

1982

Expressions 1982

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Des Moines Area Community College volume 5

EXPRESSIONS

Now our dreams are blossoming...

Laura Daiker

This fifth edition of **EXPRESSIONS** is the culmination of student efforts in the 1982 Creative Writing Contest, Campus Chronicle Photography Contest, Art and Commercial Art courses at Des Moines Area Community College.

Journalism students did the design, typography and lay-out work necessary to bring these efforts

together in this 1982 edition of **EXPRESSIONS**.

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Angel Corao, photographer
Cover illustration by Carole Floyd

SURVIVORS

Jane Carsrud

Wrapped in the warmth of the brooder house, I nestled in the middle of a carpet of brand new bobbling baby chicks. The fluffy yellow babies were as light as soap bubbles as I cuddled their soft bodies against my cheek. They hopped around on my lap and climbed into my coat sleeve as they peeped. I giggled with delight.

My delight soon gave way to the chores in the hen house, full of dirty cluckers waddling about, jerking their heads as they made their cackling "Br-r-oonk" noises, not caring about the smelly poop they left behind. The thud of the door startled the hens into a flurry of flapping wings, and the air thickened with dust. Choking for air and dreading the nest with those mean settin' hens, I armed myself with a stick and a glove. Trembling, I jammed and poked at a setter with the stick and batted her head with my gloved hand. Red with rage, and eyes filled with tears, I stared at the old hen and she stared at me. Then she cocked her head in victory. I hung my head in defeat as I cringed at the thought of a bloody battle with this furious hen. Assured that my sister would "get her good" tomorrow night when it was her turn to do chores, I let the hen set on her throne.

With a pail full of eggs, some sticky with yellow glue from broken eggs in the nest, I grumbled as I mixed some dusty feed with enough water to make a thin goo. "I don't see why the hired man can't make this chicken mash," I mumbled. "What's a hired man for?" Looking at the muck made my afternoon lunch want to escape by way of my mouth.

By midsummer the baby chicks had grown enough to be let out of the brooder house and roam around the farm yard, and the settin' hens were to meet up with Mom and her ax. Mom jammed their heads into a wire loop and stretched their necks over the top of a fence post. WHACK! The head dropped, blood spurted and the chicken flipped and flopped around

the yard. Other hens, their legs tied together, watched in horror of their destiny. The next panic-stricken hen fought and squawked in protest as Mom prepared her for execution. Whack. Blood. Flop. As I watched the headless hen flop, I wondered if the body hurts without the head. The hens were then plunged into boiling water to loosen the feathers, plucked, and singed with a flaming paper bag. What a mess: wet feathers, blood, chicken heads, and naked chickens.

When the Fall came, our family organized a platoon of chicken catchers to carry out a search and seize on the roasting chickens in the trees. My mission was to advance to the top of the tree and capture the unsuspecting victims with their heads tucked under their wings. With the courage of a combat soldier I quickly snatched my prey by the foot, which brought furious squawks of protest. The descent was a bit tricky with the furor of flapping wings and flying feathers. I felt so important doing such a grown-up job. "After all, it's a very dangerous job, climbing those trees and bringing those furious chickens down," I told myself. "My parents must think I'm awfully strong. I'm glad they didn't tell me to 'be careful, don't climb too high' and all that stuff grownups tell kids."

Tired to the bones, my bed felt good and I woke up to the familiar smells of bacon and eggs and the memory of our sneak attack last night. Stretching and yawning, I looked out to see a few white feathered survivors waddling about the farmyard.

The life and death of our farm chickens played a significant part in my growing up years. I learned through stark reality "the way things have to be" as my mother would say. I experienced feelings of delight and feelings of hatred. I had fear and I had courage. It was OK to feel good, and it was OK to feel bad. My life as a child was good.



Cynthia Sneller, photographer



LAURA'S THEME...

Ann Bobrowicz

A small, triangular shape, she sat on the sand and waited as the sun began the ritual of rising-gray water tinged with a wash of pink, mauve...colours delicately swirling together, the rhythmic movement of the waves the only sound in her focused world.

She had planned the loss of her virginity as carefully and as ritualistically as it was possible for a civilized savage. Deciding with

assurance, that her first year in college was the perfect time and age for her, and that a graduate student would be right for "him." After all, a man should be old enough to have had some experience. And so, the plan went on, the candidates vetoed, the choice made, conversational gambits introduced and the game initiated; yet, in its progression, it changed and imperceptibly she lost control.

At last the night arrived-she prepared; bathing and anointing her body, donning new, lacy, slightly risqué underwear - so different from her usual utilitarian style. The manuals had been read, precautions taken; now, it was up to him. Some hours later found them naked and intertwined, the vestments of her virginity shed, and her mythical inner calm shattered. Passion had waited for her and leapt into her empty shell, filling it with hunger, a desire to consume, to worship in the feel of skin and movement...and with it she found pain. When he should have been most with her, he whispered a name, "Laura..."

Later, when their bodies were lying, cooling, side-by-side, not touching, she asked, so casually, so carefully, "Who's Laura?" And he told her his tale of guilt and aggrievement. Of a girl known forever and loved nearly that long. Of a pregnancy and their venture to escape the consequences; she, by hoping to marry, he, by asking her parents to provide for an abortion. Of a cry for a life and his belief in the truth of planning. Of Laura's change in regard to him. Why couldn't she see that things could still be the same between them? Why did she hate him? Hadn't he done the right thing-they had their education to think about.

Listening to him tell his story, chilled by the breeze from the open window, she saw herself and her planned mating dance fragmented into a thousand dissonant notes. Nothing was as she had thought, and her innocent arrogance a defense easily breached.

Waiting until he slept, she quickly, silently rose and dressed. Leaving, she went out into the dawn hours, drawn by the glimmer of light on the horizon.

Steve Bursell, photographer

American women are going through an identity crisis, and one of the major causes is the commercials on television. Commercials have women coming and going, trapping them, as in a revolving door; coming into the office in their sexy support hose, and going home to cook up the latest in hamburger miracles.

One commercial shows a mom in her back yard serving Kool-Aid to all the kids in the neighborhood. She has to--none of the other mothers are at home! According to the commercials, they're all out in the working world, worrying about their obvious panty lines.

However, commercials still maintain that no matter what a woman does, she must look her "best." Avon makes a female fireperson "feel beautiful" while trying on perfumes at the fire station. Women doctors, in white coats, flash long legs sheathed in Hanes stockings on their way to emergencies.

It is maintained that women must be "decorative," and the situations are sometimes explicitly suggestive. Lithe women in tiny bikinis drink diet pop while staring at their navels, as the plump women at home munch cookies while staring at their TV screens.

Some commercials imply that women are experts in the bedroom, and the sexual implications are blatant. A lady, sitting in her bedroom, says, "I do it everyday." She's talking about using her beauty cream, but she has everyone's attention before she ever mentions that fact. She has also managed to make a lot of women wonder what's wrong with them if they don't "do it everyday."

Even Grandma gets into the erotic act, as she washes her hair in the shower, singing about springy, shiny, sexy hair, swishing suds around her naked shoulders.

Women are portrayed in all the typical "womanly" roles. Wives play nurse when hubby gets a cold, for instance. As he sneezes and snuffles, she explains why she has just administered Bayer aspirin. She pours cough syrup, rubs on Vicks, hands out vitamins, stocks up on germ-killing mouthwash, and wears eyeglasses when she really means business.

The glasses stand out, because most of the women on television are gorgeous, and don't wear them. After all, who would believe that a homely woman in glasses knew which was the best tampon?

Along with their various other roles in televisionland, women are also consumer experts in their spare time. They rush right home from work to set hubby straight on which brand of toothpaste he should be buying. Today's woman will even wash two piles of clothes to prove to her husband that she has picked the best detergent.

So ask a little girl what she's going to be when she grows up. Don't be surprised if she says, "I'll get up, cook the breakfast, dress the kids, go to work, earn the bacon, bring it home, fry it up in a pan, and wear a sexy dress later, so he won't forget he's a man."

Angel Corao, photographer

SUPERWOMEN

Sandra Haegele



THE BLADE

Kim Rundle

The shrill, piercing cry of a young boy's plea for help enters the station. It is 9:30 P.M. precisely as I stand up to look at the clock. Instantly, my legs are moving me out into the hallway. From easy strides I break into a run. A black adolescent boy has a razor blade, shiny and sharp, pointed at a white boy's throat. His blade cuts into the white boy's skin. It then cuts into mine. I see and hear no one else around me, except these two young men, eyes filled with hatred.

I grasp for the blade, and my fingers turn cold from chilled, red blood as the blade slithers to the floor. I crawl feverishly after it, to no avail. A black hand reaches the blade first and now comes toward me. "No! Robin, No! No! Please don't," I beg. I cry now to my young patient on the floor to run, "Run! Greg, please! You can run!" My voice is drowned out by the echoing of, "All male mental health workers to the adult unit, stat!"

Quickly, white fingers grab at my hands and pull my lifeless body back, back down a long, narrow hallway, now overcome by shadows. Greg is running now, pulling me behind him. "Kim! Come on, hang on to me, Kim!" Robin, our assailant, is nowhere in sight.

Seconds later we are safe and alive, Greg and I. Behind locked doors of a tiny examination room he has taken me to inside this institution, I see him. He is young, innocent, white, now stained with red. His tears fall through glazed blue eyes which look into mine.

