

A publication of the
English Department,
Sigma Tau Delta,
and the
English Club

Notes on contest winners

The first prize in prose fiction was awarded to Larry Rosen for "Golden Parker" and the second prize to Linda Nielsen for "Wordsmith: an Autobiography."

The first prize in the essay went to Charles McKelvy for "A Hero of the American People" and second prize to Leslie Bertagnoli for "The Conquest of the Neo-American Woman."

The first prize in poetry went to Julia Visor for "To My Dark People" and second prize to Terry Allen for "celebrate october."

Judges in prose fiction and the essay were Professors William Cloud and Charles Harris, and judges in poetry were Professors Steven Kagle and Robert Sutherland.

Triangle editors: Miss Gayle Smith and Professor Scott Eatherly.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

To My Dark People	<i>Julia Visor</i>	3
Golden Parker	<i>Larry Rosen</i>	4
A Hero of the American People	<i>Charles McKelvy</i>	17
celebrate october	<i>Terry Allen</i>	20
Wordsmith: an Autobiography	<i>Linda Nielsen</i>	21
The Conquest of the Neo-American Woman	<i>Leslie Bertagnolli</i>	24
Bars	<i>Judy Stein</i>	27
Jennifer Kate	<i>Judy Stein</i>	28
Hiroshima	<i>Dann Vega</i>	29
every so often	<i>Janis Keating</i>	30
The Solid Mahogany Man	<i>Janis Keating</i>	31
man is only here	<i>Pat Campbell</i>	32
You Know	<i>Pat Campbell</i>	33
senses	<i>Terry Allen</i>	34
The Secret	<i>Carol Raney</i>	35
Sweetness of a Cookie	<i>Carole Halicki</i>	46
A Sentimental Love Poem to You	<i>Diana Dube</i>	47
"Our Dirty Old Man"	<i>Sandra Welshimer and Rebecca Donze</i>	48
Sickened Yellow Cretin Girl	<i>James O'Malley</i>	49
To a Young Girl Crying	<i>Wayne Bleifield</i>	49
I'm So Happy	<i>Nancy Sweeney</i>	50
Word	<i>Carole Halicki</i>	51
silently slipping in	<i>Judith Fassino</i>	51
The Broadway Limited: Revisited	<i>Charles McKelvy</i>	52
America, America	<i>Dan Krupa</i>	57
"Life, Liberty, the Pursuit of Happiness"	<i>Judi Ward</i>	62
Death of a Farm	<i>Carole Halicki</i>	63

First Prize—Poetry

TO MY DARK PEOPLE

I am not of the Ghetto.
I am a child of Middle Class America.
Mother Middle Class schooled me,
Dictated my morals, and assigned my goals.
I learned from her to love her white sons,
Worship her white heroes, and live by her white standards;
And I learned well.
She taught me that the highest achievement is her esteem;
So I rejoiced when I could please my white teacher;
I shunned the slum as a disgusting circumstance;
And I quickly adopted Mama's milky-skinned beauty.
I dreamed the White Dream and hoped the White Hope.
Mother Middle Class taught me much,
And I loved her.

But I am a bastard child.
Mother Middle Class never said who my father was,
Because Mother Middle Class never really knew.
She bedded him in haste, then cast him aside;
Pregnant with me, she turned him out.
But subtly I learned who he was.
When I wanted to share with Mama's white sons,
When I wanted to become one of her heroes,
I learned.
She laughed at my efforts and ignored my accomplishments;
She rejected my blackness and drove me from her house.
My mother, origin of my being, rejected me.
As she burst my White Dream and smothered my
White Hope,
She dispossessed me of all I knew.

Thus, I come to you, my dark people,
Begging you to take me in.
I do not know your ways, and you mistrust mine;
But your father is my father, and you are my family.
Forget my mother, for she has betrayed me too.
Oh, my brothers and sisters, re-school me,
teach me your ways;
Disown me not!
For if I have not you, I have no one.

Julia Visor

THE GOLDEN PARKER

Abe finished the hundredth jumping jack, stood up and walked to the toilet where, in front of the mirror, he flexed first his right arm and then his left, each time cupping the fairly round, fairly hard mound of muscle with his opposite hand. This done, he dressed, combed his hair, smoothed his moustache, checked his fly, and left for school. The typical person? Not Abe. By the age of twelve he had a collection of seventeen pubic hairs, probably all female since he had found them in ladies rooms, had been drunk on banana liqueur, and had masturbated twice without success although he had a strong feeling he was coming close or close to coming, whichever you prefer. By the age of twenty he had loved seven girls who did not recognize his existence and two that did. None of the nine gave him a tumble, however. But Abe possessed real character and should have been noticed or discovered much before he was. This is the story of that discovery that was so long overdue. Tender? Yes. Sad? Sometimes. Beautiful? Always.

Mary Beth English finished the hundredth stroke of her tawny, long, flowing, perfect hair, stood naked before the mirror, cupped each breast to see that they grew at the same pace, dressed, and left for school. Now, what was Mary Beth? The hope of American womanhood? Probably. She was clean, well-groomed, moral, did her homework, thought very little, and would go along with sex if she had to. She loved clothes — cool culottes in the summer, fancy flared pants-suits in the winter, pretty sweaters all year round. She preferred brassieres that had a little red rose embroidered between the cups. Overall, she presented a pleasant appearance and had many boys ask her for dates. That she and Abe should have gotten together mystifies me, for personally I do not like her, but Abe's choice is Abe's choice.

The day had begun with dawn as usual, was windy, looked first as if it would be sunny, changed its mind, became cloudy, and stayed that way. Very generally, it was not a nice day but it was a day to be lived like other days and so the people of the world did pretty much what they had done the day before and mentioned the weather only in passing. But who can tell what a day will hold; for many there is the nagging hope that maybe they will make a fortune, find an easy lay, see a train wreck, witness a hold-up, murder, rape, beating, shooting, or fall in love. Abe

only thought he would flunk the test in psychology. What Mary Beth thought, God knows, although she was to take the same psychology test. Abe would follow his standard multiple-choice test plan—never choosing the answer he believed to be correct and always going for the one that said, "None of the above." The system had worked quite well so far; he had a solid C- average from the first two hour exams and only hoped that his luck would hold. Mary Beth had a phenomenal mind for factual material and could retain things she had read for as long as a week.

By five to ten the auditorium was filled with seven hundred and thirty-three students, some hurriedly flipping pages in their notebooks, others staring straight ahead in stark terror, and goodly number walking the aisles waving to friends, talking to acquaintances, playing it cool. They would be sweating enough in a few moments. Abe plunked down in his assigned spot, row WW, seat 18, and tried to remember the name of his discussion section teacher which he would have to write on the cover of his test in order that the right person could grade it and give him his C-. Upon recalling the name, Mr. Rocks, he reached for his coat to find the stub of a pencil he always carried in the right hand pocket. For some reason it was always a stub of a pencil. The object was not to be found in spite of his frantic search through both coat pockets, his four pants pockets, his one shirt pocket. In desperation Abe looked to the boy on his left who had four brand new, highly sharpened pencils, two ball points, and a fountain pen sticking proudly from his vinyl shirt pocket holder. The proctors had begun handing out the tests. Seconds became precious. Finally Abe sucked in his pride and said to the boy, "May I borrow one of your pencils?" The boy recoiled like a startled rattler.

"What?" he said, knowing damn well what Abe wanted.

"Can I use a pencil?" Abe asked again.

The boy took out a pencil, fingered it, rolled it in his grip, looked it over, and replied, "I might need it."

Abe, already not in the best of moods, told the boy to go fuck himself, and turned to the girl on his right, who, as it turned out was Mary Beth English, wearing a lovely white skirt, a blue sweater, a bit of red ribbon in her hair, and a touch of rouge. The insistent proctors were now two rows away. Upon hearing of Abe's predicament, Mary Beth reached into her purse and withdrew a pen, a golden Parker ball-point in fact, and said; "Do you promise to return it?" Her words seemed to caress the room's silence. Just as Abe said, "Yes," the exams were plopped onto his lap by the kid

with all the pencils. Looking down at the pile of tests Abe noticed his own stubby pencil sticking out from his right pants cuff but chose to leave it there and began to start or started to begin with the test.

Many questions baffled him, but number 64 was a real killer. It read, "A trait most non-indicative of the fewest number of manic depressives is least commonly not exemplified by A) Heavy breathing B) Light breathing C) Lassitudinal ambivalence D) A low I.Q. E) A, C, and D above F) All of the above." Abe racked his brain. No, he couldn't find the vaguest glimmer of an answer there. Abe departed from his rule this one time and filled in all the blank spaces. Maybe the graders would not notice and besides, it was something he had always wanted to do. "What the hell?" he said. "What the hell?" He said it twice.

The question had taken its toll; disheartenment came over him and he went on to finish the remaining 84 questions quickly. Abe, of course, understood a basic tenet of test-taking; if you have been shit upon, finish first, walk blase-ly up to the proctors, wave and smile at some imaginary friends, plop the test down as loudly as possible so every-one will know that someone has finished the test while they are only on question number 8, and swagger out for all you are worth. The Orientals are not the only ones trying to save face.

Before leaving the auditorium altogether, Abe stopped at the John where he deliberately peed on the toilet seat a little, gave the toilet paper roll a mighty pull, and watched the paper furl all over the tiny cubicle. On the wall he wrote in huge letters with his stub of a pencil, "I am too Jung to be Freudened," signed it Sigmund Romberg, and left.

* * *

Mary Beth English did not miss the Golden Parker until that evening when Frisky Salle deBain, her roommate in the Psi Phi Chi sorority, asked her how she had done on the psychology test. Frisky had been accepted into the sorority partly because of her last name which you must have noticed is French and has such a nice ring to it and partly because she was Catholic and the house needed a Catholic, what with the new liberality and all.

"The examination was rather easy," said Mary Beth, "but as I think back on the experience now, I recall lending my best pen to a young man sitting on my left who appeared to be in desparate straits." Mary Beth had recently decided to major in English and was endeavoring mightily to improve her syntax, vocabulary, and the enunciation of her glottal stops, -ing endings, palated t-sounds, and in-

flected s-es. She did have trouble with the s sounds because of a minor lisp which you can be sure she was most conscious of. On first dates, right after the entree of the evening—dinner, show, or what have you, she would make it a point to say to her date, "I have a lisp you know." Invariably, the boy would say something tactful like, "Is that right?" or "On you it sounds great," or "What caused it?" Mary Beth would have found comfort in the motto of Japanese potters: "A pot without a blemish cannot be a perfect pot." The west has much to learn from the east.

Mary Beth thought for a moment while fingering the red rose on her brassiere where it crossed the cleavage and said, "That pen means a great deal to me. My parents gave it to me when I graduated high school along with a typewriter and six new fall dresses. Do you know what the inscription says?"

"No," said Frisky, who was at that moment drawing imaginary circles on her forehead with a real finger. "What did it say?"

"It says 'To our darling Mary Beth on this her graduation. May all her tears be happy ones. Love, Mother and Father.' Wasn't that sweet of them?"

Frisky, being quite a practical sort, wondered how all that could have been written on one pen but deferred the question to some other time and merely replied, "It was indeed a fine gesture."

"I do not know how I shall ever get my pen back because I do not know the boy I lent it to nor can I even recall his face. I do recall that he seemed to be panting during the examination but that certainly cannot aid me in locating him. How shall I ever find my pen, Frisky?"

