

Eastern Illinois University

## The Keep

---

The Vehicle

Student Theses & Publications

---

Fall 1-1-1986

### The Vehicle, Fall 1986

Patrick Peters

James T. Finnegan

Dan Von Holten

Joe Horton

Michael Salem

*See next page for additional authors*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/vehicle>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Peters, Patrick; Finnegan, James T.; Von Holten, Dan; Horton, Joe; Salem, Michael; Harris, Jim; Chandler, Jean; Seltzer, Dan; Albert, Stuart; Call, Amy; Mitchell, Larry; Fehrmann, John; Zordani, Bob; Cline, Sherry L.; Simpson, Phil; Delzer, Lori; Crites, Joe; Michael, Becky; Schell, Edward; Albert, Stuart; Wright, Tina; Green, Tom; Denphy, Christy; and Buczkowski, Dane, "The Vehicle, Fall 1986" (1986). *The Vehicle*. 49.  
<https://thekeep.eiu.edu/vehicle/49>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Theses & Publications at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Vehicle by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).

---

## Authors

Patrick Peters, James T. Finnegan, Dan Von Holten, Joe Horton, Michael Salem, Jim Harris, Jean Chandler, Dan Seltzer, Stuart Albert, Amy Call, Larry Mitchell, John Fehrmann, Bob Zordani, Sherry L. Cline, Phil Simpson, Lori Delzer, Joe Crites, Becky Michael, Edward Schell, Stuart Albert, Tina Wright, Tom Green, Christy Denphy, and Dane Buczkowski

Archives

LH

1

.V4x

1986

Fall



*Lara Anderson*

## **Editorial Advisors**

Dr. John David Moore  
Dr. Anne Zahlan

## **Production Advisor**

Dr. John David Reed

## **Consulting Editors**

John Fehrmann  
Tina Wright

## **Fiction Editor**

Jeanne Fitzmaurice

## **Poetry Editor**

Dan Von Holten

## **Editor In Chief**

Bob Zordani

## **Circulation Managers**

Connie Sue Bloom  
Carrie Smith

## **Cover Art**

Laura Anderson

## **Vehicle Staff**

Connie Sue Bloom  
Da-Niel Cunningham  
Molly Donahue  
Louise Kuderna  
Rob Lobbes  
Sheryl Masters  
Lynda Morgan  
Stephanie Murduck  
Leslie Pabst  
Susan Pennington  
Mary Piper  
Karen Rust  
Karla Sanders  
Joan Sebastian  
Paula Sessions  
Phil Simpson  
Carrie Smith  
Tammy Veach

## **Special Thanks**

Karin Burrus  
Gary Burrows  
Da-Niel Cunningham  
Susan Kaufman  
Glenn Robinson  
Karla Sanders  
Diana Winson  
Collating Staff  
The Daily Eastern News  
Departmental Duplicating  
WEIU Radio  
WEIU TV

# Table of Contents

2	Selling Poetry: Honesty with the Investor	Patrick Peters
3	Father's Book, Jan. 1984 (A Fictional Autobiography)	James T. Finnegan
7	Pet Day in Afternoon Kindergarten	Dan Von Holten
7	Dental Dreams in the Bathroom Mirror	Dan Von Holten
8	Photograph	Stephanie Eihl
8	Silence	Joe Horton
9	Skull	Michael Salem
9	Photograph	Stephanie Eihl
10	The Tunnel	Jim Harris
12	Lindenwood Cemetery	Jean Chandler
13	Into the Sea	Dan Seltzer
13	Photograph	Stephanie Eihl
14	Windows	Jim Harris
18	Little Pieces of You	Stuart Albert
19	Slicing the Apple	Amy Call
19	Winter Walk	Larry Mitchell
20	Komical Kelly	John Fehrmann
20	Thermal Sue	John Fehrmann
21	Death Poem	Bob Zordani
22	Venice, Italy	Sherry L. Cline
24	Roadkill	Phil Simpson
32	I Hate Cows	Lori Delzer, Joe Crites, Becky Michael
33	Telephone Operators: 1942	Jim Harris
34	Expiration Date 3/8/65	Edward Schell
35	Desert Floor	Patrick Peters
36	Photograph	Lawrence McGown
37	Photograph	Stephanie Eihl
38	Coping with Night	Stuart Albert
38	Photograph	Dan Mount
39	One On One	Patrick Peters
40	An Acquired Taste	Tina Wright
40	Photograph	Stephanie Eihl
41	Photograph	Stephaine Eihl
41	When Children Are Alone, The Devil Speaks	Tom Green
42	Bob	Christy Denphy
42	Gut * Scissors	Dane Buczkowski
43	This Old House	Amy Call
43	Mortgage	Tina Wright

# Table of Contents

## Selling Poetry: Honesty with the Investor

This poem is a bag of stones.  
Heavy in hand, hard  
on everyone's teeth.  
Nothing to drop on your toes.

It is no limber gymnast;  
the stiff joints  
have never been rubbed down.  
This poem will do no stunts

but lie flat on its back  
dreaming of concrete cartwheels.  
It is the last parking space  
within blocks. Tombstone.

This poem is a place  
to sell good used cars cheap  
or just one triangular banner  
flapping over the lot.

**Patrick Peters**

## Special Thanks

- John Doe
- Jane Smith
- Bob Johnson
- Carol Taylor
- David Wilson
- Eve Adams
- Frank Brown
- Grace Green
- Henry White
- Ivy Black
- Jack Gold
- Karen Silver
- Leo Bronze
- Mia Copper
- Noah Iron
- Olivia Tin
- Peter Lead
- Quinn Zinc
- Rachel Nickel
- Sam Cobalt
- Tina Cadmium
- Uma Platinum
- Victor Palladium
- Wendy Silver
- Xavier Gold
- Yara Copper
- Zoe Nickel



# Father's Book, Jan. 1984 (A Fictional Autobiography)

[In the Beginning]

It's two weeks after the funeral. His things came today, packed in a Luvs Diaper box, from St. Christian's Home in Florida—an old man's musty clothes, and an old man's Bible. The cover's torn, and the binding is curved round, spreading the brittle pages like a hand-held fan. Passing through the loose pages, his soft, low voice slips from my earliest memory—

“ . . . little baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary; sheeps and goats and Santa Claus will be coming soon . . . .”

I'm bouncing up and down on his knee, protected from falling by his huge, hairy hands, coarse to the touch but holding me gently; I'm not afraid. Loose threads from his sweater tickle my nose, and warmth and sleep fade in and out as his sing-song voice pushes me back and forth.

But all good Catholic boys grow up in the first grade, and “. . . thou shalt not be afraid . . . Idle hands do and you'll go blind . . . . And I'd not expect that from a first communion to confessor . . . . Of course you've sinned, don't deny . . . . In second grade the Sisters will slap you with a ruler! . . .”

[Early Wanderings]

And when I used to ride in the car to the grocery store just around the block, or on Sundays the longer ride to church, when father with his short, fat tie on kept turning around from the steering wheel at the stoplights and screaming and trying to hit Pat, who was the oldest and who was always hitting Mary, who used to be the youngest, when father wasn't looking, and when the baby kept on crying and no one seemed to hear it cry and cry while Pat hit Mary and Mary and father screamed and the car almost hit another one and I was sure that the baby was going to die, then would I lean with my forehead pressed against the car window, and without even squinting my eye I found I could focus on a pebble lying on the curb—focus so sharply on the tiny little rock that everything around it all faded to a blur, and the screaming and crying got farther and farther away like in a dream, muffled behind a rush of air like when you hold a sea-shell over your ear and you can hear the ocean roar. And in seconds, if I wanted, I could see the whole curb again, with cracks in the concrete and broken splinters of glass and thousands of other little tiny pebbles.

[More Early Wanderings, or “That's O.K. I didn't really expect you to play basketball for Notre Dame, you know.”]

. . . But in the eighth grade we had to prod the Sisters to get them to explode. Sister Theo, “the Penguin,” didn't have a ruler, but if you got her mad enough she'd grab you by the ear, or poke you hard in the chest with her index finger—the “Iron Finger.”

“MR. FINNEGAN!” comes her cackle, and the sudden stomp of her army-style boot sends a shudder down my spine as I defiantly stiffen my neck and watch the blow coming. The first one stings hard, and a painful

silence rushes over the room so the only thing I hear is the Penguin going crazy in the distance and the thudding din of blood pumping through my ears. Tears swell in my eyes, and I'm afraid that I'll cry, but in the end it's all just a laugh, and I send a sideways smile to the class on my way to the office.

Only Dave Donovan had been to the office more times than me. He said all the nuns at St. Mark's were all a bunch of goddamn Nazis and was sent home for two days once for calling Sister Mary Beth "Sister Mary Bitch." We were best friends.