Far away I hear the familiar sound of a black boy's urgent cry for help, as male technicians on the unit take him away, "Black power! Black power is on its way!"

The event is over and I am safe. Greg is safe and out on the unit. I leave the unit to clock out. It is 11:30 P.M. exactly. Another day is through.

MIRROR... ..MIRROR

Michelle McCauley

Embraced by a walnut frame
Majestically hanging against the wall
The cyclops eyes the world
Silver iris gleaming in the light
Stealing any glance aimed its way
Mimicking any flicker of movement in view
Smiling at whoever smiles at it
Crying at whoever cries at it



Del Matters, photographer

Rich

Glinda Sue Whitson

Your face --

imprinted upon my memory,

invading my heart,

throughout all the days

that we're apart.

Not an hour passes

without a thought of you...

your bright smile,

your blue eyes,

your soothing touch...

all written upon

the pages of my heart.



Melinda White, artist

I Said Goodbye

Allene Cranston

I said goodbye today to one of the dearest friends I've ever had. Our years together were short in number really, twelve years and three months to be exact.

I cherish all the tender, good times; looking back now, the few conflicts that we did have are difficult to recall. I can think only of the love I felt for him. From the beginning, we were close. An electricity between us bound our friendship, and the months passed quickly into years.

In many ways, I was as dependent upon him as he was upon me. So many times in my stormy life he was my only stronghold. I shared things with him that I would

dare not share with any other. He listened patiently as I confided in him. He never betrayed me, and he always stood firm to defend me.

He quietly sensed my moods and overwhelmed me with affection. Never did we argue. Never did he harm me, nor let me be harmed by anything or anyone. He was in constant watch to protect me.

He lived a healthy, happy life; always giving, and rarely did he complain. In these last months, the harsh grips of old age plagued his tired body. Failing, and writhing with pain, his dedication did not falter. He continued to stand by me, and to be my strength.

I remained at his side right

down to the last moments of his life; and to the end, we were touching and sharing. I could not bear the thought of his leaving me as I gently slipped the collar from his neck to ease his labored breathing.

My life has an empty spot now. The tears come easily, as I long to hold him close to me and feel his warm, soft tongue lick the tears from my cheeks, as it did so many times before.

To most he was just the little brown dog who lived in my backyard. To me he was trust, love, and companionship, unlike any I've ever known.

I thank God for the years we had together.

The Black Hills

Jon Kerr



I went on a trip with Grandma once.

We went to the Black Hills.
Her friends had funny names.
Myrtle and Ruby and Pearl, I think.
They were all fun in the car, laughing and talking.
My ears popped going up and down the mountainsides.
There were mules there, with soft noses and ears like
corn-leaves.

The president's faces were very big, but far away.

I also remember the swimming pool, And how Grandma said
she'd pick me up at six o'clock.
But I didn't have a watch.
The clouds in the west were dark,

like open closets at night.
The wind was cold, like white dragon's breath.
So I decided she forgot me.

She drove by as I tip-toed towards the motel,
picking my way through the gravel's razor-blades.
I cried and waved my towel.
"Grandma! Grandma!" but my voice was a mouse.
I scurried back (two blocks at most).
And I was safe again, crying.

I had fun on that trip.
Too bad mom didn't think so.
She didn't let my brothers go on any trips
With Grandma.

Brian Wignall, artist

Unforgettable Afternoon

Gail Graham



Angie Brooks, artist

Several years ago on a very hot and humid August afternoon, I was lying on the sand at Clearwater Beach soaking up the sun's intense rays. It was a beautiful, cloudless day, and the burning sun actually felt good on my skin. I would shut my eyes and time seemed to stand still. In the distance I could faintly hear the rock music coming from another sunbather's radio, but I had positioned myself at the far corner of the beach where I would not be disturbed. Summer was coming to an end, and I wanted to enjoy this last weekend at the beach by myself.

Just as I was dozing off, a scream pierced the air and for an instant I was annoyed that my solitude had been interrupted. Another scream, and this time I leaned up on my elbows and watched as people were hurrying towards the water. My curiosity aroused, I also made my way to the water's edge, but at a much slower pace than everyone else was moving.

Within seconds, it was

couldn't tear myself away. I was rooted to the sand as if it were cement.

Within minutes, the two lifeguards who dove from their towers were carrying a small boy from the water. The third lifeguard was breathing into the child's mouth before they even reached the sandy beach. The large crowd that had gathered was absolutely motionless, and all that could be heard was the steady breathing of the lifeguard as he tried to force his breath into the unbreathing boy.

He tried and tried, and he did not give up until someone covered the child with a blanket and pulled the tearful lifeguard to his feet.

I could not move. I felt my legs weaken and my knees dropped into the sand. It was not until the ambulance pulled away that I found my strength and slowly walked back to my blanket. I gathered my things as quickly as I could, because just then I realized that I had to get home and tell my own son how much I loved him.

obvious there was someone in desperate trouble in the water. The two lifeguards made spectacular dives from their perches, and someone else used a bullhorn to ask swimmers to clear the water. Out of the distance came another lifeguard running towards the water with a life preserver in one hand and a tow rope in the other.

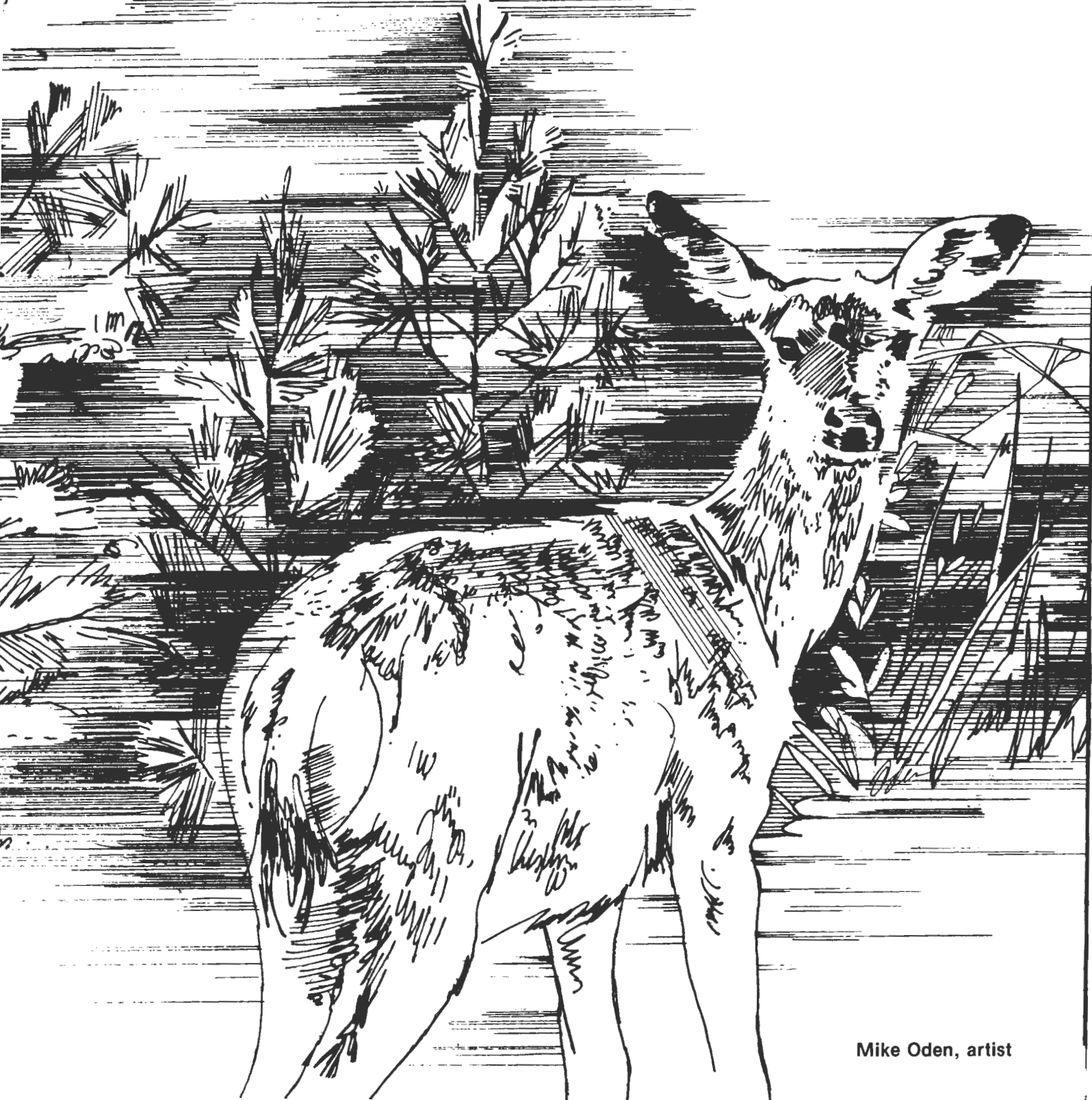
As I surveyed the crowd of anxious bystanders, my heart started pumping wildly and I broke out into a cold sweat. Someone was drowning. I knew it, and I didn't want to be a part of this awful event, but I

THE LADY

Jon Kerr

There she stood, tall and strong
Yet soft and sweet, a thing of song.
She was a queen, a guiding hand
She strove with strength across the land.
Her hair was black and long and straight;
She walked with perfect, graceful gait.
She was a beauty and a light
A shining beam throughout the night.
A leader with a shining sword
A light to follow, a steely cord.
A lantern in a sea of mist;
Blessed of gods by stars was kissed.
Her eye was sharp, her hand was quick

Her fingers long, her shoulders thick.
Her pen was silver, her ink of gold
The words she spun are often told
In stories late, around the fire
Of heroes lost, of dragon's ire.
Of lands now gone, of elves and love
Of lore, and gold, and stars above.
Their beauty cannot be denied,
Their brightness can be afar desried.
But long ago she went away,
Into the West, the legends say.
She left to us a shining star.
A star she was, her words we are.