"Well," said Frisky, "you will have to forget about that panting clue. There must be a zillion panthers around here. I was out with two last weekend alone."

The two of them pondered the possible ways of finding a person among thirty thousand on a sprawling midwestern campus—an ad in the school paper, a call to the psychology department, blind luck. They did not once think that the boy, our Abe, would have the ethics, the morality, the virtuosity, to hunt for the owner of the golden Parker—which he had kept in the heat of the moment without the least bit of malicious or dishonest intent. It being dinner-time, Mary Beth and Frisky continued the discussion during that meal and subsequently involved Sharon, Stephanie, Jennifer, and Elaine, sister Psi Phis, for the rest of the evening in how the pen should or could or would be located. It

was a night of frustrating thought. The girls were only too well aware that a sister Psi Phi was in deep despair.

* * *

For Abe too, the pen had become an issue. After his last class of the day, he had gone to purchase a copy of *The Ethics of Morality in Pre-Christian Upper New York State* by Natty B. Schopenhun. He needed some light reading. When he went to write a check for the \$1.78 he discovered the golden Parker hooked in a belt loop of his dungarees. The morning flashed back with a surge, surged back with a flash, and he knew that the pen had to be returned. He read the inscription and had his first clue—the name Mary Beth. Had it been a 19c Bic he might not have bothered, nor would a Bic have an inscription on it. How does one engrave on plastic, I ask you?

Thoughts collided in Abe's mind. The pre-test rush to find a writing utensil: The words written on the toilet wall. Question number 64. The pencil stub in his cuff. All these things and more; ideas, concepts, oxymorons, rampaged in this mind of a man. Images bumped other images, implication crashed into implication. And the end result—zilch, zero, nothing. Abe forgot the book but remembered his bowling ball, found the nearest restaurant, bought a cup of coffee, put a little cream in it, stirred it fairly briskly, sipped at it, burned his tongue on it, slopped it on the table, pushed it aside, and ordered a glass of milk with Bosco in it if they had any.

The initial confusion finally passed and Abe decided to approach the problem in a scholarly fashion. After rejecting that idea as ineffectual, Abe headed for the office of A. Norton Cripple-Creek, the one adult on campus with whom he had any rapport at all. A. Norton had studied logic but as yet had not been given due recognition by the intellectual community of scholars. Abe was to find to his chagrin that A. Norton was gone for the weekend, which was strange because it was only Wednesday. Abe slumped back to his dormitory. Defeated? Almost. Sad? Yes. Without hope? Never!

What is a man without hope I ask you? He is a dead man I tell you. Hope gets men out of bed in the morning; not breakfast, as many think. Hope is the light on a dim horizon. The first bud of spring. A 4-F classification. A vice-president like Spiro. Hope is many things. Our pal Abe still had it. He would no more be put off in returning the pen than he was in achieving a C- on his test that morning.

Abe sat in the dormitory cafeteria eating with five of his

school comrades, truly friends in need. Abe had combed his hair and changed his pants. Abe looked nice. He was eating spaghetti. The six young men had tackled the problem of the golden Parker.

Rupert Grubitelli, a young lad of Swedish descent, said, "Why don't you draw up a big sign and carry it around campus? It could say 'I have your Parker, Mary Beth!'"

The men rejected this suggestion for two reasons: no one had any sign board and no one could letter.

Ricky Eisenstein, an orthodox Jew, while sniffing the spaghetti sauce for pork, offered this suggestion: "Put an ad in the school newspaper under lost and found. If it is at all of importance to her she will be reading the lost and found column. That is what lost and found columns are for. What is lost should be found and returned to its rightful owner." Ricky, with his multi-faceted mind, got caught up in this quest for truth, nasalized his voice and began *davening*, his torso swaying backward and forward in a rhythmic pace as he had seen the older men do in temple so many times before. The other boys quietly picked up their trays and moved to another table.

Robert "Cunt" McGrew, so known for the fact that once on a dare he walked up to a girl who was carrying her tray to her table, looked her square in the eye, and whispered cunt. He and the girl subsequently became engaged. Unfortunately, Robert enjoyed himself that one time so much that he began to make it a habit. The first word he used stuck as his nickname but he long ago transcended it and is presently using the more subtle phrase of "pubic hair." Anyway, "Cunt" McGrew offered this suggestion:

"Why don't you just keep the fuckin' pen and hock it or somethin'? If the broad's rich enough to have one gold pen, she's rich enough to get another one."

The logic behind "Cunt's" idea seemed at first insurmountable and for the next four minutes there was no sound at the table but the gentle slurping of spaghetti strands. No one thought to cut up the noodles beforehand, or twirl them in a spoon like the Italians, and hence, within a few moments of concentrated eating, every face, shirt, and hand at the table was covered with spaghetti sauce speckles.

Finally the silence was broken by Alvin Jones, master of the single concept, who muttered, "Pen. Pen on table. Put pen on table. I want see it. I want see pen."

Abe took the golden Parker pen from his right pants pocket, rested it on a clean napkin on top of the napkin holder in the very dead center of the rectangular table

around which five extremely serious young men sat and contemplated the object with ten scrutinizing eyes.

The golden Parker gleamed in the artificial light from above. Its point was tucked up inside, like the head of a scared turtle. Its magnificent arrow seemed to be in flight along the slim pen-body case.

Argo Flaunther, Abe's roommate, best friend, confidant, the fifth man at the table, reached out a hand, red with spaghetti sauce, to pick up the artifact and fondle it, somehow thinking that if he held the pen the problem's resolution would be found more quickly. The hand was quickly and deftly slapped by Abe who said, "Look, but don't touch it." Argo pulled his hand away and once again rested it on his boiled cauliflower. Argo, the most astute one in the group, gave up speaking during his first year in college, some three years before, not for any particular reason except that people tended not to notice him when he spoke and tended to when he did not. He had nothing against communication. He just didn't speak. It was Argo who came up with the solution. On his note pad he wrote, "If we look at all the first names in the student directory, Mary Beth's name must surely be contained therein. You dig?" He signed it Argo Flaunther.

They dug all right. Hoorahs, hoorays, hallelujahs, yips, grunts, squeals, yells, war cries, shouted invocations to remember the Maine, the Alamo, the Pueblo gushed into the air. Another American victory was on its way to being won. The five scrambled from their seats and followed Abe who led the charge up to his room and to a student directory. Abe screamed, "Follow me!" and they followed. All five were later given student reprimands for not carrying their trays to the conveyor belt. A small price to pay, I think.

Ricky Eisensteinstein quit his davening when he heard the uproarious yells and followed the mad dash up the seven flights of stairs. He was so excited about the stampede that he dropped both his *yarmulkah* and *talas* and did not bother to retrieve either one.

* * *

The six of them sat for three and a half hours studiously studying thirty thousand names, give or take a thousand. Abe was in total command. He brilliantly eased the case load by ripping the student directory into five equal portions of approximately five thousand names apiece, give or take a thousand. What a sight it was, the six of them working interdependently, each man putting his faith in the good will of the others, each knowing a mistake by one could

keep him poring over his list fruitlessly. But is not this what life is all about? Men working together towards a common goal, for the benefit of all, not with selfish intent, but with unselfish intent for the good of many. And do not think for a moment that the quest was without problems; pages 137 and 138 were stuck together with pineapple flavored yogurt; Alvin continually forgot the name he was looking for until Abe wrote out the words "Mary Beth" on his right hand with a magic marker and even then Alvin forgot to look at his hand. By 9:24 the task was completed. Abe held a list with the names of seventeen Mary Beths who at that moment were dwelling somewhere near, by, at, on, or in the campus but probably only one of which was missing a golden Parker.

The room became very quiet then. The rustling sound of turning pages was absent. No one spoke. All eyes were focused on Abe; Abe's eyes were focused on the sheet of seventeen names. If the sheet had eyes who knows where they might have been focused? Rupert Grubitelli finally said, "Well, why don't you start calling, Abe baby?" It was the obvious thing to say. Abe, instead of responding to the question, picked up his bowling ball, removed it from its case, opened the window, dropped it out, and watched it as it thudded into the soft earth seven stories below. "I've always wanted to see how far into the ground it would go. It goes about half-way," he said. Abe then said, "Alvin, go fetch the ball." Alvin jumped up from his squatting position and could be heard all the way down and up the stairs barking out, "Ball, ball." When he had returned Abe began making the calls.

I could very well bore you to tears if I were to quote the details of all fourteen calls which Abe had to make. Credit must be given to him for being as civil as he could be. But at around call nine or ten, his index finger started blistering and when the phonee said she had not lost a pen, Abe shouted into the phone, "Well, why the hell didn't you?" and slammed down the receiver into its cradle as hard as he could. Call fourteen, however, was different. Here's how it went.

The time: 11:17.

The sound: Ring, ring, ring.

The answer: "Hello! Psi Phi Chi house. To whom do you wish to speak?" said a happy, happy voice.

And Abe said, "Mary Beth."

And the voice said, "Mary Beth English?"

And Abe said, "You got more than one there?"

And the voice said, "I'll get her," and the girl dropped the phone and could be heard trotting up the stairs.

The boys sat, laid, stood, kneeled, crouched, and broke wind in various positions about the room. No feeling of expectancy hung in the air. Alvin was licking the magic marker off his hand. Ricky moaned for his lost possessions; "Oy, my yarmulkah. Oy, my talas," he groaned. "Cunt" McGraw had pulled his shirt out to cover a minor erection. Abe was wiping sweat from his left ear-lobe when he heard the following.

"Hello, this is Mary Beth."

"Did you lend your golden Parker to someone today?" Abe asked.

"Oh, my goodness!" said Mary. "Are you he?"

"I are he." The boys in the room perked up like hound dogs who had caught a scent.

"Do you want it back?"

"Of course I want it back. It means a great deal to me. My parents gave it to me for graduation along with a typewriter and six new fall dresses. You promised to return it after the test. Why didn't you?"

"Well," said Abe, "I honestly, truly forgot. I will bring it to you tomorrow. Is that O.K.?"

It was O.K. with Mary Beth naturally and the time was set for 7:30 the next evening at the Psi Phi Chi house. Oh yeah, both Mary Beth and Abe hung up the phones when they were done talking.

* * *

That a day should have begun so ordinarily and ended so extraordinarily! Ah, what is it that makes one day different from another? May there be truth in the stars, you daily horoscope watchers out there, you Sagittarians, you Pisces, you Cancers. Or is it still possible to believe that men make their own breaks? Whatever the answer, if an answer exists in the incredulous cosmos, no one can refute that life, or what have you, with its variegated spectrum of exigencies, peccadilloes, emergencies, and small mistakes, boggles, and toys with the hearts, spirits, souls and minds of men.

The night was indeed a restless one for the boys and the girls, a night of apprehensiveness, tension, and for one of the girls, Sharon, to name names, the beginning of her seventy-ninth consecutive menstrual flow. The tension hadn't gotten to her so much. I have not said much about the girls' reaction to the lost Parker for the very simple reason that there was not much to say. Of course, they

yearned for its return. A hurt to one Phi Psi is a hurt to all Phi Psis. And after the fated call came, they clustered about Mary Beth in glee, and Jennifer, the zenith exemplar of female intellectuality, said, "What are you going to wear?"

