

1989

## Expressions 1989

Troy Doolittle

Ann Francis

Susan Woods

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Maura McCarthy

*See next page for additional authors*

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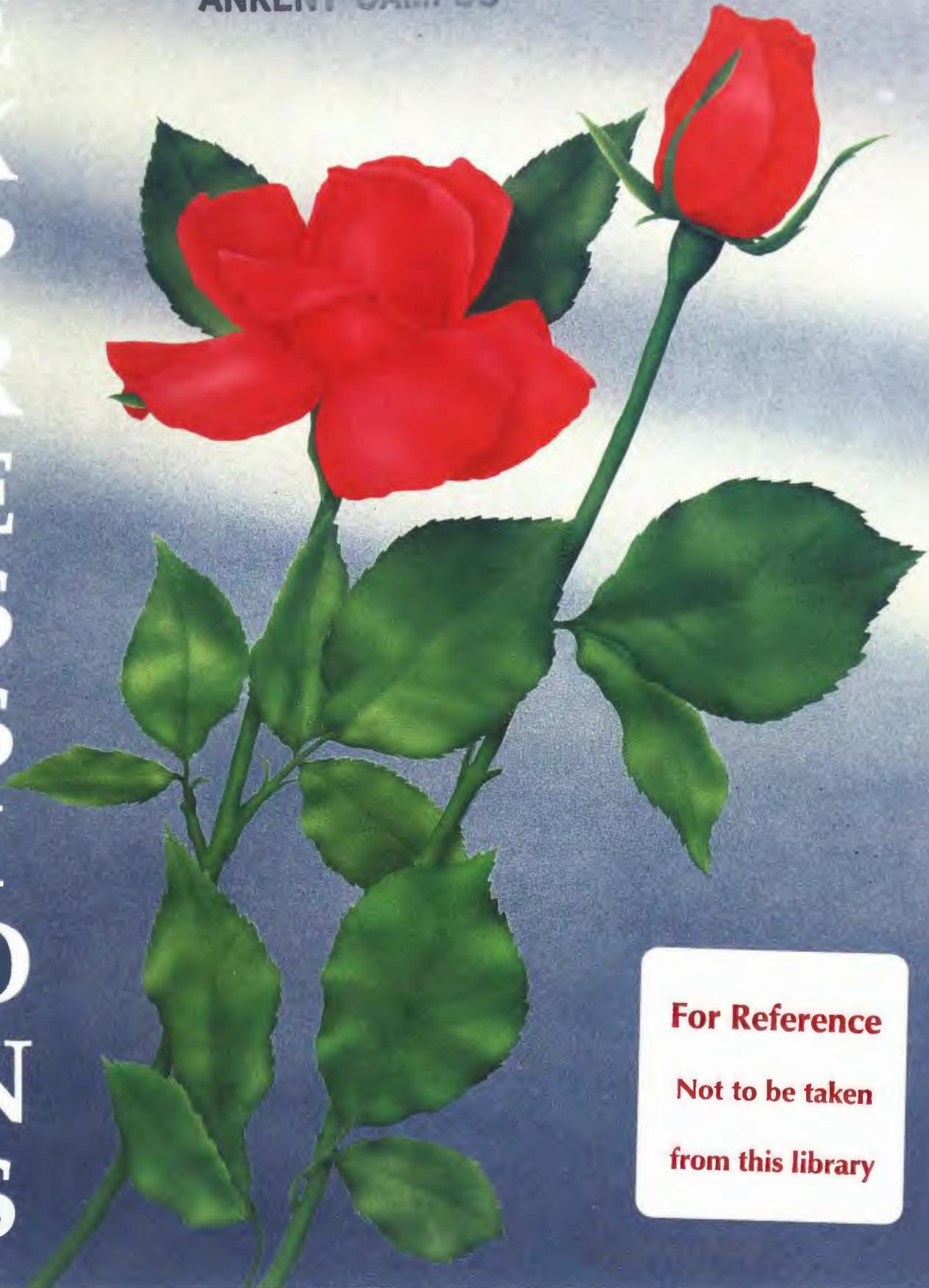
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**XII**

"You do not honor a writer by praise.  
You praise a writer by reading his writing."

Paul Engle

*Expressions XII*  
is dedicated to  
the art and achievements of  
Iowa poet  
Paul Engle.

Cover Artist: Troy Doolittle

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# A LABOR OF LOSS

She had begun to dread Tuesdays. On Monday she could go to the Center and visit with her friends. Wednesday always meant a bridge game. In fact, everyday offered a surprise, if not salvation, except Tuesday. Tuesday was set aside for cleaning his room.

She pulled the bucket of cleaning supplies down from the utility closet shelf and ventured down the hall. Reaching above the door frame, her fingers felt the cold brass key. Fumbling, she unlocked the door.

It was always so quiet on Tuesdays. She had started listening to the radio talk shows shortly after the funeral. At first, it felt almost obscene listening in on other people's lives. After a few months, that feeling had vanished. Now her radio was her companion as was her television. If it hadn't been for the game shows and Miami Vice on Friday night, she wouldn't have lived through this past year.

But Tuesdays were different. Tuesdays were for cleaning his room. The only sound breaking the incessant silence was when she would begin humming "Amazing Grace."

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me!*

*I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see.*

After fluffing the throw pillows on the ever made bed, she began dusting. She was doing much better now. She didn't break down and cry in public anymore. In fact, except for those feelings of nausea she seemed to get every

holiday and those awful headaches, she was feeling pretty good. Yes, she thought, she was doing much better now.

Picking up one of his music trophies on the dresser, gently, reverently, caressing her fingers around it, she began polishing it. She felt the sharp edges of the trophy's stand in her palm. It matched the sharpness of the pain. The pain that hid behind her eyes. She watched the sun as it streamed through the window, glinting off the golden lyre. As she dusted the corners of the trophy, the elusive pain slipped around a corner of her mind, and her thoughts wandered to church.

He had always played the organ so beautifully. The new organist was a pleasant enough girl, but, the fact is, some people are more talented than others. People hereabouts knew where he'd come by his musical abilities.

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and grace my fears relieved*

*How precious did that grace appear the hour I first believed!*

After all, she did have a lovely voice. Why, everyone knew when his daddy started singing it would set the dogs to howling. Then there was the time his daddy took to singing while doing chores. It upset that old cow so much she wouldn't give milk for three days. People knew he took after his mama.

Why is it so quiet around here? Dead quiet! It wasn't that they had talked so much when he was alive, but that if she had wanted to she could

have. If she felt like asking him, "What's the church choir singing this Sunday?", she could just go ask him. Not that she necessarily would have, mind you, but she could have if she wanted to. That's what bothered her now. Now she has a hundred things to ask him and she couldn't.

Well, she thought, next time I'll bring my radio in here. That's just what I'll do. I can set it right there on the nightstand.

*Thro' many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come;*

*'Tis grace hath bro't me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.*

Finishing with the dusting, she turned to his closet. She always checked the closet. Bending down to arrange his shoes, as if someone had been there to bother them, the pain jumped out again. It was a blow to her temples and she could hear her blood rushing into the top of her head with every heart beat. It always surprised her, for when it was hiding, it seemed so small and thin, almost helpless. But she knew it was a deceit because it could overpower her in an instant if she wasn't careful.

Slowly, she gained power over it, composing herself. As she stood, she took in a deep breath, filling her nostrils with the smell of his tweed jacket. She didn't actually put her nose right into his jacket. That wouldn't have been right. People would have thought she was crazy if they saw her doing that. After all, she wasn't crazy.

Folks thought he was crazy.



Illustration: Ann Francis  
Acrylic

That's what they think when someone kills themselves. She knew that. She had heard people whispering at the post office and the grocery store. Suddenly they would notice her, and an embarrassed hush would crowd the room. Her life was filled with quiet now. Except for her humming, the radio talk shows, and, of course, the small dark presence in her head that would fill her if she wasn't cautious... Well, it didn't matter what folks thought or knew. She knew

she wasn't crazy, and that was good enough for her.