That year we both quit being altar boys, and the next day in lunch line Sister Theo pulled us aside, talking all solemnly and sweetly as if she liked us or something, and she said that she thought we were making a "grave" mistake: that she had been up last night praying for us, that she had seen what happened to other boys who had quit and that we should at least wait a week before just quitting for good. We lied and said we would and had a great laugh on that one—"Imagine Theo staying up all night and praying for us!"

At basketball try-outs, Dave made the first team, and everyone expected that I would make at least seventh man since I had played that position last year. But Coach Mooney was a scary bastard who would scream and make fun of you for messing up, and I guess I just kind of lost interest or something, because in the end, it came down to the fact that I almost didn't make the team. Charley, who was the best on the team and my friend since the first grade, kept on telling Mooney that I was really better than I was playing, but that only made him that much more of a bastard about the whole thing.

After the first practice, he said he had to cut one more guy, which was a bunch of crap, and that me and Allen Burk would have to play a one-on-one match to see who made the team. Allen was one of those poor dorky kids who have to try like hell just to make the third squad, but who have to work so hard just to get that far that it's almost sad. They never get to play, and they always end up doing those shitty little jobs like getting water during time-outs and counting how many shots people take—a bunch of humiliating toady crap. Well, anyway, Allen was running around and all like it would just kill him if he couldn't make the team, and I know I could've beaten him any time. But he was running and sweating like the devil and Mooney was screaming at me and Charley and the other guys were yelling, "come on Finn, you can beat this twerp," and I was only one point behind, and . . . I just let it go—I just let him get around me two quick, easy times for two quick, easy lay-ups.

And, you know, at first I really just felt relieved. But then Charley and everyone said how it was all a bunch of crap and how I should've beat that Burk jerk and that they all wished I'd made the team. Then, in the locker room, Mooney just up and threw a basketball from across the room, hitting me hard in the back of the head and almost knocking me out, and he yelled at me to get out, that I was just another one of those long-haired faggots and that he didn't want some faggot sissy like me hanging around his team. Then everything went quiet, and everybody just stared at me as tears swelled up in my eyes, and I didn't know which way to go since that bastard Mooney was still standing in front of the door like he was going to fight me



or something, and I was afraid that I'd just be standing there bawling like some lost baby. But then, from out of nowhere, Dave brings over my gym bag and starts helping me put my things away. So Mooney yelled at him to let the cry baby do it himself. But then Dave yelled back, "Hey, fuck you! I quit this faggot team!" I just couldn't believe that one.

Well, Charley quit later on that same week and there was all a big to-do about how me and Dave were talking everyone into quitting basketball and ruining their lives and everything, but really we hadn't said a word to Charley. But it was us who dumped the three smelly trash cans from inside the school's kitchen on that bastard Mooney's new Camaro. And every day after that we each got an extra milk at lunch and poured it over his windshield, and even though he knew who it was, we never did get caught. I guess you could say we were almost famous for that kind of stuff . . .

[Later Wanderings, or "I just don't understand why you kids today have no sense of respect for anything and no sense of morality."]

Allison and I are sitting at the foot of a tall pillar, on the top of the stairs of *La Bourse*. A typically Belgian day, the steady drizzle drips on the well-dressed Belgians and tourists on their way to dinner on *Boulevard Adolphe Max*. My eye follows a small crack crawling up the pillar, and I get a bit dizzy—my head throbbing from a cheap bottle of champagne and a dozen or more cigarettes rolled from our pouch of French tobacco. Through the mist, the orange glow of the lights below turns to splintering rays of light dancing closer and then farther away as I stare off blankly, listening to silent songs ringing in my ears.

Looking down on the *Place de la Bourse*, we can pick out the young American brats from a mile away, flocking to the new MacDonald's for a "real" hamburger. And old Belgian men with suspenders and white, whisk-broom moustaches cautiously try the strange pommes frites. While round the corner on *Rue du Midi*, young Moroccan men stand dressed in second-hand sports jackets, trying to look suave for their shy, dark women, but a sense of cold, fear, and hatred penetrates from their dark black eyes. And just at the foot of the steps we can hear the Brits singing their jolly old songs to jolly old England in the Double Diamond Pub—drunken rugby players; and older men with waxed moustaches and smelly pipes look smart and talk to young American boys about what "real" football is . . .

Our Moroccan hashish looks like clay I used to dig up in our back yard in Peoria and make small mud houses out of where imaginary wars were waged, and Indians, Germans and Japs were inevitably trampled. The burning hashish smells sweet in the cheap plastic pipe, but if you take too big of a hit when you first light it, it'll burn the back of your throat.

Allison covers me with her thick wool cape, and we take soft, quick puffs, warming our faces under the smoke-filled shelter. Her green eyes glow in the dim light, illuminating her pale white skin—so soft, but I had never . . .

The rain begins to pick up, and in the first breathless rush of our high we take off our shoes and run flush-faced down *Rue Neuve*, past the scrambling tourists and expensive smoke shops, splashing in every small puddle along the way. Uncontrollable laughter; and delusions of self-consciousness slip away as we walk arm in arm till Allison gets cold and we

go into a small cafe called Simon's at the bottom of the Brussels Sheraton. Everyone stares, but we only love it; feeling like characters out of a Hemingway novel, we pretend that we're part of a new generation of restless and reckless expatriate artists.

Before Simon's closes for the night, we buy two bottles of wine and walk slowly back to the top of *La Bourse* steps and talk till dawn. Then, on our way to catch the early morning train home, we give up our virginity between two parked cars in an underground parking lot below Gare Central.

[Home]

And now it's two weeks after the funeral and I'm home, in the back yard, lying on my back in the snow. Ears and neck numbed, I stare at the grey, sunless, cloudless sky—a perfectly Belgian day, I'd say.

It's all illusions. And I feel old, like the ferryman in *Siddhartha* at the gate of time, where there is no time—where images and experiences appear and fade with the ebbing water's flow. Small pebbles fade to paved highways, the pebbles lead me home.

I see Megan staring contemplatively out of the kitchen window, red hair and freckles shining a thousand sightless suns. Her green eyes watch my fallen body in the snow, and I feel great consolation knowing how she worries about me. And I can't believe how lovingly and patiently she endures my insanities. I envy her stoicism and despise the childish hatred I sometimes show.

She sees me looking at her and pulls her new puppy up to her face, kisses its wet nose. I smile back, feeling suddenly warm knowing that my giving it to her has made her happy.

The screen door swings open. She walks towards me, sets her puppy down in the wet snow, and looks puzzled as I begin to flail my arms and legs in spastic synchronicity, making angels in the snow. She stops at my feet, looking sad and not knowing what to say. I become still, stare straight up into the grey, sunless sky again in a moment of tense silence that begins to annoy me.

"No clouds today; it's all just one big cloud. I don't think even Shimoda could make this one go away."

"A typically Belgian day, huh?"

"Yeah."

Then suddenly she starts a silly side-step dance while holding up the front paws of her puppy. Smiling, almost laughing, and her girlish nose wrinkled up, she says, "But look, we're walking on water! . . ."

A single tear swells heavy in my eye, but I quickly rub the water away. Megan lies down in the snow with me and gives a long, firm hug. She's worried about me because I haven't shed a tear, and it's been two weeks since he's been gone; she doesn't understand when I tell her that my father has been gone for a long, long time.

And later that afternoon, we burn his old, musty clothes in the back yard. But his Bible, I set on the mantel in our living room, and wonder if he has met the little baby Jesus, Joseph and Mary.

James T. Finnegan



## Pet Day in Afternoon Kindergarten

Poncho couldn't go  
to school, Mom said,

bad mannered dog  
and he stunk.

I sat between two kids  
with calico cats,

watched the suckers  
in Mom's two quart jar

caught that morning  
with bamboo pole and cheese

go belly-up in  
the foggy water.

**Dan Von Holten**

## Dental Dreams in the Bathroom Mirror

In the morning Uncle Elmer  
winces at the cold paste and water on his teeth,  
too warm from poached eggs and coffee,

pictures himself in dentures—  
Roebuckers to flip through his lips  
on the tip of his tongue at kids

in his arms, fists around their biceps,  
squirming off the edge of his lap,  
smiling wildly under the brim of his cap.

**Dan Von Holten**



## Silence

The most wicked of all cruelties  
spares the expense of munitions,  
chain-saws and costly leather whips.

It provides an economy of motion  
in the science of hate administration  
which outdates such primitive practices as  
kicks to the groin, knives to the back  
and those bloody, messy crucifixions.

So I must commend your impeccable,  
state-of-the-art taste in modes of torture  
as you turn on me, unprecipitated,  
and unleash the heaviest of artillery  
without an explanation.

Not even a word.

