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Expressions 1997

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EXPRESSIONS







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ERIN GOODMAN

Cover Photo

MICHELLE HAMLIN

First Place; Places

Passages of Iowa Photography Contest

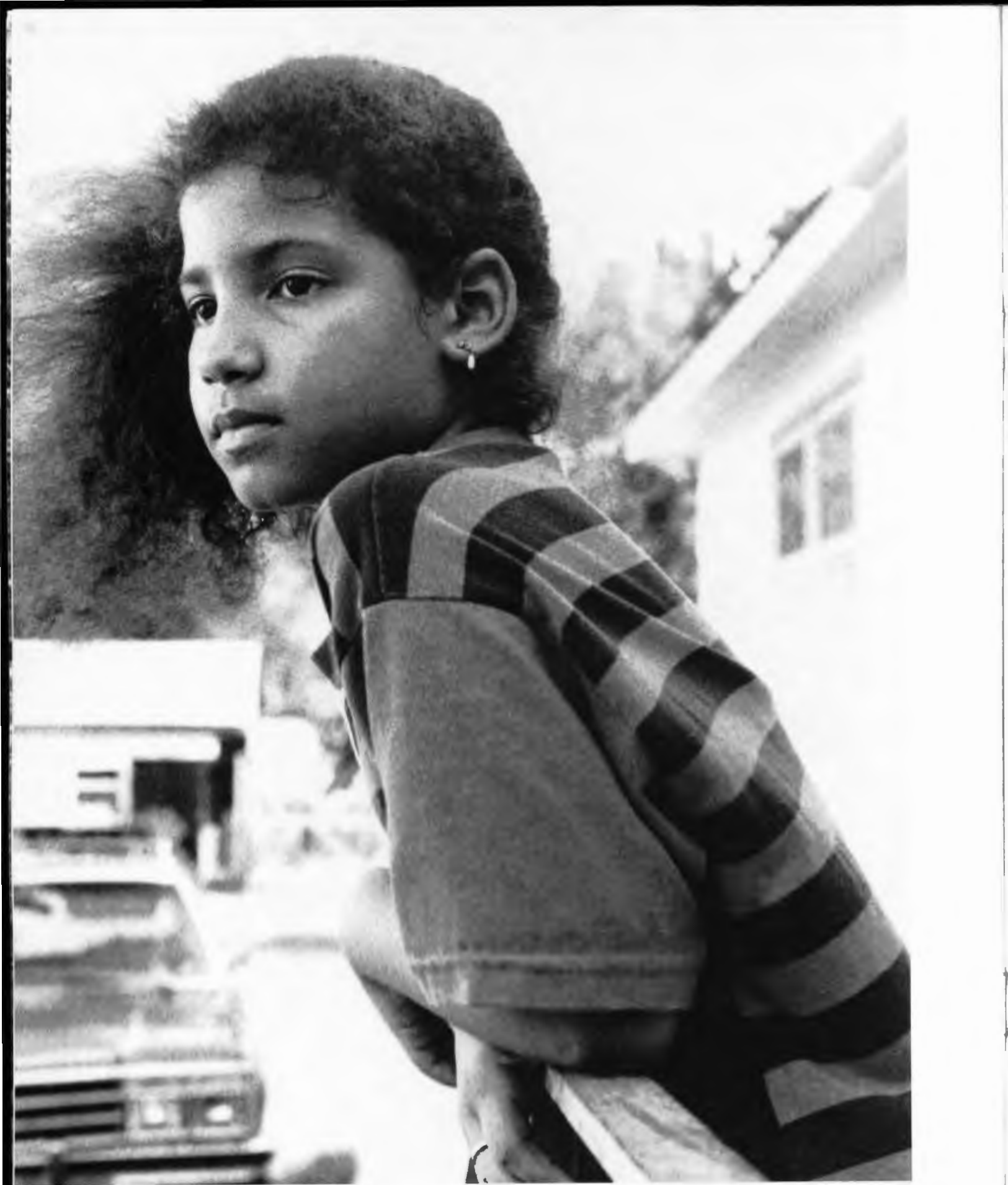
IDENTITY CRISIS

In a dream, my brother was a fawn.
"Do you remember when I was a little deer?" he'd ask
with excitement
with sleep
with earnestness
as though we'd all been there with him.
He was four years old at the time and thought it was
REAL.

In my dream, I'm a
chameleon
drone
mule
planarian
sponge
turtle.
I don't ask anyone to remember,
because I wish it were only a
DREAM.



AARON RUCKER



LORI VAUGHN

THE MIDDLE CHILD

for Jenna

July rose in waves
from the pavement to the hard blue sky,
yet did not touch my skin.
No cloud blocked the view to heaven.
Birds sang uninterrupted from a green canopy
and the world outside didn't notice
that the middle child was gone.

Phantom pain
tricks the brain into believing
our heart's song is just around the corner
or calling from the kitchen.

I saw her looking toward the sun from
an orange field of black-eyed-susans.
Summer roses echoed
the Easter dress Grandma sewed.
Her teasing fingers mussed
my hair. I turned—it was the wind.
I hugged the hollow place in my chest
to stop the rushing in of air.

Before the sun's glow disappeared in the west
a huge orange moon peeked above the horizon.
It grinned, gap-toothed, and winked as we played
tag on a lonely, curving highway.
It was the middle child laughing
in the moonlight.

In the night's
dark-quiet our joys dance
in dream-time and play the songs
of our heart's memory.

T A P S

It was a cool evening that 23rd of July, 1975. Plato and I were working the night shift. It was a boring night and we decided to park for a while on the hill in front of Peter's Farm Apartments. I lived there. All the tenants were government employees of one department or another. From the upper parking lot you could see the ocean and on a clear day the silhouette of St. Thomas and the entire Christianstead skyline.

I wanted to kill time my favorite way, and have something to eat. I had just finished a chicken sandwich (a drumstick on a piece of bread with mayo).

Plato was acting a little nervous, and not being a man of gregarious tendencies, I could tell he was holding something back. I could read in his sheepish smile it wasn't bad. "What's with you?" I queried, and then waited for the answer. He looked at his nails, raised his eyebrows with an I-don't-mean-to-brag expression and said in a very humble tone, "El conejo muerto."

"The rabbit died!" I exclaimed. "All right, yes!" I was the father of two fine sons living in Minnesota, so I could certainly relate. I gave him a feigned blow to the arm. It was a guy-thing and I was delighted that I was the first to know.

I could tell he was bubbling over inside. It appeared that having carnal knowledge of his wife was a deeply personal thing with him or at least having to admit it. He was feeling very vulnerable right now and would have been much more comfortable saying they were going to adopt.

"So what do you want?" I asked. "A raise," he replied without batting an eye.

Before he could give me a straight answer, we heard what sounded like a cannon discharging, twice, in rapid succession. Unfortunately, sound can be very deceptive and travel a long distance in the still night air; consequently, I said "let's check it out." I was driving and bored to tears, so we came down off the hill and cruised in the general direction of the "Golden Cow" intersection, aptly named for the ice cream shop there.

It didn't take long to see an immense gathering of citizens outside a house with an open front window. Women were crying hysterically. Plato looked at me with a straight face and said, "Nothing going on here, let's move on." I smiled back, acknowledging one of his rare funnies. Meanwhile, chaos reigned supreme.

We ran up to the window to see what all the fuss was about. There was blood everywhere, all over the walls and the floor. In a chair facing the window some ten to twelve feet away sat what was left of a young Puerto Rican female. She had been shot twice; once dead center at the breast line, and once in the throat, apparently with a shotgun. The wound to the throat had effectively decapitated her. Her head was hanging on to her body by a small bit of tissue and resting on her shoulder to the side. Her eyes were wide open, glazed, and transfixed in an eerie stare at no one in particular, gore continued to ooze from her wounds.

An elderly Puerto Rican man was screaming hysterically in Spanish at Plato, that his daughter had just been murdered by her estranged husband. He was last seen running towards the area we called Shanty Town. The old man had just called the police, how did we get there so quickly?

At the same time we could hear sirens going off from two different directions in the distance. We knew assistance was on the way. Plato told the old man to keep everybody out of the house and throw a blanket over the girl. I radioed the station we would be in foot pursuit and was advised that there were only two uniforms on the street and us. It could take a while to get much help; however, they would start the ball rolling and notify the Chief of Detectives, the coroner, and a lab team. We got a brief description of the suspect, I put it on the air. Plato gave me the thumbs-up sign and we took off.

As we started jogging up Queen Street I reached inside my shirt collar and pulled out my old patrol badge, which I wore on a strong chain around my neck like a pendant. There was no way I was going to do that with my beautiful gold shield, and run the risk of losing it in a brawl or running like now. I could see that Plato was taking out his shield in the wallet pack, turning it over and putting it in his shirt pocket. I had told him before that was dumb, he just smiled.

He had a dumb gun, too. It was a little .38 caliber Smith & Wesson "Detective Special" stubby with a non-exposed hammer. He said, "Diana loves it because it saves my shirts" — I said, "Yeah, but will it save your life?"

I had survived my own shootout with a teenager, in a stolen rental car, and had been taken completely by surprise. All my split-second decisions on the issue of deadly force had been made long ago clearly giving me the edge. We had fired at each other twice and neither of us had hit the other. Both my rounds were directed at his back, as he was running away. He gave up. Now back-shooting wasn't very honorable under the "Cowboy's code of the West." But this wasn't "Cowboys and Indians," it was "Cops and Robbers" and my rules.

I reached up under my right armpit and let my own Model 1911 U.S. Navy Colt .45 automatic fall gently into my hand from where it hung upside down. It was already cocked. I kept it that way. It was a little further edge I gave myself. Now, "Rosco" was not very accurate beyond fifty feet, but was tops in sheer unadulterated stopping power.

Somehow I had accidentally mailed it home just before I got out of the Navy. Presumably it just slipped my mind. I distinctly remembered dropping it over the side during some target practice off the stern of the ship. The Navy made me pay for it plus a letter of reprimand was placed in my service record. Oh, the shame of it all.