Mary Beth was stopped dead in her tracks by that one, thought a moment with all eyes on her, and finally said, "I think the red and white polka dot jumper with my blue skirt is appropriate for the receiving of a lost item."

The others agreed, but not whole heartedly and a civilized but heated discussion began and was carried on far into the evening, until bedtime in fact when the six young women trudged fatiguedly off to their separate beds to contemplate the coming of 7:30 p.m. They had at one time during the discussion considered phoning the national chapter headquarters of Phi Psi Chi to verify proper attire, but then realized the offices would be closed at such a late hour. They would, however, keep the idea in reserve for the morrow.

Abe and the boys were excited but kept to a fairly average routine, or at least did not overtly show just how excited they were. They had agreed that all must go along to deliver the pen since finding its owner had been a joint project. The time 7:30 was written on Alvin's clean hand and the boys dragged out of Abe's room and on to their individual functions. "Cunt" wacked-off in the communal toilet while memorizing the configurational relationships of the labia majora, labia minora, and urethra from a picture in his physiology textbook; Rupert listened at the stall door and chuckled quietly to himself. Rupert could really groove on a person who wanted to know his subject so well. Finally, sleep took them and needless to say, the night passed.

* * *

Sleep came for all, but not so easily for Abe. He must have tossed and turned a good twenty minutes before Somnus closed his eyes and gave him rest. And what did he think in those turbulent moments? You guessed it—Mary Beth, assuredly! He had a feeling about this one, this one with the gentle lisp. Would she be his eighth love? He could not help but think of his loving, beloved parents and their chance meeting in the back seat of a '31 Plymouth coupe where each had made arrangements to meet with different lovers. Think of the odds of that happening; two identical black '31 Plymouth coupes and four people with similar intentions in the same Chicago parking lot. These thoughts raced, dashed, and hurdled through Abe's mind.

The boy needed love, was ripe for it, wanted it, yearned for it with all his being and part of his body. He truly wanted this bird in his hand. Before sleeping, he arose, turned on the light, walked to his desk, rolled the golden Parker on its blue velvet cloth, said "That's the cat's pajamas," and stumbled back to bed smirking like a contented frog who has just eaten five flies and a mosquito. Mary Beth slept that night in her yellow bunny flannels and had visions of chocolate mousses all in a row and golden daffodills. Both Abe and Mary Beth slept with the covers off. A coincidence? No, it was rather warm all over town.

7:30 lounged its way into being for both protagonists and the ten minor characters. By 7:00 the boys were lined up in Abe's room in their finest finery for inspection. Abe refused to have any truck with a schleppy looking crew and they did not disappoint him. Rupert had had his hair trimmed that afternoon. It now barely touched his shoulders. Alvin, on the other hand, did not have his cut and it almost touched his ears. It was a big night for Alvin; the boys were not going to make him wear his leash; instead Argo would carry the choke chain he kept in his back pocket. Ricky had taken the plastic off his black, wool, itchy Bar Mitzvah suit, which had not been worn for three years since his sister Adrian's commitment. "Cunt" had parted his hair down the middle and slicked it down with Vaseline Petroleum Jelly. The boys looked good. Actually, they looked outstanding. But Abe was dressed to kill. Fresh underwear, brown sandals, red socks, tweed trousers, batik vest, blue cowboy shirt with three buttons on one sleeve and two on the other, a pink windbreaker, the name "Harry" stitched along one pocket and to top it off he wore his best and rarest Avis "We try harder" button written in Yugoslavian, stuck nattily above his heart. He wore no tie for fear of overdressing.

The girls, on the other side of the campus, were dressed casually: chantilly, velvet, satin, poie de soie, silk. Nothing much out of the ordinary. Mary Beth was hitched in her best brassiere, the one with a cluster of red roses woven on the apex of each cup. She felt tingly all over. The others felt tingly too but all that could be done was to wait. That is the work of women—waiting—waiting for Mr. Right, waiting for babies to labor from their bodies, waiting for cakes to rise. The girls waited now but did not like it much.

At 7:15 the boys left the dormitory for the trek across campus. Hup two, hup two, they marched, almost getting in step several times. People on the street saw this fiercely

determined group and stepped aside, well aside. Cars stopped, students gawked, animals skittered into bushes, dogs howled, cats whined, rabbits sought other rabbits. Twelve legs, twelve arms, walked and swung across the fields of higher education. The sky was pregnant with expectation, wild-eyed clouds swirled and roamed the heavens, some black and some white and a bluish one off in the distance. On these men strode, dauntless in their insistence to reach the goal. On, on, on, over flower beds, tree stumps, through valleys, gulches, monadnocks, crevasses, arroyos, and ravines. And finally from the haze it appeared, the Phi Psi Chi house, just where it should have been, 907 S. Green Street. The sorority stood as a bulwark against indolence, evil, sin, against all things men have a way of enjoying. There it was all right, its four big chimneys silhouetted in the sky, its massive Reconstructionist architecture, the red, white and blue neon sign blinking Phi Psi Chi, Phi Psi Chi, Phi Psi Chi, ad infinitum. Abe and the boys stopped when they had the house clearly in sight.

Abe said, "Stop, boys." They halted and gazed in true astonishment at the house. "So, this is it," they all thought, except Alvin. They came, they saw, but would they conquer? Caesar must have asked himself this same question that now ran through these five and a half minds.

"That's it, boys," said Abe and he pointed his left middle finger at the house. "You see it, Rupert?"

"Yeah," said Rupert.

"You see it, Ricky?"

"Yes," said Ricky.

Abe asked each one and when each said he had seen it Abe said, "Let's go," and they scurried behind Abe as he led the way across the street, up the walk, up the steps, and to the door. This was it, the moment of reckoning had arrived. Abe pulled in his breath, checked to see that his Avis button was straight and rapped the door with its mammoth aluminum knocker.

In a moment a young girl came to the door and said in a happy, happy voice, "Phi Psi Chi house. To whom do you wish to speak?"

Abe said, "Mary Beth," and the girl said, "Mary Beth English?"

Abe nodded in defeat. The girls showed them to a parlor-like room and could be heard trotting up the stairs. When she reached Mary Beth's room she said, "There is a group of young men downstairs for you."

The girls were jumpy as bouncing ping-pong balls. They

were all dressed and had been for forty-five minutes but decided to be ten minutes late.

The boys were nervous as cats in a dog house. They clawed, gasped, twitched, sweated, and murmured under their breaths that the fucking broads should come down already.

All of a sudden there was absolute silence. In the same split second they all had heard footsteps on the steps. They were frozen like Lot's wife. Hair stood itself on end. Pulse rates doubled, tripled, quadrupled. Adrenalin gushed. Not an eye could blink. Expectation was very high. The footsteps closed in.

In a moment it happened. The girls stood at the door to the parlor. The time of confrontation was upon them all.

For one finite portion in the movement of a billion years of time, there was no time or motion, no foot finished its step, no drop of surf slid off a beach.

Abe stared at Mary Beth. The boys, Ricky, Argo, "Cunt", Alvin, and Rupert stared at Frisky, Elaine, Sharon, Stephanie, and Jennifer. They stared and they stared and they stared. How long could it go on, this staring. Five minutes, six minutes. Ten minutes it went on—a new staring record.

It was Abe who broke the noiselessness with these words, "Mary Beth, I presume?"

Mary Beth said, "I am she. Did you bring the pen?"

Abe reached into his left windbreaker pocket and withdrew the golden Parker. He held the pen in his outstretched palms as if it were a libation to the Gods. It gleamed, it shone, it sparkled, it glittered in the light from above. Mary Beth reached out and took the pen in her hand, fondled it, kissed it, and finally clutched it against her flowered bosom. All waited for her words. They came soon enough.

"Thank you," she said.

Laurence Rosen

First Prize—Essay

A HERO OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Sometimes, I guess, the so called "generation gap" disturbs me. For instance, I have been spending the glorious months of summer 1970 working as a pay phone collector for Illinois Bell in Chicago. Really, you would be amazed how I get around during a typical day of collecting dimes, nickles and slugs. What I am trying to say is, I, a twenty year old college student hanging on to a summer job, come in contact with and am forced to deal with hardcore members of that "older" generation. You know, really scary guys like truck drivers, longshoremen (yes, there are even some in Chicago), construction workers and worst of all drunks in bars. Drunks in bars! Wow, they are the ones who really scare me.

This is where my story is supposed to begin, but kindly excuse me while I ramble on a bit about myself. Like I was saying, I am young and a bit wary of adults. An irrational state of mind, I imagine, but recent events really alarmed me. Kent State, Jackson, hard hat demonstrations and so on. Now my hair, by current campus standards, is not exceptionally long—you can see most of my ears and almost all of my neck. Granted, my forehead tends to be camouflaged at times, but what can you expect from a kid who is trying to identify with his peer group. Continuing, I sport long sideburns and when the shadows fall right, a "bushy" moustache.

Sorry, back to my story, which incidentally is true.

Feeling self-conscious about my youthful appearance, I parked my truck alongside a curb on West 63rd Street and studied the address on my computerized collection card. "This must be the place," I breathed aloud. "I'll bet it's full of red-necks and right-wing nuts just waiting to draw and quarter me."

Gulping, I grabbed an empty coin receptacle and ventured across 63rd Street. I realized that I would have to fight the upcoming battle of the generations alone, but continued on my assignment.

Head held high, face frozen in an indignant scowl, I invaded the stronghold of my enemy.

Sure enough, I was faced with a drunk in a bar. Really, the guy was everything I feared he would be. He had a crew cut, his left arm was disfigured by a garish tattoo and his face was tied up in a hostile "I hate you, you young commie punk" scowl.

A passive black bartender stood wiping glasses with a towel. He said nothing. The drunk at the bar said nothing. I managed a hoarse, "Ah, I'm here to take the money from your phone."

My adversary sat frozen in a position of concentration. He eyed me intently and then his glazed eyes shifted to my bell bottom pants.

"I lost fifty God damn cents in that phone, buddy. What the hell are you gonna do about it?" The drunk's voice was firm and yet it was pathetic.

The bartender added, "Yea, that thing took two dollars from me. 'Bout time you came to fix it."

Warming just a bit, I said, "Hang on a second and I'll see if I can't get your money back."

Sure enough there was at least ten dollars worth of overflow money lodged in the coin chute. After I carefully counted the money, I refunded two dollars to the bartender and fifty cents to his customer.

Although the President of Bell Telephone had never personally told me that refunding change to people in strange bars was regarded as being consistent with company policy, I figured that the public relations benefit was well worth the money.

Money works magic, I guess, because not only did I feel good after giving some away, but the drunk grabbed my wrist and asked me to join him for a drink.

I almost said that I couldn't drink while working, but I was too thirsty to refuse, especially since he was buying.

"My name is John Bartley", my new friend explained. "How about you?"

"Charley . . ." but I muttered my last name so he couldn't tell what it was. Still a bit paranoid.

John, or Jack, as he apparently liked to be called, had red hair although it was turning white in spots, a narrow face, wandering eyes, and puffy hands. Considering it was Wednesday and the guy was already smashed, I concluded that Jack was an alcoholic.

"You know something, Charley, I'm de best engineer in this whole God damn city", Jack stated sending a fine spray of saliva into my face. "That's right, you can ask Dicky Daley. You wanna know something?"

"Yeah", I replied engagingly, rapidly losing my fear of the man.

