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Expressions

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1986

Expressions 1986

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EXPRESSIONS



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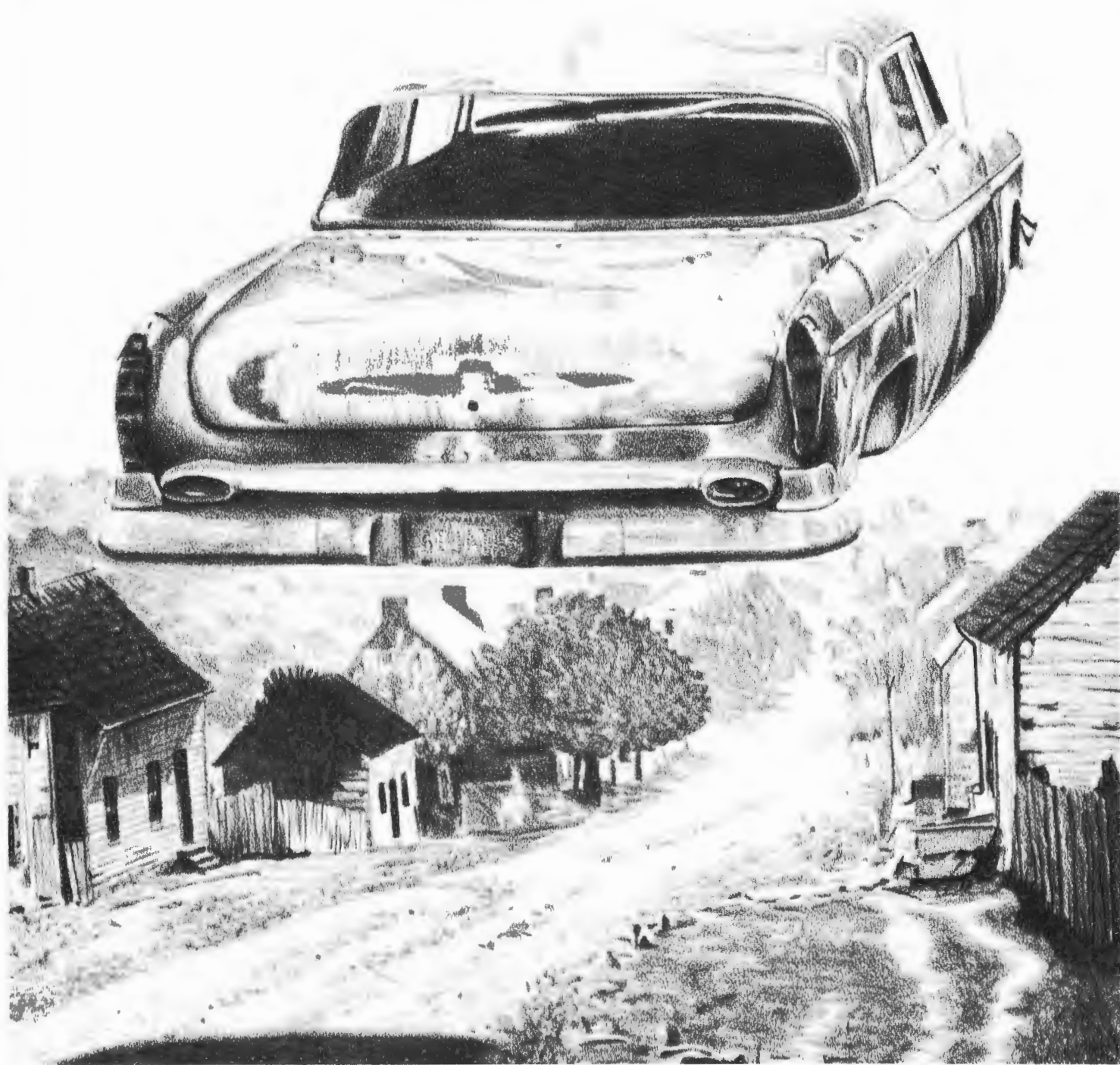
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by Loren Chantland

Expressions

BATALIA

by Mark Manning

August 27 th

Here in Batalia were suppose to git our rain in July but this year it did not hapen that way. It is all comin down at once. We aint had no rain at all last month and then this month we git enuff for 4 years. Maybe even 5 years. Today is the 24th day of rain. Last week the Nashnal Gard came and made evrybody git out of town. They sayed we are in a lot of danger. I do not think so tho. God watches out for peepel in Batalia, Alabama. Ma used to say we were Gods chozin peepel. Miss Hendrix is my 5th grade teecher and she says that Chewish peepel are Gods chozin peepel becaws of all the payn they had to go threw. I do not no what kind of payn they had to go threw but it must have been a lot to git to become Gods chozin peepel. I think that if to be Gods chozin peepel they have to go threw a lot of payn then I wood think that Leeona and Ruby Knight shoold become Gods chozin peepel. I do not think thows 2 niggers

have had a happy day in there lifes. What with Leeona in that wheel chair since that axcident done kilt her ol man. Pa told me he was a good for nothin son of a bitch. I do not no why pa thawt that but he did.

August 28 th

I wint to see thows 2 pore niggers today. I do not think they wonted to see me. They akted like they did but I do not think they reelly did. I think I wint there becaws I am so lonly. They did not no I was here in town. They done herd I got kilt in a mud slide. If they done think I was ded I wooda thawt that they wooda ben happy to see me unles they dun think I came back from the ded. Today is the 25th day of the rain. On the way over to Leeonas hows I saw the hows where me and ma and pa liffd at. It looked awful. I think it is gonna go over the hill eether today or tomorow. The bordes on the sides of the hows had broken in playces. The windows had done

gone out. I do not no if they fell out on there own or if some body broke them out. The ol junk cars in the back of the hows had done gone over. Parts of the ruf were missin to. I think those missin peeces of shingels done ben missin befor the rain ever came and I do not remember them bein gone. I told Leeona Knight while I was there today that I thawt she was Gods chozin peepel. She akted like she done redy to cry. Ruby asked me where I was stayin at but I did not tell her that I was stayin at the Greely hows. I did not tell them becaws I thawt they may want to brake in here and steel somethin. Leeona and Ruby may be Gods chozin peepel but I do not think they can be trusted. Even if she is in a wheel chair. And I think Leeona drinks. She must git drunk and tell Ruby to dothings that are not good things to do but with Ruby bein her dawter and all Ruby duz what her ma wants. I think Leeona and Ruby are religus peepel to. They are allways showten the lords name and sayin somethin I do not understand.

August 29 th

This is the 26th day of the rain. Tho the sun did come out for a little wile. It was out from about 10 o klok to 2 o klok. Leeona and Ruby dun fownd out where I am at. They dun stoped by here 2 times today to see if I was ok. I told them I was but I did not invite them in the hows. Pa used to tell me that I wood be called the lowist skum on the erth if I let a nigger come in my hows. I do not on why he sayed that but he did.

August 29 th layter

This evnin made 3 times today thos 2 crayze niggers came by here to see if I was all rite. I told them that I may be 11 years old but I can take care of my self. They browt me some supper from there hows. It was nigger food but it was the best thing I have had to eat in over a week. They browt over corn bread to. That was reel good to. They sayed that I cood come over to there playce tomorow to eat if I wanted to. I do not no bout them for shewer yet tho. When they were over here today they sayed that there were 4 other people who stayed in Batalia after thos Nashnal Gard peepel left last week. They also sayed that we were the luky peepel. They sayed that we all are Gods chozin peepel. I do not no that I have ben threw so much payn as thos 2 or the Chewish. They sayed that God was gonna be watchen out for all of us peepel in Batalia. The Greelys hows here is reel nice. They had curtens that matched the cowch and chairs. They even have carpet down in evry room. It dont go all the way to the walls but it covers most of the floor. In our hows ma only put thos little rugs down in front of the sink and in the bath room and at the front door and at the back door. She sayed that there is where the peepel make the biggist messes of all.

