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Pen Quest



BARWHAITE '82

The University of North Florida



Janet Collins



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PenQuest is designed to provide a showcase for student creativity in the fields of literature, photography, and graphic arts.

The staff would like to thank all those who contributed to this issue, both in creative material, time, and moral support. We would also like to encourage the continuing cooperation and support of students, faculty and alumni, that *PenQuest* may remain a source of pride and achievement for the University of North Florida.

Unfortunately, because of lack of space, we have been unable to include all the material that has been submitted to us; but there is no deadline for *PenQuest*, in that work submitted too late for one issue may appear in the next. And there is always a position available on the *PenQuest* Staff.

Contributions can be submitted to the Language and Literature Department, Building Eight, Room 2649.

Submissions should include your name, address, and telephone number.

No submissions can be returned, so be sure to keep a copy of your work.

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Last Hour of Light

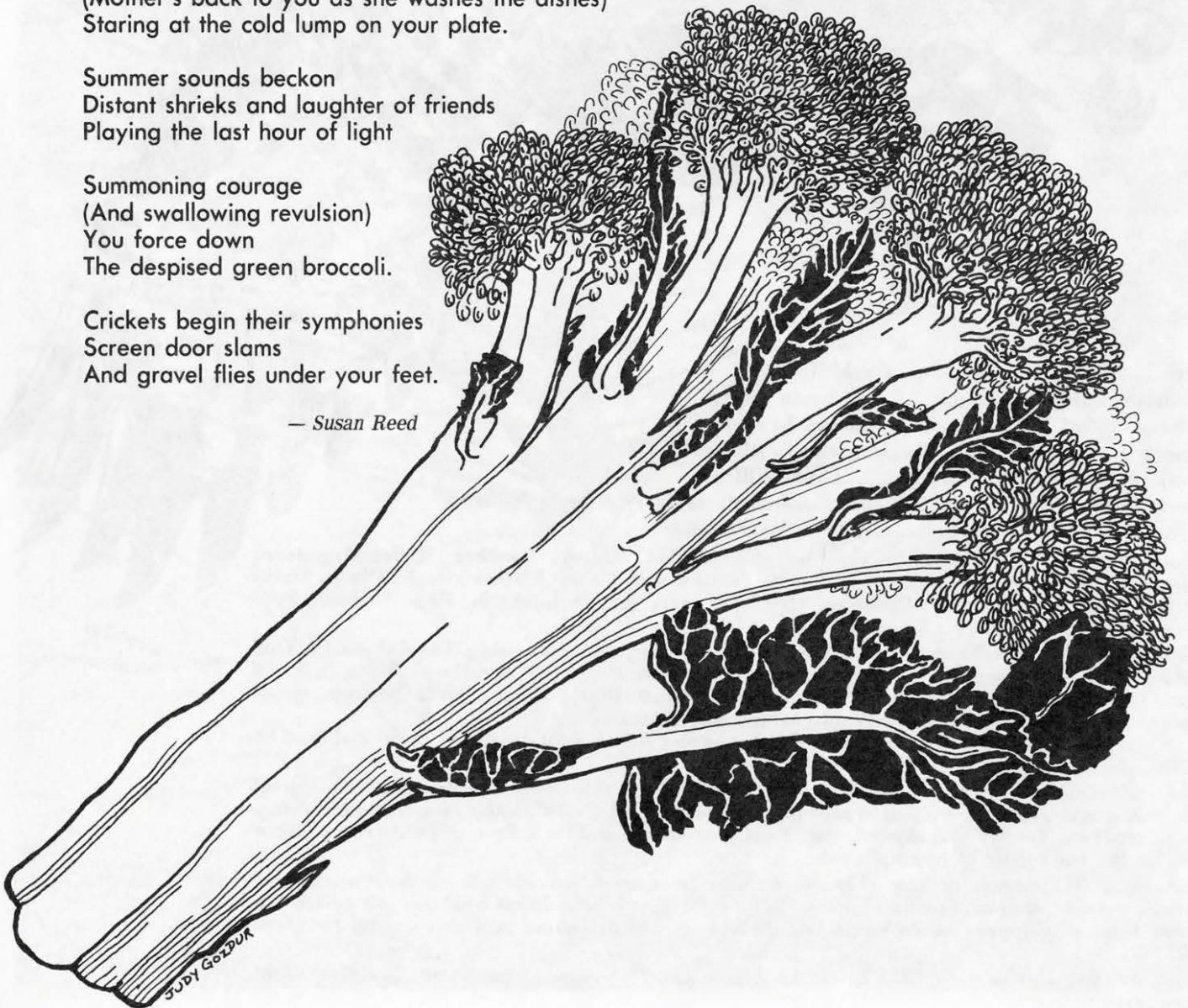
Sitting uncomfortably
(Mother's back to you as she washes the dishes)
Staring at the cold lump on your plate.

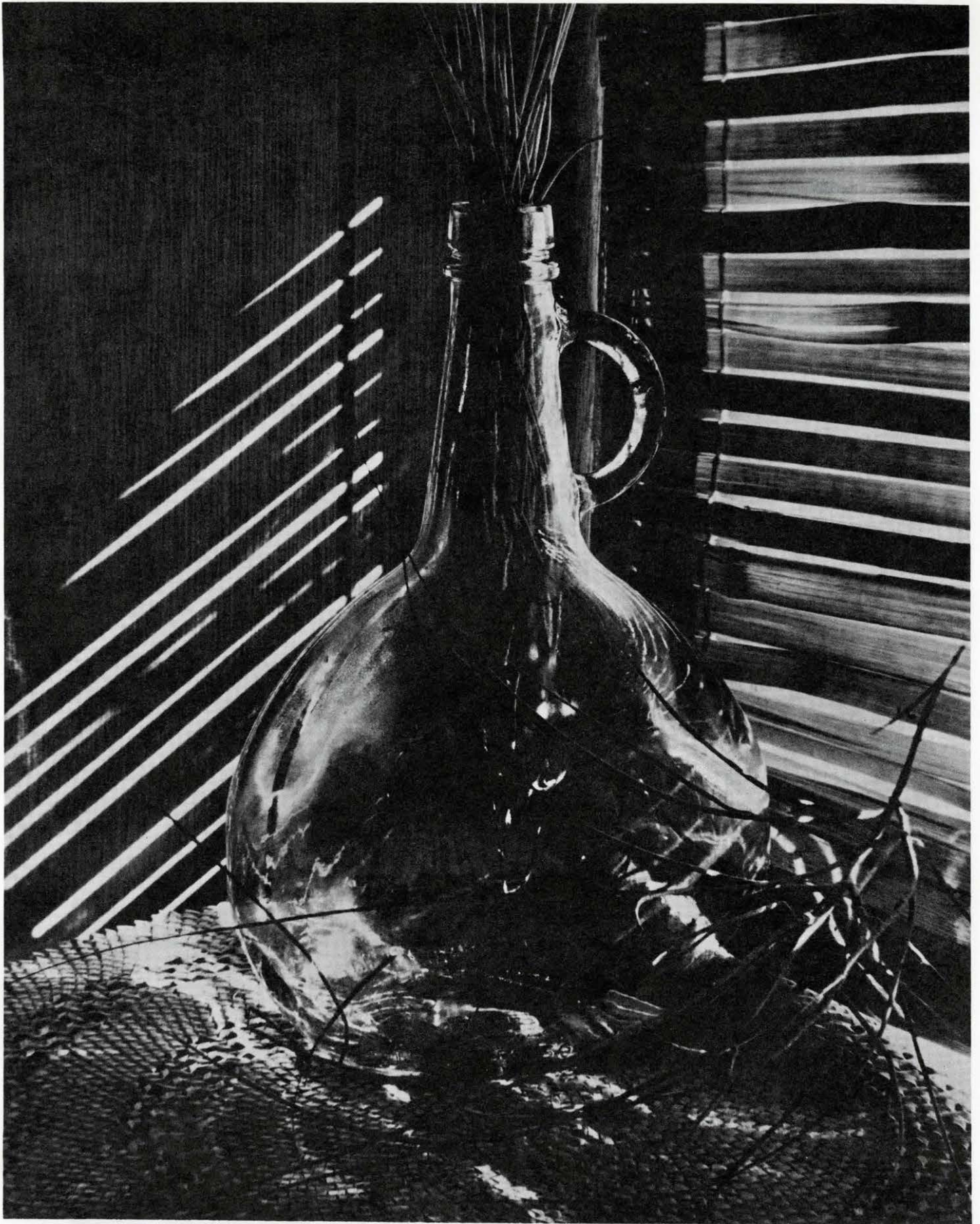
Summer sounds beckon
Distant shrieks and laughter of friends
Playing the last hour of light

Summoning courage
(And swallowing revulsion)
You force down
The despised green broccoli.

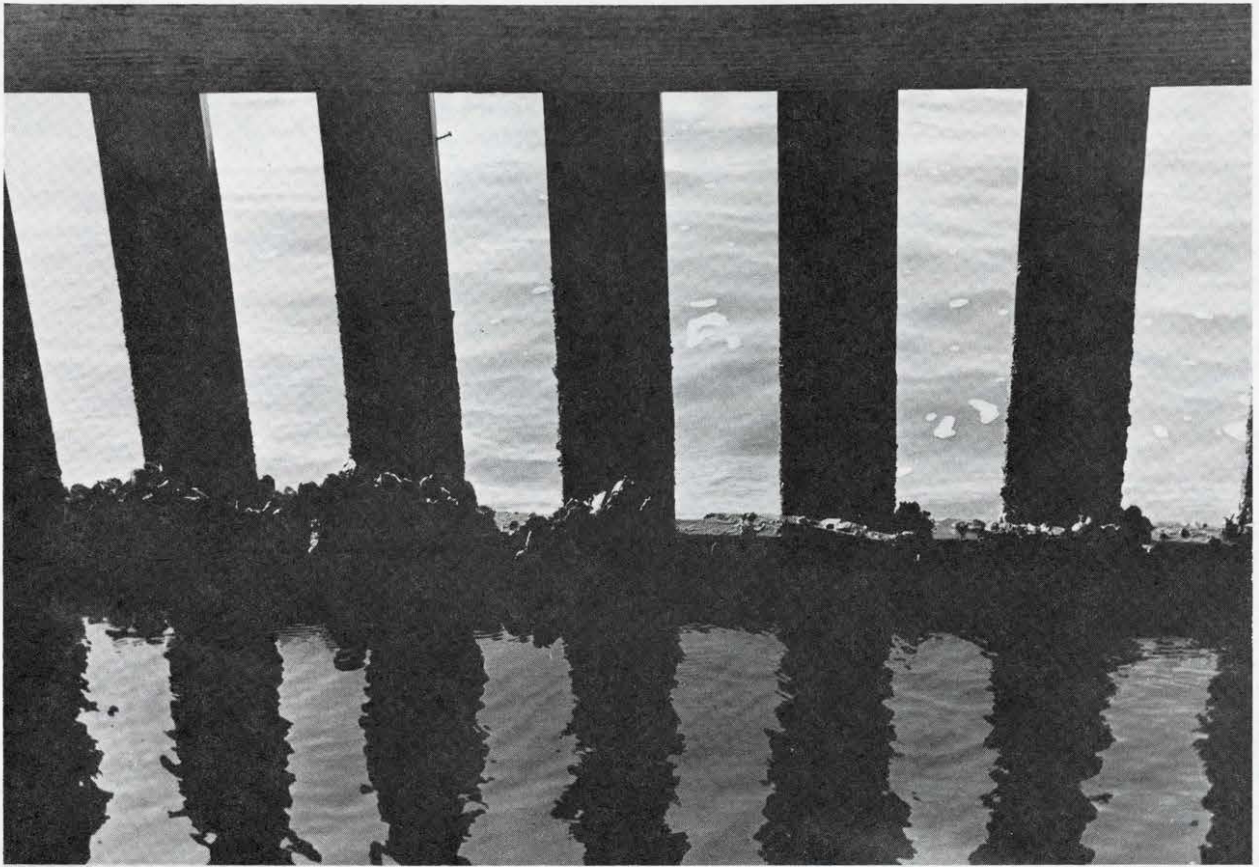
Crickets begin their symphonies
Screen door slams
And gravel flies under your feet.

