Lights and Shadows

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Rest (ink wash)</td>
<td>Melissa Fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Serenity Through Turkey in the Straw (Fiction)</td>
<td>Summer Twyman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>One Night Stand (acrylic painting)</td>
<td>Lane Emerson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Tequila Sunrise (poetry)</td>
<td>Christopher Halvorson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Just Off Exit 95 (Fiction)</td>
<td>Jennifer Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Utterly Alone (computer print)</td>
<td>Kelly Boyd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Miracle at the Church of the Immaculate Deception (Fiction)</td>
<td>Melonie Farley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Backseat Driver (acrylic painting)</td>
<td>Larry Akers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Christina (ink wash)</td>
<td>Melissa Fuller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Tears for the Living (Fiction)</td>
<td>K.D. Blake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Raku Vessel</td>
<td>Robert Grimes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>&quot;G&quot; (pen and ink)</td>
<td>Lane Emerson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Killing Time (poetry)</td>
<td>Christopher Halvorson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Chaos and Confusion (acrylic painting)</td>
<td>Larry Akers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Cherokee Eyes (informal essay)</td>
<td>Robert Bryan Crisp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Triangles (high fire stoneware)</td>
<td>Marie Robinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Richest Kids in Seattle (informal essay)</td>
<td>Christopher Halvorson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Something's Interesting (pencil drawing)</td>
<td>Joel Byrom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Untitled (photograph)</td>
<td>Larry Akers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Alabama (essay)</td>
<td>K.D. Blake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Torso (plaster piece)</td>
<td>Mary Beth Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Looking into Roger Fry's &quot;Omega Virginal&quot; (poetry)</td>
<td>Robert Bryan Crisp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Stanley (short story)</td>
<td>Larry Wiseman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Lamentation (acrylic painting)</td>
<td>Mary Beth Williams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Thursday is a Much More Happenin' Time at the Mall (poetry)</td>
<td>Kevin D. Humphries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
36 Paradise Regained (poetry) .............................................. Tania Williams
37 Galatea (computer print) ................................................. Robert Grimes
38 Endless Cycle (essay) .................................................. Nita Guinn
39 Tea Pot (high fire stoneware) ......................................... Margaret Chein
40 John the Baptist (poetry) .............................................. Melonie Farley
41 Bliss (computer) ........................................................... Robert Grimes
42 Best Friends (wood cut) ............................................... Mary Beth Williams
43 Chocolate Covered Bronx (poetry) ............................... Christopher Halvorson
44 Albert's (informal essay) .............................................. Tania Williams
45 Summertime (pastel) ..................................................... Melissa Fuller
46 Containing Eagles (high fire stoneware) ....................... Jamey Simmons
47 Mindy (poetry) ............................................................. Kevin Humphries
48 For Stacia (poetry) ....................................................... Sandra Sparks
49 An Interview with Frank (short story) ......................... Shannon Heupel
50 Bronco Buster (acrylic painting) ................................. Mary Beth Williams
51 Pinch Pot (smoke fired earthware) ............................... Sujata Savant
52 The Time for Prayer (poetry) ....................................... Jennifer Lane
53 Van Gogh's Legacy (mixed media) ............................... Lee King
54 Letter to Maggie (essay) ............................................... Shirley A. Mitchell
55 Grandpa (fiction) ........................................................ Tania Williams
56 Plant (watercolor) ........................................................ Marie Robinson
57 Les Petits Papillons Jaunes (poetry) ............................ Jo Lynn McClure
58 Crescent (soapstone) ..................................................... Tiffany Stauffer
59 Allegiance (photograph) .............................................. Larry Akers
60 Lidded Raku Vessel ...................................................... Margaret Chein
61 Ode to Pandora (Raku Fired) ....................................... Robert Grimes

High School Writing Competition

61 Fields of Glory (short story) ......................................... Jeremy Sanderson
66 Moonshine (short story) .............................................. April Sivley
70 I am Music (essay) ..................................................... Sally Kay Landham
72 Change the Channel (poetry) ....................................... Meagan Rikard

1994 Lights and Shadows – 3
Robert Lee Hawkins whistled “Turkey in the Straw” as he washed the last iron skillet that he had dirtied while he cooked up his breakfast. A decision had weighed heavily on the old man’s mind until today. His wife, Ruby, who lay helplessly in a nursing home, unable to even control her bladder now, had just called. R.L. knew that Ruby had not been quite herself since she suffered a stroke back in early spring. Nevertheless, he seemed to always fight frustrating anger every time he talked to her.

It happened all at once, R.L. remembered as he carefully dried his dishes. Ruby used to be a very independent woman. She was a grand cook and a ROOK addict. The woman constantly crafted for the grandchildren. Making quilts, crocheted hats, knitting sweaters, cooking up sweets of every sort, doing various church duties, and keeping the house spotless kept her busy all the time. Then, unexpectedly, Ruby suffered a stroke while she was in the shower one morning. She fell unconscious, breaking her hip bone, which was brittle with old age. Ruby lost her ability to move around, along with her independence that day. She no longer could remember an entire communicated thought. She busied herself constantly cataloguing everyone she had every known, who their parents were, who their children were, who they married, if they ever did, who was still living, who was now dead, where they were buried, if they had pets, and so on. This made it harder to sit quiet and listen to Ruby than to sit quiet and listen to Brother Gordon preaching in the pulpit on a Sunday morning after fishing all night the night before. She also had drastic mood swings. This meant that within a single sentence she would laugh like a hyena, which often caused her to pee all over herself, then she would sob like a wet baby so pitifully that it was truly exhausting to sit in the same room with her.

Robert Lee, even at 87, was totally independent. He rose when the sun came up, cooked for himself, cleaned his mess, fed and tended to his old mutt, Roscow, did his own laundry, mowed his huge yard, did his own grocery shopping, read the Bible every day, and went to bed when the sun went down, except on Monday.
nights, when he stayed up until 9:00 to watch “Gunsmoke.”

The cuckoo clock sounded that it was now 9:00, and R.L. slowly went from his
kitchen, through the house, to the old front porch. He took with him his Bible, as he
did every morning at 9:00. He sat on the porch to read. He held the book too close
to his eyes, but he otherwise could not see it. Cataracts blurred his vision, and R. L.
had decided on his last visit to the doctor, that they would not be surgically removed,
because the doctors assumed he, just some old man, would kill off soon anyway. R.
L. could not stand the doctors, because they never cured what was ailing him, but
more often remedied some obsolete problem that did not amount to a hill of beans,
as far as Robert Lee was concerned. They always made sure that he left with a
handful of pills, which R. L. rarely took as directed. He was sure that the good Lord
would keep him in proper health as long as it was meant to be, and he did not expect
any man to do any better.

The heavy air did not stir on this day. The mosquitoes munched on the old man’s
hands. Roscow, the mutt, slept under the old shade tree, and if not for an occasional
flop of his tail, one might assume the dog had passed on. He read for an hour, as he
did every morning, and when the cuckoo called 10:00, R. L. got up, and opened the
screen door which screeched in agony. R. L. prepared to do what he did every
morning at 10:00, mow a patch of his enormous yard. This never ending task was one
that R. L. kept his own. Countless young folks promised to do the chore in half the
time it took the old man for a little bit of spending money. The church had even
offered to cut the yard for free, but Robert Lee was insistent on doing his own labor.

He put on his tattered Liberty overalls, and floppy straw hat, then walked out
the back door, to the barn, and proceeded to pull the old mower out of the tired
structure. Roscow yelped behind R. L., who as always, when the dog asked, obliged
with a “You’re a good old dog, Roscow,” and a pat on the head.

Before he could get the mower started, R. L. saw a car winding down the dirt
road that led into the holler, where his farm house sat. The fancy car belonged to R.
L. Junior, who R. L. was expecting some time before the evening.

Junior got out of the car looking at his watch, and said, “It’s a little hot to be
outside, today, isn’t it Dad?”

“Work’s gotta be done,” R. L. answered back, as he spat on the ground.

“You said that you wanted to discuss something with me today,” Junior said.

“Come in the house, son,” R. L. said, as he removed his hat and wiped his brow
with his handkerchief.

Junior took off his blazer jacket and hung it in the fancy car. The two men,
remarkably alike in features, but so different in fashion, opened the squeaky screen
door, and went into the house.

Junior sat on the hardened vinyl couch and mumbled something about the heat.
R. L. sat, not in his lazy chair, but beside his son on the old couch.

“I’ve been turning this over and over in my old noggin, and I have come to a very
important decision. With the winter coming on, I don’t see how I can take care of
your Mama here at home,” Robert Lee paused. He looked at the dusty photograph
on the wall of his overweight wife. He knew the woman in the nursing home missed
him more than she missed her health. He began to speak again, but his voice did not
come out. He cleared his throat and continued, “I hunted some in house nurses, but
there just ain’t no way I can afford a one of them. I’ve decided to sell the place and
move into the home with Ruby.”
Junior sat silently at first, like he had had the wind knocked out of him. Then his face turned red, and anyone could see that the grown man was fighting tears, "Daddy, that place will kill you! All the sick folks, and stinking odor; You’ll be confined indoors all the time, with nothing to do. Hell, Mama doesn’t even know who you are half the time you’re around her anyway. What in the world..." Junior stopped abruptly.

"I promised Ruby before the Lord, the day I took her as my wife that I would be with her until death parted us. I made that promise over 65 years ago, and I intend to keep it."

Robert Lee stood up. His shoe string muscles shook. His brow wrinkled and his bottom lip protruded. As he spoke spittle flew out of his mouth, "I promised Ruby before the Lord, the day I took her as my wife, that I would be with her until death parted us. I made that promise over 65 years ago, and I intend to keep it. Now, I am a man of my word. She is there, and by golly, I a'going."

Junior did not say anything else. It was rare to see the usually passive and tranquil man with any kind of intensity or emotion. The cuckoo began to call "Cuckoo...Cuckoo...cuckoo..." With each mechanical "Cuckoo," the tension in the room released a little bit. Finally, both men sat in silence. There was nothing more to say.

Robert Lee spent the next few months carefully packing away most of the things he had had for so many years, but would not need again. Family members came to pilfer through all of the belongings that could not go with R. L. to the home. Antique furniture, old pictures of long dead family members, some kitchenware, the old phonograph, the clocks Ruby had loved so, and virtually everything R. L. and Ruby had ever had together was taken from the old house. Dusty silhouettes sat where a lifetime's worth of fine junk had been before. The old man watched all this silently.

The day he was to leave, R. L. dressed in his Sunday best. Junior pulled up into the driveway in the fancy car. R. L. walked out the old screen door for the last time. It seemed to screech, "Farewell," before it crashed shut. Robert Lee crossed his trimmed yard and motioned for Roscow to get into the fancy car. Junior had reluctantly decided to take the old mutt. Robert Lee knew that the grandkids would love on him more than the old man ever had. The poor dog did not know quite what to do, after all, he had never been invited into a car before. He had even gotten a few whippings for putting his muddy paws inside one. R. L. had to pick up a switch before Roscow would get into the car. Robert Lee smelled the damp holler air, then, got into Junior's car. As it pulled out of the driveway, R. L. looked at the house he had built by hand so many years ago. He silently bid the old home, the shade tree, the rickety porch, and his yard farewell. The vehicle drove up the hill from the holler to the highway. He sat back in the air conditioned plush, and like a man going to fight a battle in a country he has never seen, Robert Lee Hawkins anticipated the hardest challenge this long life had given to him. He nervously tapped the dash, then forced himself to find some peace while he whistled "Turkey in the Straw."
Honorable Mention - Poetry

Tequila Sunrise

by Christopher Halvorson

We drank moonshine until we passed out on the love sofa at your parents' house, who had left for the coast to get away from the smothering heat and constant fighting always blamed on the booze.

A tequila sunrise hung over the window, its blinding rays waking us to remember nothing about the night before except we drank too much and fought like your parents.
Fiction

Just Off Exit 95
by Jennifer Lane

Lilly couldn't sleep. She would close her eyes like she did the night before. And, just like the night before, the dreams would flicker against the backs of her eyelids. The dreams were like home movies that she wanted to turn off but couldn't because there would be her dad and mom when they were young and beautiful to her. The dreams made her want her life as it once was. Not like it was now with her sitting watching the sun rise again through the dingy motel window and with Jerry snoring in the background.

She was jealous of the sun. Its existence seemed so simple. It slipped easily over the freeway rising above the worrying travelers scurrying to work. The only difference to its day was the colors the sky wore when the sun rose. Then it would rise further, shedding the sky's colors to sit boldly in the emptiness. It wasn't afraid because it had its purpose.

But Lilly didn't have her purpose, just a road map and three cigarettes; She didn't even have a job. Jerry didn't have a job, either. He said he was going to get one but that was three weeks ago. He said not to worry he was going to take care of her. He said a lot of things. Most of it was just bullshit.

"Jerry, wake up. I said wake up! Where's the lighter?"

"What? Go away, Lil, it is not even daylight yet," Jerry said turning on his back and putting his pillow over his head to block the light out.

The sun is up so it's the daytime, you know, when people usually have breakfast and get ready to go to work.

Lilly lit a cigarette and drew on it slowly because she only had two left and not enough money to spare on another pack. She supposed poverty would finally give her the will to quit the tobacco habit. She crawled over the bed where Jerry was and put one leg across his back.

"Jerry. Jerry, come on wake up."

"Lilly, get off of me now. Damn it, I'm tired."

Lilly climbed off of him and lay down beside him. She thought to herself that she was tired too. "When are you going to get a job? We are running out of money."

"I've looked and there aren't any jobs," Jerry said getting off the bed and walking towards the bathroom. You can't expect a job to fall out of the sky." He slammed the door behind him.