The weapon was developed for the British to stop the hearty Boers during the war of the same name. The Boers, it seemed, could survive two or three .32 caliber rounds and still run over you and ruin your whole day. But one round from the mighty .45 can knock down and kill a full grown buffalo.

We knew that the car would be of little value in that area. Shanty Town made a stateside ghetto look like a nice place to live. Like the "Casbah" in Morocco, the bad guys would go into Shanty Town and you would never see them again. There hadn't been any street lights for years, because they had been constantly broken out by the resident vermin. The streets were about ten feet wide and paved with cobblestones. Shanty Town was on a hillside so it was steep. Houses were stepped like San Francisco row houses. The front room windows were just above the average person's eye level, of course the hookers just loved being looked up to.

It was an exceptionally menacing, inky black, moonless night. No one in Shanty Town could afford electricity, so there weren't even house lights to see by. People in this area used kerosene lanterns to light their corrugated tin and tarpaper shacks. Shanty Town was truly a study in abject poverty.

The residents were mostly illegal aliens from the British, French and Dutch West Indies that make up the Caribbean chain. They came to America hoping to escape \$.10 an hour wages to make \$2.50 an hour in the U.S. Almost every penny was sent home while they survived in the states.

That is if they weren't caught and deported before they were ready. Deportation was usually regarded as a minor setback. In less than ninety days you started to see some old familiar faces back on the streets. Most went home voluntarily after two or three years, and using their savings lived in almost regal splendor by comparison.

In the early days we would round them up like cattle in 2:00 AM "No Knock" raids, chain them together and put them in a large pen at the airport. USINS (Immigration) would fly them out in the morning, usually in groups of sixty to eighty with whatever they were wearing at the time of arrest. Anything they owned was a loss and soon consumed by his or her neighbors.

Then came the advent of the "Immigration Lawyer" in the mid-60's. If an illegal alien managed to get a driver's license or a social security card, we were obliged to prove that the subject wasn't born in any of the more than 5000 counties that make up the good ole USA.

An elderly Puerto Rican man was screaming hysterically in Spanish at Plato, that his daughter had just been murdered by her estranged husband.

I swore they had a circulating list of the legitimately burned down courthouses. Backup records were very hard to come by in a substantial number of cases. So, as a procedural matter, the Police Department lost interest very quickly.

It was pitch dark. Plato and I were both uptight; hell, we were petrified. We performed as we were taught and did a leapfrog maneuver (not over, but by each other) up the street, about twenty to fifty feet at a pass. When the rear man would go ahead, you would watch your partner's back and vice versa. We were crouching as we moved along trying to make as small a bull's eye as possible, because we knew that in this case a shotgun was the weapon of choice.

We made mediocre progress for the first few blocks. The street was an abyss, and I was stumbling over rubbish. I had pasted my back to the walls of the houses, just as I stepped away and started to move forward I heard a loud "KERR-SPLAT!!!"

My hair and shirt were instantly drenched in an unknown liquid. A thousand thoughts ran through my mind: the first of which I just knew I was going to be burning any second. I was destined to be toasted with a fire bomb. Maybe there was still time to save myself, instinctively I wheeled to my right, thrusting my weapon up in the direction from where the liquid had come.

There I was, face to face with a woman, nude from the waist up, her body silhouetted from behind in an eerie yellow glow from the kerosene lamp. All I could see was the whites of her eyes. And the whites of her teeth. Her lips were curled back in utter terror, because Rosco was in her face. She had just opened the shutters and thrown an enormous pan of dirty dishwater over my head into the street.

Before she could scream and give us up I said, "Shhhhhhh, police." She withdrew from the window, pulling the shutters closed very quietly.

Plato and I were soon immersed in the blackness. All I could hear was Plato snickering and I told him it wasn't funny; but looking back if the roles were reversed I would have been on the ground.



LAURIE MULLEN

First Place

DMACC Italy Year Photography Contest

My mind was running at full tilt, I could feel my blood surging through my spleen under tremendous pressure. It gave me an ache in the small of my back. Only a couple of times in my life had I felt this way. Yet I felt so alert to even the slightest sensation. I had never felt so in control and yet so helpless. I kept thinking, "Come on eyes, don't fail me now."

Plato was ahead and on the left side, uphill some forty feet and across the street. I was about to move forward when I could just see his gun hand raised in a stop signal, he was facing across the street. He was peering into an opening of some fifteen feet wide between two shacks. They were separated by what was left of a broken-down house foundation.

From my vantage point seeing what he was seeing was impossible. Then he just seemed to relax; he stood up straight as to throw all caution to the wind. He was holding his gun in his right hand, his arm hanging casually to his side.

Now Plato was senior and in charge, but sometimes I thought for being so intelligent, he just didn't have the instinct. I could see his mind working in a combat situation; "To be, or not to be, that is the question. For 'tis more noble in the minds of men to suffer the slashing and bullets of the loyal enemy, than do a bad shoot and suffer the slings and arrows of prosecution by the IAD (internal affairs division) shoot team."

I just knew that's how that cultured cranium of his worked, and yet, on occasion I knew he could, and would, strike like a viper.

Right now I thought he had lost his mind. In a strong and controlled voice he said, in the native pigeon English, "Com out naw, com now or I put a shot in your ass."

I knew then that he apparently recognized this person. He started walking across the street towards the opening. As I moved up I could see that it was more like a lean-to shed or a carport.

I started to shudder and had a watery feeling in my bowels. My most gruesome expectations were soon realized.

Plato had taken about two steps when it happened. A shattering explosion like only a shotgun could make, followed by a blinding flash of light. Plato was blown backward, his feet left the ground.

Everything went into slow-mo. I could hear myself scream "loooooooooook oooooooooout!" My voice seemed to drone on and on. I heard the unmistakable sound of someone racking another round into the chamber of a pump shotgun. Plato hadn't even hit the ground by the time the person fired again.

The elongated muzzle blast that lit up the night told me the killer was shooting across my path. Plato landed in a crumpled heap after hitting the wall behind him.

My plans were a little sketchy, but getting to Plato and giving him some cover fire was my main mission. I leaped three paces like a world class broad-jumper, and did a sliding-onto-second-base headlonger through the trash, for the remaining six or so feet. I belly-flop crashed and hoped I didn't impale myself on anything. I was surprised it didn't hurt. At the same time I hit the ground, the killer fired again. This time the muzzle blast was circular and directed at me.

I could hear the pellets hit the wood above us. Thank God he was firing high. I was in front of Plato now, we were both on the ground. I rolled up on my left side and squeezed off four or five rounds, firing low and to the right of the blast pattern. I was starting to take this very personally; however, feeling the solid kick of my own weapon hitting the crotch of my thumb and the deafening roar, I started to feel like we might just survive this mess.

Suddenly, I realized that this dirtbag suspect probably had not expected me to be there also. SURPRISE!

The killer screamed and hit the ground with a thud. Gotcha! I got up and ran toward him, then I was standing over him. He appeared to be a very big man. I fought the urge to shoot him again. He had an obvious stomach wound and his right leg was bloody from the knee down, and was lying at a most unusual angle to the side.

In the dark I kicked his shotgun away and somehow I inadvertently kicked him in the side with all my might. I really wanted to get that gun far away from him.

He was clutching his guts and screaming something about his mother and God. Of all the wounds there is none more painful than an abdominal. This dirtbag was in knee-waddling, eyeball-rattling, teeth-shattering, mother-lovin' gut-shot agony. I liked that!

All I could see was the whites of her eyes. And the whites of her teeth. Her lips were curled back in utter terror...



I ripped his bloody hand away from his guts and rolled him up on his side and cuffed him. I wasn't going to take time to search him.

I ran back over to Plato, he was barely alive and had a gaping hole chest wound where his sternum used to be. I started screaming "Somebody call an ambulance!" Then I remembered that nobody around here had a phone. I had Plato's head in my lap. I was trying to fight it back, but tears were flowing down my face.

People were coming out of the shacks and I saw a boy about 15 with only his underpants on, and looking very groggy. He noticed Plato and I could tell that what he saw frightened him and he was about to run away. I said "Get down the hill and get the police by Golden Cow. Send for an ambulance." Without uttering a word, he shook his head in the affirmative and ran off into the night.

The suspect was alternately moaning and screaming, Plato was telling me he was cold, and I'm trying somehow to make him feel warm and telling him things we both knew weren't true.

This man, my partner, my friend, was dying and the gawkers were getting an eyeful. Why couldn't the ground just part, and swallow us up? Plato's breathing indicated that he was in the death rattle. He looked up at me with an almost angelic face and said in a barely audible voice "I wonder." I quickly interrupted him and put my finger to his lips and very gently said "shut up Plato, you think too much." I could feel his body go limp, he seemed to just get heavier, his kidneys let go and then he was gone. To this day, I wish I had just let him speak.

A black and white cruiser rolled up with two uniforms. They had heard the shots, and, following the sounds, found the boy heading down the hill.

An ambulance was already on the way. I could hear the mournful wail of a siren in the distance, but now it was coming for that crying, scumsucking, dirtbag suspect across the street. Patrolman Greene produced a blanket from his trunk and we mercifully covered Plato with it. That was the last time I ever saw Plato when I pulled it over his face.

The word had already gone out about an officer fatal so there was nothing left to do but cordon off the scene, and wait for the chief. I found Plato's pistol in the mud, then I started looking for his shield because I knew Diana would want it, but it was nowhere to be found. Judging by the thirty or so people standing around, I wasn't surprised, only saddened.

Homicide investigators are required to attend the autopsy of the case victim. I made up my mind that this was one I would not attend or at least not witness. Plato would say that would be "irrational behaviorism" or some ten-dollar word like that.

Plato lying there had a chilling effect on every officer present. Detective Nesbitt said it best: "There but by the grace of God goeth I." It was hardly original but certainly appropriate to the scene.

I was in tears and wanted desperately for the scumbag to stay alive and suffer. I'm screaming at him, "You'll never have enough guts to shoot another cop, you SOB!" But the pun was probably wasted on him.

