

1983

## Reflections 1983

Amy J. Wilson

Joyce Compton Brown

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# Reflections



'83

REFLECTIONS  
Volume 15  
1983

EDITOR  
Amy J. Wilson

ADVISOR  
Joyce C. Brown

STAFF  
Stan Blair  
Eric Blankenship  
Krista Colle  
Rebecca Jones  
Vance Midget  
Sherrie Minnix  
Lou Anne Poston  
Tracey Tucker

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## CONTRIBUTORS

Matt Ayott is a student at Ashbrook High School.

Ernest Blankenship is chairman of the English Department at Gardner-Webb.

Dina L. Becker is a freshman at G-W.

\* Stan Blair is a Junior French and English major at G-W.

Ruth Ann Bronson is a Senior Social Science major at G-W.

LaVondra Brooks is a student at Crest Jr. High.

Les Brown is a professor of Biology at Gardner-Webb.

Michelle Brown is a student at Crest Jr. High.

\* Krista Colle is a Junior English major at G-W.

Robbie Dellinger is a student at Ashbrook High School.

Roger Gaddis is a professor of Psychology at Gardner-Webb.

Ray Hardee is a Senior Political Science and History major at G-W.

Rick Harwell is a Senior Religious Education major at G-W.

Wanda Hamilton resides in Shelby, N.C.

Marcie Hicks is a Senior Religious Education major at G-W.

Jay Holt is a student at Ashbrook High School.

Carmen Hood is a Senior Psychology major at G-W.

\* Rebecca Jones is a Junior, English major at G-W.

Karen Kistler is a Junior, English major at G-W.

Dianne Lail is a student at Crest Jr. High.

Patricia Laymen is a Sophomore, Accounting Major at G-W.

Max Linnens is pastor of Boiling Springs Baptist Church.

Richard McBride is currently residing in Shelby, N.C.

Thirlen Osborne is a professor of English at Gardner-Webb.

Paul Phillips is a Senior Psychology major at G-W.

Todd Phillips is a Senior Social Science major at G-W.

Charlotte Porter is a Senior Religion major at G-W.

Dennis Quinn is a professor of English at Gardner-Webb.

Johnny Revels is a Freshman Religious Education Major.

Dale Roach is a Senior Religion major at G-W.

Dave Robertson is Director of Information Services at Gardner-Webb.

Martha Rohm is a student at Holbrook Jr. High.

Carolyn Santanella is a former **Reflections** editor.

Sherrie Simmons is a student at R.S. Central High School.

Kim Spencer is a student at Crest Jr. High.

Eric Stamey is a Junior English major at G-W.

Bill Stowe is a professor of English at Gardner-Webb.

Anna Taylor is a Junior Fine Arts major at G-W.

Jim Taylor is a professor of English at Gardner-Webb.

Kaylynn Watts is a Junior Psychology major at G-W.

Rick Wilson is a professor of Religion at Gardner-Webb.

Taffy Wright is a student at Crest Jr. High.

## CONTEST

Each year the English Department of Gardner-Webb sponsors a literary contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in **Reflections**. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the **Reflections** staff and the final contest judges. This year's final contest judges were Professors Thirlen Osborne, Bill Stowe, and Dennis Quinn.

This year the English Department also sponsored a literary contest for area junior and senior high schools. The winning submission was chosen from 90 submissions from area schools. The preliminary contest was judged by **Reflections'** editor and advisor. The final contest was judged by Professor Ernest Blankenship and Senior English major Ann Henson.

### COLLEGE CONTEST AWARDS

1st Place:	LESSONS AFTER 15 YEARS	Rick Harwell
2nd Place:	HOW TO SURVIVE WINTER	Kirsta Colle
3rd Place:	FROM THE LEFT BANK, 1931	Stan Blair
HONORABLE MENTION:	ROUGH HEWN CHAIR SHAILMAR'S WAIT	Anna Taylor Rebecca Jones

### HIGH SCHOOL CONTEST AWARD

JELLO-KID                      Sherrie Simmons

In late January of this year, Gardner-Webb lost three of its professors in a tragic accident. Dr. Michael Harrelson, Dr. James Henson, and Dr. John Rast were fatally injured in an automobile accident on January 27 while returning from teaching night classes. The loss of these three men had a serious impact on this community.

To preserve the admiration of friends, fellow faculty members, and students, *Reflections* presents a special section in their memory. Included in this section is Dr. Bill Stowe's *Literary Reading*, Dr. Rick Wilson's *Eclipse*, and Dr. Rodger Gaddis's *Prayer* that were delivered at the Memorial Service held February 1, 1983. Also in this section is part of the address presented at Dr. Michael Harrelson's funeral by T. Max Linnens. A remembrance from a faculty member is presented in "The Challenge" by Ernest Blankenship and a student's remembrance is presented in a poem by Krista Cole.

*Reflections* recognizes the dedication these three men had to their families, their colleagues, their students, and to God. It was that dedication that has made them examples to be followed. *Reflections* in appreciation of their lives dedicates this issue to the memory of

Dr. Michael Harrelson  
April 22, 1931—January 27, 1983

Dr. James Henson  
January 28, 1928—January 29, 1983

Dr. John Rast  
August 26, 1946—January 27, 1983



## THE CHALLENGE

When they lived and walked among us, knowledge had a voice.  
They were three men excelling in different ways.  
One raised his voice in the choir;  
One preached the Word from the pulpit,  
And the other spoke out boldly from the pew.  
One was a scientist, one a psychologist, and one a theologian.  
Each was complete and in his own way unique,  
But they all spoke in unison through the lives they led  
And called attention to the best hopes among us.  
They left us and we were numbed into silence.  
Then we asked *Why?* but the vacant space seemed to echo silence.  
Had they stayed they could have provided reasons  
As they had been doing consistently.  
It seems that the best are always being taken from us.  
Sinisterly we are moved to love life more and secretly to long  
for death,  
But we return to the feeling of pain, a sense of loss and a sharp  
awareness of need—  
Magnifying the hollow dark vacuum.  
Then we remember how our friends lived and how they pursued  
their goals with purpose.  
Unlike other great men whose good is so often “interred with  
their bones”  
Mike, Jim, and John have stabbed us wide awake.  
Because their business was to impart and share and  
Because they did their job so well and because their work is  
unfinished and they are gone,  
We have cause and are challenged to rise.

A LITERARY READING FOR DR. HARRELSON,  
DR. HENSON, AND DR. RAST

Early in the play, Hamlet is moved to remark—

What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason.  
How infinite in faculty, in form and moving. How  
express and admirable in action. How like a angel  
in apprehension. How like a god! The beauty of the  
world. The paragon of animals. And yet, to me, what  
is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me—  
no, nor woman neither—

The wildly vacillating mood evident in Hamlet's speech is  
ours—one minute convinced of the infinitude of our capacities,  
the next standing stark against a cold, bone-freezing wind of  
mischance, accident, power arrested.

Three of ours are gone—suddenly removed from the flow of our  
lives, a removal so harsh as to disrupt the illusion that one day  
will inevitably bring another, a shocking reminder that our own  
busy-ness is not eternal.

All changed, changed utterly;  
A terrible beauty is born (*Yeats*)

After great pain, a formal feeling comes—  
The nerves sit ceremoniously, like tombs (*Dickinson*)

Our moods, like Hamlet's are **not** madness. The "terrible beauty  
born" to us as we sit ceremoniously, nerves raw with abrasions of  
repeated testament to finitude—  
that terrible beauty gleams from the measures that we take of  
our colleagues' lives.

Of one, Jim Henson, Thomas Gray has said it best:

Large was his bounty,  
and his soul sincere,  
Heaven did a recompense

as largely send;  
He gave to misery all he had, a tear  
He gained from Heaven ('twas all he wished)  
a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
or draw his frailties from their dread abode  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)  
The bosom of his Father and his God.

Of another, Mike Harrelson, Wordsworth has said it best:

For I have learned to look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains, and of all that we behold  
From this green earth . . .