Lilly knew what the slam meant. She sat up and put out the cigarette in the ashtray.

"Hey, I'm going down to the cafe for breakfast." She waited for Jerry to answer her, but as usually he answered with silence.

Lilly slipped on some jeans and pulled her hair into a pony tail. She stepped out into the morning which still had last night's chill in the air.
She walked across the parking lot to the motel’s restaurant, if you wanted to call it a restaurant. The motel itself was like any roadside disgrace abandoned by tourists who preferred the Red Roof Inns and the endless miles of interstates. Faye’s Motel only catered to those who couldn’t afford a fancier dump and to the truckers desperate for sleep after traveling across America in twenty-four hours.

Lilly looked across the highway at the Greyhound bus pulling out of the gas station. They always claimed to be on schedule. Arriving in Dubuque, Iowa, at nine o’clock then a different one in Jackson, Mississippi, at ten, but the buses were always just a few minutes late.

By the pool Lilly saw the little girl whose mom worked in the restaurant. She was throwing rocks into the pool that was filled halfway with black water because the leaves in it were starting to decay. When she and Jerry first got here the water was still a little blue. Now the pool smelled like a clogged storm drain after a heavy rain.

She remembered her mother always like to dance in the rain. It never bothered her to get wet. She used to say that the rain was heaven crying for people who were sad because their lives were not what they dreamed they would be. Her mother told her never try to live your dreams through a man. One day you will realize that he has awakened and your dreams will be gone.

Lilly looked back toward the room. Jerry was probably just getting out of the shower that only had enough room for one person to bathe in. He would be drying off preparing for his day of drinking beer, reading the classified ads, and watching the home shopping network. The same thing he did the day before and probably what he would do tomorrow. He had told her that he would get a job that paid well and buy her a small house where she could have an herb garden. But they had already been in six different cities and he had always found a reason for not staying anywhere long enough to find a job.

Lilly turned around and walked back to her room. She didn’t want to eat in the restaurant again. The thought of it nauseated her. She felt if her life didn’t change this second, she would just start to scream. She stepped on the crumbling sidewalk which crackled under her feet. At one time it was probably pounded by the feet of children running after their parents wanting change for the vending machines.

She unlocked the door and saw Jerry sitting on the foot of the bed with his black hair still wet.

“I thought you were going to eat breakfast.”

“I lost my appetite,” Lilly said dragging the chair by the window to the bed so she could sit in front of him. “We need to talk.”

“So talk,” Jerry said slicking his hair back.

“How long are we going to live here?”

“Lilly, we will live here until I can find a permanent job.”

Lilly got up from the chair and went into the bathroom. She walked back out with her make-up bag. She took her suitcase from under the bed and placed it on the bed behind Jerry.

“What are you doing?”

Lilly wasn’t going to answer him. She saw no need to. She was tired of waiting for him. She just kept filling her suitcase with what clothes she had while his mouth hung open.

“Where do you think you are going to go?”

“I don’t care where I go, Jerry. You don’t really care either.”
"How do you think you are going to get there, Lilly? Walk?"
"No, I'll use my money to buy a ticket to somewhere."
"Lilly, don't go. Listen I'll find a job, soon. Baby, I love you. Don't leave me here. If you don't like it here we'll leave."
"That is just the point, Jerry. We're always leaving and never getting anywhere."

Lilly closed her suitcase and looked around to see if she was leaving anything. She looked down at Jerry. She bent down and kissed him on his head.
"Jerry, you're sweet to think you can take care of other people, but first you need to take care of yourself," Lilly said and placed the key to the door on the T.V.
"You'll be back," Jerry said as Lilly opened the door and stepped outside.
"No, Jerry, I don't think I will." Lilly said and slammed the door.

She walked across the parking lot and to the gas station across the street. She bought a thirty dollar ticket for somewhere in Texas. She sat in the lobby for an hour waiting for the bus and ate a stale sweet bun from the vending machine. The bus arrived without Jerry's rushing in to stop her. And she boarded and sat down.

As the bus pulled out into traffic Lilly looked back at Faye's Motel. She believed she saw Jerry, surrounded by the door frame, watching the bus leave. But maybe she was just wishing he was there.
It was just after dark and Main Street was deserted except for the usual cars and trucks that lined the sidewalk in front of the pool hall. Its warm orange lights glowed like fireflies in the dark. A storm had been brewing for most of the day and brilliant streaks of lightning colored the sky an eerie purple. The leaves danced in the trees as the wind picked up and rain began to fall.

Mac’s Bar & Grill (“Mac” was Ian MacDonald, a red-haired Irishman with a heart as big as his beer belly) was humming with its usual Saturday night crowd of pool hustlers and men of the drinking persuasion. The air was thick with cigarette smoke and grease from the hamburgers that sizzled on the grill. The smell of those thick, juicy burgers could tempt even the most refined palate. Of course the small town of Conrad, Kentucky (Population 501) did not harbor too many gourmet cooks in 1962, or any year thereafter, for that matter.

Conrad was one of those backwoods mining towns that held its residents hostage for lack of anything better to do. Most people, like me, had been born there, and few would ever leave. Me and my best friend, Whitey Simpson, his real name was Alton but everybody called him “Whitey” because he had a pasty complexion and his hair was white as cotton, used to sit around in back of Mac’s and plan our escape. We were ten that summer and full of ourselves and our schemes.

Whitey’s dad, Al (“Big” Al to his friends), was inside at the bar sling back his paycheck one beer at a time and waiting patiently to shove his quarters into a vacated pool table. He was a small, unattractive man who decidedly resembled a rather large rodent with beady little eyes and a thin blond mustache that trembled just under­neath his long, pointed nose. He fancied himself a connoisseur of fine malt liquor, if there was such a thing, and a master o’ the billiards table.

Unfortunately, these were not qualities that his wife, Sadie, found particularly admirable and she left in search of greener pastures when Al’s makeshift brewery exploded and flooded their basement with a liquid something akin to raw sewage.

About the time it started to rain in earnest, Mac appeared at the back door. “You boys come in here and get out of the rain,” he said, “looks like it’s coming a real gully-washer.” We went inside and got us a seat in the corner so we could watch everybody and stay inconspicuous. Now, Mac knew that Whitey did not have a mom, and I don’t think he figured Al for slaving over a hot stove because directly he came back with burgers and fries for both of us. Whitey’s eyes got big and his face took on a look of pure rapture. Mac said with a big smile, “Y’all enjoy this now.”

As Whitey ferociously attacked his food, I kept my hands away from his plate for fear he’d mistake one of my fingers for a french fry. I was so engrossed in watching
him devour his meal that I hardly ate any of mine, but Whitey was more than happy to polish off the remains.

Out of the corner of his eye, I noticed that Big Al had dismounted from his bar stool and had moved to a nearby pool table. For me to say that Al was not a slave to fashion would be putting it mildly. He pretty much favored whatever covered his nakedness, which was usually the first thing he could find on his bedroom floor that didn’t walk off when he went to pick it up. That night, his baby blue and bright yellow plaid pants had slid down around his hips so that when he bent over to put his coins in their designated slots, anybody who had the misfortune to look in his general direction got a bird’s eye view of a good portion of his lily white ass.

Meanwhile, Cyrus Walker was reared back in his chair taking all this in. Old Cyrus had an eye for a dollar and judged that Al was just drunk enough to place a “small” wager on a game of pool and lose. “Scuse me,” he called out to Al, who by that time, was racking the balls with his cheeks to the wind. Al looked up and Cyrus said, “Purty good stick are ya?”

1994 Lights and Shadows – 13
"Yeah, 'bout the best in this place." Well, that was all Cyrus needed to hear. He was big man, who always wore overalls, even to church, and he could talk circles around a preacher at revival. He commenced to pointing and gesturing and carrying on about right angles and gravity and Einstein and geometry and before poor Al knew what was happening, he’d become the newest member of The Church of the Immaculate Deception and was just about to make his first offering—the last unbroken twenty dollar bill in his picket. Hallelujah!

I looked over at Whitey and saw that he was slack-jawed, staring at his daddy in disbelief. He’d seen his dad shoot pool on more than one occasion and he knew that a three legged dog with one paw tied behind his back would stand a better chance at winning. We could see the heads bent together and the money exchanging hand as everybody in Mac’s stopped what they were doing and turned their attention to the game at hand. The only sound in the room was the steady whump, whump, whump of the ceiling fan as Big Al chalked his stick. He had won the break and he made a big production out of placing the cue ball in just the right position. He did so many deep knee bends as he squatted to view the position of the ball (I had my doubts that he could actually see it) that I fully expected bulging muscles to burst forth from his pants legs.

Finally, after what seemed like hours, he stood up. I say "stood up;" actually he grabbed his stick with both hands and slowly prized himself into a reasonably upright position. He weaved from side to side, apparently satisfied, and squinted his left eye (his state of inebriation deemed it necessary), as he drew a bead on the milky white ball. I heard Whitey draw in a deep breath and when I looked over at him I could tell that he was nervous. He was running his hands through his hair and his feet were steadily tapping the worn wooden floor. He leaned close to me and said under his breath “My butt’s drawn up so tight it’s about to chew a hole in the seat of this chair.” It couldn’t help but grin, yet I knew he was as serious as he knew how to be. I wanted to reassure him but I knew it would take something close to a miracle to help his dad.

Cyrus was leaned up against the bar with his arms folded across his chest, grinning like a possum. The way he was watching Al reminded me of one of this disgusting vile buzzards that sit on top of a telephone pole just waiting for a road-kill snack. He was like that all right—he could wait.

In the meantime, Al positioned himself at the end of the table and aimed his stick to shoot. From that moment on, things seemed to happen in slow motion. The end of the stick met the cue ball in a spray of blue powder as he gave it a damn good lick and we watched it roll, over and over, spinning around and around for an eternity until it slammed into the triangle of solids and stripes and scattered them from one end of the table to the other. The clatter of the balls was startling and you could see the glistening beads of sweat break out from each individual pore on his wide forehead.

He’d made a pretty good break, nine ball in the side pocket, and that must’ve sobered him up some because Al seemed to stand a little straighter after that. I whispered to Whitey "Maybe there’s hope after all." But he just slowly shook his head as Al made his way around the length of the table to line up another shot. He made two more balls before his hand slipped and he missed. It looked like it was all
over. Poor old Whitey buried his face in his hands. I guess he just couldn't stand to watch any more.

Well, now Cyrus, he strutted over to the table like a rooster in a hen house. His eyes were lit up with dollar signs and it was obvious that he was indeed a happy man. The Lord was on his side. He chalked up his stick and proceeded to knock each ball into its designated pocket until the only ones left on the table were Al's and the 8-ball. Oh yes, he took his time, played the crowd here, made a combination there. There was no denying the fact that he was good, or that he knew it. His head swelled a little bit with each shot and I swear I could see the veins in his neck begin to pulsate.

"He must've had a direct line to Christ himself because it was no sooner than Cyrus had put a little elbow grease into his shot, that the biggest, whitest, blinding bolt of lightning I have ever seen struck the tree across the street from the bar."

He looked at that 8-ball like a beggar who had just discovered a gold mine. He walked around the table real slow, studying it from every angle. He called the right corner pocket and prepared to collect his winnings.

I looked around the room and saw Mac standing behind the bar, head bowed, eyes closed, making the sign of the cross. I punched Whitey and pointed to Mac. He must've had a direct line to Christ himself because it was no sooner than Cyrus had put a little elbow grease into his shot, that the biggest, whitest, blinding bolt of lightning I have ever seen, struck the tree across the street from the bar. The noise was deafening and the air was charged with electricity not only from the lightning but from the moment at hand. Cyrus missed his final shot. In fact, he was so far off that his stick plowed up about a foot of green felt and splintered in half when it hit the bumper at the end of the table.

Me and Whitey jumped right up out of our seats yelling and giggling and patting each other on the back. We weren't by ourselves, either. Cyrus was shouting, "It was an act of God, I tell you!" to anyone who would listen, and I do believe it was. Al quickly snatched the pair of crumpled twenty dollar bills from their resting place on the edge of the pool table and made his way to the bar for a celebratory drink — on the house, of course, as we ran up behind him to offer our congratulations. In our excitement, we had forgotten all about being inconspicuous and when Al realized that his son was privy to the preceding events, he threatened to beat Whitey within an inch of his life. In retaliation, Whitey promised to run away from home, and he did, and that's another story. •

1994 Lights and Shadows - 15
Campus Bookstore Award

Christina
Ink Wash
by Melissa Fuller
"Mom ... do you know who this is?"

The confused delay in the answer to her question confirmed the pain that Mary knew would come when she decided to call. The hurt was always there, only lately she was learning to place it in the back of her mind. She supposed it was a sort of evolutionary progress, an inclination to move forward despite...

"Mary darlin', I knew who you were." The slow response hid what was an obvious effort on her mother's part to hide the confusion that Mary knew was always there now. She wondered again if Mother ever knew how bad she had gotten, if she was trying to fight it. It had only been a few weeks since the last call; obligations to her own family kept her from calling as much as she wanted to, and Mother's responses seemed noticeably slower. The pauses whenever any question was asked, any stimulus offered, grew longer and longer every time Mary called.

"I just was calling to see how you and Daddy are doing. How are you feeling?"

"Just fine. Davis's asleep." The response was always short and delivered in a soft and wavering, emotionless voice. It was now impossible to get an answer to any question that was even remotely complex. She was reduced to conversing with her own mother as she would with someone she hadn't seen in years and didn't really know to begin with.

"I'm glad you're doing good. Have you been going on lots of walks?"

