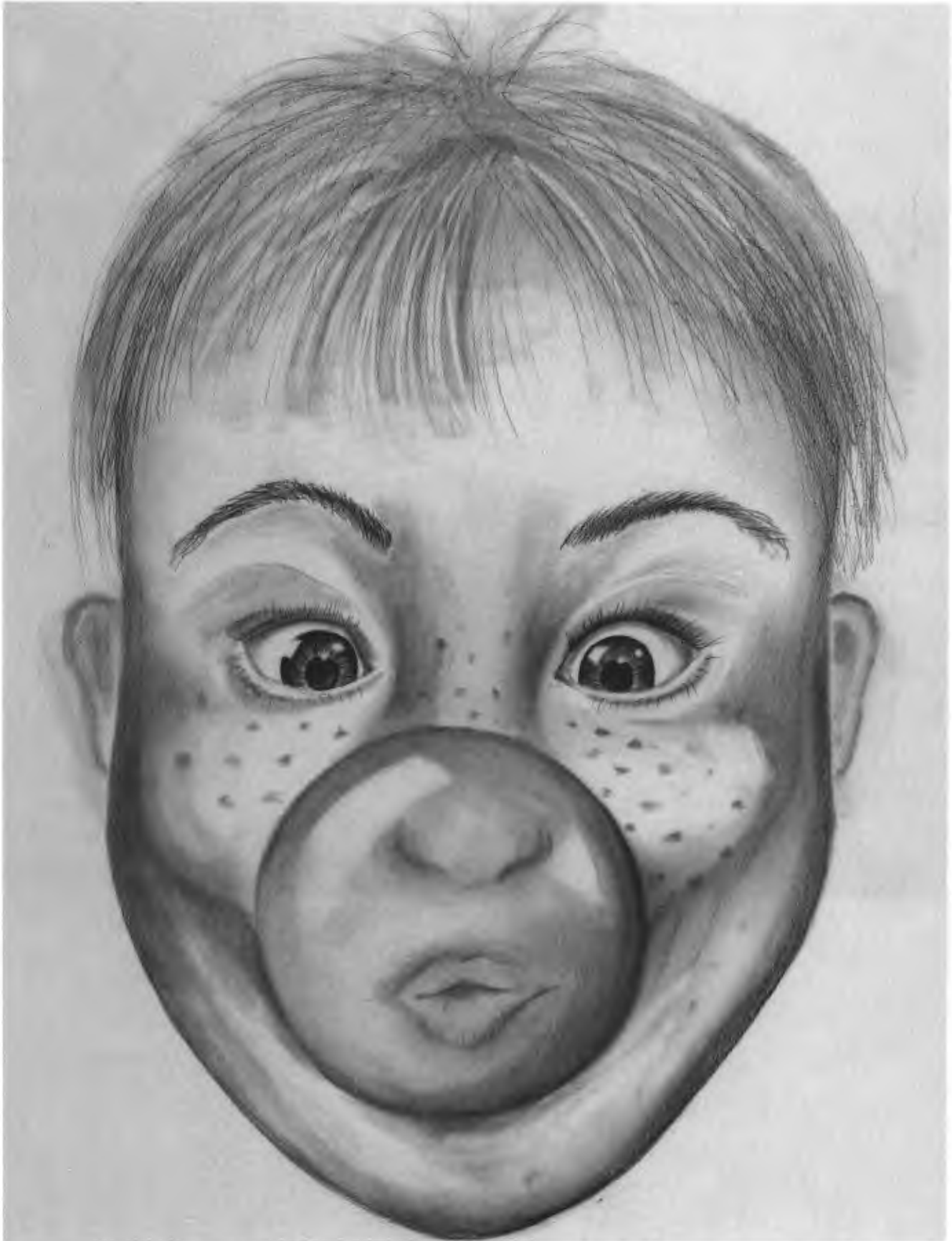
The three of them were half a decade old.
Wearing shorts, sneakers, and shirts too.
They sat side by side on the concrete steps
'round back `a the house.

One was grape
One was orange
and one was banana.

The sun slurped on the melting popsicles just as
fast as elementary tongues were lapping in the cold juice.
Cool colored drops dribbled down their skin white thighs,
matching the rainbow assorted mouths.
As the last bite vanished, three forgotten sticks
fell to the cement.
Satisfied sticky bodies ran to play.

One was a bicycle
One was a bigwheel
and one was a scooter.

By
Kim Corder



By
Polly Steele



By
Patty Wagner

FROM THE FACTORY BALLADS

The rowdy boozier if you will,
But Scanlon is my name.
And I get drunk on company time
And feel it is no shame.
That Westland got right in my face,
I told the punk straight out,
That if I hear one bit of lip,
I'll knock some heads about.

From ear to ear spreads a wicked smile.

The supervisor of the plant,
Jim Westland is my name.
And I am that damned Scanlon's boss,
And I think him dirty names-
Being college educated
I find him such a lout,
So when old Drithers lets me have it,
I bitch Scanlon out.

From ear to ear spreads a wicked smile.

And I'm the Chairman of the Board,
J.P. Drithers is my name.
I under employ half the town
And feel it is no shame.
That Westland's such a flunky,
And Scanlon has no clout,
So if production isn't up,
I'll move both their asses out.

From ear to ear spreads a wicked smile.

By
Tom DeVries

HYPOTHETICAL SITUATION

God, I was so glad when it was five
and time for me to go home, at last
Not that I hate my job, mind you
I mean, look, I don't want to complain
There are worse jobs, and I'm lucky to have it
But it's not great, and the pay's not much
I can't even afford a taxi

So here I am
in a train
in a hole
in the earth

and the smell is bad
and the delays are constant
and nobody says anything much
Nothing much needs to be said

The car's not too crowded
I guess it figures, then,
that he'd come straight to me
I saw him coming a long ways off
I saw his shining teeth first
then his black face
and his green jacket
and his tennis shoes
Tennis shoes
You know what that means

He doesn't say anything
but then, I didn't expect him to
He's crow-black, and I hate him
He's poorly dressed, and he's not like me

And he smiles Ultra-Brite
And he shuffles Nike-speed
And his eyes meet mine and he nods
And he's not long for the world

SHOOT NOW
SHOOT FAST
SHOOT FIRST
and I do
and they're all staring
and nobody says anything
and I know they're my peers
and I know
and I know
and I know they won't condemn me