— Susan Reed





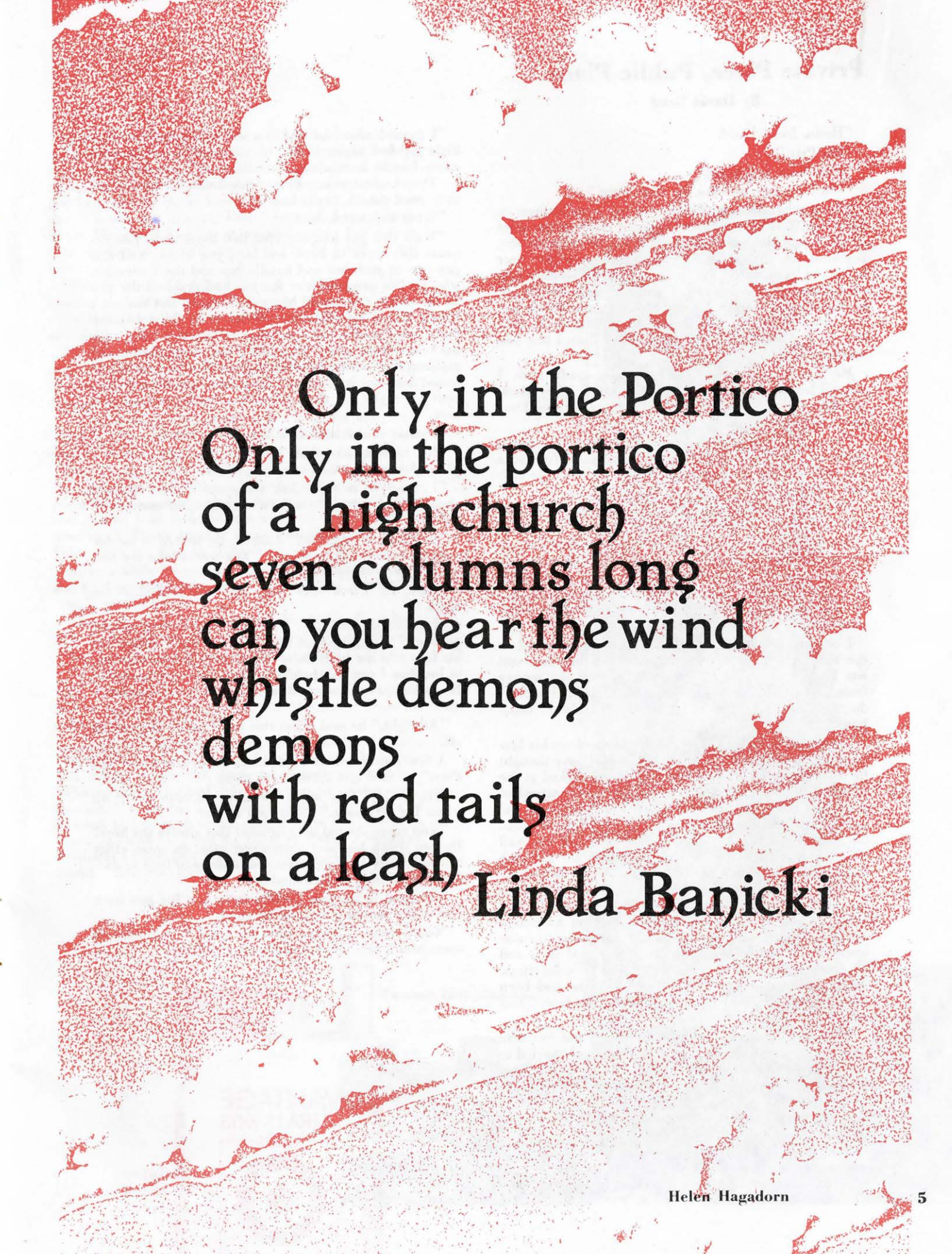
Rick Wagner



Carol Groover



R. Wagner



Only in the Portico
Only in the portico
of a high church
seven columns long
can you hear the wind
whistle demons
demons
with red tails
on a leash

Linda Banicki

Private Place, Public Place

By David Reed

"Hello, Joe," I said.

"Hi, Pete."

"How have you been?"

"Oh, I've been holding my own, Pete."

The dim light behind the bar cast heavy reflections on Joe's face. His black mustache curled down at the sides of his mouth and made him look like a Mexican bandit, the kind you see in the movies. There were five beer bottles in front of Joe; four were empty. He wouldn't let the bartender take them. A cigarette hung in the side of his mouth and though I knew that he must finish one cigarette and replace it with another, I had never seen him do it. I pointed at the beer bottles. "Can I buy you another, Joe?"

He looked at me slyly saying, "I have credit here. I can get beer on credit if I want, you know. They know me here; I come in every night, and they trust me. They know I'm good for it."

"Sure, Joe. I know that. I just thought you might drink one with me." Joe looked at me again. He had a way of looking at you without turning his head. He nodded slightly.

"Well then, sure, Pete. I'll drink one with you." I signalled the bartender.

When the beers came, Joe reached out and took them. He handed one to me. I put some money on the bar, but the bartender had already moved off. Joe looked at the money, then at me. He smiled. "He knows me, Pete. See he don't need to collect the money right away from somebody who drinks with me."

I nodded my appreciation. Joe inclined his head to the right where an overweight man in a business suit was buying a beer. "See, Pete; see he took the money from that guy as soon as he brought the beer. He don't do that with me; they know me here. I always come here."

"But why here, Joe?" I asked. He sat back on his barstool and gestured expansively. You would have thought he was the owner. I followed his gaze and looked at the polished bar with the old style wooden rails instead of simulated black leather cushion; the bar was long and narrow, and shelves with rows of bottles on them lined the wall facing the drinkers. In the center of the wall was a small platform that made an island for the cash register, an island in a sea of bottles. On the bar across from the cash register was an area with padding where the waitresses came to get the drinks. Some would lean over the bar, their low-cut blouses showing a discreet hint of cleavage, and gesture for the bartender to come over; others would set down their tray and turn and watch the crowd until the bartender had time for them. When I turned to Joe again, I could see he had been watching me. He had a look of pride on his face. "You see, Pete," he said.

A waitress came up on Joe's right and put her arm around his shoulders. "Hi, Joe," she said and nodded to me. She walked off. "Now I know why you like this place, Joe," I said. He shook his head. "Pete, she's young enough to be my daughter. Besides, a woman ain't no reason to come to a place. There's better reasons to come to a place than that, Pete."

I felt the blood rush to my face, but Joe wasn't watching me blush. He inclined his head toward the waitress who had just come up. She was picking her tray up from the waitress station.

"I darned near had to kill a couple of guys over that little girl last night, Pete," he said. "When there's too many for the bartender to handle, well I just step right in. They know me her, Pete. They know I'll help out if they need me."

"What happened, Joe?"

"Well, this guy had the idea that these girls, just because they work in here, are easy, you know. And this guy tries to grab her and handle her and the bartender, why he just jumped over the bar and grabbed the guy by the collar and started him out the door. But the guy's friend jumps up and tries a dirty trick from behind. Some guys won't make a move unless you turn your back on them, Pete. So I skipped over there and grabbed that backstabber by the scruff of the neck and tossed him out on his ear. Why, they bought me free beer all night for that, Pete. They take care of you here."

"I guess you're kind of a hero here, Joe."

"No, nothing like that. But you gotta take care of a place if you want it to take care of you."

"I guess you're right, Joe. I suppose I never thought about it that way before." Joe was looking uncomfortable.

"Anything wrong, Joe?" I asked. He looked at me for a moment as if sizing me up. "You wanta take my seat while I go to the restroom?"

"Sure, I'll watch your seat, Joe." He looked at me again.

"I didn't say watch it, I said take it, sit in it until I get back." For a moment I thought Joe was kidding, but his face told me he wasn't. "I'll sit in it if you want me to, Joe, but I can watch it from right here just as well." He looked around, seemed satisfied, then turned back to me.

"All right," he said. "But this is my seat." He walked off.

A few minutes later a friend of mine came up. "Hi, Pete," he said and sat on Joe's stool.

"Hi, Buddy. That seat's taken; you'll have to get up when Joe gets back." He smiled at me.

"You mean the old beer drinker that always sits here? He can drink his beer somewhere else, on some other barstool. Why I haven't seen you in three or four years." I smiled at him; I liked Buddy.

"It's good to see you, Buddy, but when Joe gets back you really should give him the stool."

"Okay. Sure. I'll give him the stool, I just want to tease him a bit." Buddy always was a kidder.



Tammy
Hutchinson

Suddenly we both knew Joe was behind us. It wasn't really a sound, just a presence. He was staring at Buddy, but he talked to me. "This guy a friend of yours, Pete?" he asked. You could tell Buddy was uncomfortable. Joe just kept on looking at him hard and silent. Buddy got up. "I'll see you around, Pete," he said. Joe sat back down. He wasn't looking at anything now. For a long time neither of us said anything. Finally I had to tell him.

"Buddy is an old friend, Joe. I told him you were coming back, that he would have to get up when you came back. I wouldn't have let him take your seat." Joe still didn't look at me.

"I always sit in this seat." When a regular customer sees me come in, if he is sitting in this seat, he gets up. Everyone knows this is my seat." I could hear him, but I'm not sure he was talking to me.

"What if it isn't a regular who sits in the seat, Joe? What if it is somebody who doesn't know this is your seat?"

Joe looked at me. "He don't have no business coming in here if he don't know, Pete. If a man can't tell his place from somebody else's, then he's worse off than me; and all I do is sit in this seat and drink until it's time to go. That's another thing a man needs to know, Pete: when it's time to go."

After a while he got up and nodded to the bartender and held out his hand to me. "So long, Joe," I said. "So long," he told me.

Pretty soon Buddy came over. He didn't sit in Joe's seat. "Is the old guy coming back, Pete?" he asked me.

"No, Buddy, it was time for him to go."

"Where does he come from, thinking that is his seat? This is a public place, public seats, anybody can sit in any of them." Buddy sat back as if winded from his speech.

I stood and placed my money on the bar beside Joe's. The bartender nodded to me. I looked at Buddy, he was still trying to find the pride he thought he had lost. "That old man's lucky I didn't put him out of that seat," he said. On the bar Joe's cigarette pack lay where he had left it; I knew it would still be there the next night when he came in. I put my hand on Buddy's shoulder. I thought I knew how he felt. "Sure he's lucky, Buddy," I said. "He's just lucky."

Tammy Hutchinson



Madison Knights

Madison knights
of advertising,
shaping a nation's consciousness
with dirty hands.

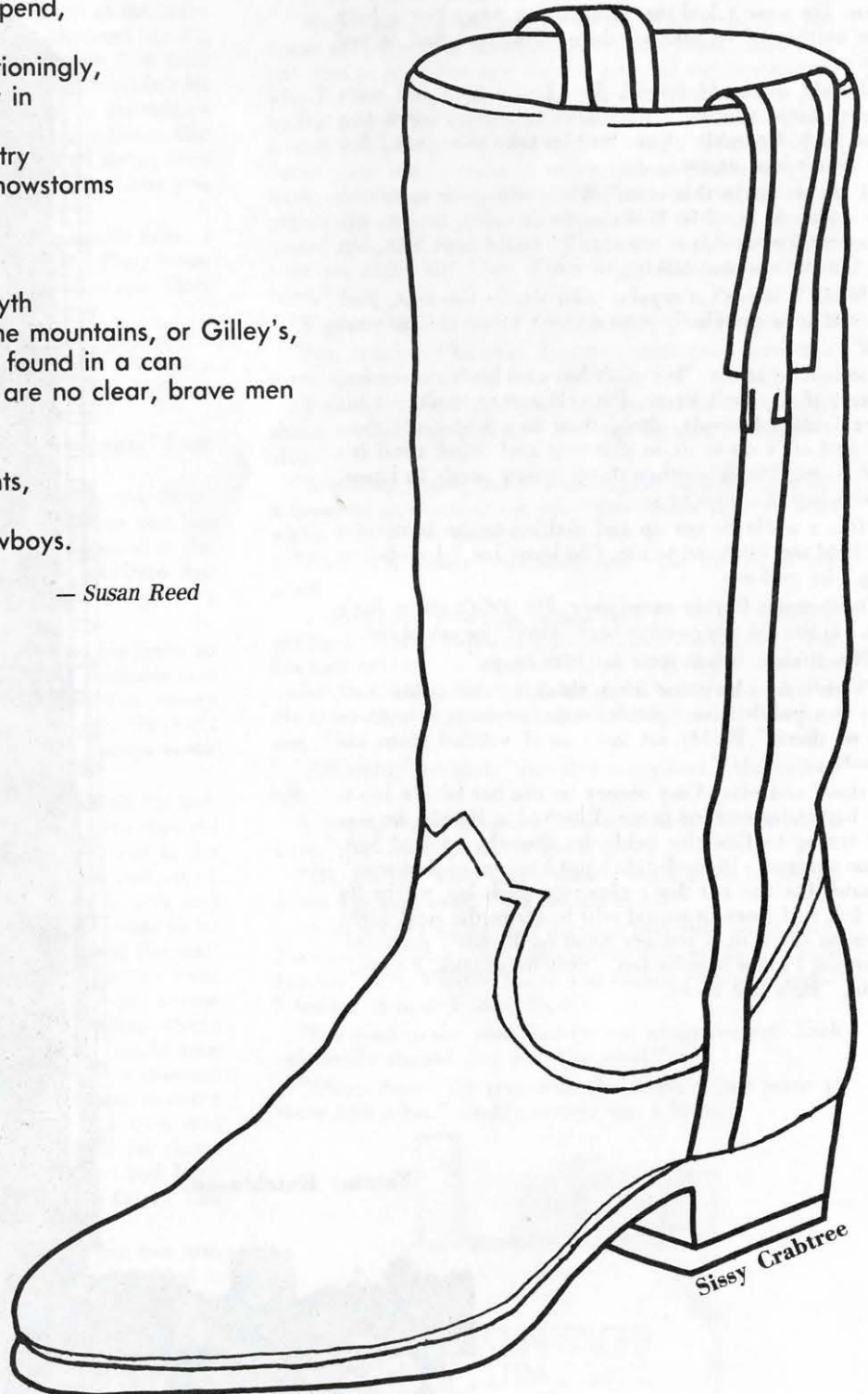
Having no disbelief
to willingly suspend,
trusting minds
accept unquestioningly,
and unfailingly in

Marlboro country
riding tall in snowstorms
rugged
and alone.

Feeding the myth
we head for the mountains, or Gilley's,
where relief is found in a can
because there are no clear, brave men
only

Madison knights,
neon lights,
and urban cowboys.