Mother loved to go for walks around her neighborhood. The doctor considered it a blessing because so many patients like her just sat around, letting their bodies waste away with their minds. He had said she was in excellent physical shape for her age. Mary often wondered though, what would be the result when Mother's mind was completely gone and her body remained in its excellent condition. When asked, the doctor said he really couldn't be certain because Alzheimer's was still a new disease. Mother was one of his first patients.

A dull "yes" was all Mother answered to the question about her walks and Mary waited patiently and hopefully as Mother quietly stammered her own question, having to do with the welfare of her precious grandchildren.

"They're all doing fine Mom. Everybody's back in school. Heather just started her second week of high school and she loves it. We're hoping Andrew's grades are going to be better this year. Robert has threatened to not let him play soccer if he doesn't get his act together with school. He's going through that difficult stage right now. And Elizabeth is having her first little dance recital this weekend. Mom, she looks so precious in her ballet costume. So, all in all, things are going pretty well. Robert's job is the same. No one is home from school yet so I though I'd give you a call while the house is quiet.
Mom, I hate to change the subject but why is Daddy asleep? Is he sick?"

"Yes," was the reply. It just now registered with Mary about her father, who had nothing but disdain for those who didn't put in a full day of hard work. She found it discomforting that, for the first time that she could remember, he was taking a nap in the middle of the afternoon.

"Oh God...Mother, please listen to me, I want you to go and shake him on the arm and tell him that Mary is on the phone and wants to talk to him...

"How long has he been taking a nap?"

"He's been asleep all afternoon," she almost whispered. Mary checked the clock on the VCR which read, 1:30 and wondered what the phrase "all afternoon" meant to her mother.

"Mother, how long is all afternoon," and as soon as she asked it Mary knew it was far too big a question for someone who had already lost at least fifty percent of her mind and was losing more every day. "When did he go lie down, Mom?" This was the easier question to answer and with the time it took for her mother to respond, the feeling in the daughter's mind was turning from near boredom to sickness so she was beginning to feel the answer in her stomach. The longer it took her mother to answer, the more certain Mary became that something was wrong, and that's where everything started to come apart.

"He...was...asleep...when...I...got-up."

"And he's been asleep all day?" Mary asked, trying so hard to hold on to the calm that was running away from her. She thought it very possible he had been asleep part or all of the day yesterday, and Mother just wouldn't remember. At this point she was remembering things in half-hour increments. The home-care nurse came every Tuesday and Thursday and today was Monday. God, there's no telling how long...

"Yes," Mother's words were so calm. She's not that bad yet; she'd know. Surely she'd know.

"Mom, have you tried to wake him up?"

A calm, "Yes."

"Oh God...Mother, please listen to me, I want you to go and shake him on the arm and tell him that Mary is on the phone and wants to talk to him...Can you do that for me please?" This can't be happening. This isn't happening. No!

"Is anything wrong?"

Pause, "No, Mom, everything is fine. I just have something to tell him and it can't wait," Mary answered, voice quivering.

"All right, hold on."

Mary could faintly hear her mother's footsteps over her own heartbeat. Mother's going to wake him up and everything will be O.K. Everything was going by so fast in her head and in two different directions that it was starting to get numb and she knew that pretty soon she wouldn't be able to think at all. She could hear her mother's footsteps, padding slowly down the hall with the wood floors that Mary and brother David used to slide on when they were little and used to come flying around the corner to see who could get to the breakfast table first. There were photographs all over the wall—a couple of hazy gray and white baby pictures, a photo of David on his first bicycle, one of him with his clarinet that he played at church. Pic-
tures of Mary—one in fifth grade in her ballet costume, another in her graduation dress, smiling proudly, diploma in hand. A photograph of every pet they had ever had showed the children in various states of growing up. There were the assorted family portraits, one made every few years so that you could see the progress of the family through time. It was strange how the pictures held within their frames only smiles and happiness. The growing-up pictures always kept out sadness and bad memories, leaving the viewer to believe that life was always perfect in this house. There were the most recent pictures of the children with their own families, lots of pictures of the grandchildren. Mother's footsteps shuffled back down the hallway, through the house's captured memories, to tell the daughter what she couldn't bear to hear.

"Davis's asleep, he's taking a nap."

"O.K., Mother." Mary paused, frantic. She wondered if she could hold it together long enough to figure out what to do. She figured the easiest thing to do would be to call her parent's next door neighbors and get them to go over to the house and confirm...

"Mom, can you look on the placard next to the phone and see if the Wendell's phone number is on there?" Mary asked with slow, even words. She could call Doris and...

"No."

"Do you not see it on there?"

"No."

"Do you have on your glasses to see it?" Daughter now spoke to mother as child. Mother's mental capacity now declined as it had once matured, only much faster. It could be said that she had reached her life's equilibrium and was now living the end of her life in reverse, remembering the events of thirty years ago and forgetting what had only just occurred.

"No."

Damn...if her glasses weren't on her face, she didn't know where they were; and if she wasn't wearing her glasses, she couldn't find her glasses. "Uh...all right Mom, I've got to go now. I'll call you back in a little while." It really didn't matter when she said she'd call back; if it were more than a half-hour, Mother would never remember having had this conversation.

"O.K. I love you." Mary knew her mother was now crying just as she did every time she had to say goodbye to her little girl.

"I love you too, Mom." Mary hung up the phone, frantic and fighting off tears of her own.

Raku Vessel
by Robert Grimes

1994 Lights and Shadows – 19
First Place 2-D

"G"

Pen & Ink by Lane Emerson

20 - University of North Alabama
I'm still here
Killing time
In a lifeless Alabama town
Where the only distraction
Is having nothing
to be distracted from.

I've considered going away
To a law school in the North
But I don't need them
To teach me how to lie
After spending three years
Of my life with her.

Today I read a personal ad
Tattooed into the pages
Of a biker magazine.
A prison inmate writers,
   Rachelle
   I've wasted three years
   Of my life
   inside this cage
   For a crime you committed
   And when they let me out
   I'm going to kill you.

I stop from doing nothing
To wonder
If his Rachelle
Is the same Rachelle
Who rode away with my soul
Forever escaping
This dying town.

If they are the same woman
Makes no difference to me,
Yet I hope
He is soon released
From the bars
Allowing her freedom.
First Place - 2D Color

Chaos & Confusion
Acrylic Painting
by Larry Akers

22 – University of North Alabama
My grandmother keeps a journal. She writes in it every morning, before common sense writes back and stops her hand with bold, black words.

Felt Bruce’s presence by my bed last night, are her words. I’m not alone. My husband is not gone.

I don’t tell her about the dreams. I don’t tell anyone because I’m afraid they will believe me and then I will begin to believe it too. In the dreams, I am sitting down to dinner, or sleeping in bed, or talking on the phone, and my grandfather walks in silently. He looks just like he did before he went into the hospital for the last time — tall, with long arms and firm hands, white hair and dark, deep Cherokee eyes. He crosses the room and tells me that he is sorry that he had to leave. I look at him in wonder and begin to cry. We talk for what seems to be hours, then he disappears.

Part of me wants to believe that my grandfather really did visit me so that we could say goodbye properly. The dreams have stopped now.

Grandmother keeps the front porch light on throughout the night. “So Bruce can find his way home,” she tells me. She will leave the light on for three days, then turn it off forever. I can see that light, streaming yellow across the porch and into the dark street. It is a beacon for my grandfather, should his spirit not be able to find its way back to my grandmother.

The dogwood in the backyard fell a year ago but still blooms. My grandparents looked at the tree as a symbol of their love, and now grandmother says if it does not bloom this time she will sell the house where she raised my mother, aunt, my brother and me and move to a retirement home. When I visit, I stand in the backyard and run my hands along the broken tree. It looks like a tired hand, its branches ready to relax for the final time.

I think back to the funeral. We walked into Johns Rideouts Funeral Home and listened to a man pretend that he “felt our loss.” He led us to a room where my grandfather lay in open casket.

I turned away. No one had told me about the open casket. No one prepared me for the smell, that strange waxy smell that filled the entire room. I walked along the wall and watched my grandmother place a kiss on my grandfather’s forehead. I still could not look at him. Mother urged me and my brother forward. I walked toward the casket, but Michael turned away.
I looked down and instantly thought, “That’s not my grandfather. That’s his body, but it’s not my grandfather.” Even still, it was the form I had seen all my life. I thought about the morgue attendants handling him, undressing and dressing him, fixing his face into that awful, tight expression, and I wanted to kill them.

I walk back and hear my aunt talking. She had been the only one with my grandfather when he died.

“I heard his breathing change,” my aunt was saying, “and I knew it was time. I simply knew it. I held him, told him to relax, let it come naturally. He wanted to die.” She looked up at me as I sat down beside her. “Then his face began to...glow. I felt him vibrate in my hands as mist began to rise from his body. It looked like steam rising from the street. The mist touched my face, passed right into me, and I felt rather than heard a snap. His eyes went blank then.” She smiled at us and whispered, “I’ve never seen anything like it. I saw a spirit leave a body.”

My brother and I were pallbearers. We helped lower my grandfather into the ground as the wind blew strongly around us. Grandmother took pictures, which I will never understand.

She still keeps her journal, though a month has passed and the porch light has been turned off permanently. She writes poems to her husband and visits the dogwood everyday. I wear hats of his I found in the closet and wonder if he approves. •
Walking beneath the carport roof, which also provided a home for a nestful of chirping birds, I pounded my fist on my grandparents' front door. Listening to the birds chirping above, while standing cautiously away from their bombardment of droppings, I waited for my grandmother to answer the door. I figured it would be her to answer, since my grandfather rarely left his armchair anchored to the television set.

Sure enough, the door flung open and there was my smiling grandmother, beaming with excitement to see me. My brother had already arrived a few minutes before, and I could hear his voice inside talking to my grandfather about the Seahawks' football game. "Hey kiddo," my grandmother said, rubbing her hand my hair. "You cut all your curls off."

My hair was never long enough for Granny. She just loved my curls. After saying hello and wiping the wet lipstick stain off my cheek, I advanced down the hallway to hang my jacket on the coatrack in the designated coatroom which used to be my mother's bedroom. Today, however, the coatroom offered a lot more than just a place to hang wet jackets.

Walking down the hallway, I stalled in order to let my older ninth-grade brother get away from the living room crammed full of visiting relatives on this big Easter Sunday. I looked at some old black and white photos of my grandfather and grandmother at a much younger age with their arms wrapped around each other and smiling. They could have passed for a movie star couple. Another photo showed my grandfather standing in front of a beach home in Florida with a couple of Italian guys I had never met or even heard the names of. One picture displayed my mother as a small child, playing with her pet goose in South America. My grandfather had bounced around a lot in his lifetime, associating with many mysterious people. I wondered what all he had done in his day, and why the hell he ever came to rainy Seattle. For right now, however, I had to get into the coatroom to perform the mission we had set out to accomplish that day. My brother finally came to the entrance of the hallway to stand guard. If any grown-ups were coming, he was to start whistling a song to alarm me.

I entered the coatroom with the jacket which would be used to pilfer the papers from my own grandparent's coatroom. Actually, there weren't just papers, these were sacred pages to the middle-school boys we planned on selling them to at St. Anthony's. We could easily make a fortune, if I could only find them.
2-D Black & White Merit Award

Something's Interesting
Pencil Drawing
by Joel Byrom

26 – University of North Alabama
I began scurrying through the old wooden desk drawers containing a treasure of messed up papers, souvenirs, and other keepsakes stored by my grandfather over the years. I knew the pages we wanted had to be in there. After all, our cousin informed us he had seen them in there while looking for a pair of scissors just the past Christmas.

Opening the third drawer down, I continued my frantic search, trying to keep everything like it was, not that anybody would notice a difference in the cluttered mess.

Nervously, I swept through the cluttered mess of papers and junk, looking for the specific pages. Going through one drawer at a time, I wished my cousin had told us exactly which drawer they were kept in. I thought I heard footsteps in the hall and slammed the drawer shut, jumped up and pretended to be hanging my jacket on the rack. “Damn!” I whispered out loud. It was only a false alarm, my paranoid imagination getting the better of me. Besides, my brother had the hallway covered.

Opening the third drawer down, I continued my frantic search, trying to keep everything like it was, not that anybody would notice a difference in the cluttered mess. My heart pounded against my chest and I could feel the cold sweat beading up inside my shirt. If I got caught, I would have to face not only my mother’s fiercest punishment, but also make a vow to the Pope and the Catholic Church as well. For all I knew I might have to serve time in juvenile detention, or might be tried as an adult and forced to remain behind bars in a state penitentiary. Although I also feared going to hell, being caught by Sister Theresa, my dictating seventh-grade teacher, was definitely my biggest fear. She had this metal-edged ruler which had a bad habit of repeatedly smacking me across the palm of my hand.

Thinking of these things, I hurried my search even more, slamming the third drawer shut and opening the fourth and bottom drawer. Rummaging through more papers, notes, and old birthday cards, I caught a glimpse of something which jumped off the page at me. My breathing became heavier. As the page came into closer view, I could tell that this was it. These were the sacred pages we had come looking for. The most beautiful woman in the world stood smiling on the cover, under the caption Playboy—a classic from Grandpa’s old collection. I took a quick glance at her topless figure before looking at the door to make sure nobody was coming. I rolled the pages up and slipped them into the sleeve of my jacket. Making sure they were secure within the sleeve’s cuff, I now hung my jacket on the rack. Opening the door, I stepped out into the hall and looked at my brother standing guard at the other end. Neither of us spoke; he saw the expression on my face and knew our mission had succeeded. A beaming smile stretched across his face and we continued standing there, gawking at each other, for we were too happy to know what else to do. We were going to be the richest kids in Seattle.
2-D Black & White
Merit Award

Untitled
Photograph
by Larry Akers
Essay

Alabama

by K. D. Blake

To get there, you had to walk zigzagging through thick vines and tangles of ivy. Those woods were impenetrable to any adventurer by way of a straight path. They were dark and damp and cool. The leaves on the tall trees managed unfailingly to keep out the sweltering sunlight, so it always felt good to go there on those humid days of summer in Alabama. You had to carry a trusty stick to slice through the thick green barrier of foliage. Progress was slow and made slower by the necessity of stopping every few minutes to fitfully pull spiderwebs out of face and hair, off of arms and chest.

