



Calliope

vol.1 no.2

CONTENTS

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ADVISORY EDITOR: ...
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Chicago, Illinois

Calliope

Calliope is published twice a year in December and May. Single issues are \$1.00 a year's subscription, \$1.50.

The editors welcome manuscripts of poetry, fiction and graphics, but cannot return manuscripts that are not accompanied by self-addressed stamped envelope. Manuscripts are accepted between Aug. 15 and March 31.

Address all correspondence to CALLIOPE, c/o Creative Writing Program, Roger Williams University, College, Bristol, R.I. 02802.

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Volume 1, Number 2

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Photo by John P. Sousa

George E. Murphy Jr

CABIN FEVER

There is a rash and heated shiver
in this house.
It twitches in your eyes.
The silvered mirror glints like knives.
I touch the windows, frosted, cold,
feel nothing.
The floor grain tightens.
The air drapes itself in odors,
mumbles into corners.

We've started reading in the bathroom.
Restless midday naps.
Wandering into closets.

Outside, there is weather.
Sliding latches, fixing bolts,
we see the changes, the unsureness
of the sky.
But here, the days are harnessed, tamed
and bitted on a shaft of spikes.
Here we can, at least,
predict the future.

George E. Murphy Jr

George E. Murphy Jr

REVISED

POEM

I'm trying to learn to talk to you.
I've dusted off my tongue, read the books.
Nothing seems to work
the way my hand
does, settling on your shoulder.

My lips are never steady
when I lean in close to kiss
like this.

Photo by John P. ...

Michael Waters

WHORLS

Like the whorls, he contains a secret.
He has filled the abandoned cave of the snail
With red pepper, knowing

That pepper excites the imagination.
Now he imagines the shell in the window
Filling the room with transformed sunlight.

The red pepper burning in the whorls
Is like the last wish in his heart
Billowing. By now

The snail must have crossed the garden
Bearing its soft new uniform
Like a gift of prophecy.

Michael Waters

AIR TOUCHED BY THE AXE

Once, the axe over my head,
I saw clearly, through wood-dust
and haze, coming home
through the forest, the woman
whose land this cabin respects.

But the axe, sweeping down
into the rough heart of the oak,
rang through the clearing
with the clarity of water
falling, and the woodpeckers

stiffened for a moment. Then
the forest resumed--
the woman gone, again, forever.
In the corner of the cabin,
on the foundation timber,

is a smooth date: 19--.
The shavings have blown to dust,
even the knife is lost
in rust, but the year rings true
as the axe hesitates, then falls--

on a hot afternoon,
swinging the axe,
surrounded by years, by sunlight,
I saw her, this woman here,
stepping home from the forest.

Michael Finley

A DRIVE IN THE COUNTRY

Summer was dry,
but farmers pretend not,
and plow the dead stalks under.
Today the wind was lifting
the first loose dirt away.
The elms in the park were striped
for felling, sugar beets lay
on the sides of sharp curves,
tree trunks lay scattered
where they landed
in the tornado of 1958.
Outside Crookston a yellow dog
just made it to the ditch to die,
and farther ahead, by the border,
old shoes line the shoulders--
Canadians are home now,
with new ones.

Dennis Trudell

MONDAY MORNING. . .

Six men in white coveralls
and white short-sleeved shirts and white
caps come into a building carrying a ladder.
They march out of step
through the lobby. They try to enter
an elevator, but the ladder is too long.
They saw it in half. They leave the two halves

in the elevator, but each carry a small pile
of sawdust along a third-floor
corridor. This is a hospital; the six men
each speak a different language
and when they reach a nurse's station
they offer their palms to the young student nurse
sitting there with a textbook. She

smiles and points to an illustration
of a nerve cell. Each of the men gently
pours what he holds onto the page
and moves away from the counter to form
a short line of men tap-dancing awkwardly
in worn white-speckled shoes. A woman
in a nearby bed sits upward

from her inert body to kiss death
as the walls around her blaze a new white.

Dennis Trudell

STREET DANCE

Ladies of fire and eye pupils
soft enough to let you in--

to let you back out and kids
wild enough to stand still

and change the world. Animals
peeing on hydrants and police cars;

accordians and fiddles walk the
invisible tightropes between our navels

while the past unfurls like flags.
It blows away--it dries and

drifts down the sidewalk into
vanishing points as the big trombone

of something that never happened before
comes gleaming around some corner.