"I designed the subway system of Chicago. Not only that but I drew the plans for the Dan Ryan, the Calumet and the Kingery Expressways."

I knew old Jack was putting me on, but I could see in his eyes that he had to. Occasionally, I spoke about myself and my job. I even made up a wild story about my experiences in the Navy and said I was 24 to keep things straight with the bartender.

At the mention of the military, Jack grew solemn and distant. "I was in the War and I'm damn proud of it."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"I was in the Pacific—an Army Air Corpsman. You know, pal, I won the silver star."

Jack stopped speaking, looked despondently at his empty glass and broke into tears.

"And—and now I'm a God damn bum—you know, I live in a flop house down the street. A fucking flop house, but I still have that medal."

Jack grasped my wrist desperately. I tried to tell him with my eyes that I believed him and that I respected him for what he had done.

"You know, Charley, my brother works for the phone company. He's in charge of all the coin phones in the whole God damn city of Chicago. He's your boss's boss."

"Maybe he could get me a raise?" I ventured.

Jack's eyes brightened. "I want you to call my brother. His name is Frederik Bartley. He's my baby brother. You tell him you saw his son-of-a-bitch of a brother." Beseechingly Jack said, "But don't tell him where you saw me. He offered me money but I couldn't take it. I don't want him to think I'm some kind of drunk. I'm the best engineer in the whole damn city. Just because I'm sittin' in a bar don't think I ain't."

"I believe you, Jack, I really do."

"My other brother, he went . . ." Jack paused to collect his thoughts. "He went to fight in Korea. They brought him back in a box."

Tears once again rolled down my friend's face.

Trying to divert Jack's attention I asked him to tell me more about World War II. He complied.

"I was on the plane that bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki."

Jack was once again overcome. "I only did what I was ordered to do—I did what they told me. How the hell did I—how could . . . The captain is in a nut house—and look at me. Look at me, a hero of my country."

I looked and I was disgusted. I looked again and I was moved to tears.

Charles McKelvy

Second Prize—Poetry

celebrate october

celebrate october as boys do—
go down to the river
one last time—
to where water laps
at gray-slate islands near the shore
and sweeps leaves of ash and oak
to still marshes
where the heron stand.
the river is silent near its birth,
soft and green in a womb of wet clay;
cold now, and hard to see
beneath abandoned leaves, and a light mist-cover
that curls around tree-trunks
at the edges of daybreak
and flows with the water at dawn.
here the songs of dandelion and violet
are muffled, out of season.
only willows are left
to ripple green pools
and nudge small gray fish
that dart and probe beside the river bluffs.
down further, some scattered flat rocks
give the river voice,
impose a pattern cutting deep into the channel bed.
go with the boys—watch the river run
through canyons hazed with old mystery.
the fading leaves dim the outlines,
melt scarlet sumac into the sunset,
call out an evening haze from the hollows.
soon the winter. soon the weary gray trees
bathed in deep-snow silence.
so now, while the color of sunset
still shows in your hair,
celebrate october as boys do—
go down to the river
one last time.

Terry Allen

Second Prize—Short Story

WORDSMITH: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I would take the world, slice from it pieces thin as film, and align them so the sun shines through out into the empty places. The pictures projected there would be mirrored from within this earth, and I could sit back and copy them down. Such an easy way out of writing if I were a universal onion slicer. I have a great many things on my side but not that. I have a crystal of friends and a lady alien, Lucifer. I have a desire to write. I have a future career and a boy friend and thoughts that run so far past both that I cry to see them left behind.

One spring I had a demon lover. My mother said that boys grew up to be men, and men had one use for women. I believed her until Pippin came and whispered in my ear. As he laid his unicorn's head in my lap, he said the very things she foretold. But there comes a time for all subjects. I had my lover and kept my virginity to catch other unicorns with. Pippin went off, grew a flower in his ear, and never came back anymore.

I see the world swing past in an endless array of colors and would give them all a name before I lose them. My childhood is a great weight of green. Daddy makes grape-juice, piling the cloudy bunches on the picnic table and yelling for us to come and help. The dew on the grass is so cold that bare feet must be buried in the garden dust to warm them up. We would rather escape to the field. It has buffalo grass, wild rose bushes, milk weed, and white violets in the spring because one corner is marshy. In summer it is the wide sweep of Africa to the railroad bank. Wild trees have the best wormy apples, but don't try to climb the pear because it is weak. One Chinese elm fell down and the other is cracked, but my willow tree will stand to the end of time. At least until childhood is all lost and blown away by California summers and Illinois State winters.

It would be a terrible thing to never speak the beauty and wonder of all this. The telling, the marvelous putting of words to things ever before unsayable. My stories crystalize the passing moments into quartz and amethyst, those thoughts clear and those colored by my emotions. Aquarians always look through lavender to see the wonders beyond. The calculating brain grows drunk on its own visions, and you would think I were baying a full moon every night.

When I go to visit my sister Tina in Carlinville, we are going to have a skulk. Lucifer will tell us how. I have cats' eyes for the night, and it will be scramble through the woods, slide down shale slopes, and run into a squirt gun's

tongue in the dark. Tag my moon glow. I wish I could take Albert on my woods running. He is a city boy who thinks the night is for muggings. I know it is for swelling and expanding until the whole universe is swallowed up in one mind. When the wind sweeps the dust along the snow crust and boots break through but paws do not, then I am a shadow and run through the winter night hot breathed. Incarnated from a wolf I am. I can feel it when I crouch beneath a lilac bush in the muggy dark with a carpet of mosquitoes on my bare arms. I can feel it when I see the moon and suddenly want to run on and on until I fall down in the grass panting.

That is what is wrong with my writing; it runs out of breath too often. I am a starter, doer, and let die-er. I begin to write but stop and put it away for another time. When that next time comes, my story has rotted away to typing exercises. Writing is the controlled setting down of words to capture something in life that is uncontrollable or fleeting or intangible. It is a craft, and it has to be practiced.

INVENATURE is dedicated to the proposition that writing is fun because it is hard work. This writers' group is the cocoon from which I stretch and slowly fan wet wings. It is synonymous with my writing self because I was one of the founding four. We are a network of letters connecting four continents with our ideas. We are INVENTION and we are ADVENTURE and we are a pack of ruffians roaming the streets of literature.

Harlan Ellison is an eco-crusado-pusho science fiction writer, and I admire him mightily for it. Lucifer says she is a dream weaver, and I admire her for that. When I get done admiring people, there does not seem to be any niche left for me. Do I write polished, entertaining little pieces? Stabs at the heart of man's cruelty to himself? Games or guns it seems to be.

Love is a game the same way Albert is a bear cub. He is understanding, but he just does not understand. He thought I was planning to go to Clarion, another summer school in archaeology.

It was hot that day, but I don't really need to tell about that. Dust and sun-dead grass with the river sliding by so smooth. To us up on that river terrace, the Alleghany could have been a world away. Salt tablets on the back of my tongue and a spade in my hands. Archaeology, I'm going back to that? You have to try your heart's desire once or never be satisfied with illusions. One summer under the overseer's whip was enough.

Try anything once. The foil flicks in and out. Parry and

the scrape of a cutover. The sweat rolls down my face under the mask, and my thighs ache as I retreat, retreat. My opponent lunges and hits my arm. I am falling back, mask flying off, foil waving, and down with a crash. The director rushes up to see if I am hurt. Just my pride, lady, just my pride. I have not fenced in a year, and my muscles are like butterscotch pudding. Luc will teach me saber after she learns the bullwhip. Pippin could fense epee, but Albert can only fight with a switchblade.

When I was in junior high, I read on a book jacket that Andre Norton, the science fiction writer, was a little old lady in a city library. I came to ISU and found the only SF on campus centered in the library science department with another Mr. Bradbury. Me a professional writer? Nothing like bread-and-butter words to choke the stream of thoughts. I leave the pro's corner to Lucifer and others more talented, and I take my own way.

We are all different under the surface. We are separated into little blocks labeled "writer" or "student" or "science fiction reader." INVENATURE is a block, Clarionites are a block, and ISU is a block. Illinois State, I feel more alien here all the time. Stone and cement highrises, dorm Hewett, brown leaves on the Quad, the Co-Op Bookstore that doesn't cooperate, and five o'clock mornings in the cafeteria. This place is Normal. The concept of alienism is Lucifer in a tiny midwest high school seeking refuge in The Man from UNCLE because she can find no friends. Alienism is me here to get an education. I came because there was no more logical choice, but I feel cut in two. One of me reads Ed Psych while the other dreams of the novel Super-Royal and I will write someday.

There was once a girl who grew up in an Illinois suburb with a gardener for a father and a female militant for a mother. The girl found some friends who liked to write, and they formed a club. She had a boy friend in high school and another in college. She went to Illinois State to become a librarian, and her parents moved to L. A. It was all so very ordinary. Only writing is extraordinary.

Writing is for the individual. It is you writing, you making the effort, and you failing if you must. I write to please myself, but it would be damn good if I pleased somebody else along the way.

I am the sum of all I have ever been, seen, done, or imagined, and it is all screaming to be let out. "I have no mouth" etc.¹

Linda Nielsen

¹Harlan Ellison, "I Have No Mouth And I Must Scream."

THE CONQUEST OF THE NEO-AMERICAN WOMAN

The destruction of American civilization in c. 1975 provides scholars with another example of the paradoxical patterns of human history. In twentieth-century America the conquered became the conquerors. Recent excavations in an area northeast of this ancient civilization's capital have caused some historians to doubt the established theories concerning the identity of the conquerors. The "black, white, and red" theory which maintains that America fell from within after a bitter feud between groups of people identifying themselves with these three colors does not account for the type of destruction caused by the conquerors. The postulate relying on fragments of newspapers from the 1960's and 70's that Americans feared invasions by a unique species of gorillas is not necessary to explain the violence that preceded the final collapse.

Examination of the ruins near New York City has led archeologists to believe that this mighty civilization was destroyed by a phenomenon called the Neo-American Woman. Anthropologists and historians have reached this conclusion after examination of American myths dating back to the seventeenth century, fragments of written material from the 1900's, and artifacts taken from various excavation areas. Logistical re-creations of the final battle have also provided insight into the character of these feminine conquerors.

The tension which led to the revolt of American women can be seen in the Founding Fathers myths of America which clearly indicate the tendency of American culture to view the female as a member of the slave class. Prominent early American heroines are usually portrayed as excelling in the performance of domestic duties. The early American myth of the woman as highly skilled in the household arts is embodied in the legendary figures of Priscilla Alden, famous for her spinning, and Betsy Ross, known for her sewing skill. Molly Pitcher and Pocahontas represent the archetypal American woman. The male-dominated America of the Revolutionary War period elevated Molly to the status of heroine because of her dedication and endurance in fetching water for her soldier-husband. The story of Pocahontas illustrates the early American admiration of a woman who will sacrifice herself for her man. An American myth of a later date exalts Aunt Jemimah, a folk character with ex-

ceptional culinary talents. The American myths also contain traces of male superiority. For example, George Washington, great American war hero, chopped down a cherry tree with complete impunity and was even praised when he told of the act.

The revolt of the Neo-American Woman seems to have first manifested itself in a rejection of the type of female roles portrayed in the early myths. One of the first activities of the feminine revolutionists was to eliminate literature offensive to their cause. Anthropologists have compared fragments of reading matter from the 1970's with a well-preserved list of books uncovered in the ruins of a major American library. The list apparently enumerated the most popular books of the last few years of American civilization. Archeologists have been able to locate only two badly charred books by two prominent anti-feminist writers, Dr. Spock and Betty Crocker.