After laboring for what seemed an hour to get there, you came to an area that was more cleared away but whose passage through took more time because you had to examine every detail of every rusty wheel, every broken bottle — as well as the occasional find of an unbroken Orange Crush or Dr. Pepper returnable one. There were all those unnamable objects, pieces of a mechanical something-or-other. You got to these things and bent down to examine them closely, and marveled at how lucky you were to have ever stumbled onto such a place. No matter how many times the treasures were picked over, there was always a new jewel to be admired, somehow passed over the last time you were there. A shiny glint of something always ended one discovery and began a new one, causing an unknowable amount of time to be spent rushing back and forth, back and forth.

The greatest excitement came from the old well-pump, like the one Helen Keller had. A half-hour was spent on every trek to that sacred site pumping the handle furiously, knowing that if the rusted and screeching mechanism was worked long enough and fast enough, cold clear water would come rushing forth from its spout. But it never did come, and patience yielded to the beckoning urge of the surroundings.

And once you felt that enough time was spent pillaging the exterior, you stood up and looked to the interior, the heart of this mysterious place. It was then that you noticed how really quiet the whole place was. And it was here that you first knew what it meant to be totally alone. You would stand there, breathing heavily, staring at the dark doorway, trying to see within but not being able to. You took a few cautious steps forward, cautious and wary more from reverence than fear. The darkness that watched you from the cracks between the faded and rotting clapboards and windowless cavities called you closer, whispering secrets not quite audible from your distance.

Standing in the blackness, you feel the same as you did your first time here — warm, dirty, mystified and alone.
3-D Merit Award

**Torso**
Plaster Piece
by
Mary Beth Williams

30 - University of North Alabama
Looking into Roger Fry's "Omega Virginal"

by Robert Bryan Crisp

A woman's foot, still white from care, dangles on the edge of the piano. The keys are coffee-stained smiles and mellow black evenings, and arching above are her legs. Her knee is above middle C.

She is painted under the piano top and craves no attention. Her long, relaxed fingers feel the curls of her sunlit hair, the texture of the grass, her breasts.

Music is played. The coffee-smiles and black evenings tinker and clammer. She remains still, perfecting herself by listening. When it is over, hands close the piano top, and she is left between the strings and the darkness.
Son lay on the operating table looking upward at his sterile surroundings. "What big lights," he thought as the ether induced a hypnotic trance. The big lights looked down from the white ceiling as the men and women in the white coats gathered about him.

"Where am I?" and "Where's my mom and dad?" were questions that Son thought to himself as he began to doze off once again.

He had been in the white room for some reason that he wasn't sure of. All he could remember was that he was getting something done to his stomach, but he didn't know what.

Outside the room, his mother and grandmother were talking...

"Jane?" his grandmother asked of his mother.

"What, Olive?" Jane replied. Son had always liked his grandmother's name—Olive. He had never known an actual person by that name.

"Where's Stan? I thought he was supposed to come down to the hospital just as soon as he got off work," Olive inquired.

"I know," Jane agreed. "That is strange. He should have been here an hour ago." She was concerned about Stanley's absence, so she went to call home.

Hopefully, he was just late.

Jane dropped a dime in the pay-phone.

One ring.

Two rings.

Five rings.

Ten rings.

"Where can he be?" she asked herself, trying to think of anywhere that Stan might have gone or was supposed to have gone. There was nowhere. He was supposed to be here with his son.

She called his place of work.

"Merrideth, has Stan left for the day?" Jane asked.

"He left about an hour ago, Jane," she told her.

Jane began to worry.

Back in the operating room—Son lay on his back in a dreamscape of a three-year-old's mind. He was unaware of the events that were brewing elsewhere.

"I'm gonna go to the house and see if he's there," Jane told Olive as she turned to get on the elevator. "You stay here with Son in case he wakes up."

At home. Stanley lay on the bed—silent and unmoving. He had gone to work that day and came home to change clothes after work. Something had happened, however. Something had happened that would affect him for the rest of his life.

Jane came in their bedroom and found Stanley unconscious. The blood that had trickled from his mouth was not dry. His pants were wet from sweat and body fluids. He was cold.

After a week of testing with the methods of the time, it was guessed that Stan had something on his brain. Maybe it had been from the birthing process or maybe from scarlet fever as a child. Doctors did not know what it was exactly, but they knew it was a scar of some kind. They also knew that it was inoperable.

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Stan started shaking violently, and began to chew his tongue. Blood flowed from his mouth. His eyes were opened as if in horror.

Son knew nothing of this until that one day when he and his father were in the basement building a table together.

"Dad, what's wrong?" Son asked. He was frightened by the blank stare of his father. It was a look that he had never seen in all of his four years. It wasn't a mean look. His father smiled at him but wouldn't speak. "Dad!" Son screamed. His dad made his way to the old ripped chair that had always existed in the basement, and he sat down in it.

Before Son knew what was happening, Stan started to shake violently, and he began to chew his tongue. Blood flowed from his mouth. His eyes were opened as if in horror.

Son began screaming and crying. He picked a hammer off the table and started to tap his father's arm to wake him from the demon that held him. Son could take no more, and he ran out of the basement screaming "My daddy's dead! My daddy's dead!"

Mother and grandmother came running out of the back door and ran down into the basement.

There was a lapse in Son's mind, but he remembered both of them bathing his father with ice water to revive him. The next thing he knew was that his dad was walking up the stairs with some assistance. It was a lot for a four-year-old to comprehend.

Again, Stanley went to the doctor.

"Stan?" the doctor said. "You have epilepsy."

The conversation went on and on between the doctor, Stan, and Jane. Tears were shed as the problem was discussed. Solution were also discussed.

"The scar that is causing the problem is in an area that we cannot operate on. However, I am going to prescribe a medicine for you called Dilantin. It won't cure you, but it will keep you from having the seizures anymore," the doctor told them.

"So, now what happens?" Stan asked.
"You go on with your life, and you’ll be fine," the doctor reassured him. "I will say, however, that after about ten years, you will start to notice that the drug is not as strong as it is now, and that in all probability, the scar will start to spread."

And after ten years, that is exactly what happened. Son was fifteen and in high-school. He came home one day to find his parents sitting on the edge of the bed. Jane was crying in his father’s arms.

“He’s going to lose all of his hair, Son.” Jane said, almost unable to get the words out clearly.

“Don’t worry, Son. Everything will be fine. We have to just take things one day at a time,” he told him with a smile. That had always been his father’s saying for as long as he could remember. A tear came to Son’s eye. It was that day that he knew his father was going to die. The doctor had given his father a year to live.

It was later that day that he witnessed his mother shaving his father’s head. She cried the whole time. Everyone cried. This started the dark times.

Over the next four years, several things occurred. Stanley was still alive and doing very well. His mind would not function properly sometimes, and because of that, he had to give up his driver’s license after wrecking the family car. This did not happen, however, until the family had taken a 2000-mile trip up the East coast and across part of Canada. Everyone was so happy that Stan had made it to go on the trip. It would be his last major journey with the family before he died. It was the summer of ’85.
Eventually, the house was remodeled, and the family moved to Huntsville. Son stayed behind to begin his college work. Things were fine for about a year, then Stanley’s situation took a turn for the worse.

“My God! I don’t know what to do, Son,” his mother whimpered over the phone line. It was his mother, but she sounded so desperate.

“Just hold on, Mom. The Lord won’t give you more than you can handle,” Son reassured her.

For about a year, all he heard from his mother was crying. He knew she hurt. He just hoped that she would hang on.

Christmas rolled around and Stan, Jane, and Zandy (Son’s sister) came to Florence for Christmas dinner. Son had not seen his father the way that he appeared when they arrived at Olive’s house.

Son’s mother had told him how Stan would fall for no reason. It was this day that Son saw what his mother had told him. Stanley was like a little child as he fell to the floor. He looked around the corner to see if anyone had seen him. Son helped him up to conceal the mishap. It was not a merry Christmas.

Through February, Son visited his father in the nursing home.

As he held his father’s hand, Stan spoke in a feeble manner to him, “Things have gone bad, Son.” Stan lay on his hospital bed and looked past Son.

All through the year, Jane and Zandy had been trying to find some money that Stan had hidden from everyone. Jane gave Stan a hundred dollars each month so he would think he was earning something. But, as he got sicker, he began to hide the money, and Jane and Zandy searched everywhere, but they couldn’t find it.

April came. It didn’t bring May flowers...

“I can’t go in and see him, Granddad,” Son said. He had just poked his head in the door and had seen how horrible his father looked. “I just can’t do it.”

“Son, you need to go in and see him while you can.” Granddad Lemay told him.

Son went into the room and took his father’s hand. He stared at him and began to cry. As he did, he felt his father’s squeeze his hand if to say “Things will be O.K., son. I love you.” He hugged his dad and told him he loved him, too.

That night, the nurses and Jane monitored Stanley while Son and Zandy slept on the couch in the waiting room. It was an uneasy sleep.

Early in the morning, Son awoke to tears on his grandfather’s face. “Son, you’d better get up.” He had never seen his grandfather cry in nineteen years. So, after waking Zandy, they all proceeded down the hall to his father’s room. He was taking a very short breath about every fifteen seconds.

Son watched as Stanley gave his final exhalation. It was the most peaceful moment that he had ever experienced. Stan had gone to a much better place.

It was a day later when everyone was preparing for the funeral that Jane called her son and told him that they had found the money in the suit that Stan was to be buried in. He had known for over a year that he was going to die soon. He had seemed so out of touch with reality those last few months, but he was aware of what was happening to him. Stan had always taken care of his family. He had always been a good husband and a good father, and he always will be.
Thursday is a Much More Happenin' Time at the Mall

by Kevin D. Humphries

Coffee & Cappuccino ran freely as the numerous shoppers flowed through one RV to another.

Tonight, I will have no time to sit and count the ticks of my watch.

I'll just have to guess the time.

While the lady in the baggy velveteen dress blares her husband's stupidest secrets.

Paradise Regained

by Tania Williams

In the beginning Eve killed a snake.

Hence, No wordy Milton No labor pains.

No premenstrual syndrome

Just two naked people In paradise.
2-D Color Merit Award

Galatea
Computer Print
by Robert Grimes
Growing up in the small, rural community of Vina, Alabama, life for me as a child was full of daydreams and fantasies. Everyday I was whoever I wanted to be, doing whatever I wanted to do, always trying to imagine my way out of that town. My friends and I with sun-kissed faces, clothes and hair that smelled like the mixture of honeysuckle and smoke from the burning brush, were free as the wind, swinging on a limb, ignoring the splinters in our hands and feet from the briar patches in the woods.

Vina now oddly resembles a picturesque ghost-town with old grey barns, sheis and corn cribs abandoned to dry-rot with tin roofs that are rusty and caved in, all guarded by dead veils of kudzu that drape over the heads of the smaller pine trees close by. The crackerbox houses and shotgun shacks are surrounded by acres of pasture. On one side, cows and the occasional mule graze the green grass that is nourished by the rich soil underneath. On the other side stand round, huge bales of golden hay that from a distance look like giant buttermilk biscuits propped up on a green plate, just like the ones I was raised on.

These clear pictures of my rural roots constantly remind me that I am a country gal, who has only gone away to college and come back home to find that the town hasn’t changed nearly as much as I have.

As a matter of fact, I realize that it hasn’t changed at all as I sit on a pew in church one Sunday morning listening to the minister preach once more against the Clinton Administration and how America will bring the wrath of God down upon us all. He goes on to say that this country was founded on the Christian morals and values of our forefathers and how we have strayed far from them. “No. Our forefathers were not Christians, they were Deists!” I answer him back in my mind. “The Christian morals and values you’re talking about are the influence of the Puritans. Our forefathers were probably just politicians who, career-wise, thought it would be best for them to go along with the majority or the ones with the most influence or wealth.” Although I realize his mistake was probably unintentional and out of ignorance, he is dangerously unaware of his power over these sheep who look toward a local politician, the nightly news commentator, a county school teacher or the town’s preacher for their intellectual “salvation.” These same sheep, born with no freedom, live a life bound by their own ignorance. And ignorance, for me, is no longer bliss.

I calmly sit through the rest of the sermon and when it is over, I am about to walk out the front door when I am stopped by Mr. Frederick, an older man with three grown children and a small business he started here in town many years ago.

“How is college and what are you planning to do after you graduate?” he asks.

“Oh, I don’t know, I guess I’ll try to get a job somewhere,” I casually reply.
“Why leave your hometown to get a job? Why don’t you just come back here and set up shop for yourself?” he asks.

“Why would I want to come back here?” I answer too quickly, but it is too late. With a shocked-surprised look on his face, Mr. Frederick turns and walks away.

“You shouldn’t have said that,” comments an old childhood friend who had just heard the conversation. “Even if you feel that way, you know that there are good people here. The same good people that had a hand in our up-bringing. Yours and mine.”

I walk away feeling guilty, ashamed and bitter at the realization that I am no different than they are. I came from them; I am also a sheep, a puppet on a string. Yet, when I think about the injustice that was dealt to me by the educational systems and religious institutions of this rural society, the anger begins to burn inside. Just like those before me, I was taught what to think and how to think. It was only when I left that ghost-town and later went back to find that all those years I had been misinformed. And so the cycle goes, breeding generation after generation of ignorance, only to raise-up bigots, narrow minds and prejudices. But if I had enough courage, just like the Lawyer Jim in Willa Cather’s story, I would go back home to that ghost-town and commit myself to the life-long battle of leading its people to fight for their freedom from that endless cycle.