Chief of Detectives Groneveldt and Deputy Chief Robert Ellison arrived. They were both NYPD retirees yet didn't know each other in the 'States, but being from the same school of thought and experience, they made a great team. I gave the Chief a brief statement, he said it was a "Good Shoot." If I had his blessing, I knew that everything would be okay with the IAD in St. Thomas.

Chief Groneveldt stood leaning up against a car not fifteen feet from Plato, and seemed to regard him as just an object. I wanted him to show some sorrow like the rest of us.

Deep in my heart I knew that he was crying on the inside and the quintessential professional on the outside. Plato was the son he always wanted but never had.

Detectives Cancel, Nesbitt and Perez had been called out and were taking the initial scene at the Golden Cow, so I would be prime on Plato's murder and toss this dirtbag to Cancel and he could be tried for the second murder and then fix him up with another life sentence.

I could hear a priest giving Plato the Sacraments, and I could feel the anger welling up inside me, what a waste. I really needed to get out of that area. Chief Groneveldt asked me if I wanted to follow up for a possible deathbed statement by the suspect. I said "Yes!" almost gleefully, and saw the raised eyebrows around me. So I repeated the word in a more subdued tone. I really needed to finish this, or him. Deep in my neurotic heart I saw it as an opportunity to pull his wires out or turn something off if I got the chance.

I grabbed somebody's black & white and tooled off for the hospital. The ride to the hospital would do me good. I was coming apart at the seams. All the details were whirling around in my brain. Life without my partner, my friend, should we have been there, what could we have done to avoid this. Plus all the guilt I could muster.

I probably just dispatched another human to his maker. Why had this bastard forced me to do this? How many rounds had I fired? I knew IAD would be asking. How could I break this to Diana? That part had been taken from me by a priest and she was en route to the hospital also.

They were working feverishly on the suspect in the emergency trauma treatment room. He was as ashen gray as the walls.

Doctors and nurses were shouting orders to each other and others for instruments I didn't understand; "Frammelstazers, clebzorpts, quick! Oxygen stat! Push the bicarb!" BICARB? I laughed, bicarb wasn't going to help his tummy ache but good luck. I kept wishing someone would call "lunch thirty minutes" but no luck. There's never a strong union around when you really need one.

Suddenly, I saw Diana, Mrs. Groneveldt and the hospital chaplain coming down the hall. I panicked, I couldn't have her breathing the same air as that piece-o-crap on the table in the next room. I ran up the hall towards her. We embraced, we cried.

I told her, his last words were of her, and the kids, he loved them so much. She cried.

If she finds out now, some twenty years later, I can only pray she'll understand. I whispered to the chaplain who was in the room some fifty feet away and he deftly led them back up the hall.

Cancel arrived a couple of hours later, with the initial victim's father to identify the suspect (his son-in-law). I knew it was a pretty routine deal so I just stood by the door reading a magazine without really seeing the words.

Cancel and the old man came out, but Cancel looked perplexed. The old man shook his head and looked equally perplexed. The old man said in Spanish, "Quin es el?" (Who was he?). I got it the first time. I felt my body starting to go limp, my knees started to buckle. I looked for a chair before I hit the floor. God, what a shitty night!

RAIN ON THE ROOF

The rain that's softly falling on the roof
is playing a staccato lullaby.
It loosens grit from crevices between
the seared and broken shingles of my mind,
and washes worry over edge where it
dissolves in sputtering gutters. The song
becomes a fluid harmony that strums
massaging fingers over tautly strung
interior wire. Tranquil melody
flows deeper as it permeates each pore;
a placid saturation that supplants
whatever's been before. The music is
too soft to hear. The song and I are one.
The peaceful rhythm slowly breathes within.



SHANIE LYNN WILSON



AMY NAMOWITZ WORTHEN: PART OF A CHAIN

The workspace is quiet, an alcove in a cool basement. A bright lamp illuminates a copperplate placed on a table. An artist, sitting on a small wooden chair, bends over the copperplate. She chooses a burin, one of many engraver's tools, from a box and carefully touches its tip to the surface of the copperplate. A thin curl is raised in front of the burin as it cuts into the surface. As the artist slowly rotates the copperplate to her left, the engraved line, at first straight, now gently curves to her right. When the artist is finished, she lifts the burin from the plate's surface and with the sharp tip of the tool flicks away the burr, a crest of copper left in the line's wake.

Amy Namowitz Worthen, a printmaker, is preparing an engraving. She is one of a small number of modern practitioners of this centuries-old form of intaglio printmaking. Referring to the old masters of engraving as her "teachers," Amy explains that as an engraver she feels that she is "part of a chain." I visited Amy in her studio and experienced first hand not only what she has learned but also what she contributes to the increasing chain of engravers through her extraordinary prints.

Amy's home sits on a deeply shaded street in Des Moines. We toured briefly through the large, open rooms on the first floor and climbed the stairs to the second floor to look at the handmade ceramic wall tiles in the bathroom — white tiles with blue drawings — each thoughtfully rendered by a family member or friend. One tile, a graceful drawing of basil leaves, is a replica of the drawing that Amy made for her father-in-law's gravestone. Another

tile is strategically placed in the shower stall — two piercing eyes to gaze at the bather, drawn by a friend with a wry sense of humor. All testify to a creative life filled with family and friends.

Amy Worthen began her journey as a printmaker in New York City. Her mother, a painter, and her father, a geologist, introduced Amy to the arts at a very young age. She took classes at the Museum of Modern Art and The Art Student's League. She attended the specialized High School of Music and Art in New York City. Later, at Smith College, Amy was a student of printmaker Leonard Baskin. While there, Amy made her first of many trips to Italy, where she studied 15th-century painting in Florence. She continued her study of printmaking under the instruction of Mauricio Lasansky at the University of Iowa where she received her M.A. She has held teaching positions at the Des Moines Art Center, Drake University and the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica, Venice, Italy, where she returns each year to conduct classes. Currently Amy is Adjunct Curator of Prints at the Des Moines Art Center.

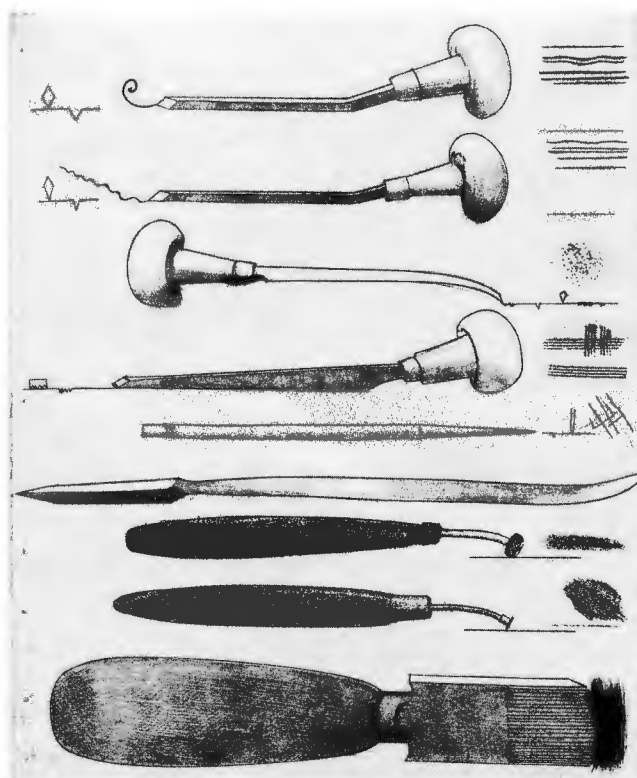
Amy's prints are in several private and public collections including The Metropolitan Museum in New York City, and she has had many solo and group shows. An art historian as well as an artist, her scholarship includes an 11,000-word entry titled "Engraving, history and techniques" for *The Dictionary of Art* published in 1996. She is also the author and artist of *Sotoporteghi Veneziani*, which depicts, in original burin and roulette engravings, twelve of the unique passageways that shape the cityscape of Venice. Amy is married to Tom Worthen, Associate Professor of Art History at Drake University, and has two grown daughters.

Amy's printmaking studio is in the basement of her home. The air becomes cooler as we descend the stairs. We walk through a hallway filled with Amy's sketchbooks in bookcases and framed prints stacked against the walls. Beyond is a large room with a sink, work area, table and chair. Papers and books are strewn about. Ceiling-high windows filter in garden-level light. An ordinary basement perhaps, were it not for the large metal object placed squarely in the center of the room and commanding nearly half its space. This device with its flat pressbed, huge flywheel and two heavy metal cylinders is Amy's printing press and was

Referring to the old masters of engraving as her "teachers," Amy explains that as an engraver she feels that she is "part of a chain."

Tools of the trade (top to bottom):

- square burin or graver
- lozenge burin or graver
- stipple graver
- multiple line graver
- drypoint needle
- scraper and burnisher
- roulette
- roulette
- mezzotint rocker



built to her specifications by an artisan in New England.

The process of engraving on a copperplate has its roots in the 15th century in the Netherlands, Germany and Italy. Engravers in Japan and China began engraving on copperplates in the 16th century. Amy writes in *The Dictionary of Art* that “The invention of printing engravings on paper was connected to three factors: the idea of using an engraved plate as a means of reproducing an image, the availability of paper and the means of applying pressure (381).” Early

engravings depicted “...scenes from the Life of Christ, the Passion and images of the saints (382).” and copied paintings and adapted designs developed by goldsmiths. This is known as “reproductive engraving.”

Albrecht Dürer, the 16th-century German painter and engraver, played a significant role in the development of engraving when, through realism and technique, he helped establish engraving “...as an independent art form (384).” The engravers of the 16th century also helped to establish the commercial growth of engraving, particularly in book illustration where engravings eventually replaced woodcuts.

Seventeenth and eighteenth-century engravers continued to develop techniques, including etching, monotype and mezzotint. They were able to simulate chalk, pastel and wash.

Engravers also began to print in a variety of pigmented inks, etching subsequent plates for each color used in the print.

By the 18th century, engraving was rarely used alone to create a print. It was combined with other techniques in the engraver's desire to create prints that resembled oil paintings, watercolors or charcoal drawings. This was distinguished from line-engraving (when the burin alone is used to carve lines into the copperplate).