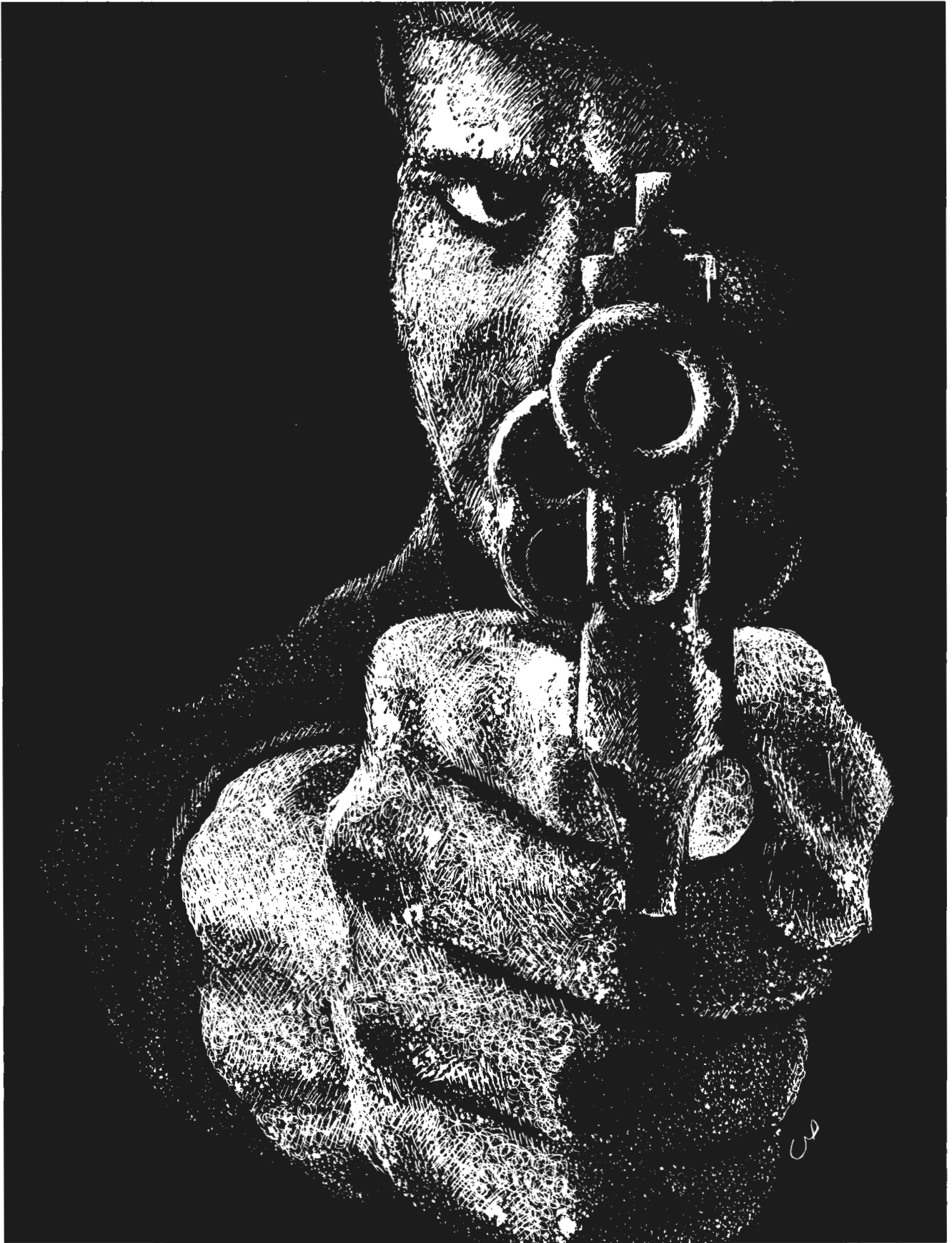
and the acrid haze clears
and nobody is left on the car
and I smile and get off
and I'm stopped
and I see lights flashing
and I hear rights being read
but I'm not worried
Why should I worry?

It's the Law of the Jungle
It's the Law of the Land
It's What a Man Had to Do
It's Necessary Force
It's Survival of the Fittest
It's What We've All Come To

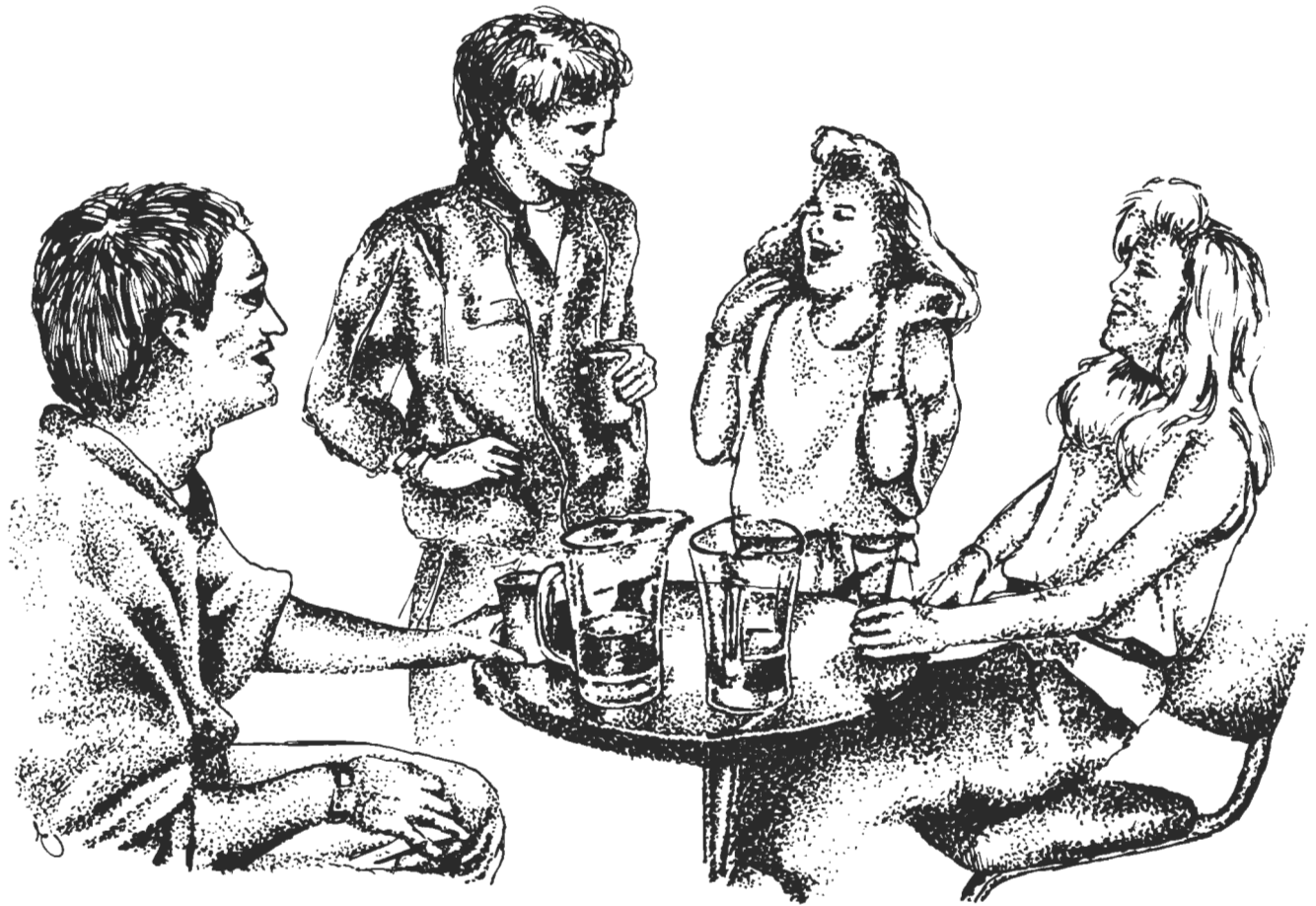
it's Goetz's fault
it's Koch's fault
it's Reagan's fault
it's Rambo's fault
it's society's fault
it's everybody's fault

God knows, it isn't my fault

By
Eddie Hegstrom



By
Wes Pranschke



By
Wes Pranschke

AN EVENING OUT

Work was over; the nurses sat round-shouldered in the locker room and slowly pulled off their scrubs in silence. Inhaling deeply on a cigarette in celebration of the end of another shift, Lana ran fingers through her shiny black hair. Beth laid on a bench with her feet elevated resting on the doors hoping to ward-off dreaded varicose veins. Wet with perspiration, her bangs stuck to her forehead in clumps. Lana and Beth had just finished 10 hours of duty in a local hospital emergency room.

This stint had been full of crises. Head traumas from a motorcycle accident and two car wrecks were treated as the shift began. A severe laceration and hemorrhaging caused by a slip of a chain saw interrupted the nurses' dinner break. A miscarriage and the application of knife to flesh in a disagreement over the finer points of poker were dealt with in the early evening hours. The shift was highlighted by a gunshot wound of questionable nature and the premature delivery of a baby girl. These incidents capped off an otherwise normal Friday night.