Besides these excavated books, archeologists have uncovered artifacts which indicate that the violence which finally destroyed America was caused by a polarization of the male and the female. The most convincing evidence of sexual division in America was uncovered by skin divers in the New York harbor. A huge statue of a woman, probably erected by the female forces, was found lying on its back in the bottom of the harbor. Extensive chips and cracks in the shoulder area of the statue indicate that it was hauled down by force, apparently by the male army. Enormous piles of what appear to be burnt pieces of white cloth have also been excavated. One sociologist has suggested that these remains are left from the ritualistic burning of the bras engaged in by the American women.

The once popular ecological theory that the American people were killed by environmental poisoning has also been related to protests staged by the Neo-American Woman. A newspaper fragment from c. 1970 tells of a shipload of bubble bath that was dumped in the Boston harbor. An analysis of a body of water northwest of the main investigation area has revealed large quantities of compounds identical to those believed to be used by the Americans in making detergents, perfumes, and hand lotion.

Military experts examining the area of ground believed to be the site of the final battle may have arrived at the key to the destruction of American civilization. From the study of bodies taken from the battlefield, archeologists have conjectured that the male armies won the early stages of the battle but were at last defeated by the woman forces. The most perplexing problem in reconstructing the final

stages of the battle is accounting for the defeat of the women. One theory maintains that the female military strategy was poor. The women's forces began the attack defending the northern section of the city but changed their minds and decided to swing around to the south. Tremendous effort was wasted in rearranging their equipment and arming their troops. As a result of these changes and delays, the female army was late for the battle and met the male army in its full strength. This unusual theory holds that that after the annihilation of the women's forces, the male army died of starvation, food poisoning, and exposure to the weather resulting from improper dress and holes in their socks. Thus ended the conquest of the Neo-American Woman and also America.

Leslie Bertagnolli

BARS

It wasn't that my father was unkind,
But he believed that his small world was mine.
With detailed measurement, present and past,
He would glance at me at last,
And sigh.
At books forever tucked,
Steps too slow to cross the streets of cars,
Dream-eyes,
Floating,
Never there.
As if a man had not enough to bear at home!

He wondered how I missed the magic clock,
But never thought to wonder why.
He put up bars to guide my way,
And seal-like
I slid the length of rail down to the sea.
It would have been a sin to laugh.

"Why are you there when I am here?"
He called.
"You built the slide,"
I said.
"Besides,
How pleasant it is to sing the songs the soul sends."

Judy Stein

JENNIFER KATE

With brown eyes great,
Jennifer Kate
Pretended not to care
a bit
And asked the question
She had formed
for many days.

It was
To her as shiny as the shells
She kept
beneath her bed
in orange crates.

"Is magic real?
Do wishes fly to special stars
and take my name?
I heard at school it isn't so;
They whispered in my class,
and I was there.

You told me
you believed in dreams.
I hear you sing
your songs of love,
of miracles
and Santa Claus,
And every word seems true."

Her soul was softly asking,
"Please."
But chin up high
And eyes as brave,
she waited for the words
she knew might come.

"No one can take away,
what you can feel,"

I spoke
in tones as light
as tears inside
can hide.

"You and I
like to look at butterflies,
and picture magic wings,

But
there are other human eyes
who never see such things.
It's much more fun
to try to see
the magic in each day,
Than never to believe
a single dream.

But what you think
is up to you.
I promise
not to make you smile
with tales that never were,

If you want to be as smart
as all your friends.
But let me keep my silly songs;
I love to be surprised
by morning dew."

She never was in doubt.
She's lived in mists
of make-believe
since she could see.

She smoothed her skirt
and chose another book
for us to read.

Judy Stein

HIROSHIMA

Twenty-five years past,
Over a *living* city,
Thousands of suns died.
(Thousands of suns rose.)

Dann Vega

every so often

every so often
the ceiling falls in
and i always try to prop it up
with what looks like
steel girders
but i soon find
they're made of nothing but
plasterboard
and soon i have to rebuild.
It's been some time now
since the first cave-in
yet each time
seems worse than the first.
(perhaps it's the frustration)
one of these days
when i get smart
i'll have a contractor
redo the place

or better yet
maybe i'll just
move out.

Janis Keating

THE SOLID MAHOGANY MAN

not going to take anymore of this
veneer stuff ;
beautiful on the outside,
without a scratch, near perfect ;
and inside, nothing
but cheap, weak wood.
Hollow, fake ; no bargain.
Wearingout long before its time.

someday i'm going to find a
solid mahogany man.
beautiful and solid all the way through.
not so much indestructible
(for this isn't possible)
but at least strong ;
not so much varnish
(hard to keep up)
to hide the natural grain.

perhaps someday
when i save enough
i'll be able to get me a
solid mahogany man.
until then
i'd rather do without
because it's going to cost more
in the long run
to keep replacing veneer
than wait for mahogany.

Janis Keating

man is only here

man is only here a lifetime long
and yet he squanders the mornings of his youth
plotting a foolproof way to success,
going blind

as he strains to eye the peaks
his samespecie next door has dulled—
and man
has never
seen the
sun wake
up.

he trains the middle-aged afternoons
to burglarproof their nook
as he slows a strangely-human object
at target practice—

and man
has never
felt the
friendliness
of a noonday
smile.

he cloaks the nights of his old age
in a coat of colors as he fingerpaints the faces
of his landsharers—

and man
has never
heard the
song within a
man.

and maybe never will . . .

for man
has never
touched the
fact

that one day the sun will
set

never to wake up again.

Pat Campbell

YOU KNOW

You know
I'd like to spin a web
to thread the timelessness of now
through the I of mankind
and within this

I
I'd like to visit the weaver of human thought
and borrow his loom to create
a breathing mind . . .

a mind
not easily dulled by the needlepoint of unconcern
an exploring, reaching
mind

that would venture
into

the maze of the human soul
and not get lost.

Pat Campbell

senses

I can sit and see
the sun come up just in time to set;
after intermittent rainfall
has washed all terror from the clouds.

I can sit and hear
dampened sounds neither of man,
nor his creatures,
but of all creation stirring.

I can sit and taste
a liquor brewed only in the path
of clear water into soil.

I can sit and smell
musty airs set free from dust
to drift the skies.

I can sit and feel
the cool breath of the earth
as she moves men and their mountains
together and away.

Terry Allen

THE SECRET A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

Cast

(In Order of Appearance)

CLIFFORD GRAVES, 36, a college professor
MARY ALICE, 34, his wife
RICHARD GRAVES, 28, Clifford's brother
ANNAMAY GRAVES, 61, their mother

Setting

The living room of an older Midwestern house. It has a homey, comfortable atmosphere, with little regard for the newest ideas in decorating. Over Right is a large window, looking out onto the street. A wide door in the rear wall opens onto a hallway leading to the stairway and an outside door; a smaller door Down Left leads to the kitchen. A brick fireplace with a mantelpiece occupies the remainder of the rear wall; over the mantle are hung various Currier and Ives prints.

The furniture is quite respectable, but not fashionable. It consists of a davenport Right of Center, facing an overstuffed armchair; between the two is a low coffeetable. A desk is Over Left, the top cluttered with framed snapshots of children. Over the desk is hung several pictures of two small boys. In the left rear corner is a triangular table, a pot with fresh flowers resting on it.

Synopsis

PLACE: A small, Midwestern college town. The living room of Mrs. Graves' house.

TIME: Eight o'clock on a Saturday morning.

(As the curtain rises, CLIFFORD is standing at the window, looking out and drumming his fingers impatiently on the sill. He is a tall, bitter-looking man with a scholarly air. His face bears deep lines that age alone has not put there. MARY ALICE enters from the hallway; she is attractive, appearing younger than her husband. Dressed in a long robe, she has obviously just awakened.)

MARY ALICE. (Tiredly) Good Lord, Cliff, don't you *ever* sleep? Up all night watching for Richard and then making such a racket getting dressed this morning that no one else could sleep either.

CLIFFORD. I just keep waiting for that phone to ring.
(Bursting out) Now where in the devil can he be? He *knows* how Mother worries when he doesn't come home nights!

MARY ALICE. Not to speak of how much *you* worry about him.

CLIFFORD. (Turning away from window. Crosses to stand behind armchair.) Well, for God's sake, Mary Alice, you know how irresponsible he is. How do I know he isn't out robbing the corner dime store right now?

MARY ALICE. Clifford! Your own brother!

CLIFFORD. (Pounding his fist into the chair.) There's nothing I wouldn't put past that boy. In fact, there's very little he hasn't done already—Can you tell me how many times in the past ten years I've been called upon to bail dear little Richard out of his scrapes?

MARY ALICE. Hush, Mother might hear you.

CLIFFORD: (Sarcastically) No, by all means, let's not let Mother in on the secret!

MARY ALICE. What secret?

CLIFFORD. (Sitting sideways in the armchair, facing front, his legs over the arm.) Why, the secret of life, of course . . . A secret she never wanted to hear.

(Unnoticed, RICHARD has appeared in the rear doorway. His clothes are in disarray, his left eye is black, and his face is cut. Nevertheless, he wears a jaunty grin.)

RICHARD: (Mocking him) My dear *Dr.* Graves, what *can* you mean by such cryptic remarks?
(MARY ALICE and CLIFFORD jump up, startled, to face him)

CLIFFORD. Well, if it isn't the prodigal son returned. Where have you been now? Robbing the Mayor, stealing cars, or just boozing it up?

MARY ALICE. Cliff!

RICHARD. Why, the latter of course. (Coming into the room.) You can never get enough booze, but even Mayors of such thriving towns as ours can only be robbed so often. I mean, the resources *are* limited, you know.

CLIFFORD. (Furiously) You . . . you . . . (MARY ALICE puts a hand on his arm)

You *fool!* Wasting your life like this . . . And you don't even care!

RICHARD. (Stung) Well, now, dear brother, that must be a trait that runs in our family.

MARY ALICE. (Standing between them) No, Richard, please. Not that again.

CLIFFORD. Go on, say it. It doesn't bother me in the least.
(He turns and walks U. L. to desk.)

RICHARD. (Following him) How many years have you wasted, *Professor*, pottering around the local college lab, dissecting frogs for admiring freshmen girls? . . . Occasionally breeding a couple of white mice? . . .

CLIFFORD. That's enough.

RICHARD. (Taunting him) Not enough guts to get out on your own to start that research lab you always wanted. Just can't cut the mustard, can you, big brother?

CLIFFORD. (Whirling, shouting) I said, that's enough!
(MRS. GRAVES enters from the kitchen door. She has an ageless, innocent look about her as if nothing had ever touched her.)

MRS. GRAVES. Oh, I thought I heard voices. Richard! I'm so glad you're home, dear. Did you have a nice time last night?

(RICHARD straightens his clothes, CLIFFORD turns away, muttering to himself, and MARY ALICE fluffs up the sofa pillows.)

RICHARD. Yes, a very nice time, Mother, I'm sorry if you worried about me.

MRS. GRAVES. That's all right, dear. I know how young men like to have their fun. No harm done.

(CLIFFORD laughs bitterly. MRS. GRAVES turns inquiringly to him, as MARY ALICE hurries over, attempting to cover up.)

