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Eastern Kentucky University, English Department

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Aurora



AURORA

1978

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AURORA

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Poetry:

Jeffrey S. Hillard	7
Charlie Hellebusch	9
Daphne Beth Greene	13
Robert Gene Huber	14
Wayne Boblitt	15
Karen Newmann	16
Lesia Kirsch	18
Brenda DeBord	20
Valerie Jo Holmes	21
B. R. Ewing	22
Patricia Hays	24
D. Marie Tucker	25
Laura Underwood	29
Steve Cambron	30
Gayle Davis	36
Larry Travis	38
Nyoka A. Wireman	40
Shelby White	42

Fiction:

Shelby White	45
Ken Tingley	56
Paul E. Newton	63
Patricia Hays	66
Phil Osborne	72
D. Scott Weaver	91

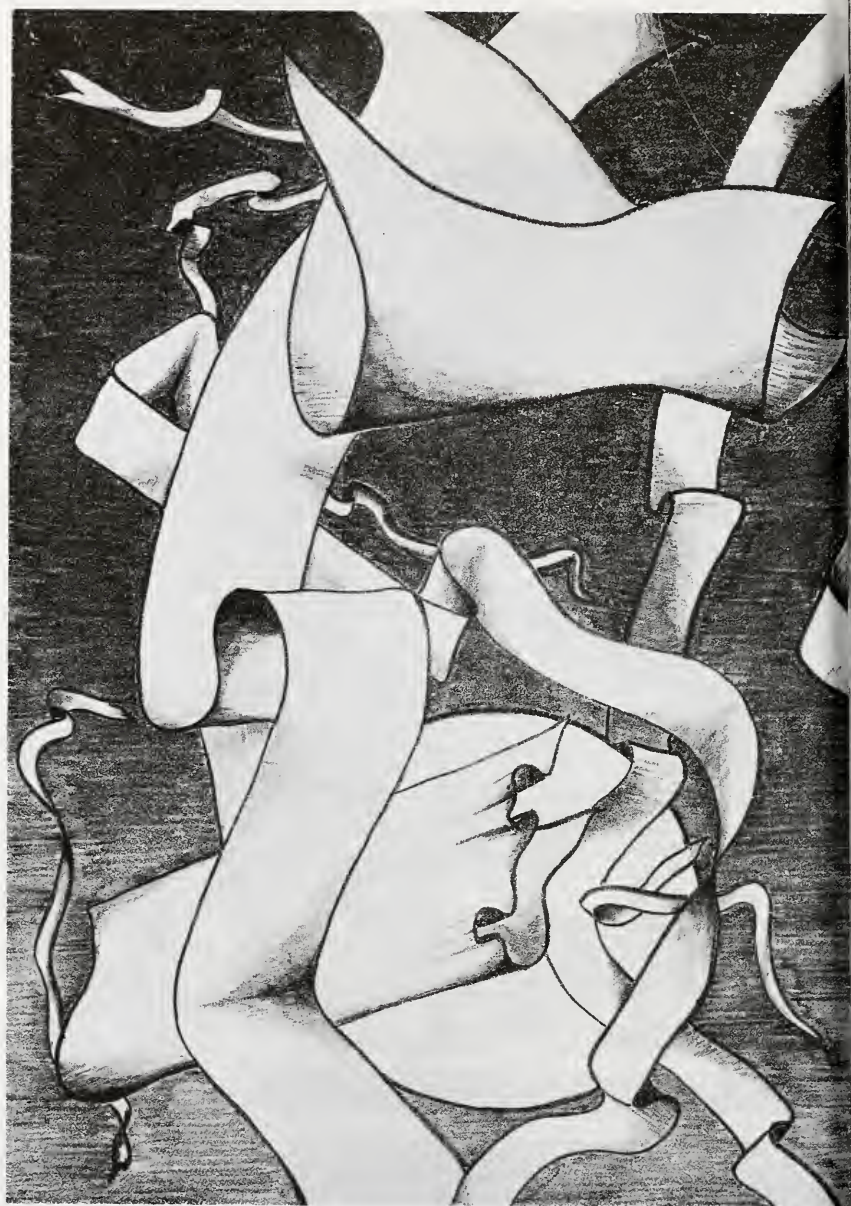
Artwork:

Kirk Denny	Cover
S. Thompson	5
Bradley K. Moore	6
Patricia Miles Nour	27
Ronnie Vanover	28
S. Thompson	43
Patricia Miles Nour	44
Clyde Hampton	54
Kathy Royer	55

Artwork, continued

Sheila McCane	70
Patricia Miles Nour	71
Robert Mudd	89
Ronnie Vanover	90





CAPTIVITY

Laying lowborn with a procelain smile reaching
the brink of a suspended hairline, your blood
touched on the border of the Sahara with every
move, cringing like arms of a drawbridge,
while my troops approached

And in signaling no retreat, crawled
mercilessly upon the tombs of your dead,
and over the snow-lodged mountains, unable
to guard my attack, when I charged full
brigade through the kingdom of your torture,
slashed and slayed, only to halt!

I locked myself in the treaty of your com-
promise
and mended my wounds forced by you,
my fearless enemy.

Jeffrey S. Hillard

THE BLANK PEACH

I - left motionless to spoil
in the hot penetrating sun
while my unfaithful ripeness
yields to earth's rotation loyal.

High up, peeking shyly downward
towards my brotherly city of
fruit, my burdened idle seeds
tell me stories of the worldly flowers.

I should be a nestled flower
among the populous poppies
all perfectly comfortably crowded,
none accused of being a coward.

Or secluded. Never to grow
like myself. Neither am I now
a tender caring brother or sister
but a miserably distant cousin.

unknown.

Jeffrey S. Hillard

go away,
but stayed and stayed with ice...
"two feet deep" some said, until the
 Twentieth of February.
Most ate their horses last
 thinking maybe...
 maybe...
they would be their only way of gettin out...
 back to Virginia,
 back to warm food,
 back to warm beds,
 back to warm women,
as they chewed and chewed that horsemeat
in the
 weary cold,
that grey, Kentucky cold.
 Some folks kept a'commin in,
 movin' slow...
a couple miles a day, some,
 down near the Gap
put up shelters, honkered down...
 watching as a toe,
 an ear,
 turned black,
against that weary cold,
that grey, Kentucky cold.
 Those once active men with long guns...
so slow now...
 sleeping never to arise...
drifting off in dreams of
 cabins warm, back over there
in the Valley of the Roanoke.
 With wives a'waitin,
 warm in flannels,
 steamin' buffalo tongue,
 white lye homney...
but,
most hungers gone away
 just the cold remains...
 weary cold,
that grey, Kentucky cold.

It took the Licking, Green and Wolf
and froze 'em down
clear to the bottom...
Yet folks kept a'comin in
those makin' for Kentucky
their new home,
a new start...
in weary cold...
weary cold,
that grey, Kentucky cold...
and again I heard Smith's voice ring-out
across
those cold, grey hills...
"If I was only in Virginia..."

Charlie Hellebusch

KENTUCKY SPRING 1845

Forty-five would be some year he thought
with green a pushin' up...
along each row of split rails.
Looking back,
across the hills...
a crisp wind blowin' to his face.
Just such a wind,
mid-March,
had burned Crab Orchard to the ground...
a rider comin' through had said,
"twenty homes or more had burned".

Forty-five would be some year he thought
with green a pushin' up...
yet things were changing fast now.
New ideas...
ideas hard to handle...

newspapers selling
Blacks...
and all that anti-slavery talk.
Cassius up in Lexington done let his go.
He'll surely suffer cause of that!

Forty-five would be some year he thought
with green a pushin' up...
all thinking now must be towards
raising hemp,
and Robert...

not so little now,
would be leavin' Fall
for Bacon College.
A damn waste too...

a healthy lad,
and just when t'baccar
must be housed.

Forty-five would be some year he thought
with green a pushin' up...
down by the spring he'd found
that splittin' maul...
missed all winter,
worth a precious price,
the hickory handle dark and damp
but,
still as good as new.

Forty-five would be some year he thought
with green a pushin' up...
and over by the corn crib
a settin' hen was cluckin'
eight young chicks along.
And Spring was breakin' fresh...
and it was breakin' new
in that year of Forty-five.