Mike Oden, artist

I shifted sluggishly in my chair. This was the first bridal shower I'd ever been to in my life, and I was already tired of it. This shower has all the appeal of wallpaper paste. I'd begged Mom not to make me stay here, to let me go along with Dad and my brothers to the livestock sale. (They usually used a sale as a getaway when we had social functions such as bridal showers at our house. They had fled the house half an hour before the ladies arrived). But Mom had been firm about me. Now that I was 12, it was time I stay and enjoy the shower of my cousin Sue. That was part of getting older.

Parents were like that. I knew enough about them to realize that they thought their number one duty was to make sure their kids grew up according to schedule. "Maturity" was their magic word. I had also heard some parents sighing over their lost childhood. They were usually the ones who tried to act dignified and mature. Pretty unreasonable, I thought. The only way Mom had been reasonable about this shower was that she at least hadn't made me wear pantyhose.

And at least I'd gotten to sit next to Aunt Carol. All of my aunts were kind, but I liked her best. She wasn't as chattery as the rest, and she talked to me plainly. She didn't twitter and tell me how cute I was like the others did.

I idly watched my Aunt Madge swallow a piece of cake. Her neck dipped forward and her eyes popped a bit as she concentrated on getting it down quietly. Temporarily, no one was talking and I guess no grown woman would want to be so crude as to break the silence by gulping. They all looked like they were staking their femininity on how slowly they could eat their finger sandwiches. Aunt Madge's eyes darted around to see if anyone had heard her swallow. I sighed.

I wistfully pictured the kind of meal Dad and my brothers would be having right now - for you couldn't last long at a sale without first sustaining yourself at Molly's Cafe. Molly had set up shop right inside the sale barn, tucked in a corner alongside the sheep pens. The farmers would be sitting

there, wiping from their chins the greased that oozed from Molly's hamburgers, chewing in a restful, almost bovine way. They'd be nodding thoughtfully while one particularly knowledgeable farmer expounded his

Growing Pains

Jana Van Gorp



views on the precarious position of farm price supports. The air would be rich with the smells of hot coffee and cherry pie, mixed with the comforting, honest smells of sweat and manure that wafted in every time a farmer opened the side door. I loved it there.

Beside me, my Aunt Kay moved and I caught a whiff of Heaven Sent. (All the ladies had on their most elegant perfume tonight.) Now they were oohing and making a fuss over one of Sue's gifts, a new towel set. All the ladies agreed that the colors were radiant. "Holy Roach," I thought. If I were Dad now I'd have something to ooh about. Then I could be looking at a prize heifer. But here I was, doing something I didn't like because my Mom said I was getting older.

Aunt Doris was wailing about the problems she'd been having getting her Otto to buy a new Sunday suit. He just wouldn't spruce up. He was so stubborn. And didn't all the other ladies know just how that went with their men? Aunt Doris had gotten a fresh perm just for this occasion and as she babbled, her curls bobbed furiously.

I gripped my chair. I reminded myself of what Dad had read after supper last night. In his careful monotone he had told us what the Apostle Paul said — in whatever state we were, therein to be content. But I wasn't sure that was valid here. Paul had never been to a bridal shower.

Then Aunt Doris noticed me staring at her. "My, Kim you're turning into a real little lady! One of these days we'll be giving a shower for you!" She smiled brightly at me, confident she had just given me a great compliment. Pleased with herself, she went on, "Yes, you are growing up fast!"

I clattered my fork. I needed air. Aunt Carol nudged me and smiled. Surely she didn't know all that was seething in my mind. But she smiled at me as though she did. "Didn't I see you swimming in the back pond this afternoon? Looked like so much fun, I almost came to join you."

I took a deep breath and smiled at Aunt Carol. If she had lasted through it, so could I!

Does He Understand? Do I?

She entered the room carrying her child bundled in a blanket. Wrapped as he was, he appeared to be about three years old. Having read his chart and knowing about his anomalies, I felt it best to put him in an exam room rather than to have him in the waiting room with all the normal children. I reasoned that placing him in a more private setting would spare his mom additional hurt and embarrassment. As we walked to the room, her reassuring smile gave me the feeling I had made the right decision.

"How is David doing today?" I asked.

"Fine, except he accidentally pulled out his gastrostomy tube," she said, as she carefully unwrapped him and placed him on her lap.

A chill ran through me as I looked at him. His hair was coal black and full. His eyes were large and piercing under one continuous bushy eyebrow. He had abnormal eyelids. His penetrating eyes were staring...staring right through me. I had never seen hands like his. He had only three fingers and a thumb on each hand. The first finger was much larger than the rest. I then realized his anomalies went much further than I had expected.

"You will need to undress him down to his diaper. We customarily weigh all patients before Doctor enters the room," I said, trying to make conversation and not show my shock.

"Good. I haven't weighed David lately and would like to know, also," she said. The child's arms and legs moved in spasmodic waves. In contrast, her hands were gentle and caressing as she undressed him. The lullaby she hummed softly seemed to sooth him. Could he be aware of the different environment? I wondered.

"This is a pretty blue room, David, just like your room," she said.

The child made no definite response that I could see.

My mind was racing. My it was hard to look at him! Hesitantly, I touched his arm. It was warm and soft! No skinned knees from riding a bike, I thought. What would be the best way to carry him? Like a tiny child with his face over my shoulder...I wouldn't have to look at his face! Perhaps, in my arms as Mom had him, since that would be the most familiar to him. I picked him up and held him in my arms. He looked as peaceful as if he had been rocked gently to sleep.

"How are you today, David?" I asked automatically. When he gave no visible response, I realized all the usual questions I asked other children as we walked to the scale

in the adjoining room were futile. I was at a loss for words. Did he really understand anyway? Surely not.

Balancing him was difficult because his body was flaccid; his arms and legs just dangled.

Entering the room, I announced to Mom, "Forty-two-and-a-half pounds."

"Oh, you are up, David. My, you are getting fat!" she said to him. He turned his head toward her. Was he responding to her voice?

"He weighed forty-one-and-one-quarter the last time we were at the pediatrician's office," she said to me.

His weight was comparable with a normal three year-old's. I couldn't believe he was twelve.

"Hi, Mrs. Brown," Doctor said as he entered the room. "Hi, David."

"He must have pulled the tube out during the night. His last feeding was about 8:00 p.m." Mom said.

"I'll bet you're getting hungry," the doctor said as he placed his ballpoint pen in David's left hand. "This is how David talks to me," Doctor said as he turned to me. "When he clicks the top of the pen, it means yes."

I was surprised. Could he know more of what was going on around him than I thought?

Doctor then said, "David, I am going to put in a new tube; then Mom can feed you. You remember. When I insert the tube, I want you to take a deep breath. Do you understand?"

David clicked the pen. I was amazed.

I handed Doctor the equipment and Mom hummed the lullaby as before.

"Now, David, I'm inserting the tube," Doctor said. David took a deep breath at the right moment.

The procedure was finished. Doctor picked David up and placed him on his lap. David seemed to respond. "David and I go back a long way," Doctor said to me. He then turned to David and said, "Would you like Michelle to bring you some milk so Mom can give it to you?"

David clicked the pen.

"Okay, then. How about a hug?" Doctor asked.

David seemed to contract all the muscles in his body. Doctor hugged him warmly and kissed him on the cheek.

I left the room to get David's milk. Could I have been wrong about how much he knew? Could I have kissed him? Could I love a child like that?

I adjust the covers around his shoulders. I see a young man where a child has been. The young cheeks once covered with peach fuzz now are covered with blotches of stubble. I realize the need to check and cover him is no longer necessary and soon will not be available to me.

I treasure these few moments as my mind skims back through some of the changes that have taken place. Perry no longer crawls upon my lap to be rocked to sleep. Instead, he towers over me and will place his arms around my shoulders and give me a quick reassuring hug...if I'm lucky.

I think back to the time Perry got his first pair of jockey shorts. He felt he was so very grown up not having to wear training pants any longer. How I laughed when he showed me the secret pocket he had discovered to keep his matchbox car in. I thought of how embarrassed he would be if he knew of the incident.

I remember Perry as a selfish two-year-old. He would watch and wait for other children to pick up something, then pounce on them like a cougar after its prey. How frustrating it was waiting for him to outgrow the phase.

Now he has such sensitivity for others. During a discussion we had last fall, he told me of his concern for Roger. Perry and Roger have been best friends for years. Roger is far from handsome with tufts of red hair that never lie down. He shuffles his feet as he walks and; though clean, he wears second hand clothes that appear dated. He never seems to quite fit in with the other kids. Perry told me how Roger's stomach always growled as they walked to school. He felt that money was a real problem at Roger's house and because of the lack of money, Roger went to school without breakfast. He had tried to coax Roger into leaving for school a little early and have breakfast at our home but Roger declined. Perry said he had given it a lot of thought and would like to fix extra toast each morning. He would pretend he was late and have to finish on the way to school. Using this as an excuse, he could share his toast with Roger. I remember thinking how wise he had grown.