— Susan Reed



The Price

Choices, decisions, obligation, revisions;
Checkbook lives, emotional lies.
To be perfectly good is always a strain —
In the end, is it worth it?

Logical, rational is simply tragical;
Whispers and sighs, humanity cries.
Never allowed the right to be wrong,
The price is never worth it.

Cabinets, Presidents, Summits take precedent;
Glory to the high, but where are the wives?
Inflexible standards drain on the brain —
The results will never be worth it.

Dairy Queens, Burger Kings, Fish & Chip nights;
Nuclear's wise, say the Good Old Guys.
Walter and Dan report from the floor;
The results are in — does it matter?

Angels trust in Angel Dust
Supply side slides and the market dives.
Power remains; yet it never sustains.
In the end, do you matter?

Sandra Coleman



Invasion of Privacy

By Mark Touchton

She had to become drunk before she could tell me what she had done. She was afraid that I'd think of her as promiscuous (which she turned out to be) instead of irreproachable (as I had thought her to be). Hearing the generalities of her recent encounters was more painful for me than her; I didn't press for details. But my curiosity had been aroused; who was the benefactor of her sexual altruism, I wondered and finally asked.

"Just, you know, a guy I know," she said.

"Well," I began sarcastically, "I figured that it probably was a guy and that you did know him."

When she told me his name, I knew she'd never seem as beautiful to me again. The man was frivolous minded, unpleasant to look at, and boringly extroverted. I had hated being anywhere near him at her office.

Since she had had the desire to have his body against hers, I knew I'd have to reevaluate my desire, if there was any, to see her anymore.

"He got me drunk," she said.

"Have another drink," I said.

And so she had another drink. And then another and another and another.

"I've got to use the bathroom," she said and slowly moved toward the hall. "Christ, I'm drunk."

"How do you feel?" I asked.

"Great," she said. "What's the word? Euphoric, that's it."

When she came out of the bathroom, she was quite energetic. She danced to a song that had just come on the radio, "She loves you," by the Beatles. And she sang, "Yeah, yeah, yeah."

But this story isn't just about me or her or even about infidelity. The main character of this story is a small box, smaller than a transistor radio. It's called a mental transducer. It reads minds at the push of a button. I have one and you can have one too; at the end of this story there will be three appendices; (A) a list of the parts you'll need and where to get them. (B) a diagram of the machine, and (C) a detailed instruction sheet-with these you should have no trouble building a mental transducer for yourself. But please, do not skip to the appendix section now.

I didn't build or create the mental transducer; an anonymous group of Soviet scientists did. For the Soviets, the mental transducer was a dream come true. The KGB soon found former means of getting information (i.e. polygraph tests, torture) archaic when compared to the mental transducer, so it became the sole instrument for interrogation. They have used the machine effectively since 1977. In 1978 the CIA, not wanting to be outdone, lobbied in a secret session of Congress for funds to develop their own transducer. The secret funds were allocated and mental transducers were produced by the hundreds.

A friend of mine, Jack Carelli, was working at the time as a stock boy in a government supplies warehouse. He found one of the crates of mental transducers opened in what turned out to be the C.I.A. storage building. He didn't know what they really were, but he took two of them thinking that they might be walkee-talkies. He offered them to me in payment for a \$20.00 loan I'd given him that week.

"Keith, I'll give you these walkee-talkies; I think they need new batteries, but they were working great. They're yours if you'll forget that little loan you gave me," he said.

"What do I need with walkee-talkie's Jack?" I asked, "But, what the hell, being the good friend I am, I'll knock \$10.00 off the loan for 'em-I might give them to my nephews for Christmas." I accepted his offer, and he accepted mine.

After he left my house, I looked at the two "walkee-talkie's" quite a bit closer. They looked familiar, as if I'd seen a picture of them before. Then it struck me-I had seen these before in a science technology magazine. I looked up the magazine in question, paging through at least a hundred of the periodicals stored in my closet. It was a short capsule article with an artist's conception of what it looked liked. Here is the article: Mental Transducer: Myth or Miracle?

For years it has been rumored that a device has been devised that can actually read minds. What is just as unbelievable is that this rumored mind reading machine can fit in the palm of your hand. Such outlandish rumors that cannot be substantiated are not usually what we, the editors of Technology for Tomorrow, are accustomed to printing. However, we believe that an exception must be made for the mental transducer (M.T.). It has been a year since letters trickled in from our subscribers around the world telling about the existence of this new break-through. And now, one of our most experienced and reliable reporters, Katherine Roth, has witnessed and participated in a test of an M.T. Here are some excerpts of her upcoming article to be published in the July '78 edition of Technology for Tomorrow:



Bruce Warner

"Frank Sinatra called women journalists whores, while I must take exception to this on principal, I also must admit that I've whored for a story-the one you're reading. But when you've finished my story, I'm sure you'll agree that any amount of whoring was worth it."

"...after he finished his sexual acrobatics, the agent (let's call him Lenny) said, 'Let us play the game now; I leave soon.' He meant that it was now time to test his mental transducer. This was my fee for the services rendered."

The test was that Lenny would tell me what I was thinking of.

"You're thinking of ear wax," he said.

And Christ he was right. "Lucky guess," I said, even although I was so overwhelmed that I could hardly breathe.

"Let's continue, okay? Guess, I mean read what's on my mind now," I said, for I knew it was much more than guessing.

Read Kathy Roth's article on the mental transducer in the July issue of Technology for Tomorrow, (the article concluded).

Kathy Roth's article never appeared. This is how Technology for Tomorrow apologized:

"We are sorry to report that the complete manuscript of Kathy Roth's story on the mental transducer was never received. Kathy died June 9, 1978. After we gained the permission of her closest of kin, we searched her apartment for her notes, looking for anything that might give us a lead on the mental transducer story. We found nothing."

Now that I knew what I had, I had to try it out. My first opportunity came as I was piling the magazines back in the closet. I heard a knock at the front door and went to answer it. It was a delivery man bringing a package for the girl I was living with, Robin Chessler. As I was signing for the package with my right hand, I was pressing down the button of the mental transducer (M.T.) with my left. The man's thoughts were not profound, "I wonder what Krissy is fixing for dinner; I think she said she was defrosting some steak," he thought. But that feeling of knowing exactly what was on that man's mind at that point in time was for me a profound experience.

I could hardly believe that I'd actually read his mind. And, being the skeptic I am, I wouldn't believe it until I'd tested it. Robin would help me with this when she came home from work.

"I'm home," she said as she walked through the door with two bags of groceries, "You wanna help me put these away?"

"In a second, First I want you to think of something, something wild, you know, something that I'd never be able to guess in a million years," I said.

"Is this some kind of game?" she asked.

"Please just think of something," I begged.

"Okay, I'm thinking of something, now what?"

"Now I'm going to tell you what you're thinking of."

"Oh, yeah, sure--what do you think I'm thinking of?"

"You're thinking about deep sea-diving," I said.

She smiled, her eyes opened wide, and she said, "How did you know? I mean how could you possibly have known?"

I now felt assured that my M.T. was indeed a genuine M.T. Robin asked me to try "guessing" again.

"Now you're thinking about playing a saxophone," I said and was right. This question session went on for several hours.

"Have you become psychic or what?" she finally asked.

"No, really, tell me how you're doing this--I know it can't be a trick because tricks couldn't do what you've done," she said.

Robin was begging for a logical explanation. So I gave her one. "It's simple, I'm just a very, very lucky guesser." However, she didn't buy that theory at all.

"You're gonna tell me how you do this or you're not coming to bed tonight," she threatened.

"I know you don't mean that," I said.

"How did you know? I thought I sounded convincing," she said.

"Just another lucky guess, I suppose," I said.

We went to bed at a quarter till two. I didn't take the M.T. with me, because it would've been awkward and quite hard to explain.

The next day I had classes. I left the house at 9 am and arrived at the university at 9:30. As I left the car, I was filled with anticipation of the great variety of minds I would read. The most startling revelation that would come to me that day was just how insecure everyone is and that most of the time people are thinking exclusively about themselves. And when thoughts of another person enters, it is only to evaluate how that other person judges them.

I also discovered that I'd never have to study for an exam again. I would simply sit near a smart student and read his answers from his mind as he formulated them.

As I sat in one class, a terribly inarticulate professor was giving a wordy and lengthy lecture that I couldn't follow. My mind was on the cute blond, Helen, I was sitting next to. She was taking extensive notes and I read her mind and deciphered the teacher's talk into understandable concepts. After class I talked with her as we walked to the cafeteria. By reading her mind, I found out that she was sufficiently attracted to me and that it was safe to ask her out; the fear of rejection had been dissolved. I made several dates in this manner with other girls that day. It's amazing what one can achieve when the fear of rejection is eliminated. When you know exactly how someone perceives you there is no need to fear that you're misreading their actions or their words. Most often actions and words are only disguised facsimiliessimilies of what is really on the mind. Not many people really speak what their minds are saying, especially when it comes to physical attraction.

At school that day, I read the minds of young men whose hearts yearned for young women, I read the minds of young women whose hearts yearned for young men. "I wonder what he/she is thinking of me?" they'd think in a thousand different ways. Here are the thoughts of one boy and girl.

"God, she's beautiful," the boy thought as he stared for a second at her profile. "I'd like to talk to her but I don't know what to say. She's too pretty for me anyway," he thought and looked at her again. This time when he began to stare at her, he found her looking at him. He turned away as if looking at her was purely an accident.

The whole damn term I've tried to get his attention," she thought, "and now, when I do get it, I've got to be dressed in this ugly blouse. My hair looks like hell too." The girl was beautiful. She could've been dressed in a burlap sack and she still would have been beautiful to him. But she didn't know it.

Their pattern of thought was very common; nearly everyone whose mind I invaded exhibited it in some manner. Everyone wondered and worried about how other people were judging them. There were, however, those who were brimming with such self confidence that it teetered on the border of conceit. There were people who believed in their own importance and expected everyone else to do the same. Often, though, they were only flattering themselves.

In a history class one such young man was so impressed with himself that he talked just as much (if not more) than the teacher. He mistook playing the devil's advocate for intelligence, so he disagreed with nearly every point the professor tried to make. The class was totally disgusted with this loud-mouthed, overbearing, vainglorious jerk. The loudmouthed, overbearing, vainglorious jerk, however, was quite pleased with himself.

Though I've stressed the fun side of knowing what is on other people's minds, there is a painful side too. Whereas most people have the tact to watch what they say to avoid hurting their friends feelings, there is no mechanism as such within the mind to watch what one

thinks to avoid hurting others' feelings. I was hurt by the thoughts of "friends" as I talked with them, even as they smiled. For this reason I decided that I would use my M.T. only on strangers or acquaintances. I would allow friends to think their thoughts privately; what they didn't want to say to my face, I didn't want to hear.

When I got home that day, Robin was already there. She had been waiting for me. She had a line that she had thought up for me and was dying to use, "Read any good minds lately?"

I had to tell Robin about the M.T. I couldn't keep it inside anymore. I had to tell someone about it. I explained where the M.T.s came from and how to use them. Though it all sounded far-fetched to her, she had no choice but to believe. I gave her the extra M.T. and she began to experiment with it on me, just as I had done with her the night before.

"You're giving it to me?" she asked.

"Yeah, it's yours," I said.

"This is gonna be great," she said, "this is gonna be like being God."

"What, do you want to be God?" I asked.

"No, no I just meant that, you know, knowing what people are thinking, it's gonna be like a really great power," she awkwardly explained.

"You'll be a vulnerable little god," I said, "when you find out everyone doesn't love you, that friends simply patronize you, that relationships you thought were deep are only one-sided, and that hardly anyone really gives a damn for anyone else, you'll realize the great power isn't really so useful as you think now."

After I had given Robin the M.T., I imposed a condition on the use of the gift. She could not use the M.T. on me. She said she wouldn't but asked, "What's the matter? Got something to hide?"

"Yes," I said, "I've got a lot to hide, and so do you, most likely."

Weeks passed and both Robin and I became more proficient with our M.T.s. She would come home from work and tell me of the interesting minds she'd monitored and the amusing thoughts she'd persued. I would tell her of the considerable merit of the M.T. as a "student's little helper", and how I had used it that day to help me academically.

And now, three years after the M.T.s were introduced into our household, Robin and I are about to part company. I have found a job as a Civics teacher in Fort Worth, Texas, and Robin has found another lover. I had no idea that she was on the prowl for someone else, for I made the resolution of never using the M.T. on anyone I loved the day after I received the two devices from my friend Jack Carelli. Robin's new man, David Atkinson, is a loudmouthed, overbearing, vainglorious jerk; he was the same man I'd read the mind of three years before in a history class. He has gotten his Bachelors of Business Administration degree and attained a job at the same office Robin works in. They have been seeing each other for at least two weeks. I just found out about it last night. I had no idea, no idea at all.

She had to become drunk before she could tell me what she had done...About the appendix I promised, I burned them. Why did I burn them? I burned them because it's not nice to read other people's diaries. And about my M.T., I'm no fool, I didn't burn that. The next girl I shack up with I'll keep a continuous mind tap on. The golden rule be damned.

Tom Schifanella





Tammy Hutchinson

Bloodwork

Don't cry to me
with your complaints
and your insipid suffering.
You bleed money
and cry for more.
Nickels and quarters
clink in your veins.

I bleed. I bleed.
I bleed like clockwork.
As the soot gathers
in the fireplace
and your clothes
fall heavy to the floor,
I bleed.