Charlie Hellebusch

The Morning After

We cry in anguish from wounds.

Rachel weeps for her children

And all of it in vain.

There is no cure.

The thorn stays in the side;

And Judas hangs.

Daphne Beth Greene

January 27, 1977

The candle dies

And the Requiem swells

As tears pour from its side.

Beauty, yet sadness in its song,

It prophecies.

The Messiah still doesn't come,

Satans always prevail;

And you melt away

Never again to illuminate.

Daphne Beth Greene

A question on time

The orbiting hands travel
to their own rhythmic song,
following close the path
that time leads them on.

Their way is not hindered;
their direction not mistaken
but minutes sometime slow
and hours often quicken.

So I ask myself as I'm drawn in deeper,
"Are clocks their brothers keepers?"

Robert Gene Huber

ANTHEM

Bluebirds herald Dawn,
Thanksgiving song for sunlight:
The sound of living.

Wayne Boblitt

PRISONS

Crying to be heard,
Truths hidden behind closed doors
Never reveal themselves.

Wayne Boblitt

8:15

The sky is lit up
With thousands of glowing suns
And Life stops . . . for Man.

Wayne Boblitt

Sagged pants -- abdicate!
to corduroy trousers
and genuine leather belt
Sweated shirt -- abdicates!
to oxford shirt
and virgin wool sweater
Abdicated yet unresigned -- I'm renewed!
Psyche!

Karen Newmann

FROM WITHIN

The words without their music
search empty space unknown,
for coupled notes to echo past
where silent verse has grown.

Fate's words will no doubt come to rest
their unjust realization,
amidst the thoughts that linger far
beyond my contemplation.

For where are notes that make their love
to words which I obtain?
Would they resound through emptiness,
the space from whence they came?

Or would they die their virgin deaths,
no oneness to be found?
Was each half meant to turn away-
or take the other down?

Lesla Kirsch

THE SEARCH

Trudging dreary in the mountains
underneath the sunset sky.
Calling softly, now the canyons
echo back the same reply.

Swimming quiet midst the waters
running deep so clear and cold,
Knowing there would be a secret
had some prophet been foretold.

Gazing silent, awed with starlight
heaven's beauty seen on earth.
Restless man is now content
to love this circumstance of birth.

Lesla Kirsch

The Worm in the Apple

I am the apple.
You are the worm.
You crawl inside me,
but I can't squirm.
When you take your first bite,
you think I'm sweet.
But I'm really sour
to the core.

Brenda DeBord

The Balloon

I once had a balloon
that I cherished very much.
I wouldn't let anyone touch it,
afraid that it would burst.
You came along, forced me
to give it up.
I cried.
 You took my balloon away.
I screamed.
 You punctured it with your pin.
I became hysterical
 when it popped.
I saw red pieces flying everywhere.

Brenda DeBord

Both Sides

Is it really that much better
to open up
 to the world
spread your arms freely
 and give yourself
 to everyone
instead of
 hiding in the darkness
 seeking solitary things
in
a
private corner?
I
don't
know
 for I've been both places
and sometimes you need a friend
but
then again
 sometimes a friend
 is
 one too many.

Valerie Jo Holmes

BUTTERFLIES

In the jungle with the hot, dripping leaves,
The tiger hits the ground, hard-mud
 covering
Her stripes, the blood flowing over the
 taut muscles-
The hunter smiles and the lizard crawls down
The crusted, seeping bark--and smiles.

We cannot touch her, her eyes vanish
And our hands are too callous-
She hides, we cannot invision her
But our skin crawls--electricity shoots
Through our skin--where are you?
Are you hiding behind those tenement walls-
Are you in those halls where the words bounce
From one point to another while they sit
Gazing through the caked-dirt windows,
Smiling so the Sun God will release them
From their nets?

B.R. Ewing

SACK OF STICKS

The rain is in puddles, my mind in a muddle,
A maze. The scenes sink quick into the mud-
There's a thud of my heart, then it stops.
Out in the rain--lost, children alone-
Singing nursery rhymes through bloody lips-
Hands on the heating pipes, the pulse, the
 pause-
It feels good to die.

Half-way through the jungle in the relentless
 rain-
Bruised ankles, bleeding fingers, no pain.
The songs were blasphemy, now I see it clear-
I'll be quiet, calm, act very dear.
Jesus ascended this world, a lot like air-
Most of us, like Jacob, must take the stairs.

B.R. Ewing

"ON PLANTING FLOWERS"

I planted some flowers today.
But I think I did it all wrong.
Oh, I broke the ground all right
And sprinkled rich dirt on top
And saturated the area with water.
But you see,
 the flowers weren't especially unique
 hybrids.
The package of seeds only cost 79¢.
But they're pretty flowers!
All different kinds - tall ones, short ones,
 yellow, pink, white. . .
But I'm afraid they'll be mad at me still.
Cause they probably wanted to set out a
 miniature rose bush, or perhaps day
 lilies.
I guess that would be more appropriate.
But I know my Daddy!
And he never cared much for propriety.
And I know once he sees all the different
 colored flowers,
He'll be happy!
Even if some of them are so tall
That they cover his name engraved on the
 marble monument.

Patricia Hays

Games

Beware, the sniper
Splitting the grass like a snake;
Peering down from the heights,
 The tree branches hiding
 the gun barrel
 and the face of one who waits,
 finger on the trigger,
 with joyful anticipation
 of his first victim
Till his mother calls him in for lunch.

See the wind blow
Across the lifeless, marble stones.
Below their silent feet lie countless little
 boys
Who were not called in for lunch
 soon enough,
And had to finish their game.

D. Marie Tucker

I Shan't Ask Again...

The winds blow
Unceasingly
Cool, wet
Smacking of the salt of the sea
Over the constant struggling
of the tides...

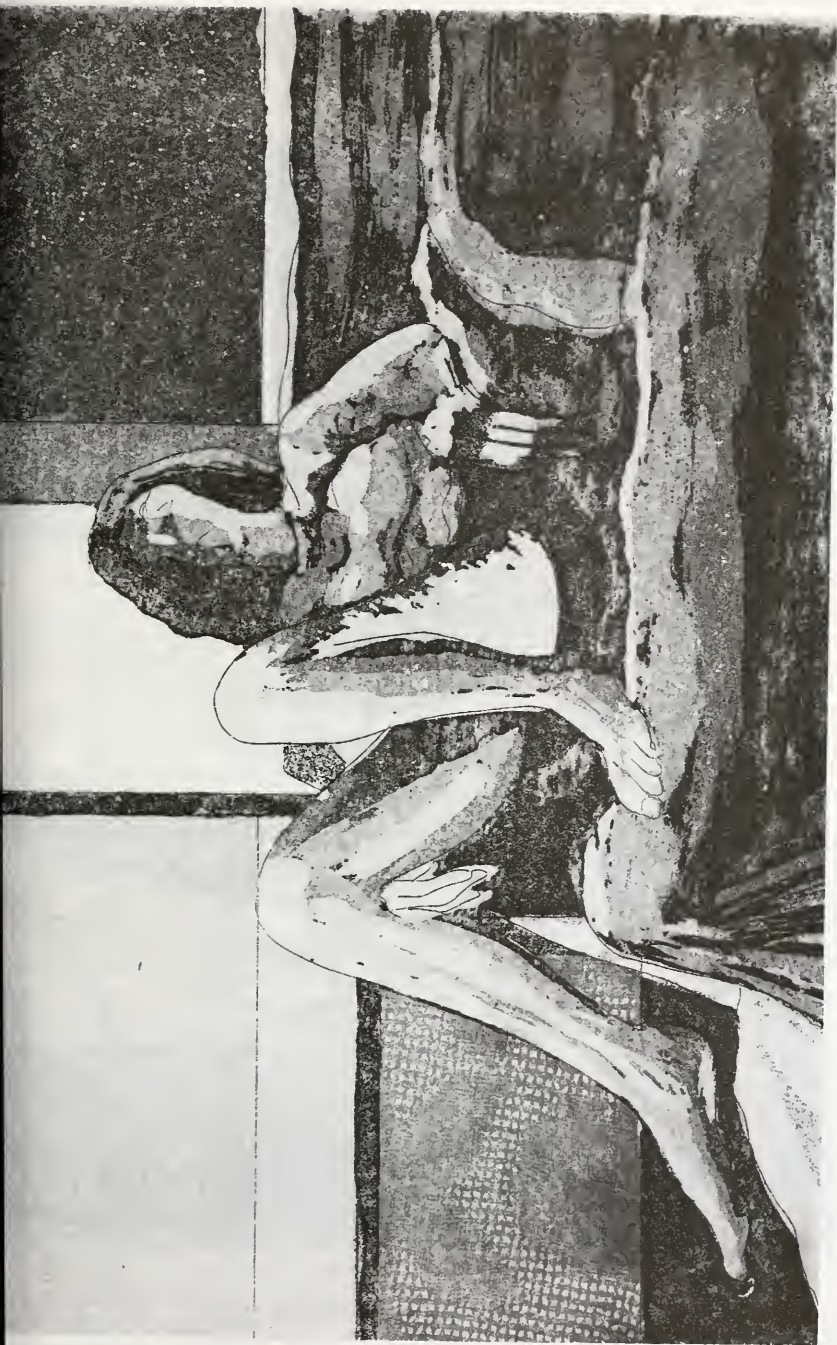
Struggling to crawl toward
The tall, sneering grass;
Tired of the shifting sand
Filled with a thousand
tiny
creatures