Although exhausted both Lana and Beth agreed they were too keyed-up for sleep and deserved to dump some of their pent-up adrenaline on an unsuspecting bartender.

"Just a couple though," yawned Beth. "I want to maximize my weekend off and nursing a hangover isn't in the plans." Lana nodded her head reluctantly and sighed, crushing out her cigartte on top of a soft drink can.

Not far from the hospital adjacent to the business district lay a friendly pup frequented by a young professional crowd. Upon entering they were greeted by the sound system belting out Smokey Robinson and the Miracles "The Tracks of My Tears". The crowd was quiet. "Shit what a bunch of wimps! One drink and if the wake continues I'm going home and pluck my eyebrows," Lana gritched.

Two light beers were orders. "96 Tears", by ? and the Mysterians, was now assaulting Lana's ears.

"God, did the market collapse while we were at work, what's with the tears-theme-crap?" Lana whines. "There's not one guy in here that could get-it-up without first knowing his stock portfolio was secure." Her looks were striking. She often moved liked a coiled spring. Her head bobbing, Lana's hands and mouth often moved together in unison.

Beth looking distant and ignoring Lana's ramblings challenged, "I feel like a lesbian sitting here at the bar, let's move to a table."

"If I'm going to be accused of being a dyke I want to be seen with someone better looking than you. Shall we move to a dark corner?" Lana fired back. They both laughed and found a table in a less congested area.

Beth's sun-bleached blonde hair was pulled back in a single thick braid. At 5'6" Beth was not tall but her long legs, neck, and fingers gave her a willowy appearance. Her movements were sensually lithesome. Lana had just ordered their second beers and a more tasteful beverage was being contemplated when a stranger approached them.

"Hi, sorry for the intrusion but my friend and I couldn't help but notice you two ladies were alone. Would you like to join us for a drink and some conversation?" he said without hesitation. His ballsy approach simultaneously shocked, flattered, and intrigued them.

Lana and Beth did a quick superficial study of the stranger. Taller than average, neatly groomed and attired, he wore a black leather jacket and jeans, red T-shirt, and moccasins trimmed with little black beans-not in keeping with the execu-droid look surrounding them. His dark wavy hair was razor cut and short, combed to the side in an Ivy League style. It occurred to Lana that he looked like a quirky Mel Gibson, from the "Mad Max" series.

"I'm sorry if I startled you or appeared aggressive. It certainly was not my intention. My friend and I saw you two come in and knew there was something different. I don't know, your poise, or something." He looked embarrassed, sheepish, totally charming, and loveable.

"Well, think about it. My name is Gabe and my friend is Fran. I hope you don't think I'm conning you, it just seems like it would be fun getting to know you gals." He left as quickly as he'd appeared, without the women having said a word.

"Wow...neat...guy," Beth said. Despite her cover girl looks and debutante actions Beth was quite naive and inexperienced with men, especially when character judgment was involved.

"Great time to become mono-syllabic, Beth," Lana

replied, staring at Gabe as he entered an adjoining room.

“Should we...follow-up on these men...what do you think Lana?” Beth babbled, with a dazed expression on her face.

“Should we accept the lottery jackpot?” Lana mocked, breaking her stare with Gabe’s disappearance. “Of course we should! I am ready to enter the adventure zone. Can you believe that shit though, trying to muster a baritone voice ‘sorry for the intrusion; conversation; poise’ what a bullshit artist and con man. My type of guy.”

“Ok, who gets who? I think I like this guy, we could experience stimulating conversation together,” Beth warmed to the idea.

Lana just shook her head, “We will sort that out later, don’t force chemistry. Besides, I don’t think he’s looking to be stimulated by conversation; he’d eat you alive.” Beth smiled shyly and expelled a brief nervous giggle.

Lana and Beth took new beers in hand, put on their best tight-assed walk and struck out to find Gabe the “cowboy” and Fran the “botanist”. They found them in the back room reading party napkins.

“Hi, we’d like to join you if the offer is still open,” Beth stuttered, standing with one foot on top of the other. A slight push from Lana propelled her unexpectedly toward Fran’s side of the table.

This brought the men to their feet with smiles. Introductions were made all around. Fran proved to be even better-looking and more ingratiating and since Beth had the inside position sitting by Fran it looked like Lana would get her “cowpoke” after all.

Lana carried the verbal ball initially, explaining that they were trauma nurses. This stimulated ice breaking conversation and provided Beth an opportunity to mentally undress Fran. At one point Lana kicked her under the table to interrupt Beth’s staring.

Everything was going well with everyone conversing like old friends. They all subtly moved, tapping feet and fingers to John Mellencamp’s “Lonely Ol Night” now coming through the speakers.

The evening grew late and a vague tension developed. Lana and Beth both recognized it, simultaneously adjusting their positions and finally excused themselves to the restroom.

Gabe had invited them for a nightcap back to Fran’s boat at the marina where both men were living temporarily.

“Well, are you ready Beth? We have two stallions out there extruding testosterone from every pore. They want to take us back to their stable on the water for some petting and breeding,” Lana panted with unbridled enthusiasm. She had a way of sounding like a twisted Zane Grey novel when talking about the courting ritual or sex.

“Just hold your hormones,” Beth asserted, coming out of another unblinking dazed moment. “What do we know about these guys? Nothing! That’s what! They’re taking us out on the bay to a boat where we’re a long swim from safety.”

“I’ll tell you what we know about them,” Lana retorted forcefully, hands on hips. “They’re both handsome, bright, entertaining, and appear to be men of means. They are also tasteful, and unassuming but with an air of individualism and mystery. Besides, no open sores are apparent and I have condoms in case some are discovered later. In other words Beth, I’m ready to be tied and rode.”

During this impassioned lecture Beth had begun touching up her makeup and hair in the mirror.

“Does this mean you’ve decided to go two out of three with Francis the talking cocksman?” teased Lana.

Ignoring this remark and with a toss of her head Beth shut a stall door to urinate. Lana joined her in a neighboring compartment and slipped a scrap of paper underneath the partition with “you won’t be sorry” scrawled on it. This brought a chuckle from Beth. Simultaneously flushing toilets (they often did things at the same time, their work required coordinating efforts, even their menstrual cycles coincided), the ladies returned to the mirror for final touch-ups and shared perfume. Beth and Lana walked back to the table arms around each other only to find it empty.

“Evidently, the boys are off polishing and sharpening their spurs,” Lana’s eyes caught the light at this moment and glistened like polished ebony. Beth poured the last of the margaritas they all had been sharing and waited...and waited, finally asking their waitress where the guys were.

“Oh they left. I guess they thought you had gone out the back way with cold feet. It happens all the time. The rear exit can come in very handy at times,” the waitress added. Lana and Beth looked at each other dumbfounded.

“Oh Shit,” they howled.

“I don’t know why you were so worried about them assaulting us. We did a pretty good job of screwing ourselves,” Lana exploded.

“Those bastards,” punctuated Beth.

Lana and Beth contemplated ordering another pitcher, when they both spied Fran and Gabe standing at the bar smiling.

“Where the hell have you two been? Lana asked, as they approached, trying not to sound harsh or like a nag; but burdened with an alcohol soaked tongue she was unable to hold back. “So you thought you’d get us shitfaced and dance us out of here and onto the “Love Boat”, just like that,” Lana continued, trying to snap her fingers, without luck.

“I might ask you two about your vanishing act but I won’t. I’m glad we thought to check again, though. It just didn’t make sense that you ladies would leave without saying good-bye,” Gabe said, with Fran nodding. This broke the

tension and the women sarcastically said “right” in unison.