Joe Horton



# Skull

I  
got no eyeballs  
to see the wrongs I've done,

got no slab of tongue  
to vomit slimy nightly calls,

got no grey matter  
to swallow my serene peace,

but I got an infinity  
to wait 'til your meat burns

and you be like me.  
I am what you need.

**Michael Salem**



# The Tunnel

There is a tunnel  
That connects the Main Library  
With the undergraduate library  
At this university  
And I am in this tunnel  
With an art student named Gerald  
And a pretty lesbian named Angela.

Vending machines line  
One side of this tunnel.  
Tables line the other side  
And they are filled up  
With orientals mostly.

There is a good chance  
That there is a vending machine  
That disperses orientals  
And it is broke and orientals  
Tumble out of it with  
Nothing better to do than sit down.

Gerald and Angela  
Are looking at an oversized book  
Of photographs Ezra Pound  
Made in Italy a long time ago.

Angela thought I would be  
Interested in these photographs  
Because they are mostly of  
Old people or poor people  
Or grotesque young people.  
"You know, like people  
You write about," Angela said.  
But  
I am more interested in  
All these oriental people  
Dropping coins in the vending machines  
And placing sandwiches  
In the microwaves,  
All the while chattering  
In their beautiful oriental tongues.

The tunnel reeks pleasantly  
Of oriental sweat.

It reminds me of a nuthouse  
I visited as a child in  
Kankakee where my  
Brother-in-law was.

There was a canteen  
There and crazy people  
Filled all the seats.

I was seven years old.

My mother clutched my  
Hand so tightly it hurt.

I remember a big black guy  
In a grey shirt tapping me  
On the shoulder and saying,

"Yo mama looks good."

I gave the man no reply.

He walked away.

"Yo mama looks good," I say outloud.

Gerald and Angela stop talking  
And look at me.

I just sit here in this tunnel  
Smiling like Hiroshima never happened.

**Jim Harris**

# Lindenwood Cemetery

I.

Great-grandfather was caretaker,  
sharing the grounds  
with gardens and graves.  
Like Mother before me,

I played hide and seek in the caves  
while Grandma sat on the stone bench  
under the pergola, red roses  
twining up white lattice.  
Fountains gushed from pools,  
lily pads floating  
like delicate women.

II.

During the war, the gardens  
were tended by German prisoners—  
good, cheap labor from a near-by camp.  
From the shadows, I watched them

in their dingy-gray uniforms,  
muttering guttural syllables,  
trimming the grass  
around each headstone.

III.

Dirt muffles their voices,  
rusty clippers lie in the grass.  
One grave stands empty in our plot.  
Mother says,  
"Bury me here."

**Jean Chandler**



## Into the Sea

Not everyone present knew his name,  
But everyone present felt the same.  
Of those that knew him, one was me,  
And we filed past the coffin, into the sea.  
The young boy spoke as I walked by,  
"Come and see what it is to die."  
The body twitched and moved aside,  
So I jumped in and lay beside.  
Many more came and filed by me,  
Crying as they walked slowly to the sea.  
I turned my head to that friend so fine,  
I was alone, the casket was mine.  
The lid came down, and they turned the key,  
As the last of my friends filed into the sea.

**Dan Seltzer**



## Windows

Edgar woke up with coyotes howling in his skull. He didn't like to wake up to music. It was Emily who bought that new alarm. It didn't ring. It just played music and it was always set on a rock and roll station and Edgar hated rock and roll. Whenever he heard rock and roll music he thought of jet-planes farting. Emily couldn't understand this.

Emily couldn't understand a lot of things and the biggest thing she couldn't understand was why she married Edgar.

He said he loved her. She never did say she loved him. They met at a carnival. Emily was with her boyfriend and Edgar was alone and they were both waiting for lemon shake-ups.

Lemon shake-ups, they would conclude, was about all they had in common.

They got married on the Fourth of July and spent their honeymoon at Disney World. They both got sick on some bad spaghetti sauce and spent all but one of the three days in their hotel room.

Edgar got out of bed and realized it was raining and went over and shut the bedroom window. The carpet was soggy where he stood.

Then Edgar walked over to the wall and removed a shotgun from the gunrack and put a shell in it.

Then he put the barrel up to Emily's forehead and pulled the trigger. Emily's head exploded all over the bed and backboard of the bed and blood and bits of her brain clung to the wall. Her body jerked a few times and then stiffened for a moment before settling limp there on the bed.

Edgar removed the empty casing of the shell from the gun and put the gun back on the wall.

He sat down on the edge of the bed and stared at a picture Emily and he had made when they were on vacation in Nashville last summer. Edgar was dressed up as a Confederate General and Emily was dressed up as a southern belle.

Neither of them was smiling. They both looked like they had just been told who won the war.

Edgar walked into the kitchen and shut the kitchen window. He looked down and wiggled his toes in the little puddle of water his feet were in. Out the window he could see a rabbit sitting immobile under a birdbath.

He turned the coffee water on and put two pieces of bread in the toaster and then took a tub of butter from the refrigerator.

Emily walked into the kitchen and reached over him for a coffee cup.

Edgar opened a drawer and removed an electric cord that went to a deep-fryer her mother gave them on their second anniversary.

He wrapped the cord firmly in his hands and in one quick jerk brought it over Emily's head and around her throat.

She struggled and kicked over one of the kitchen chairs and knocked over a flimsy metal stand that held the breadbox. Edgar kept jerking on the cord until Emily stopped struggling.

By now the coffee water was whistling Dixie and the toast was getting cold. He stepped over Emily's body and sat down at the kitchen table and ate breakfast.



It was still raining pretty hard outside and somewhere dull thunder rumbled. The rain would be good for his garden. Edgar glanced at the still body of Emily. Rain or shine it wouldn't matter a whole hell of a lot to her anymore.

Edgar put the dishes in the dishwasher and as he walked through the living room he turned on the television. He flicked all the way through the thirty or so channels, stopping now and then at anything that might interest him.

He stopped at the, all-sports channel and there were these thirteen Ukrainian women performing a water-ballet routine. He let out a strange chuckle, then said out loud, "Run and get the beer and pretzels, Martha!" He flicked the selector.

He stopped on a channel where a woman with a blonde bee-hive hairdo and wearing several pounds of make-up was standing in a gazebo in Hawaii singing about salvation. There was a phone number to call at the bottom of the screen. A wicked thought flashed through his head.

Edgar flicked to the music channel and immediately turned the volume down. He watched an ugly rock star sneer and wiggle his hips while beating the hell out of his guitar as two ungodly beautiful women pawed at his legs. Edgar shook his head and decided he just wasn't living right.

He left the television on a weather station and went into the bathroom.

The bathroom was all steamy and Emily was in the bathtub buried from the neck down in bubbles. Edgar took a hand towel and wiped a spot on the mirror so he could see his face. He started brushing his teeth.

"Edgar," Emily began. "Have you heard anything about bubbles causing bladder infections?"

Edgar turned to look at Emily, toothbrush sticking out of his mouth. "No," he said.

"I think I'll ask Mother about that. Did you remember to snap the cord over the garbage can?"

"Um-yes," Edgar said, not sure.

"You better. You know what a mess we had last week. Are you sure that was a skunk?"

"Yes," Edgar said. "Unless it was a raccoon in drag."

Emily shook her head, began soaping up her neck. Edgar plugged in his electric razor and wiped moisture from the mirror again.

"I think we should have Larry and Rebecca over this weekend," Emily said, as Edgar stared at the twirling blades of his razor. "I know you don't like Larry but Rebecca is such a dear. I really think you over-reacted a bit when Larry patted my rump that time."

Edgar made a swipe at his cheek with the razor. "You think so?"

"Larry's just a—" Emily stretched one leg out of the bubbles and started soaping up her thigh. "Touchy-feely kind of guy, you know?"

"Uh-huh," Edgar said, pressing hard on the razor under his chin.

"Sometimes I wish you were more like that," Emily said.

Edgar jerked his head around. "You want me to pat Rebecca's rump?"

"Oh, you are so stupid! I can't talk to you anymore. Could you hand me a Bic?"

Edgar, staring into the mirror, could not see himself smiling. It was fogged-over again.

"Here," Edgar said. "Use mine." He tossed the electric razor into the tub and then washed his hands and face as Emily screamed.

Edgar pulled the bathroom window shut before he left.

He went into the den and poured himself two shots of bourbon, took a sip, and walked over to a card table where Trivial Pursuit was set up. He picked up a card. What was Ed Sullivan's wife's name? He turned the card over. Sylvia. Edgar smiled. What a great game. Emily loved Trivial Pursuit. So did Larry.

Emily came dancing into the den, naked, pushing a vacuum cleaner, with headphones on, and a walkman attached to the handle of the vacuum cleaner.

"Hey! Ho! Let's go! Hey! Ho! Let's go!," Emily sang, in a half-whisper, hips bobbing back and forth. "Blitzkrieg Bop!" She let go of the handle, did a twirl, fingers snapping. "The Ramones! You can just have your Alabama, Edwin!"