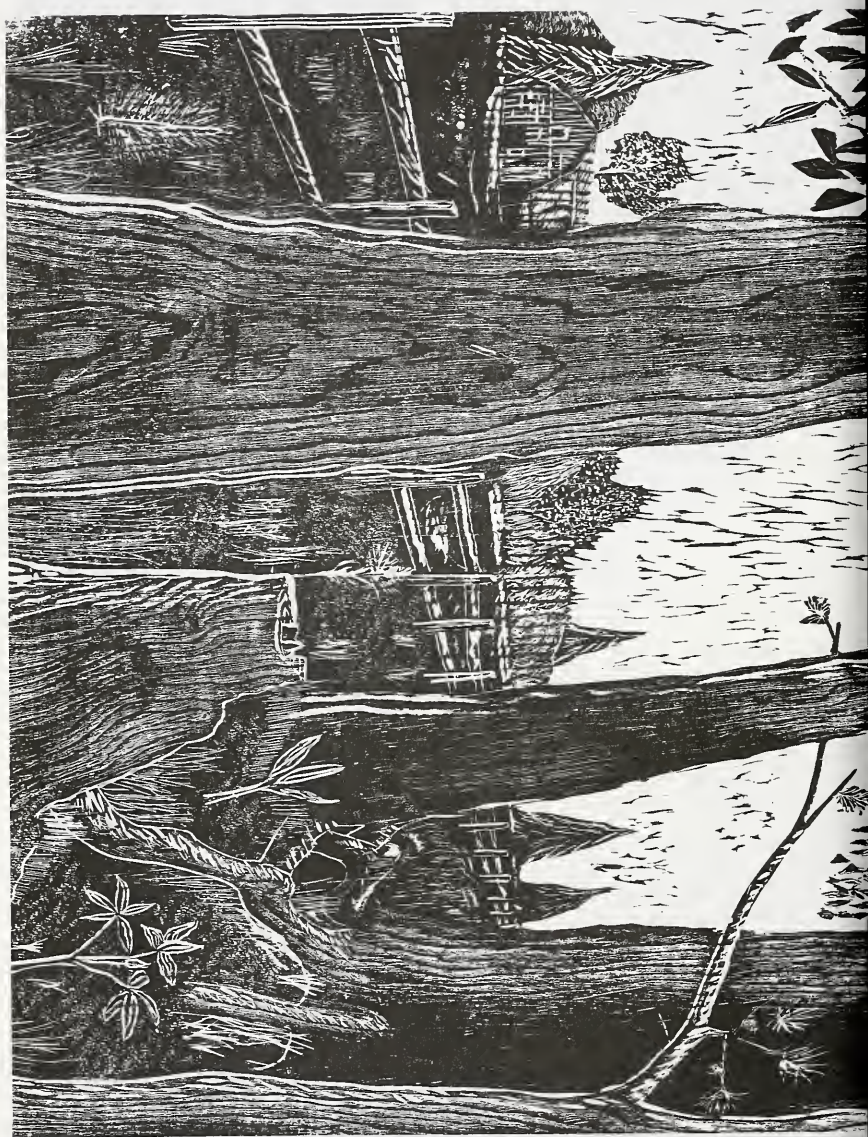
Not wishing to be disturbed
Digging deeper into a
fortress
Which dissolves around them.

But the tides fall short
Dragged back from the refuge
of solid ground.

And the lone gull
Laughs in all his splendour
At the weakness
of the waves
Which turned the towering cliffs
Into the inescapable boundaries
Of the endless beach.

D. Marie Tucker





THE MASTERPIECE

Imagine a caterpillar
Slowly picking the perfect
spot
Carefully deciding on top quality material
And building security around himself; a
cocoon.

The cocoon is whole.
The days are warm.
All is evolving as planned when destruction
finds its place.

It was not slow when the precision was lost.
The quality mattered not.
Now there was no cocoon or security.

A human destroyed the masterpiece with a
nonchalant swat.

Laura Underwood

Beggar Trees
(For T.C.)

Bare trees stark on the landscape
like arthritic old men stretching their hands
lean and hungry like claws of crows
curled up in the sunset, whiplashing
and shoving crooked fingers toward the sky
like beggars after manna.

At night the wind-driven hammer howls
into a frozen forge, knocking
the branches together like a string of bones
they scream for mercy and rake their
nightmare fingernails across the window.

My grandfather danced like the trees
frostbite drove nails through his forehead
the wind bent him into a pitchfork
he rocked in a wild storm night after night
twisted and contorted, until the seeds
went bankrupt and the blood froze to jello.
He became a bare tree
like the solitary old men who are scarecrows
hunchbacked on hills of a winter landscape.

Steve Cambron

Anima

Wild floating forms
drift leaf-like
through the air of my sleep

under the foxfire lamplight
of dreams, a swan-necked girl
with the nose of Nefertiti
and the eyes of a nymph
lips smooth as jellyfish
is dancing a strip tease

meanwhile, behind the scenes
through a crack in the cranial curtains
that old voyeur spys with his spyglass
trying to snatch a peek of an exposed
ass-end of an enigma just before
the catcalls and sandbags come tumbling down

Steve Cambron

The Bank of Saint Francis

Saint Francis stood on the window sill
of brown slate and chalk dust grooves
along with the frog eggs and novelties.
That was his grotto, he never moved
or rebuked the sun. But some said
"Wait until night with the door shut
and the janitors gone, he will dance
like an elf in the dark and laugh
like a dwarf." But I never saw him move.
He prayed quiet as the dust on the
window sill, as humble as a mushroom
while we dropped our milk money
through the hole in his head.
We proffered pennies for a dance
he ate handfuls, grew fat with the
seasons became as heavy as lead
(not what you'd call a dancer).
Still, it was rumored but the footprints
never proved, because Saint Francis
waltzing the not-quite shadow
must dance from his grotto
and so must the man in the moon.

Steve Cambron

No Variations on an Old Theme

It's an old theme
you know
about how indiscriminate suffering

must always occur
in the midst
of nonchalant occurings.

About how Icarus
got it
in the end, falling breakneck

towards a yawning sea
burnt bird wings
collapsed like a dirigible.

How his eyes bulged out
to meet the water
how his hands clawed nothing

as the last scream for
his father
floated out as bubbles.

Meanwhile, back at the cottage
horny peasant people
were eating their black bread

and making love. The mule
not even stopping
dropped a stool in the furrows

and the ploughman picked
his teeth
with his back turned.

It's an old story, older
than Aesop
written in the sand

of your grandmother's psyche.
Someone set it down
on a lost scroll before there were

lost scrolls. It was graffitied
in a subway tunnel
eons before the tracks were laid.

It's on the cave walls, engraved
in torchlight
at Lescaux and Altimira

behind the darkest recess
imaginable
in a margin of timeless limestone

crowded with bison and trampled
stick figures
someone, maybe a Cro-Magnon poet

or a Java Man's widow, passed the
message down -

"About suffering they were never wrong,
The Old Masters."