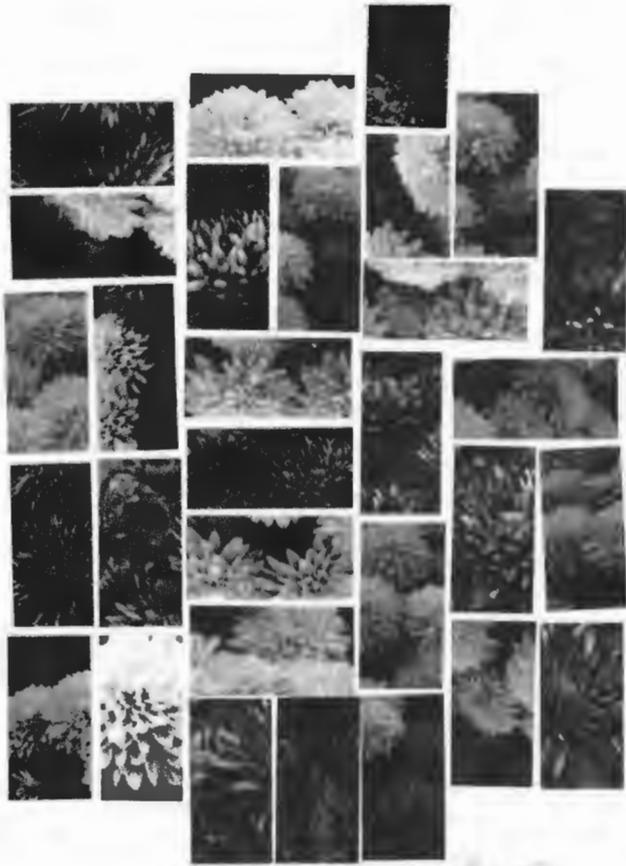
*When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,*

*We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun.*

Taking one last look around the room, she picked up her bucket and closed the door, locking it behind her.

Putting away her cleaning supplies, she decided that if these awful headaches didn't let up pretty soon, she was going to visit the doctor.

by Susan Woods



# Playing in the Garden

By Kathy Eastman

My child, my son  
lovely and free  
as the flowers that sway  
in the breeze  
in the sun

bold as a crocus popping through the snow  
sturdy as zinnias, marching in a row  
lush and pink as a peony  
airy and transparent as queen anne's lace  
precious as a mari-gold  
he's a dilly dahlia  
his tu-lips bubbling  
with the laughter of our shared jokes  
yet full of impatiens  
a brown-eyed susan  
daisy fresh

fragile as a rosebud  
temporary as the first buds of spring,  
for the bittersweet seasons pass  
and time will not be held hosta-ge.

Photos by Maura McCarthy  
Mindy Myers and Terri Kent



## *Flight of a Comet*

My mother always said that if a woman married a nice man, her life would be perfect; if not, life would be hard until the day she died. I did not quite understand. I just knew that I could not control my fate. Wasn't that what all Chinese agreed?

My father died when I was three, and my mother left me when I was barely six. I was engaged to a young man when I was twelve, but he died a year later. Since then, the villagers called me a "comet" - a girl who sweeps away all kinds of good luck. I could not blame them because what had happened was true, even my only brother blamed me.

When I was sixteen, my brother arranged for me to marry a man as his concubine - a second wife. He told me that he did not want me to come back to our village after I was married. Everyone wanted to sweep the "comet" out. I felt sorry I had not brought our village good luck. I was happy that

some nice man did not mind marrying a girl who might bring the family bad luck, but I did worry that his family would come to an end because of me.

On the wedding day, a sedan-chair was sent to get me. I had to say farewell to my village. Although people there did not like me that much, I would still miss them and the place where I was born. I just hoped that my leaving would end their bad luck.

Instead of formal red, I wore a black wedding dress because the villagers believed such humility would bring good luck to my husband's family. I listened to the villagers because they were older and had more experience than I.

In the next village the sedan-chair stopped at the back door of a big house with a very fancy door. It was decorated with a wood carved dragon and phoenix, and a stone carved banner with red base color and golden for the Chinese character. A woman, about fifty years old, was waiting inside. She told me to step over a small bucket of fire in the doorway to chase away all the bad luck. I was not the original wife of my husband so I could not enter the house through the main door on my wedding day, but at least I had a place to step into and I did not have to worry about the future.

The woman led me into the family room, where she sat down on a huge chair at the far end. There was a rooster on the chair next to hers so I knew that

my husband was not home. I knelt down and a maid brought two cups of tea for me to serve. I realized then that the woman was my husband's original wife.

After the tea, I waited for her to begin her rule over me. The original wife traditionally does this to prevent the concubine from becoming more popular. Instead, she gave me some jewels and told me she was sorry that our husband could not be home before the wedding, but there was nothing she could do about it. She said that she wanted her husband to marry me because she might not be able to live long enough to take care of him, and hopefully, I would continue her duty to be his wife after she died.

She was a great woman to care about him so much. She did not treat me like a concubine, but rather as her daughter or best friend. I was really lucky that she was so nice, and I promised myself that I would do anything for her.

Our husband came home from Shanghai four days after the wedding. He was so fair to us that there was no jealousy between us, and the three of us got along great. Everything was going so well that I thought I was dreaming, but I was not. Good moments do not last long, however, and he had to leave for Shanghai for his business. He was home for only ten days, but those happy memories will remain buried deep in my mind forever.

After he left, we went back to our normal life. She taught me how to read and write better, and

even taught me poetry and literature. I could tell how much she trusted me because she started to let me run the family. She gave me enough power in the family that I did not wish for more.

On a cold, dark night in December, after saying good-night, I went back to my room. I was just about asleep when I heard something moving outside. I did not think there was anything wrong, but all of a sudden someone broke through my window. I wanted to scream, but I could not because my mouth was covered by a cold hand. He forced me to walk to her room. I was not scared for myself, but I was worried that he might hurt her. When she opened the door, I heard a voice call "Mom." I looked back and saw a young man's face.

He told us that he escaped from a prison in the Japanese occupied area. He was put in jail because he was found out to be a Chinese spy. He stayed home for two days, but said that he had to leave because he did not want to cause trouble for the family. We packed some clothes and food for him, and told him to write to us as soon as he was in a safe place. He told me to take care of his mother, then took off in a cold, soundless night with tears on his face.

About a month later, she received a letter saying that her only son had been killed by the Japanese in an attack. We did not want to believe the letter, but we had to. She could not stand the shock. She refused to eat and cried all the time. I felt so bad

that I could not bring her son back to life. I wished I could do something to comfort her, but she became sick and passed away.

I did not understand what the Japanese were doing. Why did they invade China and kill a nice young man? Didn't they know peace was the most valuable thing in the world? Why did bad people live longer than good people? Endless questions in my mind, but questions could not bring back their lives.

My husband came home from Shanghai for her funeral, but the remains of his only son were never found. He was so hurt inside and said that he did not know what he had done that God brought him such a bad memory. He had not done anything wrong. He just married a "comet." It was all my fault.

After the funeral, my husband called a meeting at the village hall. He told the people that I was not a concubine any longer, but his wife. But because he would not look me in the eye, I knew that he would rather this have never happened. I did not mind being a concubine. I did not want to become his wife over the death of her - the woman I respected the most. Why could I not bring good luck to anyone?

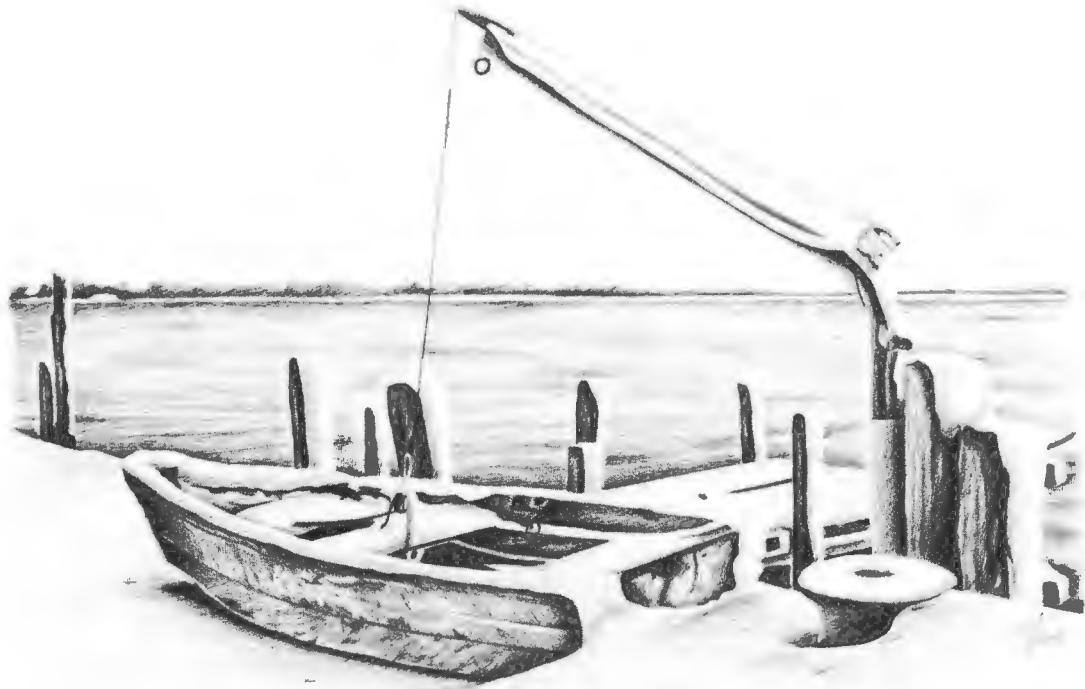
Ten months later we had a son. Another town meeting was called for my husband to announce the birth. His lips spoke words of joy, and his hands called all our people to celebrate. But there was no sparkle in his eyes as he again looked past me; did I imagine it, or were his shoulders stiff and cold as he turned from me?