MARY ALICE. Mother Richard looks like he could do with a good breakfast. Let's go see what we can find for him.

MRS. GRAVES. (Peering shortsightedly at RICHARD) Yes, he does . . . Why, what's the matter with your eye, Richard?

CLIFFORD. (Turning toward her) I'll tell you what happened to his eye, Mother.

RICHARD. (Stepping in front of him) I just bumped into a door, Mother. Nothing to worry about.

CLIFFORD. (Laughing harshly) Why don't you tell her the truth?

MRS. GRAVES. (Shocked) Clifford! Your brother doesn't lie.

CLIFFORD. (Stares at her a long moment, then turns away despairingly.) Dear God, no. No one has ever lied, cheated, robbed, or killed, have they, Mother? Not for you, they haven't.

(MRS. GRAVES ignores him, fussing over RICHARD)

MARY ALICE. Cliff, please.

MRS. GRAVES. Now, come with me, dear, and we'll have a good hot breakfast for you in a jiffy.

(RICHARD and MRS. GRAVES exit through kitchen door. CLIFFORD moves D. R. to fireplace, MARY ALICE watching him.)

CLIFFORD. (Between clenched teeth) One of these times, I am going to tell her. It's almost more than I can bear.

MARY ALICE. Cliff, are you *that* jealous of Richard?

CLIFFORD (Touching the figurines on the mantlepiece) Jealous? Yes, I guess you could say I'm jealous . . . but certainly not of Richard.

MARY ALICE. I don't understand. Jealous of whom, then?

CLIFFORD. Why, of her, of course.

MARY ALICE. (Amazed, coming toward him) Your mother! (Stares at him) You must be joking! (Back to her, he doesn't answer. She puts her hand on his arm.) Cliff, what are you talking about?

CLIFFORD. (Brushing her aside, moving upstage to back of davenport.) Just leave me alone, Mary Alice. It doesn't matter, anyway.

MARY ALICE. Yes, I think it does matter very much. For the ten years we've been married, I've watched you resenting your mother, but I never understood why. It's

about time we got to the bottom of this. Now I want to know, Clifford.

CLIFFORD. (Silent a moment, head bent over the sofa. His fist slams into the sofa back and he bursts out.) She's . . . she's just so damned *innocent*! It's not right that *she* should have what the rest of us have lost. Don't you see that?

MARY ALICE. (Watching him) I'm beginning to see . . .

CLIFFORD. (Moving restlessly U. L.) People like her upset the very delicate balance of the adult world. I mean, the only way we can bear what we have become is if we know everyone else is in the same condition. (Looking up at pictures above desk.) She is a constant, sore reminder of what we once were, and no longer are . . .

MARY ALICE. (Moving to stand behind davenport.) Go on.

CLIFFORD. (Lifting a pair of old baby shoes from desk.) I can remember the day I first realized I no longer belonged to my mother's world . . . That summer I had worked hard, mowing and raking, to earn enough money to buy my own bicycle. (He pauses, remembering, and then continues, as if to himself.) One night, while I was dreaming of shiny chrome and spinning wheels, I woke to see my father holding my wooden money box. I pretended to be asleep and he slipped out the door, leaving the box empty.

MARY ALICE. Your own father robbed you?

CLIFFORD. (Brought back to reality, he turns sharply to MARY ALICE.) When I told Mother what he had done, do you know what she said? She absolutely denied that Father would do such a thing, said I had imagined the whole thing, that the money was only misplaced. (Drops the baby shoes to the desk.) Well, that day I lost both money and a child's innocence. And I knew how wrong my mother was, because I had seen with my own eyes what human nature really is.

MARY ALICE. Don't you think that's a lopsided view of man? We're not all as wicked as you make out.

CLIFFORD. (Turning) Oh, yes, we're every bit that evil! You can't see that very clearly, Mary Alice, because you, too, have never quite grown up.

MARY ALICE. Well, if by "growing up," you mean becoming the bitter, disillusioned person that you are . . .!

CLIFFORD. *Everyone* has to grow up . . . face pain and disappointment. Then, when we know the secret, we must help each other to bear it. But some people just are not sharing the burden.

(MRS. GRAVES enters from the kitchen door, carrying a cookbook. She is in a state of agitated indecision.)

MRS. GRAVES. I've been thinking, Mary Alice. Shall we have that nice roast beef for dinner tonight . . . or maybe a casserole . . . or fried chicken? (She presses her hand to her head.) What do you think, Mary Alice? . . .

MARY ALICE. (Patting her arm) Now, don't worry about it, Mother. Let's go see what we have. (They start to leave.)

CLIFFORD. (Turning) Wait, Mother, sit down. I've been wanting to talk to you for a long time now. (He seats her in davenport.)

MARY ALICE. (Warningly) Cliff, be careful!

MRS. GRAVES. (Wonderingly) What is it, Clifford? Have I done something wrong?

CLIFFORD. (Standing before her) No, not exactly. It's about something you should know, Mother.

MARY ALICE. Cliff, for God's sake, leave her alone.

CLIFFORD. (Aside) Shut up, will you? (He is silent for a moment.) Mother, do you remember that big orange tomcat we had when I was a boy?

MRS. GRAVES. (Nodding happily) Oh, wasn't he a fine one! Out all night . . . but the sweetest little thing, really. (Saddening) He died, though . . . I never did know why.

CLIFFORD. (Bending to her) But I told you then how he died, Mother. Don't you remember?

MRS. GRAVES. (Vaguely, looking away) I . . . uh . . . I'm not sure.

CLIFFORD. (On his knees in front of her, gripping her shoulders) Yes, you are, too. (With emphasis and slowly) I knocked his head in with a rock. Isn't that right, Mother?

MRS. GRAVES. (Struggling to rise) I . . . I . . . I don't know what you're talking about.

MARY ALICE. Clifford, let her go! (Pulling at his hands) (CLIFFORD flings her off. Richard appears, unnoticed, in the kitchen door, holding an ice pack to his eye.)

CLIFFORD. You are going to hear and understand me this time. (She looks away.) You see, Mother, you never chose to see any of the bad things Richard and I ever did. You closed your eyes to that part of us. But then we were each only half a person to you, and—knowing what we really were—we resented that. (He shakes her slightly.) I killed that cat, Mother, hoping you would really see me for the first time. (He watches her eagerly for some response.)

MRS. GRAVES. (Vaguely) Dinner . . . I must see to dinner . . . Chicken, did I say . . . ?

CLIFFORD (Turning away in despair) Why won't you listen to me? I'm just trying to let you in on the secret so you can be like everyone else.

MARY ALICE. (Helping MRS. GRAVES up) Come, Mother. Clifford didn't mean to upset you. Let's see what to have for dinner. (They exit right.)

RICHARD. (Coming forward, angry) Why don't you lay off her, Cliff? What're you trying to do, anyway—drive her *completely* looney?

CLIFFORD. (In disgust) Oh, don't give me that old line, Richard. She's not crazy and you know it.

RICHARD. No, I don't know it.

CLIFFORD. (Intensely) Think back, now. Remember how this fogginess of hers first started? You were old enough then to notice the change.

RICHARD. (Silent a moment) It was after Father left us. She always thought he was so perfect.

CLIFFORD. What else do you remember?

RICHARD. I remember she read his note to us . . . and then, that night . . .

CLIFFORD. Go on.

RICHARD. (Painfully) I heard sirens and men's voices . . . Mother being carried downstairs . . . blood on her throat and hands. I think she still carried the knife, but maybe I dreamed that.

CLIFFORD. Poor Mother! She didn't have the strength to finish what she started. After that, she began tuning out reality, remember? Over the years, she shut out everything that was unpleasant and evil, refusing to believe that such things existed.

RICHARD. But why are you bringing all of this up now?

CLIFFORD. (Back to him) I just think it's about time she had to face facts and see things the way they really are . . . instead of living in that little private paradise.

RICHARD. And what's the matter with living in a paradise, may I ask? It's very few of us who can do it successfully, God knows. Just leave her the way she is.

CLIFFORD. (Sarcastically) That would be very convenient for you, now, wouldn't it? A loving, unsuspecting old mother to dote over you. Why, sure, you know when you have a good thing going. Let's not spoil things for dear little Richard, is that it?

RICHARD. (Seriously) No, it's just that I don't want her hurt.

CLIFFORD. (Sitting on davenport) That's fine, coming from you—having spent your short life trying to show her how evil people really can be!

RICHARD. Yes, and for that reason, I know better than anyone else just how out of touch with reality she really is. Cliff, she *never* admitted that I'd do anything wrong . . . and, like you say, I've spent my whole life doing wrong things. Only I don't do them to prove anything, anymore—that's just the way I am now. (Pleading with him) You can't tear her up for that. If she ever really saw both of us . . . why, she just couldn't take it!

CLIFFORD. Aha! That's what I thought. Still afraid of exposure, aren't you, little brother? Well, that *does* seem like a good place to start in telling our mother the facts of life. (He goes to kitchen door and calls.) Mother! Would you come in here a minute, please?

RICHARD. You're crazy. You don't know what you're doing!

CLIFFORD. Yes, I do. (At desk, dangling baby shoes by a finger.) See these? Well, they don't fit either of us anymore, so let's all grow up and step into our adult shoes. (Throwing shoes to the floor.) We can't have our mother

still thinking that fire doesn't burn and bees don't sting, now, can we? (Smiling grimly, he goes to the door again.) Mother!

RICHARD. (Quietly) I'll kill you if anything happens to her.

CLIFFORD. Ha! Then you will have committed the ultimate crime and can retire from your profession with honor.

(RICHARD turns away to mantle, head in hands. MRS. GRAVES comes to the door, followed by MARY ALICE. MRS. GRAVES is carrying a stack of mail and a letter opener.)

MRS. GRAVES. Did you call me, Clifford?

CLIFFORD. Yes, Mother. You and I are going to have a nice, long talk in the kitchen where we won't be bothered.

MRS. GRAVES. A talk . . . just the two of us? Oh, that will be nice, Clifford. I'll just bring my letters to open while we talk. (She turns and goes back through the door.)

MARY ALICE. (Detaining CLIFFORD) What are you going to do?

CLIFFORD. I'm going to make her understand me, if it's the last thing I do! (He goes out.)

MARY ALICE. Clifford . . .!

RICHARD. (From fireplace) Let him go, Mary Alice. He'll never let any of us have a moment's peace until we're all as enlightened, and miserable, as he is.

MARY ALICE. I don't understand why . . . all of a sudden . . .

RICHARD. He's been building up to this since he was ten years old. I only hope she's too far gone to understand him.

MARY ALICE. (Realizing for the first time) You really care for her, don't you, Richard? Odd, I never thought of you loving anyone.

RICHARD. (Brusquely) You know, I can understand how Cliff feels. She used to make me furious and frustrated, too, and I wanted to hurt her.

MARY ALICE. But not now?

RICHARD. No, I think that too many people know too much about pain and evil. I'd join her there, if I could.

MARY ALICE. You talk as if she lives in a different world.

RICHARD. She does—a world of innocence and peace that has very little to do with Old Mother Earth.

MARY ALICE. (In wonder) Richard, I've never heard you talk like this. (He is embarrassed and pokes in the fireplace.) I always thought you enjoyed your way of life.