Steve Cambron

The Rembrandt Fugitives in Central Park

The wind comes and goes in the park
scuttling leaves on the sidewalk.
Old men brooding like apostles
on benches, they guzzle and talk
with voices crisp as glass bottles.
The one with torn sleeves, crouched in the
corner
played the old Jew in "Supper at Emanus"
his buddy with the cane posed as Homer.

Now the weather eats them like statues
their hands crumble like sandstone
the pigeons play in the ruins
and crows flock down to pick the bones.
In streetlight chiaroscuro
the wind comes and goes in the dark
sweeping the pieces of dropped voices
broken in piles on the sidewalk.

Steve Cambron

SLOW TO RUN

They were not pet dogs they were stray dogs and they lived in the field outside the town and they hunted in the town. The town people hated the dogs and threw rocks at the dogs and the more food the dogs found the harder the town people threw their rocks and the surer was their throwing and the town people often hit the dogs and the dogs in pain dropped their food and limped to the field outside the town.

But the dogs soon recovered and soon hunted again and they found more than enough food and they ate and slept and buried their bones and their ribs were fat and they were contented.

The town people built a road through the field outside the town and their cars went through the field and the dogs of the field chased the cars for fear the cars would dig their bones. The cars did not dig the bones of the dogs yet the dogs continued their chase of the cars as the lights of the wheels were a pleasure to chase.

The dogs could not catch the lights of the wheels but they desired the lights of the wheels and did not desire to hunt in the town and they hunted very little. Soon food got scarce and there were no bones and the dogs barked at one another and fought one another and their ribs were lean and there was no contentment.

Two dogs of the field outside the town were slow to run the cars and they ran the cars but little and they hunted in the town and to find contentment they crossed through the thorn trees to the field beneath the mountain and they ate there and slept there and buried their bones there and they lived there and their ribs were fat and they were contented.

The town people heard the noises of the dogs of the field outside the town and took their guns and the town people shot at the dogs of the field and the town people hit one dog and the dog died screaming and the town people wounded another dog and the dog screamed in pain and limped to the trees beside the pond and suffered there till he could hunt food.

Sometimes for pleasure the two dogs slow to run crossed over to the field outside the town and chased the lights they could never catch and when they were filled with enjoyment they crossed back through the thorn trees to the field beneath the mountain and there they heard the sounds. They heard the sounds of barking and fights and guns. They heard the sounds of death and the sounds of suffering and they heard the sounds of the animals and insects and birds of the mountain and of the field beneath the mountain and they drank the cool water of the field's clear stream and they lived there till they died.

Gayle Davis

A Memorial: Raymond Allen Harrig

I step slowly.

Slowly past the low moans of saddened souls.
Slowly past the inexhaustible cries of love
That soak through me.
Drifting in an aura of stiff sounds
That deaden the silence,

I step slowly.

Slowly away from the lamenting of lost life
And slowly toward one who had struggled.
For he had built it
And waxed it
And polished it
In Hope to make Life
Strong. Secure. Shining. Ray
Had loved it.

I step slowly .

Slowly toward the blessed soul
Quiet in his boxed sleep.
Slowly toward one that has dowered
A son and a daughter
To my sister without warning.

Chance Elliot, only two years old, too young
to remember his
Father nicknaming him Bubba.
And Seasons Lenée', six weeks from birth,
Will know only a photograph and a painting on
a wall.
And Sandra Kay
She begs soundlessly...
No words can shed her light.
Her Ray is gone.

I step slowly.

Then slowly over a horizon
I see him with radiance.

A deluge of love spills over.
My eyes are filled
And close on me.
My lips are silent
But want to move.
My ears ring with
Memorial hymns.
My heart feels lost
But prays for him
A righteous beginning.

My hand touches his that is blessed
In hope of an awakening-

I see through
A flowing vision.
He seems to move.
There, as when he was alive,
I feel a warmth in his touch
But still the stiffness in his shoulder.

I ask again
Forgiveness and a miracle.
For if one did rise before Him
Allow this One to rise before me.

I stop silently my asking,
For he lay still asleep
In his everlasting rest,
Unanswering.

I step slowly away
For I knew him well.

I knew him well.

Larry Travis

The Beggar

Sitting; cup in hand.

Shaking with palsy,

Smelling of oldness.

People rush by,

Afraid to meet

His unblinking eyes.

Do not shrink from

The clear white orbs,

He cannot see you staring

But look away.

He will strip your soul.

You are much blinder than he.

Nyoka A. Wireman

Mirror

my cloak is a frightened mirror image
a silver-toned duplicate hiding in
 haunted eyes
waiting to be called away
hoping to be left alone
a silent, staring stream of light
refracted reflection, secreted seclusion
 a reckless revision
 untouched by my hand
fading in twilight's trembling
sudden sunset sends the image sleep
stardark dims the fearful dreaming
explosion left another day postponed

Nyoka A. Wireman

On the Retirement of a Friend

Twenty years in Major,
Today you go.
Korea, 'Nam are in the past.
Civies are waiting on the door.

I'm sorry we didn't have a war
For you to die a soldier's death.
But the old warriors are the ones,
you know, who live to breed the next.

Beat your rifle into a typewriter,
Your grenade into a pen.
Your company now is an office desk,
Your battles fought in conference rooms.

Shelby White





MACKINAC ADVENTURE

Shelby White

And it came to pass in the last few weeks of the spring semester of his junior year, the Lord spoke to Shelby and said, "Go ye unto Mackinac Island and participate in Inter-
iversity Christian Fellowship's Mackinac Island Evangelism Project."

And Shelby said unto the Lord, "What is Mackinac Island?"

The Lord answered, "Mackinac Island is a resort island on the Lake Huron side of the Straits of Mackinac between Michigan's upper and lower peninsulas."

Shelby said, "But Lord, I'm from Kentucky. I've never been north of Cincinnati. I've never been in northern Cincinnati. They will laugh at my accent."

And the Lord said, "They will sound pretty funny themselves."

"But Lord," Shelby asked, "What is an evangelism project?"

The Lord replied, "The Mackinac Project is a summer long commitment to live and work on Mackinac Island. You come to the Island in May or June or earlier and work at a job you find yourself for as long as possible during the summer tourist season. You will be expected to be a Christian witness in a very non-Christian environment. You will be expected to find your own employment and housing on the Island and become friends with the non-Christians you come in contact with. To help you witness, you and the other Project members will form small groups and prayer partnerships and the small groups will come together regularly for large group activities. An Inter-

Varsity staff person will be on the Island during the months of June and July to direct, co-ordinate, and initiate Project activities and to counsel and teach the Project members. You and the other Christians will do contact evangelism, friendship evangelism, form evangelistic Bible studies, lead Christian house discussions, and generally make yourselves useful in My work."

"Is that all?" Shelby asked.

And the Lord said, "'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.'" (Ecclesiastes 9:10a)

Shelby answered, "Yes Lord, but why Michigan?"

And the Lord said, "'Go ye unto all the world and....'"

Shelby said, "I know Lord, but Michigan? Surely you didn't mean Michigan?"

And the Lord said, "Even Michigan."

Shelby said, "I can't go."

The Lord asked, "Why not?"

"I don't have a way to get there." Shelby answered.

The Lord replied, "'I am the way, the truth and the Light....' Surely I can find you a ride."

Shelby said, "But Lord, I'm scared."

The Lord answered, "Just keep up your daily quiet times. I am YOUR Shepard. YOU shall not want. I will prepare YOU for whatever will come."

Shelby said, "Okay, I'll go. But I want a good job with good pay, easy working conditions, and a good place to live."

The Lord said, "Shelby, you will get what I give you."

So Shelby went, prayed, and fasted until finals week when he said unto the Lord, "Guess what! I looked around and some of the people from my IV chapter are going to

Cedar Campus, IV's summer camp in the upper peninsula of Michigan. I can ride up with them and go to small group leader's camp at Cedar Campus too. You won't have to bother about finding me a ride, God. I've already found one."

And the Lord said, "Shelby, how often do you have friends going all the way from Kentucky to northern Michigan; particularly when you are going there yourself?"