Our family moved to Shanghai in November\* where he thought we would be safe during war time. But a comet knows there is no safer place than being in love.

*\*The Japanese invaded Shanghai on January 28, 1932.*

**By Enid Phillips**

**Illustration page 8: Angie Hurd  
Tech Pen**



Captured in emerald green - my boat,  
I feared, had gone quite astray.  
The course I had chartered, like far  
reaching horizons, seemed elusive and  
vague.

Peaceful, once calm waters, spew forth,  
churn violently in angry discord,  
not to challenge or deter my dreams,  
they strived only to shatter  
peaceful tranquility.

My warped, minute craft braved these waters -  
Bobbing toward the island, then turning its shy face away -  
it allowed me time to escape unscathed...  
to an abyss  
and freedom from thought.

There's a mournful contentment that penetrates problems,  
it smooths a wrinkled brow and induces lazy, wise smiles.

# Untitled

by Mimi Senn

Illustration: Carl Norman  
Ball point pen



# Ghost at Curly's

by Cindy Cole

endless customers lined up for  
greasy tenderloins soaking in hard buns  
them little plastic dishes of generic coleslaw  
my bare feet thudding, bloated  
my boss Curly giving me mean looks through the smoke  
i saw him out the glass for an instant a ghost  
he watched, waited, the old blue mercury  
i slowly moved toward the door heart racing  
i took off the greasy apron  
wanting to run  
the november wind wasn't so deadly  
as i opened the car door  
he wore an old baseball cap and tattered green cardigan  
bony knees in polyester  
an endless vine of wrinkle covered his face and jowls  
lower lip drooping, unlit Lucky hanging out of oily black  
my right hand trembled on the door handle  
he took the other and pressed the envelope inside it  
feeling my calloused edges trying to clench  
those pleading old eyes ruined the familiar hate  
of twenty years  
i whispered i love you daddy as he pulled away

Photograph: Kent Robinson



**Illustration: Jim Barcus**  
**Mixed media**

# BOMB SHELTER

I grew up in the 50's. The time that gave us the 'children of the age.' You know who I mean. We all watched the Cleaver's and the Anderson's spotless homes. Dad would come home, briefcase in hand, to the house that 'Mom built,' in dress pearls and pumps. The kitchen was stocked with fresh baked cookies, and not a dirty dish in sight.

We believed that families were loving, responsible, and protective and above all - fair. We were taught that if the 'bomb' were dropped we could go to the basement, bend over and place our arms over our heads to be safe. Our schools taught us 'reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic.

Like the cookies in June Cleaver's kitchen, we were stamped out from the same mold, little gingerbread people. If one didn't turn out quite right, or have the right texture, it was pushed aside, while the perfect little cookies were iced and decorated and put on display. Girls were made soft and lacy pink, boys were made hard and denim blue.

Successful boys went to college where successful girls met and married them. They all went out and bought three things: a house in the suburbs, a briefcase and pearls.

I was married in December of 1966 and worked the next four years to put my husband through school. Instead of feeling like June and Ward, it seemed we were more like Wally and the Beav; roommates, each going our separate ways. We had our own friends, our own activities, our own lives. My husband did eventually graduate, though. Our daughter was born, and then our son. Finally, we had it all -- a three bedroom ranch, 2.5 children, two dogs and a station wagon. Just the way it was supposed to be!

I watched. I watched my kids grow... the dogs grow... my husband grow... the grass grow... I babysat for half a dozen small children and would occasionally call time to hear an adult voice. Cookie Monster and I learned to count to ten in Spanish. I could

recite Dr. Suess on command, and I began to wear Mr. Rogers' catatonic smile. The only thing wrong was that I never seemed to find the time to bake those damned cookies.

One night in April, after school conferences, I tucked in the kids and settled on the couch in my burgundy robe to watch "Hart to Hart." Ben came into the den, sat in his big chair across the room and said, "I filed for Divorce today. You can either go to my lawyer's office and sign the papers or I can have them delivered to you. It's your choice."

Wait a minute! What kind of choice was that? Well, the bomb had finally dropped. I had followed all the rules. I was a member of the PTA. I knew which wax yellowed the vinyl and which diaper chafed the baby's butt. I hadn't gained 500 pounds and I always wore clean underwear. I was someone's wife... someone's mom... someone's babysitter... and no one at all...

by Linda Anderson

# LIBRARY ZONE TIME

From the very first moment, I knew that this was a special place. Once beyond that heavy oaken door a kid growing up in a sleepy, little farm town could escape to adventure, mystery, and romance. Here were secrets begging to be shared, knowledge ready to dazzle, and ideas to challenge and inspire.

Order was in everything, from the large square-cut stones stacked two stories high, bordered with sparkling white trim, to the black, bold letters above the door--Alden Carnegie Library. Inside, from the shelves neatly lined with books to the card catalog where alphabet was king, this large, airy room had a pervasive sense of order. Here was respect for method, a feeling of discipline.

The people of Alden, Iowa never really understood why they became the recipients of an Andrew Carnegie Library Foundation Grant. No one in Alden ever remembered meeting Mr. Carnegie personally, or even knowing mutual friends. Nevertheless, the endowment of \$9,000 in 1913 provided Aldenites with the boast of being the smallest town (pop. 953) to receive a Carnegie library. Having ended his own formal education at twelve, Andrew Carnegie felt nothing was of more value to children than a library and a community willing to support it. He and I were in complete agreement.

The building was really more than a library. The library proper occupied the entire second story, but the

lower level was used for numerous civic purposes. Because of remodeling being done at the school at that time, first grade classes used its lower level for several years. Dick, Jane, and Spot paraded through that winter as we learned the gentle art of reading. I still remember the cold, that pre-insulation winter of 1952, as the wind whistled through while we followed Dick and Jane's exploits. Magically, upstairs was never cold.

Outside, in the back, was a playground area--an enormous swing set faced the meandering Iowa River, which at that point in its course was little more than a glorified stream. In the heat of summer--before air conditioning--when heat waves danced and eddied above the pavement, it was an oasis. Under an umbrella of oak and elm trees, I'd pump that swing as high as it would go. With a pinch of imagination, I'd be flying over some far-away ocean. They don't make swing sets tall enough to peek into second story windows from the slide platform anymore. Too dangerous, I suppose. I still remember those delicious chills as I defied death, stretching to peek in that window. The breeze was always a little fresher there, the time a little slower to pass--library zone time.

But of it all, Mrs. Nellie Robertson was the best part of Mr. Carnegie's gift. An elderly widow, Mrs. Robertson was commander-in-chief. Her diminutive figure, in dark dresses and white crocheted collars under a magnificent thatch of white hair, belied the iron hand behind her

organizational talents. Formally trained? I don't know. She surely understood the Dewey Decimal System, how to organize, how to mend books, and how to assess fines for rule infractions. I always worried about rain or dirt or smudges on her books, and I paid a few fines. She had unerring eyesight. A good story might get a rate reduction, but "grace period" wasn't part of her vocabulary, and mostly she collected nickles in an old cigar box.

Mrs. Robertson allowed me into her workshop, a tiny alcove off the main room, while she mended books. She had a way with those old, tattered books. Her gnarled fingers knew just how to soothe and bend and coax those pieces back into wholeness again. We spent hours talking there. She must have read incessantly. She knew everything.