And when I don't,
the hands of the clock
stand still in silence,
waiting for the day
of reckoning to beget
flesh of my flesh,
bone of my bone.

And when he adds
an extra stitch for you,
I bleed like a tired quilt
frayed around the edges,
patched beyond mercy
to keep your body
warm at night.

Deposit made,
you leave the bed
to wash me
off your body.
I am a bank,
Interest Compounded Daily,
and I bleed.

I make your bed
and sweep your floors
until the dust
is heavy in my throat
and I leave your lies
stagnant under the rug
that is woven with my veins.

I look in the mirror
and see fading ghosts
of wasted dreams
I never dared.
I bleed. I bleed.
Like clockwork, I bleed.
But not for you.



David Whitsett

Burial Instructions

When I die
please don't let them

dress me up
in a coat and tie

or put wax
in my mouth.

I never
wore lip-stick

in real life,
so why start now?

When I die
please don't let them

open the casket —
all my sorry friends

passing by,
telling me

I look
just like myself.

When I die
please don't let them

read Bible verses.
for God

so loved the world
He gave . . .

all his preferred
stocks away.

When I die
please don't let them

bury me
in a memorial garden

with a name
like Forest Lawn

or Tranquility Base,
but in any other

nameless place.
And right away.

When I die
please don't let them

say anything
about me,

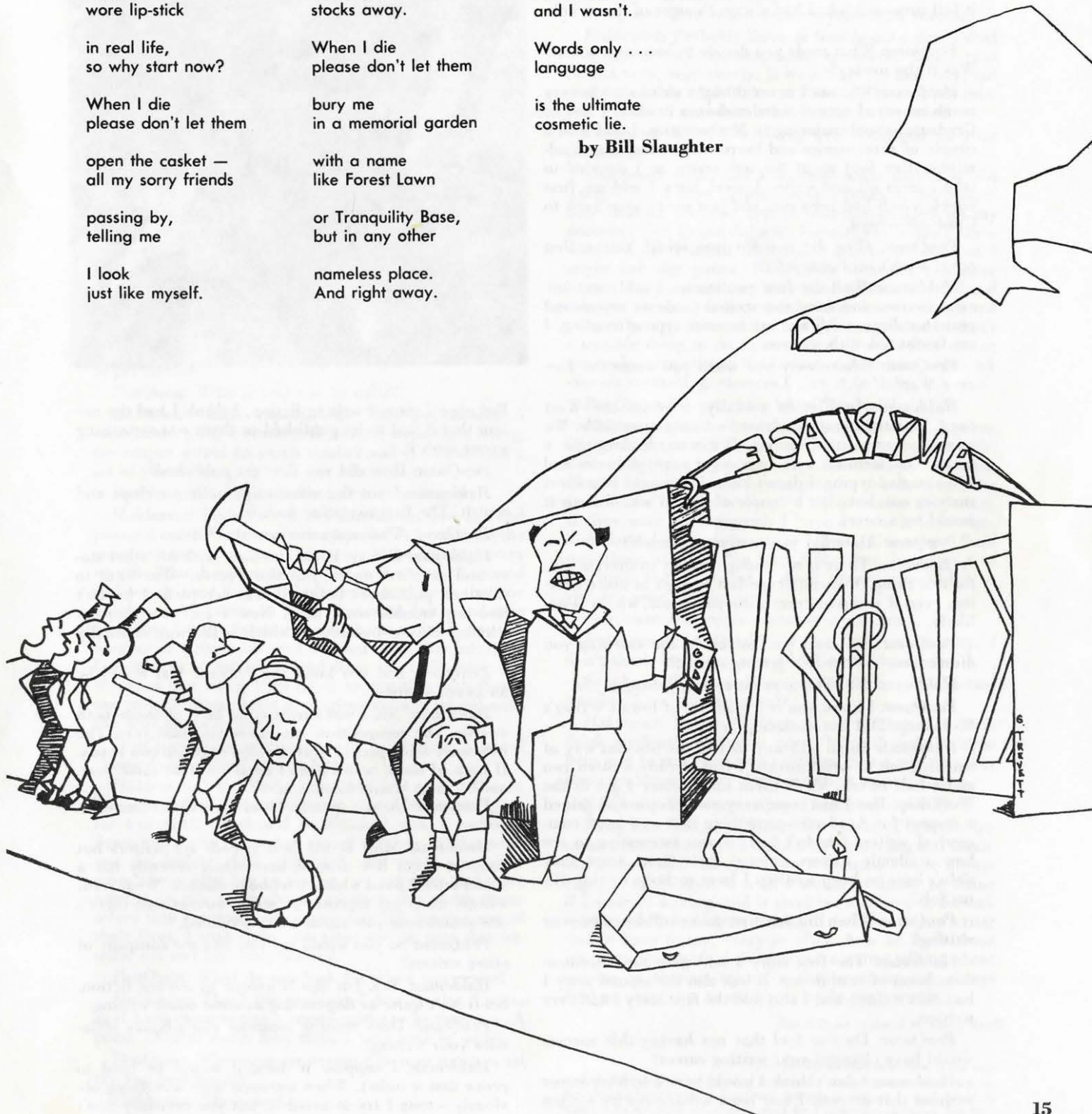
not even —
he was a good man.

I both was
and I wasn't.

Words only . . .
language

is the ultimate
cosmetic lie.

by Bill Slaughter



Pen Quest Interview

Joe Haldeman is a man of medium height whose casual manner contrasts his sharp eyes. He lives in Daytona with his wife, Gay, who manages the business end of marketing Joe's shelf full of best-selling sci-fi books. He has twice been convinced to teach writing courses at UNF and currently teaches a Novel Writing Workshop that may well be a first in the United States.

PenQuest: Did you always know you would be a writer?

Haldeman: Yes, but I never thought I would be doing it full time--as a job. I had always thought of it as a hobby.

PenQuest: What made you decide to become a writer? Was it the money?

Haldeman: Oh, no. I never thought writers made very much money. I sort of wandered into it while I was in Graduate school majoring in Mathematics. I had sold a couple of short stories and there was a complicated administrative foul up at the university, so I decided to take a term off and write. A week later I sold my first novel, which had been out, and just never went back to Graduate school.

PenQuest: How did you get into sci-fi? You're first novel wasn't sci-fi, was it?

Haldeman: Well the first two stories I sold were science fiction, and from the second grade to my second year in college, sci-fi was my favorite type of reading. I am fascinated with science.

PenQuest: Where were you when you wrote the *Forever War*?

Haldeman: In Florida actually; over on the West coast. I started it out on a friend's dining room table. We weren't even settled in yet. We were looking for a house. Gay went off with him to get some groceries and I just started typing. I didn't know if it would be a short story or not, but after a couple of days it was obvious it would be a novel.

PenQuest: How did you motivate yourself?

Haldeman: There is not enough money in short stories for one thing. You can't type fast enough to make a living, even if you sold everything you wrote, which is unlikely.

PenQuest: So when you got up in the morning you didn't have any trouble getting started?

Haldeman: No. The alternative was getting a job.

PenQuest: I know you're a graduate of Iowa's Writer's Workshop. Did the workshop help?

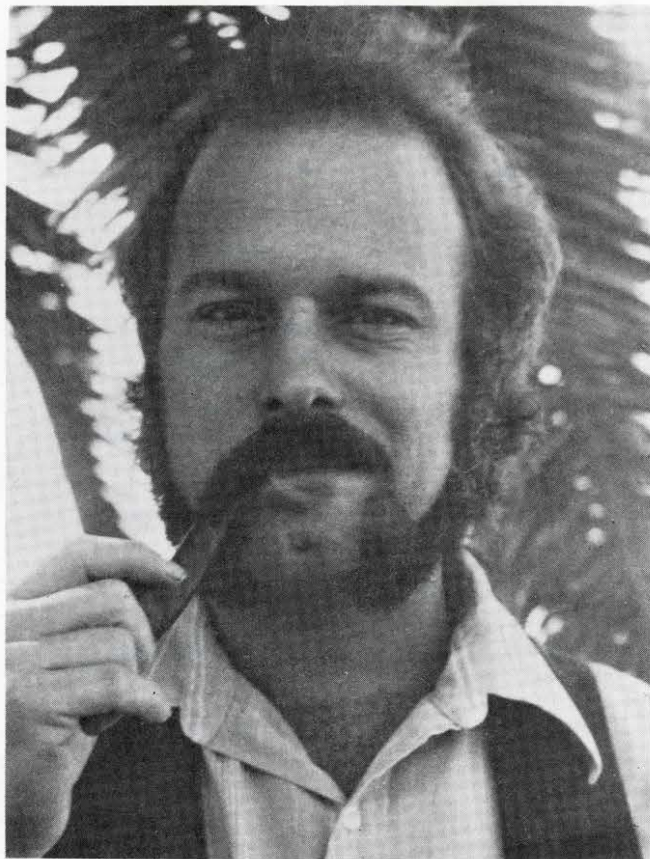
Haldeman: In an odd way, not in the obvious way of teaching me to write novels. I had already written two and a half novels, all of them sold, before I got to the Workshop. But I met some very nice people and gained a respect for Academia--something that as a good commercial writer, I hadn't had. It was interesting to see how academic writers ordered their lives, since they didn't have to keep writing. I have to keep writing--it's my job.

PenQuest: When did you first gain confidence in your writing?

Haldeman: The first story I sold gave me a tremendous boost of confidence. It was also the second story I had ever written and I also sold the first story I had ever written.

PenQuest: Do you feel that not having this success would have changed your writing career?

Haldeman: I don't think I would have a writing career without that success. I had been writing poetry for ten years, and a creative writing class prodded me to write some short stories. No one expects to publish poetry.



But once I started writing fiction, I think I had the notion that it had to be published or there was something wrong with it.

PenQuest: How did you first get published?

Haldeman: I put the manuscript in an envelope and sent it. The first magazine took it.

PenQuest: What magazine was that?

Haldeman: *Galaxy*. It was the same with my other story and my first novel. But the *Forever War* went to nineteen publishers before it was accepted. I haven't had any trouble since then. Now I am in a position where I choose publishers, which is the way it usually is.

PenQuest: Did you know the *Forever War* would be an award winner?

Haldeman: No, I was surprised at both of them--both awards. The competition was interesting that year. The new-wave sci-fi people were divided between two books. If both of those books hadn't come out that same year, one of them would have won.

PenQuest: Do you spend a lot of time with other writers?

Haldeman: Most of my best friends are writers but none of them live around here. Only recently has a writer-friend lived within telephone distance. What sci-fi writers do is get together at sci-fi conventions; there's one somewhere just about every weekend.

PenQuest: So you would say you like the company of other writers?

Haldeman: Yes, but this is unique to science fiction. Sci-fi isn't quite as dog-eat-dog as some other writing.

PenQuest: Does reading someone else's books influence your writing?

Haldeman: I suppose it does; it would be hard to prove that it didn't. When someone does something obviously wrong I try to avoid it, but you certainly don't want to copy something done right. I can be a little analytical about my work, and I see some influence from

Hemingway, Stephen Crane, and Dostoyvseky. I think Hemingway has affected every writer since him.

PenQuest: Do you feel you are writing to a specific audience, or do you simply write what you want to?

Haldeman: I have done both. I've written some things that were strictly directed to a specific audience and I don't apologize for those, I have to make a living. When I write my serious work, I address it to myself—that is, to my own taste.

PenQuest: What feeds your imagination?

Haldeman: Well, we counted up the other day and found we had subscriptions to eighty-one magazines and journals—that is a constant input. And not all are sci-fi. I subscribe to a number of critical journals. You can't read all the books that come out, but reading *Publisher's Weekly* and *New York Times Book Review* gives you a sense of what is being written and what other writers are interested in.

PenQuest: Does traveling feed your imagination?

Haldeman: Yes, in a very specific way. It gives you settings. This is very important for sci-fi writers. Some guys who ripped you off in Marakesh come out as creatures from another galaxy, or something—at least in metaphor.

PenQuest: Do you have any devices to get you started in the morning?

Haldeman: Yes, anxiety. (laughing) No, the fact is I've been doing this for so long, I don't know what I would do in the morning if I didn't write. But when I first get up, I read for forty-five minutes; I have a cup of coffee to get started.

PenQuest: What drives you to write?

Haldeman: Bills—unpaid bills. This has motivated most of the great literature. If I didn't write for a living, my output would be much smaller and it would have a lot of poetry in it.

PenQuest: Has money affected your writing?

Haldeman: I don't see it as financial success. If I had pursued another career, I would probably be making the same amount of money and it would be coming every month. What happens to a writer, is that you sit around and watch your funds dwindle away and hope that the royalty check comes in time. I've been fairly smart in arranging for my insecurity and because I did know a number of writers before I decided to do this full time, I took care to establish solid lines of credit here and there, so that when I get down to negative cash flow I can make business loans at usurious rates of interest until the next check comes in.

PenQuest: Has your approach to writing a novel changed since the *Forever War*?

Haldeman: Yes, I find it gets more and more difficult. The novel I'm working on now, I've been working on for two years. It should be finished now—I could sit down and write it out—but you always try to beat what you did before. And with each new novel you know more about what can go wrong; you get more and more careful. I know there are some writers that worry themselves into a writer's block that can last for the rest of their lives. I wish there was some way to turn that impulse off and just keep writing.

PenQuest: What do you look for when you revise?

Haldeman: That's the problem—I don't revise. I write as if I am constructing a poem—sentence by sentence. A poem 100,000 words long takes a long time to write.

PenQuest: When you are revising in your mind, what are you looking for?