Of the third, John Rast, Chaucer has said it best:

(freely translated)  
Rich he was of holy thought and work.  
He was a learned man, a clerk,  
That Christ's gospel truly would preach,  
His parishioners devoutly would teach.  
Benign he was, and wonderfully diligent,  
And in adversity full patient.

This noble example to his sheep he gave  
That first he wrought, and afterward he taught.

He was a shepherd and not a mercenary,  
And though he holy was and virtuous,  
He was to sinful man not dis-piteous.

A better priest I trowe there nowhere none is.

Recently, I heard John read a passage from the comments of Flannery O'Connor which I find appropriate to this occasion. She said, "One of the tendencies of our age is to use the suffering of children to discredit the goodness of God, [and let us not forget that there are eight children without fathers] and once you have discredited his goodness, you are done with him . . . . In this popular pity, we mark our gain in sensibility and our loss in vision. If other ages felt less, they saw more, even though they saw with the blind, prophetic, unsentimental eye of acceptance, which is to say, of faith. In the absence of this faith now, we govern by tenderness. It is a tenderness which, long since cut off from the person of Christ, is wrapped in theory. When tenderness is detached from the source of tenderness, its logical outcome is terror. It ends in forced-labor camps and in the fumes of the gas chamber."

In John's life—and in the lives of Mike and Jim—there was a tenderness attached to the Source—clearly, quietly, wonderfully radiant of Christ. And in their deaths, I have felt a tenderness among us that I have never felt before.

So, Hamlet, what is this quintessence of dust? For my money,

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society. How strange, that all  
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,  
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused  
Within my mind, should ever have borne apart,  
And that a needful part, in making up  
The calm existence that is [ours] when [we]  
Are worthy of [ourselves]. Praise to the end! (*Wordsworth*)

Our Father and our God:

We hurt . . . We hurt in the absence of our admired  
colleagues, teachers, and friends. And yet in the midst of  
our hurt, we are thankful, for without  
    love, we would have felt no loss;  
without  
    respect, we would have felt no grief;  
without  
    honor, we would not have mourned;  
without  
    joy in their presence; we would have known no sorrow.

For the gentlepeople who passed from this life and were translated  
into

    another, we thank thee  
For those lives we grieve  
For the families that are broken, we sorrow  
For the teachers whose counsel we lost, we mourn  
For the friends who have died, we lament

Yet in all we thank thee for their time spent with us. We count  
ourselves

    favored in proportion to our closeness to them.  
Without their brightness, we would not have noticed the present  
darkness. We thank thee for the light they brought and shared. In  
the light, we praise thee; in the darkness, we need thee.

    We hurt . . . bless those who mourn. Comfort those who  
sorrow.

    In trust, we ask thy unmeasured blessing on those who  
grieve in  
    The current darkness. Amen.

## “ECLIPSE”

All of us gathered here this morning faced last Friday with the abrupt awareness that our world had been plunged into darkness the night before. Friday's dawn did not bring light; and by mid-afternoon on Saturday the darkness had deepened. Today our world remains in darkness as we remember those three from our midst who were light-bearers for us all. Dr. Mike Harrelson, Dr. James Henson, and Dr. John Rast carried light for us, for all of us. Indeed, each of these not only **carried** light, but embodied light.

Tragedy has come between these three and us. Tragedy has eclipsed the light they shed and we stand in the shadows of their deaths: chilled, anguished, and bewildered.

Today we would do well to recognize that the light which Dr. Harrelson, Dr. Henson, and Dr. Rast so freely gave has NOT been extinguished, but only eclipsed. In the days, weeks, and months ahead, as the pain of this tragedy passes, their lights will shine again. Their lights will shine in this place — and in every place where they are remembered.

But today — today we are overshadowed. We have the promise of light. Yet we stand in darkness. The darkness is real; the anguish is deep; the confusion is profound. We look for light but are surrounded by darkness.

The words of Martin Luther are poignant reminders of how the hope for light and the cold reality of dark sorrow can be felt in the same instant. As Luther stood at the grave of his fourteen year old daughter he is said to have cried out:

Magdalena, Magdalena!

You will rise and shine like the stars and the sun.

How strange it is to know she is at peace,

And yet to be so sorrowful.

Today we as a community cry out like Luther:

Oh! Our dear friends!  
You will rise and shine like the stars and the sun.  
How strange it is to know they are at peace,  
And yet to be so sorrowful.

We are a community. A special community. We are a community where lives are molded, where lives are shared, and where lives are given. Two weeks ago John Rast and I had driven to Gaffney for a meeting; on the way home our talk turned to a new semester and our feelings about Gardner-Webb. We talked with excitement about our classes, our students, our colleagues, and our community. The conversation ended when John said of this place:

This is a good place with good people.  
This is a place where one can invest his life.

This is a good place with good people. And this is a place where Mike Harrelson, Jim Henson, and John Rast invested their lives. For that reason we are a community. A community in darkness, held together by love for one another.

Our tragedy may eclipse the light these, our friends, gave, but the shadow of their deaths does not overpower the love they gave. It is because they loved so much that we hurt so badly. It is their love that we share which holds us close in the darkness. In our experience of the past days the words of Paul are proved:

For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8;38-39)

In the darkness of our sorrow it is the depth of our love for these three that creates our anguish. It is our knowledge and assurance of their love for us that holds us together. And our experience has proclaimed that in the midst of this tragic eclipse, God has been on the dark side with us, suffering with our loss and loving us through his pain.

Mike Harrelson, Jim Henson, and John Rast were our friends. Because they were we know their lights will shine again in our darkness. In the days, weeks, and months ahead we will remember each one—and those memories will bring dawn—slow and gradually brightening—to our darkened lives.

They were our friends. As our friends they taught us much. As friends we would part—and come together again—after a day's class, after the weekend, and after breaks.

During registration week John and I talked about the meaning of this separating and coming together again among friends. We were touched by the way Arthur Schopenhauer interpreted that daily event. Schopenhauer said:

Every parting gives a foretaste of death;  
Every coming together again a foretaste of the resurrection.

We have tasted the deaths of our friends. We await the taste of the resurrection. They ARE our friends.



FUNERAL—JANUARY 29, 1983

A choice spirit has left us suddenly. And we feel the chill of grief. We stand close together for the warmth love brings. We look into the eyes of fellow sufferers, we grope for words to express the sense of our loss we feel, and we touch each other to enforce our words and to try to convey our feelings, for touch is the highest form of communication. And we remember how many ways Mike Harrelson touched our lives. In true worship we come to reach out to touch God with our needs and to feel his answering touch of healing. And we surround Mike's family with our love and empathy. And we reach deep within for the comfort only that other spirit can give — The spirit that bears witness to our spirit that we are the children of God.

The photograph tells me it is Monday,  
or Friday, or Tuesday.

I remember the long, careful walk to the cafeteria.  
I look five times before crossing the street  
And look once more at the yellow stripes.

Suppertime and thirty hours have passed.  
I hear noise again.

Wait

Silence again.

Now three not two departed teaching family members.

Keep our school flag half riding  
The tall straight pin!

Looking like the tree that stood  
Half destroyed on the front lawn  
The same week DISASTER AREA  
Labeled the county.

Dead? Gone?

The tree too is uprooted

And no longer stands in proud representation.

The flag in the picture,  
It is Monday.

No formal sessions today.

But some meet.

I sit in an office.

I watch an instructor friend.

She tapes worn record covers with cellophane.

Cellophane tape?

I tell her it will never last.

She knows that.

I must keep my mind occupied she said.

Tuesday brings the same picture.  
The required mass meeting  
Reveals an expectancy in students.  
No useless chatter or opened studies today.  
Tip-toeing in with  
knowledge of emptiness,  
Rid of all callousness,  
Needing a beginning to the end.  
Keep our school flag half riding  
The tall straight pin!

Photographers meander around noiselessly (carefully)  
But even so, distracting with their every step.

Professors read their notes?  
Unsure of your words?  
Perhaps it is the grief.  
Perhaps it is the words.  
Before death they were mere words  
Though words you presumed to live by.  
Now they are made alive in death  
And their definition  
Adds to your grief.  
It is as if you say,  
I had not noticed before  
That my life's words were true.  
I have never seen men so humble.  
No one claps, or reacts  
All sitting silently stunned.  
Keep our school flag half riding  
The tall straight pin!