RICHARD. (Attempting to regain his flippancy) Sure, lots of laughs. We sit in the bar every night and pour beer on each other's heads. Then, sometimes, when we're bored, we hold up a filling station for kicks.

MARY ALICE. I don't believe you really do those things.

RICHARD. Oh, God, Not you, too! (He moves to davenport, flinging himself into it.) You know, I think Cliff and I understand each other better than anyone else does. We each know what the other is capable of and we don't have to pull any punches.

MARY ALICE. (Perched on the arm of the chair, facing RICHARD.) You must be right, because I certainly don't understand either one of you . . . especially my own husband. Cliff has always kept me at a distance, Richard—never talked about what was bothering him.

RICHARD. I know. I had hoped he might talk it out with you.

MARY ALICE. A few minutes ago, he tried to, but I'm afraid it's too late now for the two of us . . . So many years of brooding and silence . . . (Sadly) I might have been able to help.

(MRS. GRAVES comes through the kitchen door, humming a soft tune. The letters are gone, but she still carries the letter opener, now stained red. Carried in her right hand, the opener is hidden from the audience. The other two stare at her, not noticing the letter opener, at first. She sees the baby shoes on the floor, and bends to pick them up, smiling.)

MRS. GRAVES. (Talking to herself) Dear little things. Why I can't seem to remember which of the boys wore these. Maybe Clifford . . . no, Clifford never *would* wear

baby shoes . . . (Sadly, shaking her head) I don't know why he couldn't do that for his mother.

MARY ALICE. (Stepping toward her, anxiously) Mother . . .? Are you all right?

MRS. GRAVES. (Vaguely) All right . . .? Oh, yes, dear. Everything's all right . . . *now*. I did what I had to . . . (She looks down at the letter opener.)

(The others see it for the first time. As she continues to speak, both faces show growing understanding and horror. Looking up at them, she tries to explain.)

MRS. GRAVES. He was saying things that weren't true, you know. I couldn't listen to him.

MARY ALICE. (Hand to her mouth) Oh, God! (She runs offstage, through kitchen door.)

(RICHARD is numb. He stands motionless, staring at his mother. She gently places letter opener on desk and takes RICHARD'S arm. They walk downstage center together, RICHARD'S head bent.)

MRS. GRAVES. (Cheerfully) Now, dear, won't we have a fine time together, just the two of us! Why, we can play double solitaire every night and look over old pictures of you children. (MARY ALICE'S scream is heard, offstage. RICHARD starts and looks toward door. MRS. GRAVES goes on talking, obliviously.) You know, Richard, I feel just as happy as if I was in Paradise, right this minute!

(CURTAIN)

Carol Raney

SWEETNESS OF A COOKIE

How long ago was the day
when we ran barefooted,
from your red car
with shiny wheels—
Through the rain
and over
puddles on the sidewalk,
To buy breakfast
at the little bakery on the corner?
I really can't remember what day it was,
but I'll never forget
the big round cookie
you bought there,
And how sweet it tasted
when we ate it
in the red car,
And the windows steamed up
and the rain
came down
around us—
And how you looked
at me,
after we washed it down with kisses,
And brushed the crumbs
on the floor.

Carole Halicki

A SENTIMENTAL LOVE POEM TO YOU

all around
virginity heaves a parting sigh
the paintings on the windows run
(whose tears)
sleeping Loves
have waited for you a thousand years—
see their faces in the window
and spring, a little behind,
coming up blue.

I've heard the sky
has been mapped out in concise little squares
and will be sold as such
to those wishing to set aside a space
and the rarest collection of stars to be seen
in a New York museum
it is admirable to be alarmed
and fashionable to resist
you say where do you come in
but you know the answer better than I
beneath a field of wild darkness

share with me
as if you were dying
fading star
climbing through the days as if
there were no end but everlasting decline.
philosophies of independent hues
Love, I am the rainbow in your mind
coloring your dreams, traces
of me lingering behind your smiles.

it is in the womb of desperation
that light is conceived
and truth emerges
and we are born with a question on our lips
and the single elements of an abstract plan
and the Rights to Creation—
love that is deep is also infinite
sleeping Loves blossom in our eyes

mine is the reflection in the window
through which you witness
the changing seasons.

Diana Dube

"OUR DIRTY OLD MAN"

(Dedicated to the one we love)

With lovely soft hair we love to touch
And blue eyes that gleam in blacklight,
He's a well-known twenty-three year old freshman
on our campus
Sent to us with regards from the war in Viet Nam
and the Medic Corps
(Among other things).
We won his experiment—
What we won, we don't know;
Not to mention the fact
We're afraid to ask
Because he's a notorious woman-chaser,
Lewd and lecherous and lustful
(Among other things).
Which is why we call him our Dirty Old Man
And why his birthday present was a seat between us at *Hair*.
He pops prescription pills from Rachel Cooper
That make him spacey over the phone.
And drinks booze from his private stock
And just loves to play Ah, Shit! with us
Or Screw Your Buddy on occasion.
Some people may think he's a son of a bitch,
But he's not as bad as all that.
He's kind and considerate:
He warns you when he's going to drop the phone.
We don't really mean to cut him down.
He is quite sweet and thoughtful
And we love him very much
For better or for worse—
Even if he doesn't want to get married.
He's quite unique and different from the rest.
That's why we say (in the language of love)
"Vive la différence".

*Sandra Welshimer and
Rebecca Donze*

SICKENED YELLOW CRETIN GIRL

When she smiles her cute lip cracks thick,
The blood runs hot, cooled quickened
Over her cancerous cold sores dripping

Onto a powdered white potted chin,
Scratching face, hair, crotch grins
Through an egomorphic maidenhead.

Heat within, glows throughout
The fiery moon fever throbs but she does
Not confess. Instead she simpers sweetly.

Sunburned gut belches blackened crusty blood
Never to dry out endless backstream
Over the tide of the snickering floodlands.

James O'Malley

TO A YOUNG GIRL CRYING

In the quiet cold of darkness
Your eyes were bled to me
And streams flowed down
Your bravest cheeks
That called me to touch.
You had seen our dreams
And loved them
But feared they wouldn't live.
I saw these things as you did
And envied you your tears
But I could not cry them
For our fates cannot be tied.
The book will not allow it.
Its last word reads,
Almost
And echoes back,
Almost
And whispers low,
Almost.

Wayne Bleifield

I'M SO HAPPY

I'm so happy and that's with no intentions of promise.
Just simple happiness, bred from the depths of
my heart and yours.

I feel so good and look ahead with no reservations
and yet no real plans of intent.
I just try to be me and let you be you and if,
by chance, we should discover each other in the
turmoil of today—
together it will be beautiful.
But I am happy—
and no one can deny me that feeling.

You see, we talk and are true with each other
and don't try to deceive.
We try hard—not to inhibit or ask too much.
And I catch myself doing just that:
inhibiting
and
asking too much.

Oh well, I'm still happy and to thank you
would seem humiliating, maybe just trivial.
But anyway, you are a part of that happiness and
I can only hope that I'm a part of yours.
I think I am.

And notice love wasn't mentioned once.

Nancy Sweeney

WORD

Twelve days passed
without word from you.

Today
word came.

I still care though.

Almost as much
as before.

But if you want it
this way,
There's not much
I can do.

Except hope you'll change your mind.

Carole Halicki

silently slipping in

silently slipping in
and gripping my very soul
helping half a person
reach a silent om --
a whole again.
I am whole when,
You, my friend,
silently seep into
my every pore and
what's more
I feel anew
that something with
You grows into greatness.
Do not leave again, my friend,
but stay
inside
and
simmer.

Judith Fassino

THE BROADWAY LIMITED: REVISITED

Funny how remote an issue such as an Air Controllers' slow-down can alter an individual's plans.

Well in advance of April 2, I had purchased a round-trip plane ticket from Chicago to Philadelphia. My cousin was to be married in a Main Line Church and I wanted to honor my invitation.

Reports of federal injunctions and arbitration convinced me early in the week that my still uncanceled flight would remain in service. Even my travel agent was confident that my plans would be unaffected by the slowdown.

The ringing of my telephone woke me early Thursday morning. Picking up the phone, I heard, "Hello, Mr. McKelvy, this is the travel agency; I'm sorry, but we just received word that your flight has been cancelled."

"Aren't there any other flights?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid not."

"Well, look, I have to be in Philadelphia by Saturday and I'd like to be there tomorrow if possible. Is there any other . . ."

"Yes, I think I could put you on the *Broadway Limited*."

Upon hearing the name of the legendary train, I recalled having ridden on it as a child.

"It leaves at 4:15 this afternoon and should reach Philadelphia by 8:30 tomorrow morning."

"All right, go ahead and make the arrangements."

Perhaps because I had not been there for such a long time, Chicago's Union Station seemed alien and unfamiliar to me. The great hall which had added grandeur to the building was gone—victim to modernization. Construction work was taking place in and around the track area as trains from LaSalle and Grand Central Stations were scheduled to be rerouted into Union Station.

Checking in at the ticket desk, I was informed that a coach seat had been reserved for me on the twelfth car of the train. Because of the unusually large crowds, I was unable to find a place to sit in the station. I bought a pack of cigars and some reading material for the trip and pushed my luggage out to gate #48 where the *Broadway Limited* stood in preparation for its more than 1000 mile journey to New York City.

By 3:45 a large throng had gathered and at 4:00 the following announcement was made over the PA system, "All passengers holding tickets on Penn Central's *Broadway Limited* bound for Fort Wayne, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia and New York may now board at gate number 48. No visitors will be allowed on the train."

As the conductor inspected my ticket at the gate he smiled and said, "Your car is the last one, sir. The conductor aboard will direct you to your seat. Have a pleasant trip."

Childish enthusiasm bubbled within me as I grabbed my luggage and climbed aboard the train. My seat was located to the rear of the car. I was delighted to find that I would be able to sit by the window.

Within a few minutes the car was filled to capacity. I took interest in the conversations of some of my fellow passengers.

"Well, at least I'll have some time to finish up that report."

"Flying always did make me nervous."

"Now I'll have a chance to get some rest."

"I heard that they had to make up a special train for this trip. Apparently the *Broadway* normally runs with three or four cars."

A young man who appeared to be just a few years older than myself took the seat next to me.

He introduced himself as "Bob" and informed me that he was travelling from Minneapolis to Boston via New York City.

A gentle lurch set us in motion at 4:20 and we were soon rolling out of the station into the sunlight. Having passed through the sprawling yards adjoining the station, the train gradually accelerated moving through the slush covered South Side of Chicago. A brief stop was made at the ramshackle Englewood Station, and the *Broadway* was soon cruising along the Southern Shores of Lake Michigan.

As we neared Gary, Indiana we were afforded an unusual view of the South Works Steel Mill complex. Noxious sulfur fumes permeated the train's ventilators, impressing us of the extent of the pollution dilemma.

My seat mate and I wondered how people could work in such an atmosphere. Shortly before the stop at Gary, Indiana, a conductor entered the car and announced, "First call for dinner."

"Would you like to go eat now?" asked Bob.

"I am hungry, but I don't want to have to wait in line."

"Come on, I bet we won't."

Together Bob and I ventured forward towards the dining car. Enroute I read a notice which stated that the *Broadway Limited* was one of several Penn Central trains slated for possible cancellation. Before reaching our destination, we passed through three other coach cars and a club car.

Much to my surprise, immediate seating was available in the diner.