I remember late spring, three years ago, when all the boys in the neighborhood were in Little League teams. Perry looked forward to the baseball season with enthusiasm. It was the first game and the excitement radiated from everyone. As I watched the game, I realized the season would be difficult for Perry. He could no longer follow through with his swings, and when he was able to hit the ball, the ability to run from base to base seemed to be a tremendous undertaking. Having grown four inches in three months seemed to alter his coordination. The frustration showed on his face as he tried desperately to recapture what he had been able to do the summer before. No amount of reassurance eased the hurt he had or enhanced his self-image.

The baseball game was a real contrast to the basketball game last week. I felt proud as I realized the responsibility he has as the starting center. The game was played with methodical teamwork and coordination. His height had finally become an asset and an advantage.

As all these thoughts kaleidoscope through my mind, I bend down once more to kiss Perry's cheek before he awakens and catches me.



FEELINGS

Michelle Wright

Lance Coles, photographer



Karen Dahl, photographer

The Nursing Home Birthday Visit

Vicky J. Garrett

Gee, how absurd the dialogue gets
as I approach you
lying so still. . .

I see the tube that guides your food,
in liquid form,
from outside to in--
your puffy face and colorless skin.

You wonder, with failing eyesight,
who's coming near. . .
And I take your hand
and squeeze it so gently.

I announce who I am and we chat for awhile.
Then I dare to open my mouth
and proclaim, with a smile,
"I hope you have a happy birthday!"

And you smile back
and say "thank you,"
and you watch me slowly leaving. . .
. . . walking out the door.

Face Value

Denise Kramer

*I found a dream face down in the sand
It was so tremendously beautiful, so perfect*

*I knelt down, tugged and pulled
after a while I had it, I owned it*

*I took it home, and put it in a jar
everyday it was the only thing I saw*

*As I grew older so did my dream
It had turned a dull lonely gray*

*On my last day I went down to the beach
put it where I had found it, and watched
as the tide carried it away.*

Bryan Clemens, photographer

PRISONS OF THE MIND

Sandra Haegele

My Grandma Esther came from Sweden
and filled her yard with peonies.

Her house went shining, all because
she found a joy in work.

We made rubies and emeralds
canning pears, dying them
bright red and green.

She swept her sidewalk every day,
and taught me how to say my prayers.

I thought she would always teach me.

Oh, things a child cannot know!

For even though I longed to help,
she had a stroke - could work no more.

How she railed against the lying
in a bed, while dust fell silent
in the rooms. Her spirit longed
for brooms and action!

But the doctor told her, "No."

Her flowers choked on weeds.

Once when we'd just left her,
she passed sentence on herself.

She sealed the kitchen windows,
nalled a blanket to the door.

She placed a pillow in the oven,
and kneeling down, laid her head.

I often wonder if she cried,
or went about this one last task
with her old zeal.



Rob Karlsson, photographer

THE ULTIMATE SPACE WAR

Blake Soder

The aliens had attacked the earth in their full force. Whole cities had been reduced to piles of smoking ruins. Within a period of less than three days, the world recovered from its state of total chaotic panic. The Air Force, with its galactic warships, had driven the aliens back into space and beyond the moon.

Now, the aliens were preparing for a second attack. NASA reported massive numbers of the alien ships waiting just outside of the moon's orbit. The earth would not survive a second attack. The leaders of the world powers decided that what the earth needed was a secret weapon to hit the aliens first. And they knew just the man to call on.

Captain Tony Fargus, of the warship **Federal**, looked over his ship. Bathed in the red and white lights of the docking bay, its silver hull gleamed brightly. Here and there along the sides were long, thin black scars made by laser blasts from enemy ships from many battles. The ship was a massive, impressive sight.

Tony strode past the maintenance men who were performing their various jobs of refueling and repairing. He barely heard the buzzing of voices that followed in his wake. Tony Fargus was a legend in his own time for his many battles. The ship's six-man crew stood at attention beneath one of the ship's stubby wings, and watched their famous captain approach.

Tony stopped a yard in front of them. His cold stare sent shivers down their spines. Slowly and deliberately, he removed a pair of sunglasses from his shirt pocket, put them on without shifting his gaze, and spoke in a tone as cold as his stare.

"Men," he said. "I have just received orders from the president to do anything and everything necessary to keep the aliens from attacking the earth again. I'm not going to lie to you. This may be a one-way trip." He paused and let his gaze sweep the six men standing before him. "We've been through a lot of battles together, but, if any of you family men don't want to go through with this, don't feel ashamed to speak up."

The men were silent. They would follow their leader with their full confidence and, if necessary, they would die with him.



"Good," Tony said. "Now, let's go to battle."

Within a few minutes, the **Federal** was speeding toward the moon, fully armed, ready for battle, and commanded by the most revered man in the history of space.

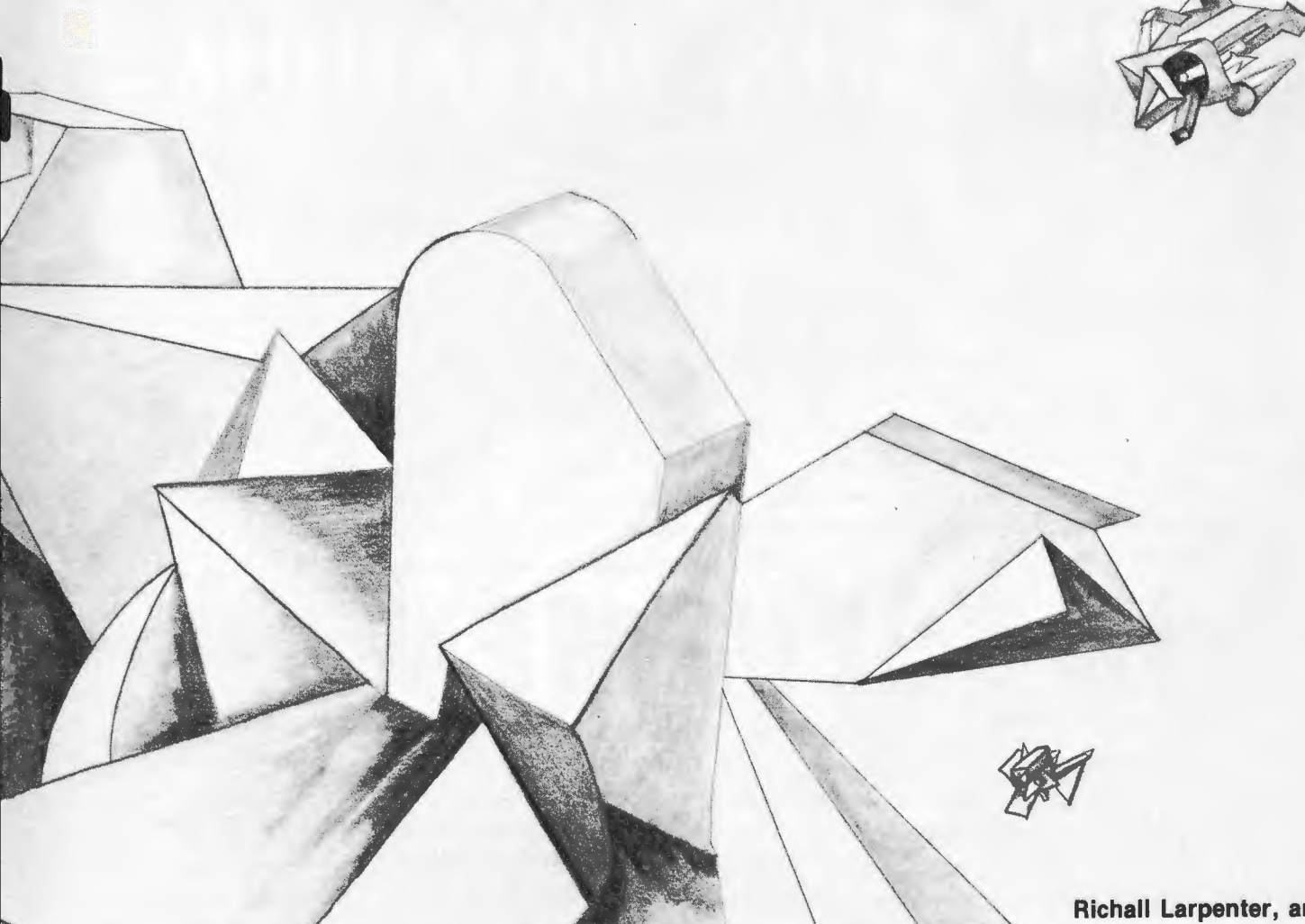
They encountered the first wave of enemy fighters as they neared the moon. Seven long, tube-shaped alien warships swarmed towards the earth ship. Tony ordered all battle stations to open fire with everything they had.

Almost before the battle had even begun, seven twisted masses of alien metal were spinning slowly down toward the moon. A second wave of alien ships came into view from around the moon. Though they fought fiercely, they were no match for the **Federal**.

Tony swung the ship around to the dark side of the moon. Suddenly, a terrific explosion rocked the **Federal**. They had been hit. Tony quickly checked the damage read-outs and, finding no serious damage, turned his attention to the ship that had fired at them.

It was the largest machine he had ever seen. The alien ship was the size of a small moon. Indeed, it was almost round as a ball, and its lights looked like a thousand tiny cities on its surface. The multi-colored hull was dotted with shiny laser canons that numbered in the hundreds.