FROM THE LEFT BANK, 1931

I cannot write about war.  
War is outside my experience.  
I have not known firsthand  
A muddy grave among rotting corpses,  
Festering wounds, screams of pain,  
Or the blissful agony of orgiastic murder.  
No, I cannot write of war—  
I do not know of it.  
I know only of quiet, peaceful things—  
The singing of birds—  
The return of spring—  
The scornful sub-breath muttering of "coward"  
As I walk past the rusted park benches  
Where wasted old men play checkers  
And discuss their limits.

ANGER

Anger is a thick syrup  
Slowly flowing within all of us  
If we are not careful  
We learn to love its bittersweet taste  
And then we are lost . . .

## HOW TO SURVIVE WINTER

Dream:

Of cool blades of grass between toes,  
The sweetness of sweat when first perspired,  
The scent of freshly mown grass mingled with blossoms,  
Of the needle-like sting of a mosquito,  
Breezy beaches and sharp shells underfoot,  
And of bronzed skinned bodies with golden hair.  
Summertime;  
Ponder these things.

## THE CHAIRLIFT

Wonder, awe  
Rides to the sky  
On open carriages.  
Extended feet dangling,  
Sticks held firm.  
Viewing heaven it seems:

A coral garden  
Tall and still  
Or, short clumps,  
Like flowers.  
Limbs made shelves  
For God's white powder,  
Held firm by the cold.

## A MEANDERING MIND

My mind drifts,  
sailing across the  
sea of memories.  
Causing ripples in my senses.  
Dipping softly into  
the pool of dreams.

Clouds appear.  
The craft tossed to and fro.  
Sails crumpled by the gale.

Fear is my albatross  
choking the tranquility of mind.  
Hurricane of thoughts.  
Dreams wrenched from my grasp.  
A wave of doubts  
rambles through the  
shanty of my consciousness.

## THE SEVENTH STRING

Stopped in midstream  
As all is rushing by,  
Who's to give the answers,  
When no one knows the questions?  
Can we really listen  
To the part the other plays,  
When each is playing louder  
And insists, "I'm sure it goes like this."  
Why not play the seventh string,  
And learn the song anew?  
We could all teach the world one thing or two,  
Who's to say you're wrong?  
There comes a time for growing  
In a more mental sort of way,  
to part from all the wonder-  
Beyond the seventh string . . .



*Carmen Hood*

Listening to every minute small sound

Missing the chatter and laughter of friends

Even the blaring radio at 6 a.m.—

When I don't have a class until 10:00

Anxiously wishing my door would shake from knocking

Or even the phone vibrate from ringing

It wouldn't even matter who it was

So long as someone remembered

That I was the only one who couldn't go home.

*Taffy Wright*

Apple

Crisp and delicious

Munching on a juicy bite

Delighted tastebuds.

## THE VULNERABLE SPOT

There is a vulnerable spot  
in all our souls.  
A place secrets are kept  
in the darkest folds.

Where only lovers are  
invited to tread.  
Where pain and jealousy  
rear their ugly heads.

The spot which says . . .  
“ . . . we are us, and  
you are you, and  
*I'd* much prefer we remain  
. . . just two!”

It's a vulnerable spot  
we keep secure . . .  
By watching, and checking  
. . . just to be sure!

Then . . . a love is lost—  
a secret revealed,  
And pain that seems  
. . . never to heal.

## SHALIMAR'S WAIT

Shalimar, your eyes are weary brown.  
Tired from the endless days of sad design.

Watching the horizon . . .  
Your waiting has become a talisman for  
those who wait  
Each dawn you arise . . .  
Filled with optimists' glory,  
and begin the sentry's walk.  
Your eyes growing wearier as the hours pass,  
And your awaited vision does not appear.

Shalimar, he will not return;  
His hour of laughter is long past.  
The familiar steps far away . . .  
gone forever from the soft earth—  
Swept into a sea of war and hate.

Come in from your watch, Shalimar,  
And I will help you weep.

## ASKING FOR A DATE

Meet her.  
Feel your interest rise.  
Go home.

Discover you're still thinking of her.  
Want to make a date but let  
Silly fears hold you back.  
Stare at the telephone and  
Wait for it to dial itself.  
Leave the receiver on the hook and  
Practice dialing a dozen times to  
Make sure it's correct.  
Sit down and put on your "cool" face and  
Adopt your smooth voice.  
Deny the million butterflies in your stomach.  
Pick up the phone and  
Put it back down.

Retrieve your courage.  
You will survive if she says no.  
Pick up that phone. Dial it.  
It's ringing what do I do now?  
Hello . . .

## STORM

A cloud . . .

misting,  
condensing,  
forming,  
suspending,  
floating,  
combining,  
increasing,  
bursting.

Rain . . .

dripping,  
dropping,  
drizzling,  
pouring,  
streaming,  
drenching,  
flooding,  
drowning.

Lightning . . .

flashing,  
slashing,  
streaking,  
reaching,  
striking,  
crashing,  
smashing.

Thunder . . .

rumbling,  
roaring,  
cracking,  
clapping,  
exploding,  
booming,  
echoing.

## DICKEY ADDRESSES ATLANTA CONVENTION

Breathlessly I waited  
    (breathless because I knew  
    he might simply drop his pants).  
The old man, now, stepped to the podium,  
    hitched up his pants,  
    said "Hiyall,"  
And began to look for the nature of poetry,  
    stringing Wild Jim Dickey along with him,  
    his mischievous eyes peering out  
    occasionally at us,  
    his crooked grin often breaking in  
    to remind us.  
But the voice was largely sober, eternal.  
And the words rolled forth like a hundred handkerchiefs  
    from a magician's sleeve,  
    multicolored, linked, fluttering slightly  
    in the breeze,  
Accumulating, finally, enough evidence  
To blow his thesis all to Hell (Wordsmiths  
    don't say weighty things).

Toward the end he speculated about poor Li Po  
Whose poem was usurped by Pound,  
Concluding that Li Po was long dead anyway,  
"Drowned trying to embrace the moon  
    in the Yellow River,"  
An image he obviously enjoyed.

The magic of this philosopher—  
Or the philosophy of this magician—  
Sucked forth my soul.

I saw him dying, drowning  
    beneath the French Broad,  
    the moon flashing a Wild Jim Dickey  
    grin up at lovers on the bridge.

Li Po, the "Banished Angel" of Chinese poetry (701-762), wrote the poem which was translated by Ezra Pound as "The River-Merchant's Wife." Legend has it that Li Po's dissolute life ended in drowning "one night when he fell out of a canoe while trying to kiss the reflection of the moon in the Yellow River." Warnock and Anderson, *The World in Literature*, Scott, Foresman, 1959.

## SOILED SNEAKERS

Never put sneakers  
In a mechanical monster;  
For with the gray-slime water,  
Down the cold, insensitive pipes  
Slide the costly threads.

Put soiled sneakers  
In a sink of warm water.  
Powder well the surfacing grime.  
Rub, squish, rub, examine.  
Soak til the suds vanish  
And the water turns cold.

Then rinse. And wring (the difficult part).  
Place on a sill for puddles to form,  
And ask, "Which is more costly?  
The prunish results of handiwork,  
Or sneakers robbed of wear by  
A masterpiece of luxury!?"

## ETERNAL GOD,

we are broken, thou art whole  
we are partial, thou art complete  
we are limited, thou art limitless  
we are separate, finite,  
thou art infinite and connected to every particle  
of creation,  
we are flawed, thou art faultless.

What a wonder that you chose to become one of us—and did not cling to the glory of your perfection but chose to bend to touch and join us where we are—broken, partial, finite, flawed.

You choose the child in us to teach the way of trust and mystery—and to grant us power beyond the limits of our own to lay aside the fear of growing—to approach you—to grasp as we are able some dimension of your holiness.

to know in human terms a life more whole,  
more complete than we could make on our own.

to know in human terms the flavor of life  
you had in mind all along.

the life your Christ Child grew to live.