In the early 19th century, lithography, "...which could resemble pen, wash or crayon drawings or imitate engravings," was introduced as engravers sought to develop processes to increase the speed and lessen the cost of production. Additionally, more work was being produced on steelplates rather than copperplates because steelplates could withstand printing editions of 20,000 to 30,000 impressions, while copperplates wore considerably over time. During the same period, however, the English poet and engraver, William Blake, used the classical engraving technique of the crisp, clean line and is credited with the historical revival of engraving as "...an original medium once again (394)."

Engraving continued to develop in the 20th century. Abstract expressionist painters influenced engravers when they began to paint large-scale paintings. Engravers followed suit, and the large plate sizes "...encouraged changes in burin techniques (397)." But some engravers, however, returned to the 15th-century practice of using the burin to create beautiful lines. By the 1970's an important distinction was made between "...artists who made their own prints and those who worked collaboratively (398)." True line-engraving is image-oriented, not process-oriented, and to that end, the line engraver is free from collaboration ("...well-known painters working with master printers, [who] favored complicated, innovative and expensive processes but produced little in the way of engraving"). Engraving also became free from its reproductive role.

Amy is one of a small number of contemporary engravers who has "...selected the burin for its unique ability to produce its characteristic lines and tones and for its simplicity of means (397)." Although she believes that she has mastered the essential techniques of the

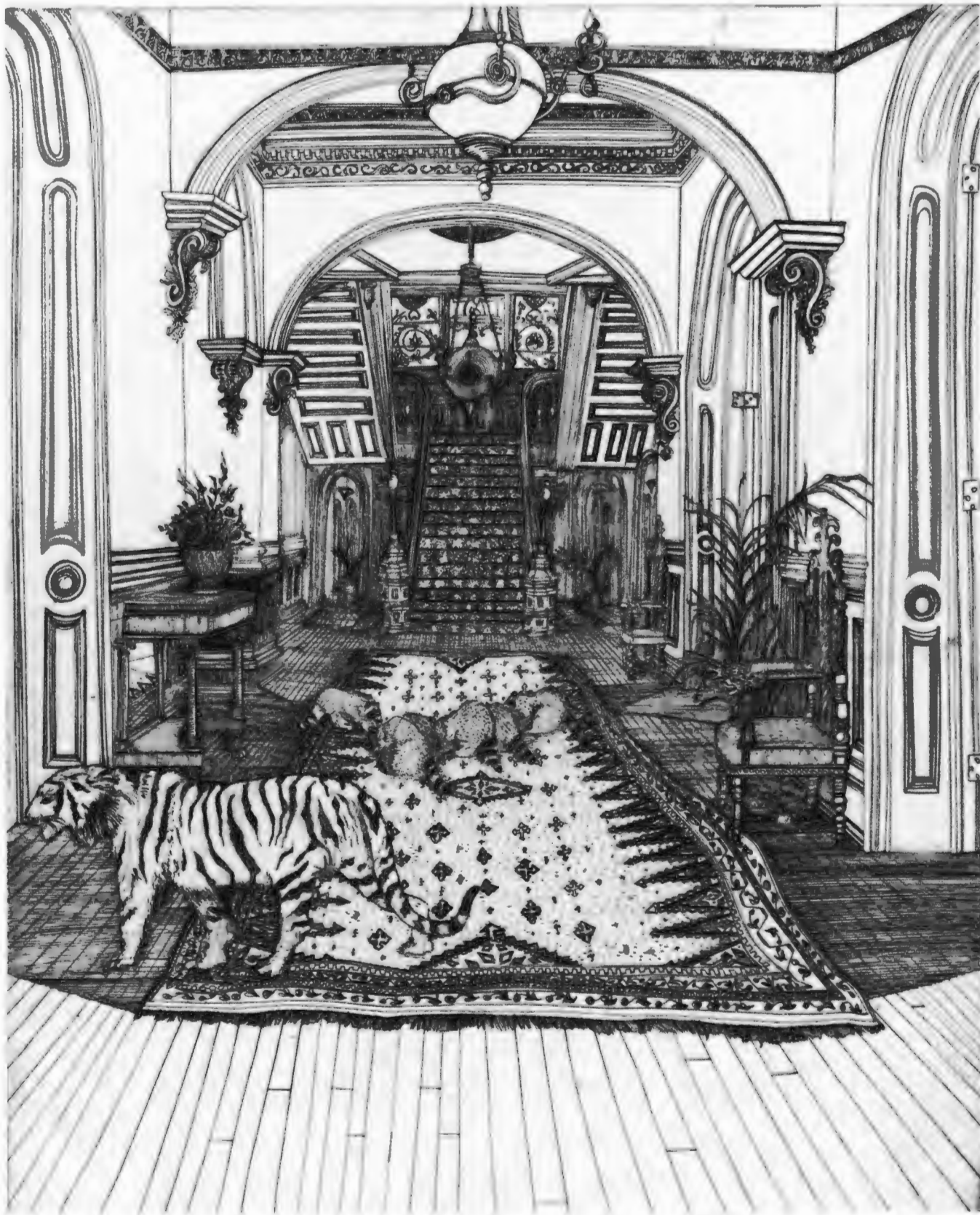
burin, Amy continues to challenge herself through the careful study of her subjects and the translation of images from her detailed drawings to the engraved plate.

Amy's interest in engraving developed from practical as well as aesthetic reasons. She made the change from etching to engraving when her daughters were young. She was concerned about the process of etching, particularly the acid bath, a hazardous but essential ingredient. Also, engraving provided Amy with a connection to the past and enhanced her interest in the technical evolution of the medium.

Through her engraving Amy has explored her interests in European architecture and art history, Japanese art and culture, classical culture, fantasy, family memories and life in Iowa. She has committed a considerable amount of her lifetime to understanding the techniques of engraving and translating its process to modern images and interests. Amy explains that until very recently she shied away from using a magnifying glass — a tool favored by engravers born of the jewelry trade — or any other tools not historically bound to the medium. Amy's dedication to engraving is a powerful draw to a visitor of her studio, and I was filled with anticipation as we began a journey that was to bring the past into the present with both creativity and precision.

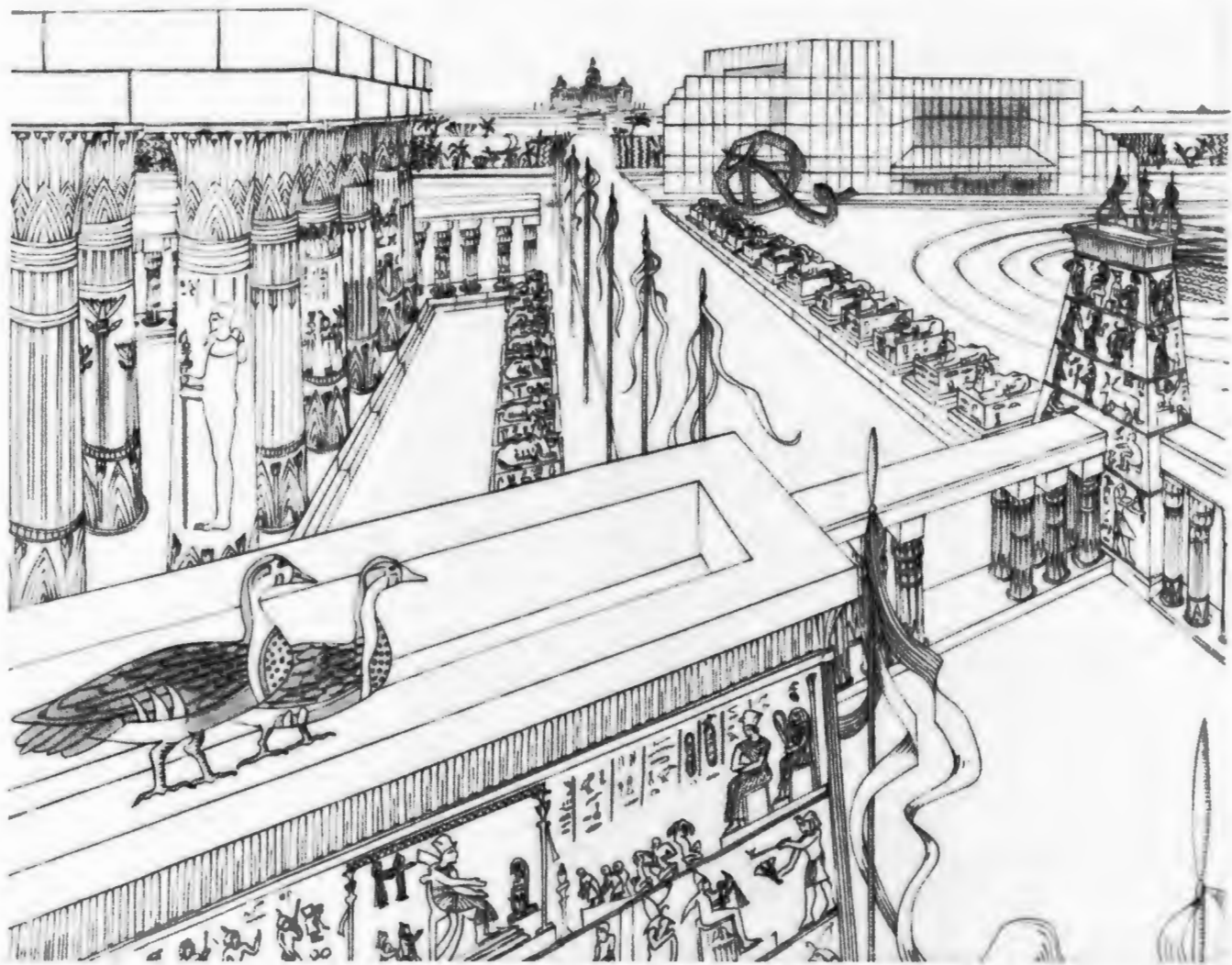
After graduate school, Amy concentrated on perfecting her skills as a printmaker. She made several trips to Europe, where she filled notebook upon notebook with renderings of churches, landmarks and ancient ruins. In 1977, the Iowa Arts Council gave Amy a grant to develop a touring exhibition of her engravings and etchings titled "Real and Imagined Aspects of the State Capitol." She completed 17 prints for the exhibition that opened at the Governor's office in 1978. Her meticulously rendered engravings depicted interior and exterior spaces of the Iowa State Capitol Building. The exhibition was a great success and earned Amy the distinction of creating art that was "whimsical."