"The mother ship," Tony whispered. This was the aliens' main ship and it controlled the movements of



Richall Larpenster, artist

fighters that attacked Earth. If they could destroy this ship, the war would be ended.

The monstrous ship fired again and the **Federal** lurched backwards from the resulting explosion. The damage reports automatically flashed red on the screen in front of Tony. The two forward guns had been destroyed, and the two men operating them, killed.

"Return fire!" Tony shouted into the radio microphone.

The **Federal's** generators squealed under the power drain caused by the firing of the laser canons. The ship was violently rocked time and time again under the enemy's attack. Metal screeched against metal as the **Federal** was torn and twisted. Tony could hear the cursing of his men over the radio as they were knocked around their gun compartments while trying to return fire. Acrid smoke filled the ship and formed a hazy fog that burnt Tony's eyes and made him choke.

The damage reports flashed by on the screen so fast that Tony could barely read them. For what seemed like an hour, the barrage between the two ships continued.

Tony was violently jerked one way and then the other as he tried to shout above the crashing explosions and give orders to his crew. He gripped the edge of his chair as the ship was shaken by another blast. Then, suddenly, everything was quiet. The cracking of electrical fires was the only sound on the ship.

Tony wiped the sooty sweat from his forehead and looked about. The damage was incredible. Support beams were bent and twisted, and rivets rolled about on the floor. A small electrical fire was burning in the computer in front of him and smoke was drifting out of the cracks in the console. The damage reports were still flashing faintly on the screen. All of the guns had been destroyed and the only compartment that was still pressurized with oxygen was the one he was in. That meant that he was the only one left alive on the ship.

The viewing screen was cracked and caked with oily grime. Tony wiped a small spot on it clean and peered through. A gasp of despair escaped his throat. The alien ship was still there. There was some damage to it but Tony knew that it was still capable of destroying Earth.

Tony gritted his teeth. There was only one thing he could do now. He hoped the engines still worked. With a muttered oath, he pulled back on the drive lever. The ship hesitated, then began moving. He slammed the engines into top speed and headed directly towards the alien ship. It was suicide, he thought, but it was the only chance Earth had.

"Tony," a shrill voice called from the distance, "cartoons are on."

Little Tony dropped the toys he was holding and raced into the next room. The salvation of Earth would have to wait until after cartoons.

I love to argue with my friend, Tom. I may agree with his point of view, but I'll play the devil's advocate, just to ride him. We were taking the subway up town because he had some errands to run. He threw down the paper he had been reading and told me about the article he had just finished. It was a story about an eighty year-old woman being mugged in broad daylight on a busy street in the business district and not one of the many bystanders attempted to help her.

"People just have to start thinking on a grander scale, they need to get involved," he said.

"That would be nice, but it'll never happen," I replied. "Everybody's looking out for Number One and to hell with everyone else."

INVOLVEMENT

Craig Anderson

"That's crazy," he shot back, "Involvement, that's the key, getting people involved."

"How can you get people involved, if they won't even speak to each other on the street?"

"They're afraid," he sighed.

"Goddamn right they're afraid! There's a lot of crazy mothers out and about these days."

"Let me finish, asshole. They're afraid to make the first gesture of friendship. Once they're past that it comes easy. Here's our stop."

Having had this conversation several times before, I just shook my head and followed him off the train and up to the street. We stepped off several blocks in silence, then noticing that we were in the heart of the inner city, I asked, "What the hell is it we're looking for anyway?"

"A little antique shop I heard about," he answered.

"Antiques, down here? Jesus, I heard about a bridge for sale in Brooklyn too. Man, somebody fed you a line, the only antiques around here are the winos."

He kept on walking for a couple more blocks then turned to me and said, "You've gotten us lost, you jerk."

"Me? Me?? Why do I let you talk me into these things?" I said, bristling with anger.

"For the adventure," he said smiling, "You're too isolated from the real world."

"Don't you mean misadventure? The cops are scared to come down here and they carry guns."

"All right, take it easy. Let's get some

directions from these guys over there and get the hell out of here. They look friendly enough."

Looking in the direction of the group, I started to hear the theme from West Side Story.

I whispered, "They look to be many things; friendly doesn't come to mind. Let's just hang a left and run for our lives."

"Jesus, you kill me sometimes," he chuckled, continuing towards the Sharks or the Jets or whoever the hell these guys are.

There's a feeling I get in the pit of my stomach when I know bad stuff is about to happen. Like when a police car come flashing up behind me and doesn't want to pass. I slowed down looking for possible escape routes and or weapons.

Tom walked up and asked, "How's it going? Can somebody tell me how to get back to Vine?"

"You ain't goin nowhere, man," came the reply and they started toward Tom.

I freaked and bolted down an alley on my left. About halfway through the alley I tripped on something and took a fall. When I realized no one was after me, I caught my breath and tried to figure out what to do.

"Shit! I can't leave him, he wouldn't leave me. Him and his friggin' involvement!"

I found a piece of rusty pipe, let out a primal scream and ran back to the pile of brawling bodies. It didn't take me long to get their attention and as they formed a circle around me, I realized Tom was gone.

I woke up in the hospital, the next day, with a broken hand and some ribs to match. As I tried to focus my eyes, a familiar shape appeared beside my bed: Tom

"Hey man, you OK?" he asked.

I winced as I tried to sit up. "Hell no, I'm not OK! Glad to see you made it through. You don't seem to be too busted up."

"They never laid a hand on me," he replied.

"What?" I gasped.

"As they were coming at me, I threw all the bills I had in my wallet over their heads. As they scrambled for the cash, I beat feet out of there. You know, you were right, look out for Number One, it's the only way to go. Why'd you go back anyway? Those guys could have killed you!"

MORNING SURPRISE

Craig Anderson

My first real job was delivering newspapers, evenings and Sunday mornings. A neighbor of mine, named Gary, had a paper route and he convinced me that it was an easy way to make money. He had his manager call me, so I decided to give it a try.

I walked along with the boy I was replacing on his last two days, to become familiar with the route. The first day I delivered on my own was Sunday morning. I hadn't considered the bulk or the weight of seventy five Sunday editions until I packed them all in my paper bag and lifted it to my shoulder. I felt like I was carrying a load of brick until I started concentrating on matching the list of addresses to the numbers on the houses in the early morning darkness. No one mentioned to me that a flashlight would be handy to have, but then again, I might be taken for a burglar, so it's probably just as well. I finished, feeling very pleased with myself, and started back home. The only sound was the snow crunching under my boots as I walked. I noticed how quiet and deserted the neighborhood seemed. The streetlights made the snow give off a kind of fluorescent glow and I felt like I was the only person on the planet. I enjoyed this solitude-I felt as if I was in control of everything around me.

As I began to cut across the park to my house, I stopped to tie my boot lace. Even though I had stopped walking, I could still hear the snow crunching, getting louder at each step. My heart started pounding as my eyes darted from the slide to the jungle gym, looking for something to climb or some way to escape. I was positive that I'd be gunned down, but when I caught a glimpse of the large, dark figure coming towards me, I decided to make a break for it. I took four or five strides, slipped and ended up sprawled on the ground. As I struggled to get my feet under me again, I heard laughing and then Gary's voice say "Did I scare you? I just finished my route and thought you might want to stop by my house for some hot chocolate before you go home."

Daryl Jones, artist

A Captive of Mind

Cathy Kintner

I tell of my love, my life, my happiness

I am beaten down,

Condemned for my contentment.

"You are wrong," they say.

"You are sinful and destructive.

You will pay," they say.

I look to them.

My only hope is gone.

I am alone.

I must face the darkness.

The darkness evolves throughout

My world

It overtakes me.

I am lost within its grasp;

I have nothing to fight with

I speak but no one listens

My words are just echoes in my mind.

I beg them to hear me,

To give me a chance to justify myself
crying to them



Mike Oden, artist

SUCCESS

Allene Cranston

Fail I have
many times
To depths I
cannot share.
Each time I've
struggled back,
Scarring my
heart repeatedly,
While searching
for success.
Social prominence
and want of wealth
Are but a pittance
in this life,
For finally now
I know,
The only beginning
for true success is
Acceptance of self
and happiness within



Lonnie Lamb, artist



An Unending Battle

Cathy Kintner

When I was growing up, my family merely represented people living in the same household as I. I never really appreciated them--my sister least of all. She was four years older than I, but at times, I felt her mental capacity was four years below mine. In fact, many moments I resented her. Yet, in the last few years, I have realized just how special a sister she was, and through her life and death, I have come to know the true meaning of determination. She showed me that determination represents the will to strive, to succeed, and to survive.

About ten years ago, my sister Lydia was in the seventh grade. For many years, she had taken baton lessons, and her goal was to be head twirler of the marching band. Yet, one rule caused severe difficulties for her. All twirlers had to play an instrument in order to be members of the band, and Lydia had no musical background or experience. At that time I was taking piano lessons, and according to my teacher and my parents, I was gifted musically. Unfortunately, my sister just didn't possess that same ability.

Every night for at least two hours, she squeaked on the clarinet and shrieked on the baritone, striving to find that one instrument she could play. I have never seen anyone put forth so much effort and time, just to accomplish one task. Yet, to her this position of head twirler represented the ultimate dream, and she allowed nothing to stand in her way. She was determined!