He touched your mystery, your presence at every turn.  
He healed the wounds of body and spirit, being neighbor to the neighbor.  
He renewed his strength in you and discovered his own unique place in Thy creation—dispensing your love at the cost of his life.

Help us to know in the midst of our brokenness—he was broken for us and raised again to your completeness for us.

May we grow in thy grace.



SUSANNA PROPHETT

Angel-hair they call it—  
A sort of meta-physical,  
Epi-phenomenal effluence  
Which emanates, they say,  
From certain neer-too-well seen  
Saucers of the flying kind.  
Some people down in Texas saw it  
Once, reporting strange and eerie  
Sights the night before.

Stuff . . . that's what it was—  
Stuff that looked like strings  
Of fiber glass, or spiders' webs.  
And it was hanging there,  
All over town; on billboards,  
Power poles and gates.  
The Sheriff, just a simple man,  
Said: "Damned if Ah know whut it is,  
But ain't it queer?"

Scientists from local schools  
Could not explain the nature  
Of the filmy, stringy stuff;  
They paced, and thought,  
And looked, and shook their heads.

Towards noon, the weather, warming up,  
Dispelled the angel-hair.  
The scientists left town  
And cards, and said:  
"Be sure to call us if it comes again."  
Sheriff was quoted by U.P.I.:  
"Ain't it the damndest thing?"

And Sheriff, thinking something foul  
Was up, some prankster'd played  
A trick to upset equilibrium,  
Was quite intent to find some footprints  
Near the scenes where angel-hair had been.  
He traipsed and took pictures and  
Talked with his citizens, turned to  
The hope of a crime he could solve  
Or a plot against pride in America.

Deputy Scoggins, left in a lurch  
While the Sheriff was dashing around,  
Filed away a report  
That the lonely, lovely only child  
Of a local, crack-pot minister  
Had disappeared the self-same night.  
Association wasn't made between the two events,  
And no one therefore ever knew  
That sweet Susanna Prophett had,  
The night of angel-hair,  
Become a daughter of the stars.

Jello-Kid  
He's the kid  
Ya see hikin'  
Up the street  
But ya never see  
His mama  
The kinda kid  
Ya guess'll end up  
Snatchin' your purse  
So's ya hold on to it  
**Real** tight  
He's got his hands in his  
Pockets—probably around  
A switch-blade  
“Gonna cutcha, honkey”  
He's got on flashy shoes  
And a tough-cat look  
That on anybody else  
Would be loneliness  
He's got the kinda look  
Ya see in a kid  
Raised on Jello.

And I am  
Like the maelstroms  
    which come out of  
    the cool, grey dawning like

A vengeance  
    And I am the vengeance  
    If you touch me  
    Your hand shall  
    Burn like

A fire  
    And I hold the fire  
    which warms my  
    soul on the cold,  
    black night, yes

The night  
    And I am the night  
    also the day  
    I share the beginning  
    as also the

End  
    And I am the end  
    The final hour of grief  
    My hunger burns  
    And will only be appeased by

Death  
    And I am death  
    when I come to you in  
    the night you shall  
    see that in Death  
    All is as it should be.

## LOVE LETTER

The weather here's awful.  
Your father and I  
Don't even go out  
Except to the store.  
Getting too old  
For snow.

Here are some coupons  
I thought you could use  
And a newspaper clipping  
On plants.  
It tells how to make  
Them grow.

Hope you're well.  
Please call us collect  
To let us know.

Love.

## LOVE NOTES

I can't write down what won't come out,  
And I'll not put down what isn't there.  
I am to give of what is mine,  
so we can make what will be ours.

*Ray Hardee*

## PAINFUL LAUGHTER

Laugh, Laugh  
And make this pain disappear  
  
Go away pain, far away  
Don't linger and hurt, don't stay  
  
I can't bear to meet with you  
Cause I can't afford to feel so blue  
  
So I'll laugh and joke to make you disappear  
Along with my hurt, my doubts, my fear  
  
I'll quench their burning fire inside  
With a burst of joy I refuse to hide.

AUTUMN WOODS AND WINTER SKIES

I.

into the cutting  
wind ( tired  
from  
blending  
the  
trees into  
restless seas  
of autumn  
flame

) i await the sweet  
annihilation  
when flesh and flame  
merge

into

dreams

II.

the

sky

is :

luminous shy pinks  
and icy

blues and

roses

while the  
violets ( sprout-  
ing stars  
) fade  
to  
black

*Kim Spencer*

## AUTUMN

Summer waves goodbye  
Leaves drift gently to the  
ground  
Winter's on its way

## COMING TO TERMS STUBBORNLY

1

I look back and ahead to take stock  
But all there was or will be for me is  
bound up in the present.  
I have more to fear than Robert's mouse  
Even though I've not yet lost my home.  
Onlookers would never guess how near the threat  
Who walk bare-footed on cold floors through  
sliding doors in houses made of glass!  
They have their own concerns within  
And fail to notice the shadows outside.

2

Birds know how to be afraid by instinct.  
Thus they learn to fly.  
We order our lives wisely by intellect,  
But who can avoid nuclear disaster or demise by other means?  
The world will end in fifty years.  
But why should I panic?  
I will not be here.  
When professors walk in front of speeding cars the problem  
is not nuclear.  
We steel ourselves against crime, bad news and complaining,  
but we have no defense against quiet suffering.

3

Every seven years, they say  
The composition of the body is changed completely.  
The memory of the cells is a marvelous thing  
To help one retain his identity.  
But my cells don't remember so well any more.  
Rather than take their places like good soldiers  
They go to sleep and desert their useful purpose  
Leaving all those remaining on the field discouraged  
With little zeal to fight a useless battle.  
They wait their turns to be brushed away  
Or to be washed into the sea on another day.  
Eventually death is sure,  
But its not so sudden.  
Usually it's not a one-clip that's all,  
But rather it's a gradual thing



That sends out its warning in advance.  
Why should one ever fear it  
Since he has had all of his life to get used to the idea?

4

No one likes to face the cold reality.  
A sense of well being is not found in the truth;  
Therefore, I will revert to deceiving myself for a while.  
Why should I chafe and gnaw the bit?  
Kicking against the pricks will serve no purpose.  
So I must learn to stand up under stress.  
Why not make the most of what I have by fighting least,  
Provide a sedative by adding laughter,  
Develop an appreciation for the nonsense nothings?  
Lighter pleasures rest on meager matters.  
Why face the wind? Why rock the boat? Why brave the storm?  
Just lie down flat and float along.

5

Only those who have never lived wish to die.  
I had intended not to talk so much about death,  
But it's so easy to forget not to talk about death.  
The head and the heart hold different views.  
They both succumb and are finally put to rest,  
But Death takes its own sweet time.  
Logic and essence are not always the same.  
The way I deal with the punishment as I run the race  
Makes the greatest difference as I keep my eyes on  
the finish line.  
No one can change the fact that I have the virus  
of a fatal disease.

6

Young man, who do you think you are?  
With your long thick hair and smooth tender skin  
Think again if you think you're superior.  
I was once like you,  
But with mistakes the hair turned gray.  
As I remembered acts with shame, the hair fell out.  
Bald and Ashamed  
With only a rim of gray that remains  
I'm a wiser man but less attractive.  
I'm older and sadder too.  
Don't laugh because you're stronger and more energetic.  
I sit quietly at ease now as I calmly wait for you  
With more freedom than I've ever had.  
I have come to grips with ultimate reality.

Freedom is a wonderful thing—a gift of the Gods;  
 And all of us feel that we must have it, with proper limitations.  
 We stretch out reach up and look down.  
 In every direction the possibility cuts us short of desire.  
 The Gods control everything down to the very soul.  
 Sometimes we move easily and think that we are free.  
 But soon we are relieved of such delusions.  
 For we do not have control of the air we breathe  
 Or the source of the food we eat  
 Or the social possibilities that we are subjected to  
 Or the thoughts that engage our minds.  
 The germs will come and do their work.  
 My body will not resist.  
 I will lie down and die,  
 Fully cooperating, but I will not cry.  
 I have learned that living is dying and dying is living.  
 I don't have to like it, but I have to accept it.