Edgar reflexively started to lunge for the drapes and pull them shut like he usually did. This time, though, he just took another sip of bourbon.

"Would you be a dear and hold the bookcase while I sweep there? Don't want to knock over any more of your silly bowling trophies again."

"Okay," Edgar said, setting his drink down and grasping the edge of the bookcase with both hands.

"Really, Edward-o. I don't think I'm all that clumsy."

Edgar gave the bookcase a clean jerk. Bowling trophies, encyclopedias, knick-knacks, video-tapes, and several best-selling paperbacks about rich people who travel abroad a lot and screw even more, came tumbling down upon Emily.

Edgar picked up a broken-framed picture of Emily as a cheerleader. Somewhere beneath it all Edgar was standing with a bowling ball in his hand and Packard's Packaged Liquors emblazoned in red across his grey shirt.

Edgar took a bottle of bourbon from the bar and then tiptoed over to the sliding glass doors that lead out of the den and to the back patio.

He was tiptoeing because the carpet was soaking wet as rain was blowing in the screen. He pulled the sliding door shut.

Back in the living room he turned the television channel to a cable health network where two middle-aged women were discussing sex fantasies.

Inexplicably, this fantasy made an appearance in Edgar's head: two hours in a hot-tub with the Pointer Sisters.

Edgar set the bottle of bourbon on the coffee table and climbed over the couch to shut the window. A big flash of lightning that was immediately followed by a booming thunderclap jolted him. Edgar hated storms.

He sat down in his recliner and unscrewed the top of the bourbon bottle and took a drink. One of the women on the television said some women cannot have an orgasm unless they fantasize during the act.

"Huh," Edgar said. He turned his head and standing in a black lacy negligee was Emily. She was trying to make her eyes look sultry.

"I'm horny, Eddie," Emily said. She strutted over and straddled him in the chair. "You like this?" She touched her negligee.

"Yes," Edgar said.



"It's new." Emily unzipped his pants and then unsnapped the crotch of her negligee.

They went at it pretty good.

"God! I love you Emily!" Edgar's eyes rolled in the back of his head.

Emily nipped at his ear, exclaimed breathlessly, "Don't come yet, Larry!"

Edgar and Emily froze, eyes locked together.

Edgar bonked Emily on the side of the head with the bourbon bottle. She wavered, then fell forward against him, blood flowing freely down the side of her face.

He pushed her body off and then stretched out in his chair.

"One mustn't let fantasies replace reality, however," one woman was saying. "They should only enhance reality."

Edgar grimaced, then reached over and dropped a Statler Brothers cassette in the tape deck. He leaned back and closed his eyes, pressing down on the mute button on the channel selector.

The doorbell rang and Edgar bolted upright. He knew who it was.

Emily came in the door. She said hello and closed her umbrella. Then, "So where are they?"

She was referring to the divorce papers.

Edgar turned the television off and the stereo down.

"They're on the kitchen table."

Emily started to say something, then changed her mind, and went into the kitchen.

She did not return until two and a half songs later. Edgar poured himself some more bourbon.

Emily stood in the doorway. "I'm sorry I'm late."

"That's okay," Edgar said. "I just got up."

Emily looked around nervously. "I told you Larry's divorce was final yesterday, didn't I?"

"Oh, yeah?" Edgar said, staring into the bottle of bourbon.

Emily sighed. "I don't—" She hesitated, looked away, sniffing. "I don't know what else to say, Edgar."

Edgar bit down on his bottom lip. "Then don't say anything else."

"Okay, I won't then!" Emily came back with, as agitation once again flared between them. She grabbed the umbrella as if to open it, then turned to leave.

"Like I told you. You don't have to be out of here until Larry and I get back from our honeymoon next Thursday."

Edgar tapped the bottle in his hands. "Okay."

Emily stood there a moment as if she were trying to think of something to say. She couldn't think of anything else. Finally, she turned and opened the door. Hot, damp rain blew in. She turned to look at Edgar one last time.

"It's raining pretty good, did you remember to shut all the windows?"

A happy-sad smile crossed Edgar's face.

"Yes," Edgar said.

Then Emily was gone.

## Little Pieces of You

Last night when you screamed and I broke things  
you said you were going away some place  
where I could never find you and  
I said good.

So I went to a bar I didn't know  
and ordered four beers I didn't drink and  
finally said fuck it and went back home but  
you weren't there.

I thought you would take your pink houseshoes  
your coffee cups and your Barry Manilow records  
but you left them.  
All you took was you.

You left me dust on the mirror and flies on the window  
lace on the bedpost and lead in the ceiling  
strands of hair on the pillows and  
clots of hair on the walls.

Now they've been asking me questions all day I can't answer and  
they want me to go someplace downtown they call it but  
I can't leave this warm red corner where everywhere I look I see  
a little piece of you.

**Stuart Albert**

## Slicing the Apple

This morning when I woke and found the first  
frost lying thick on my lawn I thought of  
how you took that knife from your pocket and  
slid it deep inside the last autumn apple  
that rocked back and forth  
in your palm, spilling seeds.

**Amy Call**

## Winter Walk

I walk through the white field.  
Corn stalks poke through the fresh snow,  
like Grandpa's ever-present stubble.  
Everyone said he looked ten years younger,  
at the wake,  
but it really wasn't him.  
I kick down stalks as I go;  
a clean close shave  
marks my path.

**Larry Littrell**

## Komical Kelly

My love is like a red, red nose  
who clowns with me in the center  
ring. Beneath the canvas Top  
we bump and roll,  
squeeze in the back of a tiny coupe,  
making funny faces in our pink suits.  
Sometimes I rescue her from  
fake fires in bogus buildings;  
I spray her with my hose,  
roll her in a blanket,  
carry her to my tent,  
and clown around some more.

John Fehrmann

## Thermal Sue

I don't know how you do it,  
but now I sleep with the sheets off.  
Every night I'm driving alone somewhere  
or sitting in a theatre maybe,  
and you appear like a match in the dark,  
next to me suddenly, close,  
lighting me with that kiss,  
making me hotter than a furnace.  
I wake up burning, sweaty as a boiler,  
turn on the fan, and get some water.  
I had to quit smoking to pay the A.C. bill,  
and cold showers give me headaches,  
so cut it out.

John Fehrmann



## Death Poem

I am your rusty iron lung, and you,  
poor girl, are dying. Tonight I do

no good. You cannot breathe with me  
holding on like a mother, attached

to your side like the thin strand  
of life which is gripping your hand.

You know the ugly story, the whole truth,  
this nothing-but-pain. I am no cure

for you, for life, for the wicked days  
which pass quick as the sun's long rays.

Tonight I help you cough and wheeze.  
I do no good propped here, keeping you

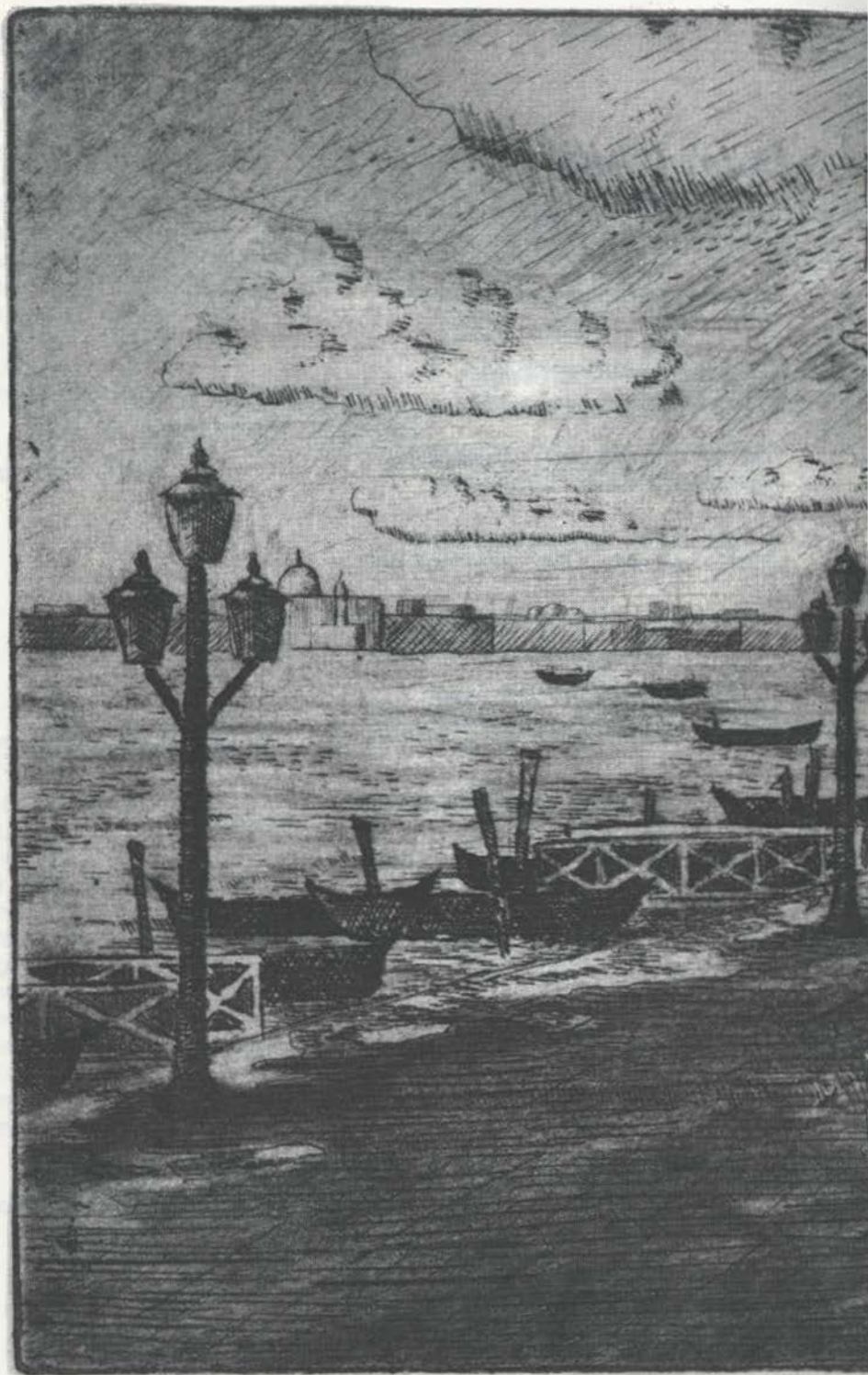
alive. You will die. The cold metal  
of my palms cannot open, cannot warm