Arthur Winfield Knight

Robert Lowell

LORD

Robert Lowell

When my wife died
 I thought of Gene Halboth
 because it had happened to him
 a few years earlier.
 Each time I saw him,
 asking how he was,
 he'd say: "As well
 as the Lord allows,"
 and I always thought
 the Lord wasn't allowing much.

James Schevill

THE ANGEL TRACK

Four feet from the canvas he points
His brush at the white emptiness:
"You have to know where to begin.
These young guys start to paint anywhere,
All they want is to go fast.
What way can they fight twenty,
Thirty years of experience? NO WAY."
For an hour he tries to start and fails.
He advances, circles, measures, stares,
The canvas, pristine white, remains intact.
"The beginning is the curse, the crime.
Once you get started you hit the rhythm.
The whole thing grows like it was forcefed.
But the beginning, you've gotta be bold,
You've gotta hit the deep stuff where it hides.
It's like looking in a mirror or lake.
If you don't see more than your reflection
You're in trouble. There's a whole world
Under that reflection, all those images
That connect you to time, space, history.
You see that blank white space singing to me?
It's an angel track. To fill that angel space
You've gotta dance around with demons.
A painter's trapped searching for invisible angels.
The real beginning is when you find dim angel tracks."
Suddenly he slashes a black line on the canvas,
Smears it up, down, searching for the angel track.

Original: Calliope 1.2

Calliope 1.2

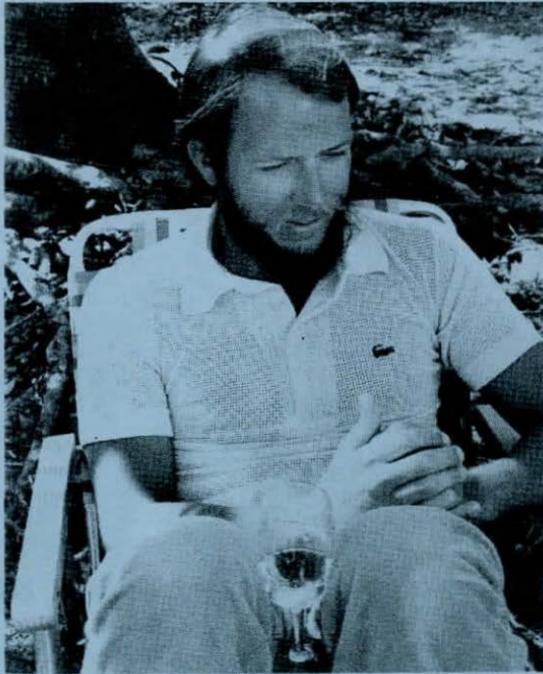
1981

THE ANGEL TRACK

You feel how the canvas he paints
 his brush at the white background
 You have to know where to begin
 down young guys start to paint anywhere
 all they want is to go fast
 that way can they fight tonight
 thirty years of experience to say
 not an hour he tries to start and fail
 in someone, circles, squares, triangles
 the canvas, painting white, looking black
 "The painting is the canvas, the crime
 look you get started you hit the victim
 The whole thing grows like it was foretold
 but the beginning, you've got to be bold
 how's gonna hit the deep stuff where it hides
 it's like looking in a mirror or glass
 if you don't see more than your reflection
 you're in trouble. There's a whole world
 that's that reflection, all those images
 that connect you to time, space, history
 you see that black white space sliding to me?
 it's an angel track. To fill that angel space
 you've gotta dance around with demons.
 A painter's trapped searching for invisible angels.
 The real beginning is when you find the angel tracks.
 Nobody be slipped a black line on the canvas,
 search it up, down, searching for the angel track.

SPECIAL FEATURE: JIM HALL

An Interview and Five Poems



Jim Hall was born in Hopkinsville, Kentucky, on July 4, 1947. He did his undergraduate work at Eckerd College and has an M.A. from Johns Hopkins University and a Ph.D. from the University of Utah. He has worked as a bartender, a landscaper and gardener, washed yachts and been a ranch hand on actor Robert Redford's ranch. His poems have appeared in many little magazines, including *The Antioch Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Beloit Poetry Journal* and *New York Quarterly*. His first book, *The Lady from the Dark Green Hills*, was published by Three Rivers Press in 1976 and re-issued by Carnegie-Mellon in 1977. A second volume, tentatively titled *The Mating Reflex*, is expected from the same press in January 1979. Jim lives with his wife and three cats in Miami, where he teaches at Florida International University.