A few years later, when Lydia reached high school, other areas of interest were more pertinent and challenging. At that age, every girl hoped to be invited to all the dances and parties. One's social life seemed devastated if she did not have a steady boyfriend! Well, Lydia never had the opportunity to date much in high school. Many times, she would come home from school in tears, wishing she could be popular and beautiful. Those years were hard for her because she felt inferior and unloved. Nevertheless, through it all, she smiled and struggled to prove to the world she was a somebody. I remember how embarrassed I became sometimes because she talked to anybody and

everybody, trying to make friends. the worst moment of my life (at that time, anyway) was homecoming night. The football team played an excellent game, and the crowd ran out on the field after the performance to congratulate the players. Guess who went up to the jock of the football teams and told him how much she enjoyed the game? That's right--my sister. I thought I was ruined for life! Yet to her, this action was just another way of reaching out in hopes of someday being accepted. I just wish everyone, including myself, could have sensed her unending desire to be just like everyone else.

Time elapsed, and Lydia left for college. I was elated after she was gone; my only interest was in finally having my own room. However, this major step was truly an accomplishment for her. Lydia had been a slow learner since childhood, and every small task seemed a burden for her. Her grades barely reached C-level, and compared to my straight A's, seemed worthless. Not until she was almost through college did I realize how difficult school really was

for her. I was older and finally understood how devoted and determined she was to graduate. Every time she came home, she would tell the family how many B's she had earned and how many hours she had spent studying for her basic math courses just so we'd be proud of her. I recall one conversation in particular. She was speaking to my mother, and I overheard her say, "You know, mom, I might not be as smart or as talented as Cathy, but I'm going to be something real important. Someday, the world will notice me for a change. I just know it."

A few months after that conversation, my sister was lying in the hospital fighting for her life. A rare type of cancer, the only case ever reported in the United States, had swept through her body. My family and I didn't even know she was dying until her last day of life.

I walked into her hospital room and stared at the lifeless sight that lay before me. I could not believe that this swollen and bruised creature was my sister. I held her hand, spoke to her, and watched her struggle to survive with each and every breath she took. Even when the doctors thought she had died, her strong will helped her hang on. I'll never forget the doctor's remark to us that day, "It's not possible or probable," he said, "but she is still alive. I have never seen such an obstinate will to survive. She is just damn determined."

Our family was gathered in one of the doctor's offices, and all of us were aware Lydia would go away at any time. One of the nuns entered the room and shared with us her acquaintance with Lydia. In those few words, I realized how my sister had touched the lives of so many in

such a short time. Truly, this was her success! Then I understood why God was asking for her now.

A few minutes later, the doctor came into the room. "I'm sorry," he remarked, tears in his eyes, "it's all over."

Tears flowed from all of us, but they were not tears of sadness for her death. Rather, the tears of joy for the life that she had led. Her determination was indeed an inspiration to all.

My sister gave to me the most valuable gift I've ever received--respect, love, and strength to survive that which seems impossible. To her, I owe my own life. For without knowing the true meaning of determination, I too may not have been alive today. To my sister, I give my most precious gift--this poem of love in memory for all she had done for me.

None possessed such an inner beauty,
a caring art--a loving spirit,
unique and special in every detailed
perfection of her being.

She existed when others would have failed
and laughed when those of us would have cried.

Love flowed from her like a rose extending
its petals, caressing the world surrounding it.

Fearful of nothing and no one, strong and secure
in her ways.

Caring for others as no one else could,
showing her deepest concern to those in need.

I learned so many things from her and I
valued what she stood for.

"Love strangers as though they were your
oldest and dearest friends and always be
yourself, not complicated, but simple and
direct."

I love her very much and will never forget
the memories I cherish of her.

She may live in another world now, but I
feel so warm inside because I know she
really does live.

Thanks for being you, Lid.



Barb Weidmaier, artist



The Homecoming

Sandra Haegele

My husband of less than a year let me out in front of the house, saying he had to take the car to a friend's to work on it, and he would be back for lunch. I walked through the front door carrying my bundle. I looked around the living room, and thought, "This can't be the same place I left four days ago!" Every table was littered with dirty glasses and unemptied ashtrays. There were dishes crusty with dried bits of food. My shoe scraped against something and I looked down to discover there were chunks of crumbled mud lying all over the carpet. I passed on through to the kitchen.

The wastebasket was overflowing with empty cartons and

bent TV dinner trays. The counters were lined with sticky pots and pans, dirty dishes and wadded up paper towels. The trail of dried mud continued on into the kitchen floor. By the back door stood a pair of hunting boots with large muddy clumps still hanging on them. I opened a cupboard with one hand, only to discover there wasn't a clean dish in it. I would have to wash some of those scattered around the house before I could make any lunch.

On my way to the bedroom I bumped into a large basket full of damp clothes sitting in the hallway. They had been washed but not dried. Since I didn't have a car to take them back to the laundromat, I would have to

hang them out on the line--if it wasn't too late by the smell of them.

The bed was a crumpled heap of sheets and blankets. I'd have to change them before I could go to bed tonight. I gingerly stepped over the piles of clothes lying here and there around the bed. Then my eyes caught the one, clean spot in the house that was just as I had left it. The crib that I had bought second-hand and painted a soft blue. At least he would never remember this homecoming. Before I started in on the massive cleanup, I gently laid my firstborn son in his bed.

Gary Irving, photographer

Chiaroscuro

Ann Bobrowicz

The girl was placing a set of doll's china in the squares of sunlight filtering through the apple tree's leaves. The care and concentration shown by her controlled movements indicated that something loved was being readied for something special. Footsteps sounded on the path. Looking up, she smiled. "Ellen, you really came. I'm all ready!"

Ellen just looked at her and mutely shook her head.

"Are you O.K.? Ellen!! Please tell me!"

And an explosion of sound shook Ellen's small frame, "Oh, Margaret, I can't play with you anymore! Not at all!" Crying, she stepped toward her friend, who backed a pace, staring.

"You just have to understand, Margaret, it's not me, it's my mother...I don't understand why, she said your mother had a 'friend' (I knew she meant Steve) and that your dad didn't live here and that the neighborhood

was going down...and...and more and I'm so confused...I sneaked out to see you, to tell you, to tell you you're my friend forever, no matter what!"

Silence. Two children staring at each other, one with eyes full of tears and the other with eyes of stone.

"Please Margaret, please say something..."

"GO AWAY! I never want to see you again."

Ellen turned and fled, disappearing into the green darkness. At that moment a toddler charged across the lawn bellowing, "Play too, Mama say!" Her sister whirled around hitting and flaying the small creature, from whom soundless screams were coming.

Suddenly her sounds found air, taking life in that lovely summer garden...and Margaret stopped as abruptly as she had begun. With tears pouring down her face she attempted to console the little one, "Ohh Baby, I'm sorry, so sorry." Wiping her tears with the back of a jellied hand, Baby found no forgiveness, "I tell Mama, I tell Mama NOW!" The two formed a procession back toward the house.

Time had passed; not long, but enough to move the shadows, and where there had been a checkerboard of light, now there was darkness.



Carol Jean Hinrichsen, artist

A Glimpse of Heaven

Vicky J. Garrett

I can sense the warmth of the water bed even before it's within focus. After working all night at one job [the 11-7 shift] and going directly to that second job, it is 12:30 in the afternoon before I find myself headed for my son's bedroom and the warm waves of the water bed!

It's raining outside. It has been raining since yesterday. Coming in from the wet chill of the outdoors makes the bed that much more inviting. The semi-darkness from outside causes the hallways and closed corners to quiet down into a hushed darkness. I rush to change into my flannel nightgown. [I'm after total comfort!]

As I push the door open, the bed lies before me; a tan colored blanket, in soft velour, lies casually spread out, ready to engulf me. One of Grandma's patchwork quilts hugs the far side of the bed. A quilted pillow case, with NFL football helmets as its pattern, covers a pillow that lies on top of a rainbow-colored sheet. It looks out of place, until you look up and see the matching NFL curtains in bright reds and blues.

My backside takes the lead and bottoms out as I sit on the edge. I pull my legs and cold toes quickly up and over the side of the bed, and the water in the mattress helps pull me over to the center. My toes are warming up already, as I pull the blanket snugly around me. My head hits the pillow, and I'm on my left side, melting into the warm sheet like ice cream melting into a hot caramel sauce.

I decide to add a bit of fun to my afternoon adventure; so with my right foot, I tighten and release my toe muscles enough to start a rocking motion in the bed. It starts slowly and ripples upward under my body until I'm moving up and down in a wavy pattern.

I hear the light sprinkling of rain against the window. My toe muscles relax and the wave subsides, and I slowly rock into a deep, cozy sleep.

February, Black History Month. A time to reflect upon where we've been and where we're going. An appropriate time to search ourselves to see if perhaps progress in some areas hasn't set us back in others.

Something many of us take for granted is the privilege of motherhood. So many times we focus on dirty diapers, spilled milk and torn pants, not realizing our ancestors would have viewed our burdens as a blessing. Not having to face the possibility of our children being snatched from our bosoms, because they were smart, strong, or pretty. We don't appreciate being able to watch our babies grow into men and women.