“Well, pull up a chair cowboys. Looks like you’re saddle weary. You must be thirsty after that hasty retreat,” Beth gushed, trying to imitate Lana’s style.

“This here’s a bronc that needs breaking that’s all,” Lana drawled, with a phony Texas accent, nodding towards Gabe knowingly. “Of course if a bronco is found to be too wild and crazy it becomes a gelding.” Gabe’s eyes widened and he shuddered. This brought a laugh and applause from Fran.

“This may be the first time a weasel gets saddled and broke,” Fran held his arms up as if making an offering to the gods.

“Well, why don’t we make like horseshit and hit the trail,” Lana slurred seductively. Everyone laughed and headed for the door arm-in-arm.

The four of them were more alike then they would ever care to admit.

By
Keith Adams

A GOOD MAN IS HARD TO FIND

We met as inmates. And when I think of her, I am about to dissolve in the sentimental muck of one of the lesser emotions. I won't put you through that . . . except to say that I miss her. She was my friend.

What brought us together was a shared passion for the wrong men, but hers is the story I choose to tell -- that and a shared faith. We were both Catholic and that was important to us.

They were married, she told me, right out of college.

"He had joined the Air Force and was a commissioned officer, a pilot. He was handsome," she said, "not only in my eyes, but others, too. Dark, tall -- a full mustache -- athletic. I think people noticed us as a couple."

Betty, that is her name, is tall, too. But she is blonde. Her hair is the color of ripe oats and she is the only person I have ever known that looks fantastic in yellow. When she wears yellow, it's like you are looking at a sunbeam.

"Shortly after we were married," she told me, "we were sent to Germany. I began German lessons. 'Ich gehe in die schlue' -- my life, I thought, was ecstatic. Then I discovered I was pregnant and I thought life could go on being this good forever.

"We went to Paris, through the Pyrenees -- and Italy and Greece. But we were in Frankfort for Christmas.

"Germany, anywhere, at Christmas is beautiful," she went on. The country is so old, and this city, too. It carries a whole history of the Middle Ages. That and Catholicism -- and it was the churches I liked best. Every form and size. Campaniles. Spires. A semi-Roman palace of the bishop. And there were so many squares, crowded with people. The houses had carved beams and stained glass windows, and they overhung the pavement.

"From our apartment, there was a Franciscan abbey with big gables side-by-side. and we could hear them singing Christmas carols at night.

"The baby was due any time then -- and I did go to the hospital on the 22nd. I can still remember the first word I said after I had her: 'Girl.' When I said it, I thought of what my own grandmother called me, 'girl.' It was, then, when I looked at my baby like a word of promise and love.

"I didn't get to go home right away. I developed some type of unusual blood problem and I had to stay in the hospital two more weeks, or at least that's what we thought. But the doctor came in one day and told me I could go home a little early. I wanted to surprise him, so I called a friend of ours and he came and got me and the baby and took us home.

"Looking back, now, I recall sometimes his long silences that frightened me with their aggressiveness and the unexplained absences, but easily explained, you know, because he was in the Air Force and flew a lot.

"The entrance to our apartment was in the rear of the building because the front was rented to retail stores. At night the neighborhood is quiet, so we were very careful when we came up the stairs -- not to make noise, you know. So it would be a surprise. And I was hoping the baby didn't cry, and she didn't. When we came in the apartment, the living room lamp was dimmed and it was dark in there and Joe, his friend, who had brought us sat down on the couch. I carried the baby on into our bedroom. The light filtered in thin from the living room, so at first I couldn't see -- but what I remember clearest of all was the joint of gray-white knuckle and the fold of his wedding band. And then the emerging figure of the other man in our bed."

"Joe heard my cry, and came rushing into the bedroom and pulled me and the baby out. He put his arms around me," and said, "Don't cry girl, don't cry now."

"But I did."

By
Kathy Tyler



By
Jim Russell



By
Muriel Pietsch

DIE AND LEARN

It was a cold and rainy October in Korea that year, making life miserable for myself and my brother Marines. It had been raining since before we had made our landing, a driving rain that leaves nothing dry. After the first day no one really worried too much about it, you were wet and you were going to stay that way.

On the morning of the third day we had set up on a hill top. There was just enough room in the clearing at the top for all the communication gear so we laid out the defense on the hillside. The hill was so steep however, that the men on security had to tie themselves to trees to keep from sliding down the muddy slopes. Every so often there would be a mudslide and we would all have to go and dig out men and equipment buried in the mud.

Local Koreans were everywhere. Adults came into the camp selling everything from cokes to cocaine and children scurried about looking for handouts and souvenirs. We tried to keep them away from the equipment, but that was not very easy, after all, it was their country. Then on the fourth morning we found that some of the gear was missing.

I broke the first law of the military and volunteered to go with a team to search for the gear. I thought it would be a nice break from listening to the radios.

Ten of us, seven Koreans and three Americans, headed for a nearby village. As soon as we got to it, a Korean lieutenant ordered his men into the homes of peasants. The houses were made of homemade brick and thatch, most had only one or two rooms with dirt floors. Chickens squawked and children cried as they went from house to house throwing out pieces of wood furniture and people into the mud street.

The feel of the icy wind and driving rain disappeared as the three of us stood in shock as a woman, crying and

screaming unintelligibly, pounded on the chest of one of the Korean marines. He slammed the butt of his rifle against the side of her head and she fell to the ground, her blood mixing with the mud street where she lay. As the marine walked away a small old man ran out of the house screaming and dragged the woman off the street.

The sergeant in charge of us radioed back to the command post to tell them what was going on just as the Koreans found our gear. They radioed back that the C.O. was on his way. The Koreans dragged a middle aged man dressed in gray pajamas from the house where they had found our equipment. They made a circle around him and began practicing judo on him. They bounded him back and forth, like cats playing with a mouse before they killed it. Finally the man kneeled in front of the lieutenant, bruised and bloody, begging for his life. The lieutenant pulled an American made .45 from his holster and pulled back the hammer. He put the muzzle in the center of the man's forehead. The man just closed his eyes and continued to beg.

"He's gonna waste 'im," said the sergeant.

"This man is a traitor and a communist and will be shot," said the lieutenant in broken English.

The pistol fired. The Koreans began to laugh as the man screamed. It was not a scream of pain, but of anguish. The lieutenant had fired into the air.

They laughed uncontrollably as the man curled into a muddy ball. The pistol fired again and the top half of the man's head disappeared into the mud.

The impact of the rain hitting the mud was like the roar of artillery. I could feel myself losing my balance as it shook the ground.

"Come on son," said the sergeant. "Grab some gear and let's get out of here."

By
Scott Koeneman

DEATH OF A HOMELESS MAN

Snows fell from the cloud-smear'd December sky,
And an old man staggered in the screaming winds.
He walked through crystal snow-drifts on the interstate,
Into the city, he continued, past blocks and blocks
Of amber houses, decorated in tints of green.
As gray smoke poured out the chimney-tops,
and icicles hung from the telephone wires
Along the traffic-congested intersections;
by office buildings and brightly lit department stores.

Sidewalks were filled with consumers who appeared
and disappeared along the seasonal avenues.
Some few wore exotically beautiful furs.

One wandered down an alley with a crumpled sack,
and rummaged through the dumpsters and cans of trash,
and came to yet, another building with a red-brick wall,
and tore at boarded windows with murderous claws...

He muttered profanities in the dark,
as a cop stumbled with a light that flashed
On a floor strewn with colorful papers, and ribbons scattering
the rats.

Amongst old cans, bottles, wrappings, and the broken glass,
Sprawled a grisly thing, like rags on a stick
A purple grimace on its lifeless lips.

By
Tom DeVries



By
Troy Overstreet



By
Rick Walker

DIVORCE ETOUFFEE

Leaving the city feeling light while smiling.
Needing a change,
the divorce ready for filing.