Martha Christina

AN INTERVIEW WITH JIM HALL

Q. The poems we're publishing seem to show it not several voices, at least several tones from one voice. Do you feel that any of them reflect a truer you than the others?

H. All my selves are true. From the first my impulse to write poetry was mixed up with a desire to impersonate. I love to mimic, and feel that wearing as many different masks as possible in different poems has allowed me to hack out new terrain in my inner life. If I wrote all my poems in the first person confessional voice, I'd get bored and give up writing in a few years. In a poem like "Golden Pond," for instance, certain lies had to be told because the names of those Kentucky villages didn't weld together right when I told the truth. So as the logic of the poem took over, a different self had to emerge to speak it.

Q. Many readers like to speculate on influences. They'll say, for example, "There's a William Carlos Williams poem," or "He's sounding like Roethke." Who are the poets in your past or present whose work influences your own?

H. The positive poetic influences were Frost and Dickey. Both of them are concerned with and very good at rendering speech patterns. They are also story-tellers. I was strongly attracted to the story-telling possibilities in poetry. Another positive influence was Edward Field, a New York poet whose recent work has gotten a little too flat and talky for me, but whose early books revolutionized what I considered possible in poems. The negative influences, which were at least as important in the beginning, were so many that I can't list them all: Pound, Eliot, Milton, Stevens. After learning more about poetry, though, and

Christina/HALL

teaching some of these giants whom I used to consider unnecessarily recondite and opaque, I find that I admire a great deal of their work. But in the beginning I wanted to write a good simple poem, one that would never need footnotes. I was angry with Eliot and Pound especially for making poems which were so damn hard.

Q. What about extra-poetic influences, things like where you live, things you like to do?

H. I've always read more fiction than poetry, and seen more films, too. I'd say my study of film has been a large influence. Rapid cutting in film, and the right gesture to expose the emotional condition correlate with poetic technique. I have a tropical spirit and need lots of sunshine to feel healthy. My interest in sports, I guess, has been the largest extra-literary influence. That and my curiosity about and fascination with sex.

Q. Many of the poems in your first book, *The Lady from the Dark Green Hills*, are full of sexual innuendo (and more!).

H. Pound says the three things men have in common (I'm not sure if he meant to say people) is a fascination with money, sex and tomorrow. I'm a money/sex person myself. I suppose the sexual ignorance that seemed to be the norm when I was growing up, coupled with the transcendent possibilities of sexual activity have made the subject one of great interest to me. Also, sex forces you back to the body. You can't think and make love very well. I like that. Money talks for itself.

Q. Your poems, even those dealing with grim subjects, seem to retain a light touch. Is this a conscious effort to avoid mawkishness and sentimentality?

H. It's very easy to give in to the sway of your own feelings, to convince yourself that your grief, your loss, your guilt, is the best grief that's

Christina/HALL

ever wept into town. I've tried to cultivate ambivalence about most things, not get too pompously certain I'm right. Because I mistrust pomposity more than anything, I like to scratch at the truth with humor. Humor, jokes, are really great tools for truth telling. Comedy seems much more natural, much less a perversion of the spirit than gloom. If I could, I'd write only funny poems.

Q. What about the delicate line separating sentiment and sentimentality, i.e., "Golden Pond"?

H. If the words of a poem which is full of sentiment don't preen and ooze, then the sentimentality won't be there. I don't believe in being emotionally tough and resisting strong feelings as you are writing a poem. But I do believe in allowing your feelings to be ruled by the necessary form of the poem, rather than the other way.

Q. You've said many writers hate words. Would you please elaborate on that paradox.

H. Writing a poem means cooperating with the form it begins to take and the words that are helping it emerge. I don't believe one should slap an emotion or an image down on a page, quick while it's still hot. What will always happen is: the original impulse (image or emotion or idea) will seem to decay as the words fail to make it zing and whistle and belch as it seemed to do when it was just in the writer's mind. The natural result is to begin to hate the words. Those incompetent bastards, they failed me again. It's more profitable to look on the blank page as a chunk of wood rather than as a forbidding canvas that you have to fill up. You and the words and the page and the original image or impulse all get together and see what you can come up with. Hopefully, the finished poem will deepen the original impulse. Hopefully, you'll discover something, know something at line 27 that you had no idea about in line

Christina/HALL

one. Poems work when they are the overt history of a revelation.