August 30 th

This mornin I wint over to Leeonas and Rubys hows. From the out side there

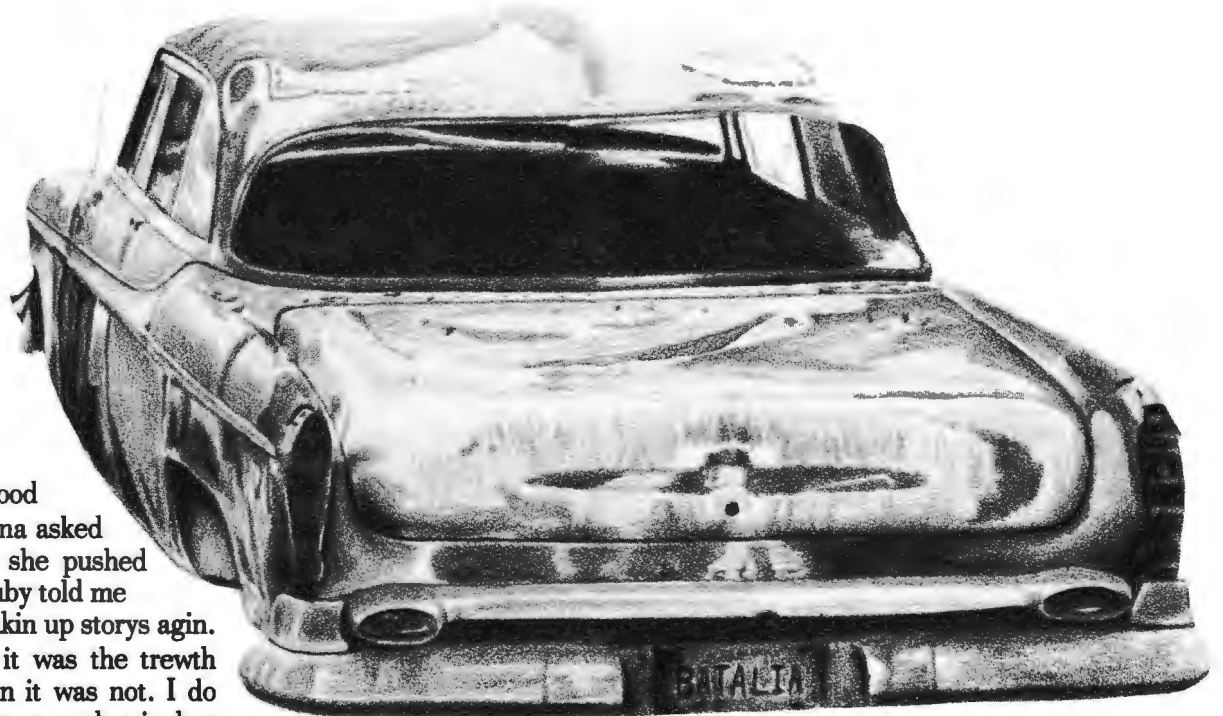
hows looked reel bad but on the in side there hows was as cleen as any hows in Batalia. Pa all ways sayed that niggers liffd like animals and did not give a shit bout nothin. He sayed that they deestroyed evrythin they put there hands on. I do not think that is trew any more. May be the ones that he new did but Leeonas and Rubys hows was reel cleen. May be win he and ma git back to Batalia he will want to go over there and see that they do not all liff like that. Wont he be sirprized. This mornin for brake fast Ruby fixed us all some eggs and bacon and towst and lots of grits. She sayed that she had dun run out of lots of food but becaws there was nobody at the grochery store she sorta helped her self to the thing she needed. I think that will be all right with Mr. Hillman. Ruby and Leeona can jus pay him for the things they took when he gits back to Batalia with evrybody else. I asked Leeona what it was like to a nigger and a crippeled won at that. She made a joke of it and sayed honey there aint nothin rong with me. I jus got so tired af whayten on white folks that I desided they cood whayt on me. Win she sayed that her and Ruby started laffin so hard. I was not so shewer what they were laffin at but I started laffin to. And win I started laffin they started laffin even more. The sun started shinin after we ate brake fast and we desided to go out side. I was reel sad and hirt win I saw that pas and mas hows wint over the hill. I felt like I wonted to cry but then I did not feel so bad. Leeona started up with more jokes bout how hard it was to git her wheel chair threw the mud

but wonce she did it was all down hill from there. That time tho I think I understood what the joke was about. Thos nigger wimmen shur are funny. I told them that I had to come back here to take care of some bizness but I reely wonted to come back here and rite in this becaws so much is happenin that I was frayed that I wood forget what all happened. I am gonna go back over to there playc. Ruby even did the dishes rite after dinner. Ma always wayted till rite before bed or the next day to do hers.

August 30 th layter

Leeona sayed she aint frayed to die. She sayed that Gods chozin peepel wernt frayed to die. Cents she put it that way I do not think I am frayed to die. Ruby sayed that we do not have any thin to worry bout dien. We were havin lunch win we herd a lowd noyze. Win Ruby wint out side to see what happened she sayed that I shood stay at the tabel and feed Leeona. I wonted to no what happened but I wonted to no what it was like to feed some body a lot older than me. I asked Leeona what thos straps that kept her back against the chair were for. She sayed that was her seet belt for win Ruby was drunk and got reckless win she was pushin her in her chair. She sayed wonce Ruby was drunk and was pushin her threw the hows and ackten crayze and pushed her rite across the street and she hit a parked car. And then she started laffin agin. She kept rite on laffin till Ruby came back in side. Leeona wonted to no what the comoshin was

bout but Ruby wood not tell her. Leeona asked Ruby bout the time she pushed her out the door. Ruby told me that Leeona was makin up storys agin. Leeona kept sayin it was the trewth and Ruby kept sayin it was not. I do not no if it is the trew or not but it shur is a funny story. We all came back over here to the Greely hows for lunch. Win we left Leeonas and Rubys hows we saw what made that lowd noyz we herd erlier. It was thos 2 howses next to Leeonas and Rubys. They wint over the side. No body sayed nothin cept Ruby win she had trubbel gitten Leeonas wheel chair threw the mud. It aint very far from Leeonas and Rubys hows to the Greely hows even tho they are on opasit ends of town. Bout haf way here it started rainin agin. We all got wet but no body minded much. No body sayed any thin if they did any way. I had not noticed how many billdings were missin befor we walked back here. Leeona and Ruby took a nap and I came in here and rote.



August 30 th even layter

Ruby fixed us dinner tonite. It was reel good. It was white peeples food but I did not think it tasted any better than nigger food. After dinner we had a long talk bout what wood happin to good people after they died. Ruby held me on her lap and kept playin with my hair. I asked her if I cood touch her hair and she sayed yes. It felt funny at first but not for long. I figurd it wood be ezer to keep cleen. It felt good to have her hold me. Ma or pa never did that. Leeona and Ruby treeted me difrently than did ma and pa. Pa was all waysto drunk to care. Ma was all ways to bizee takin care of pa to spend

any time with me. She did not seem to have time for any thin els except makin pa happy. Ruby tawt me how to play a card game. I won but I think she let me win. We herd a lowd noyze like erlier today but no body had to say any thin becaws we all new it was the hows next door that wint over the side of the hill. I had a reel strange feelin. Why did I have to wait for some thin to happen like this befor I ever felt good? I do not think it is me that is makin me feel so good. I think it is Leeona and Ruby that is makin me feel so good. Them and God. I gess I feel so good becaws I am a chozin persin. I hope Leeona and Ruby feel good to. I am gittin reel tired and I am gonna stop riten for tonite and go to bed.

THE LESSON

by Lola Peters

*The spent match
dropped in haste
smolders*

*I kiss the watery blister
rising
like a tiny white balloon
on her chubby finger*

*I dry
her Smurf-blue eyes
and hope the lesson learned
remains*

*When passion
lights the fire*



by Milo M. Mendenhall



by Scott Fabritz

Fall 1986

TUESDAY

by Paul Miller

*Such beautiful hair
feather-soft
curling round her fingers
as she runs them
through and through
a mere hint of a breath
would send strands floating
past a pale cheek
surely more lovely than any I've seen
and I've been looking*

*feeling my stare she looks up
and of course I look away
frightened
that's how I am sometimes
yet my gaze returns ever again
it is useless to even attempt studying
on Tuesdays*



by Loren Chantland

Expressions

HAVE A GOOD ONE

by Bev Cranmer

May 1

Dear Dad,

How are things down south? I'm doing pretty good up here, now that the snow's gone and I can ride my bike. I'd been going crazy just looking at it since Christmas. It was really a great surprise. Thanks, Dad. You should see me on it--vicious, real vicious.