Through the Quarter,
and past the dome,
across the lake,
too happy to bitch or moan.

Out of urban funk, into country fresh,
time for some introspection.
On hell, what a way to ruin the day,
for I'm pleased with mutual rejection.

So off I go, relieved and carefree.
Please don't think me callous,
but marriage should not be,
plotting, deceit, and malice.

Back to roots and a much needed rest.
Time won't be used to pine,
instead some fishin, drinkin, and folly.
There won't be a moment between wine and dine
for any needless melancholy.

Consider this a confession.
This union was an "experience" of sorts.
I certainly learned a southern fried lesson,
while trying to stay out of the courts.
The levity and acted-out lust was fun
but these conjugal parts did not equal the sum.

By
Keith Adams

KILL THE UMP!

It isn't easy being a big brother despite what most people think. Almost immediately, you become an "Example." You set the standards for conduct in the family. And the relationships with your brothers and sisters, strain very easily. My mind drifts back to a spring about 15 years ago....

My youngest brother Joel, was playing Little League baseball at the time, and I rode out with my mother to see him play. I had worked with him a lot - playing catch, hitting flies, batting practice, running bases - the kind of things that good big brothers are supposed to do. Here was a chance to see my protegee' in action.

As I sat with my mother in the rickety, rusty stands on that windy, chilly April day, there was a touch of excitement in the air for me. I could only hope that his Little League career would prove more productive than mine had been nine years before.

Joel was selected as the starting shortstop, and he smiled and waved proudly as he trotted out to his position. "Jody (our nickname for him) is so proud that you could come," Mom said. I waved back, thinking that being a big brother did have its rewards. It was nice having someone look up to you. I just trusted he would remember the things we had worked on. Just then, we noticed there seemed to be some trouble on the field....

There was only one umpire for the game, and league rules required two. One at home plate, and one on the bases. What seemed a bit humorous at first, became much less so when I saw my brother talking to his manager, and pointing to me in the stands. Before I knew it, I was on the field.

"Look," I objected. "I just came to see the game, not get in it! And besides, my brother is in this game - isn't that a conflict of interest or something?" The opposing manager had no objection, but I wasn't convinced. I turned to leave, when Joel and some of his friends came up to me. "You've got to help us! If you don't, WE CAN'T PLAY!" Well, what could I do?

I confess to being one umpire that prayed before a game. Prayed for a blow-out. That one team would win by such a large margin that I wouldn't have to make any tough calls. Luckily I was sent to the basepaths. I swear I could FEEL those managers watching me. Waiting, just waiting to make a mistake. And what was that infield fly rule again?

The game was a quick one, and by the last inning, all had gone well. I was even beginning to enjoy myself. Joel made some snappy plays in the field - but I restrained myself. (It is considered bad form for an umpire to cheer during a game.) The score was looking bad for his team, trailing 9 to 2, when they came to bat in the bottom of the last inning. I began to breathe a little easier. While I wished Joel's team had done better, it would all be over for ME in a few minutes....

Someone once said that the game is 'never over until the final out.' It was never truer than on this day. After two quick outs, the rally began. Joel's team picked up hit after hit, and closed the gap to 9 to 8. My brother stepped to the plate, and drew a walk. He was now the potential tying run. The home plate umpire motioned for me to cover any play at third. Somehow, I knew what was about to happen.

The next batter tattooed the first pitch into right field for a hit. Joel did not stop at second, but barreled toward third. The right fielder made a great play, and fired the ball toward the infield.

What took place in that split second seemed to happen in slow motion. A hundred different thoughts ran through my mind: the perfect slide (just as I taught him) the flawless arch of the ball as it headed toward the third baseman, how this was THE GAME - my call would decide it - and with my brother the baserunner - I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!, and the cloud of dirt as his slide reached its climax simultaneously with the ball.

The ride home was deathly quiet. I sat in the front seat, staring straight ahead. Joel was hunched in the back, fists clenched, covered with dirt. Mom knew better than to say anything. As we got home, I had to end the silence. "Look Jodi, you know I didn't want to umpire. I wouldn't have done it at all if you hadn't begged me!" My big mistake was my last comment. "I just called it the way I saw it!" He strode up to me, his forehead nearly to my chest. "I was safe, and you know it! You cheater!" Then came the final blow - the heavy artillery for a seven-year old. "You hate me!" I turned to walk away, and a fielders glove whistled past my head. I hated being a big brother.



By
Wes Pranschke

Needless to say, I didn't go to anymore games that season, and Joel didn't speak to me for at least three weeks. By the way, at the end of the year, his team finished in second place, ONE GAME out of first. Who finished in first? Do you even need to ask? And who do you think got the blame? Right again.

Years have passed since that spring day. My brother is

now a fully grown adult, married, with two sons of his own. He was doing some work on my car recently, when I asked him if he remembered the incident. Without missing a beat, he sternly replied, "I was safe." Some people never forget. But he was out. Sure it was close, but he was out. I mean, I was standing right there....

By
Jeff McDowell



By
Judy Mouzakis

SHIFTING SAND

"Aren't you ready yet?" Norma grumbled, rapping her knuckles against the filmy dressing room door.

"No," I mumbled, "go on and I'll be out there pretty soon." Norma was my best friend and knew why it was taking me a long time to leave the room.

I had been staring at myself in the mirror, for at least the last ten minutes, trying to build up enough courage to walk outside and join my friends, classmates, and neighbors, gathered around the pool.

This year, I had made up my mind to be one of those girls that the boys looked at twice.

I was fourteen and resembled a Daddy Long Legs - all legs and very little else as evidence of my "blossoming" physique. Five feet seven was too tall to be considered "cute" and my hour-glass figure was definitely short on sand at the top.

To balance it I purchased some falsies for my sleek, new, one-piece, black bathing suit. Asking for them raised the eyebrows of the grey-haired cashier, as she peered at me above her rhinestone inlaid bifocals. Stooping behind the counter, she began rummaging through hidden compartments, muttering each time the heavy gold chain from her glasses caught on the door handle. My eyes skipped from department to department, searching for the inevitable familiar face, only to return to the hunched back of the saleswoman. Rising, empty-handed, with a pinched scowl on her face - the old lady scanned the women's apparel department opposite us. Spying who she needed, she raised her arms and in a flurry of movement, began flapping them back and forth - sending off a chain reaction of clinking bangles, as they slapped her wrist.

An equally antiquated, slightly shorter woman teetered towards us, her brows furrowed in agitation.

"What d'ya need Doris?" she cackled.

Pointing an accusatory finger at me, she rasped, "Martha, this girl wants a pair of falsies, and I can't find them."

In a show of sympathy Doris dropped her head, shaking it slightly.

Slowly, she raised her eyes to mine. Under the intense scrutiny my face flushed crimson, and I sheepishly stammered, "I'm in a play and need them for my costume." Clucking softly to herself, she made her way behind the counter, and began rifling through the shelves underneath it. With a

satisfied "hmph" she tossed the falsies on top of the register, and with considerable effort heaved herself to an upright position, while the other one rang them up. Eyes cast downward, I grabbed my change and hurriedly left the store, while stuffing the sack into my purse.

Norma and I laughed ourselves into a state of tears when I first put the falsies in the top of my suit. I went from "Twiggy" to Dolly Parton in ten seconds, with only the flick of a wrist. Foam rubber spilled out of the neckline and under my arms - not only was I shapely, but I was drown-proof. This meant that careful trimming and adjustment was needed, during which I constantly nagged Norma, "if you trim too much you're going back to the "Frick and Frack" of Wolf's for another pair, not me." Eventually, we arrived at what we hoped was a natural shape. (for me?)