First Place 3-D

Tea Pot
Highfire Stoneware
by Margaret Chien
Poetry

"St. John the Baptist"

oil on Canvas

by Andre de Sarto

by Melonie Farley

He sits in the blackness
Of his future
Angelic face unaware
Of greatness to come.

We find ourselves awed
Yet reaching to touch
Broad shoulders laid bare
By the artist's brush.

His powerful arms are
Columns of ivory
Waiting to support the
Souls of believers.

A splash of crimson
Runs in rivulets across
His lap, a sign
Of things to come.
Second Place
2-D Color

Bliss
Computer
by Robert Grimes
Black & White Merit Award

Best Friends
Woodcut by Mary Beth Williams

42 – University of North Alabama
Poetry

Chocolate Covered
BRONX

by Christopher Halvorson

He finally caught me
after chasing me down
Forty-Second Street
onto Ninth
past the Italian produce stands
guarded by white-haired men
selling fruit
in a Bronx paradise lost
years ago

The aromas from Angelo’s
Pizzeria
drift into the neighborhood air,
masking the stench of garbage
scattered about the broken
sidewalks

I stare into the mirrored sunglasses
of the arresting police officer

witnessing the terrified face
in the reflection

This can’t be me
getting busted
after risking
my flawless sixth-grade career
lifting a box of chocolates
to steal the heart
of a brown-eyed princess
who sits in the third row
of Mr. Scapini’s classroom

Tomorrow Vinnie Capello
will bring her
the perfume of a dozen roses
bought with his godfather’s
dirty money

1994 Lights and Shadows – 43
In my childhood, there was a place much like Floyd’s Barber shop on the Andy Griffin Show. The name of this place was the Hamilton Barber Shop, but everyone knew it as Albert’s. This place where the local men gathered on Saturday mornings to talk about the news, discuss politics, and play checkers.

I am proud to say that I was the only female permitted there. Of course, I was only allowed because my mother refused to let my father go “tom catting” all over town while she stayed home with the kids. I was my father’s ticket to freedom — the men knew it and tolerated me.

They felt compelled to explain to me every time I came that what men talked about was not gossip but news. Albert always used this illustration: “If Mr. Adam’s daughter is pregnant, we talked about it because we don’t want to step on his toes. If the women talk about it, it’s to spread rumors and hurt.”

But the topics discussed there were rarely scandalous. They were more like whether Fords or GM’s make better trucks or if Blue Ticks or Tiger Paws make better hunting hounds. Albert always said that Blue Ticks were better, but the only person that ever agreed with him was the person in his chair. (Albert once nipped Flavis Shott’s ears for saying that Tiger Paws were superior dogs.)

Of course they could never have a talk without touching on politics. They were all Democrats, not by convictions, but by tradition. It was in their blood. My daddy once said, “A person cannot be a true Southerner unless they vote a straight Democratic ticket.” You cannot be a Republican and be Southern. You have to choose.

The men gathered there more for the news than for the trim. Albert learned to cut hair in the army, so all his clients wore a modification of the classic Army cut. But I have to give Albert some credit. He could make my daddy look so clean-cut and good-looking. My daddy’s hair never looked just-cut or needed-a-cut but just right.

Albert kept a gallon bottle of “smelling stuff” to the right of his crimson barber chair. (Albert was a big Alabama football fan and had that chair upholstered in the Crimson Tide’s colors to show off his loyalty.) That “smelling stuff” made my daddy smell so nice. Daddy often complained that Albert should be ashamed of using watered down Old Spice for an after-shave; after all, Albert did charge extra for a shave, but that mixture was the best cologne my daddy ever wore.
My favorite time to visit Albert’s was during autumn. The men would move their checker games outside on the sidewalk, and Albert would prop the door open and turn up the radio. We would all sit outside in straight backed chairs and sing along with the gospel songs. Sometimes men from the outskirts of town would bring fruits and vegetables to sell. Daddy always bought something. He knew what it was like to try to live off the land. Daddy often said, “The farmer is the hardest worker of them all because God is his foreman.”

Those lazy Saturday mornings are gone now. Albert is long dead, and my dad now goes to a hair stylist once a month; but the shop is still there. It’s boarded up like most of downtown, but news still gathers. Teenagers spray paint new messages around the broken candy cane sign, and flyers announcing the Pig Festival and church bazaars are tacked on the boarded up windows. The men are gone, but the news still lingers.
3-D Merit Award

Containing Eagles
Highfire Stoneware
by Jamey Simmons

Poetry

Mindy,
with warm regards to
Frank Capra, James Stewart
and Granny
by Kevin D. Humphries

The light of the full moon
desses brilliantly
upon our bodies
as I hold you.
The beating of my heart
is muffled
into the locks of your hair.
I ask the eternal question
“Do you want the moon...?”
And my anxious arms
fumble to capture it for you.

The night air
flushes your cheeks
radiating your beauty
beyond the rapidly paling moon’s.

Once again I ask.
This time the words are
different, but the meaning
remains...

“You want the hills, Mindy?
Is that what you want?”
Poetry

For Stacia

by Sandra Starke

the existence of this man
has toppled your plans
the breathing of him
has made your mapped life
crash like a house of cards

but somehow
it doesn’t matter so much
because you are sailing
breathing a freer air

you want to run with him
(anywhere)
and lick honey
from his navel
you want to swallow him
you crave him
and this you have never known

you are standing
on a limb
high above
the way things were
(before he stopped from your
silent longing)
now winging it
you realize that the eventual
coming together of the puzzle
is a lie

beware though
of the painter
of this illusion
he can and probably will
leave you clutching
the half canvas

in the end
after your blood
mixes
with watercolors
you will know
that he was just a boost
to the other side
controlled
by nothing
a link to the girl
that treads air

1994 Lights and Shadows - 47
Short Story

An Interview with Frank

by Shannon Heupel

When you think of the devil, what image comes to mind? Is it the stereotypical Beelzebub, standing in flames with a pitchfork, a tail and horns on his head? Maybe you see a swindler: a man in a black Armani tux, with his hair slicked back and an evil grin on his face. And we've all thought that our siblings were at least demoniacs, if not smaller versions of Mephistopheles, at one time or another.

From my own experience and beliefs, I'm sure that he's a comedian. A kind of Cosmic Joker, if you can imagine that sort of thing.

Oh, and I forgot to mention one thing. He likes to be called Frank. I met him last year on a Saturday afternoon in Florence, Alabama.

My name is Steve Faucett and I'm a writer, as you've probably guessed by now. I'd like to go on record as saying that I am a Christian, Methodist to be specific, though I don't get to church as often as I should.

I was one of the lucky few people that got a job right out of college working in my chosen profession. The pay wasn't much, but it kept me in an apartment and out of my parent's house. I was a reporter for the TimesDaily. I liked working there, but now I'm really looking to expand into other media.

Well, as I was saying to begin with, it was the weekend and nothing much was going on in the office. The layout artists were talking over that day's design. My editor was off in his office drinking antacid to ease his ulcer. I had a ton of paperwork to finish and dozens of photo assignments to fill out. Plus I had skipped breakfast that day, so by now I was starving.

I left the office and walked a couple of blocks down to Trowbridge's, a small ice-cream parlor/cafe that had been open since the early 1900's. It was a sunny November day and as I walked in the door, a small hanging bell rang in the same way it had for the past eighty or ninety years. I love the history of this place. It's like stepping back in time a few decades. The walls are covered in pictures from Florence's early days. Just take a look around and you'll see the old trolley tracks that use to line the streets. They buried them when they repaved the streets. Hell, they've buried most of the people that lived back then too, although I think a few of them still work here in the restaurant.

When I walked in I saw that the place was nearly empty, unusual for one o'clock in the afternoon. The waitresses were there, of course. They are practically permanent fixtures.

There was one customer sitting at the counter, a rather ordinary looking guy. He wore a plain brown suit, with a white shirt and red tie. His face was smooth, though a bit pudgy. And his hair looked like the typical supercut design.
As a reporter, I've learned to become a good observer of people. This guy just didn't seem right. There was something about him. The way he would glance around the room, though not so that anyone could really look at him. He would stare at the old waitresses’ backs as they passed by doing their daily routine.

From my seat in the back corner of the room I could see him as he ate a large chocolate sundae, wiping his mouth with the napkin after every bite he took.

Something definitely was wrong with this guy. I had always been imaginative, even as a child. In my mind’s eye I could put people anywhere, have them do anything. My parents said it was from all the comics I used to read. I still read them once in a while.

This man looked out of place somehow. Physically he looked so normal that he seemed abnormal. He was too bland.

"Hadn't there been some trouble with the health standards in a few of the restaurants in town?" I thought. "That’s gotta be it. He’s an undercover health inspector. He’s getting ready to give Trowbridge’s a bad grade, maybe even close them down. Close down the oldest restaurant in town? I’ve gotta talk to this guy."

I just knew that I’d stumbled onto a great feature story. And if I could get this guy to talk, maybe even give me an exclusive, it would really make my career. Up till then, I’d been doing mostly obits, anniversaries and wedding announcements. I hadn’t even had my own byline yet.

Slowly I got up and walked towards the counter, taking my half-eaten hotdog and bottle coke with me. My heart was pounding a Uttle. Sure I’d done interviews before, but always with the mutual agreement of the other party involved. Pumping information was new to me.

I had no real idea who this guy was. I’d probably end up looking like an idiot and never dare show my face here again.

"Nice day outside," I said to the man as I sat on a stool three down from his. It was the only thing I could think to say at the time.

"Yeah...I guess so," he said. His voice was as bland as his clothing, though it did have a little nasal quality to it. He never turned his head towards me.

Maybe he's an undercover cop and one of these old women is wanted for murder.
partying type, but you never know. The way those eyes looked, he must’ve had one hell of a hangover.

I then said what was probably the oldest line on the face of the earth, “Excuse me, sir, you look familiar to me. Have I met you before?”

“I don’t think so,” he said, still not turning toward me.

“Are you sure? I’m almost positive I’ve seen you before. Maybe it was a few weeks ago at the health department,” I said.

Of course I was lying, I’d never seen the man before. I just thought maybe mention of the health department would cause his cover to slip.

“No, I’ve never been there,” he said, still keeping his eyes focused down on his melting dessert.

“How about at the police department?” I said.

I was really stretching at this point. Maybe he’s an undercover cop and one of these old women is wanted for murder. Maybe she’d killed her husband and chopped him into the barbecue they were selling there, just like in that movie I’d seen a few weeks back.

“No, not there either,” he said. His face still didn’t turn.

It really didn’t matter why he was there at this point, I had to see his eyes again. Were they just blood shot? That must have been it. But when I closed my eyes I could still see two small red dots. Two little spots were burned into my eyes, like when you look at the sun for a few seconds. I wasn’t about to leave till I found out what the deal was.

I thought about it for a few seconds and tried to think of something else to say to this strange stranger.

“I’m sorry to keep bothering you sir,” I said a few seconds later when I had forced up enough nerve. “I’m a reporter with the TimesDaily. I’m doing a review on the local historic restaurants of Florence. I was wondering if I could ask you a few questions.”

“You’re lying,” he said. “You don’t have a notepad or a recorder. Are you planning to memorize an entire interview. I don’t think so.”

How did he know what I had? He had never even looked towards me. In fact, he had been staring at his now melted sundae since I sat down here. It was true that I’d left my notepad and recorder, the main reporter’s tools, back at the office. But how did he know it?

“You’re still a drip, boy,” he said.

His voice was now a little more harsh than before.

What did he say? Drip?

I know it sounds cliché, but I had a small flashback at this point. I went back to my fourth grade year at Mars Hill Bible School.

I was never the most popular of kids; in fact I was the geek of the crowd. And having a name like Faucett didn’t help matters much.

I remember when it began. I was in the bathroom washing my hands. I was much shorter then and had to lean into the wet sink to use it. When I left it looked like I’d wet my pants.

The older kids saw me when I was walking to class down the hallway. One of them (they seemed to be in a pack so I couldn’t tell which) yelled out, “Hey, look at Faucett! He sprung a leak in his pants. Hey look, the Faucett’s dripping.”
The nickname “Drip” hung on for quite a while after that, especially when my older sister, Rosalie found out about it.

“How...How did you know about that?” I said.

I was so nervous that I nearly did wet my pants.

“Because I’m the one that gave you the name, Drip,” he said, and then broke down into a laughing fit that even went on for a couple of minutes. I just sat there and watched silently. I was paralyzed.

Then suddenly he turned towards me, focusing red glowing eyes upon my pale fluttering ones.

The room was suddenly silent. I looked towards the kitchen, but the waitresses were nowhere to be seen. Through the plate glass window in the front I could see nothing but blackness, though the sun had been shining through just a few seconds earlier.

“I thought we could use some privacy,” he said.

He could feel my terror. He seemed to feed off of it. I’m almost certain I did wet myself a little.
"Listen up, kid," he said. "Things have been a little slow for me lately. I’ve been trying to think of ways to liven up my act."

"Your act?" I said. My voice was whiny. Inside I was 10 years old again.

"Yeah, my act. You don’t think I do my job just for the sake of doing it, do you? Pardon my expression, but it’s a Hell of a lot of fun."

He broke into another fit of laughter. For some sick reason I almost felt like joining in.

"But Mr...," I said. I was stuck. What do you call this guy? Mr. Lucifer? Mr. Satan? I wasn’t even sure if these were his first names or last.

"You can call me Frank," he said.

I thought it was an odd name for evil incarnate, but I didn’t argue with him.