your death away. You will pass  
like the sun, like the moon of your days,

through clouds and night, through heated light,  
without me. I am the tired breath of your days,

and it is night. Good-bye, dear girl, good night.  
May the sun be out and the stars be bright.

**Bob Zordani**







## Roadkill

It was a closed casket service, of course. It couldn't have been anything else, not even after the best efforts of the local post-mortem plastic surgeon. He was an inappropriately jolly old bastard named Shafer who ran the Shafer Home of Eternal Rest. It was said that he could put the bloom of color back into the shrunken cheeks of a cadaverous cancer victim or patch up all but the worst damage done to the latest casualty of the Drinking and Driving crowd. But not this time.

It seemed like everyone knew the story. And of course everyone suddenly loved the memory of the late, lamented Brad Gunther and began to cherish the all-too-brief moments that they had spent in his saintly company. What the papers didn't print, and what no one would say, was that Brad Gunther was a mean son-of-a-bitch whom everybody in the entire high school had been afraid of. His idea of a hysterical practical joke was to blow up stray cats with firecrackers. His greatest joy was to break some running back's ribs during the Homecoming games. I know, I just know, that most of the freshmen breathed a silent and guilty sigh of relief when they heard that the Biggest, Baddest senior of them all had been ripped in half by a semi. A semi that had paid no heed to Brad's four years of varsity football and state championship wrestling.

I was a little more honest than most of them. I had always hated Gunther, for many reasons, and I wasn't about to let his death suddenly make me realize what a swell guy he had actually been. Whenever I began to feel too sorry for him, I would remember how he had beaten a little freshman geek to the point of hospitalization. I can still hear the way the kid screamed when Gunther broke out his front teeth. Even with this, I had never really wanted Brad Gunther to die. But when he did, I wasn't going to lose too much sleep. The most his death meant to me was that we got out of school for a day. The day of the funeral.

I didn't want to go to the funeral. I was going to use the time to go cruise the mall, buy books or something, eat some pizza. Anything but pretend that I had liked Brad Gunther and would miss him. But Jeff wanted to go, and that puzzled me. Jeff wasn't any fan of Brad Gunther either. Jeff had always called him a bloodthirsty asshole with a taste for raw meat (preferably freshman).

Jeff insisted on going, though. Since I usually hung around with Jeff a lot, I sacrificed my principles and went to Brad Gunther's funeral. Probably more to make sure he was dead than anything else. And to humor Jeff.

All the way to the church, Jeff talked about what had happened to Brad Gunther. I still remember Jeff's face as he drove. He was staring at the road rather than seeing it, and he was not talking to me as much as . . . well, somewhere else.

The story Jeff was telling was common knowledge. Brad Gunther had been driving home from school when his parent-financed Camaro inexplicably swerved into the opposite lane. A semi rig operating out of Hyster's had been coming right toward him. The Camaro smashed into the rig's grill and was then pushed under the front tires. There were two basic accounts of what had happened to Brad. One was that he had been decapitated. Another was that he had been torn in half. I had heard both



stories. All I knew was that if your car gets crushed flat under a semi, you are probably not going to leave a good-looking corpse. Whatever had happened to him, it was sufficient for old man Shafer to admit defeat and hold a closed-casket service.

Jeff was fascinated by the accident. At the time, while we were driving to the church, I suppose it was merely because someone we knew, someone our own age and from our own high school class, had been killed. I know a little more about Jeff now, but then I had no idea. I remember being a little startled by Jeff's obsession with the gory details of Gunther's death. He talked about little else during that drive.

"Just think of it, man," I remember him saying. "I wonder how quick it was. Did he know what was happening to him? Did he live long enough to feel himself rip apart? I mean Jesus, what would you think during something like that?"

I said nothing. To tell the truth, I didn't much like to think about what the poor mean bastard had gone through in his last seconds. Just because I hated him didn't mean I wanted to see him torn in half. Or maybe I did and felt so guilty about it I didn't want to think about it anymore. I don't know. Either way, I didn't share Jeff's obsession with the subject.

On and on he went. "I wonder what it looked like? You know, before the rescue guys cleaned it up. There would be a shit-load of blood, all over the glass, boiling on the engine. I wonder if he lived long enough to see that?"

I looked over at Jeff. To tell the truth, he was worrying me a little. Maybe his was a healthy reaction, but I doubted it. Weren't you not supposed to think about stuff like that? I mean, when you're seventeen years old, who wants to think about dying? But Jeff did. I had never really noticed it before. That conversation with Jeff on the way over to the church was the start of it. Things got bad in a hurry after that. Or maybe they always had been and it just took something like the Gunther accident to bring things to a head. To make me notice.

We sat through the funeral. All of our classmates were there. And all of the faculty and about three hundred relatives and assorted townspeople. It was one of the largest funerals in the history of the area. A real standing-room-only affair. Newspaper reporters were there. I had already seen the headlines during the past two days. STAR ATHLETE DIES IN HEAD-ON COLLISION. PROMISING AREA STUDENT KILLED IN ACCIDENT. You know the type. It just goes to show you that not even brutal sadism and severe personality defects can keep you from being popular if you know how to play football well enough.

I spent most of the funeral day-dreaming. But not Jeff. He was intent on all the action. I know he was disappointed he couldn't sneak a look into the casket somehow. I had a vivid mental image of Jeff sweeping the floral displays from the coffin lid, battering open the hasp or lock or whatever the hell it is, and then throwing open the lid. Whenever I tried to think of how Gunther did look beneath that burnished wood surface, I just couldn't do it. But I'm sure Jeff could. I'm sure he knew exactly, and it was frustrating to him he couldn't look and confirm the accuracy of his vision.

As soon as the formal service was over, I dragged Jeff through the crowd and back to his car. He was reluctant to go. But I sure as hell didn't want to stick around and have to talk to all our classmates about how great Brad

Gunther was and what a tragedy all of this was. It would have been my luck for some reporter to try to interview me for my reaction to this terrible news. All I wanted was to leave the whole mess behind, to bury Brad Gunther and thus let things get back to normal.

Jeff never really mentioned Brad Gunther too much after that, but all the same I knew that he was changing. You see, Jeff and I were best friends from an early age. The whole American childhood tradition: Cub Scouts at nine, Boy Scouts at twelve, staying overnight at each other's house, forcing the parents to take us to movies. We even stayed friends through the social turmoils and general upheaval of high school. We always managed to keep from stealing each other's girls or getting in with different peer groups that would have split us apart. The first time I got drunk was with Jeff. We got high together for the first time. Jeff got a car first and became my tireless chauffeur until I was able to get my own piece-of-shit car. In general, we were prime examples of classical adolescent male-bonding. I thought I knew Jeff, and that's why what happened was such a shock. Neither Jeff nor I was what I thought we were.