Haldeman: The sound.

PenQuest: Is the main character basically what drives your books?

Haldeman: No, it's a group effort of all the characters. In the trilogy I'm working on now, I'm not sure who the main character really is.

PenQuest: Does the character come first or the theme?

Haldeman: The character comes first; the character generates the theme.

PenQuest: How much of the novel do you know when you start?

Haldeman: Generally I don't know anything except a vague notion of how it's going to end. And this changes as the story generates itself.

PenQuest: How much time do you spend reading?

Haldeman: Probably three or four hours a day. I read non-fiction very fast—skimming, of course. But I read fiction very, very slowly. It wasn't always that way, but now I probably read fiction at 100 or 150 words per minute. I have to see what is happening in my mind.

PenQuest: What if a young writer camped on your doorstep?

Haldeman: I just had a doormat made that says "Go Away". No, I have helped young writers in the past, if they showed promise. But if someone camped on my doorstep, like Mouse did with Hemingway, I don't know what I'd do. I might be amused and help him, but I might call the police. Sometimes someone you have known for years will say they have written a novel and ask you for advice. But usually they know enough not to hand you the manuscript and ask you to read it; that's a terrible thing to do to an author. But sci-fi is not an intensely competitive field. And if someone wants advice on marketing, etcetera, I give it to them.

PenQuest: Do you get a lot of fan mail?

Haldeman: Oh, two or three letters a week, I guess. But publishers will save them until they have a pile, then stick them in one envelope and mail them to you. That's interesting; then you get the whole spectrum: from "wow" to "perversion." I try to answer the letters. If they want an autograph I have a form letter I sign, sometimes I write a note at the bottom. If someone finds something wrong with a book, I'll either thank them or tell them they're wrong. I don't advertise my address; you get some strange mail.

PenQuest: Do people often recognize you?

Haldeman: No. Outside of the sci-fi community, I don't think I've been recognized more than twice.

PenQuest: What would you say is the best intellectual training for a young writer?

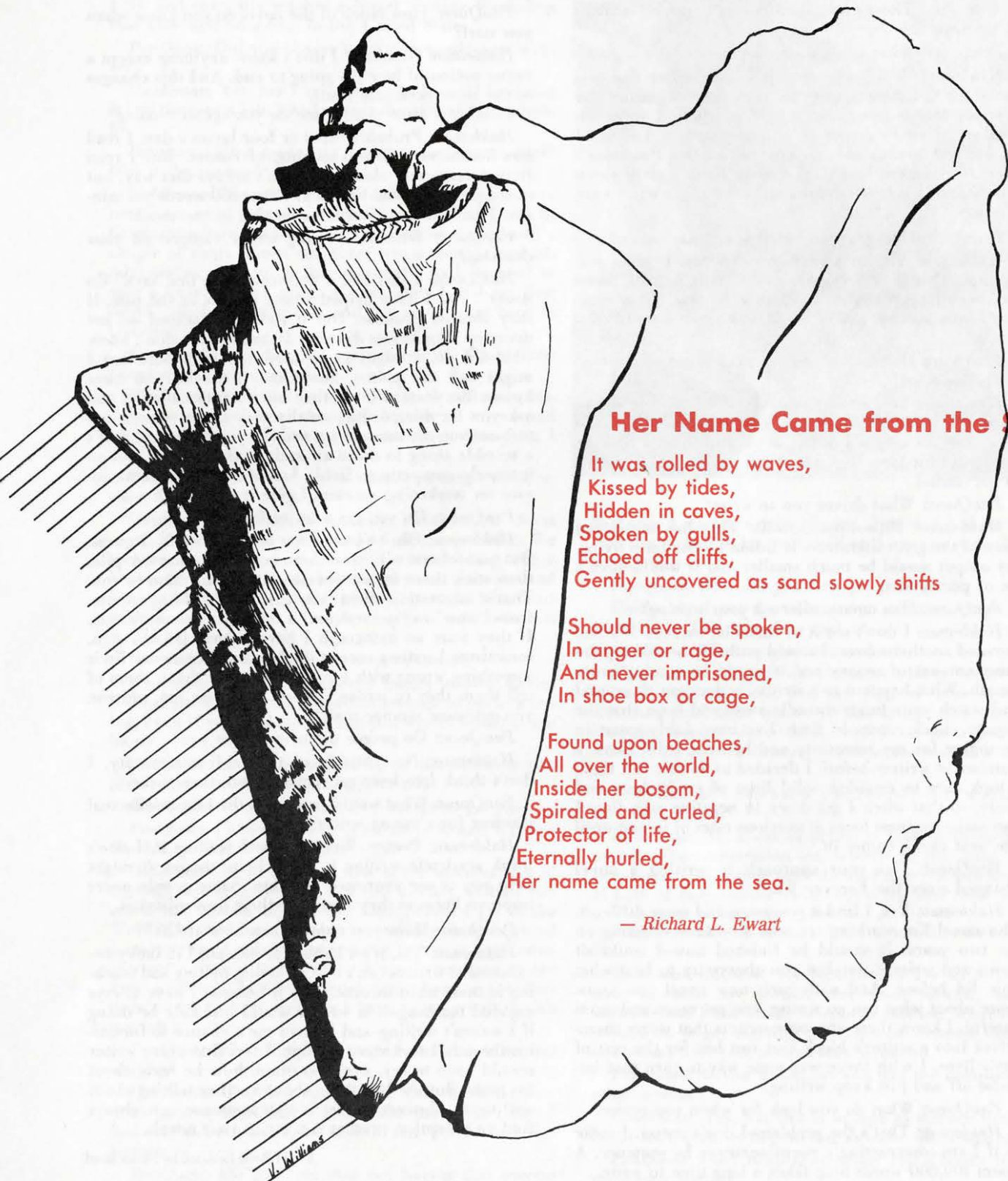
Haldeman: Poetry. Writing it and reading it. I don't think academic writing is much help, though it might help you to see your own mistakes. Some people never improve because they don't see their own mistakes.

PenQuest: Have you enjoyed teaching at UNF?

Haldeman: Yes, it's a hobby for me, but I'm lucky because most writers can't make a living writing and teaching is their main income. I do it because I have always enjoyed teaching—it is what I would probably be doing if I weren't writing—and it gives me a chance to formalize the way I feel about writing. I feel that every writer should have to say, every so often, how he feels about his tools. But the bad thing about a writer talking about writing in abstract terms, is that someone can always find an exception to what you say in your novels.

David Reed (assisted by Susan Reed)

The Joe Haldeman interview is the second in a series that is intended to provide encouragement and inspiration for aspiring writers. *PenQuest* intends to feature in each issue either an interview of or creative work by a professional writer. Joe Haldeman is author of over a dozen novels among them are *The Forever War*, *Mindbridge*, *Study War No More*, and *Worlds*.



Her Name Came from the Sea

It was rolled by waves,
Kissed by tides,
Hidden in caves,
Spoken by gulls,
Echoed off cliffs,
Gently uncovered as sand slowly shifts

Should never be spoken,
In anger or rage,
And never imprisoned,
In shoe box or cage,

Found upon beaches,
All over the world,
Inside her bosom,
Spiraled and curled,
Protector of life,
Eternally hurled,
Her name came from the sea.

— Richard L. Ewart

In the Woodshed

By R.E. Mallery

Some folks say that Papa was wrong to leave Eugene and me all alone in that farmhouse ten miles from town, but they don't understand. Mama's time had come and the baby wasn't coming right. Papa had to take the sleigh to get Mama to the doctor in Rock Creek. If the horse had had to pull our weight, too, Papa might not have made it in time. Papa knew I could take care of myself and my brother, 'cause I'm almost thirteen, and that's big enough.

"Lizzy," Papa said just before he left, "there's plenty of food in the cupboard and firewood in the woodshed. I'll be back in a day or two at the most. Take care of your brother, don't let nobody in the house, and *stay close*. Remember what Luther told us!"

How could I forget? Luther had stayed over one night during the summer; a rough cowman on his way back to Texas from a trail drive. But before he spread his bedroll on the floor, we sat and listened to his stories. When he learned we were greenhorns from Pennsylvania, he told us about the bitter winters we were in for here in Kansas; the blizzards and how people had been lost and frozen on these plains, and how some folks said that the spirits of dead Indians had led those poor folks to their deaths in revenge for having had their graves plowed up.

"One thing's for sure," Luther slurred his words around a cheekful of tobacco, "spirits or no spirits, anybody 'ut steps out of sight of his house when they's a blizzard in this country is *lost*. They's no way of tellin' direction, no landmarks that the snow ain't covered, an' you couldn't hear a cannon go off if you was standin' more'n a yard from it. An' *cold!* Met a feller once't had got lost in one a' them storms. Just blind luck he come on a house. But when I saw him he hadn't but three fingers on one hand, none on the other. Left ear and part of his nose gone. Frostbite. Still, he was lucky. Mighty few live to tell the kind of story he told me."

Papa and Luther got along pretty well, even though they'd fought on different sides during the war between the states. By the time Luther had turned in we were well schooled about winters hereabouts.

Papa carried Mama out to the sleigh and gave Eugene and me a goodbye hug. Then he whipped up the mare, and the way she flew nobody'd have guessed that she'd ever pulled a plow.

We watched the sleigh until it was just a patch on the snow, then a spot, then a pinprick. When the pinprick faded we went into the house. We were so worried about Mama that at first we weren't afraid because of being alone. All I could think about was the woman back home who had died in childbirth.

While I was changing Mama's bed, Eugene went outside without telling me. When I noticed he was gone I ran outside to call him, but I could see him walking back toward the house just as I stepped into the yard. I was all ready to scold him, but the look on his face stopped me.

"Look at the sky, Lizzy." His voice was kind of quivery. The sky was solid gray to the north and east. I wasn't sure, but I had a scared feeling that I knew what it meant.

"Is it a...bul-lizzard?"

"No, silly," I lied as we went back into the house, "just a little more snow coming, that's all." But to myself I was praying that Papa could get to town before the storm reached us. We kept busy carrying wood in from the woodshed, which was butted up against the back wall of the house. It was hard to open and close the

heavy door between the back room and the shed, but the cold air in the woodshed had to be kept out of the house.

It was just getting dark when the blizzard hit. The wind was just like Luther had said it would be.

"You sure that's not a bul-lizzard, Lizzy?" Eugene asked.

"Well, I guess it's a little one, but it doesn't matter. Papa's got Mama to the doctor by now, and we've food and wood aplenty. We've only got two rooms to heat. We'll just be bosses of the farm longer than we thought we would, that's all." I was hoping I could keep Eugene from getting too scared. Nine-year-olds scare so easy. All kinds of thoughts ran through my head. What if one of us got sick? What if even our stove couldn't keep back the cold?

I made some tea and we sat and ate bread and jelly. While we were eating, the front door flew open and the howling, snow-cold air cut into the warm room like a knife. An Indian stood in the doorway looking at us. Then he slammed the door shut and practically hugged the stove 'till the steam curled off his sheepskin coat.

What a fool I'd been! I couldn't forgive myself for not remembering to bolt the door. Now here he was, whether we liked it or not. Eugene's eyes were popping out of his head, but I had to act like I wasn't scared, but I was.

The Indian wore ragged old white man's clothing, and he was carrying a bundle with him. After he got warmed up, he grinned rotten teeth at us. "Cold," he nodded toward the door, "Goddam cold." He squatted in front of the stove and looked around the room. "You little. Where big ones?"

"Papa and Mama went into town this morning," Eugene blurted, "Mama's sick...."

"Eugene, shut up!" I snapped, but it was too late. I had hoped to scare that Indian off by telling him that Papa was nearby doing chores or something, but now that wouldn't work.

The Indian grinned again. He knew he was safe. "Horse bust foot. I kill 'im," and he held up a knife that looked to be a foot long. It was a nasty looking thing, but at least he didn't have a gun. I thought of Papa's shotgun in the other room.

The Indian was with us to stay, and I couldn't blame him. It would be sure death for a man on foot out there. For a while I hoped that we'd get along together, so I gave him some bread and meat which he gobbled like a wolf. Then he reached into his bundle and brought out a bottle of whiskey, and I knew there would be trouble, 'cause I saw a drunk man once in St. Louis, and Mama told me that all drinkers act like he did.

So the Indian drank while we tried to ignore him, but ignoring him was hard to do. The warmer he got, the worse he smelled. We stayed away from him because we could see the lice in his hair, and I sure didn't want to catch *them*. After an hour or so he started looking at me kind of funny. Then he beckoned to me.

"You, woman...you come. Wiss-kee," and he splashed the teeny bit that was left in the bottle.



Modesta Matthews

I shook my head. "No, I don't like it."

His mouth dropped and he stopped grinning. He stood up and grabbed my wrist. "You *come!*" He started to drag me away from the stove.

"You leave her alone!" Eugene yelled at him as he grabbed the broom. "She's not a woman, she's just a girl. Leave her alone!" And he gave that Indian a rap on the elbow that must have hurt like sin, 'cause he hollered and let go of me to chase Eugene around the stove, but Eugene was faster and he kept the hot stove between them.

I saw my chance to run into the other room and get the shotgun. I didn't think I'd have the strength, but I managed to get both hammers cocked. I had a plan. I'd fire a barrel to show that Indian I meant business, then we'd tie him up. It looked like that was the only way to make him behave.

When I stepped back into the room and he saw me, he forgot all about Eugene. I had the gun pointed at him, but he started toward me.

"Now...you go on back to that bed and lay down," I told him. I was shaking all over.