I thought you might be having trouble thinking of a birthday present for me, so I decided to make it easy for you. (You don't have to thank me.) There's this electric guitar I've been looking at, it's used, only \$99.95. Maybe you and Gramps could go in together and just send money. No, I don't mind doing your shopping for you.

Mom says I can take guitar lessons as long as I keep up my trombone (gag me). You know her, she's on a big 'balanced life kick. Last year it was health food. She was almost killing us until Paul got mad and said he didn't marry her to eat wheat germ and

yogurt all the time. So she quit--maybe she'll give up on this year's kick too. I live in hope.

Anyway, these guys at school are putting together a band. I'm in as soon as I get my own guitar. I'm counting on you, Dad. If Mom has her way, I'll end up playing symphony concerts instead of school dances.

Love,
Eric

P.S. I may not be able to come down this summer. I might get this job as a bus boy at a Mexican joint--only \$2.50 an hour, but all the tacos you can eat. I really need the money. I can't do anything on the stingy allowance I get around here.

Also, I'm trying to get into a summer algebra class, so I can take geometry this fall. My school counselor says that's the only way I can get all the math I'll need to get into a good college and Med school. I'm going to miss fishing and water skiing with you, but they say these days that if you don't plan for your career in high

school, you'll be too far behind to compete in college.

Hey, Paul has been taking me out in the country and letting me drive. (Mom wouldn't--she's such a pansy.) I read the driver's manual, the test will be a cinch. I'm going to take it on my birthday. I'll be ready to drive your Vette when I get down there. Maybe over Labor Day weekend. (They do let 14yr. olds drive in Florida, don't they? Who cares--we can find some back roads.)

The Ace

May 15

Hey Ace,

Thought I'd send you a little extra--you'll need an amp. for that guitar, won't you? Besides, you did save me a lot of shopping time, and like they say: Time is money.

What's this talk about not coming down for the summer? Don't tell me you'd choose dirty dishes and math

assignments over sun and surf and girls in bikinis. This can't be my kid talking--not the Ace!

Your plans for college are fine, but aren't you pushing yourself a little too hard? You don't want to burn out, do you?

I've got a plan. I've just started to work for a new agency--they've set me up in a little office in the suburbs. I'm looking for some summer help. Pays \$5.00 an hour and the job's yours if you want it. Just think, you'd be learning the insurance business all day and cruisin' all night. Just us guys, what do you say? (Don't worry about your Mother, I know how to handle her.)

HAPPY 14TH---HAVE A GOOD ONE!

Love,
Dad

July 2

Mom,

Things are going great! It's hard to believe I'm getting this kind of money for such easy work. (Filing papers, sharpening pencils, emptying the trash, mowing the patch of grass out front once a week.) This insurance stuff is choice.

We've been eating out a lot--yes, I always order vegetables (french fries are made out of potatoes, right?). Got a small problem, though. I just might forget how to load a dishwasher by the time I get home. (Laugh, Mom, that was a joke.)

We've been seeing some great

movies--with my new haircut and my shades I must look like I'm seventeen, cause not one theater has asked to see my ID. Can you believe that?

I'm not sure I'll make it home soon enough to go to those marching practices, so I'll probably not make the band this year. But I'll still be involved in music--I'm better than ever on my guitar. You should hear me. I can play almost all the songs on Dad's Led Zeppelin albums.

Oh, by the way, I forgot to turn in a schedule change before I left. Would you call the school and try to get me into that algebra class. If it's too late, just sign me up for general math.

Love,

The Ace

(You know, Mom...Eric)

July 23

Dear Eric,

I suppose you know that your father called me last night. I hope he relayed to you, in no uncertain terms, that you are NOT going to spend your freshman year in Florida. You have plane reservations for August 20th--BE ON THAT PLANE.

I called the school. They said they would make room for you in algebra because of your test scores and last year's grades. The advisor said it was a shame that someone with your potential hadn't gotten that class out of the way during the summer.

Band practice starts the 25th. You're

enrolled in marching band for the Fall and Concert Orchestra in the Spring. We'll see how that goes before we decide about guitar lessons. El Patio Cafe still has a help wanted sign in the window. Maybe you'll be able to work a few hours a week during the school year.

We've really missed you this summer. It's quiet as a morgue around here. Food is actually rotting away in the refrigerator. My nails are a mess from all this dishwashing and I'm afraid Paul has forgotten how to yell "Turn it down" from behind the newspaper. Seriously, Honey, we'll be glad to have you home.

Love,
Mom and Paul

P.S. Paul says to tell you that he's going to an auction on Saturday to see if he can find a car for you--an old VW or something--one that needs work. He's planning for the two of you to fix it up, then when you're sixteen, you'll have a car to drive and the know-how to keep it running.

Mom

Sept. 3

Dad,

Sure do miss you. It was a great summer, wasn't it? One to remember. The guys around here aren't believing the things I'm telling them. You know Tony Williams--you met him that time you came up for the Computer Fair Awards Banquet--he said the most exciting part of his summer was a

JANUARY 28, 1986

by Tom Devries

The oranges froze near Cape Canaveral.

Family and friends

huddled in the winds,

Sipped coffee and smiled.

Crowds waved from the grandstands.

All cameras were trained on McAuliffe.

She had courted a nation, and it adored her.

Scobee told Smith to get ready; Jarvis

Turned toward McNair; Onizuka winked

At Resnik; they laughed and descended the stair.

When ushered to the launch-pad, they waved goodbye.

But what knew we, we cheered them on to ride.

11:37:30 a.m.

Up burst Challenger with a gusher of flames!

A tail of smoke trailed into the sky

And seventy-two seconds over the cape:

Explosion of smoke strewed debris through the sky!

A father errantly smiled; the horror on

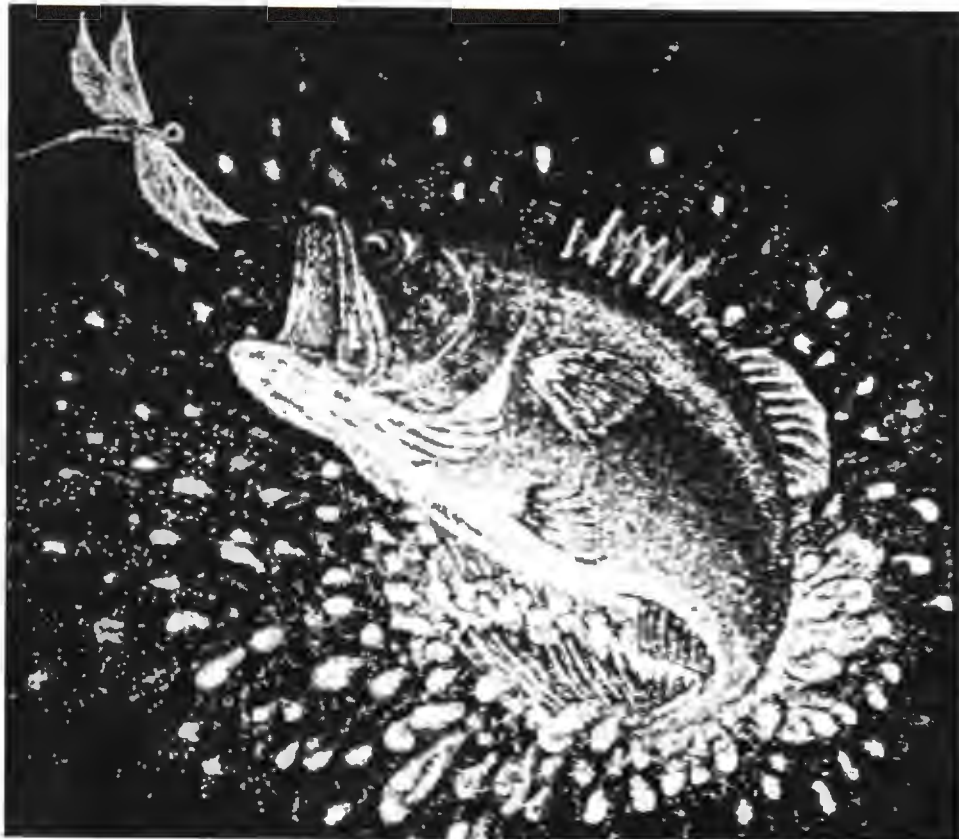
The mother's face, her hands still clapping