Shelby said, "Oh!"

And Shelby went unto Cedar Campus and said, "Well, that was a long trip but small group leader's camp was worth it. Lord, I just thought of something. If I spend the summer on the Island, how am I going to get home?"

The Lord said, "Don't worry. I'll take care of that too."

Shelby said, "Lord, my ride has just left me and I'm about to get on the boat to go across the Straits to the Island. God, it's lonely. I'm really scared."

The Lord said, "Relax. By doing this you are increasing your faith in Me. Look at it as a beginner's course in moving mountains."

When Shelby got off the boat, he was amazed at what he saw. He said, "Lord, Mackinac Island is really nice. I've never seen so many bicycles and horses in all my life. I'm glad they don't have any cars on Mackinac Island. It makes the place unique. Uh, Lord, what do I do now?"

The Lord said, "The Project co-ordinator sent you the addresses of some Project members who are already on the Island. I suggest you check with them and find out if they know of any job openings."

"Lord," Shelby asked, "What about a place to stay?"

The Lord answered, "Most of the larger employers on the Island, such as the hotels and the state park, provide housing for their employees. That is a possibility.

Shelby did as the Lord commanded and then said unto the Lord, "Lord, I've met some of the people with the Project. It sure is good to know there are some other Christians around and that I'm not alone; but they didn't know of any job openings. What should I do?"

The Lord said, "Start looking."

After a period of fruitless searching, Shelby said, "Lord, I've spent the entire day looking for a job. God, there isn't any. Why did you bring me here to suffer like this?"

The Lord said, "'Ye of little faith.' Keep looking."

That same day Shelby spoke unto the Lord again and said, "Lord, I've found a job but it's selling hamburgers. I could have sold hamburgers at home and made more money too. Why are you doing this to me God?"

The Lord said, "At home you would have been comfortable. Here I can use and teach you."

"Lord," said Shelby, "There's a problem. The job doesn't provide housing and I can't find a place to stay tonight and it is already dark. Good Heavens, God! Did you bring me all the way to Michigan just so I could sleep on a park bench?"

The Lord said, "Relax. I found Mary and Joseph something; I will take care of you too. Go back to the friends you have made-- your brothers with the Project. Tell them your plight. They'll put you up."

Shelby asked, "Are you sure? I just met them. They don't know me."

The Lord answered, "Of course I'm sure.

That's what brothers are for? 'When you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me.'

Shelby remarked, "Well, I certainly feel like one of the least right now."

Shelby went unto his brothers, as the Lord had commanded and just as the Lord had said, his brothers gave Shelby a place to rest and Shelby gave thanks unto the Lord.

After a few days Shelby said, "Wow Lord! It has taken me four days but I've finally found a place to live. Lord, I was beginning to think I couldn't do it. It's a good room. I sure am glad I found it."

And the Lord said unto Shelby, "'Where were you, when I laid the foundations of the earth?'"

The Lord continued, "Don't forget where all things come from."

"Lord I won't." Shelby promised. "But couldn't you have found me a better job? The rush is awful, the people mean, the flies horrible, the heat atrocious, the pay lousy, and today I nearly cut my finger off with the electric slicer. God, I hate it. I want to quit."

The Lord said, "Shelby, when you agreed to participate in the Mackinac Island Project, you agreed to remain faithful to any employment agreements you made. You have agreed to sell hamburgers until August 15. I expect you to keep your promise."

"But Lord," Shelby said, "It's only June!"

The Lord said, "I know. Have you been keeping up with your daily quiet times?"

Shelby answered, "Yeah, I've been reading Romans here. Hey God, did you see this? Paul said right here in Romans 8:18, 'For I reckon....' Did you hear that? 'For I reckon....' Paul must have been a southerner."

I haven't heard anybody say, 'For I reckon' since I left Kentucky. Isn't that something?"

The Lord said, "Read on Shelby."

"Oh, okay. Paul says, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.' Wow God! That is something to think about. Lord," Shelby asked, "Did Paul reckon right?"

The Lord answered, "I reckon he did. Why don't you read on?"

Shelby did and came to Romans 8:28 which reads, "All things work together for the good to those who love God and are keeping to His commandments."

Shelby asked, "Lord, is that true?"

The Lord said, "Of course it is."

Shelby asked, "How can I be sure? It seems to me a lot of things have been happening that just don't seem to be working out for the good and I love you and I sure am trying to obey...."

The Lord smiled and said, "Just keep loving and keep on obeying and watch how I put together your summer."

"God," Shelby said, "The people I work with stay stoned half the time and I can't blame them. If getting high was all I kenw, I would stay high. This work is awful."

The Lord said, "Shelby, I am better than getting high. You know that. Show it to them as you work along beside them. They think it's easy to be holy when you are separated and protected and that's all Christianity is good for. Show them that a Christian doesn't surrender his faith when times get rough. Christianity is something that is lived day in and day out--and especially when the times are hard. Show them that."

Shelby said, "Lord, I'll try."

"Why not start an evangelistic Bible study for the people you work for?"

"But Lord, I've never led an EBS before."

"Why do you think I send you to small group leader's camp. They taught you how to lead an EBS there."

Shelby had the EBS and it was a flop. This angered Shelby who pouted, "Lord, I just had the EBS. No one showed up except two young Christians."

"Disciple them then," God said. "Teach them what you know about me. Show them how to lead the EBS so the entire burden will not be on you. Stand firm in your faith and talk up the EBS. It will grow."

"Lord," said Shelby, "I've got another problem. My roommate is a pot-smoking atheist who makes fun of my accent. Why did you put him in my room? He's driving me up a wall."

The Lord said, "Shelby, be patient with him. I've been working with your roommate. I have already had several members of the Project witness to him. He is curious. Answer his questions. Do a one-to-one Bible study with him."

"But Lord, I've never done a 1-2-1 before."

"Why do you think I sent you to small group leader's camp? You learned how to do a 1-2-1 there."

"But Lord, why do you want me to waste my time on him? I know some nice clean-cut church kids that need to be saved. Why don't you let me work on them? I could never change my roommate."

The Lord said, "I know you can't but I can. Just have the 1-2-1 and let my Word do the work. A little prayer will help."

The summer progressed and the evangelism

project began to pick up momentum. Shelby met many people, explored the Island, took up jogging, and even began to like selling hamburgers. As the Lord had said in an earlier time, "The field is ripe for harvest."

"God, guess what!" Shelby exclaimed one day, "My roommate, the atheist, was talking to one of the guys in the Project.... Lord, my roommate has just become a Christian!!"

The Lord said, "I know. A legion of angels is celebrating right now."

Shelby said, "Must be some party. Lord, is there anything you can't do?"

"Not when you have faith."

"Lord, you've done it again. A bunch of people are leaving Cedar Campus for Kentucky August 18. I can ride back with them. Mackinac Island grows on you. I'm going to hate to leave."

The Lord said, "Remember how you squealed when I was trying to get you to come?"

Shelby asked, "Lord, I'm going to be leaving soon. What about the EBS? We had fourteen non-Christians show up last night. We can't let it stop now."

The Lord said, "Why not give it to those two young Christians?"

"Lord, do you think they can handle it?"

The Lord answered, "It will make them grow."

As Shelby was leaving the Island, he said unto the Lord, "Lord, I'm on my way home. It sure was hard to say goodbye to everyone knowing that I probably will never see many of them again."

God said, "Shelby, the glory of Heaven is that it is the meeting place of my firends. You will see each other again."

"This is true Lord. Thank you for such a wonderful trip."

When Shelby got home, the Lord said unto

him, "Now I want you to write about your experiences on Mackinac Island so those who participate in the Project next summer will know what to expect. They can also write ahead and make arrangements for jobs and housing."

Shelby said, "That's a good idea. Did you know I was the only person my employer hired off the street. He had hired everyone else in January and February by mail. I sure was lucky he hired me. That happened to several people who worked with the Project."

"Shelby," God said, "I have a plan. Luck has nothing to do with it."

"Oh sorry." Shelby apologized. "It sure is nice to be home. Mackinac was great but it sure was hard. I certainly never want to do anything like that again."

And the Lord said unto Shelby, "now about next summer...."