With one last look in the mirror, I took a deep breath, crossed my fingers and gathered the towel around my shoulders. Leaving the dressing room, I hugged the wall of the clubhouse, still safely hidden, until I rounded the corner and faced the pool. Groups of teenagers were sprawled out on the hot cement. The jocks were in a corner near the deep end, straddling lounge chairs, and trying to look cool; while the cheerleaders, directly across from them, were preening, trying to look equally disinterested. They kept sending sly looks at each other from the corner of their eyes. Another group, not necessarily nerds, but more like two-year olds trapped in fourteen year olds bodies, were on the other side of the cheerleaders. Younger kids splashed around in the shallow-end, throwing beach balls and whatever else was available.

Spying Norma, I made my way through the obstacle course - over the towels, past the baby oil, and around the radios, to the opposite side of the pool, and the security of my confidante. The cheerleaders glanced up as I passed, I knew all of them since we had attended school, Sunday socials, and holiday picnics together for years. The familiarity of a small town had never been less appreciated than it was that day.

"Do I look ok?" I whispered to Norma, as I spread my towel next to her on the pavement.

"Yes," she replied exasperated, "just act natural!"

Slowly, my eyes checked off all the places the guys were. The jocks were still lounging, with bored looks on their faces, while the other group near the preening beauties tried

desperately to get their attention. Scanning the pool, I sighted the place for my "unveiling," - the diving board. What better place to be seen! Everybody noticed when someone was on the board.

"Ok, I'm going for a swim," I whispered conspiratorily. "But, will you get in the pool, over by the side, and tell me how I look after I dive?"

"All right," Norma whined, "but then let's just relax and get some sun."

Trying to look natural, I rose from the pavement. Tummy in, butt out, shoulders hunched, I approached the board, my eyes carefully skimming the top of everyone's head - not daring to make direct eye contact. I began climbing the ladder. Gently, I raised my arms and grasped the railing, lifting my foot to the second rung. Suddenly, I slipped, sending shockwaves through my body as it corkscrewed. My eyes snapped down to the top of my suit., Falsies intact, I scampered onto the diving board, forgetting the regal pose. Nervously, I approached the edge and began concentrating

on the perfect dive. Norma waved from her position in the pool as I dove in, smoothly slicing the water.

Surfacing, I could see Norma swimming frantically on top, right where I had entered the water. Surprised and mad, I sputtered out, "What are you doing?"

"Stay in the water and I'll get your towel, then head for the dressing room," she giggled.

"Why?" I persisted. With a slow, secret motion, she showed me why she had frantically been swimming around. My falsies had jumped ship when I hit the water; shot straight to the surface and were bobbing around like a couple of corks.

My heart started pounding as I cut the water, swiftly spinning around to see who had witnessed my predicament. The jocks no longer straddled the lounge chairs, but were stretching out on the cement, still looking very cool. The cheerleaders had turned over and were tanning their backs, while the "nerds" had made their way to the refreshment stand. No one . . . had been watching.

By
L.A. Trimble



By
Gregory Turner

(Ronnieisthatyou?)

Wiping his battle scars
with a raggedy old hanky
he sat behind the GitnGo
toothless, no socks.
(Ronnieisthatyou?)

Smiling, I greeted him
Boldly stepping into my old existence
he made no move to get up
and took another swig with a scabby arm:
Ya want some?

Our old fishing partner laid in the shade
furry chest heaving,
thirsty.
"I washed my hair today," he announced,
pushing his long grey lock on grimy shoulders
Ronnie is that you?

An old radio pulsed
loud between his dusty knees

Rock n Roll will never die.

By
Cindy Cole



By
Todd Casey

GUSTAV, WO SIND SIE

Gustav, Wo sind sie katz?
My master calls out for me
in a voice that is cheated by death.

Gustav! Gustav, Ich haben ratte fur sie.
Gustav, Kommen und essen sie ratte.
Das ist fur sie katz; Kommen sie.

I hurry down the long hallway
to sink my teeth in a feast of kings.
There lays the King of of the Rats before me
dead, run over by a horse in the village below.

As I begin to paw and play with my food,
I am snatched up by a cold lanky hand
while my dinner waits there in front of me,
teasing and taunting me with that everlasting smell.

“Wie gehts katz,” he said,
squeezing my empty stomach as my food gets colder
on the floor.

I know not why he has no reflection as he looks
toward the mirror.
He dresses in a robe of a priest, stalking his
prey at night.

Placing me back by my meal he pets my black silky fur,
while staring out at the countryside with a haunting look.

Ja, das ist gut? essen mein freund.
Ja er ist sehr nett.

Poor, poor master with no one but me to love.
To live in a place that no one comes to visit.
Only the dead roam these halls, searching for the living,
so that they might live another day.

Rejected by heaven to live a life of hell.
With the finishing touch on this meal.
He calls out to me in a hoarse voice.

Gustav, Gustav . . .
Ich habe durst.
Turning slowly, he slides out the door.
To stalk the town below.
Auf

Auf bald Wiedersehen mein freund.
Auf Wiedersehen to you, Nosferatu.

Katz - Cat
Wo sind sie - Where are you
Ich haben ratte fur sie - I have a rat for you
Komme essen sie - Come eat
Das ist fur sie - It is for you
Wie gehts - How are you
Ja - Yes
Das ist gut - It is good
er ist sehr nett - he is very nice
Ich habe durst - I am very thirsty
Auf Wiedersehen - Good-bye.

By
Edward L. Bradford



By
David Blitz

JAMES HEARST: A POET OF IOWA AND THE WORLD

James Schell Hearst was born in Blackhawk County, Iowa, August 9, 1900, and died July 27, 1983. During his long life, Hearst published more than 600 poems, many of which were collected in the dozen books of his poetry that were published while he lived.

Today, a growing body of readers recognize him as one of the finest twentieth century Midwestern poets. This selection of a few of his finest and most representative poems reveals a strong Midwestern man drawing from his experiences as a farmer to produce poetry deeply anchored in Iowa but achieving universal appeal.

All who knew Jim Hearst were aware how strong he was. At nineteen he picked up loose change as a semi-pro pitcher around Iowa. But in the summer of 1919 he drove into the Cedar River, broke his neck and was on crutches or in a wheel chair for more than sixty years. Yet until just before his death he never wrote a poem hinting at his handicap. And during those six decades, he spent thirty years farming (often stepped into a tractor seat) while also a respected teacher of literature and writing at the University of Northern Iowa.

His voice was colloquial, like that of an old friend talking to his reader face-to-face. Consider his posthumously published poem "Not the Day to Listen," whose narrator scornfully dismisses the cemetery salesman, reflecting that staunch independence so typical of Hearst. Another poem in that same vein is "Truth," one of his finest pieces. Here we can almost hear the impatience of a man who has learned the hard way about the rocks we all have in our fields. As he says to the questioner, "the connection with a thing/ is the only truth I know of,/ so plow it."

This later poem also reflects his farm experience. In "Truth" the act of plowing one's field becomes a metaphor for the living of one's life: to refuse to cultivate either means no harvest; yet cultivating either poses the ever-present risk of

striking rocks of one sort or another. "Success" and "Cows Bawl on Sunday" are other poems that provide insights to the human condition while presenting a vivid yet unsentimentalized view of farm life.

For Hearst, the farmer played a noble and necessary part in society as illustrated in the "The Same in this as Other Lands" and "The Visitor." In the former Hearst shows the universality of the farmer as the poem moves from mythological allusions about the labors of Hercules to culminate in the Christian imagery of the farmer as savior. In "The Visitor" Hearst echoes the medieval concept of man as steward of the land, a temporary tenant charged with keeping it in good repair.