When public address system shook the throng,

"Obviously, something drastic is wrong..."



by Richard Hawkins



by Dody Ray

TO MEN WHO LIKE TO FISH

by Tom Devries

*They stand and stare with rod and reel
Into the shallowness of the stream.
Its flow's tumultuous, at times serene.
They flock the bank; they cast and reel
And bait with hooks the pain and grief
They feel. And everyman's a fish
When his pocketbook's in pain. The leaves
From trees are driven; streams grow cold.
And men flee from the sub-degrees,
But not the vanity of human wishes.
In their pools lie the slaughtered fishes:
Schools of suckers embark on the unknown;
Blind leading the blind, they hook and hold.
Yet drop their pose when all is sere:
Men possessed by the dying year.*

SPOKEN WITHOUT A SOUND

by Mark Becker



by Melody Banks

The shadows from the trees had crept unnoticeably across the interstate. The only thing that kept the thick blanket of darkness from engulfing my vision was the piercing glow of headlights. Beads of water appearing on the windshield were soon slapped off with the windshield wipers' consistent accuracy. The darkness seemed to cover itself mysteriously, and the rain sang a song with virtually no melody.

I hadn't understood most of the things that had gone on this week. Audiences were not responding to our program as we were accustomed to. The jokes had lost their punch and seemed to lull the crowds to laughter. Even with a wide variety in our repertoire and a tight performance by the band and vocalists, the response we were receiving was at an all time record low. Something was lacking, but just what it was, I had no idea.

A set of flashing lights then appeared in the distance. The screaming of air pressure being released sounded as I slammed on the brakes in an effort to slow down ten tons of bus. Ignoring the lights' silent call, the rest of the traffic continued on. It was I who stopped to investigate.

At the edge of the median a man was standing. I called out to inquire if I could help. His only response was a motion for me to follow. After locking the brakes, I exited the bus and proceeded across the highway down

into the median. There a passenger car, now stuck in the mud, had apparently slid out of control due to the wet road conditions. I could now see there were two gentlemen instead of one, both of whom had been unsuccessful in dislodging the car.

"Are either of you hurt?" I asked, while examining the extent of their dilemma.

They gave no response.

"Well, it's sure stuck. Have you called for help yet?" I inquired.

Again, they didn't respond.

I was busy looking at the rear wheels when I realized my inquiries had not been answered. While staring at the tires it dawned on me that I was alone in a ditch at night with two total strangers that had not spoken a word to me. I had no protection, and no one in the bus knew I was out here. Fear began to grip hold of me.

Looking up at them I could see their hands moving aimlessly about. My ears picked up some of the unintelligible noises they were making. I thought to myself, "What are they doing, and what are they planning to do to me?" After gawking at them for what seemed to be an eternity, I finally asked, "Can either of you hear me?"

They were shaking their heads to and fro while pointing to their ears and mouths. The extent of their situation was greater than I had anticipated, for

they could neither speak nor hear. It was not until I took the time to listen to what they were not saying audibly that I understood their message.

I summoned a wrecker for them, and we succeeded in getting their car back on the road.

My emotions had done quite a turn about from the moment I first became fearful to the time of our parting when compassion swelled within me. I was thankful for the rain that disguised my tears when we shared goodbyes.

Never before had I recognized the power of nonverbal communication. The warmth of their handshake, the glow of their smile, their cheery disposition and silent laughter had really spoken to me.

Back in the driver's seat, I began the seemingly never ending process of shifting gears; and the bus lunged forward.

The darkness kicked off its cover and displayed its beauty while the rain harmonized with the rhythm of the windshield wipers. Likewise, perhaps the message we were sending to our audiences was completely different from that which we had thought it to be.

Awakened from sleep, one of my colleagues from inside the bus called out, "Who was that, and what did they want?"

Smiling, I eased back into the seat and replied, "I don't know. They didn't say."

ONE NIGHT IN THE WOODS

by Tom Devries

*My head hurts, and a callous society
Wears me down. I walk to the edge of town;
Meander on down Coalbank's crooked spine,
Past the bridge, through the grass, to cottonwood trees
Along Iowa's boulder-stream bank and up
Log-decayed, thicket-mingled foliage entangled
With vine and berry. A speckled doe, startled,
Leaps through the bushes and into the trees.
A hawk sails lazy like a wayward kite—
Drops from the sky. And sun-lit water falls
Down a pinnacle of rock, rippling
Reflections on the placid water's pool.
And there I make myself at home, and there
I gather stick and stone, stake-up a tent;
And soon enough, beside a yellow fire
The sweltry, sticky August air grows cool.
Dim clouds drift by through the darkening sky—
Wrapped in the swollen darkness, where breezes blow
The twisted shadows of trees; blinking eyes stare
Out of the night, and from my tent I peek
To see shapes through shadows of things that move
In the slant pallor of the midnight moon.
And gleaming pool reflects each fading star
Till the dawn breaks upon a sunken fire
As sun yawns over the horizon. A quiet
Symphony serenades the drowsy wood.
An old oak limb, drooping, jumps in the wind;
Conducts the crickets' trumpets over the drum
Of an owl's hoot, and roars of bullfrogs' bass
Embrace the violin winds while flutes of birds
Whistle in time with the fluid liquid rhyme
Of the bustling sharp stream upon flat rocks.
Everything, caught so harmoniously
In the music as it flows past the woods,
Down the river, up the hills, through the meadows
Till it far off in the distance awakens
The murderous applause of the ages.*



by Richard Hawkins

A DAUGHTER'S FLAWLESS VISION

by Pat Underwood

*My father would come in
from the fields at night
nearly crazy from the swirling dust.
My brothers and I hushed into whispers
as if we still heard the hurt
of the tractor's roar. We knew.
My handsome father
with his hair combed neatly back
in softened rows
resembling his groomed fields
should not have had
to breathe the blackened soil.
His unbreakable evenness
should have been rewarded
in some wonderful way.
Instead, I'd take off
his shoes and socks
when he relaxed to read
the evening paper
and trim his toenails,
thick as corduroy.
I remember picking up the ashtrays
as soon as his cigarettes were cold
and twisting my wrist
in a quick jolt
so the white butts
fell into the discarded papers
as if they had been killed.*

*My father spent his 70th year
learning the meaning of various phrases.
The doctors looked away
as they stammered for explanation.
Peering out my window
at the green freshness of spring
makes me think just now
of when he taught my boys
to catch a squinny alive,
and how snakes, strange hearts,
and granddaddy longlegs can be good.*



by Jill Egnew



by Suzanne Peterson

EASY TO BE ME

by Jane Carsurd

My social life was in a rut. My blue jeans and cowboy boots needed a rest. My stomach begged for tasteful morsels other than pizza and beer, as my ears yearned for musical sounds other than country western rock.

It was time to celebrate. The wind chill was above zero, the roads were finally open, and the Siberian Express had moved out of the state.

"Dust off you three piece double knit," I told my husband, "lets hit the town 'scrubbed-up style'," and I began taking steps to create a new image. In the back of the closet, I found what I had in mind, a dress. I rummaged through an array of shoes to find a pair of skinny four inch heels, then refreshed my memory as I read through the directions that came with the panty hose. "With feet close together, alternating from leg to leg, gently but firmly pull over calf, knee, and thigh." With my hair bouncing in curls, dress clinging to my feminine form, hose firming and flattening, and mini shoes squeezing my feet, I was ready. My confidence peaked with a look in the full length mirror as it reflected a striking resemblance to Olivia Newton-John.

The restaurant we chose was quite nice with tablecloths, centerpieces, and soft music. The maitre d'seated us and before-dinner drinks were

served in fancy glasses with fruit draped over the edge. A young, handsome, male waiter asked if we were ready to order and served our meal with a white cloth folded over his arm. Deep in my memory, the use of forks surfaced and I began dine with the etiquette of Emily Post.

Sipping on our creamed after dinner drinks and puffing on our cigarettes, we spoke of our eloquent meal. Graciously, I excused myself and headed for the ladies' room to freshen up. After relieving myself, I gently tugged at my panty hose remembering direction number three; "Gently but firmly pull panty hose as high on each leg as you can until the crotch panel is positioned correctly." With a quick look in the mirror, I added a little dab here, a little dab there to my face, and fluffed my hair. "Lookin; good, Olivia," I whispered to the mirror.