*Ruth Ann Bronson*

## TO MY SWEET, ON OUR ANNIVERSARY

For all the years we've treasured so  
     this note I write so you may know  
 The meal of which you did partake  
     sealed twenty years of love and hate.  
 Our past is filled with memories  
     of broken bones and mangled dreams.  
 Though hobbled, black and blue I stood,  
     over four stove burners and oven hood  
 To prepare for you all that you ate  
     which serves my sentence to commemorate.  
 From all the pain that I've endured  
     I will soon be forever cured.  
 Your favorite foods were but my ploy  
     which I am thrilled you did enjoy  
 For peas, and corn and chicken fried  
     were lightly laced with cyanide.

*La Vondra Brooks*

Autumn's chilling fingers  
Browning leaves and grass  
Bringing winter again . . .

*Michelle Brown*

Daintily the leaves  
Fall to the ground, painting the  
Earth beautifully.

*Dianne Lail*

## POEMS

words stuck together  
Expressing thoughts in their  
own way  
Lifeless without a soul

## ROUGH HEWN CHAIR

Rough hewn chair beside the hearth  
your sister on the porch  
what comfort I have  
found within  
those white pine arms.

Many a time a scolding  
has sent me a-creeping  
up on your lap.  
Or when a hickory twig  
has left me sore  
I've wished to heal in you.  
And so with pillow in my arms  
I cried into your back.

The other times  
when tired from playing  
you offered rest.  
And many is the time  
I've fallen asleep with you  
and awoke in bed.  
You've drowned out the  
thunder,  
soothed my fevered mind,  
gave me courage when  
Auntie came,  
and when the schooling started  
with you I solved all math.

Now my son is found in  
you,  
for I am grown and married,  
and as you were for me  
years gone by  
you are to him now.

## THESE DAYS

Of times when light  
streams  
    softly  
        bathing  
my face  
there are plenty

We wish for these days  
like children  
who wish  
    for  
penny candy

I see the light  
    as  
    it  
    touches your hair

A kiss stolen by the sun  
softer  
    than mine

I yearn for these days  
    spent  
as we would  
in youth

## FALL

You taste mortality first in your mouth,  
a roundness sets your teeth on edge,  
when the nights grow long in tooth  
and no food can satisfy;  
then you dream of apples  
you ate in your youth,  
want a stayman fresh from the orchard,  
or a gravenstein to hold in your hand,  
or a McIntosh to please the eye.  
Youth is the apple of an old man's eye  
when passion is out of season;  
when the nights grow long in tooth  
and no food can satisfy.

## SPRING

Toads think a lot,  
and loath the frog's public dance;  
and for all the kisses  
blown in the wind,  
would not give a second glance.

## COLD APPREHENSION

The sky grows dark  
and impatient  
waiting  
for the sun  
to shed light  
which doesn't exist in our world  
anymore.

The sun is gone  
and we shall live  
separately  
under the dark, dreary dome  
of death  
for we cannot see the light  
amidst so much darkness  
unless we look into one  
another  
for our reflection.

## LESSONS FROM 15 YEARS

Forget about

mail-order manuals for finger-perfect playing.  
(Nothing is perfect at \$6.95, plus postage.)

Forget about remembering

to keep a board-straight back  
and all those other chisel-cut peculiarities  
your paid-for teacher insists carve musicians from music-makers.

Forget about

right notes, right now.

(Leave this to the be-spectacled editor-in-chief lounging  
in the corner grey room of the stoney-cold building that  
manufactured this week's Attempt in A<sup>b</sup> and Other Nonmelodies.)

Remember

to paint with explosive revenge  
the ripened hills and valleys.

Wander westward. To the east. Unbridled. Unfinished.

Remember

nothing is mastered by propriety.



## WORKING IN THE FIELD

Clad yourself in earthy ware.  
Climb a weathered truck.  
Walk in fields of grass and dust  
    while long sluggish shadows  
    make their way.  
Rectangular figures lie amid a  
field of golden green all spaced  
equally from the others.  
Grasp the narrow tendons which  
wrap themselves round.  
Then — flex, lift, heave  
Smell — grass, sweat, earth, and sun.

The evening you bombed into my life  
My heart kinda felt like Pearl Harbor  
I sorta expected some little midget  
To come into existence  
Screaming "the plane", "the plane"  
And then there was the sailboat  
The one you built  
So that we could begin to navigate  
The courses of our lives  
Into the same channel  
I was warned of the dangers  
Some would think I was a fool  
For risking the voyage  
And then the realness of the waves  
But I was ready  
A young sailor  
Jesus captain of my ship  
Every time things got stormy  
And the sea air took its toll  
You threw me another lifeline  
That said look up  
He's clearing our skies  
But lately  
I have begun to feel  
That you have thrown out the anchor  
You need time to take grasp  
Of your surroundings  
And as I continue to sail towards you  
With feelings as deep as the ocean  
I wonder  
If I am just caught in the  
Net of illusion  
Or if you are . . .

## UNCERTAINTY

All i want to do  
Is look in the mirror  
And see me  
I want to see the reflection  
Of my smile  
On other's faces  
And drop all these ridiculous masks  
Why can't i look behind  
The fear  
And remorse  
And see His will  
And my want  
Please God  
Tonight  
Help me find  
A mere fraction  
Of reality  
And feel again  
Without  
Thinking

*Carolyn Santanella*

Like quiet psalms  
you are there

Gentle, soul  
touching  
mind soothing  
Keeper of the  
sanity

How fragile  
the  
friendship

How precious  
the joy

*Thirlen Osborne*

## THE JOY OF THE LORD

Lord, if your joy is my strength,  
Let me be full of your joy unspeakable,  
glorious,  
exceeding,  
and  
everlasting.

Let it be in my heart and voice  
And on my lips.  
I would be strong.

## DEFINITION

To a child, it may be a puppy  
To a teen, maybe a first date  
To a young adult, maybe a fiancée  
To an older adult, time along with their mate  
It can be pretty  
It can be bland  
To some it gives  
To some it demands  
Distorted beyond measure  
Yet the basic need of all  
Some call it lustful pleasure  
To some it's an unpenetrable wall  
But to many it is a hill  
Where a man we did raise  
On a tree  
On which he was slain  
Then, a cave  
In which he was lain.  
But, there is more  
A rock, some guards  
That were put aside  
Because he did arise  
So that the Father above  
Could show the world  
The true definition of Love.

## THE GOOD OLD DAYS!

The pot-bellied one with the red hot soul  
Spits forth his fury and cries for coal  
While whippoorwills begin their call  
And ancient eyes watch from the wall.  
Sandman slowly pulls the shades  
And leads to a bed ready-made  
With quilted mountains high and wide  
Beneath whose shelter ears may hide  
From nightfall's cold, black melody  
Which sets imaginations free.  
Nature makes a sudden plea  
Which turns into necessity  
And causes timid flesh to greet  
The horrors of a porcelain seat.  
Business is so hard to bear  
While sitting in the arctic air.  
Whatever prompts a man to say  
"I remember the good old days"?

DAWN

The sun peers over the horizon,  
Trickling his fingers of glistening lights  
upon the wavecrests.  
Seagulls cry out with jubilancy  
As they soar through ocean spray  
and climb upward  
Toward billowing clouds  
Blushed with pink.

Along the shore,  
The water playfully chases the young sandpipers.  
Amused,  
She feigns fearfulness  
And hastily retreats as they turn  
and sprint toward her.

The fiddler crab emerges,  
Timidly,  
And begins his tedious extracting of shell  
fragments from his burrow.  
The wind stirs among the seaoats,  
Gently awaking them to the new day.

## ETERNITY

The clock of life winds down—slowly ticking.

Time is up, life is over

And the body will

crumble

totter

decay

rot—

back from whence it came.

The scale of the soul weighs the situation.

The soul has not died,

It has defied logical man's assumption.

It has a future—

somewhere

out there.