Q. What about your own love of puns?

H. I hate puns. I try never to use them. They hide in my keys like roaches.

Q. You're one of many poets who support their habit by teaching. Do you find that teaching others to write helps or hinders your own progress?

H. I've gone through some simple-minded worrying over whether I was a teacher, who also wrote, or the opposite. Now I see I am a good teacher and an improving writer, and I'm realistic enough to know that even if I thought my teaching hindered my writing, I wouldn't give it up and go back to tending bar or planting palm trees around condominiums. If I had it to do over again, though, I think I would have gone into scientific research. I'd like to have a set of metaphors that were non-literary to work with. I still fantasize about joining an expedition to study the puffin or the slow loris. But teaching doesn't really impede my growth as a writer. It doesn't help as much as one might think either. Partly that's because teaching robs the same energy bank that writing uses, and partly because you begin to take too seriously the activity of writing. You endow it with false reverence. Writing is really, in Eliot's words, "superior amusement."

Q. "Fifteen Billion Sold" addresses a very real situation. But what about the positive side of little magazine publishing?

H. One positive element is that literary magazines will print the incoherent ramblings of a pompous poetaster. I can send a copy of this literary magazine, with my brilliant and unselfish remarks, to the Guggenheim committee and maybe get a whole lot of money. Literary magazines help us stay in touch. That's their best purpose. In touch with

Christina/HALL

who is writing and what they're doing. The failures, the successes. They also act as an index of the passion that is alive for poetry. I'm continually amazed, though, by serious writers who publish in literary magazines but who don't read anything in the issue except their poem and the notes on contributors.

Q. Writing can be a very isolating activity, enforcing a kind of solitude. When you have a poem in progress, do you share it and, if so, with whom?

H. I read the poems that I think are nearly finished to my wife. But the ones that I'm not sure of I sometimes send out in the mail, and after a few rejections I look at them and usually withdraw the one good line or image, and throw the rest away. It takes a few rejection slips sometimes before I can be honest with myself; I wish it weren't so. I wish I could tell right away, but it takes me a while, sometimes quite a while, to cool to a poem, and having it in the mail helps with this objectivity. I know a lot of my poet friends would be appalled at this. "I would never let anyone see something I was less than certain of." But I write so much that it takes the shock of repeated rejection to admit that a particular poem is just not successful. Another aspect of your question is the poetry community issue. Is it important to have a tough and critical audience who see and discuss early versions of a poem? It was quite helpful to me to have had such critical audiences in graduate writing programs for several years. But I'm quite tired of conversations about poetry. I feel like the things that other people have to contribute to my knowledge of the world is much greater in fields outside literature than in it. I like stock car racers. I'd ask Frost about the biology of a white heal-all before I'd ask him what elements of prosody he employed in "Design."

Christina/HALL

Q. You've been writing seriously for about 10 years. How do you feel about where you are now and where you'll be in 10 more years?

H. I'd like to write a few good novels. I know I can if I don't get too discouraged. It's a tough craft to learn and break into. I also expect I'll keep on publishing poems, if I can maintain the amused distance I have had on poetry writing. I'll probably be moving further south to avoid the coming ice age. I imagine I'll still be eating too many Girl Scout cookies, and I'll know one or two new barnyard sounds. I do a good pig. As far as being king of the mountain of American poetry, I neither aspire to that nor will willingly accept the office. I'd rather make my little toys and go relatively unnoticed, than become lionized and a hopelessly self-congratulatory poet. There are a dozen or so of them running amok just now.

Jim Hall

GOLDEN POND

Canton Gracey Cadiz Golden Pond
Those names he made me memorize,
the towns leading to the Lake, leading
towards his birthplace.

Canton Gracey Cadiz Golden Pond
The same route the funeral cars took
the hills stiff and bald on either side,
my tan hands stiff in my lap.

Canton Gracey Cadiz Golden Pond
I'd forgotten their names, forgot the road
and the cemetery where the others are,
those women and men related to me
in ways no one alive can remember.

Canton Gracey Cadiz Golden Pond
I chant it now a thousand miles away
and bring back the summers, his bourbon tinted
skin, those hands that helped me reel
up my first silver prizes.