"Don’t you have any guilt?" I suddenly found myself saying. "You’ve caused immeasurable pain and anguish. You’ve incited people to follow you to their doom. Weren’t you an angel once?"

I couldn’t believe that I’d said these things face to face to the Devil, even if he was calling himself Frank.

"Yeah, yeah, yeah. The multitudes that I’ve supposedly led away. Let me tell you something, kid. They had a choice. They made it. Now they’re having to deal with it. So what?"

His nostrils began to flare as he spoke.

"I’m doing the same thing He’s doing, just in an opposite way if you get my meaning," Frank said as he pointed down. "Drip, you’ve got to see it from my point of view. I’m just down here to have a good time. I plant a few messages here and there, give them a little overdose of pride. That’s all it takes, my boy."
“But still, don’t you feel any remorse for what you’ve done?” I said. I realized all too well what this guy could do if I ticked him off, but this was the interview of a lifetime. Sure, Chancellor, Jennings, and Brokaw have interviewed some powerful people in their day, but had they ever interviewed Frank? I think not.

“Guilt? What’s to be guilty about? I’m just doing my job and having fun at it,” Frank said.

We talked for what seemed like hours. I grabbed a pen and a ticket book one of the waitresses had left on the counter and started writing down quotes. We discussed everything from the world wars to riots. From politics to corruption. From industrial accidents to Chernobyl.

“Yeah, Drip. You should have seen the looks on their faces when the reactor blew. They’re not used to that kind of heat. Actually, it reminded me a little bit of home. But it sure gave those Reds a sunburn they’ll never forget.”

By the time we were finished, I had exhausted five more ticket books I found behind the counter and written notes on at least a dozen napkins. I was thrilled. For my first major interview, this had gone pretty well.

Frank seemed to be happy about it too.

“Well Drip, I’ve got to get back to work. There’s no telling how many He’s got over to his side while I’ve been piddling around here. I’ll be seeing you later,” Frank said as he stood up from his chair.

“Oh, I hope not,” I said. I was actually chuckling under my breath.

Frank patted me on the back as he walked towards the door.

“You never know, Drip. Oh, by the way. Good luck on the story.”

A trail of laughter followed Frank as the door closed behind him, and its bell gave a loud jingle.

Suddenly everything was back to normal. Even the waitresses were back. To my surprise, only about fifteen minutes had passed, though for me it seemed that hours had gone by.

And it also seemed that Frank left without paying his check, which I had to pick up.

But this wasn’t the only last laugh Frank had on me. In my rush to get this interview I forgot one thing: No one would believe me in a million years.

And nobody did.

I made the mistake of telling my boss about the interview. I even went so far as to ask for space on the front page.

Today, as I dictate this letter to my nurse (they don’t allow me to hold pointed objects here in the hospital) I would like to say that I don’t have a huge grudge towards Frank. That Cosmic Joker was just doing his job.

And to the family of that poor man in Trowbridge’s, the man in the brown suit that was sitting at the counter this November, I’d like to say that I apologize sincerely for my actions. It was a simple case of mistaken identity.

I’d also like to apologize to the fine people at Trowbridge’s for the huge mess. However, I’m sure that with a little effort that blood will scrub right off of the walls.

The important thing is that I did get the last laugh on Frank after all. My story is going to run nationwide. If you’d like, you can read it next week in the National Inquisitor.
I hear you from the other side of the wall, talking to Jesus in the dark, going through your nightly ritual of asking him to save those on your list of sinners whose names you yell out loud just in case God is hard of hearing.

Your husband, dying in the next room can hear you too. Soon, he will no longer have to scuttle to his vegetable plot to escape your wrath. He will be in God's garden, sitting in a butter bean patch drinking from a 3-Liter Pepsi, cooled under a peach tree.

You will repeat these last moments before William went with the Lord and savor visions of anger because it's you who wanted to be buried next. Now alone, you beg Jesus to bring the rapture in the same conversations with comments on the weather always ready with your ticket to heaven, one-way.
Hi Maggie.

How've you been? I'm sorry I took so long to write back to you. I'll see if I can remember everything that's happened since I talked to you last.

I went back to school full-time in January, but I had to miss a lot because Clarissa was sick. I quit so I wouldn't have to take a bad grade. But I lost 75% of the tuition Mom paid. They only give back full tuition when it's the student who gets sick or has an accident. Doesn't seem fair.

I eventually had to take Clarissa to the doctor's office three times before they put her in the hospital. She had a collapsed bronchial tube. She got well and ten days later went back in to have five top front teeth removed. I call her toothless.

Charity was going to cheerleading practice so she could try out for the team. But, one day I was a little late getting home and Grandy forgot about getting Clarissa off the school bus. So, Brandon had to get her off. Can you imagine a small eight year old getting a blind four year old off of the bus and walking her home from the bus stop? Well, I knew this would probably happen again if Charity became a cheerleader because practice is after school. Besides, she would need rides to and from the games. Needless to say, she didn't try out. With a family of six and one of them with a disability, sacrifices and compromises happen all the time.

I put in an application for a Leadership Institute training program called Partners in Policymaking. What they do is to pick thirty people from all over the state who either have a disability or a family member with a disability. Then they train them to work with community leaders and politicians to assure that people with disabilities are treated like people. Next week, my friend, Pam (whose daughter has cerebral palsy) and I are going to see the Lieutenant Governor and our House representative. We want them to meet our kids and hope that they will think about them whenever legislation comes up affecting kids like Clarissa and Miranda. This class has made me think about a lot of things we take for granted, like using the bathroom and getting into places when you're in a wheelchair. Pam has been warning all of the businesses in town to get ready for her and Miranda because hardly anyplace there is wheelchair accessible.

Miranda's brother fights with her all of the time and he says she gets away...
with things. Pam told him, "Okay, tomorrow when you wake up, just lay there until I can get you up to use the bathroom and you can only get up when I pick you up and carry you." It gave him something to think about. The next morning when he woke up, he asked, "Mom, can I get up?" Pam told him if he understood what she was trying to tell him, he could.

I did that with my kids too. I asked them how they would like to have to go to the bathroom, go to school, eat and everything else without being able to see. I don't think Brandon and Bradley could do it. They're afraid of the dark.

I think it's easier for kids who have been raised with kids who have disabilities to understand that kids who have disabilities are just people like them. Because of that, kids with disabilities are more likely to grow up and get jobs and be on their own.

Well, enough of that, I hope everyone in your family is doing well. Write back and let me know what's going on with you.

All my love,
Shirley

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**Grandpa**

by Tania Williams

"Why did he have to come with me?" Elizabeth thought. "Why couldn’t he just stay at home and rest? The trip was so long."

Elizabeth watched the man as he walked determinedly down the aisle ahead of her shopping cart. "He's such a stubborn old coot," she thought and then said aloud, "Grandpa, I've got everything I need. I'm ready to check out."

He turned around and responded, "Well, let's go, Missy."

They made their way to the front of the store, taking their place in the line.

Ahead of them, a woman struggled desperately to keep her toddler in the basket while she waited.

Grandpa watched her for a moment and then asked, "Are you married, Ma'am?"

The woman stopped fussing with the child and responded, "Why, yes I am."

"Do you love your husband?" he asked.

Elizabeth's stomach tightened. "Why can't he just leave people alone?" she thought.
"Yes, I love my husband," the woman said, wrinkling her forehead.
"Well, Ma'am," Grandpa began. "You should go to a fruit stand and get some real apples. The preservatives in those canned ones will kill you. And you should put that frozen pie crust back and make a good one. Show your husband some love. My Desa, God rest her soul, used to bake the most delicious home-made apple pies. They would make you want to swallow your tongue."

"I wish you would swallow your tongue," Elizabeth thought. "That woman is going to slap the daylights out of you for your meddling."

The woman just turned around and pretended to be interested in the cover of a magazine. After she left, Elizabeth said, "Grandpa, why did you do that?"
"Do what?"
"Make her mad like that."
"Well, Elizabeth, I didn't mean to."

Elizabeth decided to forget the scolding and began to put her groceries on the counter. Grandpa reached in the cart and picked up some corn flakes and milk.

Elizabeth hadn't seen him put them in the buggy.
"Grandpa, I've already bought milk this week. We don't need it," Elizabeth said.
"This is my jug of milk," he responded.
"Why does he have to be so difficult?" Elizabeth wondered. "Oh well," Elizabeth thought, "I'll let him go ahead and have his way."

The store clerk began bagging her items.
"Don't put the bread in the same bag with those cans," Grandpa said.

The clerk said, "O.K., Gramps."

"Don't you roll your eyes at me either," Grandpa said. "You need to learn some manners. My name is Mr. Chandler and you may call me Mr. Chandler. And I, thank the good Lord, am not your 'gramps.' When I was your age, I had a wife, a child, and was fighting Hitler, and I still had enough courtesy to refer to my elders in the proper manner. You young people think you can get by with anything, but I won't stand for it. Do you understand me?"

Grandpa was working himself into quite a frenzy. His shoulders were no longer slumped, but were erect and square and his fat bull-dog cheeks were quivering.

He started tapping his cane. He would tap it up and down quickly, like an out-of-control metronome. Elizabeth knew that he toted that cane for the sole purpose of using it on somebody.

"That clerk is going to have a lump on his head a mile high if he doesn't watch it," Elizabeth thought.

"And another thing," Elizabeth heard Grandpa say, "The customer is always right. Don't roll your eyes."

Elizabeth saw her opportunity to dive in. "Grandpa, would you bring the car around so I won't have to walk so far with the groceries?" Elizabeth wasn't sure that Grandpa could be trusted with the car, but she knew that she had to do something.

Grandpa took the keys and left.

Elizabeth paid the clerk and picked up the groceries.

"What an old coot," she heard the clerk mumble.

"My grandfather is not an old coot," she responded and left.
Where did they go?
The little yellow butterflies
You know the ones
That dance frantically as if trying
To make you laugh
Only around long enough
To see them frolic around your head
Like following maestro’s wand
Their music is silent
Within the beholder’s mind

Music to a French farce
Their movements as sharp and quick
Their presence on stage too short
No denouement to end their show
Playing the same scene over and over
And around the world
Flirting with the spirits
Of all who pay the price
For one more spring production.
High School Writing Competition Winners
3-D Merit Award

Crescent
Soapstone
by
Tiffany Stauffer
Fields of Glory

by Jeremy Sanderson, Deisher High School

The icy rain began to fall before dawn, causing him to be chilled to the bone. Off in the distance, the occasional discharge of cannon upset the tranquility of the forest surrounding the Confederate camp. The boy rolled from under this blanket and crept from the weather-worn tent that he and his two brothers shared.

After dawn came, the rain had ceased, but there was still a mist that hung over the camp that morning, causing life to seem almost like a dream to the newly arisen boy. Smoke from numerous campfires rose steadily and seemed to cover the sky, hiding it from his view. Men were huddled around the fires, wrapped in their gum blankets, attempting to retain their body heat.

"James?" came a sleepy voice from inside the tent.
"Yeah?" replied the boy.
"What time is it?" the brother asked, rubbing the crust from his eyes.

James was beginning to shiver in the cool morning air, but he knew that soon the sun would peek over the horizon and make for a blistering day. He removed the gold timepiece from his breeches pocket, exposing the cracked face to the chilly mist. "Six-thirty," was his reply.

James' younger brother, Thomas, arose and quickly buttoned his shell jacket. As he crawled from the tent, he placed his blanket over Jesse, the middle brother, hoping to give him added warmth as he slept, and stiffly followed James to a nearby campfire.

As the two brothers neared the fire, the aroma of bacon being fried filled their nostrils. Some of the men were talking grumpily to each other, but a few laughs were heard as one man finished telling the exaggerated story of how he had swiped the pig on which they were feasting.

James and Thomas uttered their "mornin's" and received a few in return. Thomas removed his tin cup from his haversack, filled it with water from his canteen and placed it on a log that was quickly being consumed by the fire. He then laid back on the grass and waited for it to boil.

About fifteen minutes later, Jesse awoke when a gnat flew in his nose, causing him to sneeze. He arose with a grunt and removed the two blankets. Being the last of the three up that morning, the job of unstaking the tent fell to him.

Jesse grunted as he made an effort to withdraw the stakes from the soil. "Could've done without this," he grumbled as his hand slid off the first stake, allowing him to fall back on his rump in a puddle of mud. He heard the sound of laughter directed at him. Swearing, he returned to his work.

By the time Jesse had completed
the task, the sun was over the treetops, casting a brilliant light upon the camp. Jesse unbuttoned the two tent halves and rolled them separately. It was nearly seven-thirty, and he had not had anything to eat since noon on the previous day. Jesse mumbled angrily to himself, “Them Yankees ain’t gotta worry ‘bout shootin us, we’ll starve to death first.”

Thomas had just finished drinking his second cup of coffee when Jesse came trotting to the fire. “G’mornin’,” were his only words, but the greeting held the underlying message, “I don’t want to be here so leave me be.”

Jesse was greeted at the fire by a snicker or two, but the conversation quickly took its previous course. A man with a black beard who was smoking a pipe, removed his kepi from his now balding head and asked anyone willing to answer, “What town did MacLaws say we was comin’ to?”

“I don’t rightly ‘member,” came a reply from across the smoke of the dying fire. The man who answered appeared to be short and stocky. He was dressed in a brown shirt and homemade pants, which hardly gave him the image of a soldier.

“We still in Virginia, ain’t we? We ain’t crossed over into Pennsylvania yet, have we?” asked Thomas.

“I’m not for sure, but if Stuart and his cavalry don’t quit joyriding, I can tell you where we will be,” James said as he reached behind Thomas for another log to place on the fire. The wood was wet, but he thought it might dry out.