REFLECTIONS OF FREEDOM

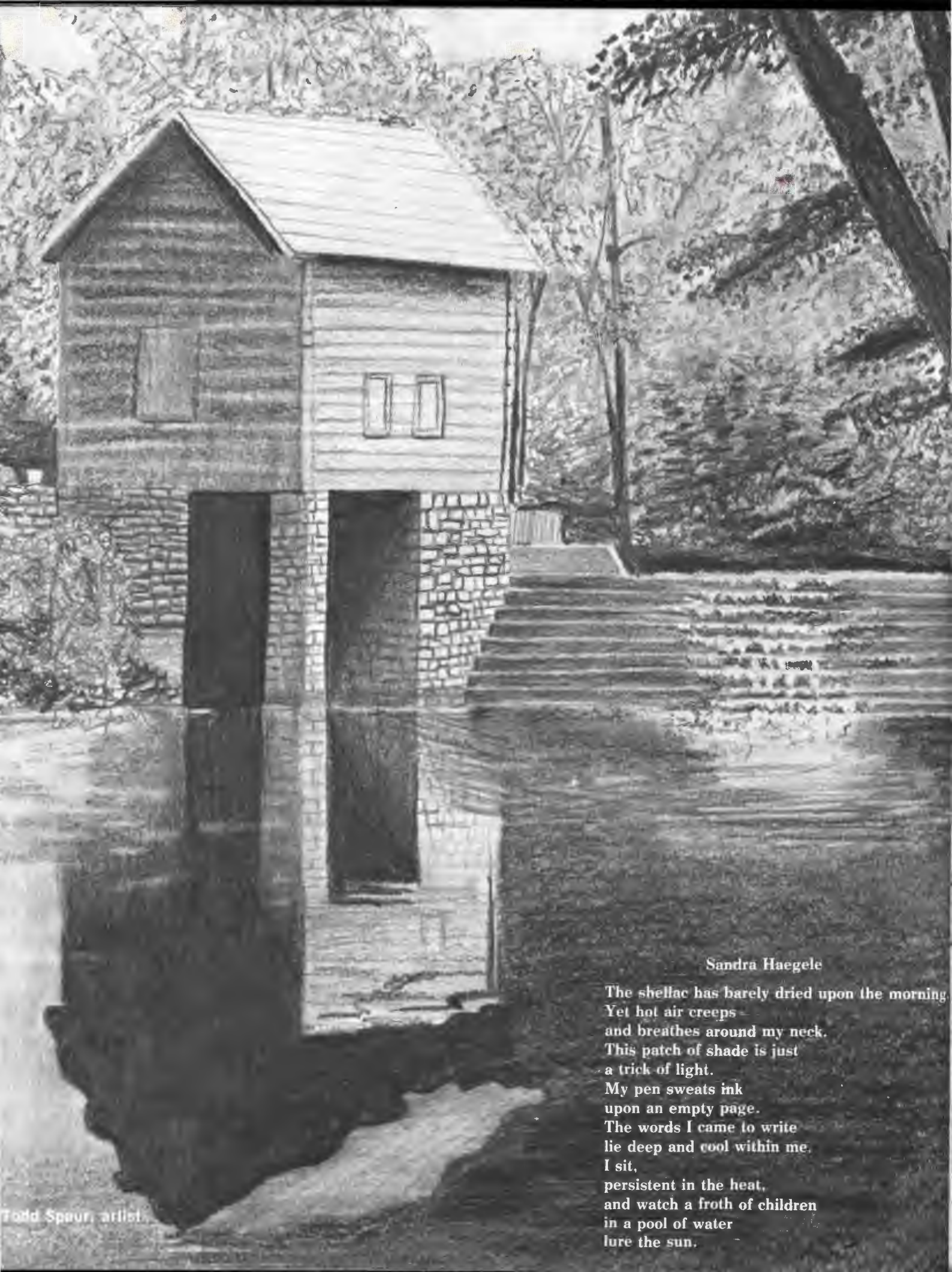
Lacinda L. White

Instead of complaining about having to stay home on Friday night for lack of a babysitter, we should spend more time teaching our children about life: how to give love as well as receive it, how to have strong minds as well as strong bodies. How do we accomplish this? By being good examples. By showing them openly when we are pleased with them, instead of always criticizing them. By emphasizing school work instead of sports.

If we could only go back and feel the pain of mothers who loved and cared for their children only to have them snatched away, never to be seen again. Had we experienced the anguish of not being able to teach our children to read and write for fear of being beaten and sold, then I believe motherhood would take on a new and different meaning for us all.

Even though we made it from the back of the bus, we still have a long struggle ahead before we are truly free. But we have gained a basic freedom--the freedom of motherhood, so let us not take for granted the freedom of motherhood and all the priceless things we can do for our children. Instead, let us remember that not so long ago we were denied this opportunity. Let's not take it for granted, and love and cherish our children like the wonderful prizes they are.





Sandra Haegele

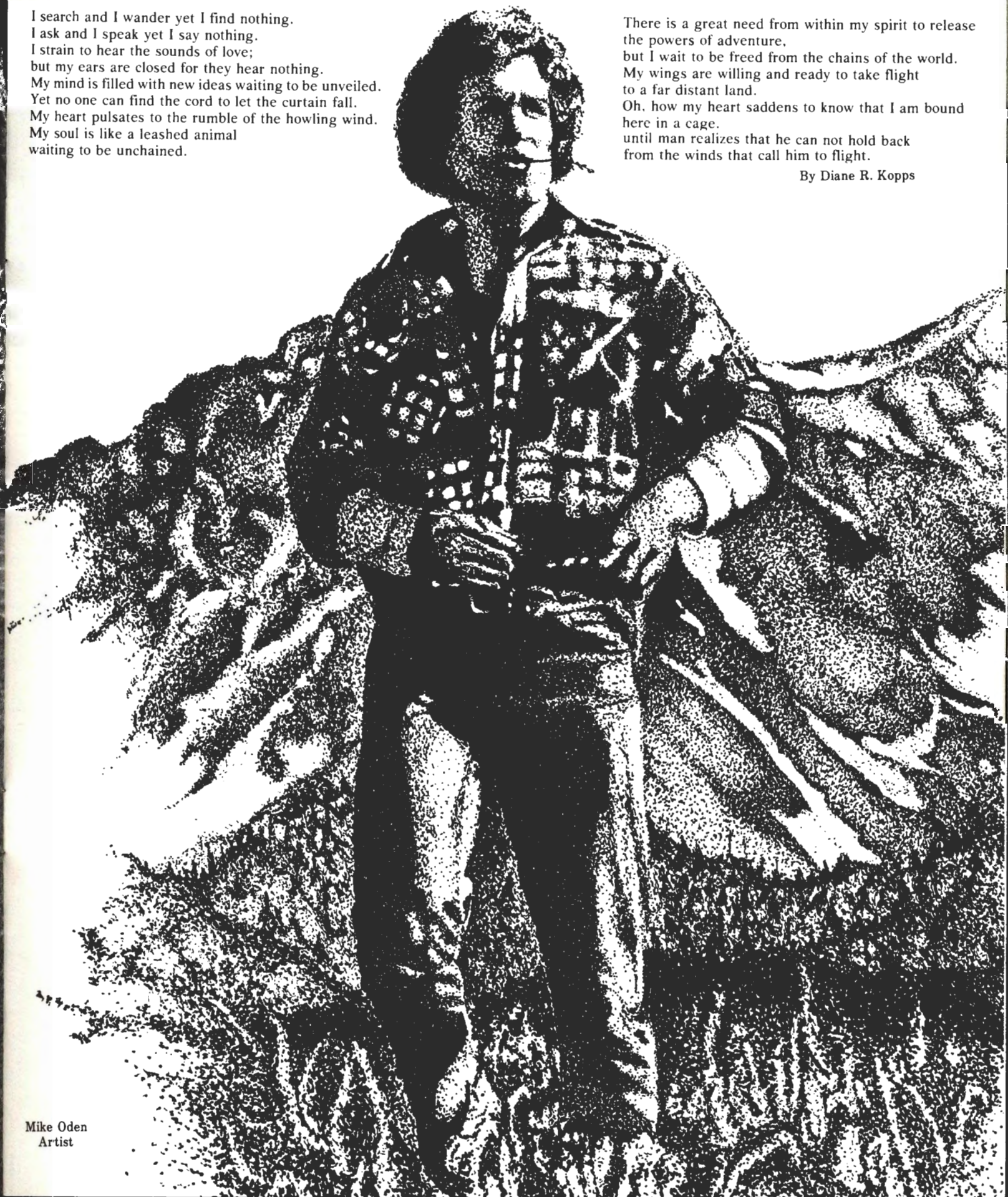
The shellac has barely dried upon the morning,
Yet hot air creeps
and breathes around my neck.
This patch of shade is just
a trick of light.
My pen sweats ink
upon an empty page.
The words I came to write
lie deep and cool within me.
I sit,
persistent in the heat,
and watch a froth of children
in a pool of water
lure the sun.

howling winds

I search and I wander yet I find nothing.
I ask and I speak yet I say nothing.
I strain to hear the sounds of love;
but my ears are closed for they hear nothing.
My mind is filled with new ideas waiting to be unveiled.
Yet no one can find the cord to let the curtain fall.
My heart pulsates to the rumble of the howling wind.
My soul is like a leashed animal
waiting to be unchained.

There is a great need from within my spirit to release
the powers of adventure,
but I wait to be freed from the chains of the world.
My wings are willing and ready to take flight
to a far distant land.
Oh, how my heart saddens to know that I am bound
here in a cage.
until man realizes that he can not hold back
from the winds that call him to flight.