The Indian laughed and kept on coming. He watched the gun real close. "Ho! You little," he grinned, "you no shoot."

I let him get too close, and he made a grab for the gun, but he was too drunk and he missed. I snatched the gun away, and it went off! What a terrible sound it made in that little room!

The next thing I knew I was sitting on my bustle on the floor where the shotgun had kicked me, and the Indian was across the room, sprawled with his back against the wall. He was holding his hand over his middle, but blood was pumping through his fingers and making a spreading puddle between his legs.

Eugene had run to hide his face in the corner and was crying "You shot 'im, Lizzy, why'd you have to shoot 'im?"

Then I realized what I'd done. I felt like throwing up. "Oh, Eugene, I didn't mean to! It was an accident! He tried to grab me..."

"Goddam!" The Indian looked up at us like he couldn't believe what had happened to him. "Big hole."

"I'm sorry, Mister Indian, truly I am," I said. "Here, let me look." He took his hand away so I could see the wound. I began to get sick all over again.

"You fix?" His big eyes reminded me of a hungry puppy's.

I shook my head. "No, we need a doctor."

"No doctor. Storm." He looked at the pool of blood he was sitting in, then he sighed. "I die now," he said. Then he began a kind of song in Indian that went on and on. Later I found out it was called a death song.

Eugene came out of his corner slowly. "Why's he singing, Lizzy?" he asked.

"I guess he's praying, Eugene. Getting ready to go to heaven, or wherever." I was too scared and tired and sick to comfort my brother just then. He sat down in Mama's rocker and just cried.

I kept my head turned away so I wouldn't have to see the man die. His voice got weaker and weaker. Then it stopped. I waited a few seconds, and then I looked and saw that his eyes had stopped seeing anything.

I waited until I had calmed down some, just sitting and listening to the wind outside cutting around the house like a stock whip. Then I had Eugene bring me Papa's Bible. It seemed as if the wind howled louder as I read from the Good Book. I hoped the Lord wasn't angry at me for touching His gospel with hands that had killed. Eugene had stopped crying. "We gonna bury him

now, Lizzy?" I could see right then that he was going to grow up straight and brave.

"Can't do that," I said, "the ground's frozen. Besides, maybe his people will want him later on.

Eugene rolled his eyes toward the door. "Oh, don't worry about them," I said, "I bet they don't even know he's around here.

"We just gonna leave him on the floor?"

"No...we'll put him outside...no, that won't do; animals could get him. I know! The woodshed! We'll put him in there."

Eugene was afraid to touch a dead man, especially this one, so I did most of the work of dragging the body on an old blanket. Finally we got it laid out as decently as we could, and covered those staring eyes with the blanket. Then I cleaned up the blood. I almost couldn't finish, I was so tired. We laid down on Mama's bed, and prayed together until we fell asleep.

When we woke up in the morning, we were so cold we could barely move. The fire had gone out during the night. I could barely move my fingers, but somehow I got the fire started again. Just a little while longer and we'd never have woken up.

"Eugene," I said, "we'll have to watch the fire closer. Take turns sleeping or something."

Of course we had to go into the woodshed to get wood, and each time we did, we tried not to look at the dead man and imagine those open, frozen eyes under the blanket.

There was nothing to do but sit at the stove and feed it wood, and listen to the ice-mist crackling against the windows like grease in a hot skillet. We talked a lot about this and that, but Eugene kept bringing the talk around to ghosts. "Lizzy," he asked once, "you think that Indian's spirit is mad at us?"

"Oh, Eugene, hush up!" I was nervous enough without such talk. "There's no such thing as spirits, and you know it."

"But Luther said..."

"Oh, darn Luther! Those were just stories...what's the matter?"

Eugene had his head cocked, listening. "I don't hear the wind anymore," he whispered.

He was right. The storm had stopped. We ran to open the front door. On the other side was a solid wall of snow. I had a trapped feeling for a few seconds until I remembered the outside door in the woodshed. The snow hadn't drifted near so high there, so we stomped a path in the snow and breathed the cold, fresh air. But the sky was still gray. Little puffs of north wind began to sting our faces, and my heart sank. "It's only stopped for a little while, Eugene. Let's enjoy it while we can."

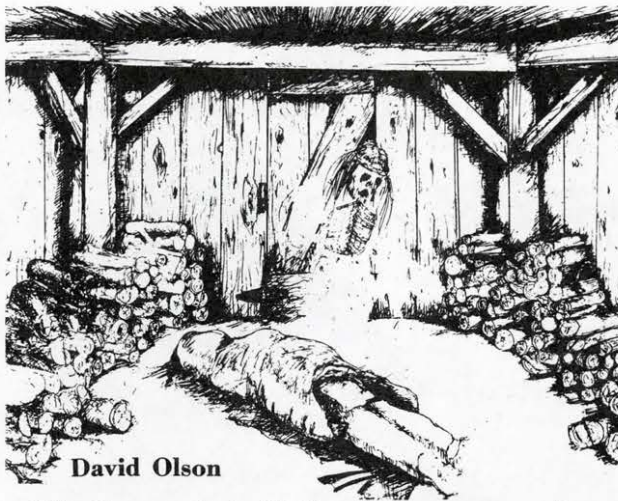
Poor Eugene played hard in the snow, trying to make up for lost time. He knew that soon we'd be cooped up in the house again. The storm had been harder on him than me, 'cause I'm almost grown, but he's still little. And having a dead man in the woodshed hadn't helped any.

The wind picked up again, pushing snow, and the storm-cold air cut through our clothes. When we went back into the woodshed, I cut off most of the light as I closed the door. Eugene screamed and grabbed me. I could feel him trembling even through our heavy coats.

"For the Lord's sake, Eugene, what's the matter with you?"

"H...he moved, Lizzy! I saw 'im. That dead man moved!"

I looked over at the Indian's body. It was the same as we had left it, under the blanket and as still as any other corpse.



David Olson

"Oh, Eugene, that's silly! Look...do you see any frozen breath coming through the blanket? 'Course not." But Eugene wouldn't let go of me until we were back in the house. I prayed for the storm to end soon, Eugene was too little to stand much more.

While I was poking up the fire Eugene said, "Lizzy, I ain't going into that woodshed no more, and I wish you wouldn't either."

"But, Eugene," I said, "what'll we do? We'll freeze without wood."

"Burn the furniture." He had his jaw set real stubborn, just like Papa did sometimes. I knew he meant it. It was silly, but he even had me scared of spirits a little.

"All right," I agreed, "tell you what we'll do. We'll get a whole lot of wood, enough for a real long time, and stack it in here. Then I'll close that shed door and bar it, so he won't be able to get at us. All right?"

Eugene looked relieved. "Bring the axe in too, Lizzy."

"What for?"

"I don't want him busting in the door with it. 'Sides, we'll need it to chop up the furniture."

I was set on doing anything that would make Eugene feel safer, so after I'd carried I don't know how much wood inside, I brought in the axe and barred the woodshed door.

Eugene almost smiled. "There, now," he said, "that's lots better."

And it was. The whole thing was silly kid stuff, but I still felt like I'd just put down a heavy load I'd been carrying.

That night we took turns staying up to feed the fire. Eugene woke me up before I'd hardly gotten any sleep at all. "Listen, Lizzy, he whispered. He was pale and shivering.

Then I heard it! Even the storm noises couldn't hide it. At first there was a sound like stovewood makes when a stack of it is knocked over. He was moving around in the woodshed! Then he yelled words at us, but they didn't make any sense, and the door shook and rumbled as he hit it and shook it. My heart was going crazy! "Oh, God," I screamed, "he's dead, I killed him! Make him stop!" Eugene was hollering the Lord's Prayer over and over to drown out the mumbling and groaning coming from the woodshed.

The door held, and after a while the noise stopped. Eugene stayed curled up in a corner, blubbering and making animal sounds, and all I could do was watch that woodshed door.

I remember riding to Rock Creek after they had found us the next morning, and I can remember a little that's happened now and then since we've been staying at Reverend Margene's house. Eugene is still what they

call "demented", but the doctor says he should get over it, just like I did.

Mama's better, even though she lost the baby, but Papa is dead. He tried to get back to Eugene and me during the lull in the storm, and he got caught out on the plains when it started up again. If he hadn't loved us so much he'd be with us now.

Everybody tried to tell me that what we heard in the woodshed was a hallucination. It wasn't. I'd like to believe that the dead *stay* dead, but I'll never forget what I heard that night.

Sheriff Ephraim Sattertwait
Lowndes County, Kansas

April 12, 1878

Sir,

The above was dictated over a period of some two months by Miss Elizabeth Welch, and put in more coherent form by the editor of the Rock Creek "Courant" and myself. For the good of the Welch children's sanity, which has been near to failing during these past months, we who rescued them have not told them the actual circumstances of their father, Carl Welch's death. We thought it best to tell them that we found his body not far away from his foundered horse and sleigh. It is true that he tried to return to his children during a lull in the storm, something we would not have allowed him to do had we known his intention.

When the storm ended, twelve of us in three sleighs hurried to the Welch farm. We made short work of the snow blocking the front door. Inside the house we found two demented wretches who had once been healthy children. all we could gather from their weak mumbling was that there was a dead Indian in the woodshed, and that he would not stay dead. We bundled them off to town, then we who remained opened the woodshed door. There lay the body of Carl Welch. The Indian was as they had left him, beneath the blanket.

It was not too difficult to reconstruct what had happened. Carl Welch had left his useless sleigh and eventually, after heaven knows how much wandering in the bitter, blinding storm, actually stumbled onto his own home. The front door being blocked, he entered through the side door of the woodshed. Then the poor devil tried to get his children to open the inner door, but, as we know, he was unsuccessful. He then tried to build a fire on the shed floor. We found him surrounded by sulphur matches that his frostbitten fingers had been unable to light.

None of us could understand why Carl Welch had been unable to simply tell his children who he was. After we had transported Welch's body back to Rock Creek, where it was inspected by Doctor Lundquist, our local physician, we learned that Welch had been injured about the face and neck, probably when his sleigh overturned. In addition to having his nose broken, Carl Welch's larynx had been heavily bruised. According to Doctor Lundquist, it was a wonder that Welch could even breathe, let alone speak.

Mrs. Welch and her children will return to their old home in Pennsylvania as soon as arrangements can be made. At present we feel that it is not necessary or advisable that the children learn the truth concerning their father's death. But the time will come when Mrs. Welch must tell the children, or allow them to carry through life a superstitious belief. I do not envy her that duty. In any additional investigation you may feel it necessary to conduct, we hope you will arrange it in such a way that the children will be in no danger or learning the truth.

Respectfully Yours,

Rev. Samuel Margene

Pastor, First Methodist Church Rock Creek, Kansas

Illumination

Kapleau-Roshi

Zen Master of Roshester

heard at Nuremberg how the German

concentration camp masters

fiddled Brahms in the evenings

in the noontide made lampshades

from Jewish Gypsy queer skins,

how Hegel thought hovered in thick air

in the ruins of buildings bombed to shells,

the words gone tainted, time blown

in the stained glass ruins.

They burned with self-pity, stood humped with defiance,

though light burned through the ruined skins.

Knowing what it's come to

how can we teach

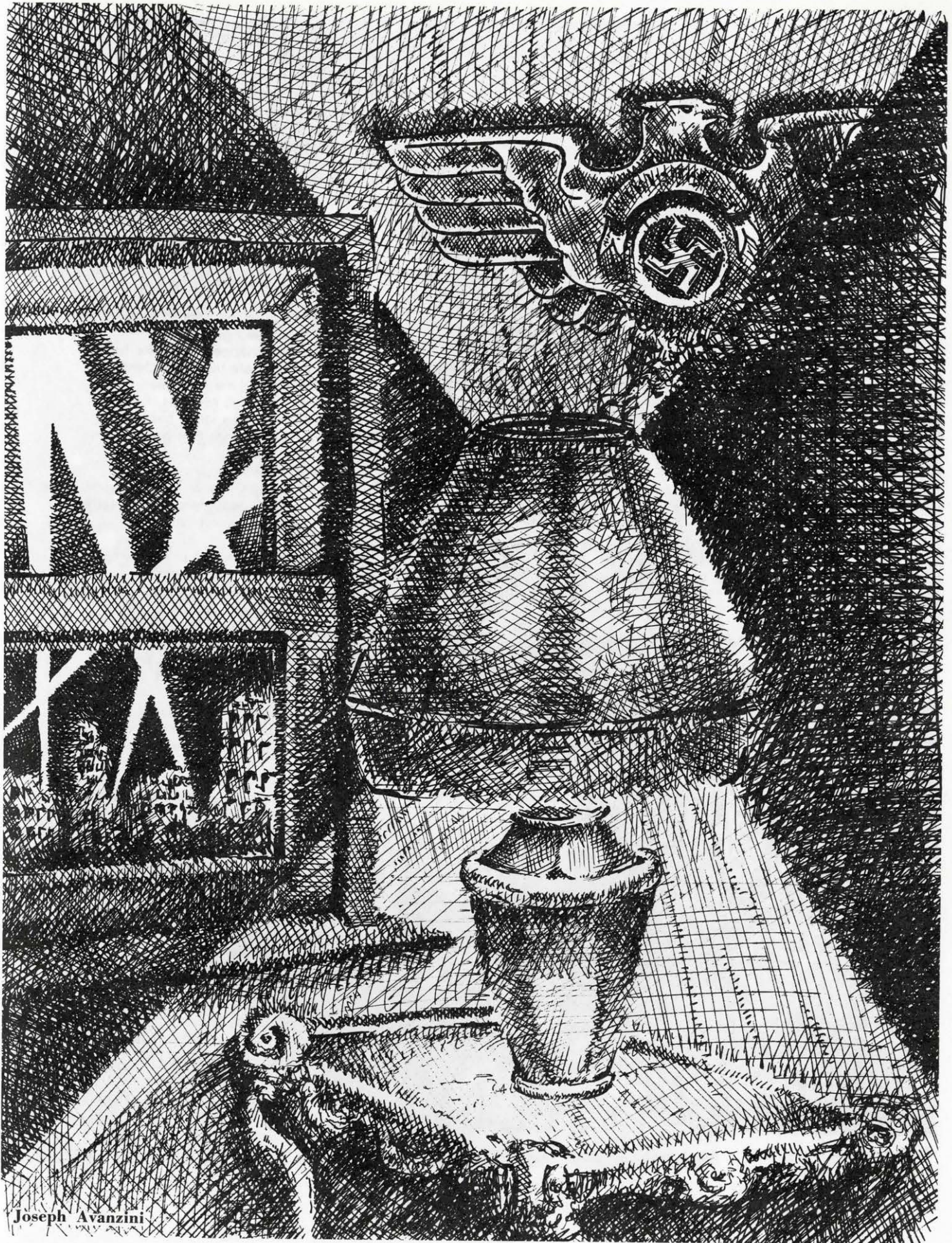
how can we write.