A NEW LIGHT, NO MERCY, AND
SURVIVAL AT THE HANDS OF A LEGEND

Ken Tingley

We broke the huddle and lined up. The line in front of me blurred as the pain inside my chest intensified. I just wanted to survive this practice. The ball was snapped. I took off hard left from my tailback position, put my head down and ran through a gaping hole, right through the secondary untouched.

Costello blew the whistle. As I turned to go back to the huddle I was hit head on by our middle linebacker. I hit the ground in more pain than I had ever been in my whole life. The pain was starting to overcome me. I just lay there as I heard Costello's voice fading, "Get up Tingley. Get up you horse's ass. Get up..."

I moved to Seymour from a slightly larger town when I was ten-years-old. Sometimes it seems like a century ago but it was really only yesterday. Within a year my football career would begin.

When I was eleven years old I joined the Seymour Tigers, a Pop-Warner football team. For the next three years I played Pop-Warner football. My second year on the team I was named the team MVP. All this, of course, was just training for my high school career.

I began my high school football career as a 5'6", 140 pound lineman playing under Seymour's legendary coach Bill Costello. That first practice remains firmly implanted in my mind.

It was a hot June day, not a cloud in the sky. The players huddled together in small groups as they waited for Costello to appear.

They laughed nervously at old jokes about Costello that everyone on the team had heard before but still found funny.

A hush fell over the players as the man with the blue shorts and dark sunglasses walked toward them. The other coaches huddled in back of him as the players formed a horseshoe in front of him. He seemed to loom above everyone. I stared at the scar on his knee. He began his speech.

"Men we are the defending Naugatuck league champions. Now that we're on top everyone will be trying to knock us off. I'll be honest men, we don't have the size or talent as the team last year but we can make that up in quickness and desire. We are not going to lose. I intend on making this same speech again next year so I'm going to work your tails off but you're going to win."

That spring I started my career as a fifth string offensive guard. I was the smallest lineman on the team. I worked harder than anyone because I wanted to play and win for this living legend Bill Costello.

The summer practices began and I was still playing guard. I worked as hard as I could but I was still being driven into the ground by tackles twice my size. I had to do something.

I was on the verge of quitting when my father suggested that I have a talk with Costello. Me, talk to Costello. The sound of Costello's deep, booming voice would instill fear into the biggest of linemen. How could I talk to him?

It was early in the morning before the first of our three-a-day sessions that I approached the crossroads on which Costello stood. I was nervous and scared. This is crazy, I thought. Costello's going to tell me to go to hell. As I muttered the first words, I wondered if Costello even knew who

I was.

"C-Coach, can I talk to you?", I stut-tered.

Costello smiled and said, "Why sure, Kenney, come into my office."

I followed the huge man into his sur-prisingly small office. I gazed at the many plaques and trophies which decorated the four walls.

Costello lit his pipe and said, "Go ahead."

Nervous and afraid I paused trying to avoid eye contact. I had his full atten-tion so I began my little speech.

"Coach I've played backfield ever since Pop Warner and I think I could help the team a lot more if I played there instead of on the line. I've tried to be a lineman but I'm not doing any good there. If I could just have a chance I'd prove to you that I could play in the backfield."

Costello appeared thoughtful. I wasn't sure if he had understood what I had said. He just sat there puffing on his pipe. I was waiting for him to tell me off when he finally stood up and said, "Okay, we'll try you there tomorrow."

I stood stunned. I finally nodded my head and backed out of his office. I was estatic. It was a dream come true. I actually loved the man. This was why he was a winner. He knew how to handle his players.

I spent the rest of the season as a tail-back and defensive back on the junior var-sity team. By the end of the year I was the starting cornerback on our defensive unit.

By the fall of the next year I felt I had improved enough to play varsity ball. Costello, however, was still unimpressed

with my size or possibly lack of it. He repeated to me several times that I was just too small.

I hated to go back to junior varsity but reluctantly I did. Then, about three games into the season Costello brought up two sophomores from the jayvee team who were about the same size as me but had less experience. I decided to have my second talk with Costello.

My second talk with Costello was much different from the first one. He seemed much more cold and distant. I asked him why I was too small and the two sophomores weren't. He stumbled over his words saying I didn't have something called 'quick feet'. He said the other coaches felt it would be better if I got more experience on the jayvee team before I moved up to varsity.

The point was unarguable so I left his office. Despite what Costello had said I felt the reason why I wasn't playing was very clear. I was a junior; I would only play one more year where the sophomores would play two more. It was a matter of economics. I was no longer needed.

Halfway through a winless junior varsity season I was injured, bruised ribs. I can still clearly remember the feeling of being crushed between two defensive tackles. Every breath was agony. To anyone of value the injury would demand two weeks of healing.

The next morning Costello called me into his office.

"Kenney, we're a little short on running backs and we've had an awful lot of injuries. The team needs you."

I knew then he wasn't going to let me heal. What he needed me for was a tackling dummy.

"Coach, I can barely breathe without pain." I pleaded.

He responded, "Kenney, we all have to play with a little pain."

Suddenly football took on a new light. Practice was now a matter of survival. Costello showed no mercy for me those final weeks. I could barely run and he knew it but still every time I was beaten on a pass play or stopped for no gain he would scream and rant and rave. He punished me for doing my best. Every minute seemed an hour but I went on and on and on and on.

Without really realizing it something inside of me came alive. I finally realized that it wasn't me against the other team anymore but me against the coach. I was stubborn, I was going to fight back with everything I had.

Those last few days are very clear to me, very clear and very painful. The pain was mental as well as physical. This is what I had worked six years for. Only to have it end up in a psychological war between the coach and I.

It all finally came to a climax two days before our seventh game. I was the running back against the first string defense. Costello was calling all the plays and I was getting to carry the ball quite a bit.

Costello called an I-76. This is a play where I carry the ball off the left tackle out of an 'I' formation. I strode up to the line and lined up behind the fullback. The ball was hiked. I sprinted left, took the handoff and plowed into the line as the blocking was breaking down. I caught a helmet in the ribs and screamed. I was hit by two more on the way down. The pain was excruciating but, determined, I rose up and returned to the huddle.

Costello called my number again, this time to the right. I didn't get one block. I was smothered before I could reach the line of scrimmage. Crawling to my feet, I stumbled back to the huddle, trying to catch my breath. Costello actually seemed annoyed that I was still walking. He screamed, "Same play!"

Again with no blocking I didn't even make it to the line. I was blindsided and took a helmet right in the heart of the ribs after the whistle.

Costello did not say one word as I lay there screaming in pain. My friend the quarterback begged me not to get up but after cursing a few times I staggered to my feet and finally made it back to the huddle. Costello screamed, "SAME PLAY!"

Once again I was racked up good. The pain was getting to me. I was dizzy and couldn't walk or see right. Slowly I returned to my last huddle, staring at the ground as Costello repeated, "Same play!"

The quarterback asked me how I was. I couldn't answer, not even a whimper. The quarterback then told the line they better block this time or he was going to knock their fucking heads off.

We broke the huddle and lined up. The line in front of me blurred as the pain inside my chest intensified. I just wanted to survive this practice. The ball was snapped. I took off hard left from my tailback position, put my head down and ran through a gaping hole, right through the secondary untouched.

Costello blew the whistle. As I turned to go back to the huddle I was hit head on by our middle linebacker. I hit the ground in more pain than I had ever been in in my whole life. The pain was starting to overcome me. I just lay there as I heard Cos-

tello's voice fading, "Get up Tingley. Get up you horse's ass. Get up..."

The last thing I remember was knowing my football career was over and managing a slight smile.

TATTOOS

Paul E. Newton

Walt glared past the passing shallow faces as he walked down the crowded street through the seamy night. It was hot and humid, and the smells of the run-down tenements melted together, seeming to enclose and suffocate him. Walt knew where his buddies were, but he didn't want to join them. They would surely be down at one of the sleezy bars they frequented, but he couldn't put up with their worthless chatter and prodding right now. Besides, the pain was bothering him.