As I was returning to our table, I recognized friends dining across the room. Anxious for my friends to see me in something other than blue jeans, I headed for their table. I had an overwhelming feeling that everyone was looking at me and my confidence told me it was my smashing style. "Jane," they greeted me with sheepish grins, "your hair looks great. Love your dress. Nice legs and ass. Uh....you've got your dress tucked inside your panty hose."



REGRETS ON A SLEEPLESS NIGHT

by Debra Peckumn

My sleep bubble is burst and there's no question who the culprit is. I crack one eye open just enough to see the lighted dial of the princess phone on the nightstand. Years of experience have trained me to answer after only one ring. Each time, I pray for a wrong number, even an obscene call, so I can hang up and return to my cocoon. But the reply is the same: "Diane, this is

Jeanette at the hospital.”

“Yes, Jeanette?”

“Dr. Baker has a patient in E.R. with headaches. They want to do an arteriogram. I already called Dr. Quinn and he said for you to come on in and phone him when you’re ready to start.”

“Headaches? Does he have a neurological consult yet?”

“I don’t know.”

There’s no point interrogating Jeannette further, because it will only frustrate me further and delay the inevitable. I thought these routs out of bed would decrease after x-ray training, but seniority as a registered technologist seems directly proportioned to nights on call. “O.K. I’ll be there in fifteen minutes.” I put the receiver back to its bed and roll out of mine. The routine is so automatic, I sometimes find myself already clothed and brushing my teeth, wondering who got me dressed. Blue jeans and a gray sweatshirt comprise my “uniform.”

After midnight, getting there quickly outranks dress code. I grab my parka and gloves, the keys to the Honda, and head out the door. The engine reluctantly turns over, and as I pass the -20 degree readout on the time and temperature bank sign, I know why it complained. Stop signs seem like a mere formality at 2:30 a.m., but I brake to a stop at University for a little time to think. This is the third consecutive night after midnight to get called, but I seesaw between anger and why-me to flat resignation that this

is what they’re paying me for.

A carload of late night party-ers passes before I proceed, and I remember the patient I got called in for last night. Mr. Rafferty was sitting in a wheelchair, reading *Time* and smelling like he splashed on a little Old Spice before they came to get him from his room. I usually don’t have to furnish conversation with my technical expertise this late, because the patient’s condition doesn’t usually afford him that luxury. The hardened standard line of hospital personnel is that ‘after midnight patients should be bleeding and on a cart.’ So when he asked if he could finish his article before I did his test, I internally hit “TILT;” externally smiled politely, and replied, “I don’t think so.” As it turned out, if longevity depended on the condition of cerebral arteries alone, he was good for at least another 50 years. Maybe after ten years, my tolerance is getting a little low. And maybe when compassion and caring turn to anger and self-pity, it’s time to get out.

My thoughts return to the present and I make the last familiar turn to the Emergency entrance. Entering the front door, the security guard asks if he can help me. Instead of answering truthfully, I simply reply, “On call for radiology;” and continue walking. Minus the usual doctors, orderlies, patients, wheelchairs, and bright lights of the daytime, the corridors seem asleep, too. In radiology, I yell a little “Hello” to Jeanette to see where she is. Instead of a reply, I find a note

taped to the front desk. ‘Diane, Your patient’s name is Don Geisse, age 38, Hospital Number 333-492. Dr. Quinn wants to do a four vessel study. Call ER when you’re set up. I’m in the call room if you need me. Jeanette.’ I feel alone, with only the scent of anti-septic and silence of the halls to keep me company.

While I prepare the sterile field and arrange Dr. Quinn’s instruments, I reason if we start the case at 3:30, finish at 5:00, and clean up by 5:30, I’ll have enough time to go home and shower before I have to be back at 7:00 for my regular eight hours. I fire my sterile gloves slingshot-style into the waste basket for two points and phone Phyllis in ER to tell her I’m ready.

The orderly pushes our Mr. Geisse in his own pajamas, in a wheelchair and chatting to his wife, toward my room. Assessing his condition, I feel it’s more appropriate to ask if he’d like to order a cocktail than to sign a consent for a surgical procedure. His sunbleached curls and golden tan face indicate a possible recent southern vacation. And his taupe Goeffrey Beene pajamas with matching slippers contradict my image of a critically ill patient in a thin hospital gown lying on a cart.

I introduce myself, and as I help him onto the table, he says, “I’m really sorry you had to come in to do this test on me. I told my wife it could wait until morning, but she insisted I call the doctor and he thought I better come in right away.”

"That's O.K." I say, and think to myself, "Right—the same doctor who probably said 'Call me back if you find anything wrong,' and rolled over and went back to sleep."

"Can my wife be in here with me during the exam?" asks Mr. Geisse.

As I draw up the xylocaine, I reply, "No, she will be in the waiting area just outside the room and we'll keep her informed of your condition throughout the test."

"Oh, well, about how long do you think it will take?"

"You should be up to your room in about 1 or 2 hours," I say and gladly rip off the left electrode off his hairy chest to replace it for a better tracing.

He flinches slightly and says, "Oh, then I'll be admitted. I thought maybe I could just go home after the test was done."

"No, the blood vessel where we introduce the tubing for the test has to be monitored for 24 hours in case it starts to bleed."

Dr. Quinn pokes his head in the door as I start the second scrub on Mr. Geisse's incision site. "I'm going to grab a set of scrubs from the O.R. and be right back. Set out a Type I catheter and load the injector with enough contrast for four runs," he says.

"Boy, that soap you use is really cold," says Mr. Geisse. "Do you keep it in the refrigerator or something?"

"No, of course not. We don't need any more complaints about it than we already get," I reply, and spray iodine everywhere as I hurl the used scrub

pad at the waste basket and miss.

He smiles, revealing a flawless set of ivory teeth, and said, "I'm not complaining, really. I just thought I'd see if I could get you to smile." He paused, then added, "Will I be asleep for this test?"

"No, we can't have you asleep or we wouldn't be able to tell how you were tolerating the test. Now please remember to keep your hands underneath this drape," I say as I tuck the sterile sheet under his chin.

"Well, Dr. Quinn said something about some medica—"

"We have something on hand just to relax you if we decide it's necessary. But like I already told you, you must be alert."

"I see. You really seem to know your job. Does it require formal schooling?"

"No, you get instructions out of a bubble gum machine," I think. Hoping this would be the last of the interrogation, I answer, "Yes, most schools are a two year program."

"Then did you go to school somewhere in Des Moines?"

I pretend not to hear and leave the room to get some extra gloves from the supply closet. Returning, I straighten instruments and busily open and close cabinet doors, with the hope Dr. Quinn will be back soon to take on Chatty Cathy.

"You probably didn't hear me before. Did you go to school here in Des Moines?" says Mr. Geisse.

"Uh, no. I went to the University

of Iowa."

"Well, isn't that something? My daughter wants to go there when she graduates. She's not sure what her major will be, but she's never even considered any other school. Boy, it's hard to believe my little girl is old enough to be going to college." His boyish blue eyes gaze off with that thought, and for just a moment I think about my dad's own blue eyes when he dropped me off in Iowa City to start school.

Shaking away the image, I explain, "When we actually take your picture, your head will feel very, very hot—even painful. It will last only a few seconds, then go away. It's extremely important to hold still during that time, so you don't blur the pictures. Now, do you have any questions?"

He winks, and says, "Yeah, if it's real bad, do I punch you or Dr. Quinn?"

I sigh and reply, "Dr. Quinn. But tell me so I can punch him for you. If you contaminate this area with your hands, we'll have to redrape and start all over."

We begin the test to determine if there is an abnormality of the blood vessels in Mr. Geisse's brain that could be causing his headaches. Like clockwork, the catheter is introduced and manipulated with the aid of a TV screen to the position for the first set of films. An efficient injector hook-up and we exit the room to take the films. Through a small window, I observe whether Mr. Geisse fulfills his

promise to hold still without restraints as I program and trigger the computer-run series. I return to the room to check Mr. Geisse's condition. His face is red, and his eyes water, but he smiles and says, "Not bad," when I ask how he feels. "Probably tightened my curls a little, though."