One of the prints in the exhibition, *The Supreme Court (1978)*, inspired by Amy's visit to traffic court to contest a parking ticket, depicts Iowa's highest court filled with a number of peculiar looking beasts and birds. The inspiration for this gathering was the judge in traffic



Terrace Hill with Bengal Tiger and Raccoons, 1979
engraving, 17" x 14"

WORTHEN



Aida in Des Moines, 1984
engraving and mezzotint, 14" x 17"

court, transformed by Amy into a waddling penguin. Those who reviewed the exhibition appreciated not only Amy's sensitivity to her subject matter but also her capability to nudge the sensibilities of those who knew and respected such a prestigious building and its inhabitants.

The exhibition caught the attention of The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and it purchased two prints: *Stairway with Skeleton (1978)* and *The Department of Agriculture (1978)*. In Des Moines, The Terrace Hill Society commissioned Amy for a set of prints of Terrace Hill.

With fund-raising a priority, the Society requested that the prints include something whimsical, similar to the prints that had been so successful in the 1978 exhibition. Amy complied (with some reservations for having to produce whimsy at the whims of others), and one of the resulting prints, *Terrace Hill with Moose (1979)*, is a detailed engraving of the main hall of the mansion containing the figure of a moose (at one time the mansion had a few trophy heads on display). Amy has also created prints for several nonprofit organizations including the Des Moines Metro Opera, the University of Iowa Museum of Art, the Des Moines Art Center Print Club and St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral.

Through her commissioned works Amy came to believe that prints are "intrinsically public" — much more so than paintings or sculpture which cannot be easily reproduced as original works of art. Amy sees her commissioned works as her special contribution to the community. She also confronted the inevitable challenge of commercial success. Her whimsical style was very popular, but soon Amy came to believe that "...if you meet with a certain level of success, you do the same thing or you need to go on." In short, Amy was tired of doing intricate designs and details. For example, in one engraving, *Terrace Hill with Bengal Tiger and Raccoons (1979)*, the oriental rug took three months to engrave. Amy felt that it was time to move forward.

In the early 1980s Amy began to explore new themes, and she says that people questioned the direction of her work. She became interested in the structure of the spaces

PRINTING AN ENGRAVING



SQUEEGEEING THE INK

The engraved plate is on a large hot plate to warm it so that the thick ink will spread smoothly over the plate. The squeegee forces the ink down into the engraved lines.



WIPING THE PLATE WITH TARLATAN

The printer wipes the surface clean, taking care to leave the ink in the incised lines.



POSITIONING THE PLATE ON THE PRESS

The inked plate is placed image-side up on the press.



THE PLATE

placed image side up.



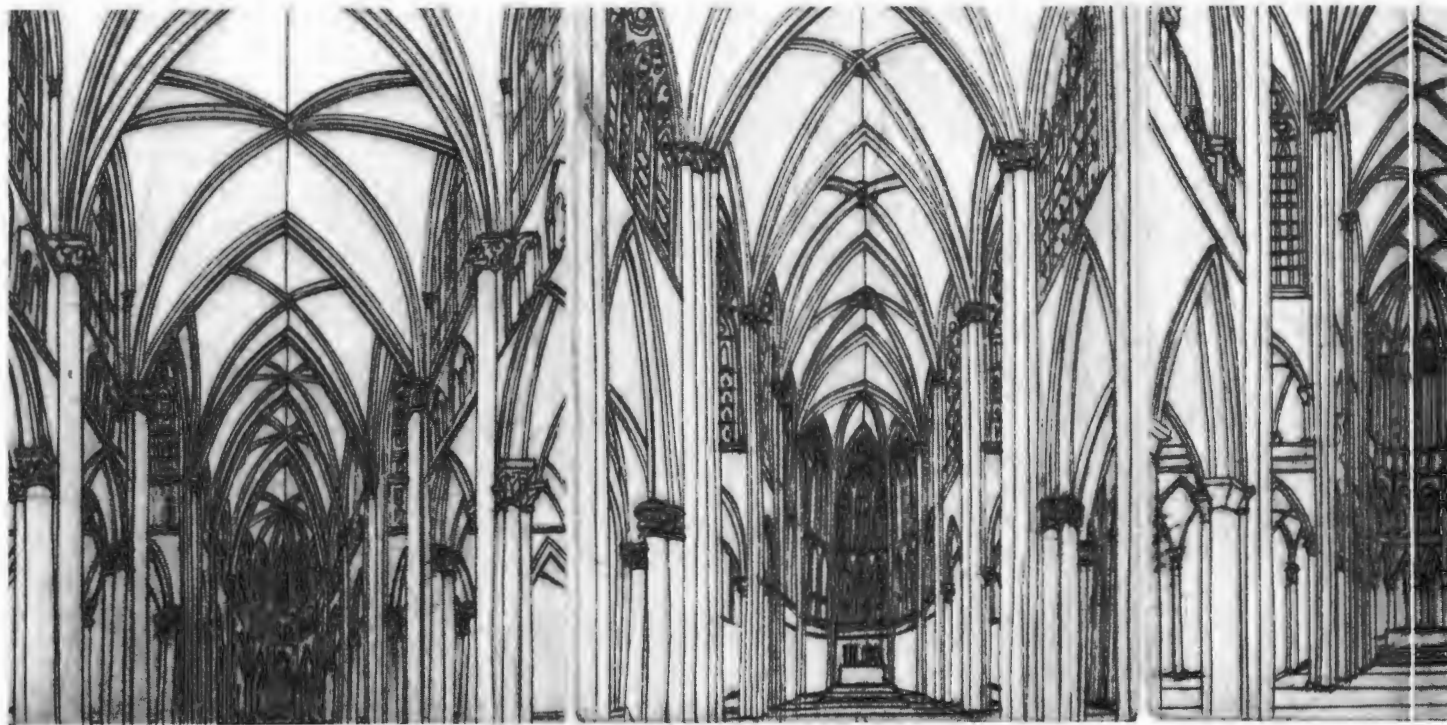
POSITIONING DAMP PAPER OVER THE INKED PLATE

Felts placed over the damp paper cushion the immense pressure exerted by the press rollers.



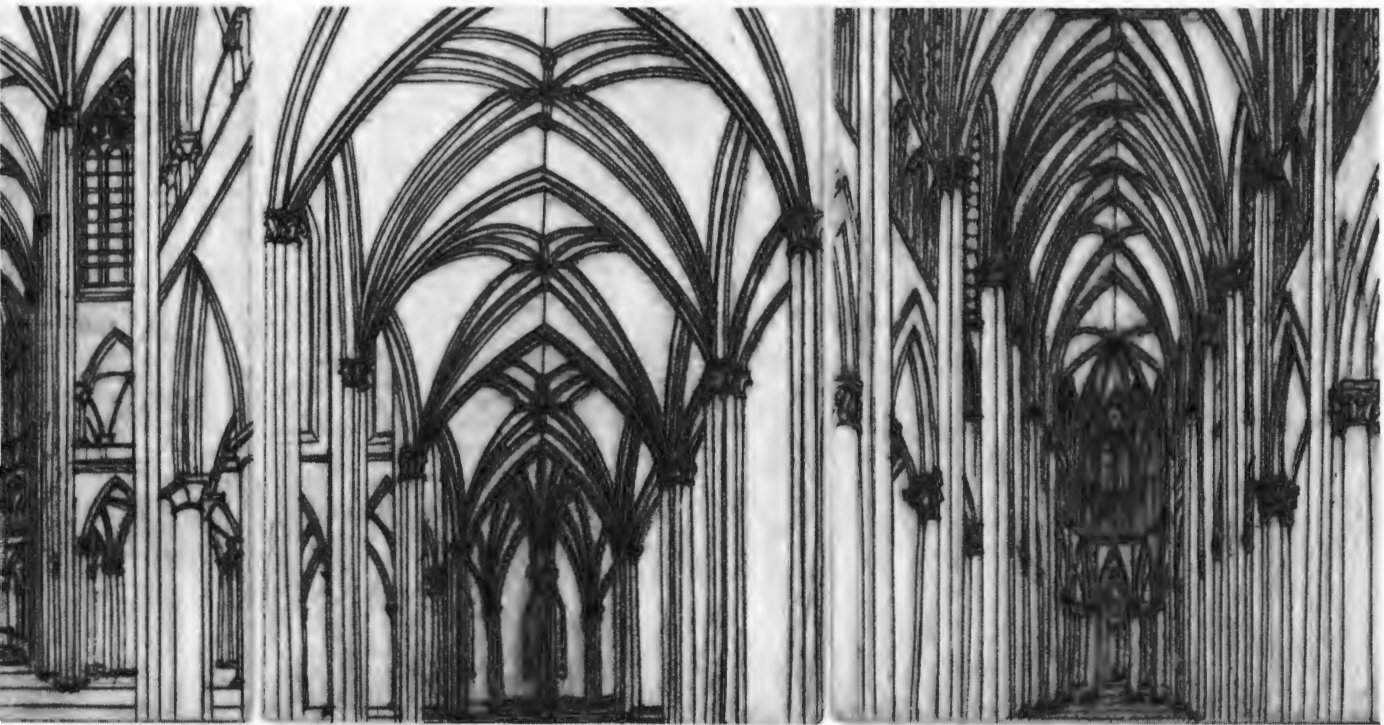
EXAMINING THE PRINT AFTER RUNNING IT THROUGH THE PRESS

The image is embossed onto the printing paper.



particularly in terms of perspective and light. She experimented with different burin techniques to create a sense of tonality in her work. The beautiful curling lines and highly detailed ornamentation, prevalent in her work in the past, gave way to bold, rich prints constructed entirely of engraved parallel lines. The spacing and weight of the lines contributed to the building of tone in her prints. One engraving, *Bradway Place and Pleasant Street Houses* (1982), is printed in three colors, another new direction of Amy's work.