By Diane R. Kopps



HELL ON HARDING ROAD

Dorothy Olson

Drops of the steady, early spring rain rinsed winter's grime from the two windows in my efficiency apartment. The illuminated hands of my square plastic alarm clock pointed to 10:30 on that frightful Friday night in 1978. I was in the deepest period of my sleep, exhausted from working a daily full-time job and a part-time job four nights a week.

The sounds of bodies being propelled against the cheap, flimsy, thin wooden front door accompanied by a flood of obscenities awakened me. My heart played hopscotch in my arteries. Drenched with fear and shock, I lay motionless in the glare of harsh streetlights streaming through my window. Even though my telephone sat on the floor within my reach, begging me to call the police, I



Angel Corao, photographer

couldn't move! I couldn't comprehend the chaos.

After a few minutes, I started to tremble. I dashed from my rumples daybed across the kitchen/living room. As I plastered myself against the unyielding door to listen, I heard a conversation among fragments of obscenities.

"He has a knife! I have a scissors!" yelled a deep-voiced, angry black man.

At least four to six men and women with weapons were outside my door! These facts flipped on some switches in my head, "Dorothy, call the police!"

With the cool telephone receiver clenched firmly in my hot, perspiring palms, I whispered, "Des Moines Police Department," to the operator.

"I'll connect you!"

"Thank you!" I croaked from my dry throat.

"Police Department," I heard as the sergeant on duty answered the phone. Immediately I became aware of the shrill, rhythmic beeping tones that told me our conversation was being taped. "Hello! I live at 659 Harding Road, Apartment 16 on the third floor. There is a fight going on right outside my door! They have a knife and a pair of scissors. They keep crashing against my door! It may cave in!"

"Ma'am, we'll come if you'll come down and let us in. The main door has a security lock," he informed me.

Obviously, he knew the building well. Flashbacks from previous conversations and visions of people sucking in their breath when they were made aware of my address raced through my mind. "I know this neighborhood is marginal," Mrs. Denium, the owner of the building, had once admitted.

"I can't!" I wailed. "I can't go through all of that fighting! Just listen to it! I'm scared that I'll get hurt! You can break the glass window in the security door! Besides, the door isn't usually locked. Someone props it open with a rock."

"Sorry, we can't do that!" was followed by the hopeless click of his receiver in my ear!

I sat there stunned, still gripping the receiver with a deafening dial tone blaring from it. "No wonder people lack faith in the Des Moines Police Department! They don't even know my name!" I thought angrily.

I could still hear the bloody, violent battle and feel the vibrations from their bodies slamming into the weakening door and walls. I fumbled for my personal phone directory and found Mrs. Denium's phone number. I frantically dialed and prayed that I'd hear her, "Hello."

I did. "Mrs. Denium!" I gasped. "This is Dorothy. There is a terrible battle being fought right outside my door and the police won't come!" I screamed, allowing my panic to show.

"OK, Dorothy, I'll be there in twenty to thirty minutes. Remember, I live clear out on Southeast Lacona!"

"Please hurry!" I begged. After hanging up, I began screaming and pounding on the door. "Please quit it out there! I can't stand it! I've called the police!"

Twenty minutes passed. Each powerful thud promised to snap the weak door from its hinges. I shoved my

grandmother's small three-drawer antique dresser on casters in front of the door to block its pending collapse and their unwelcome entry. Feeling the terror building inside me, I redialed the Des Moines Police Department number. "Police Department," answered the same uncaring man.

"Hello! It's me again! Please come! They are still fighting..."

The apathetic policeman hung up before I could finish my plea. I hung up too, forgetting my self-preservation routine. I had found it necessary to leave the receiver off the hook each night. This prevented a persistent obscene caller from satisfying his pleasures at my expense. As the phone jangled, I jumped feeling sure that it was the offensive caller again!

Knowing I needed a free phone line, I picked up the receiver, said nothing and tried to break the connection. I hastily banged the receiver buttons up and down. I could hear his sickening breathing. I gave up! I couldn't break the connection! I was trapped! I had no communication with the outside world! The phone began ringing constantly! The fight raged on!

I ran to the window and considered tying sheets together and climbing down to the parking lot below. "No, I can't! Two sheets won't reach three stories. What if the knots came untied?" I thought.

Even if I had escaped down to the puddled asphalt, I would have taken on a whole new list of dangers. I remembered taking unnecessary chances in the winter by just being in the vicinity alone at night. This was spring; warmer weather brought the weirdos out of the woodwork. I had no place to go! I had witnessed the untrustworthy quality of my neighbors, and the thought of walking past the huge, old, dark, eerie shadowy cemetery across the street sent a new batch of fears shivering through me.

I paced back and forth with my cold, clammy hands plattered over my ears. I wanted to block out the incessantly ringing phone and the constant fighting. I screamed repeatedly, "Quit it! I've called the police!"

Somehow I had survived forty-five minutes when, suddenly the hallway became unnaturally quiet. My heart was beating as loudly as the never-ending ringing of the phone. Then, I heard knocking on the door, followed by the familiar voice of Mrs. Denium, "The trouble is over. Everything is OK!"

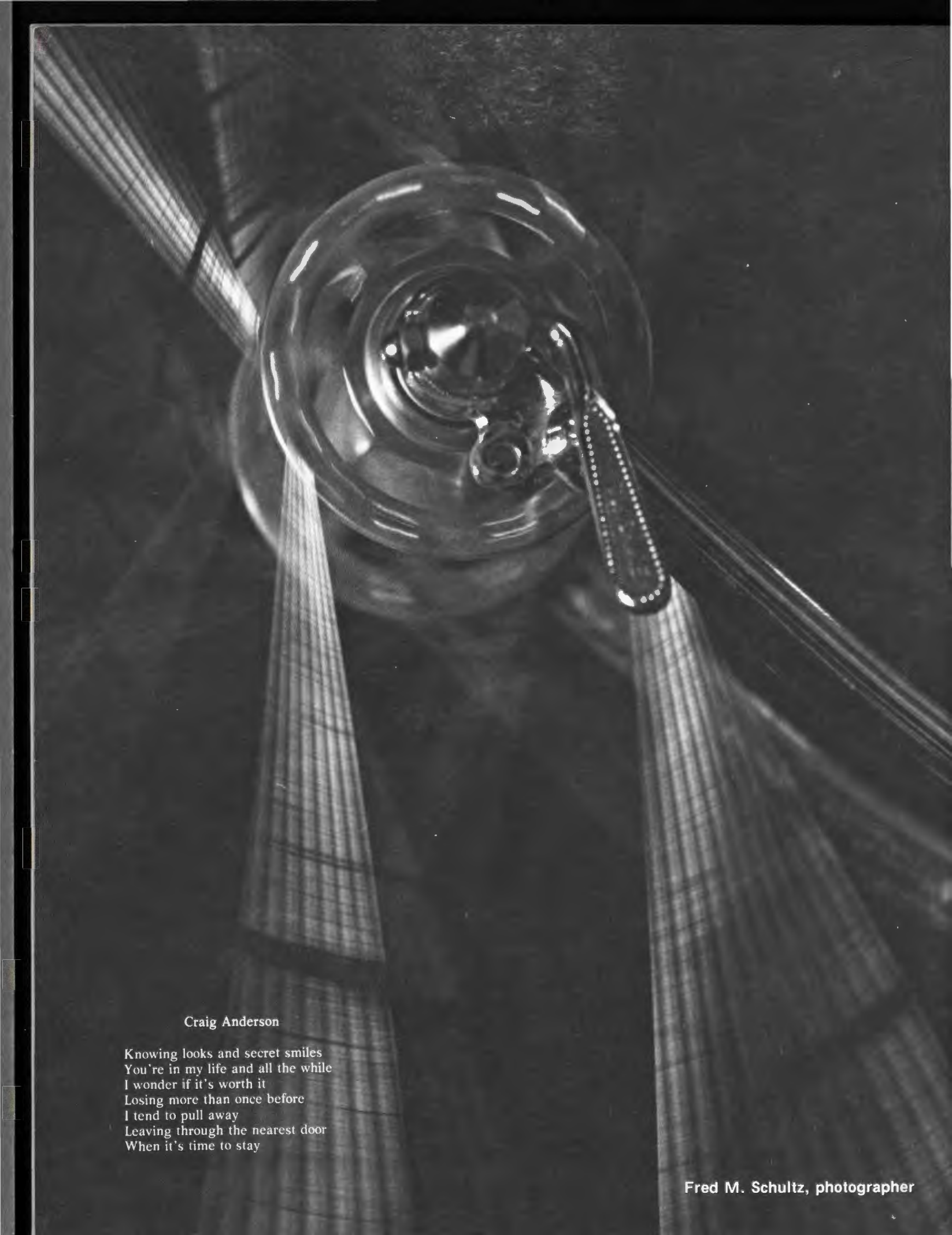
Her welcome entrance brought a feeling of security.

"Aren't you going to answer your phone?" asked a puzzled Mrs. Denium.

"No, it's one of those 'el sickos'!" I snapped.

"I'll take care of this!" she replied as she grabbed the phone. With an authoritative "Hey, we know who you are, and we're telling the police," she successfully threatened my obscene caller.

The bright luminous hands on my alarm clock read 12:30. No ringing phone and no fight. My windows were cleaner. My door was weaker. I was wiser. Soon I would move!



Craig Anderson

Knowing looks and secret smiles
You're in my life and all the while
I wonder if it's worth it
Losing more than once before
I tend to pull away
Leaving through the nearest door
When it's time to stay

Fred M. Schultz, photographer