The orderly steps in to watch Mr. Geisse while we leave to process and interpret the films. Thankful to have completed the "social" part of the test and well ahead of my mental timetable, I think I may even have time for toast and coffee before I start my regular shift. I pull up a stool in front of the automatic processor and Dr. Quinn joins me in the small cubicle, holding his clasped hands up to keep them sterile. "Should be finished if you held up your end of the bargain and took good films." The first film drops out of the processor and as I reach to pick it up, I'm startled by a loud gnashing sound followed by KATHUMP, KATHUMP, KATHUMP until I throw the main switch. Opening the lid reveals a film caught in one of the gears and a backlog of others tangled in the developing tank.

"What's the problem?" asks Dr. Quinn. "Can you fix it? Don't tell me we're going to have to repeat the series."

I feign deafness, and proceed to disassemble the mess piece by piece—first, the instigator, then the other gears, and hopefully, a good portion of salvagable films. "I think I can save most of the films, but you'll have to break scrub and hold them as I pull

them out of the developer. Then I'll put them through the wash tank and dryer and you can see if we have enough information for a diagnosis." My heart lurches as I pull out the culprit film, and I hope the large white area just above the sella is an artifact from the film jam. But each subsequent film shows the same dense area in the exact same position.

With all the films displayed in the viewing room, Dr. Quinn phones Dr. Scheffert at home to notify him of the diagnosis. I eavesdrop on their conversation, but from what I hear I assume they must be talking about another patient.

Dr. Quinn leaves to inform Mr. Geisse and his family of the test results. Left alone in the viewing room, I sink to a chair and stare at the x-rays in front of me.

I'm startled from my stupor as Dr. Quinn says, "Oh, here you still are. I couldn't find you and thought maybe you went home already. Could you make copies of this brain scan and sign them out to University Hospital? Life-Flight is on their way to take him there tonight."

Completing my assigned task, I enter the hallway to find a cheery Mr. Geisse, now on a cart, and eight other family members around him. I'm baffled at his inner strength. Mrs. Geisse is now leaning over, sobbing uncontrollably, with her head on Mr. Geisse's chest. He strokes her auburn hair and makes a joke about mascara stains on his pajamas. Still sobbing, she grabs his hand as though for the last time.

Mr. Geisse then kisses his wife's hand and massages her back with his free hand, as the rest of the family looks on, victims of their own emotions and tears. I swallow hard and try to smile, as I notice a head or two has turned toward me.

"We need to go to the Emergency entrance to meet the helicopter, so if you'll follow me, I think they should be almost ready for him now." As I push the cart down the hall, I ask, "Mr. Geisse, are you warm enough?"

"I'm fine. But I wonder if you could find my wife a cup of coffee if we need to wait. She's pretty upset and I think that might help."

"Sure. Anything else?"

"No. I still feel bad that you had to come in tonight. But you did a good job, and I'm glad I'll finally be rid of these headaches."

I stand next to his family and watch the attendants wheel him to the launch pad. As they collapse the cart and load him in, I purposely grip my car keys so they dig into my palm. The beating of the helicopter blades accelerate to a deafening roar as it takes off to Iowa City, and I wish I could have made what are possibly his last hours a little more pleasant.

The first orange glow of morning lights the horizon as I head east on the freeway. I notice a few companion cars, and glance at the clock on the dash which tells me it's 6:20 a.m. As the rest of the world awakens, I stifle a yawn and pray that I can endure another eight hours when I return to work.



by Susan Staber

TOM AND SARA

by Judi Carter

I watch him follow her. She, old and regal, minding her business as old folk do, walks with her head held high. He pads along behind her, prancing as young folk do.

He follows her, but she ignores him. She sits down to her fish dinner, bending her head slightly so as not to spill. He watches her, green eyes bright, then bends over his own dish.

He needs a companion more his age to tear around with--she's too old for such youthful energy. He hides behind a door and jumps out when she walks by. She just turns and gives him a backhand swipe.

Tom and Sara are uneasy friends. Sara's had this residence for over ten years; Tom only moved in a couple of months ago.

Very unlikely compadres, these two cats.

THE WINDY CITY

A PARABLE

by Ron S. Porter

The needs of others are inversely proportional to our ability to recognize them.

I watched the landscape roll by as only riding on a train can allow, aware of every foot the lurching locomotive placed between me and the Naval training station at Great Lakes, Illinois. The snow and ice that had made marching so hard and dangerous in training seemed benign, even beautiful. It may have been dirtier than snow should have been, but the sun peeked through the clouds just enough to give it a luminescence that never existed among the mass of depressing buildings on the base. Even though it was bitterly cold, people were everywhere; in every little town that the train toured, the kids were oblivious to the cold as they darted across frozen ponds, some



by Jolene Wagoner

in the violent combat of sport and others simply enjoying the freedom of skating.

Morales and I were headed to Chicago for our first leave since boot-camp had begun. Sailors were given strict warnings about the evils of the the big city; the brainwashing of training left us nearly incapable of thinking for ourselves. I had spent a lot of time in Kansas City without any worries, but I had become a sailor. Everyone was out to get sailors; my commanding officer had told us so. Our company swarmed out of the train, and into the station, boisterous and

scared to death.

Morales suggested we find a bar and have a beer while we decided where to go and what to do. I felt a mild thrill of freedom from the many weeks of confinement as crowds of people meandered toward the concourse where even greater crowds pulsed with the action of getting somewhere. We forced our way through the throng and grabbed seats at a bar only slightly out of the mainstream of traffic. I could have stayed right there wrapped in that blanket of humanity, feeling its life and liberty.

We spent a couple of cool beers try-

ing to make sense out of our map and city guide. Eventually, we gave up and reached the consensus we would wait for more of our buddies to bum around with. We moved to the other side of the bar where the crowd's movement was reduced.

On the bench across from us, an old woman sat alone, bent over and clutching her shopping bag. Even though the building was warm from the forced hot air and the thousands of warm bodies, this woman was bundled from head to toe. She wore a tattered but full fur hat smashed down over her head. Her heavy, well-worn overcoat was misshapen from the many layers of clothing under it and a pair of faded red ski pants bulged clumsily over whatever she wore under them. On her feet, army boots hung loosely enough that I wondered how they stayed on.

She noticed me staring at her. With a smile and a brave voice that just did not fit, she asked if we were sight-seeing. I admitted we were but could not decide where to go first. I was stunned when she sprang up and jumped between Morales and myself. He still had the map out, and this ragamuffin little lady took us on an elaborate spoken tour of Chicago without even leaving the comfort of the train station. Morales kept giving me stupid looks and making rude signs behind this poor woman's back. Barely able to keep a straight face, I tried in vain to keep up a stream of polite interjections. I really stopped listening to her after her first few words, but I kept watching her every gesture.

She clutched the map shakily in one hand. With her free hand, she illustrated each attraction as if she held it in her palm. She pointed excitedly out into the cold as if it were some tropical paradise and constantly shook her head up and down as if she always agreed with herself. How could such a person really exist?

I was thinking what a comical little woman this was when I realized she was waiting for me to say something. Bringing back the words I had let wash by me, I heard her ask if we wanted to follow her somewhere. Hesitantly, I told her I didn't think so but she assured me all of the things we wanted to see were on her way home, and we could save a lot of hunting around if we allowed her to be our guide. I finally paid full attention to the map and realized that all of those places she had ranted about were in one small part of the city. Suddenly, the warnings I had received came back to me in a torrent of truly unpleasant thought. Surely this little old lady couldn't hurt us, but what if she led us into a trap? I glanced at Morales, who was adamantly shaking his head no. When she offered to feed us dinner if we would escort her home, visions of a man with a shotgun ran through my mind.

I gathered my thoughts and told her that we really had to wait for some of our buddies who would be arriving on the next train. It was a lie and I'll go to hell for it, but I wasn't going anywhere with that lady. When she finally accepted that we weren't interested, she gave me a deep, passion-

filled stare. I wanted so desperately to know what she was thinking.

"If anyone bothers you out there, just don't let them know you're scared. That'll save you, I know." Her voice was strong and proud, but her features melted into a face full of age. She smashed that silly hat even farther down on her old, gray head. With no hint of the energy she had shown us, she eased herself into the crowd and was gone from sight. That little lady made me feel small, really small. I gave Morales a questioning look, but he just stared at me, and slightly shrugged his shoulders. I lunged into the masses.