A few weeks after Gunther's death, Jeff and I decided to go out on Friday night and cruise Main Street. We agreed to use Jeff's car because it was the flashier of our two workhorses. His car was a '79 Cutlass, and the bastard could really move. Jeff had bought it from some old couple down the block and fixed it up. He had it repainted dark blue and installed a kick-ass stereo system. One of his friends down at the garage had revamped the engine for a song. As a result, what had been a beat-up piece of shit was now a prime cruising vessel. Jeff was proud of it. I do believe he loved that car more than his mom and dad.

I loved the Cutlass myself. It held good memories for me. It was good to party in or pick up girls with out on Main. What more do you want when you're seventeen?

I brought the beer that night—my way of kicking in for the gas money. I heisted a twelve-pack out of the fridge in the garage and promised myself I would replace it tomorrow. Dad always kept some beer out there whenever he was working on the cars. He would usually look the other way if I took some for a party or something, but if Mom ever caught me, he always said he would "disavow all knowledge." Anyway, I grabbed the beer and then went outside into the driveway to wait for Jeff. As usual, he was right on time. The Cutlass rolled up to the house at exactly eight o'clock.

I trotted over to the passenger door, the beer wedged under my right arm. I saw Jeff lean across the side and crack the door open for me. I got an arm inside the door, pushed it open, and then slid inside.

"There he is," Jeff said. "And prepared, too."

"Don't leave home without it," I said, holding the beer up momentarily.

"Jesus Christ, don't let your mom see that. She'll come out here and throw my ass in jail for contributing to the delinquency of her innocent little boy."

"Don't worry. Whenever I go out for the night, I know Dad jumps her bones the second I leave the door. They wouldn't know it if we had a fucking party out here."

"Man, that's disgusting. I can't even imagine my mom and dad together. Jesus! I don't think they do it anymore."



"I can't blame them. Look at what happened," I said, indicating Jeff. Jeff aimed a lazy punch at my arm which I easily escaped. Now that the formalities of greeting were over, we could get the hell out of here and go pursue the bare necessities. You know, getting drunk and trying to get laid out on Main Street. Good Lord, life could be simple back then.

Jeff backed the Cutlass out of my driveway onto the residential street. He didn't even look to see if any cars were coming or if he was about to back over the neighbor's snot-nosed little four-year-old. He just rammed that baby out into the street, threw the shifter into drive, and took off with a lot of fish-tailing and protesting rubber. I looked over at Jeff and said, "Take it easy, would ya? It'd be real smart to get arrested with all this beer in the car."

Jeff said, "You worry too much, man. Relax."

Man, we flew down that narrow street. I didn't dare look at Jeff's speedometer. Parked cars were lined up along both sides of the street and they just flashed past in blurs of steel and chrome and plastic. If somebody had been getting out of one of those cars, Jeff would have taken his door off. I looked over at Jeff, about ready to tell him what an asshole he was being, and the words stuck somewhere in my throat.

Jeff's cheeks were pinched in, like he was biting down. His eyes were narrow with concentration, and you could tell just by looking at him that I wasn't in the car for him. All that mattered to him was this insane rocket ride down the street I lived on. I stared at him for a few seconds, and then I remembered the stop sign at the end of the street. I whipped my head forward again and saw the sign less than a block away. Jeff was still accelerating.

"Jeff—Jeff, godDAMN IT—"

I saw his foot lash out toward the brake. The brake pedal sank to the floor. I braced my hands against the dashboard as the Cutlass's tires locked up. I jerked toward the windshield, but then the Cutlass stopped right at the stop sign and pitched me back in the seat before I could eat any glass. The goddamn car hadn't even drifted when he locked it up. It was a damn good thing, too, because if it had, we would have sideswiped one of the parked cars. As I fell back in the seat, I heard Jeff let out a high-pitched adolescent laugh, a shout of triumph.

"Check that shit out!" he said excitedly. "We were going sixty!"

I was too surprised to be as pissed as I should have been. Jeff usually didn't drive like that. He had always bitched about the guy who did.

But still, I was scared. We could have really been wracked up. Because I was scared, I tried to sound more pissed than I was when I said, "Yeah, I just read the new scientific study that conclusively proves that penis length is directly proportional to how fast you drive on a goddamn side street."

Jeff looked over at me. "Take it easy, man. Just blowin' the cobwebs out the tailpipe. The ol' Cutlass was gettin' sluggish."

"Is that any reason to wreck it?"

Jeff laughed and punched me playfully in the arm. I had to consciously keep from really popping him one back. He said, "Would I wreck the Cutlass? Come on. I just got 'er fixed up and paid off. I can handle this."

So we drove on, at a sane pace, and I forgot the incident after a few minutes. We cruised Main that night, drank some beers, and managed to



invite a couple of girls over to the local make-out spot. It was a real romantic locale, let me tell ya—an abandoned lot behind Mike's Bar and Grill. But when you're a horny teenager, your options are limited. We had a good time and then the girls left. We still had beer left but we decided to call it a night. Jeff drove me home and that was that—until a few days later.

Jeff called me Tuesday night. "Hey, stud," he said when I answered the phone. "Doin' any homework tonight?"

"Nothin' that I can't put off until tomorrow."

"Let's go for a drive. Steal some more of your dad's beer."

"Man, if I take too much he's gonna cut us off for good."

"Oh come on, there's still some left from Friday, ain't there?"

"Jesus, I'm easy. Okay. Want me to drive?"

"Hell no. The Cutlass is restless tonight."

As I hung up, I idly wondered what Jeff wanted. We usually weren't too ambitious on weeknights. Gas money was too rare to go out all the time. It was better to wait for the weekends when everybody was out. Then I figured, well, Jeff's folks are getting on his nerves and he just has to get out for awhile. I'm sure you remember that scene.

When Jeff picked me up, he told me he wanted to go boony-driving. That was easy enough when you lived in a small town in the middle of corn country. Five minutes outside of town you could get hopelessly lost on a winding tangle of gravel and dirt roads. This was convenient as hell in case you wanted to drink or make-out unobserved. Being from a small town has its advantages.

We drove out of town and turned off down a gravel county road. It was about nine or nine-thirty and just as dark as hell. The rows of corn streaked by on either side of Jeff's high-beams. Occasionally, red animal eyes would gleam in the tall grass by the road as the headlights caught them just right. Jeff cranked on some Bob Seger tunes and we drank our beers in good-natured silence. There was a hint of fall in the chill night breeze and I began to wonder where my windbreakers were at the bottom of my closet.

I was pretty much hypnotized by the passing rows of corn when I was suddenly jarred to full alertness. A small but handsome farm collie was poised by the side of the road as Jeff's headlights fell upon it. When the lights hit it, it froze for an instant. Then it dashed in a panic across the road. There was time to avoid it—or there would have been if Jeff hadn't floored the accelerator.

I couldn't believe it. I glanced at Jeff and saw his face had that pinched look. His blonde hair whipped frenziedly across his brow in the breeze from the open window. Gravel sprayed across the sides of the car as Jeff bore down on the fleeing collie. It was diving for the opposite side of the road. Jeff swung the wheel after it. The rear tires lost their purchase in the shifting gravel and the back end of the Cutlass swung around—but not before the right bumper caught the collie in the ribs. The collie was flung to the side, and then the Cutlass's back end slid to the right and the nose snapped toward the ditch. I was flung against the door, and I distinctly felt the metal bow in toward me as the dog's body hit the outside. There was no time to be scared—only stunned.

It was over so quickly I wasn't sure that it had happened. The Cutlass completely spun around once. The whole time, Jeff was heaving the wheel

in the direction of the skid. He never touched the brake, which saved our asses. My every instinct would have been to ride that brake, but he never did. He was able to regain control. We straightened out just shy of the ditch on the left side of the road. Only then, when Jeff was certain he had the Cutlass back, did he put on the brake. We shuddered to a stop. And then there was only Bob Seger playing on the stereo.

"Oh shit," I finally muttered. My voice was shaky and I didn't trust it above a whisper. I began to tremble as the reaction set in. Then I looked at Jeff. I wasn't sure what I felt yet, but it was close to hatred. I simply could not believe that Jeff, my best friend since childhood, the one I thought I knew so well, had just deliberately wiped out a dog and nearly got us in the bargain. Jeff was peering up into the rearview mirror. His face was expressionless. Something in his eyes warned me against saying anything. At least not yet.

He reached down and moved the shifter into reverse. We backed up in silence. My only thought was a bitter, 'Going back to finish the job on the dog?' I still had no idea what to say to Jeff. I was scared, pissed-off, and worried about him all at once.

He moved the Cutlass back about fifty feet. Clouds of dust swirled through his headlights as we slowly backed up through the section of road where the Cutlass had lost it. I could see where the gravel had been scattered every which way. Deep ruts were dug clear through the gravel right into the dirt. And then Jeff stopped the car. Without a word, he opened the door and slowly, deliberately, climbed out. Then he walked behind the car.