Canton Gracey Cadiz Golden Pond
I trace on my palm the curves that road took
I am my own fortune teller now
This is the only fortune he left me
My silver prize, this bourbon tinted hand
This road map to Golden Pond

Jim Hall

KILLING MY TEACHER, FOR PETER

The afternoon the screaming cockatoo lit
in my orchid tree, escaped from Parrot Jungle,
hounded by sparrows and bluejays,
which it knocked away with its cumbersome beak,
I was thinking hard of you.

I was trying to recall a single thing I'd learned
from you, my teacher, my buddy now. And nothing
came to mind. Nothing at all.

Until the cockatoo.
With its spray-paint colors, its wings
like the coat of the craziest pimp
like your glaring paisleys.
Get it?
I did.

The air drops down all the answers we need.
When the mood is raging hot enough
the solutions speak in every radio song
in every grain of the oak desk.

You are the cockatoo, see,
and me and the rest of us back then, in our drab
fatigues, our depressing earth colors,
we came at you, for a crumble of your beak,
a spiney feather come loose.
And you just wanted to coast back to Parrot Jungle,
your little bungalow.
You just wanted to stir us up, not hurt us,
then swim away yourself above the trees
through the sweet air,
the air no one can be taught to breathe.

The cockatoo never returned.
It couldn't, for this to come out right.
The sparrows, the jays, they live in my backyard sky
all their lives and mine. We are each other's ambiance.
We really wanted to kill you.
We really did.
I'm glad you outflew us all.

AT HOME ON DAYTONA BEACH

He's seen alligators snapping
at asses perked on postcards in St. Paul.
The sunsets sliced by white birds.
He's dreamed of sliding his hand
into the pocket of dark where bikinis
stand off from the wings of hip bones.
And here, balanced on the railing
of his hotel in clothes that don't yet fit,
he squints out past the yellow sails
which lean across the immense water
and he toys with the unfamiliar key
and breathes and breathes and breathes
to own at least a quart of this
expensive air.

Jim Hall

FIFTEEN BILLION SOLD

The earth is a big mac
and fourteen times around its
greasy equator stretch the
poems laid end to end
Convenient fast slapped
cookie cut poems they
sizzel on silver skilletts
and young graduates spatula
them into congruent stacks
and collate the pulpy tomatoes,
the spiceless pickles and the
bloodless gray patties

Haiku blot out the sun
Undigested burgers are seen
drifting at sea Free verse
is pumped from bilges by
large and small craft
Young boys wake at night
and shit cheeseburgers into blank
verse They wash ashore
belting the earth
with a saturn of images

Where do they come from
where do they go
Large libraries catalog quarter
pounders, junior plains,
small fries learn to ride beefy
motorcycles of metaphor before
they've suffered through spinach

Mothers deserve a poem today,
and fathers have change left
and everyone, everyone is having
it their way after another and
another and another meatless
bun is fast wrapped quick sacked
chewed swallowed burped and after
tasted and dumped back into the
limitless unpollutable ocean
of our heartburnt imagination

Jim Hall

THINGS THAT NEVER HAPPENED BUT ALWAYS WERE

When the soldier returns with new eyes
when a woman cries unexpectedly
when two tired men drop their tools
and remember
when the sun and the moon and each star

When you touch my face
when you blind my mouth
when you fumble for the best way to say it

When these things are no longer blessings
when these things are all that matter
when all of this is made petty by easy people

When the sun when the moon when you and
each star
find each other

Willis Barnstone

WHEN THE APRICOTS ARE RIPE

I know the garden. Deer eat there, are shot
and haunt us with their flight. And when I lay
in the surprising islands, under the apricot,
by the white pigeon tower, happy in our day
of kisses, hair, in our huge night of cries,
loving screams while memorizing the sweet
science of our thighs, suddenly the animal
harried us with its blood. I'm at your feet
but you are gone. I call. Dead phone. I fall
in the same grove. And deeper in the wood
I call. Now like a fool I shake. Your eyes
are olive on the olive mountains. Of
course deeper than white night, since gone. With love
far I rush on fire nowhere, cold for good.