The only thoughts which do us honor

burst from their skein of words

like light.

— E. Allen Tilley



Joseph Avanzini

Everywoman

I walked the deserts with Abraham
until with sand my feet were raw.
I drew his water from the well to ease
his tongue growing thick with thirst.
I am she who danced like flames of fire
that Herod might fulfill my wish:
to have the bearded head of John
displayed upon a silver platter.

I am everywoman:
Eurydice, Gaea, Gertrude, Mary,
Gloria, Sylvia, Ann.
I am everywoman.

The Burmese coiled my neck in brass —
protection from the tiger's bite.
My giraffe neck snapped when the cut
the rings to suffocate the Magdalene.
Frenchmen followed me to battle
seeing victory through my eyes,
then burned me at the stake because
they feared the strength that grew within.

I am everywoman:
virgin, whore, bitch, queen,
wife, daughter, sister, mother.
I am everywoman.

Egyptians robbed my cunt of pleasure;
knife to phallus, death to sex.
Duty commanded my body to bed
that the culture might survive.
I laughed in freedom, a flower child;
to know, to think, to feel, to be.
I fought for freedom, marched, protested.
I won, I lost, I cried. I dreamed.

I am everywoman:
strong, weak, child, adult,
laughing, crying, hating, loving.
I am everywoman.

In the heat of night I spread my legs
to accept my lover's seed
then stood watch the lonely ground
as my belly swelled with child.
I cursed. I prayed. I swept. I cooked.
Mistress. Doctor. Nurse. Maid.
I walked behind, I led the way
I was you I was me I am.

I am everywoman:
enemy, friend, callous, kind,
life-bearer, murderess, dead, alive.
I am everywoman:
good, bad, evil, pure,
all to all, none to any.
I am everywoman.

— *Laura Jo Last*



Beth Goeckel



Believe Me

The trouble started about a week ago. William Willis, or Weird Willie, as the gang at work calls him, was telling me about the problems he has had with his love life the last few months. I was running some of my lab tests. He was supposed to be working outside, but the boss was out sick.

"I'm about to give up on Sheela," he said. "I've been buying her forty-dollar dinners, taking her to real nice places. We play Backgammon every night, and I've given her some great backrubs. My fingers are magic, but I just can't get anywhere with her. Last week she told me I was a good friend, but that was all."

I wondered why he was confiding in me. It seemed like something he should be talking about with one of the guys.

"Well, Willie," I said, "maybe you should start going out with someone else, if you think you're being used. She's not the only girl in town, is she?"

"No, I've had it with the dating crap. I got tired of waiting around. Women disgust me anyway, so I raped three of them last week."

I laughed at that. He said it nonchalantly, like he was talking about the weather. I wasn't sure if I should have laughed or not. It was hard to tell from his face. He was looking out the window at something in the distance.

Weird Willie was a good name for him all right. Every time I looked at him, I thought of Ichabod Crane. He was tall and bony and kind of clumsy, and usually had a strange grin on his face. Maybe it was just the natural curve of his mouth, but he always looked like a laughing mannequin. I'm not sure why I disliked him so much.

"Sure, Willie," I said, "and I'm the World's Heavyweight Boxing Champion."

He just stared at me. "Don't laugh at me. I don't like it and I won't take it." And he slammed out the door. He was always so hyper about everything.

Willie and I worked at the Marshfield Water Plant, along with four other people — Joan, who worked the midnight shift; Stan, the four-to-midnight man; and Duke, the fifty-year-old man who worked the swing shift. Willie and I both worked during the day with the boss, Paul. I worked in the lab, making sure the water met government standards, and Willie did general labor. All of us were friendly with one another and we partied together whenever we were off at the same time.

A couple of days after Willie's strange statement, Joan had a barbecue in her backyard, and we were all there, except for poor Duke, who usually got stuck working wherever the rest of us were having a good time. He didn't like to socialize with us anyway. He said we were all too concerned with "sex, drugs, and rock and roll," (even though we listened to country music, none of us did drugs, and none of us had gotten any lately either).

Joan was cleaning off oysters before putting them on the grill.

"I don't know why we're botherin' to eat these things, do you?"

"I just like them anyway," smiled Stan.

"Who knows," said Joan, "maybe that rapist I read about in the papers will attack me."

"I thought I heard something a rapist on the news last night," I said. "But I was cooking supper, and I didn't catch all of it."

"Yeah, he got three girls last week. The bad part is, he killed them too. With a knife. How gross. Some people are really sick."

I moved my eyes in Willie's direction. He was sitting there quietly; him and his mannequin face. I felt kind of queasy. Willie was such a strange bird.

"Darlene, would you care to take a walk with me to the pond? We can feed the ducks if you'd like," Willie said.

I jumped slightly when he spoke. He was speaking slowly and softly. I stared into his grinning face. He must have been playing a joke on me. I hoped.

"No thanks, Willie. I'm waiting for these oysters to get hot."

"Oh, come on," he said semi-sweetly. "You don't need those. Come take a walk with me."

"Sorry, Willie. Guess I'm not in a walking mood."

He turned to Joan. "How about you sweetheart? I just need to stretch my legs a little."

"Sure, Willie," said Joan, "sounds good to me."

I wondered if Willie was just testing me — waiting to see if I would make a fool of myself over this practical joke.

About twenty minutes later Joan and Willie returned. Joan was laughing at something Willie said that I couldn't hear. I was able to enjoy the rest of the evening after their return, except for feeling stupid and mad at myself for suspecting Willie.

We sat around drinking and talking about some of the crazy things that had happened at work — things that were funny after they were over.

"Well, folks," Joan said after a while, "sorry to break up the party, but I have to be at the plant in half an hour. See you guys later, OK?"

"Sure, Joan, we get the hint."

Everyone got up to leave. Weird Willie put his arm around my shoulder. "Can I walk you to your car, sweetheart?"

I hated it when he called me sweetheart.

"Sure, why not," I said, feeling like I owed it to him.

Willie acted like the perfect gentleman — opened the car door for me and made sure it was locked after I got in.

"Be careful driving home, sweetheart. I wouldn't want anything to happen to you. Not a thing."

I said, "Thanks," and smiled at him, and thought, what a weirdo.

I drove home with my car radio turned up loud to help me get rid of the creepy feeling I had. After I got



into the apartment, I locked the door and turned on all the lights and the television.

About ten minutes later the phone rang and I thought I'd have a heart attack.

"Hi, Darlene — hope I didn't wake you up?" said Joan.

"No, you didn't, but you sure scared the hell out of me. What's up?"

"Nothing, really. I just wondered if you'd bring me some coffee from the Magic Market. I can hardly keep my eyes open 'cause I didn't get any sleep today."

"Sure," I said, thinking: oh, great, just what I wanted to do.

I left the lights on when I left the apartment, and ran as fast as I could to my car. I wasn't sure exactly what I was so afraid of, but I figured my imagination was over-working itself as usual.

I got to the plant about fifteen minutes later. It was a warm night and Joan had the office door open to let the breeze blow through.

I was just through the door, about to say, "Hope you appreciate this," when every nerve and muscle in my body contracted. Backed against the wall, wild-eyed, was Joan. She saw me, but didn't make a sound, because Willie was holding a long glistening knife at her throat. His back was toward me.

I backed out of the office very quietly, amazed at my calmness and clear-headedness. I knew Willie never put his tools up during the day. Surely I could find a hammer or something lying around that I could use as a weapon.

The bush-axe was still leaning against the palm tree where Willie had been trimming dead palm fronds the day before. I grabbed it, stole back to the front door and tiptoed in. I was sure I would never live through this night. My heart felt like it had stopped beating.

Joan and Willie were in the same position, except that Willie had ripped her blouse and was rubbing the knife gently against her neck.

I took a deep breath, raised the bush-axe over my shoulder and brought it down into Willie's back with all my strength.

I heard a heavy gasp as he fell backwards. He looked at me from the floor with that mannequin smile on his face; but there was a glaze over his eyes.

My entire body started shaking. I could hardly stand up.

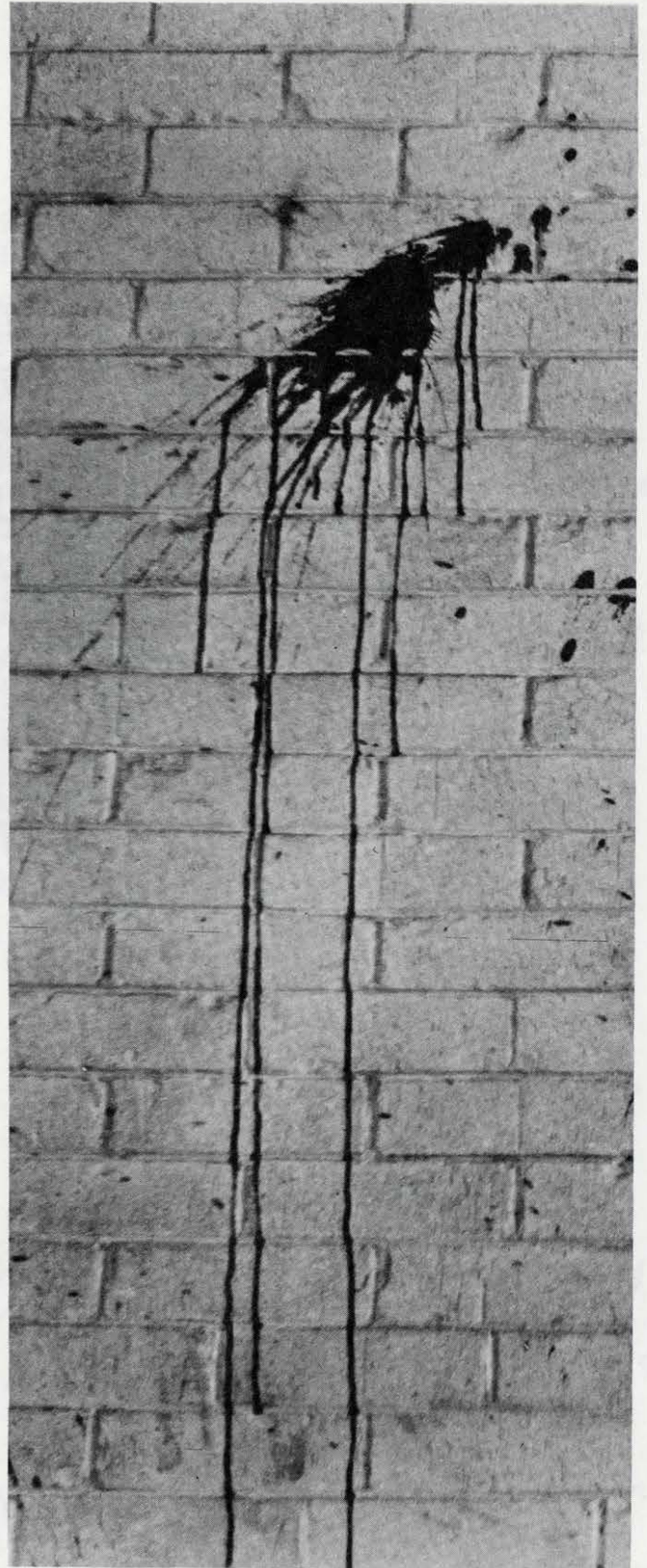
"Joan, are you OK?" I was barely able to get the words out.

"Joan— "

Joan was lying on the floor. At first I thought she must have fainted, but then I saw the blood spreading rapidly across the floor toward my feet.

The knife was still in Willie's hand, but the blood on it was Joan's. When I hit Willie with the axe, he must have driven the knife into Joan's throat. I could still see the smile on Willie's face as I stumbled to the phone to call the police.