Hearst's poetry often reflects his Iowa heritage. If ever a poet deserved to be the State Poet Laureate, it was Jim Hearst. His short poem "Landscape-Iowa" accurately catches the quality of life in Iowa, where we are dominated by a "land drunk on Spring promises," a "land in its working clothes." In this poem, as in others such as "Sounds around a Man," we are struck by the sense of *place* in Hearst's poetry. In this modern urban, mobile society few poets reveal a strong sense of place in their work, but to read much of Hearst's work is to know that he is Iowa born and bred and that he never lost that sense of being an Iowan.

Yet Hearst's best poetry transcends the provincial to capture the universal. Consider "Snake in the Strawberries" in which Hearst draws upon pagan, Biblical, Freudian, and Jungian sources to achieve a richness of metaphor and density of allusion. The literal and metaphorical loss of innocence intertwine with color symbolism, concrete detail, and tight structure to make it one of his strongest pieces. Other fine works like "Forsythia" go beyond any particular time and place. Iowans should know and appreciate the poetry of James Hearst; the artist and his work are a valuable part of our rich cultural heritage.

Dr. Robert Ward, Literary Executor,
James Hearst Estate
University of Northern Iowa

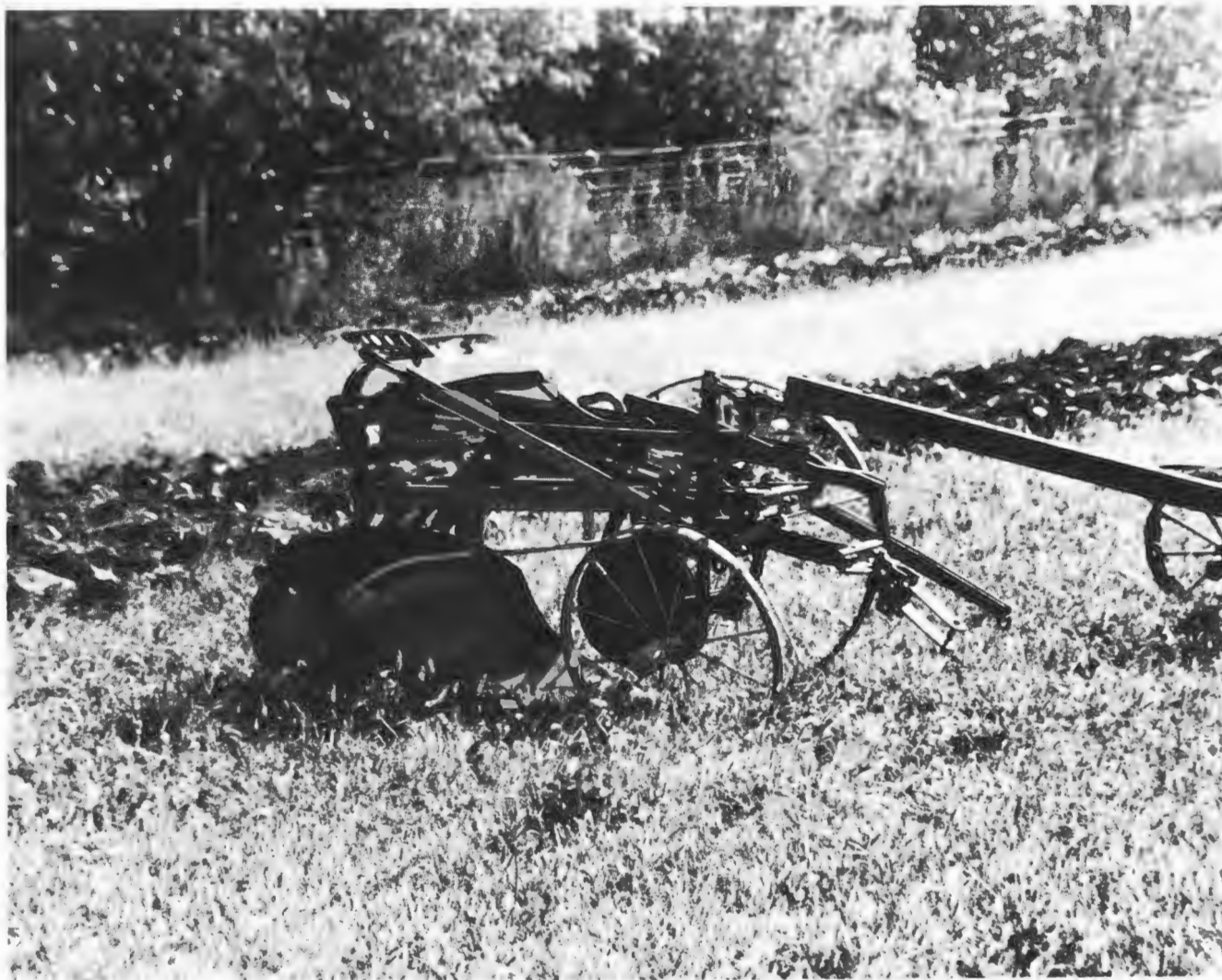
Edited By
Dr. Nancy St. Clair,
Des Moines Area Community College



By
Judy Mouzakis

LANDSCAPE - IOWA

No one lives here
knows how to tell the stranger
what it's like, the land I mean,
farms all gently rolling,
squared off by roads and fences,
creased by streams, stubbled with groves,
a land not known by mountain's height
or tides of either ocean,
a land in its working clothes,
sweaty with dew, thick-skinned loam,
a match for the men who work it,
breaths dust and pollen, wears furrows
and meadows, endures drought and flood.
Muscles swell and bulge in horizons
of corn, lakes of purple alfalfa,
a land drunk on spring promises,
half crazed with growth — I can no more
tell the secrets of its dark depths
than I can count the banners in a
farmer's eye at spring planting. (1970)



By
Judy Mouzakis

How the devil do I know
if there are rocks in your field,
plow it and find out.
If the plow strikes something
harder than earth, the point
shatters at a sudden blow
and the tractor jerks sidewise
and dumps you off the seat —
because the spring hitch
isn't set to trip quickly enough
and it never is — probably
you hit a rock. That means
the glacier emptied his pocket
in your field as well as mine,
but the connection with a thing
is the only truth I know of,
so plow it. (1961)

TRUTH



You said, take a few dry sticks, cut the ends slantwise to let in water, stick them in the old silver cup on the dresser in the spare room and wait for the touch of Easter. With a cold wave protected the snow, and the sea's pulse beat so low underground I felt no answer in myself except silence. You said, winter breaks out in flowers for the faintest and today when I opened the door the dry sticks spoke in little yellow stars and I thought of you. (1965)

By
Judy Mouzakis

FORSYTHIA



In the heat of the afternoon
I stopped for a drink and while
my sweat dried and hands relaxed
looked at my work. The corn showed
nary a weed, the plants dark green,
the third leaf showing, sun wakened,
a meadowlark bobbed on a fence post
and pumped out a trickle of song,
a morning glory climbed the gate post
I leaned against and barbed wire
ran shining along the field's edge
to protect my ownership.
A breadth of air touched me softly
like a bird's wing across my face
and suddenly I felt like a stranger
who stayed here only by sufferance
of growing things and I almost bowed
to the earth as a favored guest might
who was invited to stay out his visit. (1975)

By
Judy Mouzakis

THE VISITOR



This nifty gent with a spry tongue
rolls shares in a cemetery association
with radical options strange to us.
No ceremony, he said, prompt and efficient
disposal of the body, no church services,
no gathering of relatives and friends,
no reception afterward with food and drink.
One morning like this, lilacs in bloom
all over town, he couldn't sell flies
to a spider. A fresh carpet of grass edges
the garden where seeds just broke through
seeds lifting their heads, dandelions
in the front row, the kids off swimming
after their chores. Mama with a tub
full of dirty clothes - who has got time
to die on a day like this?