“Well, all I know is that we’s gonna whoop ’em, and from what I hear, end the war and show them blue-bellies who’s boss,” said the black-bearded man.

“A-men,” was the only reply, and it came from Jesse, who was seated on a stump next to the short man.

The day progressed in very much the same way. Boredom slowly crept through the camp and was occasionally highlighted by the false rumors of Confederate victories. One such rumor said that Heth’s men had destroyed a band of Union cavalry near town. Slowly but surely, time passed. Noon came, and the growls of the stomachs of most of the men in camp seemed as if they could be heard from a mile’s distance.

By three o’clock, the men were anticipating how well their regiment would do when it became their turn to fight. Phrases like, “I’ll die afore I’ll fall back,” were common.

The sun had drastically changed the temperature, and James and Thomas were forced to shed their shell jackets. Jesse, being more ornery, retained his while the sweat dribbled down his face.

The sky was cloudless, and the sun beat down unmercifully on the helpless soldiers. The occasional cannon fire had almost completely ceased. James sat leaning against an ancient oak tree. It reminded him of the many oaks surrounding the dilapidated barn on his family’s farm in Alabama. He recalled the two mules that pulled the plow across their forty acre plot. Neither would leave the barn without the other, so he had to tie one to an oak, much like this one, while the other plowed.

James thumped a small spider from his hand. He was back on the farm. The birds were chirping. Everything was peaceful. He was in the barn. His father had just returned from plowing the cotton patch for planting. He was carrying the plow, and the mules were following close behind. To James’ five-year-old eyes, the plow seemed twice as big as he was, and his father
appeared much larger and stouter, like that oak.

The barn's outer wall was entangled with honeysuckle vines that sent a sweet smell into his nose. He was at home and at peace. He was away at camp.

The boy shut his eyes and then reopened them in the forest across a small stream from their two-room shack. He saw three squirrels rush up a tree and then heard the shot from his father's double-barrel shotgun. Two squirrels fell from the oak while a third rushed to safety in a hollow tree, never looking back.

James awoke when Thomas came to him. "We're gonna have to move out soon. Sounds as if we're fixin' to have our great moment of glory."

Glory. The word hit James with a sour meaning. "What is glory?" he thought. "Shootin' somebody's head off?"

Allegiance

Photograph

by Larry Akers
“Form up men! Form up!” came the order from the regimental commander. Hurriedly, James gathered his arms and joined the three-column mass of infantrymen.

The regiments of the Forty-seventh Alabama and Fifth Texas formed alongside them. The three brothers, members of the Fourth Alabama, had mingled with the other regiments and saw many familiar faces.

James removed his kepi as the column began to move forward and said a silent prayer that God would be merciful that day. He looked at his two brothers. There was an eagerness in Jesse’s eyes, yet a certain sadness appeared to linger there. Thomas looked worried, but not for himself. Perhaps he worried for his brothers and friends most of all.

James replaced his kepi and lengthened his strides, slowing his pace. What was to happen next was in God’s hands. “Perhaps we won’t have to fight,” he thought.

Blood oozed from the wound. Bodies were lying all around. Cries of the wounded and dying crept through the air toward heaven and the eyes of the dead seemed to plead for life.

The sounds of distant firing up ahead became more intense, but the men continued onward. “Double time!” came the order, but his feet couldn’t move any faster. The man in front of Thomas tripped on a root and with help from Thomas resumed his course.

The three regiments reached a rock ridge. It was cloaked in blood. A man had been shot in the left leg and had bled to death. Blood still oozed from the wound. Bodies were lying all around. Cries of the wounded and dying crept through the air toward heaven and the eyes of the dead seemed to plead for life.

The shells continued to fall as if to taunt the soldiers—dead, alive, and wounded. A shell landed in the midst of several men, throwing them into the air.

The stalled men hid behind trees and stones in hopes of gaining added protection from the messengers of death being hurled at them. The command to advance was given, and the boys in gray moved from their protective umbrella of trees into open ground. Then, James saw their destination. He thought to himself, “It would be easier to escape the devil himself than to take that hill.”

The hill was laden with trees and rocks, providing adequate defense. Artillery continued bombarding the men from their loft, and ahead loomed the hill. It seemed to laugh at the attempts of the men to break its defenses.

Between the rocky ridge and the hill was a great open space where death lurked. The field was already soaked with so much blood that James could hardly see anything but red soil, reminiscent of the red clay in his Alabama home. “How many men have died here today?” he thought to himself.

The three regiments began the long trek across the field to utter destruction. In the first few steps, James saw men fall, men he thought indestructible. The man with the black beard was struck dead when a cannonball ex-
exploded less than ten feet in front of him.

The field was covered with blood, but, by the grace of God, James was able to reach the hill with the remains of the three tattered regiments of men and boys. He turned to see his two brothers flanking him and ascending the hill to his left. Over two thousand men had begun the assault, but only a fraction of that number remained to die a glorious death storming the Union trenches.

The men wearing gray had halted at a line of oaks and cotton-woods and were now fired upon by infantrymen in trenches. James found an oak and, using it for cover, fired his first round. A man fell across the Union trenches.

While reloading his gun, the ramrod was struck by a bullet and, being forced backwards, slapped a man’s face. An instant later, a bullet clipped the boy’s ear. He was too numb to feel pain, but he still knew what had happened.

The cries from wounded almost drowned the cracks of the many rifles. Men were falling all around the boy. A man on his right was forced back at least three yards, leaving a trail of blood. Another bullet split a small sapling, causing the top to sway to and fro until it finally gave way and hit the ground. A cloud of dust was kicked up in front of James’ feet. The man to his left doubled over, clutching his stomach and moaning in anguish.

James took the wounded man’s ramrod to replace his own. He pounded the bullet into the breech of the barrel and, placing a brass cap under the hammer, fired.

A soldier’s rifle exploded from the breech as he discharged it, killing the two men on either side of him and seriously wounding the soldier. The regimental commander of the Fifth Texas fell with a bullet in his side.

James was ramming his final round into his musket when a bullet took two of his fingers and scraped his neck. When he recovered enough to fire, the enemy was hurling more shot toward the offenders. Placing the cap in its position, he fired his final shot, and the bullet knocked a Union officer to the ground.

James reached for more paper cartridges and caps from a fallen soldier. As he did so, a bullet struck his shoulder and another ripped into his hip. He heard a soldier yell, “I got me another Reb!”

James rolled over on his stomach and, using his rifle as a crutch, attempted to recover his position. A bullet struck the lock-plate, and he felt a blow to his chest. He laid on the blood-soaked ground, waiting for his life to be taken from him.

Not far behind, James saw Jesse take a bullet in his face and Thomas retreat with the few remaining men. “Three squirrels,” James stuttered with his final bit of strength. “Two fall. One reaches safety without the knowledge of the other two. Run, Thomas!” •

A bullet struck the lock-plate, and he felt a blow to his chest. He laid on the blood-soaked ground, waiting for his life to be taken from him.
A young man, quick and nimble, carefully chose his way through the thicket. He knew that he must leave no trace of the direction in which he was going, but he also knew that they were not far behind. He had to hurry.

A low, jagged limb caught his right arm and ripped the skin. He drew a sharp breath but made no sound. He felt the blood running down his arm and the cold wetness of his shirt sleeve, but he could see the rocks at the base of the bluff; he couldn’t slow down.

He climbed the rocks just as he had many times before but without the caution he usually took. His arm was weak, and several times he lost his grip and fell against them, bruising his face and chest. The rocks tore at his hands, but he continued his ascent until he reached the cave.

He and his brothers had played at the old Indian cave when they were younger, and he had used it as a safe haven once before. It was hidden from view by the rocks stacked at the bottom of the bluff; therefore, the Feds couldn’t find him. He sat down, ripped his shirt off, and bandaged his arm. He was safe.

Hours passed, and the dim light inside the cave soon gave way to total darkness. Earl pulled himself up with sore hands and felt his way through the pitch-black cavern. He made his way down the rocks very slowly, feeling for every recess and obstruction. The woods were not such an obstacle, and he made his way through the trees rapidly in the dim moonlight.

When his feet finally found the dirt road, he exhaled with relief. It would only be a short time before he reached the house, and then he could make sure all of his brothers had escaped the A.B.C. men—that was the most important thing. The still would have to be rebuilt; he knew from experience that an ax had had its way with the barrels and copper lines. The hollow itself could have been drunk, had it had a low alcohol tolerance, after seeping up the gallons of Wildcat spilled there that afternoon. It was a terrible loss, but if everyone had gotten away it would take only days to relocate and rebuild.

The Alcohol and Beverage Control was tightening its hold on the county; the raids were coming closer together, and the sheriff knew about the Federal plans less and less often. But a person had to make a living.

He could hear, rather than see, the leaves falling onto the dusty road. The night air had a fall chill, and Earl suddenly felt the cold air against his bare chest. He shivered involuntarily. It was already fall, soon winter would set in, and it would be harder to meet the demand for whiskey. During winter the requests for the warm liquid increased while the amount of time allowed for making it was drastically reduced, but business remained good—just harder.

By the time he saw the lamps burning through the window of the old house, he was trembling uncontrollably. He quietly went up the rock steps and crossed the porch, but the screen door squeaked as he opened it.

"Earl White, where’ve you been? Don’t you know I been worried sick about you?" Her face paled visibly when she saw the blood-soaked shirt wrapped around her son’s arm. "What happened? How bad is it?" She was already removing the makeshift bandage from his upper arm.

"I’m okay, Ma, it’s just a scratch."

"Good Lord, boy, you look like you been beat," Mr. White said from the corner where the iron stove burned.

Earl looked at his father and smiled. The man was getting on in years, having turned sixty-one just months earlier. His hair and beard were frosty, and his skin was marked by many fine lines. He was
beginning to favor his left leg when walking, and his old hands held the small of his back more and more often. However, he still laughed whole-heartedly at limericks shared with his sons. He still loved Emma just as he had the day he married her, and his blue eyes still twinkled when he teased her.

Mr. White himself had stopped running stills five years earlier; after he went to work at a C. C. camp in '36. Earl had just turned fifteen and had no trouble taking up the slack in the family business. Work was good even during the worst of the Depression; it seemed as though people really needed Wildcat during those years, and Earl learned what he didn't already know about the trade very quickly.

"Yeah, I guess so, I sure as hell feel like I been beat." Ma closed her eyes against the sight of her son's arm. It looked dreadful, but she was thankful it wasn't a gunshot. It would take a long time to clean, but it wasn't a bad wound; it had barely torn the muscle.

"How'd you do this, Earl?"

"Limb caught me," he replied softly; it wasn't a very noble way to be injured.

She carefully picked the splinters out with a needle and washed the cut with rubbing alcohol. She bandaged his arm with a fresh linen cloth, soaked another cloth with medicine, and washed the scratches on his face and upper body.

"I left some beans warmin' on the stove, and the cornbread's on the table," she paused and squeezed his hand.

He slid down into a straight backed chair and asked his oldest brother, Owen, about the still.

"Well," Owen sighed, "There ain't much left, but we managed to salvage a few cans. It could've been worse, it could've been a twenty-sack still." He smiled; he never let the world get to him.

"Yeah," Earl said lightly, "it could've been worse."

He stood and walked to the cabinet. He got out a bowl and a spoon. He hadn't realized how hungry he was.

*****

The bruises were beginning to fade, and Earl's arm wasn't as sore as it had been a couple of days ago. The sun was high in the sky, and it was hot on his already sun-bronzed back, but the wind was cool.

He laughed at Mara as she ran from Birdie, the family's Red Bone Hound.

"Don't let 'im jump on you, Sweetheart."

The seven-year-old girl ran straight into Earl's arms. She looked like her mother, she had the same cinnamon-sprinkled brown hair and the same fair skin. Her mouth was delicately shaped and her cheekbones finely chiseled, but her most striking feature was her sparkling, inquisitive, brown eyes.

He imagined that she was the picture of Emma at that age.

"I wanna go down to the creek," she demanded.

"And, just why would you want to do that?" he replied.

"I wanna go down to the creek," she demanded.

"And, just why would you want to do that?" he replied.

"I wanna look for crawfish," she smiled.

"I don't know, Mara. I thank it's a little cold to be playin' in the water."

"Please Earl. Purdie please."

"I cain't, Sweetie. Seth'll be here soon, and then I've gotta go to town."

"I wanna go."

"I'm goin' with Seth, babe; I cain't take you with me and him."

She scrambled out of her brother's arms and stomped away. He laughed as he watched her little back going toward the house.

It was nearly an hour later when Seth Preston pulled his Mercury into the old dirt drive. He swung his long legs out of the car and slammed the door. He was taller than Earl and his eyes were clear blue, but both men had coal black hair and dark complexions. Earl had an mischievous glint to his brown eyes, while Seth's eyes looked completely kind and honest, and Earl was a little more muscular than Seth. However, both were young and virile, and they were very much alike in personality.

They had met when they were nine years old. Owen had courted Seth's older sister, Sarah; the boys
often played together while Owen and Sarah picnicked or went for walks. The two men were from totally
different backgrounds; Earl's father had been moonshining most of his life, while Mr. Preston worked
in the drugstore downtown. They never realized the differences. When they were older, Seth taught
Earl about books, and Earl taught Seth about whiskey, women, and good times. It was a fair exchange.
They found that they could count on each other in any situation, and they both knew how rare it was
to find someone who could be trusted. Over the years they became very much like brothers.

"Ready?" Seth called.

"Yeah, let's go."

Earl knew his way around the hardware store, but he often took his time when he was sent on an
errand. It was a man's dream. He imagined that Mr. Jones, the store owner, was a wealthy man; because
a man always bought more than he actually needed; after all, one never knows when one might need
it.