I still didn't know what to do. This was so far beyond my experience that I had no idea what a proper reaction would be. Should I scream, shout, punch him, or never speak to him again? The one thing I knew for sure: it would be a hell of a long time before I rode in a car with Jeff again.

"Scott," he called. His voice was level, but deeper than I had ever heard it before. Involuntarily, I turned around in my seat. I could see Jeff through the back window. He was a dark silhouette, just barely outlined by the sick glow of the taillights, but I could see he was looking down at the road. Probably down at the dog.

I debated ignoring him. But he showed no signs of getting back into the car. He was so still I thought that there was a good chance we would stay here all night until I got out of the car and saw whatever the hell it was he wanted me to see. If I humored him, he would drive me home quicker. Then I could decide what to do about him.

So I opened my door and climbed out. I remembered hearing and feeling the dog hit the side of the door. Unable to help myself, I looked down at the door as I closed it. Sure enough, there was a wide buckle in the dark blue skin of the Cutlass. Matted hair and blood slimed the entire length of the door. My stomach suddenly felt very hollow.

"Scott," he said again. I finally looked away from the smear of blood. Jeff was still standing behind the car. I was aware of the engine smoothly idling.

"What the hell are you trying to do?" I finally made myself say. It sounded completely inadequate but I had to start somewhere.

"Scott, come here. Look at it."



"Man, screw that. You're crazy."

"No, man," he said quietly. "Check this out."

Again, I knew we weren't going to leave until I went back and looked at the wiped-out dog. The longer we sat here on this road, the more likely some farmer would drive by and see us. With my luck it would be the dog's owner. That would be an unbelievable hassle even if Jeff could lie convincingly and say it was an accident. So I took a deep breath and walked over to Jeff. Then I slowly looked down at his feet.

The dog's body was bathed in the red glow of the Cutlass's taillights. The blood looked black and there was a lot of it. It had sprayed across the road and it was still leaking from the dog's stomach and mouth. The dog I had seen running across the road had very little connection with this broken bundle of twisted limbs. Its eyes were wide and unseeing, and its tongue curled out one side of its muzzle. That was all the more I could look. Even in that brief glimpse I could see that the car's tires had nearly ripped it in half.

And that reminded me of something else. Of course . . . Brad Gunther. And suddenly it was a lot clearer.

"Jeff . . . what is wrong with you?"

He looked away from the dog for the first time. He looked right at me. I could see parts of his face in the dim light . . . the rest was black. His eyes caught the light in much the same way as the dog's had.

He said, "Do you ever think about death?"

I tried to be cool, but I know I backed up a step. I'm not sure why. I wasn't really afraid of him. It was more like he was becoming something I didn't want to get any closer to. "Well, sometimes, I guess."

"Ever think about dying?"

"Not as much as you seem to."

"Ever killed anything?"

"No. Jesus Christ, Jeff, let's get out of here before someone sees us."

"Ever think about killing anything?"

"No, damn it!"

"That's bullshit. How can you not think about it?"

"All right . . . sometimes I do." Then I pointed at the dog lying at our feet. "But this . . ."

Jeff looked down at the dog briefly. Then I saw his eyes move back up and meet mine. "This, man. If we are friends, that means I don't have to hide as much from you. What I'm saying is, I'm curious. If you're honest, you'll admit it too."

I didn't have to admit anything. All I wanted was to get out of there. "C'mon, let's go. You bashed in the side of your car, it's got blood all over it, now let's go get it taken care of before someone sees it. Come on!"

Jeff nodded. "Okay, let's go. But tell me one thing—it was a high. Wasn't it?"

I stared at him, and then suddenly turned away. I was getting paranoid as hell; thought I heard cars coming, people walking through the fields, shotgun bolts drawn back. "Man, you're bizarre. Let's get gone. Your car's a mess."

"Scott," he said, grabbing my shoulder. I jumped a little bit. No, a lot. He was scaring the hell out of me. "Admit it. We're always bitching about how



bored we are. How nothing ever happens around here. Well, my man, we just made something happen."

He made me turn around to face him. I couldn't help but look at him. His face was more in the darkness now that we were beside the car; that helped a bit. Then he said, "It beats cruising Main, don't it? Beats the hell out of saying the same tired old shit to the same old bitches. It beats drinking and telling the same stupid jokes. You don't know you're alive until you know there's death. Right?"

All I could say was, "Jeff, can we go home?"

"It was a high, wasn't it? To be able to do that to something. Right?"

I pulled away from him, half-falling against the Cutlass as I did. Then I opened the passenger door. "Jeff, damn it, let's go. I have to get home."

"Okay," he said behind me. "But just think about one thing. Okay?" I didn't answer. "Think about Brad Gunther. Think that maybe he was going for the ultimate high. Okay?"

Jeff drove me home. I didn't say a word. I didn't offer to help him clean the car up. I drank a couple of beers during the ride, fully expecting Jeff to do some other stupid and dangerous move. But he drove a steady 55 and slowly pulled up to my house. No screaming tires, no revving engine. I got out of the car without looking back. I left him the beer because I'd had enough.

As I walked up my driveway, Jeff called after me, "I'll see you soon. We'll go out."

And that's why I have to talk to someone. Get this off my chest. It's safe to admit this here, where Jeff can't hear me. He had said, "We'll go out." I'm not sure exactly what he meant. On the surface, at least, he meant another moonlight run. Another roadkill. But is that where it would end?

"We'll go out." God help me, I think we will.

**Phil Simpson**



Leather on my shoes,  
I hate cows.

They Lick my steering  
wheel—

They give me hickies—  
They bite me.

I really hate cows.

Goodbye cow  
**BANG!** you're a belt.

*Lori Decker, Joe Cites, Bubba Michael*

# Telephone Operators: 1942

I know this reference librarian  
At the U of I who has  
Eyes too big for her face  
And lips to big for her face, too.

And this makes me want  
To get in her pants and  
Stay there for awhile.

And she has on a turquoise engagement ring  
And subtle perfume  
And stringy librarian blonde hair  
She keeps away from her face  
With a tacky brown barrette.

She is helping me  
Find books on working women—1942.

I am writing a novel.

Everybody should. Once.

As she flips through  
A big reference book  
I stand beside her  
And can see her bra.

When are you getting married? I ask.

What? she says, even though she heard me.

I don't know why people do this.

I don't repeat myself.  
I just look at her.

August, she says. Fifth.

She finds me a book  
That is thick with yellow pages  
That provides me with one bit  
Of information:

Telephone operators  
Made 25 dollars a week in 1942.

Thank you, I say.

She smiles and walks away.

Jim Harris





## Expiration Date 3/8/65

I walk in mighty late one night  
You ask me  
"Can I get you anything?"  
The only thing I could think of was a  
Real dry potroast  
You say Ha ha ha because you  
seem to think it's funny  
Well, I'll tell you a joke that  
Has no punch line  
As you can tell  
I'm not in the best of moods  
I got a nail through my head  
And the skies turned dark purple  
But that's what happens  
When you drink bad milk.

**Edward Schell**

## Desert Floor

The wind through this canyon  
is wind in my face, is

your mouth-breath  
bending stars like waves.

I hold the desert  
to my ear

and hear  
breaking against dunes

the moon rolling  
tumbleweed over box walls.

There are no anchors here—  
but a quick-birther stillness

when the crack  
of a divining rod

may be heard  
across miles.

for S.