She did not give up entirely on her earlier themes or techniques but began to explore images that represented a more serious interpretation of the architectural spaces that are so compelling to her. *Aida in Des Moines* (1984), commissioned by the Des Moines Metro Opera, gives the viewer a look into many of the influences on Amy's work at the time: the curling ornamentation, the bold parallel lines, the fanciful creatures, Amy's deep appreciation for art history, her sense of humor and her ability to adapt to her surroundings. In *Aida* Amy transforms the monotonous landscape of a downtown street in Des Moines into a grand Egyptian temple.



Amy also applied her changing style to engravings she made of European churches and cathedrals, a passion of hers. *Five Gothic Churches (1984)* is the result of a trip to France in 1983 where she filled two notebooks with sketches to prepare for the piece. In recent years, Amy has spent countless hours making hundreds of drawings of church interiors in Italy, Germany, France and England. In 1996, Amy had a show in Venice called "Sacred Places" that featured 15 engravings of church interiors.

In the mid-1980s, Tom Worthen's family home in Little Rock, Arkansas, was destroyed by fire. Amy's mother-in-law was left with nothing. "It was a tremendous loss for me, even though it was not the home I grew up in," Amy says. She had spent many hours drawing there in the past, and her mother-in-law was completely supportive of Amy's desire to record the destruction in a series of prints. "The wreckage was so horrible," says Amy, "yet it was really beautiful to me, too." The house was left for many months in its rubble state for insurance purposes, and Amy spent the better part of that year making the visual records of

the event among the remains and the odor of the charred house. In terms of artistic development, Amy was ready to deal with this. "It wasn't invented disaster," she says, "this was our life."

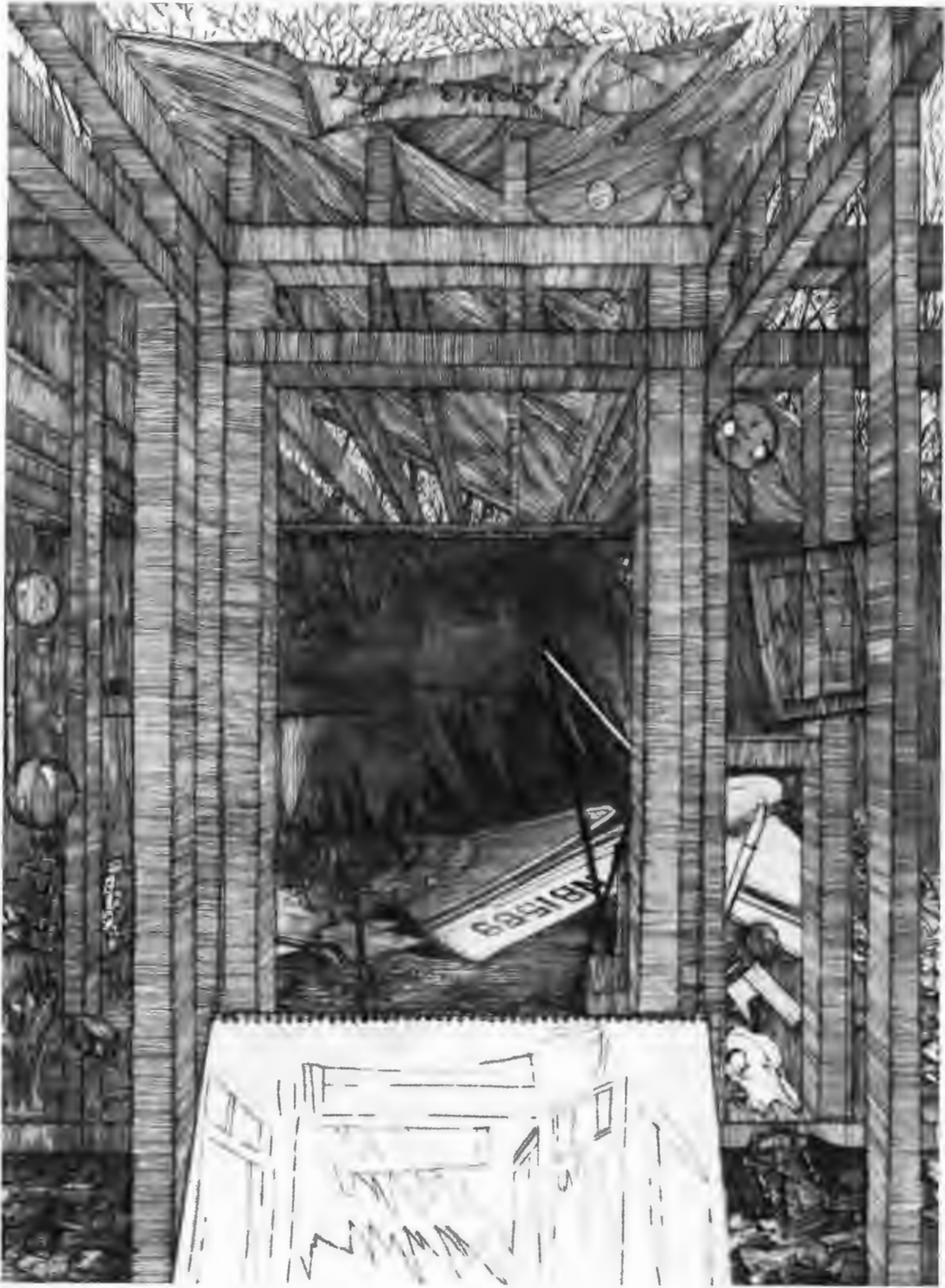
The fire prints were also a time for Amy to use different techniques with the burin. In the ruins Amy saw a blurriness, and to describe this in the engravings she cross-hatched lines several times over and left the rough end that is usually scraped away after the burin has cut a line. Amy did not want a crisp, clean line but rather one that would hold additional black ink, and these techniques provided her with an image that translated the deep blackness of the remains of the fire. To date, this series was Amy's most personal and important work, and for every engraving of the fire there are more than 50 sketchbook drawings.

Amy's large collection of sketchbooks contain pen and ink, graphite, charcoal and watercolor drawings that are artworks in themselves. With an idea for a print in mind, Amy will spend several hours on location making detailed renderings in a sketchbook that has been custom made for her by a paper-maker/book-binder friend in Italy. Amy never works from photographs. "I have to have seen it and understood it through drawing," she says. Her sketchbooks fill a bookcase against a wall, and a storage room off the studio contains large portfolios bulging with loose drawings dating back to her childhood. Much of her work is only in the sketchbooks and very little of it will be made into engravings. Of the drawings that do become engravings, Amy says that they serve as a basis of information and that typically the final print will contain many alterations.

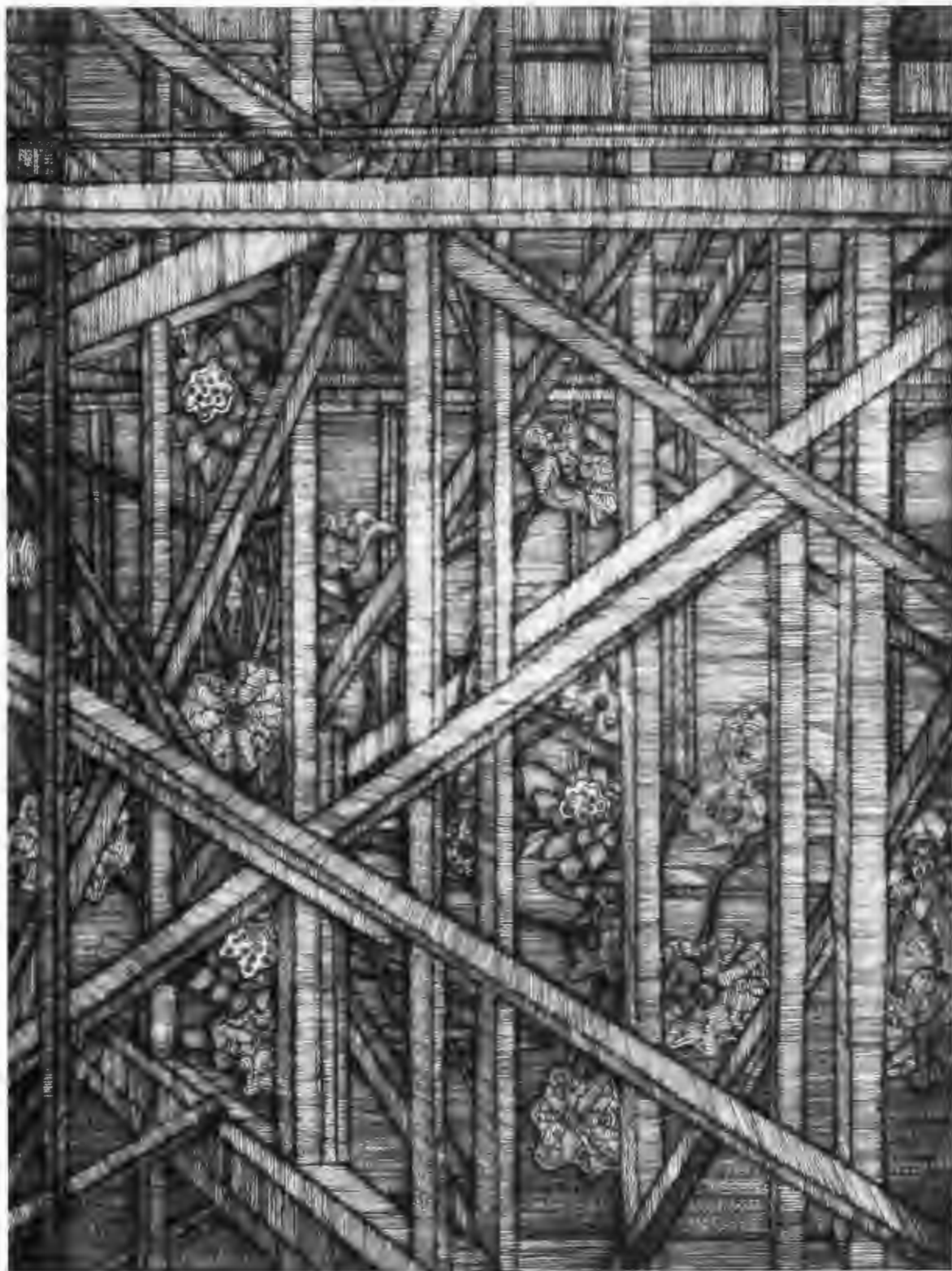
In the winter of 1985 Amy and her family were again confronted by tragedy. During an ice storm a small plane carrying seven female student athletes home to Iowa State University plunged into Amy's neighborhood 300 feet from her home. While preparing dinner Amy saw something whiz by the window and then heard a terrible noise followed by silence. The plane sheared through electrical wires and the neighborhood fell into darkness. Tom ran out to help as Amy called 911 but there was no chance to save the occupants. The plane was engulfed in flames. The "incredible trauma" of the crash left Amy unable to look at fire or bear the sound



Detail of sketchbook drawing, 5 Dec 1997
Basilica of San Marco, Venice
sepia ink, 8.4" x 7"



House of Emblems, 1988
engraving, mezzotint, roulette, 24" x 18"



Endless Structure, 1991
engraving, mezzotint, 24" x 18"

WORTHEN



Vanitas, 1987
engraving, 14.5" x 11.75"

of aircraft overhead. After many months, Amy decided that the only way she could get beyond this tragedy was the same way she got beyond the house fire: through her art.