The crowd that had drawn me earlier became an unyielding tide, a wall of human flesh I couldn't fight through. I pushed, shoved and eventually forced my way to the huge glass doors that led to the snow covered world outside. The bitter cold hit me as I freed myself from the crowd. I pulled my P-coat around me, but even that blanket of thick wool was no help against such intense cold.

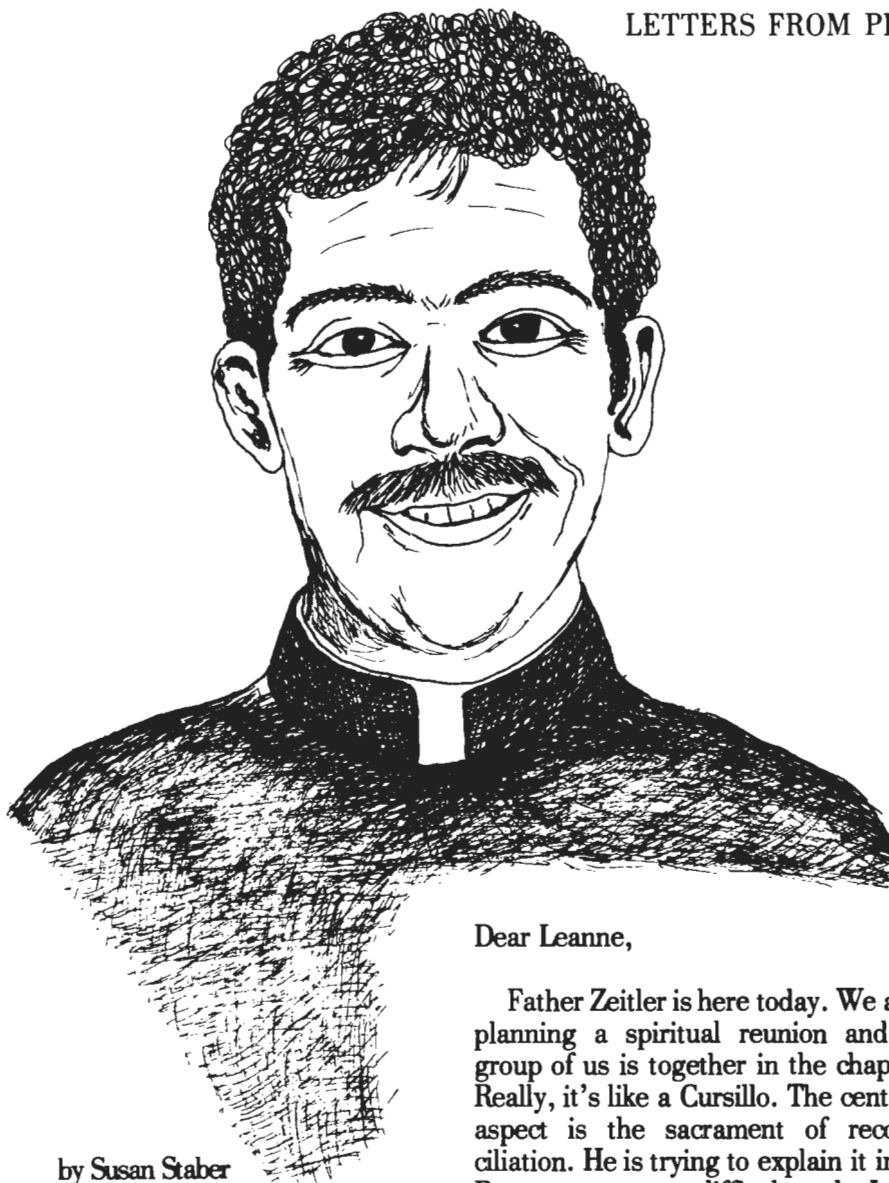
I caught sight of her for just an instant. She was hunched in a useless attempt to lessen the grip the frigid wind held on her. As I watched her glance nervously in all directions, I believed her. I believed every single word she had spoken to us. Suddenly, she straightened her frail body to a height I would never have believed possible, held her head high and disappeared around a wind-swept corner.

If you're out there, lady, I'm really sorry.

SACRAMENTS

by Kathy Tyler

LETTERS FROM PRISON (an alphabet of feelings 'A to Z')



Dear Leanne,

Father Zeitler is here today. We are planning a spiritual reunion and a group of us is together in the chapel. Really, it's like a Cursillo. The central aspect is the sacrament of reconciliation. He is trying to explain it in a Protestant way--a difficult task, I do confess. Father Zeitler, devoted to Catholicism, really believes that unless you love God and practice your faith (whatever it is)-- well, actually

stated in another way, if you sin too much, you grill. He certainly doesn't give himself qualities he doesn't have. He is using an analogy of a journey to explain reconciliation today. It is nice. He says the sacraments are paradigms of joys and sorrows--well, he didn't use the word "paradigm", but I will, because that is what he meant. And I understood that, "We," he says, "tend in great joys or sorrows to move apart from one another. The sharing of the sacraments brings us together." He is charming, controlled. I think I know what the true journey is with him--it is a journey into himself. He works on being.

His face--I think he is about 40--but he has an ageless quality--a sort of generational androgyny as if he has some sort of special dispensation to extend his youth.

The women here recognize that. He is a very sexual presence on campus and the Protestants (well, actually, anyone who is not Catholic) talk about that, not knowing that it is forbidden to think of a priest in that way. I certainly understand. He is terribly seductive, but that is because he gives and withholds so much of his own character--all at the same time.

Write,

Mom

ZINNIA

by Kathy Tyler



by Susan Staber

Fall 1986

Dear Leanne:

It was so good to talk on the phone last night. I cannot tell you how you enchant me -- what is it that is between a mother and a daughter (Maybe the cord never really is cut). I think -- certainly not between us.

Did you REALLY tell the cartoonist (when you were invited to cocktails by friends of his last night to have a drink with them) -- the one who draws "The Better Half" (you are right, how prosaic and sexist and awful) -- when he asked you what you talked about at the federal arsenal, where you, the lawyer, work: "War, sir, we talk about war."

Enough! Life cannot be all comedy. I have thought of something new to do. Let's choose what we feel are the greatest lines in literature. Your first favorite and then on down. Here's mine. It's in "Sophie's Choice."

"What is truth, anyway?"

The newest here is that we may be called by something other than "resident". Which would be a promotion, if it were not that we remain as criminal in their eyes as ever.

The very newest is that I have decided to plant flowers again next year, in spite of my prior statement. The change of mind came when I was walking outside the other day and there was this soft winged creature sitting on my zinnia totally immersed in its activity (sucking nectar). I immediately named him Queen Mab's wagoner and I could have sworn he lifted his large mild eyes and looked at me. But I didn't stay after that because I felt intrusive. And he went back to work. (I will, however, plant flowers again next year --for sure.

Write,
Mom



by Alan Newman

SEE THE WORLD

by Bill Chaney

The flight from Seattle had been uneventful, even tedious. I was a new Marine Corps private headed for my first duty station. All I had really wanted to do was to sleep, to forget my gnawing apprehension about where they were sending me. I arrived in Anchorage well after midnight and had to spend the night at Elmendorff Air Force Base, since my flight for the Aleutian Islands would not be leaving until the following afternoon. The next morning, I rode back to the airport in an Air Force van and waited at the only boarding gate of something called Reeve Aleutian Airways for about four hours. Finally, a grey-bearded man stood up on a chair and gave the boarding call, gesturing toward a black metal door at the back of the gate area. I grabbed my bags and followed a group of sailors into the cold sunshine. The plane was an ancient Lockheed Electra. As they wheeled a metal staircase up to the open hatch, I inspected one of the four turbo-prop engines. It was dirty and encrusted with ice; I shook my head and went aboard. When everyone had been seated, the stewardess shouted that there would be a slight delay while the ground crew de-iced the fuselage. Their footsteps could be heard all over the plane; I looked at the window and observed huge chunks of ice floating by in a wash of sickly green fluid.