During the course of life, this soul had a choice,

An ultimate choice for its spirituality.

Lukewarmness would not suffice,

It was self or God.

This choice

determined

decided

settled

its destination.



The choice was God—oh, paradise!  
Tranquility pervades throughout this land.  
Magnificent Creator and resplendent creations  
to behold.  
Unbelievable, overwhelming, this bliss,  
This love beyond all conceivable of man.  
How peaceful  
beautiful  
wonderful—  
halleluiah!

But alas! Another soul did choose itself.  
Woe is this being that now must bear the anguish,  
The intolerable heat, the insufferable infestations  
Affliction has set in among hatred and guilt and envy,  
Having to endure  
the distressing  
agonizing  
tormenting:  
eternity!

Eternity. A new clock is wound up,  
Tightly, unable to run down, to terminate.  
And the soul will  
rejoice  
and  
rise  
or  
lower  
and  
lament  
forever.



PAUL PHILLIPS '83

## JESSICA AND THE CAPTAIN

Jessica Curry seldom listened when her father delivered his sermons in Mansfield's only Methodist church. She always sat in back where she could see but not be seen, and waited for Alan Curry to dramatize some point. Then she would look up from her hymnal, transfixed, savoring the words as if they came from the Shakespearean stage. Her father was more mesmerist than preacher, more philosopher than psychologist, and his new congregation had had a painful introduction to Curry, whose predecessor was a master of formulas and contrivances, to them what a minister should be.

The institution of a new minister with two motherless children had stirred much surreptitious discourse. No one approached the matter directly, or, if so, her father never admitted it. Jessica couldn't have told much anyway; it had all happened three years ago, when she was eight. One night her mother was gone, just like that, and the explanations, offered by an alarmingly incoherent father, confused rather than enlightened her. Anyway, she thought bitterly, all her mother ever cared about was affairs, operations, and trials.

Jessica shook her head, trying to dislodge the memories. Her eyes filled with the images on the stained glass windows, and she wondered how anyone could know what Jesus looked like. Did he really have a beard? Did he have blue eyes? How tall was he? She'd rather not know.

Jessica returned to the hymnal. She liked to read the preface and the order of worship and then study the words of certain hymns. She thumbed to the index of authors and composers and found "Wesley." Why, she wondered, did any hymnal, even Methodist, need seventy-eight hymns by Charles Wesley. And if you threw in John, Sam S. and Sam W., you'd have an even bigger mess. Who could every sing all those songs in a lifetime? Jessica found one and read: "Jesus, lover of my soul,/Let me to thy bosom fly, . . ." It had lots of poetic language, but she didn't like the music. It was slow and mournful, more a dirge than a hymn. Hymns should be lively, she concluded. Why be sad in church? If you sang that stuff too much you might turn into a ghoul.

There were better ways to be mournful—delicious ways. In her father's library she had once found a volume of Edgar Allen Poe's poetry, and now she remembered the scrumptiously chilling words returning to haunt her soul:

returning to haunt her soul:

The skies they were ashen and sober;  
The leaves they were crisped and sere—  
The leaves they were withering and sere;  
It was night in the lonesome October  
Of my most immemorial year;  
It was hard by the dim lake of Auber,  
In the misty mid region of Weir—  
It was down by the dank tarn of Auber.  
In the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir.

Her shoulders quivered involuntarily, as if touched by some creature come up from the tarn, and the faces around her dimmed as black curtains enveloped the sanctuary.

Alan Curry was talking about Christmas letdown, and Jessica drifted back to Christmas eve when her father had taken her and Miles to Midnight Mass in Wellington, sixty miles away. She had never been in a Catholic church before and was thrilled, her attention whetted. Although she didn't understand the occasional Latin used by the priest, the rest of the service wasn't as strange as she had expected—or hoped. During the liturgy, she had closed her eyes and had seen black-garbed monks and nuns, their shrouded heads bent as they genuflected in an ancient cathedral. And she had wanted to be there and yet knew she would have been so awed and fidgety and shivery that she would have done something stupid and ruined the moment. As her father often said, she sometimes let her enthusiasms get the better of her.

Jessica closed the hymnal and studied the congregation. She liked to watch people furtively, but didn't like to get caught. When you were staring at someone and he suddenly looked back, you had to get a speck out of your eye. Mr. and Mrs. Royer sat near the front. That was so Mrs. Royer could turn around and gawk while other members filed in for the services—or so Jessica thought. The woman had bird eyes, and she gave Jessica the creeps. She wished that the slumbering Mr. Royer would do something to make his life's life more exciting. Jessica's face flushed when she recalled how Mrs. Royer had tried to cajole from her information about Jessica's mother.

Such people weren't worth getting mad about, Jessica knew. You just got all hot and bothered for nothing. Then, time dragged and she got bored. She wished that her father would do something. Oh, crap. Mrs. Westerly was in church. She would escort Jessica to the door after services and tell Alan Curry how Jessica was her best student and made all "A's" and why couldn't all her children be like

that. School would be okay if it weren't for teachers.

School. What was that word she had found in a library book? She tried to locate it in the jungle of her memory. Lug . . . lugubrus. No, that wasn't it. Lugubrious—yeah. It was a wonderful word, full of suggestive sounds. She tried to pronounce it, flowing through the syllables, her enthusiasm mounting. That that moment, Alan Curry, his sermon finished, was saying, "Let us pray," and his daughter, forgetting herself, spoke aloud, for God and all mankind to hear, "Loo-grub-rus." Mrs. Royer whipped around, striking her husband with her elbow and causing him to rise, thinking the service was over. And Alan Curry, smiling in resignation amid the titers, repeated, "Let us pray—one more time."

The next morning, as was her custom, Jessica arose early and went outside to sit under the beech tree in her back yard. She wore jeans and a long-sleeved flannel shirt inherited from Miles. She had recovered from the embarrassment of Sunday morning and was thinking how funny it all had been, especially the Royers. And just as good was the fact that Mrs. Westerly had scrupulously avoided her after the service.

Alan Curry had accustomed himself to his daughter's idiosyncracies, being something of an eccentric himself. That a passerby might notice his daughter sitting under a tree at six in the morning occupied none of his concern, for her meandering spirit united them far more than flesh and blood ever could.

The flannel shirt was inadequate protection against the morning chill, but Jessica liked it that way. She loved the biting air—little needle teeth nipping at her face and hands and trying to penetrate her clothing. She knew that the seat of her jeans would be wet when she went back inside, but it would be a good wetness, not soggy and goopy like her swimming suit. She loved these mute, misty mornings with their unspent energy, their unfulfilled potential, their unsolved mysteries. She listened for silent flutes to entice her into earthly wantonness and for silver streaks to ride her toward heaven. In the distance, she heard a great truck, its growl subsiding to a warning hiss at a stop sign. Once she had touched the hood of one of those mammoths, and it had burned her. At home, she had covered her hand with Vaseline and wondered how many places that truck had been, how many people had seen it and how many roads had felt the weight of its load, and how many animals in woods had danced to the music of its tires.

The birds were coming now to the feeder, and Jessica saw another one, a free spirit, way up in the sky, and brought it closer with her binoculars. Then she sighted through the other end and

lost it. For some reason, she enjoyed looking this way. She wished for spring to come, for it would bring her butterflies—monarchs and swallowtails, golds and blues. In her dreams she saw herself as a butterfly—soft, elusive, vagrant—sipping pleasure from one of earth's sweet cups. The butterfly—Psyche her soul. She wondered about all things far away and enchanting, if those millions of people out there would ever turn their faces to her in greeting. She would be like Emily Dickinson and write a letter to the world, and maybe some day Jessica Curry would transcend this time and this place.

Then her father broke the reverie, calling her. She entered the kitchen, hurriedly closing the door against the pursuing January air.

"I think that I will have some coffee for breakfast," she announced, and was pouring a cup before Alan could formulate a response.

Finally: "Well, just don't drink too much," he replied. "One caffeine addict in the family is enough."

Alan Curry always made his hospital rounds early on Monday morning, so he quickly placed breakfast before his daughter and went to call Miles.