By Donna Kaluzniak



Judy Gozdur

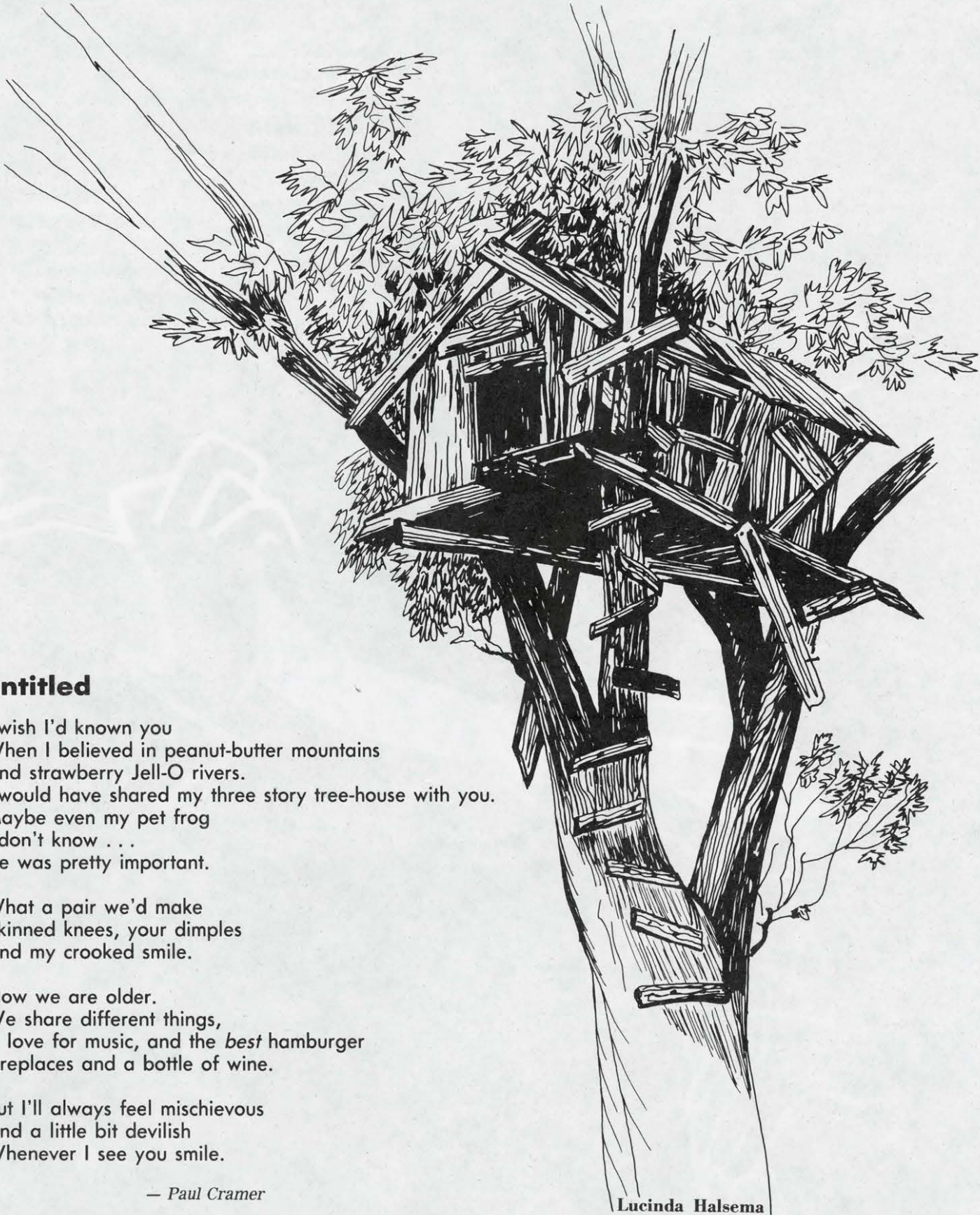
UNICORN

I LIVED BEFORE
LEGEND OR
DINOSAUR
WOOLY MAMMOTH OR
DISTANT COUSIN
ECHIPPUS

BEFORE MAN OR
BEAUTY OR
FAME
THE FEW WHO CAN
SEE
HAVE GIVEN ME A
NAME
UNICORN

BY DAVID REED





untitled

I wish I'd known you
When I believed in peanut-butter mountains
And strawberry Jell-O rivers.
I would have shared my three story tree-house with you.
Maybe even my pet frog
I don't know . . .
He was pretty important.

What a pair we'd make
Skinned knees, your dimples
And my crooked smile.

Now we are older.
We share different things,
A love for music, and the *best* hamburger
Fireplaces and a bottle of wine.

But I'll always feel mischievous
And a little bit devilish
Whenever I see you smile.

— Paul Cramer

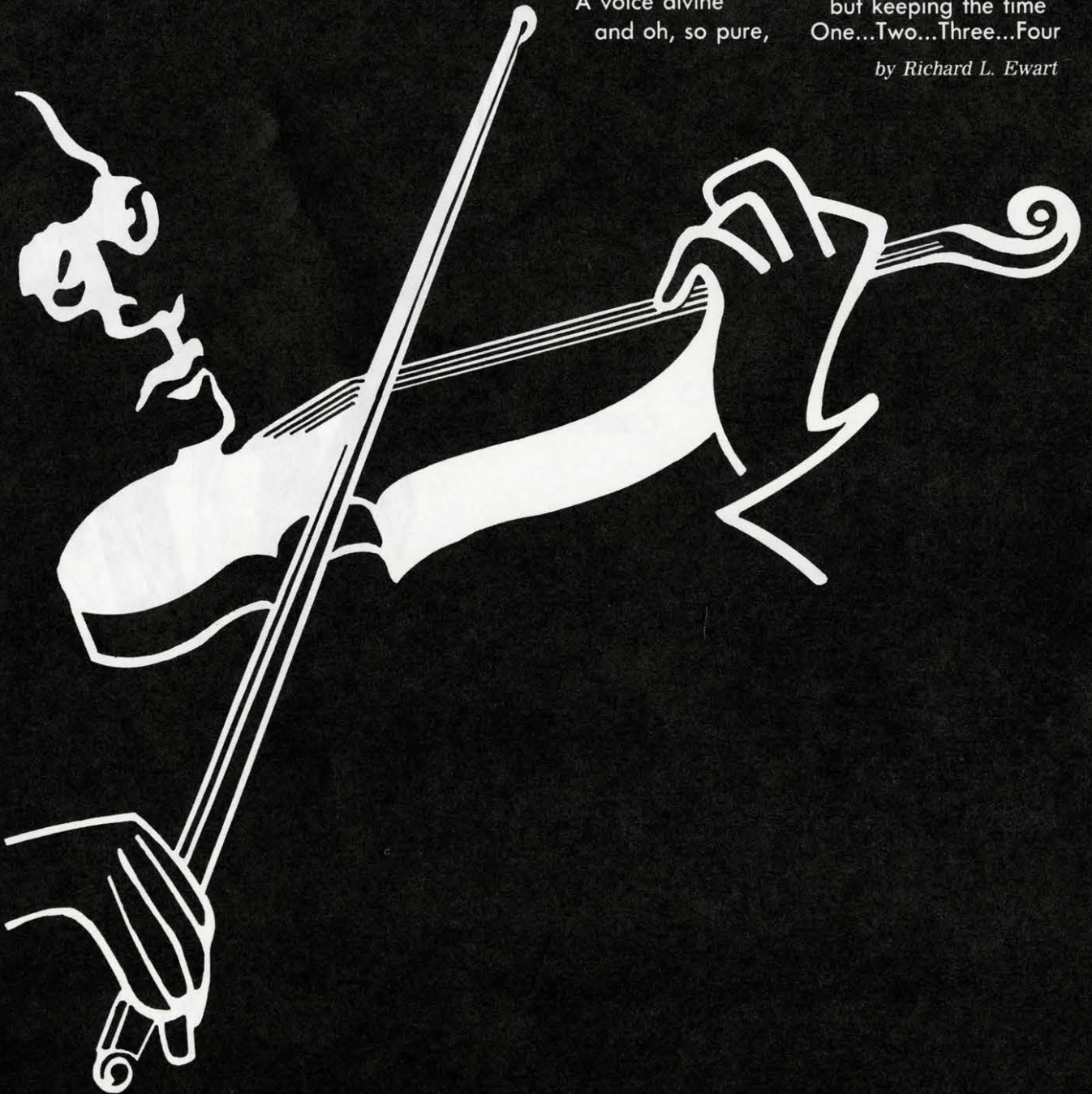
Lucinda Halsema

The Violin

I gently placed you
at my chin,
Left hand raised
to hold you in,
With bow in right
I touched a note,
It wavered low
in air around,
Piercing softly
a touch so fresh
It fell round me
with sweet caress,
A voice divine
and oh, so pure,

It touched my heart
like none before,
Then a new note
fell in rhyme.
Changing the cadence
but keeping the time
One...Two...Three...Four

by Richard L. Ewart



Walter
...
...
...
...
...



Roger Whitt Jr.

Haiku

Piccolo nocturne,

Sweet sonority of dusk —

Artsong nightingale

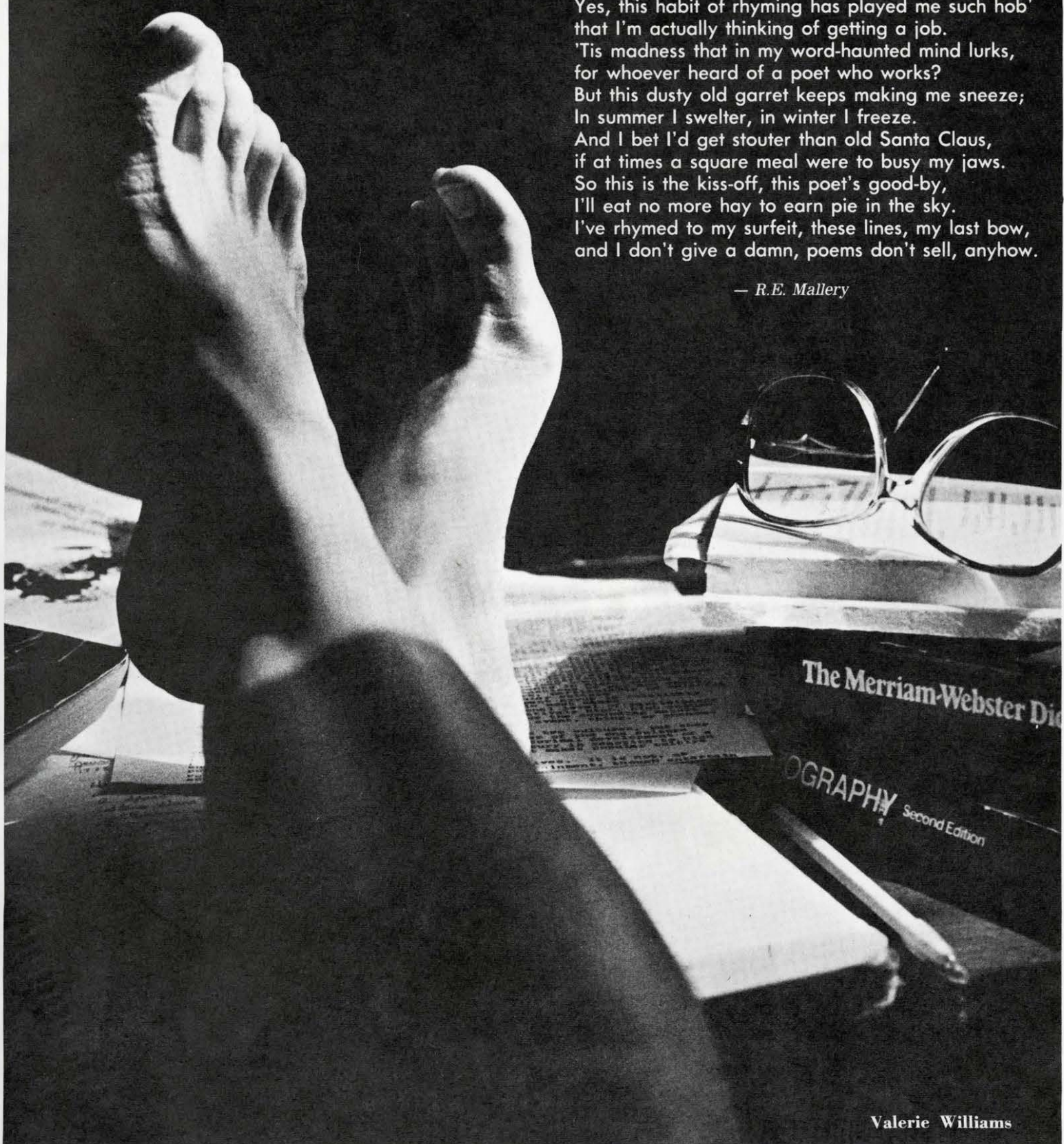
— Lori Nasrallah



Rhymer's Revolt

I'm guilty, Dear Reader, of a modern-day crime,
I have an obsession to make my poems rhyme.
For with stylish free verse I have never felt free.
I've answers from editors, oh, yes, countless times:
"This isn't a poem, the silly thing rhymes."
Yes, this habit of rhyming has played me such hob'
that I'm actually thinking of getting a job.
'Tis madness that in my word-haunted mind lurks,
for whoever heard of a poet who works?
But this dusty old garret keeps making me sneeze;
In summer I swelter, in winter I freeze.
And I bet I'd get stouter than old Santa Claus,
if at times a square meal were to busy my jaws.
So this is the kiss-off, this poet's good-by,
I'll eat no more hay to earn pie in the sky.
I've rhymed to my surfeit, these lines, my last bow,
and I don't give a damn, poems don't sell, anyhow.

— R.E. Mallery





M. BARNHART '82

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