Once we were aloft, the cabin began to heat up. My window seat was com-

fortable enough, but the clouds were too thick to see through. The plane was buffeted about by the winds, rather like a fly being angrily swatted away from a plate of picnic food. After an hour or so, the clouds gave way, and I was able to see the Bering Sea. The water was pitch black, with a hint of murky green, and it stretched as far as the clouds would let me see. The whole expanse of ocean was punctuated, at even intervals, by jagged icebergs. Damn, it looked cold down there. It occurred to me that, if this quaint relic of an airplane should crash into that water, I would only last about five minutes. The broad back of a whale broke the surface like a submarine; then the clouds shrouded us again.

I had been asleep for a few hours, I suppose, when the Lockheed's roller-coaster drop through the overcast awakened me. The plane skittered on blasts of wind as it approached the island of Adak. Its gradual descent paralleled a peninsula, which broadened quickly, and suddenly joined the island at the confluence of two raging mountain streams. Lower and lower we glided, over sharp, black and white, ice-peaked mountains, and into a grey, dreary day. The plane passed over a cluster of Quonset huts and dilapidated frame buildings. A line of wireless telephone poles, looking like a string of exclamation points, led away from it and into the snowy tundra. I was later told that this

was one of Adak's many ghost towns. The island had been a huge staging area, and minor battlefield, in the Aleutian Campaign of World War Two. It was a strange, hushed-up war which had started when the Japanese seized islands in the Chain, and bombed Dutch Harbor for twenty minutes on June 3, 1942.

The plane made another gut-wrenching drop and then settled into a rough landing. The pilot twirled it around and cut the engines. I grabbed my things and edged into the line which had formed in the aisle, looking my uniform over and trying to smooth the wrinkles out of my trousers. I shivered when the hatch was shoved open, and listened in wonder to the grey, shrieking winds outside. I gathered my light jacket about me and stepped through the hatch, my foot seeking the top step of another portable steel stairway. As I did so, the wind punched me in the face, hard, choking me for several seconds. The handful of ice particles it carried tore at my face like a blast of birdshot. It tore the garrison cap from my head and carried it down along the runway. The cap came to rest in a puddle of slushy water. Regulations stated that I had to wear the thing when I was outside, so I shook the sodden, freezing cap out and perched it at a jaunty angle on my closely cropped head. It felt like a wet bathing suit. As I rushed through the howling wind toward the small, cinderblock building that served as the passenger terminal, I noticed a brightly colored sign which read: "Welcome to Adak, Alaska, Birthplace of the Winds."

THE HOLE



by Richard Hawkins

by Craig Gimple

Whop! I felt pain above my right ear when the guard hit me with his flashlight. I heard the batteries click when they shifted on impact. Another guard grabbed my feet while another pushed my arms into my chest, holding tight. One clamped thick iron shackles, with a heavy connecting chain, to my ankles. The chain rattled against the metal bed as he secured them. I saw a pair of handcuffs slide out of grey trousers. The shackle man jerked up my feet by the center of the chain, dragging my body down over the end of the metal bed. My arms

were pulled up into the air; handcuffs were snapped into place. One guard pulled on my shackle chain, while the other two each grabbed a wrist. They dragged me, feet first, down two flights of cement stairs, across an eighty-foot span of flagstone, past an empty flagpole pointing toward a half-moon, down another flight of stairs, to NA gallery. The key clinked and rattled in door number seven. Hinges squeaked. They dropped me on the floor on my back. I felt blood from the stair and flagstone cuts sticking my back to the cold floor, as well as blood trickling down my ear toward the back of my neck. With a slam clang of the cell door, one guard said, "Welcome to the hole."

I lay quietly for a few minutes. I rolled from my back to my side, pushing my hands against the cold,

smooth, footworn floor, to sit up. The only noise being a slight clink of my shackle chains. The cell was half of my body wide and my body with outstretched arms long. The side walls, ceiling, and back wall were solid iron; except there were some ragged rust holes at the bottom of the back wall. The front of the cell was three-fourths inch steel bars covered with crisscross iron wire mesh with a hole waist high, rectangular, to let food through. There was a six inch hole in the floor for a toilet; it doubled as a drain for the cold water spigot. Two iron bunk beds were attached to the wall with heavy metal hinges hung by an angled chain on each end. The chain was welded together at each link to prevent looping to hang yourself.

Morning came abruptly with the sliding metal doors grading on the tiers above. Light shone down at an angle from a row of windows thirty feet above. Dust filtered down through the shafts of light from the movement above. A guard came in and took off my shackles, and handcuffs. He took my underwear and gave me a set of dingy, off-white coveralls. He came back and brought a bowl of oatmeal mush. Dinner and supper combined, was a bowl of boiled potatoes.

I heard a rustling in the cell next to me and a voice said, "Hey man, what's you in for?" I told him about an argument with a guard, and that I got mad and called him a pig. This was his third time in the hole. He told me to rip off some of the wire mesh, bend the

ends together to lengthen it, and make a hook on one end. I used it the first time to reach through the food hole to his to get toilet paper. Other days we used the hooks to reach cigarette butts from out in front of the cell. We sorted out butts from discarded candy wrappers, Chips Ahoy packs, cigarette packs, and trash. The faceless man and I became friends. Most days were spent exercising, hooking butts, thinking, eating, and sleeping.

Then the smell came; it was pungent, slightly burning my nostrils. It was the same odor used to spray our underarms and pubic hair in the fingerprint room at the reception and diagnostic center--DDT. I traced the smell to the rust holes. I heard voices and footsteps against metal grates through the hole. There were three tiers of cells above, back to back, with a walkway between on each floor to repair plumbing. They were spraying for bugs.

The first bugs to come out of the rust holes were the cockroaches. The smaller ones were stunned. They staggered around on the floor in no certain direction. They tried to crawl up the wall and would fall back to the floor. The larger inch-and-a-half ones were more alert. They would poke their heads out of the hole cautiously, then run quickly a few feet. Then raise themselves up stiff-legged, look around, and run under the bunk into the shadows. Soon more bugs came; waterbugs, silverfish, millipeded, and others I couldn't identify. I ripped up

the left leg of my coveralls. Using a piece of wire, I fastened a crude swatter. It didn't work well as a swatter, but I could brush them off the wall to crush them with my feet. It also doubled as a broom to sweep them into the toilet hole. Bugs kept coming; I kept brushing and stomping. They came out steady for three days and nights. I became mentally and physically exhausted.

My mind started to wander in directions I didn't recognize. I was swatting bugs frantically off my face and neck that weren't there. I became afraid I was crossing areas in my mind I might not be able to return from. Salty tears and sweat rolled down my face to the cracks on my mouth. I broke down. I slid down the wall to the floor with the bugs and cried.

I looked up toward the ceiling and yelled, "God, if you're up there, do something!" I'm not sure what I expected, but a warm feeling started through my head spreading over my body. The fear and frustration moved down through my body; it was replaced with a quiet calm. The bugs quit crawling on me. I laid down on the floor and slept for the first time in three days.

On the eighteenth day, a guard came to let me out of the hole. I was being put back into population. He told me to put on the clothes. While buttoning up my shirt, I looked toward the rust hole and saw a baby cockroach wander out. I smiled slightly to myself and thought, "New life".

THE BARN

by Debra Peckumn

*Small brown sparrows still play and chase,
But the playground is theirs alone today.
No curious swine will halt their games
To assess an uninvited guest,
No swirling dust from frisky feet.....It's settled now
on feeders and gates.*

*My calico seems lost and wonders where
Her jungle gym of sweet, fresh hay has gone.
She wanders through an empty stall,
Curious where her giant friend could be.
But Sambo sold on Monday's sale,
His black bull eyes won't plead to me
To brush his back and scratch his face.
Hand-fashioned twine and panel pens
That saw new life each spring and fall
Lie vacant now; blank beds of straw
Await in vain, no little squealing,
Warm, pink pigs will fill that void.
A remnant pail half-filled with corn
Now lunch for birds instead of cows.
Next to it the black tire track
From Dad's John Deere; we took that beast
To check the calves - my dad at helm
While I rode shotgun and played the scout.
No need to latch the exit gate,
It creaks and moans to say farewell.
I take with me a memory
Of days gone by, the best it seems.
These changes come, beyond control.
But memories stay, they can't take those.*



by Teresa M. Little

WE DO NOT REMEMBER DAYS,
WE REMEMBER MOMENTS.

Cesare Pavese, *The Burning Brand*, Walker and Co. 1961