Amy made several drawings of the plane crash but nothing seemed to work until she went back to a house fire drawing and decided to combine the two images. The resulting print, *House of Emblems* (1989), is what one reviewer of Amy's work describes as her response to "...the fragility and transience of human life — wilted flowers, skull, mirror, and soap bubbles — imagery borrowed from sixteenth and seventeenth century 'vanitas' or 'memento mori' subjects, meditations on death" (Reed 1990). She had also dealt with that sort of imagery in a previous work, *Vanitas*, 1987.

Earlier, in 1984, Amy visited Japan as a guest artist. While there, she was inspired by the Buddhist temples in the same way she had been by the European cathedrals. Drawing the temples in Japan became as important to her as drawing churches. She became interested in the form of the lotus flower, a sacred symbol to Buddhists. During the same period, work began on a backyard porch for her home in Des Moines. It was a complicated process involving two years of design and construction. Amy continued to fill notebooks with drawings of the lotus, and to these she added drawings of the structure of the porch with its exposed beams and strong diagonal lines.

In the fall of 1990, the images of the lotus and the unfinished porch structure began to merge. While Amy drew she listened to the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas hearings on the radio. Her mind turned to thoughts of male power and the oppression of women. She saw the lotus as the female form and the porch structure as a male symbol of confinement. She made several drawings of "jail-like forms" and the "struggle to escape the structure." *Endless Structure* (1991) is one of a series of three prints that depicts the lotus eventually taking on a life of its own inside the structure and in doing so altering the shape of the structure. The experience had provided a voice for Amy's interest in feminist politics.

In 1988, Amy met Matilde Dolcetti, the director of the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica, Venice, Italy, while Ms. Dolcetti was visiting a friend in Des Moines. They began a friendship

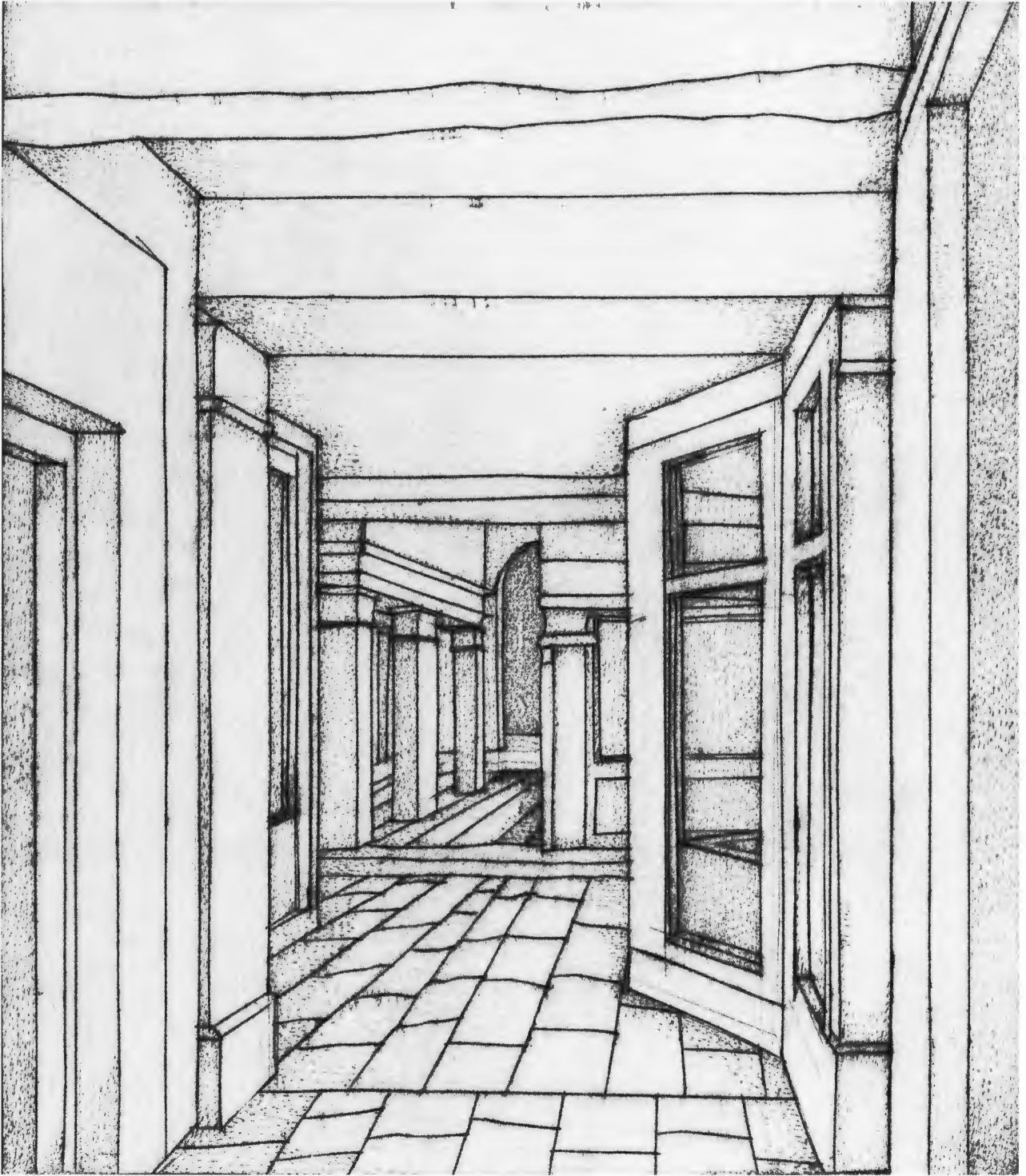
that continues to this day. In 1989 the two artists created a cooperative venture that brought the works of Venetian engravers to Iowa and sent the works of Iowan engravers to Venice. Since then Amy has traveled each year to Venice to teach a series of classes at the Scuola Internazionale di Grafica.

One of Amy's recent works is her collection of engravings in book form titled *Sotoporteghi Veneziani*, which means "Venetian Passageways." In her book, Amy depicts 12 passageways of



Venice that she says are more familiar to Venitians than to tourists. The impetus for this project stems from Amy's experiences in the art culture of Venice and her interest in collecting prints and artists' books. Venice is known for its master book-makers and, in particular, those who make artists' books. Historically speaking, prints were always presented in a portfolio rather than stuffed into frames,

pressed behind glass and hung on a wall, as they are most often displayed today. According to Amy, Americans are used to a certain amount of distance from their works of art, "...the idea that [artwork] is just decoration rather than something that you can look at very intimately." She decided to create that sort of intimacy with the original prints by presenting them in a form that allows the viewer to sit down and enjoy the artwork in a very private way. "There is an aspect that appeals to me that it doesn't have to have great decorative power, it can be something that is a very private experience." Amy had 15 books made, all with original prints.



Sotoportego de la Bissa, 1994
engraving, 7" x 8"
from Sotoporteghi Veneziani

The Des Moines Art Center and Grinnell College own copies of *Sotoporteghi Veneziani*. She plans a similar project portraying scenes of Iowa.

We finish the interview sitting out on the back deck of her home. Amy talks about the issues that interest her now including her contemplation of the artist at mid-life, her current stage in life. She is an artist of great dedication and intelligence, and her ability to draw upon her vast store of knowledge of art history is a gift that builds on the strength of her natural artistic talent. Her intimate understanding of her "teachers," the master engravers of the 15th and 16th centuries, has enabled her to carefully, with great skill and precision, secure her place in the continuing story that is the history of engraving.

As we sit in the warm air, I imagine myself as a visitor to a large public library, going to the special collections and asking the librarian to see a copy of *Sotoporteghi Veneziani*. I carry the book to a table, pull it from its protective sleeve and open the cover. I have never been to Venice, but now I am looking at beautiful engravings of the passageways of this city, each an original print. Amy Worthen is part of the chain of engravers and is sharing her connection with me. This, I believe, is the intent of her work and is a gift to us all.

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*Temple of Theives (San Marco), 1996
engraving, 8.5" x 14.5"*



LARASSA KABEL

PHOTOGRAPH OF MY FATHER

24

In a white T
black leather belt
lean and soft in worn blues
thick brown waves touch his shoulders.

He is standing
on the cement slab patio
before a white box of a house
nestled in green and buttercups
not far from the Sound.

He is leaning
arms folded, ankles crossed
against dusty paneling
at dusk
on his face
a half-cocked smile
A solitary curl
reaches for the evening sky.

For him
the war was mostly
typing and cigarettes and bullshit
and he is still young
His friends are still occasionally
more fun but never
as sweet
as his wife
He is only half-ready
to leave Ginsberg behind
and I am three years old.