I leaned on my hoe long enough to tell him
we weren't ready yet and besides
we had made plans for tomorrow. (1986)

By
Judy Mouzakis

NOT THE DAY TO LISTEN

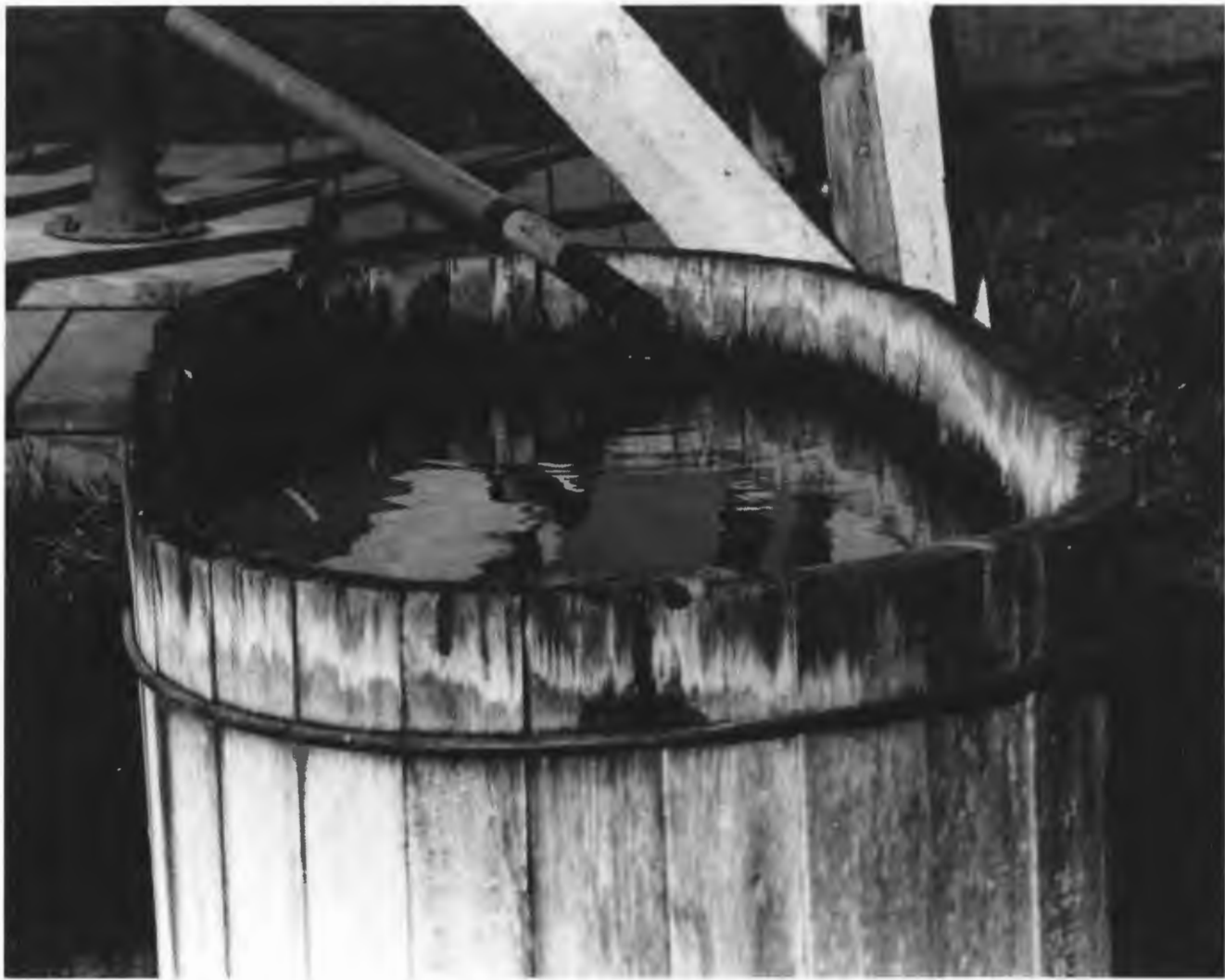


By
Judy Mouzakis

SNAKE IN THE STRAWBERRIES

This lovely girl dressed in lambswool thoughts
dances a tune in the sunshine, a tune like a bright path
leading her to that soft cloud curled up like a girl
in her sleep, but she stops at the strawberry bed
carrying nothing but joy in her basket and it falls
to the ground. Oh-h-h-h-h, her red lips round out
berries of sound but the berries under her feet are
not startled though they sway ever so slightly
as life long-striped and winding congeals into
form, driving its red tongue into her breast
forever marking its presence and turning into a shiver
barely a thread of motion in the clusters of green leaves.
She stands now as cold as marble now with the thought
coiled round her, the image of her thought holding her

tightly in its folds for it is part of her now and dimly
like a faint sobbing she knows that part of her crawls
forever among green leaves and light grasses, it is the same
shiver that shakes her now and now her hair tumbles slightly and
now she feels dishevelled but the spell breaks finally.
For the warm sun has not changed and maybe the tune
of her coming still floats in the air but the path
no longer ends in the cloud. She fills her basket taking
the richest ripe berries for this is what she came to do,
she touches her breast a minute and then the ground
feeling beneath her fingers the coiled muscles
of a cold fear that seems so dark and secret
beside the warm colors of the sunlight
splashing like blood on the heaped fruit in her basket. (1943)



By
Judy Mouzakis

THE SAME IN THIS AS OTHER LANDS

He bows his head against the wind
that dries the muscles of his hands and
chills the needy folk the same in this as other lands.
Mud and the litter on his boots
witness the chores that he has done,
how many stables has he cleaned
and never owned a part of one?
His helpless eyes watch time unfold
vague leaves of promise everywhere
that are not written in his tongue
though he is often mentioned there.
The same in this as other lands
he grinds his labor for our bread
working the daily miracle
by which the multitude is fed. (1940)



By
Judy Mouzakis

The image of God
in a warm mackinaw and rubber boots
daily fights his way into the streaming barnyard
into a multitude of hungry, angry, playful and determined
animals
through a cloud of raging sound
to bring order out of chaos.
Six times a week and rests not on the seventh-
and there fails his divinity. (1936)

COWS BAWL ON SUNDAY

SOUNDS AROUND A MAN

It's late, late in the year
to hear a plowman sing, he yells
his tune above the tractor's clatter
mocked by a crow from its perch
in the grove. I listen to air shaped
to sound, a hunter shoots, a pheasant
squawks from the meadow and flashes bronze
and scarlet as he sails downwind,
a dog barks, somewhere a cow bawls,
two boys shout from a farm yard.
I grew up with this language hoping
to find what signs warn me what I
stand for, for whom I speak.
These bugle notes ring out in a
bowl of sky bound by the horizon's
ring to solid earth, the plowman
rides over the hill with his song,
wind mutters among the dead weeds,
the power line overhead vibrates
its monotone, I am caught in a web
of voices anchored as far
as their echo. (1970)



By
Judy Mouzakis



By
Judy Mouzakis

SUCCESS

When I come home from work at the close of day
Blind with the sunset, faced with the evening chores,
The hungry pigs, the unmilked cows, the hens
Restless for my attention, with feed and hay
To measure and lift, it seems the whole outdoors
Would let its need for order rest on me.
I hear the windmill's voice as I clean pens
But never the meadowlark's, a warning sign

I've meant to heed some day but never do.
Now I am old and stooped I've come to see
That each year charges interest for its use,
That life's a mortgage no one can renew,
I've found I traded even, farm for sweat
To justify the boast I'm master yet.
Shaky and cold under the wind's abuse
I read on the tax receipts the land is mine. (1965)

1988 U. 11

LI

ANKE