I met Jo, Meg, Amy, Beth, Sherlock Holmes, the Joads, Hester Prynne and hundreds of others there and loved them all. On a hot summer day in 1959, I asked for a copy of the D.H. Lawrence sizzler, Lady Chatterley's Lover. Barely flinching, Mrs. Robertson retrieved the book from the window seat in her alcove where it had been buried under other "selected" reading materials. I never officially checked that book out, and nothing was said when I placed it in her hands several days later. She would never have dreamed of censorship, not even in Alden in 1959 with a book which had been banned since its printing. She believed every idea had merit, nothing could be denied.

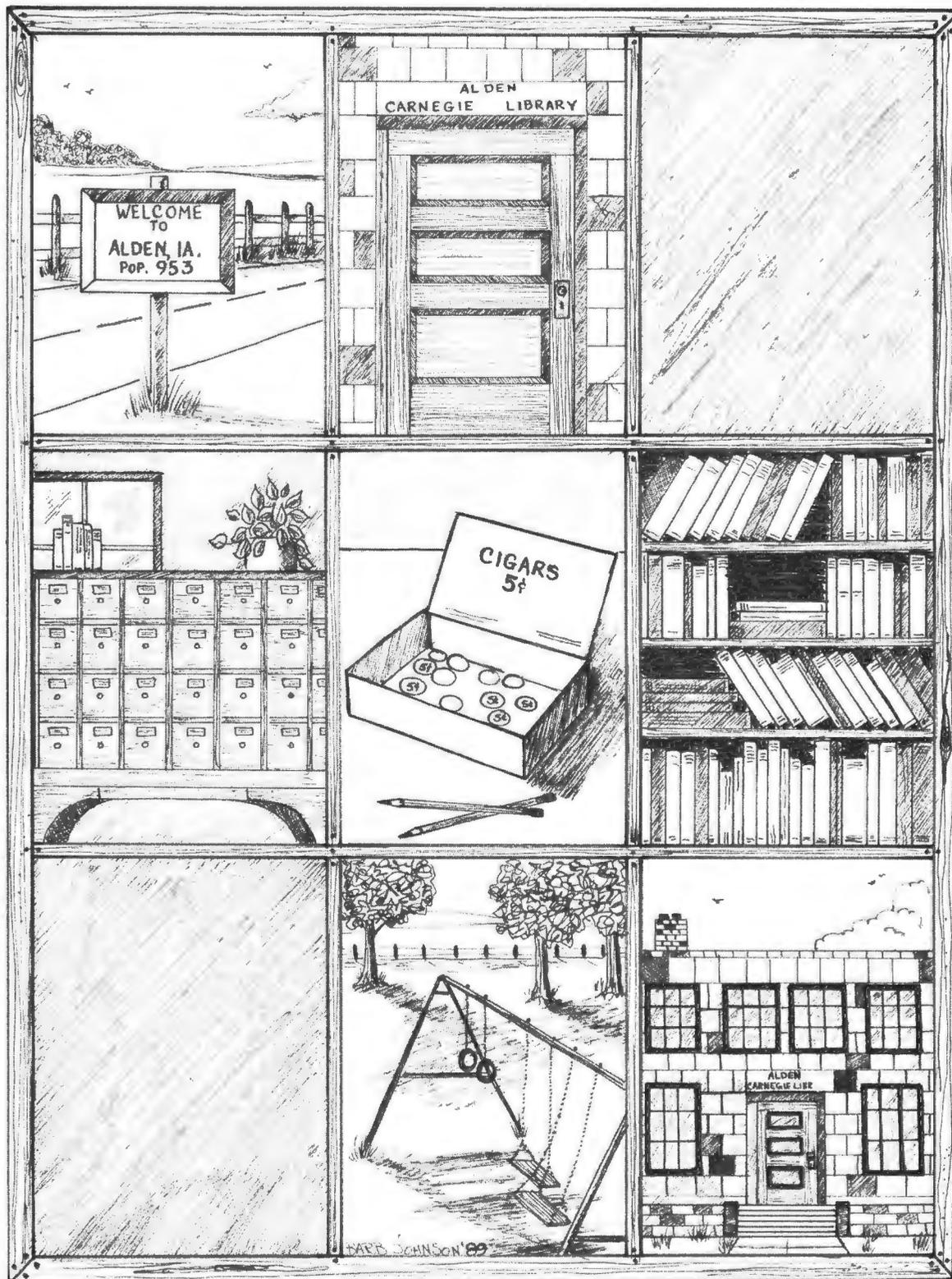
I went back to Alden last summer as a balm for my troubled, tired soul. The swing set was gone, so were the elm trees, probably victims of Dutch elm disease. The oaks still keep it shady and cool. The

temptation to dangle my feet in that cool river water was overwhelming. Mrs. Robertson is gone now, too. Mr. Carnegie's building seems smaller now, but everything is in order, aging well. Children still push open that

oak door to get to the dreams neatly stored on the shelves inside. It was peaceful there, still operating on library zone time.

By Leslie Rivas

Illustration: Barb Johnson  
Ink



# A CHRISTMAS MEMORY



Illustrations: Above, Jinea Jensen  
Cross-hatch  
Right, Karen Von Muenster  
Stipple-dot

His name was Salvatore, named for the Savior, and around him swirl memories of many Christmases. He was born on Christmas eve in a village in southern Italy; he was my grandfather and I was his first grandchild to be born in the new world.

Nonno was a railroad fireman who stoked the engines of the Rock Island. He was a large man, his hands fit for shoveling coal. His moustache bushed out over a wide smile and there was a twinkle in his brown eyes. Often he would have a small red carnation behind his ear, flowers that grandmother grew in windowpots. Whereas Nanna would buy us woolen socks, Nonno would supply the candy. Whatever the difficulty of the time, Christmas was always a celebration, his special time.

Preparations would begin early each Christmas eve; the smells of frying fish, simmering greens, pasta sauce and honey-coated cookies fill our senses. In the evening, family and friends would gather in the stuccoed house to await grand-

father's homecoming, when he would take his place at the head of the laden table. His railroad gang worked until dark and he often arrived home from the roundhouse, his moustache flaked with snow and his nose frostbitten from walking the tracks. As we helped pull off his boots, he would tell us, in his special dialect, that in the darkened sky he had seen Santa Claus and reindeer and yes, they were indeed coming.

After midnight Mass everyone would return to celebrate Salvatore's birthday. There would be a large white cake with red roses and silver sprinkles, and toasting to "a hundred years." In those quiet nights, namesakes touched.

On the day after Christmas, 1954, my grandfather, sitting in his chair near the tree with children playing around him, closed his eyes, folded his large hands and peacefully bound all the Christmases past to the safe-keeping of our memories.

by Nancy Chido Harrison



Kenneth Mackintosh



Illustration: Ann Francis  
Mixed Media

## *Adieu*

by Mimi Senn

The sky, dark and ominous  
cool wind blows  
clouds begin to part  
Moonlight slithers down below  
a raven flies from night  
devils spit upon the globe  
dew drops fall like rain  
Dawn approaches upon hushed heels  
as morning's air stands still  
A blazing torch lights up  
the dark blue hues  
as starlit diamonds bid  
adieu

# DIES IRAE

He drove along in silence, the fingers of one hand smoothly guiding his car along the highway. The evening air, cool and refreshing, sucked through the passenger cabin and pulled long wisps of his hair askew.

As the miles piled up, his mind drifted from tangibles to intangibles and back. He slipped a compact disc into his car stereo and reviewed the day. He supposed that he cared about his family and friends, but it was pleasant to be riding in peace, away from them all.

"I love you," his girlfriend had told him when he left. Why couldn't he use the word "love?" Was it because he didn't mean it, or just because it was too common? Of course, people just fit meanings to words instead of words to meanings, anyway, he thought. His left hand summoned a few tangled hairs back into place.

The patterns of sound that had been submerged by his

thoughts rose to the forefront, forming a piece of choral music. Why was he enthralled by music he had heard hundreds of times? The choir, backed by chamber orchestra, attacked the piece with fervor, certainly more fervor than he could summon.

Ahead was a curve.

*"Confutatis maledictis*  
From th'accursed and re-  
jected  
*Flammis acribus addictis*  
Doom'd to fiery flames  
convicted,  
*Voca me cum benedictis—*"  
Call me forth with thine  
elected.

He imagined what would happen if he just held the steering wheel straight. His car would go off the road, for certain. He would reduce thousands of dollars worth of precision-machined plastic and steel to junk, and almost certainly be killed. Who would come to the funeral? His dear brother Joe would show up

late, of course, reeking of the cheap liquor he bought with his government disability check. His wife Louise would be there with her heavily made-up face, the kids in tow. She would force the kids to go up and look at his body (presuming it wasn't too badly mangled), maybe even touch it. Louise would be the type to tell them that his corpse was just sleeping. Her little boy would then run around asking, in his childish and bellowing voice, when the corpse would wake up.