He is a fading idealist
smart and profoundly sentimental.
It is 1973.

43



GARY TRAPP

I saw some friends this weekend, a year since we'd last met.
 No occasion this time; just us.
 We ate and drank and talked and laughed and teased and argued and gamed and diced
 and ate and drank some more.
 We hiked snowy woods and romped with the dogs.
 Brad lectured on kettle drums and glacial melt.
 Bryan pontificated on the virtue of humility —
 "Never be too proud to wear mittens."
 David won the impromptu hat contest with the foot-high yellow smiley face atop his head.
 And Shannon saw a bluejay for the first time.
 Penny wasn't impressed with The Lost 40, the 300-year-old pines saved from the
 loggers by a mapping mistake years ago —
 "It was just a bunch of trees."
 And Ling Hui insisted on photos before snowballs.
 When Tom said he didn't like giving backrubs, Kari became quiet.
 Cheryl and Elliot cooked.
 Paul fed the dogs lasagna when (almost) no one was looking.
 And Sue washed dishes.
 The invitation said children were welcome, but none came, and nobody minded.
 The other Sue, my Sue, my original thread to this web of strangers, couldn't come.
 My friends looked at my uncoupled personage with something less than pity.
 And I looked at my friends and noticed, for the first time, lines that didn't quite disappear
 after they smiled.
 At breakfast my friends and I ate wedding cake from the last gathering.
 And when we said good-bye, they hugged me harder than I expected.

DREAMERING

I've always loved to clean house in the nude when I could, on the pretext of sparing my house dress. The urge first came on when our children were still little, at that age of reluctantly taking their naps.

My husband always liked it, too, begging me, "Unlatch the door," when he'd come in from the fields. He'd sit long moments, watching me from the rocker. Enjoying the fluid freedom of my nudity while I danced across our wide pine floor, interpreting the scratchy strains of "Beautiful Dreamer," after he bashfully played it on our Victrola that first time.

His music still rouses me, 60 years later, to push away from a sink full of dishes and set myself spinning through dust stars sparkling in the sunshine. Twirling, now in my old age, across that floor with the stuttered spin of a fallen leaf in Autumn. Still longing for the massive arms that swept me up suddenly long ago, and the tender green eyes, often filled with unspoken emotion.

Our house has always been a country home, surrounded now, by houses built along tree-lined streets laid across our fields in the 50's. Bringing to our ground the threat of prying voyeur's eyes staring with disgust at the withered breasts of an old woman who dips and spins. And flounces like a scarf loose on the wind.

I knew one day I'd have to pack the Victrola away, and give up losing myself to "Beautiful Dreamer," set to the time of his laughter. So at last I did, resolutely playing it, just once more.

I swung and I swayed, and I side step sashayed, dreamering my way gracefully to lift the back door latch, anxiously thrilled to be answering a familiar timid knock for my dimpled, handsome-faced boy.

"I see you're at it again," he simply said, while patiently holding my cool fragile hand.

I stood long moments, oblivious that I wore nothing but a drifty impish grin, so intent was I upon swiftly crossing the years; lost, looking into his tender smile, and the expressive green eyes that have passed down, Praise the Lord, to our grandson.



SHANIE LYNN WILSON

*First Place; People
Passages of Iowa Photography Contest*

SEWING LESSONS

I received my first sewing lessons as a young child, watching my mother make curtains, and slip-covers. She'd set up her sewing machine on the dining room table and sew through the day as she cooked and cleaned and attended to other household matters. She'd tell me how her mother, Grandma Sickles, could cut the pattern for a man's suit from newspaper. And how Grandma Sickles made my mother's dresses from flour sacks during the Depression. I heard tales about fabric and meat rationing during World War II and how later, my mother used the shirt-tails of my dad's worn, blue uniform shirts to make ruffled play suits for me.

There were always scraps of fabric and bits of lace I could use for my own creations. My mother threaded a big needle for me and tied a knot in one end of the thread. I'd sit on the floor and sew little bits of this-and-that together while my mother made the sewing machine fly. My thread always tangled and pulled out of the needle's eye and I wanted to tie the two strands of thread together; but my mother said that wasn't the proper way to use a needle and thread. She showed me how to spit on one end of the thread and put it back through the little eye in the needle. By supper time, finished or not, the sewing machine was put away so the family would have a place to eat. Next morning, out came the machine and the project continued.

My first "official" sewing lessons were in seventh grade home economics class. Every girl in seventh grade took one semester of sewing and one semester of cooking. The school

board must have felt this year of cooking and sewing sufficiently prepared girls to become wives and mothers because by the time home economics classes were again offered in high school, students were already in the college track or the “mommy” track. If you were in the college track, you didn’t take home economics classes.

Mrs. Kelso was my sewing teacher in seventh grade. I remember her as a humorless, middle-aged woman with dull brown hair, parted on the side and arranged in little curls around her head. She made her own classically styled clothes. Mrs. Kelso took sewing very seriously, as though it were as important as science or math. Her sewing was not the sewing I learned watching my mother.

My mother worked quickly and improvised, used intuition and logic, rarely reading the pattern instructions. My mother didn’t stay-stitch, grade, trace, or mark. She just spread out fabric on the dining room table, laid out the pattern (if she had one), stuck in a few pins, cut it out and sewed it up. Voila, next day I had a new dress or curtains. My mother whistled and sang and clapped her hands while she worked. We listened to the radio and sang “Sixteen Tons” with Tennessee Ernie Ford. Or she’d put on a record and we listened to “The Gollywog’s Cakewalk” and marched around in circles. Sometimes she played a record of Gypsy violin music that made her cry.

There was no singing in Mrs. Kelso’s class, not even a radio. Our first project was to sew snaps, buttons, and hooks and eyes, by hand, onto little squares of fabric with zig-zagged edges. We attached these using a short needle and long white thread that was carefully knotted on only one end. Each time we pulled the thread through the little hole on the snap or hook, we made a knot in the thread and pushed it down close to the outer edge of the fastener. The knots all had to lie down next to each other in little bumps along each metal edge. If your knots didn’t line up, you had to do the whole thing over again. Mrs. Kelso said the knots would hold the snaps on tightly even if some of the threads pulled loose.

Mrs. Kelso was my sewing teacher in seventh grade. I remember her as a humorless, middle-aged woman with dull brown hair, parted on the side and arranged in little curls around her head.





LYNN WALTERS

Next we made a simple apron of checked gingham. Mine was green and white. We didn't need a pattern. We measured a length of fabric with our tape measure and cut along a row of checks. Mrs. Kelso showed us how to gather the top of the apron with a double row of long stitches. She said it had to be a double row in case one row of stitching broke as we pulled up the gathers. (My mother said if I was careful, the thread wouldn't break and only one row of stitches was necessary.) After we learned how to thread the machine and fill the bobbin, we used the sewing machines to sew the band onto the apron. We wore our aprons the following semester in cooking class. After that, my mother wore my green and white checked apron.

Finally, we began work on our "real" sewing project: a jumper. We all had to use the same A-line, V-neck pattern that Mrs. Kelso picked. It was easy, safe, and dull: no buttons, zippers, or darts. My mother and I picked a plain fabric as we'd been instructed by Mrs. Kelso. It was a tightly woven, gray flannel. I loved the soft feel and gray color.

Before we could cut our jumpers, Mrs. Kelso made us read the entire pattern instruction sheet and tested us on pattern terms. We learned which way was straight-of-grain and where the salvage edges were. We learned to match up pattern pieces using notches and how to lay out a pattern if the fabric had a nap. We learned that cutting lines were solid and sewing lines were dashed.

We spread out our fabric on big tables and pinned the pattern pieces down exactly as the instructions directed. We cut out the pieces carefully along the solid lines, making little triangle bump-outs when we came to a notch. (My mother never bothered with notches.) Then, using dress-maker carbon and tracing wheel, we marked every sewing line on the pattern. I laid the dress-maker carbon carefully between the two layers of my jumper and traced a steady line with my little metal wheel. I pushed hard on the soft, thick fabric, but the carbon marks barely showed up on my jumper pieces. I tried and tried to get a hint of sewing line to show up until the teeth of my tracing wheel cut through the thin paper and

all the seam allowances fell away from my pattern. (How did my mother know where to sew the seams? She didn't have a tracing wheel or dressmaker carbon.)

By the time I was ready to sew my jumper pieces together I never wanted to see it again. I struggled with it, digging crooked seams out of the soft flannel with the sharp little finger of my seam-ripper, and then sewed them back in again. (My mother used scissors to remove missewn seams. She said you could cut holes in the fabric if you used a seam-ripper.) To keep our seams from fraying, we had to cut off the edges using pinking shears that took two hands to close. Mrs. Kelso made us hem our jumpers to below our knees. I imagined I looked like a skinny chicken wearing a Depression-era flour-sack dress. I don't remember my grade. When I brought my jumper home, my mother raised the hem above my knees, adjusted the side seams to fit my body, and bought me a pink crepe blouse with long ties that wrapped into a bow under my chin.

By the end of the semester in Mrs. Kelso's class I didn't want to be a wife or mother. But by the time I was twenty-one, I was both and I didn't have time to use most of Mrs. Kelso's sewing lessons. Instead, my mother's sewing lessons came naturally and I moved quickly through each project, using intuition to sense what was right and logic to figure out reasonable solutions to inevitable problems. I didn't mark, press, or sew on hooks with little knots around the metal loops. I learned to match my effort with the quality of my fabric and the amount of baby spit-up that was likely to get on the little bibs and shirts I made. I sewed in snatches, picking things I could finish between breakfast and supper. And while I sewed, I sang and clapped my hands and played with my son, all at the same time.

HARVEST

The harvest corn stands still and brown,
like rows of emaciated hula girls —
arms drooping at their sides —
worn out by summer's fertile dance.



Heat presses against my skin,
too thick to breathe.
Thunder builds afternoon's expectations
into evening's anxiety.
I look out the window into the dark,
straining to see the ocean.
Instead, your smile reflects on the glass
as you put your arms around me,
and we dance through the night
to the rhythm of the rain.
Tomorrow the sand will burn our feet again
as we run for the waves.



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