When he returned, Jessica said, as if revealing some secret intelligence, "Drinking coffee isn't such a big deal. Some of my friends can't because their parents say they aren't old enough. Isn't that weird?"

"Oh, so that means that you are getting to be grown up, eh?"

"Don't be silly, Daddy. I just like the strong taste when it goes down all burny. Say," she continued, "did you know that I tasted wine one time? Remember when we went to Midnight Mass and they had communion and everybody started going up. Miles said he wouldn't tell, so I put on my kerchief and got behind you in line. I'm tall for my age and the kerchief covered part of my face. I didn't know if I was supposed to do it or not, but I got away with it."

Alan Curry wanted to laugh. "And just how did it taste, Miss Grown-Up?"

"It burned my lips and went down and sloshed around in my stomach and wanted to come back up," she admitted, wrinkling her face. "But I'm glad I did it. Wouldn't it be fun to tell Mrs. Royer?"

Alan Curry rolled his eyes at the ceiling. "Why don't you pass on that one."

Jessica giggled and practiced facial expressions the woman might use if she knew. Then her father kissed her and was gone, and Miles, grumpy and disheveled, came for breakfast. She went to change her jeans and then remembered to look for the notes. Her

father liked to leave them for the children because he could never remember to tell Miles and Jessica everything. And the notes were likely to be wherever he was when he wrote them. So Jessica searched, finally locating one behind the wall telephone. It said: "It was a great word—but you mispronounced it. Look it up."

Wednesday afternoon, Alan picked up the children after school, having promised that they could ride out into the country with him when he went to see Miss Penny Hutchens. Before leaving, he stopped at Winkler's convenience store to get groceries for supper, and Miles raced inside to play a video game. Jessica followed and, after watching for a few moments, lost interest and went to look at magazines. Soon, she heard Mr. Winkler walking down the aisle, dragging his feet and making strange noises.

"Hey, little lady. You don't want to read those. They're for men. Why, what would your father say if he knew you were looking at those pictures?"

Jessica turned a page. "Why don't you ask him? He's right over there. 'Sides, I'm not looking at anything I haven't seen before. Seems strange that one woman can't look at another woman."

Gerald Winkler sought Alan Curry, needing help, but the minister's back was turned.

"Do you ever read this magazine, Mr. Winkler?"

Winkler moved his lips, rubbed his hand across his shirt, and stammered, "Uh, I don't think my mother would let me do that, Jessie."

Her eyes got big. "You mean your mother is still alive? Does she still tell you what to do?"

Gerald Winkler rubbed the back of his neck. "No, no, of course not. That was just a manner of speaking."

Jessica pressed her lips together and nodded solemnly. "You know something, I think you're right. What would we do without mothers to tell us what to do and to protect us from bag things. I never thought about it that way."

"Now, what do you mean by that?" Here, uh, put the magazine back and go play a video game, on me."

"But Mr. Winkler, all that violence might make me think bad thoughts. 'Sides, I don't like video games."

To Winkler's relief, Alan Curry came with the groceries. "How about running these up for me, Gerald?" but looking at his daughter as he made the request. "I'll be out in a minute, Jessie."

Jessica stopped at a small machine near the door, dug for a dime in her pocket, and clicked a Super Ball out of the slot. It was solid white, the first she'd ever gotten, and now she had forty-three balls

any down here.”

“Then I’ll grab you by that sassy tongue and lead you around town and let everybody laugh.”

“Hah. I’ll annihilate you.”

“And I’ll put a hammer claw on your nose and pull it off.”

“How would you like to be cremated?”

“I’ll use you for target practice.”

Jessica screamed, “I’ll obliterate you, I’ll cannibalize you, I’ll institutionalize you, defrock you, and then exorcise you and give you extreme unction.”

She collapsed, spent, her breathing labored. Miles, overwhelmed, sputtered, “Wh . . . What’s all that stuff? It don’t mean nothin’ and you ain’t worth nothin’. You shut your mouth or I’ll get your gizzard.”

“Dummy, dummy,” the girl shook her head. “People don’t have gizzards; chickens do. I don’t see how you passed health.”

“Oh, they don’t, do they,” Miles mimicked. “I’ll show you.” He lunged across the seat and dug his fingers into her ribs. Surprised, Jessica howled, squirming to escape.

From the front, Alan Curry, his patience exhausted, ordered, “Now stop the foolishness. Miles get back on your side.”

Sneering triumphantly, he complied. But Jessica, recovering, yelled, “Just for that, I’ll get your gizzard, too,” and leaped upon the startled boy who, trying to dodge, slipped to the floor between the seats. Capitalizing on her advantage, she raked and jabbed at her miserable brother until Alan Curry once more commanded order. Miles, rescued, slid over the backrest into the front seat, panting, his shirttail pulled out and his hair messed up.

“Why’s she like that?” he complained. “What a crummy sister I ended up with. Other guys got sisters they can have respectable fights with. Me, I got to argue with a dictionary. Boy!”

Moments later, recovered, Miles leaned close to his father and whispered, “Just what was that extreme enjin she was gonna do to me?” Hearing the answer, he pivoted to glare at his sister, who stuck out her tongue at him.

Just past Clawson’s Fish Pond, they hit a winding stretch of road, and Jessica noticed a yard fronting a bank, and in the yard an elderly man, watching them. He was dressed in baggy trousers, the belt pinching the oversized waist against his mid-section, an aged green work shirt, scruffy brogans, and a hat with a shiny black bill. His face, as inscrutable as it was timeless, turned to keep pace with the slowly passing car, and the old man, elbow at his hip, raised his hand to shoulder level and wiggled his fingers in a greeting. Then he was gone before Jessica could beat the curve by looking out the



back window.

She leaned against the backrest, her head between Alan and Miles. "Who was that? What kind of hat did he have one?"

Alan shook his head. "I don't know. Maybe Miss Penny can tell you. I always called it a captain's hat."

"Does that mean he was in the army or something?"

"Not necessarily. You can get one in a surplus store."

"I bet he was an important person one time."

Miles, still smarting, put on his there-she-goes-again look. "Can't you see he's just some old guy who lives way out here and doesn't have anything better to do than look at cars go by?"

Jessica ignored him. "Are we coming back this way?"

Miles wasn't finished. "And didn't you even see that house of his? It had a dirt roof with a stove pipe sticking out the top. Who'd be crazy enough to live in such a place? Bet it's got only one room."

"Could have been a tornado shelter or a storage building for preserving food," Alan offered.

The conversation was cut short when Alan pulled the car into Miss Penny's driveway. "You two want to come in? Miss Penny likes company."

"Sure," said Jessica.

"Then I'm staying here," pouted Miles.

Miss Penny Hutchens, cared for by her niece, was sick, senile, and forgetful. The niece did say that the man's name was Orrin Wallace, but knew little else since she had only recently come to be with her aunt.

On the return trip, Jessica slid across the seat to see better as they passed the man's house, and this time he stood a few feet in front of the door of his dwelling and under a small, awning-like roof supported by a pair of two by fours. Once again he, expressionless, waved and was gone, and Jessica closed her eyes, clenched her fists, and tried to etch his image permanently on her mind.

Jessica's room could easily have been mistaken for a boy's if you failed to look closely. Her father called it Jessica's junkyard, but children are different from adults in the value they attach to certain possessions. On her wall to the left of the bed were three green, luminous paper skulls, which often frightened her when she awoke in the night but which she kept there to harden her against superstition. Her table, actually an old card table with wobbly legs, contained an Astor coffee can bulging with Super Balls; a Rubik's Cube; a plastic bowl with rubber bands, ties for garbage bags, and paper clips; scattered pieces of paper with writings and drawings, and last year's report card jutting from beneath her eight-band

radio. From the knobs of her cabinet hung four visors, two from Putt-Putt and two from West Palms Amusement Park. The cabinet itself, two storage compartments below several book shelves, were stuffed with other papers, some sticking through the doors, and with games, books for which there was no room elsewhere, and old school pictures she had never traded with classmates. A Santa Claus head, fashioned from a jelly jar, sat in the middle of her desk and was flanked by two encyclopedias and by the **American Heritage Dictionary**. On the floor beside her desk, and in front of the window, stood her telescope. Hanging from her walls and from the ceiling were picture-posters of animals: a bushbaby hanging onto a limb; a dolphin; koalas; tigers; seals; and two giraffes nuzzling above the caption "Let's Be Friends." Her French horn barred the doorway, an encased obstacle for her to leap before pouncing on the bed that was her trampoline.