*"Oro supplex et acclinis*  
Lo, I pray, a suppliant  
sighing,  
*Cor contritum quasi cinis*  
Dark remorse my heart up-  
drying,  
*Gere curam mei finis—*"  
Heed me at the hour of  
dying—

He smiled at the thought. A small convenience store passed on his right, one of those "Stop 'n' Rob" places that make life easy for drunk drivers. At the gas



*"Confutatis maledictis  
Flammis acribus addictis*

*Voca me cum benedictis—*

*"Oro supplex  
...inis*

*Cor contritum quasi cinis  
Gere curam mei finis—"*

*"Lacrimosa dies illa*

*Qua resurget ex favilla—"*



pump was a creaky-looking truck with stock racks and a few bales of hay in the back. The whole thing looked like it was squatting slightly and the grill sagged in a grin, quite like the haggard old man leaning under the hood. Likely as not, he was gassing himself up as much as the truck. Meanwhile his wife probably sat at home trying to keep a pork roast from drying out.

*"Lacrimosa dies illa*  
Ah! what weeping on that  
morrow!  
*Qua resurget ex favilla—*"  
when man's ashes from  
shall borrow—

What would that old man think, he wondered, if he read about the car accident? He would probably catch it in the weekly paper over his watery coffee and greasy eggs. It would come just below the grain prices- MAN KILLED IN ONE-CAR TRAGEDY. His wife would mumble, "How terrible," and the old man would go on to the want ads, or worse still, the comics.

*"Judicandus homo reus*  
Judgement guilty shall  
declare him  
*Huic ergo parce, Deus—*"  
in thy mercy, Lord—

A pair of headlights peered around the curve at him. From the height, he guessed that they belonged to a semi-trailer or a grain truck. His tongue swelled as adrenaline surged through him, and he moved to grip the wheel with both hands. The rhythm of his breathing began to crescendo.

His nose became aware of a moldering in the air, and his skin began to take on pallor in the rear-view mirror. He gripped the wheel more tightly.

*"Pie Jesu Domine,*  
Gentle Jesus, Gracious  
Lord  
*dona eis requiem."*  
grant them Thy eternal rest.

The headlights grew brighter, and he became transfixed. His death grip on the wheel tightened until the joints of his hands locked. The semi moved past him as he rounded the curve, sucking at his car in its wake.

He shifted in his seat, looking for a comfortable position. As he fidgeted, he shut off the compact disc player, skipping the denouement of the piece. Taking the Mozart a little too seriously tonight, he thought. "Maybe the radio," he said aloud, his voice strangely thin and squeaky. He smiled tiredly and moved his eyes back to the road.

Ahead he could see another curve.

by Mike Skoglund

Illustration: Ann Francis, Tho Bui  
Mixed Media



## **Paul Engle Showcase**

Photo copy:  
Bruce Bergerud

**P**aul Engle, born in 1908 and raised in Cedar Rapids, credits his Iowa roots with shaping the nature of a man who would come to be known as an International Poet and the "leading importer of Iowa's talent (McCarthy 2)." His fifty year career includes work as a poet, novelist, teacher and prairie philosopher. In 1941, Engle became the director of The University of Iowa's Creative Writing Workshop, a position he would hold for the next twenty-five years.

As an Iowa farm boy, he helped his father train horses, delivered papers for *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, and worked at the East End Pharmacy. Engle's artistic genius appeared at an early age when he shared his first poems with his high school teacher, Elizabeth Cock. She took an interest in his work and served as mentor to a budding poet. Nurtured and supported by many people, Engle would one day reflect that "it's amazing the power that a sympathetic, alert librarian or teacher can have over the young. They can speed up your life by twenty years (Wilbers 86)."

Engle also credits his parents as strong forces in his life. From his mother, whom he describes as brilliant and soft spoken, he inherited his sensitivity and imagination. From his father, who sold and trained horses, he acquired his drive.

This farm boy began his graduate studies at Coe College, pursuing the ministry. However, after claiming 'he heard no call,' he took up geology before finally settling on a career in literature at The University of Iowa. After receiving his B.A. from Coe College in 1931, Engle did post-graduate studies at The University of Iowa, receiving his M.A. in 1932. A book of original poems, *Worn Earth*, was presented as his thesis and won the Yale Series of Younger Poets prize. Engle studied for one year toward his Ph.D. at Columbia University, won a Rhodes Scholarship, and studied at Merton College in Oxford. In Engle's own words, "When I arrived at Oxford, I had horse manure on my shoes from my father's barn. That was my life (McCarthy 4)."

Engle would step onto the American stage of the literary world in 1934. *American Song*, his second collection of poetry was enthusiastically reviewed by J. Donald Adams on the front page of *The New York Times Book Review*. (It was rare for any contemporary poetry to be reviewed on the front page.) The headline proclaiming: Engle's 'American Song' May Prove a Literary Landmark, catapulted a 26 year-old Engle into the public view.

A world traveler, Engle joined the University of Iowa faculty as a lecturer in poetry in 1937, making it his home. He decided to settle down "in this small, agreeable and very adventurous university town." Engle believed that his heritage, his Iowa roots, were important enough to share with other writers. As director of the Creative Writing Workshop, Engle would create a unique teaching exercise. His philosophy was that "if the mind could be honored (in the university)..., why not the imagination?" Theorizing that since a painter, composer or sculptor works under the guidance of a master, then why not a writer (Wilbers 84)?

Under this philosophy, the workshop has had the future of American literature passing through it. Such 'Iowa' authors included: Robert Penn Warren, Robert Lowell, William Stafford, James Dickey, Herbert Gold, Vance Bourjaily, W.D. Snodgrass, Donald Justice, Phillip Levine, Paul Horgan, Karl Shapiro, Josephine Johnson, Mark Strand, and Richard Kim. Other prestigious figures include Flannery O'Connor and Kurt Vonnegut, who taught at the workshop in 1965.

In 1967, Engle and his future wife Nieh Hualing, a Chinese born novelist, co-founded the International Writing Program. Engle currently is consultant to the program, which his wife now directs. The farm boy, who lives just a few miles from where he was born, has made an impact in literature and in the cultural understanding of people that spans the globe. Chief Okogbule Wonodi of Nigeria wrote: "I am personally convinced that you have done more in creating an atmosphere of peace and mutual respect between citizens of different parts of the world than most loud-talking politicians (McCarthy 2)." And yet, it is the reflection in his poetry of his Iowa heritage and sense of rootedness, of belonging to a place, that endears the reader to Engle's works.

by: Susan L. Woods  
Assistant Editor

Sources:

McCarthy, Colman. "The Servant of Literature in The Heart of Iowa."  
*The Washington Post*, 1983

Wilbers, Stephen. *The Iowa Writers Workshop: Origins, Emergence, and Growth*.  
Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1980

# HEARTLAND

Apollo spacecraft one hundred miles high  
sees the thousand mile long Midwest  
as a woman's body lying on the earth:  
her head at cool Itasca to the north,  
her feet in the Gulf of Mexico to the south,  
Ohio and Missouri Rivers her long arms,  
fingers fondling Rockies and Appalachians,  
her neck in Minnesota, her backbone  
named for the long-gone Indian tribes,  
Wisconsin, Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Kentucky, Tennessee,  
Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana,  
head tied to toes by their hard muscle.  
Out of that beautiful body I was born.  
Great grandfather Peter Reinheimer broke  
our piece of Iowa prairie, the first man  
from the world's beginning  
to tear that gold-green grass apart  
(in hollow places it grew tall as a horse),  
yelling at twelve yoked oxen  
bent to a sod-busting plow  
with a ten foot beam of tough oak,  
breaking deep roots out of black dirt  
with a ripping sound like a cry of pain,  
his hands hard as a hickory axe handle.  
Great grandmother gardened, baked, bore kids,  
slopped hogs, picked corn, fed Indians, seldom cried,  
her spirit smooth as a hickory axe handle.  
Immigrant people, out of old Europe,  
left the toy-making Black Forest,  
the Hessian hills of the Rhine,  
hating the military madness of hate,  
wanting peace of the curved plow in the curving field.  
They fled to this new place from the old country  
to spit their past out like a bitter fruit,  
to kick their yesterday in the teeth  
as a barefoot boy will kick a little stone,  
to put hope down in Iowa like a deep root.  
Grandfather rode back from the Civil War  
(Company K, Fifth Iowa Cavalry)  
to hang his sabre on the kitchen wall:  
I'll never touch that damn thing again.  
Grandmother did two things marvelously well:  
One-- a hickory cake, cracking the hard nuts  
with a flared hammer on the same flat iron