Willis Barnstone

SUN AS A WINTER ONION

Padding through the snow, the cat fires a look
through the glass door and tigers off to woods
of blue air. Six degrees. Sun on my book
burns shadow on the page: black dogwood buds,
a knight with parchment eyes. The marble table
holds a graph pad and four painted clay birds,
my elbow, the gold Sheaffer nib, blue words
on the squares; and Mahler's last amazing fable
sings. I watch fire on the marble. The bells
of fire are an illusion Plotinus found
is life itself. He went inside a round
darkness and up like any Siberian shaman,
and was the sun. I search within, a Sunday layman
to mystery. The sun, like a cut onion, smells

Terry Nathan

GEORG TRAKL

The liquid stillness of oranges
before they are eaten. A fragrance
of fruit on the black linen tablecloth.

Blue lights, azure. Blue autumn
resounding through the spines of unborn
finches fluttering away. In your evening dream,
huts are thatched with lavender ribbons.

Wine swells bitter in your throat.

Friend, we have climbed down hills
like Calvary, and the scars relax in the watery-red.

Your voice undresses outside
a cry of mandolins we cannot kill.

Someone plays a sonata as you
drag an axe across the icy-blue doves.

Janet Little

EOHIPPIUS

I saw a picture of an elephant's embryo
Sac torn, trunk curled
And I saw a horse in a jar.
It had perfect hooves and a smiling snout
And the withered sac waved like a rag.

Sometimes I think that I am eohippus
Walking on strange mountains
Eating something that looks like bamboo.
Or I turn, slow-motion, in yellowish fluid
My circle, my uncharted sea.

CAESURA

I am standing in my bathroom mirror
While you sleep like a pink fish in a fuscia pond
Just as still as all this light

My suitcases look expectant in the kitchen
They don't seem to mind how still it is
With the sky so blue and an empty house

So I go barefoot in mourning
Down the dusty stair-rug
Once outside I'll probably scream
Like a gaping fish in all this light

Janet Little

THE VISCOUS SLEEP

There is a river and I am the marshes
The vapors are yellowish ghosts in the trees
I find rotting apples clutched in finger-like weeds
And the black swarming waters have covered my thighs
I am damp stillness
I am the tongues
Of the waves in the wings of drowned birds

Cliff Saunders

GATSBY'S GHOST

It brushes the night from its dinner jacket and enters the mansion in search of a telephone. Outside, the lawn party rages like a dazzling inferno: chords of laughter, clinking glasses, crescendo of sad violins...The call is made. It returns to the gathering outside, women flocking to its smile like curious moths. The music stops. Cobwebs adorn the trees like silk veils. It removes a green light from its pocket and tosses it into the bushes. Standing alone, it awaits its chauffeur. The moon fades like a drop of breath on a dark window.

Peggy Heinrich

EXPOSURE

The funeral was in the old neighborhood.
There used to be a newsstand at the corner
where my brother and his friends
stole pennies tossed
at the blind newsdealer.

The butcher shop's still there
but not the red-faced butcher
with three fingers missing.
I used to stare at them missing.
One side of the store was gray
with seafood lobsters crawling
in their tank on one another
fish on ice the fish man
asked me once if I would like to
have the eyes moist and cold as glass.

I ran away a lot
from boys who chased me
yelling fuck and men who stood
exposed my mother called it
I thought she meant me.

The candy store's a thrift shop now
the deli's a boutique and different
people roam the streets we chalked
different kids run errands roller skate
sit in our movie house fill up our cubicles.

At the funeral parlor someone said
they didn't know a soul there anyomre
someone said they didn't understand
a word someone said dirty
empty someone said strange I said
the neighborhood has changed.

Elton Glaser

EASTER

We watched the evening sparrow,
 Upstroke and counter-poise, sweep
 From the white pear a spiced
 Sheet of blossoms that hung there
 Whitely as light drifting
 Down clouds that do not move.
 Then night came, dragging her wings,
 Sick breath of nicotine and
 Wet fur in the bedroom.
 We waited, overtaking
 The last scared hours, then leaning
 Out of the window to watch
 The stars degenerate and
 The moon, in a downy light,
 Roll back at the bell's appeal.

Elton Glaser

MARTIAL ART

The bridge retracting under us
was no shock, nor were
the brass clangors, limp flags,
the syllables numb to the core.

We took the city in two days
with no problem, no prisoners.
Booty piled up like barricades.
The women laughed with their legs.