He was hovering around the copper wire when he heard Mr. Simpson's voice.

"I don't know why Seth keeps company with that White boy; he ain't nothin' but trouble, just like
the rest of his family. You remember when his brother Owen came down here and beat up that Johnson
kid, don't you? Said he didn't have to explain his reasons. They ain't no better than animals—ain't got
no morals or respect for other human bein's. They get that wild look in their eye." Mr. Simpson said.

"Umm," Mr. Jones grunted.

"I just don't like none of em; they don't live by any standards," Mr. Simpson concluded.

Earl took a deep breath. He should have been used to this reaction by now. It had always been this
way when people saw Seth with him. He felt his cheeks flame; he walked out of the store without the
nails he had come for.

He was fuming by the time he met Seth on the sidewalk.

Seth, who immediately sensed his friend's frustration, questioned his mood.

"Mr. Simpson was in the store. He said he couldn't understand why Seth kept company with that
White boy. 'Earl's got that wild look in his eye,' he said. 'Got no morals, no respect for other human's,'
he said. 'Ain't no better than an animal,' he said," he mocked Mr. Simpson. "That Goddam hypocrite;
he buys all the whiskey that he hides from his wife from us, Seth. Damn."

"Earl, you know better than to listen to what people like that have to say. It ain't worth gettin' upset
over. You've got morals. You don't live like animals, and you love easier than anybody I've ever seen—
that's a kind of respect most people don't even understand. Let it go."

Earl groaned. He didn't want to let it go, but Seth was right; it wasn't worth the effort that it took
to stay mad.

*****

Late that night Seth and Earl made their way to the barn and siphoned some Wildcat from the
barrels buried in the dirt floor. They took their jugs of whiskey out of the pond and dropped a cork and
line into the water. The moon shone brightly, but the corks were hard to see. Soon it wouldn't matter
anyway.

Earl began to feel the heat rise to his cheeks, and he knew the alcohol was having an effect. The
day's events were erased from his mind. He heard a coyote's yelp in the distance. The animal was just
showing its respect to the moon.

"You ever think about the moon, Seth? About how important it is to those animals—the coyotes,
the owls, the wolves, the rats?"

"Cain't say I've pondered the question before."

"Ever night he sets up there in the sky and gives 'em the light to live by. Without him they'd never
make it in this world. He just sends his moonbeams down here to them, always, never asking why he
should, he just does, because it's his place to take care of those things that couldn't make it without him."

"And what about those nights when it's cloudy, or when its rainin' or when there's a new moon,
Earl?"

"He's still there—he wouldn't let them down."
The moon wouldn’t let the predators down, because they need him to survive? And the moon’s always there for those creatures that need him? ’s that right?"
"Yeah, that’s my idea."
"Damn, Earl, I believe we’re drunk."

****

Earl White watched his feet stir the dust on the road as he walked. It was well into Indian summer, and warmth surrounded him. He saw a young couple having a picnic in old Mr. Carraway’s pasture, and he stopped for a moment and leaned on one of the old barren fence posts that marked the edge of the road. He thought about Mary Beth for a moment, then turned and headed on down the mountain.

There had been another inspection, but Sheriff Harley had tipped Owen that the A.B.C. was going on another raid. They had had time to move the still. The money was coming in, and the prices of sugar and corn were going down everyday. In fact, Ma had just bought Mara a new dress.

Everyone was happy.

Earl didn’t stay at Buddy Hawkin’s very long, just long enough to pick up an order from town.

The sun was passing into the western sky when he reached Carraway property. His mind drifted back to Mary Beth; perhaps they could go to the Harvest Festival together. She was beautiful. He could almost smell her perfume.

The screams pierced the air and broke into Earl’s peaceful world. His head jerked up to see the couple about a hundred yards away near the side of the road. He saw the man’s fist slam into the side of the young woman’s face, and he saw the blood streaming from her mouth. He was already running when the man ripped her blouse.

Even as he jerked one of the old fence posts from the ground, Earl never slowed down. He swung the post into the stranger’s stomach and then over his back. The young man was strong and managed to rise and throw a punch. Earl brought the wood against the man’s temple, and hit him in the gut twice more before the guy fell to the ground. Blood soaked into the ground around his head. There was little doubt that he was dead. The woman stood in silence with her hands over her mouth.

Sheriff Harley’s car pulled into the yard late that night. Earl was prepared to go, but it broke his heart when Mara begged the sheriff not to take her brother away.

He would never forget the sheriff’s words, “Earl White, you’re under arrest for attempted murder. Yeah, he’s still alive, but just barely.”

Thank God.

His hands were cuffed behind his back, and Guy Harley led him out of his mother’s house. The moonlight shone down on the old country car and even glistened off the handcuffs.

“I’m sorry about this, son,” Guy said honestly.

Earl nodded.

He knew he would do the same thing again. There was no regret.

“Don’t go, Earl!” Mara screamed.

The car door shut on her words.

Lidded Raku Vessel
by Margaret Chein

1994 Lights and Shadows – 69
I grew up in a house of music. Melodies reverberated through the walls of my childhood home, and at the center of the music was Granddaddy. He had learned the secrets of the art of arts and, in his final years, was anxious to share his insight. He instilled in us a love of the harmony which can sometimes be found in life and provided us with the ability to compose our own symphonies when faced with an unpleasant situation. We became a passionate, intense family because as we were creating music, the music was, in turn, creating us.

Because I did not develop my musical abilities as the rest of the family did, Granddaddy included me in a different way. He tried to show me the true meaning of music—the music that does not come from a guitar or a piano but, instead, comes from within a person. He wanted to show me that the power and strength of the soul lies buried, out of reach to most, only to be discovered by the rare individuals who have the ability to climb inside a strain of music. "This ability," he assured me, "has nothing to do with actually playing music, but has everything to do with understanding music." At that time, I couldn't comprehend his meaning, but the words became etched in my mind. As I grew older, I considered his ideas and realized the impact that this ability to discover the strength of my soul could have on me.

Learning to understand music became my first priority because I knew that was what Granddaddy wanted. I remembered the walks we used to take together when we could close our eyes to listen to the songs of nature. I only heard birds chirping and dogs barking, but he said that he heard a masterpiece composition. I went back to the same woods where we walked and listened for the music. I heard leaves crunching and crickets chirping and the wind whistling through the trees. I still didn't hear the music.

Nature didn't help me understand music, so I tried to remember another clue he might have given me. He once told me that the music in a soul needs an outlet for expression, so I became involved in drama. I discovered that I had talent, and I was finally able to feel the exhilaration and satisfaction of performing. I overcame my shyness and gained self-confidence, but I didn't hear the music.
I eventually realized that my search had been going in circles, and I decided that I would never hear the music unless I developed my own theory of music. I took the things Granddaddy taught me and combined them with my observations and pondered. I concluded that music is a manner of expressing emotions. Words are only rough translations of concepts such as love, hate, and beauty, and attempting to speak of them demands the magnitude of the feelings. The heart must be allowed to speak through its own language—the language of music.

Having completed my search, I was ready to climb inside the music and find my power and strength. However, that door had already been unlocked. It had opened itself many years before, on the day when I was forced to hear music—at my Granddaddy’s funeral.

Only one thing remained for me to do; I needed to tell Granddaddy. I had not been to his grave in the six years since his funeral, but I knew it was time. During the drive to the cemetery, I planned what I would say to him. I could tell him the things that I learned from my search—that music exists everywhere, and it is the means by which the soul speaks. I could also tell him that the musical background he established for our family kept us unified and strong during the most trying times of our lives. I would share my search for music led me to my true passion—drama—and that his insights inspired me to be an optimistic, successful person. Most importantly, I would tell him that I love him.

I sat down by the grave and opened my mouth to speak. I closed it, though, and let my heart speak for me. And I finally heard the music. •
Change The Channel

Meagan Rikard
Bradshaw High School

A dirty chin with lonesome eyes
Bare feet on the muddy green earth
It's the Ireland of Joyce
It's both Protestant and Catholic
It makes no distinction

A tear-stained face worn with the trials of war
Cracked and bleeding hands pick up the shrapnel
violated bodies
It's the Bosnia of today
It's the Auschwitz of yesterday
It makes no distinction

And I feel a need
A need to change the channel

A brown-bag old man with trash-can clothes
Elected manicured hands slam a secret, infested book closed
It's the America of Reagan

It's Congress today but the gutters tomorrow
It makes no distinction

A lonely opaque porpoise glides through the thick water
Charred trees stand desolate, naked before the wind
It's the earth of man
It makes no distinction

And I feel a need
A need to change the channel

A trembling chin staring at reality
Seventeen years of unconsciousness going into battle
It's the world of homophobic hate
It's the world of family values
It makes no distinction

And I feel a need
A need to change the channel
Second Place - 3D

"Ode To Pandora"
Raku fired by Robert Grimes
Production Credits

Art Editor .................................................. Angie Gresham
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University Photographer ..................... Shannon Wells
Proofreader .............................................. Brenda J. Hill
Compositor ........................................... Margaret Walls Beck

Art Winners

Best of Show ........................................................ Backseat Driver - Larry Akers
First Place 2-D Color ........................................ Chaos & Confusion - Larry Akers
Second Place 2-D Color ....................................... Bliss - Robert Grimes

Color Merit Distinctions
Summertime - Melissa Fuller
One Night Stand - Lane Emerson
Hopefuls - Tiffany Dunlap
Lamentation - Mary Beth Williams
Plant - Marie Robinson

First Place 2-D Black & White ........................... "G" - Lane Emerson
Second Place 2-D Black & White ...................... Rest - Melissa Fuller

Black & White Distinctions
Allegiance - Larry Akers
Best Friends - Mary Beth Williams
Something’s Interesting - Joel Byrom
Untitled - Larry Akers

First Place 3-D ......................................................... Tea Pot - Margaret Chein
Second Place 3-D .................................................... Ode to Pandora - Robert Grimes

3-D Merit Distinctions
Triangle - Marie Robinson
Crescent - Tiffany Stauffer

Containing Eagles - Jamey Simmons
Torso - Mary Beth Williams

Pinch Pot - Sujata Savant

Campus Bookstore Award ............................... Christina - Melissa Fuller
Literary Winners

POETRY
First .................................. Looking into Roger Fry's "Omega Virginal" - Robert Bryan Crisp
Second ................................... Le Petits Papillion Jaunes - Jo Lynn McClure
Third .................................... Killing Time - Christopher Halvorson

FICTION
First .................................. Serenity Through Turkey in the Straw - Summer Twyman
Second .................................. Tears for the Living - K.D. Blake
Third .................................... Miracle at the Church of the Immaculate Deception - Melonie Farley

INFORMAL ESSAY
First .................................. Cherokee Eyes - Robert Bryan Crisp
Second .................................. Richest Kids in Seattle - Christopher Halvorson
Third .................................... Albert's - Tania Williams

High School Literary Winners

POETRY
First .................................. Change the Channel - Meagan Rikard
Bradshaw High School

FICTION
First (Tie) .................................. Fields of Glory - Jeremy Sanderson
Deshler High School
Moonshine - April Sivley
East Lawrence High School

INFORMAL ESSAY
First .................................. I am Music - Sally Kay Landham
Bradshaw High School

Nondiscrimination Policies: It is the policy of the University of North Alabama to afford equal opportunities in education and in employment to qualified persons regardless of age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, or sex, in accord with applicable parts of the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The coordinators of the nondiscrimination policies are for students, Vice President for Student Affairs and University Counsel, Room 217, Bibb Graves Hall or telephone 205-760-4235 for employees, the Director of Human Resources, Room 222, Bibb Graves Hall or telephone 205-760-4291.
art and literary judges

Poetry: Susan Luther is a poet and scholar who lives in Huntsville. She is an editor of Poem. Of the winning poems she says, “All vibrate with strong feeling and intelligence. And in them all, but most in ‘Omega Virginal,’ intelligence comes to mean ‘the revelation of secrets’—of worlds beyond our own, of the harmonics that resonate beneath the polished surface of everyday life and consciousness.”

Fiction: Maria M. Benet is a graduate student in the MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College. Her work has appeared in many journals, most recently Prairie Fire, a Canadian literary magazine. She praises the fiction entries as “bravely imagined,” and “sensitive.”

Informal Essay: Carol Wolfe Konek, Associate Dean of Liberal Arts at Wichita State University, is an author and editor whose work has appeared in scholarly and literary journals throughout the country. Her major work of literary non-fiction, Daddyboy, was a finalist in the PEN non-fiction awards. She comments, “I am engaged by the voices of these writers who make their experience vibrant by attending to detail and by listening well.”

Judge for the high school competition was Professor James Seay who is the head of the creative writing program at the University of North Carolina.

Art: Julian Acosta, originally from Miami, Florida, fell in love with Alabama while visiting relatives and now resides in Russellville, Alabama. After years of working with different media in a variety of styles, Acosta has cycled back to creating art that can be categorized as honest and unpretentious. Acosta treats common subject matter in a variety of abstract ways with mixed media. He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree from Florida Atlantic University and a Masters Degree from St. Thomas University in Miami, Florida.

“I was quite honored to be asked to judge the 1994 art entries. As an artist, looking at new work always provides me with an opportunity to be motivated and inspired. Due to the overall amount of talent, the task of choosing the winners became extremely difficult. As I viewed the diverse body of work, I felt in touch with the creators; I could see through their souls, feel the love, share their passion, empathize with their struggle, surround myself with their fears and embrace their humanity. In retrospect, every piece held a special place in my psyche—in my sometimes limited, sometimes vast scheme of life.

“Overall, it was quite evident that the faculty and students at the University of North Alabama share a strong commitment towards ‘Excellence in Teaching and Learning.’ The combined efforts provide an important link in the chain of community enrichment and development.”