she heated over a wood-burning range  
to smooth grandfathers' Sunday shirt;  
two--bearing my mother in her own blunt image.  
One night when I was ten and fever-sick  
scared of the night, scared of my body's heat,  
my mother beat back the darkness from my bed,  
her blue eyes streaming tears,  
her white hands streaming light,  
the callous on her thumb caressing my face.  
I fell asleep in calm and woke in cool.  
Father Tom believed in horses and hard work  
(God was a three letter word meaning work).  
Tough Tom Engle, hands on hips,  
the rough words jumping from his lips,  
toward friends or strangers jutting his jaw,  
staring at horses for any delicate flaw,  
as a jeweler squints with one eye at a gem,  
muttering as his eyes were judging them.  
Hands moving over the twitching horse hide,  
he saw the bone and muscle move inside.  
From such a mother, such a father, I was born,  
in red leaf dazzling autumn, trees on fire,  
in a little Iowa bedroom in our house.  
Mountain to mountain rich fields roll,  
ocean of soil above an ocean of stone,  
limestone beds that were once a seabed,  
full of old fossils, making a sweet dirt.  
Feeding far countries that have never seen it,  
this land rolls onward with the rolling world,  
a place of trust in a time not to be trusted.

*from the future book, ENGLE COUNTRY:Poems*



Illustration: Karen VonMuenster  
Ink

# DOOR

I walk around with a door in my hands.

It opens in all directions.  
Whenever I want to go through,  
I gently open it with my key.  
The key is lovingly notched  
like a liar's tongue.  
It turns without a sound at  
the softest touch.  
Without the key, I would  
have to throw away my  
door.  
In my pocket, the key  
beats like a living heart.

Sometimes I hear growling  
on the other side.  
I never find a dog there.

Sometimes I hear weeping,  
I never find a woman there.

Sometimes I hear rain.  
Nothing is ever wet there.

Sometimes I smell fire.  
Never smoke. Nothing burns there.

Sometimes I even knock on the door  
myself.  
My key caresses the lock.  
I never find myself there.

Sometimes the door is hard to hold,  
wanting to run away,  
haunted by its memory of hinges.

I hear a small sound, and one more  
time  
I put the patient key in the lock.  
The door trembles as it opens:

A boy's shadow grieves on the bare  
ground.  
When I start to close the door,  
its dark hand reaches toward.  
I bang the door on the hand.



I

Lucky the living child born in a land  
Bordered by rivers of enormous flow:  
Missouri talking through its throat of sand,  
Mississippi wide with ice and snow,  
A country confident that day or night,  
Planting, ploughing or at evening rest,  
It has a trust like childhood, free of fright,  
Having such powers to hold it east and west.

Water edged with willow gray or green  
Edges the hours and meadows where she plays.  
Where the black earth and the bright time are piled  
She lived between those rivers as between  
Her birth and death, and is in these bold days  
A water-watched and river-radiant child.

Photographs:  
Ruth Kellogg, left  
Chad Bailey, right





## VIII

A beach of flesh above a beach of sand.  
Tide-steady jaws tearing at food gone gritty  
With shattered, golden granite of the land:  
The sea-desiring people of the city.  
She dives around them like a dolphin leaping  
Over and under the fish-furious waves,  
Past buried bellies and the sunburned sleeping,  
Past papers where the world's old madness raves.

Like something dragged by the delirious tide  
She flings up to us out of breath and streaming  
Glittering water down from neck and side. She says,  
I'm tired, falls off to sleep, her head  
Curled on my arm, smiles from her beach of dreaming  
Narrow along the world's wide sea of dread.

Hallowe'en. She dressed up in a sheet,  
 A paper crown, a tail, a fierce expression,  
 High-button shoes, not fitting, on her feet,  
 A broken mask, her proudest child-possession,  
 A lantern on the handle of a broom,  
 While over the sky of her anticipation,  
 Shining and far away though in that room,  
 Feet, lantern, hands leapt like a constellation.

Outdoors she waved her lantern in wild daring  
 And yelled at a stranger passing in the night,  
 Half to cheer herself and half in play.  
 But scared herself with her own sudden scaring,  
 And ran from what she thought would run away,  
 And found she could not even frighten fright.

## IX

She hears the voice say, Estimates go higher  
 On millions dead from H-bombs.No defense.  
 Then,as the curious wood says,What is fire?  
 She asks,But what is that?And her intense  
 Voice trembles as she adds,A bomb?The thought  
 Shakes her like a dog an old felt hat.  
 She lifts her head in trust and anguish,caught  
 Between her love of us,and fear of *that*.

Under the golden fall-out of the stars,  
 Enduring our knowledge like a dread disease,  
 We wait in silence.Then the whole room jars  
 As she screams,I'll ask *her*,and with a wild  
 Crying hugs her doll,while my arms seize  
 The live,exploding element of child.

## LXXIII

She knows blue heron, water-wading bird,  
 Squirrel planting acorns in the sprouting ground,  
 Rabbit, fugitive, owl-wary, furred,  
 Cricket chirping careful, liquid sound,  
 Green grasshopper eating greener weeds,  
 Tiger kitten with a twitching tail,  
 White teeth of gray mouse eating golden seeds,  
 The terrible, tight moving of a snail.

Let her remain in part an animal  
 Knowing that under her new skin there lies  
 The ancient pulse beat with its rise and fall.  
 Let her voice keep that old blood in her cries,  
 Let the decisions of her days be all  
 Animal simple, which is human wise.

Photograph: Kyle Rohlk

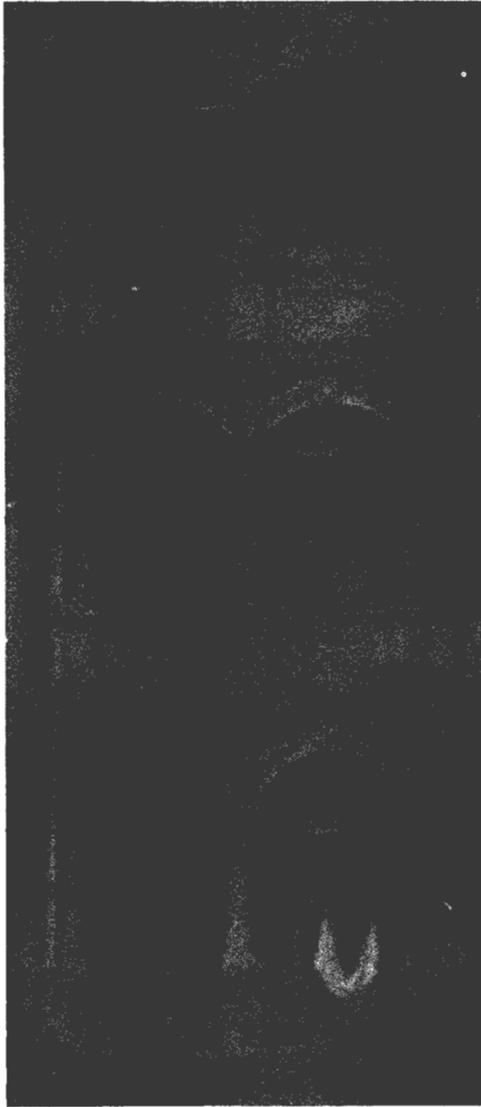


Photo copy:  
Bruce Bergerud

# Shanghai

Today in Lu Xun's house I breathed his breath.  
I hope he is glad to know  
His furious writings are read  
By us in our funny foreign alphabet.

You do not honor a writer by praise.  
You praise a writer by reading his writing.

Did he sleep comfortably in that bed,  
Or was he tormented by dreams of tormented men?  
What was his favorite dish  
Out of that little kitchen?  
Did he have the same subtle taste  
In food that he had in ideas?  
Or did the ideas possess him like demons  
So that he did not know what he was eating?

City where violence fell on the streets  
Naturally as rain on a peasant village.

City of great and shining rivers,  
Red Yangtze massive out of western mountains,  
Huangpu River brown from fields of rice and wheat,  
Bumping together to make one stream  
Broad as an inland sea of two colors.

City whose intensity is intense people,  
Millions on millions on millions  
Filling your myriad streets with a human murmur.

Of a hundred memories, three grab my mind:

City tied by water to the world,  
Boat whistles and bells haunting the Huangpu River.