But that was before our relief turned back,
before the orders lost in a muddy portmanteau
and the maps shattered in the sound of

mortars, carbines, light and heavy guns
heaving over the unmarked minefield
where we stand, the next step not taken.

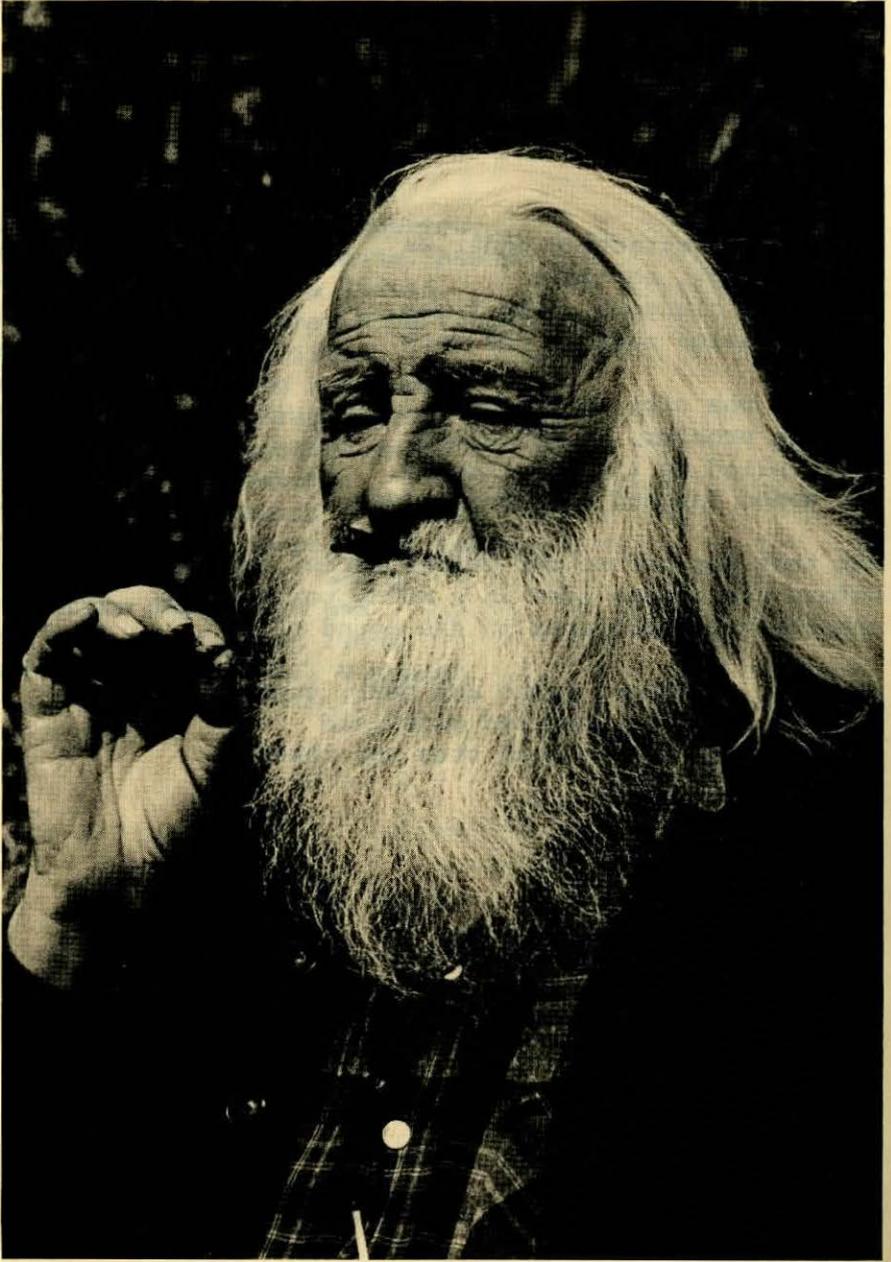


Photo by Les Breault

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FROM THE EDITORS

CALLIOPE is the class project of the Literary Magazine course in the Creative Writing Program at Roger Williams College. The student staff participates in all aspects of preparation and publication except the actual printing, which is done by photo offset.

Each subsequent issue of CALLIOPE will be edited by a new staff, but the editorial policies and procedures will remain the same as those followed in the publication of CALLIOPE 1. Manuscripts will be read and evaluated with the author's name masked so that beginning and well-established writers are read without prejudice.

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