On the top shelf of her closet, Jessica kept jigsaw puzzles, stray tennis balls, abandoned paintings, a scrapbook of newspaper and magazine clippings about archaeology, and a photograph album containing her butterfly and moth collection. On the closet floor were shirts and blouses fallen from their hangers, an outgrown Sunday dress, jeans, old shoes, frisbees, buried letter blocks and tinker toys, a deflated float, a dented pie pan, and other objects so numerous as to endanger anyone trying to reach the clothes she kept hanging from the single wooden rod.

Her father teased her that she would never be able to find anything in such a mess. But the paradox of disorder is that nothing is really out of place and can easily be found by whoever created the confusion. Now, the night immediately following her trip to Miss Penny's, Jessica lay on her bed, stomach down, hands supporting her chin. What kind of name was that? Orrin Wallace just wouldn't do. Didn't make any difference what Miles said. She just knew that he was more important than an Orrin Wallace could ever be. Maybe he really had been a soldier—even a hero. Whoever heard of an Orrin being a hero? Men named William and Robert were heroes. Then she frowned, castigating herself for being so obvious. Everybody could be those. So, she decided, he will be called the Captain. That's exactly what he'll be. And it was in that moment that Jessica Curry resolved to write a story, even a novel, about him.

Jessica always had some kind of project going. The big drawer of her desk served as a filing cabinet for the scores of stories, poems, art works, vocabulary lists, and made-up games. Over the next several days, she began to write down ideas. The Captain would indeed be an important person, yet little would be known about him.

He would be nebulous, a word she got from her father, and she would describe his exploits and then show him choosing the quiet, simple life of seclusion in retirement, abandoning the adulation others wished to accord him. Above all, he would be noble and have a beautiful soul, and he would be able to turn his disappointments into advantages.

The Captain consumed Jessica, and even her father, accustomed to his daughter's fanciful flights, noticed the change in her. And still she wrote—incomplete paragraphs, sentences, descriptive words, ideas—all of which she planned to organize later. She carried a note pad with her and in church Alan Curry became convinced that his daughter was taking notes for a critique of his sermon.

On a Friday night late in January, with Miles watching the late movie and Jessica in the kitchen, hunting a snack, Alan Curry finished a phone call and told them that he had to drive to Wellington.

Jessica perked up. "How come you got to go way over there? It's almost midnight."

"That was a woman from social services. It seems that Mr. Wallace is in jail. She couldn't find anybody to go see about him and called me since he used to go to our church several years back."

Jessica searched her father's face. "He's in jail? Why? What did he do?"

"I'll find out and tell you when I get back, Jessie."

"Let me go. Please."

"Now, Jessie, it's very late and . . ."

"But I don't have to go to school tomorrow. Lemme go, lemme go."

"Oh, all right. I'd just waste time arguing with you. Miles . . ."

"I'm staying here."

"All right. But lock up the house."

Jessica scrunched down beside her father and followed the headlights as they cut into the darkness. Alan could leave them on high beam most of the way, thought Jessica. Past Eddings' garage on the edge of town, they hit the two lane that would become four only when they approached Wellington.

Jessica was confused. Maybe they had someone else in jail. How could they be sure? Her father didn't even know the Captain and could be mistaken. She suddenly became aware of the stifling darkness, softened only by pale panel lights, and locked her door and the one behind her. Soon they were gliding through the great pine forest—the ghostly pines—impenetrable in the midnight

gloom, towering over her frail form and swaying a warning.

Then they were in Lustig, at the only traffic light, which for some inexplicable reason was still operating. Jessica turned to look at the stores and saw, parked beside them, an ancient, rusting car. At the steering wheel sat an old man, his withered face stubble-bearded and jaundiced. And he held a baby, one with a round, pallid face and large lips which the baby worked as if in some effort to communicate with her. The child then pressed its lips against the glass, leaving a smear. The baby's eyes locked on Jessica's and the mouth parted in a toothless grin, deformed by the window. Then the old man swiveled to face her, rolled down the window and spat a stream of tobacco juice past the baby onto the oily street. Jessica's stomach heaved and she snapped her eyelids shut.

Fifteen miles on, Alan Curry pulled the car to the shoulder and stopped. There were no other towns before Wellington, no signs of houses or traffic where they were now.

"I had too much coffee," he explained, opening the door.

Jessica tried to push away the night and see across the road. Her eyes clearing, she discerned a bank, perhaps eight feet high, and wondered what was on the other side. She was torn by ambivalence, dread and curiosity her tormenters. Leaving the car, Jessica approached the bank cautiously, then climbed it, slipping twice before reaching the top. At first she saw nothing, but then she was aware of a pond, black in the moonless night, not far below her. Beyond it—trees, a house; she couldn't be sure. She was too mesmerized by the water to notice. She descended to the edge, crossed her arms and squeezed until they hurt. The words came:

It was down by the dank tarn of Auber.  
In the ghoulish-woodland of Weir.

In the water she saw images, faces—two green skulls floating, only to dip beneath the surface. And following them, the grinning faces of a baby and an old man. She tried to blot out the images, turning her back to ascend the bank. Compelled to take one last look, however, she saw a new face, the swollen, dull, cheerless face of a woman, her hair spread, her eyes calling.

Jessica Curry fled—from the dark waters and the hideous creatures therein, from the threatening skies and ghostly pines, from all the ugliness and waste, the deadening forces of life, time and eternity. Jessica Curry fled from her own soul.

Jessica slammed the door and locked it, startling her father. But he was too tired to analyze his daughter's latest outburst.

Soon they were at the jail in Wellington, Jessica grateful to escape the car for a lighted place. The officer was speaking to her father.

"Yeah, we picked him up for public drunk 'bout nine. Didn't know where he was."

"But how did he get over here?"

"Well, seems from what that welfare woman told me that a neighbor went by to check on him and found the car gone. When it got past supper, he called her. I reckon the old man had been drinkin' and maybe run out of the stuff and went to get more."

Alan rubbed his eyes. "You want me to take him home?"

"But he ain't here no more. 'Bout midnight, he got real sick and we took him to the hospital. They said he probably had a heart attack. Looks bad."

Jessica bit her lower lip. Her father sighed. "Okay, I'll go over there."

Fifteen minutes later, Alan Curry flipped the ignition off and looked at his daughter. "You all right, Jessie?"

She nodded.

"Bet you're just sleepy."

She nodded again.

"You want to go in with me?"

She shook her head emphatically.

"Look, I'll see what I can do for him and be right out. Go ahead and sleep if you feel like it."

When she could no longer see her father, Jessica climbed into the back seat and curled up in a corner. What was this cenotaph she had built? She knew that her father would be back. Nothing could change that. Why did one pay such a painful price for ecstasy? Why must the butterfly suffer for its pleasure? She felt so stupid. Maybe if she just cried the tears would wash away the darkness.

Jessica Curry bit her finger. In the morning everything would be okay. In the morning it wouldn't hurt so much. In the morning.

## STAFF

Stan Blair is a Junior French and English major at G-W from Willingboro, N.J.

Eric Blankenship is a Freshman English major at G-W from Boiling Springs, N.C.

Krista Colle is a Junior English major from Titusville, Fl.

Rebecca Jones is a Junior English major from Ellenboro, N.C.

Vance Midget is a Senior Religion major at G-W from Wilmington, N.C.

Sherrie Minnix is a Freshman English major at G-W from Cherryville, N.C.

Lou Anne Poston is a Junior English major at G-W from Boiling Springs, N.C.

Tracey Tucker is a Junior Religious Education major at G-W from Charlotte, N.C.

Amy Wilson is a Junior English Education major at G-W from Charlotte, N.C.