Walt's thoughts slowly drifted back to where he had been. He couldn't believe he had finally gone through with it, yet he knew it had to happen sooner or later. His arm hung listlessly to his side, throbbing with a dull pain that had at one point been excruciating. While the old tattooist had been studiously applying his trade to Walt's arm, with a half-burnt camel hanging from his lips, the pain had caused Walt to remember the photograph. Walt had accidentally found the photograph years before while he was rummaging through an old suitcase in the attic. The photograph, aged with lines and creases, was of a young man with his arm proudly around a pretty girl. It had taken him awhile to realize it was his mother and his unseen father. He had never seen his father before because his mother kept the family photo album under lock and key. There was something in the picture that caused him to stare at it for several minutes, he didn't know why. Walt also noticed the Marine tattoo on his father's arm and the carefree

smiles of the couple, as if they were laughing over a secret joke. Walt had never seen his mother laugh in all the years that she alone had raised him and his two sisters.

The sharp pain in his arm had brought him back to the tattoo studio. What the hell is he doing now? Changing needles? He ain't even done with the outline. Jesus Christ! I wonder what he thinks about while he does this?

As the old man painstakingly went back to work, the pain brought his mother's voice back to him. She had always avoided all questions he had asked about his father until finally she had told him of his father's death. When she spoke, she spoke quietly and deliberately, almost as if she were making a pre-planned speech. That was the only time that Walt could remember when his mother had looked him directly in the eyes. She had never looked at him directly and it wasn't until he comprehended the photograph that he understood why. To understand what? She hates me, anyone could see it, she always has ignored me. If she wasn't ignoring me, then she was criticizing me.

Huh? Oh yeah, that looks all right. I wish you'd quit fooling around and finish it. Huh? I haven't got all night and I think my stomach's not feeling so damn good.

While watching the old man apply the bright red outline, Walt's thoughts violently whirled quickly to his mother's eyes. The redness of her eyes had shocked him. All he had done was to proudly bring the newly found photograph downstairs in an attempt to please her. She had reacted very quickly with an open-handed slap fully across his face. His face stung bitterly, but he had remained motionless and completely stunned.

Later that night, Walt heard someone crying and went into the hallway to see if his sisters were all right. But as he passed his mother's bedroom, he was stopped in mid-stride by what he saw. She was lying on her bed crying heavily into a pillow, on her small nightstand was the photograph.

What? I'm all done, I can leave? Well, no shit! Walt mechanically paid the old man and wandered out into the street, feeling the cool night air against his flushed cheeks. The pain was still there.

But now he understood it all, all the pieces finally had come together. Walt knew why his mother had callously and continually driven him away from her. The awakening occurred the night before he left, several years after his initial discovery of the photograph. Walt recovered the hidden photograph after a long search and saw what he hadn't been able to see before. The face of his father was not only a ghost from the past, it was a face he knew all too well, it was his face in a mirror that he saw. It was his face and now his turn.

He turned slowly and wandered down the dark, deserted street toward a bright esplanade. The now-stinging tattoo on his arm was an exact duplicate of his father's, he had made sure of that.

It was his turn now.

USELESS OBJECT

Patricia Hays

The room hung on the twelfth floor of a decrepit structure. Splotchy mildew hugged the baseboards, which were dampened by urine from within and fog permeating from without. Thick, almost fibrous air encompassed all who entered, invading first their nostrils and eventually their entire lungs until breathing became labored. Walls fell from ceiling to floor in inconsistent angles mapped by wallpaper grasping with ancient and powerless smears of paste. Even the color of the paper yellow flattened by age and dirt, seemed to emanate a repulsive stench as its own contribution to the room's offensiveness. A single naked bulb pierced downward from an otherwise blackened ceiling. A thick string dangled beside the bulb where living hands had reached for it when light was desired. And yet even when the cord was pulled light was still desired.

The one small window did little to cheer up the room, for even if the sun did manage to break through the smog outside, only a few glimmering rays ever succeeded in filtering through the grime-layered glass. Each pane wore a collection of dust and grease accumulated through the years. Not one of the four squares of glass had survived those years without a crack of some kind. A torn, dingy towel hung from two nails in a further effort to keep the sun from disturbing the room's darkness. Thus the window had lost its true purpose and served only to allow the sounds of cars and people to float inward presenting themselves most alienistically within. Such noises of life proved only to

heighten the room's deadened character.

Against one wall stood the weak frame of a small cot imburdened by a mattress which bulged unevenly. One could almost see the reeking fumes of perspiration emanate upward from the badly stained mattress. No sheets were visable; instead its cottony torso lay ashamedly naked, revealing several wounds caused by careless cigarettes. Some of the burns had developed into small rips out of which its innards spilled onto the floor frequently. A pillow, also uncovered, lay at one end mimicking the roundness of a human head. Its stiff blue stripes intermingled with roundish stains caused by salivary dribblings. The mattress, the pillow, and the rumped blanket as well, were one with the odor and filth and, therefore, the room.

On the wall opposite the cot stood a chipped porcelain lavatory where one could see the room's only attempt at cleanliness. A stiffened washcloth lay soured beside the two handles marked "H" and "C". Both contained cold water. The single bar of soap had long since dried up, the resulting cracks marked by lines of dirt. A rusting stain rivered its way into the hollowness of the sink where one of the faucets dripped a consistent splatter of water. A forlorn toothbrush lay silently to one side, its worn bristles embedded with dried paste, a tube of which was bent and tangled awkwardly nearby. But the sink was alive with movement as it continued its incessant dripping.

Beside the sink stood the only other piece of furniture in the room. It too was alive, for the refrigerator delivered a certain purring noise that could be clearly heard when the room was silent. And the room was silent. But the small motor hummed to no avail as was easily seen upon opening the

grease-smearred door. Inside on a metal rack sat a bowl of soured beans smothered by a layer of growing mold. The accompanying odor was nauseous. The bottom compartment was covered with milk which had been spilled weeks before. The semi-liquid floated in a jelled state which increased daily due to the curdling process. Old food matter clung to the sides of the refrigerator, and bits and pieces floated in the milk below. In some places the wires on the rack were meshed together due to collected grease and crumbs. The small freezer compartment was covered with inches of invading globs of ice. But even more forbidding, the small light that ordinarily came on when the door opened . . . was dark.

And the sticky wooden floor creaked for no reason.

He sat on the same floor, huddled tightly into a corner with his legs drawn to a fetal pose. His head leaned back wearily, and two bulbous eyes stared vacantly at the ceiling. Deep furrows lay frozen above his brows. His thinning hair fell unnaturally to his forehead in streaks of gray. Blue work pants and a thin shirt clothed the hulk. Bits of cotton clung to him here and there, and a piece of lint had even settled on one eyelash. Where the clothes did not cover, thin elastic flesh lay in folds miraculously forming hands and a face. The hands hung over his knees and dangled toward the floor. The face, like the hands, showed evidence of many years of hard work. A ruddy complexion ran the length of two shallow cheeks. His thin lips lay grim and discolored. The eyes still stared. And from across the room the sound of a car horn drifted through the window. Outside in the hall someone dropped his keys. The refrigerator purred and the faucet dripped.

All these living sounds chimed in together, but he didn't hear them. He was dead.

His eyes ran with mucous, which eased down his ruddy cheeks and past his mouth. There it was joined with more mucous seething from the corners of his lips where they continued together at a slow pace, finally falling off the end of his chin. And he stunk. Not like perspiration or urine or soured beans, but like death. Decay danced on his fingertips. His entire frame sunk lower and lower into the corner. It seemed as if it would eventually crumble into a small heap of unrecognizable flesh leaving only his trousers and shoes behind.

And even they would eventually rot along with the sinking torso. For clothes and shoes were useless to him now--as useless as a refrigerator without food and a window without light. He himself lay useless to the world and had been that way for many years. But now he was unlike the two living objects in the room; he was dead. The milk in the bottom of the refrigerator continued to jell and so did his blood, which had long since quit flowing. Beneath him the floor creaked for no reason. And his eyes bulged as if they would surely fall out.





"UNOPENED DOOR"

Phil Osborne

"Good afternoon. Hayes, Hayes and Lovell."

There is a pause as the receptionist listens to the caller.

"Just a moment, Mrs. Lovell. I'll see if Mr. Lovell is still in his office."

The receptionist pushed the hold button and buzzed for Eric Lovell on the intercom.