A little girl in her school for the arts  
In the huge house of huge rooms built by outsiders  
(Better hundreds of bright Chinese children  
Singing, painting, playing *erbu*\*, violins,  
In those big rooms, than one foreign family.)  
She sits, age 8, before the low *Yang Qin*\*\*  
The bamboo hammers in her little hands  
Seem to move with the speed of light.  
The beaten strings shimmer with music and light.

The black moustache of Lu Xun aimed like a gun  
At the living world he loved and hated.

---

\*Vertical stringed instrument with the bow playing the strings from inside

\*\*Small many-stringed instrument like a piano played from a low stool with small vibrating mallets

## Women

You hold up half the sky and many men,  
Dig half the dirt, the gravel and the sand,  
Raise all the children, more than half the food,  
Repair the road, in baskets on your back  
Bear rock, bear fruit, in buckets hung on poles  
Bear from your shoulders stinking excrement,  
Above all, bear all children all the years.

Women of China, moving as earth floats,  
Neck narrow as a flying swallow's wing,  
Or tough as banyan roots above the ground,  
Or loud in yells at oxen, pigs or kids,  
Or soft in song (your throat vibrates like silk).

Yangtze is a woman, live  
Water changing in unchanging river.  
China is a woman, strong  
As Guangzhou sun, indestructible as sky.

Your will is deep as dark rock underground.

## Bamboo Trees

You are the greatest plant in the world.  
Panda bear prowling Sichuan mountains  
Loves to eat you, so do women, children, men.  
You are in Chinese gardens and in soup.  
You screen rice fields from the loud highway,  
Your leaves are scattered over lacquered screens.  
You grow on long scroll paintings over walls.  
Your poles bend on the bending backs of women, men.  
You are the old scaffold of new buildings.  
You become chairs and hold up people's bottoms.  
You become baskets and carry everything.  
Your shoot is tender, tasty, but your trunk  
Holds up the roofs of houses.  
You are near human, a member of the family.  
Delicate and tough, you do everything  
But walk and talk and feel sorry for yourself.

In China  
There are more of you in paintings than in life.  
I never see you in apartments or on streets,  
But once one on a wall grinned at me  
Smugly, as if he were the only cat in Suzhou.  
Or was that grin a sneer  
At a foreign devil stupidly looking for cats  
In a country which probably ate their ancestors?

## Cats

Has the good word gone out to rats and mice  
In Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing---  
Live it up, boys, no more sneaky cats  
Hunting us with horrible fangs,  
Their pink mouths spitting contempt?

On scrolls, cat whiskers are finer  
Than those of the tough tomcat on the wall,  
Eyes are too gentle, back tries to look too cuddly.

I prefer that live and boney beast  
Crouching on the wall,  
Threatening birds and people.  
I like the killer instinct in his eyes.  
They have blood in them.  
He's the real thing, he's all cat,  
A mean old bastard, but honest.  
He and I have a perfect understanding.

He snarls at me, "Turn your back  
And I'll slash you in the ass." He knows  
I'd love to kick out a few of his teeth.

The tomcat has his fangs,  
But his back is beautifully curved,  
Waiting to kill.

The kitty has her fur softer than life,  
Her paws have cruel claws but they are only  
Waiting to play.

Artist, put a little savagery in her,  
A little tenderness in him.  
Paint us the whole catness of cats,  
Then pat them before they scratch you.

Make us a painting that will scratch us.



Photograph: Jenea Jensen

# A Photograph of Mrs. Martin Luther King on the Cover of Life

## I.

Your head--carved stone through which the hurt blood flows.  
Three hundred years of anguish made this face  
where now there glows  
unbearable grace-in-grief and grief-in-grace.

Your body does not bend. It is one long cry.  
Your mouth is silent, having too much to say.  
The photo shows, deep as time, your left eye.  
Our white bones sing the blues on this black day.

Keep, keep your harsh control. We fear  
that if you wept, we also would lose all  
as if not only a tear,  
but the hovering sky would fall.

## II.

Your unbitter face bruises our eyes.  
Beyond the blaze of bestiality  
which brought you here--the fury of flowers.  
Only your hands weep. Fighting his grief, we see  
in front of you, suddenly, a tall man cries.  
We suffer the live wound of these hours.

A wasp's bite, without fire, burns.  
Today, a tree branch rattles the wind's teeth  
We vomit the word, "progress," when the country yearns  
back toward the cave man's hide and the brute beneath.

You dignify this too degraded day.  
We do not deserve your face with its assurance  
that you bless us in this moment when we may  
endure the terrible power of your endurance.

## III.

The black, transparent veil protects  
the brown veil of your face, and that protects  
the red veil of your heart, and that protects  
these people and this country as nothing else protects.

Illustration: Ann Francis  
Tech pen

**LIFE**



**LIFE**



**LIFE**



**LIFE**



**LIFE**



**LIFE**



**LIFE**

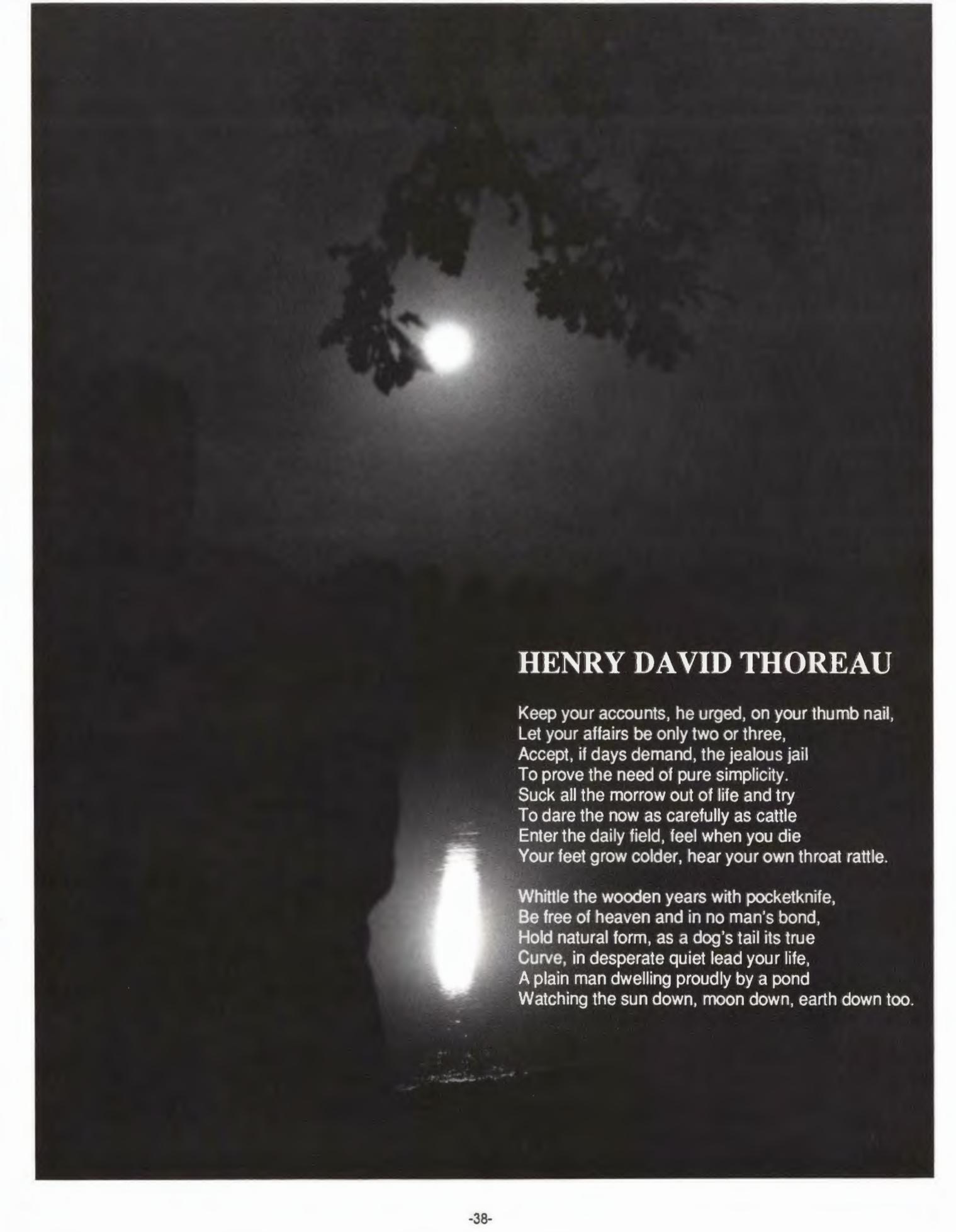


**LIFE**



**LIFE**





## HENRY DAVID THOREAU

Keep your accounts, he urged, on your thumb nail,  
Let your affairs be only two or three,  
Accept, if days demand, the jealous jail  
To prove the need of pure simplicity.  
Suck all the morrow out of life and try  
To dare the now as carefully as cattle  
Enter the daily field, feel when you die  
Your feet grow colder, hear your own throat rattle.