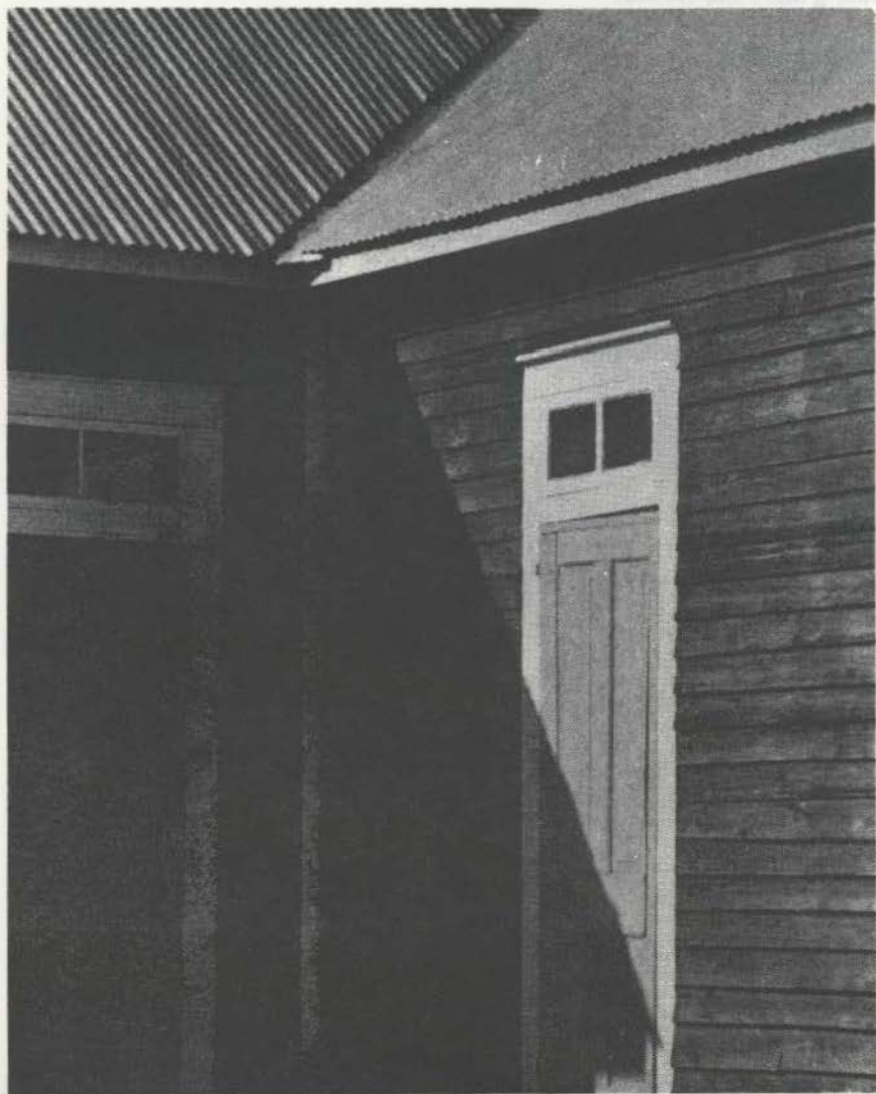
**Patrick Peters**

## Desert Floor

The hard through the canyon  
is wind in my face, it

your mouth breaths

breathing from the canyon





...and ...  
...  
...  
...  
...  
...

...  
...

...

## The Undressing Room

I undress for work, conceal myself in robe,  
Careful not to reveal that which will soon be seen.

I exit the undressing room  
And take my place on stage.  
The class chatters cheerfully,  
Asks me how I am today.  
I strike a pose,  
And answer, "Fine."

But they don't hear my reply—  
I'm now a bowl of fruit.

Krista a. e. Taylor



## Coping with Night

Icarus, had I asked you,  
perhaps you could have taught me caution,  
that I might not have reached bare-handed  
to stroke hair  
as blonde as fire.

You knew before I ever dreamed:  
the drunken impudence of flight;  
the unbelieving  
endless  
plummet;  
the cold wet kiss  
of sudden dark.

Icarus, was it worth it?  
to lose all to come yet closer  
to the sun that shone  
without you.  
And did the brine that washed  
your broken face  
burn your eyes  
as it did mine?

**Stuart Albert**



## One On One

Coozy knifed the ball  
between his legs  
and jitterbugged past for two.  
Points spun by  
on a roulette wheel  
while I banged with my slim  
coat hanger elbows. Trying  
to muscle.

He was a bearing  
on blacktop, a well oiled  
joint spinning and rolling on me.  
I played hard. Thinning  
my soles with defense.  
Coozy swung right, back left,  
lobbed a hook, and dropped  
the moon through the hoop.

**Patrick Peters**

## An Acquired Taste

In the bathroom, up on top of the toilet tank,  
Next to the Pepsodent and the Old Spice,  
I'd always find the chipped ashtray.

In 1969, I couldn't read "Knottsberry Farm"  
Or even know of the silver-oxide days  
One could spend in California.

All I knew was that when I ate the moon-grey ashes,  
They tasted bitter when my tongue lapped them from  
The pictures of the "Saratoga Stagecoach Ride,"  
The "Ghost Town," and the "Knottsberry Farm Ice  
Cream Parlor;"

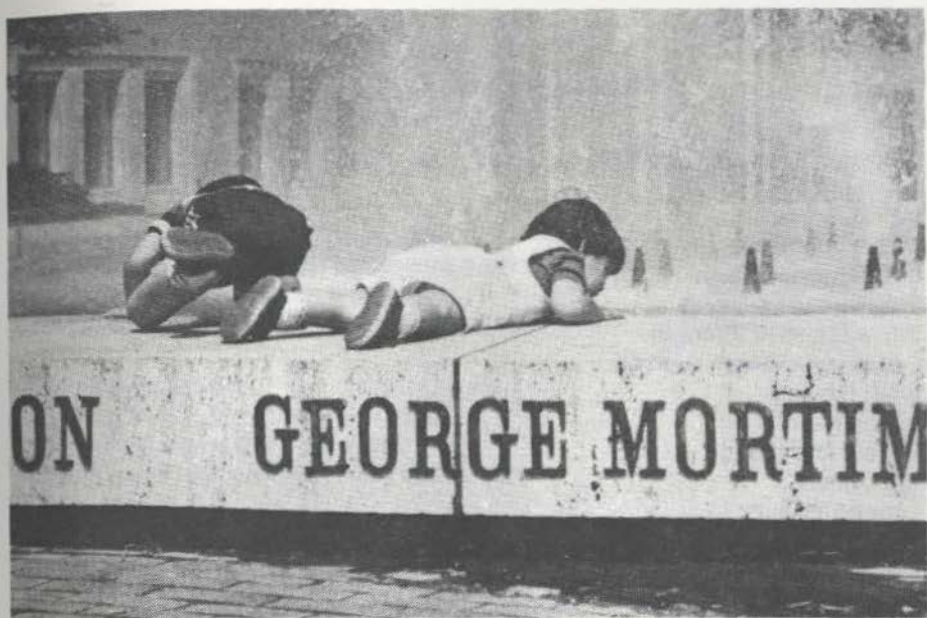
I couldn't read the souvenir ashtray with its  
bright red lettering,

But I knew that ants get on popsicles in the summer,  
Cream-O-Wheat is made with bitable lumps in the winter,  
And Dad's crumpled Salem butts couldn't be picked up  
Anytime without the ashes falling off.

**Tina Wright**







## When Children Are Alone, The Devil Speaks

Put the plastic  
bag on your head

Tom Green

## Bob

I imagine  
there was blood  
purple, escaping the mouth  
down the side of his  
crooked face.  
The rope, black,  
strong without flaw.  
Tiny threads twisting  
into a chaos of strength.  
I could have been laughing  
when he tied  
his noose.  
Round and round  
and round  
I imagine it was  
tight, solid  
because it worked.  
The only thing  
I can't imagine  
is why. ?

**Christy Dunphy**

## Gut & Scissors

I want a beard  
that doesn't grow hair,  
but alfalfa sprouts.  
When eating sandwiches  
I'd snip some beard onto the bread.  
On the road I could rip  
my beard and eat it.  
The only thing better would be  
to shit wheat.

**Dane Buczkowski**

## **This Old House**

Why so many glassless windows in this old house?  
Dad didn't gaze through a pane that wiggled  
with rain last night to see if hail  
hammered his stalks of corn.

I suppose Dad would miss the window  
where he watched his corn yellow into husks.  
"Dry and ready for plowing," he'd say.  
His hands pressing hard against the pane.

Yet frames still stand,  
hollowing the house. Not one smudge  
wet from his sweat blurs my vision  
of zig-zagged furrows grown wild with grass.

### **Amy Call**

## **Mortgage**

"Mort"—Death in Latin  
An appropriate name  
He killed himself  
Working in the mill  
Twenty-two years  
To buy his house  
The city tore down  
For a parking lot  
One year after  
His stone  
Went up

### **Tina Wright**



---

## 1986 Vehicle Literary Awards

### Fiction:

- 1st Prize—Steve Baker, "The Couch Potato"
- 2nd Prize—B.J. Livingston, "48 Nights in the Grocery Biz"
- 3rd Prize—Eddie Simpson, "The Honor Grad"

### Poetry:

- 1st Prize—Bob Zordani, "Sight-Seeing Outside Phoenix"
- 2nd Prize—Patrick Peters, "The History of High School Basketball"
- 3rd Prize—Patrick Peters, "Photo Album"

The winner of the Winnie Davis Neely Memorial Award was Bob Zordani, for "Sight-Seeing Outside Phoenix."

The Vehicle was awarded second place in the Literary Magazine category in the national competition sponsored by The Society for Collegiate Journalists, for the Spring and Fall issues of 1985.

*The Vehicle* is published twice yearly by the students of Eastern Illinois University under the supervision of the Upsilon Gamma Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, National English Honors Society. It is funded by Eastern Illinois University.

Submissions for the Spring '87 issue of *The Vehicle* should be brought to Coleman Hall Room 308. All Eastern Illinois students are eligible to submit their work for possible publication in *The Vehicle*.

---

EASTERN ILL. UNIV. LIBRARY



3 2211 131597791