The man who seated us directed a waiter to our table. Bob and I both decided on the \$2.00 steak dinner and ordered cocktails.

"Would you gentlemen mind sharing this table?" the maitré d inquired.

"No, not at all", I replied.

A young business man from Fort Wayne was seated.

"Hi, my name is Paul Clark."

Bob and I introduced ourselves and the three of us were soon engaged in friendly conversation.

"You know," observed Paul as we sipped our professionally prepared cocktails, "This could never happen on a plane."

A complimentary bottle of Paul Masson Rosé was served with dinner. Observing that the train's movement had been reduced to a slower speed, I asked our waiter why.

"That ice storm we had the other night downed power lines in Northern Indiana. A lot of crossing gates are out of service so we have to slow down to avoid accidents. But don't worry, we'll make up for lost time in Ohio tonight."

Two middle aged businessmen seated themselves at the table across the aisle from us and introduced themselves. Like my new found friends and myself, the two men had intended to fly but were forced to take the train because of the slowdown. Like us, they were in high spirits and were prepared to make light of the situation.

When the announcement was made that we were nearing Fort Wayne, Bob, Paul, our two friends across the aisle and I were still seated in the diner.

"It's been nice talking to you fellas—have a nice trip." Paul said as he excused himself.

Shortly after our stop in Fort Wayne, Bob and I returned to the Club Car to relax after our delicious dinner. I observed that drinks were priced high so I limited myself to one beer. Darkness had obscured our view of the countryside, but I could tell that the engineer was opening the throttle to make up for lost time.

Bob and I talked of the theater and his plans to form a dramatics company in Boston. Other passengers drifted into the lounge and a warm atmosphere of *comaraderie* soon existed. Only when a businessman who had been drinking heavily tripped and fell against a young mother and her baby did conditions seem anything but friendly. A stately looking man dressed in a blue suit, assisted the fallen man to his feet and led him from the car. The rest of us reassured

the woman who was only worried about her baby. "I was afraid to travel without my husband", she admitted, "but now I feel much better."

When the *Broadway* made its first stop in Ohio I descended the ramp and breathed in the cold but sweet smelling air. A conductor motioned me back on the train, and pulled the steps and door shut. "We should make Pittsburgh by midnight", he stated in response to my question.

The lounge gradually emptied as the night wore on. Bob and I played a few hands of canasta with our dinner friends and discovered that one was a confirmed Republican while his partner was a Democrat. We talked politics, reviewing past Presidents and appraising the Nixon Administration and then I announced that I was going to try to get some sleep before we reached Pittsburgh.

Sleep proved elusive because of a heat ventilator next to my seat and because a group of my fellow passengers were suffering from insomnia. I walked to the platform on the rear of the train to escape from the heat and was soon discovered by a conductor who promised he would readjust the thermostat. I joined briefly in the discussion and then returned to my seat where I lapsed into a deep sleep.

When the motion of the train woke me, I asked if we were in Pittsburgh.

An elderly man who was sitting across the aisle said, "We've been out of Pittsburgh for more than an hour."

I was disappointed because I had wanted to contact relatives there. Wondering where Bob was, I walked back to the lounge car where I discovered him asleep on a couch with a curtain wrapped around him.

Walking further up in the train, I encountered three of the conductors in the dining car where they were filling out passenger reports. One of them asked, "Where do you belong?"

"Back in car 12. Why?"

"There are nothing but pullman cars ahead. Why don't you go back where you belong?"

I complied and told the insomnia group in my car about the incident.

Half jokingly, one man said, "I guess we're the peasants and they're the aristocracy. Let's go up there and throw them out."

Another attempt at sleep was made successful with the aid of a pillow which I rented from the conductor.

When I awoke, the train was standing in the Altoona station. The town looked desolate in the gray haze of pre-dawn. I dozed off again and was reawakened when I heard the conductor announce that we were about to travel around famous Horseshoe Bend.

My view of our engine which was already opposite us on the other side of the gorge was obscured by a freight train. Before the other train passed car 12 I marvelled at the sweeping panorama I was afforded of the snow covered Appalachians.

Bob and I enjoyed the beauty of the remaining ranges and foothills in the dining car as we feasted on a multi-course breakfast. Once on the eastern side of the Appalachians we passed through gently rolling Pennsylvania farm country.

Our waiter explained that the octagonal symbols on the barns were an indication that we were in Pennsylvania Dutch country. "Those are hex signs. The people paint them up there for good luck."

Of particular interest to me was seeing an Amish couple attired in their black wardrobes, waiting in a horse drawn buggy at the railroad crossing.

I briefly disembarked from the train when we stopped in Harrisburg, the state capital. The golden dome atop the Capitol Building stood magnificently against the richly blue sky.

Two and one half hours later the *Broadway Limited* slid to a stop in Paoli, a Mainline suburb of Philadelphia. I pulled my luggage down from the overhead rack, bid my fellow passengers a heartfelt farewell and stepped from the train, which had transported me almost a thousand miles, knowing that I might never again enjoy so enlightening an experience.

Charles McKelvy

AMERICA, AMERICA

America,
When I was only so-high
I used to play baseball with you
Down at the corner.
You would hit me pop-ups
And I would brush the dust out
Of my eyes and catch them
In my brand new Nellie Fox autographed mit.
Remember?

America,
You were a thousand fathers
Leaving with their sons
For a weekend fishing trip in Wisconsin.

America,
You were a carnival and cotton candy
Stuck on my face—
Riverview Park and roller coasters.
Remember?

America,
You were the crowd
Strummin' on the ol' banjo,
Talking about the Mississippi,
Singing songs and calling her
The Big Muddy.
America, America
Long time no see
Old buddy.

America,
When I was only five or six
I can remember crawling
To the foot of my bed to see
What the sirens were for.
Tell me, America,
Was that you?
If it was, you scared me.
I was only little and
I was always afraid the sirens
Were coming for me
And I'd be snatched away from my
Mommy and Daddy.
Excuse me.
I didn't mean to accuse you.

But I was just wondering.
But tell the truth (if you still know how).
Those were your red lights flashing
And causing all that commotion outside weren't they?
By the way, tell me,
Who were the sirens for?

America,
Don't you recognize me?
I used to sit next to you
At the ball park,
And we'd sing and cheer together.
Our team was a big winner
In those days,
But we had much better coaching then.

Fine, America!
You'll take me out to
The ball game again
But your peanuts and crackerjack
Are stale.
I'm older now
And I don't like beer
So quit shoving it down my throat.
And besides,
I don't like winning
If we have to
Cheat!
America,
Your cigar smoke
Is nauseating me
So take me home.

No! Wait!
Don't take me home just yet.
I can't stand to hear Old Lady America
Across the street in the morning,
Hands on her hips,
Screaming loud enough for everyone to hear.
She'll be bitching about how
Some of the kids in the neighborhood
Broke her windows last night.
She screams so loud
You'd think she'd wake everyone up.
(But she doesn't.)
She likes it better when everyone is sleeping.

Well damn it anyway!
I know for a fact she
Took a whole carload of
Them kids and dumped them
Somewhere out in the jungle.
And some of them kids ain't
Ever going to find their way back either.

Last week one of my friends
Ducked away and hid
When she tried
To take another carload away.
He got away, but no one has seen him lately.

Wait a minute!
Is that what the sirens
Were for?

America,
I'm all set to go to school this Fall.
I bought myself a brand new
Gas mask to make sure I get to
Classes safe and on time.
America,
Is it that I've gotten smart?
Much of my generation has gotten wise
To your alibis
And quite a few of your lies.

America,
You are going to have to give me
Some privacy.
You are crowding me
And you are coming around just
A little too often.

America, I'll be with you in a minute.
There is someone at the back door.
America, there is someone at the front door.
America, someone is on the phone.
America, I can't breathe your air.
America, you water is burning my skin.
America, there is something wrong
With the color T. V. you sold me.
All I keep getting is
black and white
black and white
black and white.

Quit playing with the knobs
Because the reception isn't
Getting any better.
Maybe we need a new picture tube?
This one seems to be faulty
And I don't like the picture I'm receiving.
America, quit shaking out the
Rug in my face.
Let's stop for a breather.
How about some good old fashioned
Lemonade to talk things over?
No, America.
I'm sorry.
I don't have any champagne.

America,
You are a different feeling
Than before.
Now you are the mood of the
Perfect marriage gone sour.
And you are obviously not staying
Together for the sake of the children.

America,
What has happened to you?
We used to be friends
And now I can't even talk to you.
Why are you always too busy for me?
Come on, America,
Look at me.
Aren't we ever going
To speak to each other again?
I know I'm stubborn too
But how can I talk to you
While you are wearing that helmet
And tossing that club around in your hands.

America,
I remember you.
You are a faded picture
In my scrapbook of idols.

America,
Can't we talk it over?
I admit you have given me quite a bit.

Things a lot of people don't have
And more.
But how about the things I really need?

O America,
Sad day.
Your flag is at half mast again
And I'm afraid you're not going to
Listen no matter how hard I try.

America,
There is a fallen dove
With a broken wing
Lying in your front yard.
Will you take it inside to heal
Or will you leave it
To rot
And die?

Dan Krupa

"LIFE, LIBERTY, THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS"

I went home last weekend and
looked
at my brother.
He's fourteen already—
or as my parents would say when he's testing his
independence—
"only" fourteen.

There are times he still insists
on making noise simply to be
making noise
or disagreeing simply to be
disagreeing
And I think "Dear God, I wasn't like that—
was I?"
He's starting to speak, now
of life
and God
and making love
of "cabbages and kings"
And I listen.
His childish dreams of greatness
echo
loudly in a virgin brain.
He gives no thought to
training
or talent
or testing himself
no trials
or tribulations
only tinsel.
Hollywood and Woodstock
are distant only in miles.
His mind has them on the drugstore stool
with Lana Turner.
His quest includes a model wife
in their model home
with their model family.
Raquel Welch
in a Beatles mansion
with a little boy who plays
Little League baseball.

Only fourteen
and his dreams are those of a fool

to expect a happy, free life
to expect a happy life
to expect a life.

Soon he'll be nineteen.

Judi Ward

DEATH OF A FARM

There is no happiness here,
there is no joy.
Only walls
that once stood strong
against winds and rains
and the blaze of summer suns—
But crumble now,
and sway with the wind
and weaken with the rain.

Trees that rebelled storms
and drought
and lightning of summer nights—
And pushed away the sun's blazes
from the grasses beneath
leafy boughs,
Have fallen
to loneliness
to make way for nothing.

Wagons and racks once used
helped fill the barn
with hay and grains—
Only to sit idle now,
rusted,
and forgotten.

Barns give way to the silent rains
that beat upon the aging boards,
And winds that batter under the eaves
and through half opened doors,
turn the lonely building
Into a skeleton of the past.

Once a family lived in the house,
and held up the walls
that held in love and joy
And happy times.

The family too stood strong
against the winds and rains,
and worked in the blaze of summer suns
Far too many to count.

But walls cave in,
and loneliness creeps between the lath
and silence dominates the nothingness that remains,
And swells throughout the emptiness.

Chaotic jumbles of forgotten life
decaying in the silent emptiness
of a deserted farm house,
Haunts the lonely and desolate memory
of a farmer
who tilled the land,
And gave his sweat
and time,
and muscle
And finally himself—
to the land.

Carole Halicki