Whittle the wooden years with pocketknife,  
Be free of heaven and in no man's bond,  
Hold natural form, as a dog's tail its true  
Curve, in desperate quiet lead your life,  
A plain man dwelling proudly by a pond  
Watching the sun down, moon down, earth down too.

## HERMAN MELVILLE

Noah, old scorners of the narrow land,  
Here was a master mariner like you.  
Fanatic of the fanged harpoon, all day  
He drove in fury where the dark winds blew  
Whaleward. Sailing hooped round by iron night  
The barren Arctic waters from Nantucket  
For a seafarer's luck, he found with light  
The cold brain frozen in its bony bucket.

Call him Ishmael who for the marvelous fish  
Girdled the round, keel-graven glove too often  
Propped on a lonely foot, his single wish  
To win that white whale or abandon breath  
In agony of persuaded death  
Wearing but warped American wood for coffin.

Photograph: Jennifer Brennan



Photograph:  
Julie Vannordstrand

## WINDY NIGHT

WHAT MOVED against the window one long night,  
Whether a face or leaf, I could not tell.  
But if a face, it ran away from light,  
And if a leaf, it fell.

I did not ask, watching it turn and swing,  
Why it came to me in so cold a season.  
For whether human or a natural thing  
It had its own good reason.

I did not speak, fearing that it would go,  
That, in the dark, my voice would seem a shout.  
For looking lonely in, how could it know  
That I looked lonely out?

## GOING AWAY

Why does it take so many people  
to get each traveler started on his journey?

Why all that shouted advice from men and women  
to a young boy whose back is straight with fright,  
who clutches his cheap brief case desperately,  
as if it held his life, not just a clean shirt?

What can I say as you leave this city and me?  
Shall I urge you- Be good! How foolish,  
like telling a fish, Don't get your feet wet,  
or a butterfly, Look out for high places.

I give you no advice but my own name.  
Your hands lift toward me and I drop it in them  
like a rare fruit brought from a far country.

You simply speak my name. I close my eyes  
as if the sunlight spoke, and not your mouth.



**Photograph: Angie Hurd**

# THE WORD AND THE POET

I

Verse is not written, it is bled  
Out of the poet's abstract head.  
Words drip the poem on the page  
Out of his grief, delight and rage.

Words hold his life, as window glass  
Holds sunlight it allows to pass.

The word becomes the poem where  
His pencil's point becomes thin air.

The word, which only tries to sing  
A lived-through act, becomes live thing,  
As if a mirror black with night,  
Turned the astonished air to light.

II

Beethoven, absolute of tones,  
Lost his inner ear's fine bones.  
Michelangelo, whose bright  
Eyes could shape the shapeless light,  
Lost at last his accurate sight.

Baudelaire, whose words could teach  
Song to the birds, lost power of speech.  
Through nights loud with the drunkard's shrieks  
Evil kissed him on both cheeks. Pelican in his stinking nest  
Bit bleeding poems from his live breast.

Rimbaud, hell-haunted, bitter boy,  
Piled grief on grief and joy on joy,  
Made Paris seven-layered Troy.  
His demon could not keep apart  
Monstrous life and marvelous art.

Bellowing on the Montauk beach  
Whitman made art from artless speech,  
Yet it is not the naked man's  
Barbaric yawp on those brown sands  
Endures, but words that are the hush  
Of Lincoln dead, the grieving thrush.

III

Man is the metaphor of is.  
Verse is the metaphor of his  
Abandonment of self, live man  
Transformed to poem's formal plan  
Through brain and gut and furious heart  
The artist dies into his art.

## ENGLE COUNTRY

I walk around  
with a guidebook to Engle Country in my hand.  
It says that, though it is inefficiently governed,  
strangers are welcome there and well-treated.  
However, it is difficult to find your way around:  
the roads in rural areas are badly marked  
and in many cities the street signs have been reversed.  
A few forests have been excessively logged,  
so that flowering plants burn out when exposed to the sun  
Some wilderness places are still primitive:  
no man has set foot in that deep undergrowth.

The guidebook points out the house where he was born,  
1602, 5th Avenue SE, Cedar Rapids, Iowa  
(in that marvelous, old-fashioned, right way,  
his mother in labor on the bed where he was conceived,  
childbirth blood on the same bed  
where she bled on the marriage night she became a woman):  
"A traditional example of Midwest Ordinary,  
a wooden frame dwelling cheaply nailed together,  
draughty in winter, dreadfully hot in summer,  
its garage built for a Model T Ford.  
The humming bird nest on an elm branch,  
built on the bark like jewel on a ring,  
is gone from the flowered wallpaper where it hung.

His room is the one on the southwest corner upstairs,  
with a window on the roof where he used to climb and hide  
when he heard his father's brutal voice  
making the night air blacker around his mother.  
The cherry tree in the backyard which he picked each year  
still stains the May air pink.  
He remembers his mother sitting with a dishpan of cherries,  
splitting them with her thumbs and flicking out the pits.  
The red of the fruit mixed with the blood of her finger  
where she had stabbed herself with a needle the night before,  
sewing his thick winter clothes.  
He could not eat the crimson jam she made from the cherries."

On that street corner, 5th Avenue and 16th St., where at dawn  
he picked Sphinx moths for the light poles,  
he abandoned his childhood like a clawing cat  
thrown out of a moving car on a country road.

Here is the house where he batted a baseball through a window.  
When he went, shaking, to get it back,  
the lady gave him a slice of bread and brown sugar  
and said she was sorry the horsehide on the ball was torn.

This is the alley where he found broken toys,  
taking them home and working a week to repair them,  
painting the bent-runner sled and busted wagon,  
and even a girl's doll without an arm--  
he shamelessly hid her under the pillow in his bed.



1602 5th Avenue SE  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

There is Indian Creek, where he learned to swim,  
shallow, running over gold-glowing sand;  
a cottonwood had fallen across the creek  
and damned the water into a dark pool.  
Half drowning, half in delight, half in despair,  
he swam across it, grabbing the green water,  
less graceful than black tadpoles and gray fish  
gliding beneath, their amazed eyes glittering.

Here is a narrow street of little houses  
where he was once chased by dark foreign children:  
he is still afraid to walk there at night alone.

There are the lilac bushes  
from cuttings taken at his greatgrandfather's farm  
(the old plants still bloom around the hole of the house)  
where he hid when his father brought home  
a wild, white horse and told him to get up and ride.

On this corner at Third Avenue and First Street SE  
he sold the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*,  
buying it for one penny, selling it for two  
(by any capitalist standard, a superb rate of profit).  
His favorite customers were the girls in the old hotel  
to whom he took a copy each morning at ten:  
"Don't knock, honey, the door's always open,"  
the-erotic odor of dime store perfume dancing in air.  
They gave five pennies for each paper,  
dropped tenderly in his hand with a scamper of skin.  
For hours he could hold those pennies up to his nose  
and sniff the wonderful, dank odor of woman.  
One of them once put a nickel on her bare breast  
and said to him in a silver-ringing voice,  
"Pick it up, Paul, let's see what a man you are."  
He was ten. He had never seen a breast.  
Frugality beat down fear.  
He grabbed the nickel and ran crying from the room;  
hand burning, he threw the nickel into the Cedar River,  
and watched it sizzling in the earth-colored water.

Here is the vacant lot  
where an eight-year-old boy told him when he was six  
that Santa Claus really did not exist.  
Paul beat him in the belly with bitter fists,  
defending the myth that was really his mother.

Here is old Johnson School  
where Miss Emerson hung glass prisms in the window  
and for the first time he was rainbows in radiant light,  
where, for the first time, Miss Kugler told him:  
these words are a poem,  
they talk about birds, but they mean a poet.

His voice can still be heard in Engle Country:  
muffled with winter snow,  
edged with the grinding Iowa sun in August,  
he goes on living the lyrical English language,  
buried alive in the casket of his bones.



Photograph:  
Karen VonMuenster



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Scott Lindsey

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