"Mr. Lovell, it's your wife. Should I tell her you have gone?"

"Yes, Carol. Tell her I had a late appointment with a client or something."

"Yes, sir."

Eric leaned back in his swivel chair and heaved a sigh. He pivoted in the chair and looked out across the bay. There was a bright sun peeking through the cottony clouds on a typical San Francisco afternoon. The spring breeze gently blew up and down the numerous hills, clearing the city of the haze that had accompanied the winter.

The daydreaming excursion was interrupted by a soft knock on his door.

"Come in."

"Excuse me, sir."

"Yes, Carol?"

"Your wife wanted to remind you to pick up the tickets for your opera date with the Westovers tomorrow."

"Can you check on them for me please?"

"Yes, sir."

"Thank you Carol."

Carol, closing the door, was interrupted.

"Tell me Carol. Have you ever seen an opera?"

"No, sir. I'm sure it would be very enjoyable."

Eric spoke with excitement in his voice, "Oh, it is. It is. First you go home after a day at work and get prepared for an evening at the opera. You break out your finest gown, or in my case, my only tux."

Eric jumped from his chair and waltzed toward his receptionist. He continued, "Then you go to an exclusive restaurant where there is wining and dining and dancing, except for me there is no wining because the fruit of the vine tastes like turpentine."

Carol's initial look of confusion was broken by a quaint smile.

"I can't eat because my vest is too tight, and I can't dance because my wife has this phobia about perspiration."

Carol's smile became a hidden grin as she bit her lower lip.

"So I get to sit like an oaf until Charlie Westover gets his fill of roast duckling and Mouton-Cadet. Then it is off to the theatre. Sounds great doesn't it."

Carol could only nod to keep from revealing her amusement to Eric.

"Oh, but then comes the best part: the opera itself. Are you familiar with Giuseppe Verdi, that's Italian for Joe Green. Somehow Joe Green just isn't as flashy. Anyway, Verdi is my favorite. You go take your seat, and the orchestra strikes up a beautiful Verdi overture. The music fills the whole theater. Then the curtain opens and a huge woman begins to sing as if she had been gored. After that it is utter boredom until the curtain closes."

Carol could no longer control her laughter.

"That my dear Carol is an evening at the opera. Would you like to join us tomorrow?"

"No thank you."

Eric's look became somewhat sober at the thought that he too would like to say 'No thank you'.

"I guess you had better check on those tickets, Carol."

Following Eric's lead, Carol, too, became sober, "Yes, sir."

After Carol had left the room, Eric made his way back to the big swivel chair. He spun around and escaped into the serenity of the clouds. A few minutes passed when the intercom buzzer broke the silence.

"Mr. Lovell. It's 5:00 and I'm going home if you have nothing else for me to do."

"No. No. That's fine. Have a nice night."

"The tickets for the opera will be sent up tomorrow morning."

"Oh. I nearly forgot. Thank you, Carol."

"You're welcome sir. Can I call you a cab?"

"No thank you." Carol could hear him draw a long breath, "I think I'll take a street car to the park and walk from there."

"Good night, Mr. Lovell."

"Good night, Carol."

Eric heard the door close as Carol left the room. "Well, I'm not getting anything accomplished here," he mumbled to himself.

He quickly gathered some papers, placed them under his arm, and opened the door to leave. Before putting out the light, he turned once again to the window and chuckled, "Fanciest damn tomb I've ever seen...complete with a view of the bay."

He rode down the elevator alone, thinking about how such a beautiful day had been such a complete waste. He could feel the warmth of the afternoon near him as he went through the revolving door of the Hayes Building. He felt like going through the door again, but decided against such a childish act. Instead, he made his way to the street car stop where he laid down the papers, took off his jacket, and faced the sun.

A young lady who had been sitting on the bench when he arrived tapped him on the shoulder, "Excuse me, sir. Are you a Libran?"

Eric looked at her with a bit of astonishment and a great deal of confusion on his face, "No, I'm a Catholic."

He looked at the girl inquisitively. She was long and willowy with very blonde hair. Her face purveyed child-like innocence, but her voice was full and confident. Her attire was strictly college, but she wore it far better and neather than anyone he had ever seen.

"No, no. I mean what sign are you under?"

"At the moment I'm under a street car stop sign."

"No! What is your astrological sign? When is your birthday?"

"October 10. Why do you ask?"

"I thought so. That makes you a Libran, the sign of the scales."

"Sign of the what?"

"The scales. You know. Balanced individuals weighing out the good and the bad. Looking at both sides of a situation before making a decision. That's what you sign means. It's a clue to your personality. Surely you've heard of astrology?"

"Yes. Well I believe Monique, my daughter, was talking some jibberish about it yesterday."

"It's not jibberish. It's an excellent reference to reveal an individual's personality. You can tell a lot about a person just by knowing his sign. For instance, I'll bet you love to eat."

"Well, I guess I do but I watch my weight. A man my age has got to be careful of that you know."

"Oh. I didn't mean you were a glutton, I just meant that you enjoy food. I'll bet you like music too."

"I do for the most part, but not that long-haired prattle you young folks listen to."

"None of it."

"Well, some of it is alright."

"I thought so."

Eric ventured a question, "You could tell all of this by knowing my birthday?"

"Oh, yes. This and a lot more."

"Like what for instance?"

"Well, you mentioned a daughter. Do you have any other children?"

Eric's face suddenly became dark.

"I'm sorry. I've upset you."

Eric regained his composure and said, "I had a son, but he was killed near Saigon a few years ago."

"Oh. I'm very sorry."

"That's O.K. Nathan was a good boy-- about your age I guess." He tried to shrug away the memory, "You were saying?"

"I'm really sorry, but my point was that your sign makes you an excellent father. You never had any problems with your children did you?"

"No, nothing major. We always got along pretty well."

"See? I'll bet you're a stockbroker too, aren't you?"

"You could tell that by my sign?"

"No. By the portfolios you're carrying."

They both laughed, dispelling some of the uneasiness.

"Oh, so you can't tell everything about me by my sign?"

"No, not everything. But I can make some general conclusions."

"Like what?"

"Like...you're a good supporter, but basically lazy at work."

"I beg your pardon."

"Excuse me. That was a little brash. I'm sorry."

"A little brash, but true. This astronomy..."

"Astrology."

"Oh. This astrology interests me. What else can you tell?"

"You're intelligent."

"Not really."

"You're modest."

"One should be modest."

"You're creative."

"Well, I paint a little."

"You're a good lover."

"Young lady, that is not something that one discusses with strangers."

"Well, aren't you."

Eric could feel the heat of a blush on his cheeks. He looked away, then turned to her and asked, "Do you work around here?"

"No. I was going to a protest march across town and took the wrong car."

"Oh. So you're one of those radicals that my wife is so afraid of."

"You're not afraid?"

"Are you a member of the Weathermen?"

"No."

"Have you ever blown up any buildings?"

"No."

"Then I'm not afraid. Why should I be? People like you are saying the same things that I think about Viet Nam except you have the guts to get out and say it and I respect you for that."

"Thank you Mr.--Mr.--I don't even know your name."

"Lovell. Eric Lovell."

"Hi, Eric Lovell. I'm Ginny Musick."

"It's nice to meet you, Miss Musick."

"Ginny."

"It's nice to meet you, Ginny."

"Have you ever had an affair?"

Eric, again floored by this girl's remarks, pretended that he hadn't heard her and of-

ferred a nervous interjection, "I wonder where that street car is?"

"Have you?"

"Have I what?"

"Ever had an affair?"

"No, I haven't!" he exclaimed. Then he looked around, somewhat embarrassed at his outburst, and continued, "and I never had any desire to!"

"Never?"

"No, never!"

"What's your wife like?"

"Young lady, this conversation is getting a little preposterous."

"Are you ashamed of her?"

"Of course not. But why divulge my sex life to a total stranger?"

"I didn't ask you to divulge your sex life. I just asked what your wife was like."

"Well she's--she's--nice."

"Nice," Ginny echoed.

"She's a good mother and housekeeper. She's attractive and likes to do charity work."

"What's her name?"

"Blanche."

"Blanche is a very ah--nice name."

"Yes. She's a very ah--nice person."

"Is she good in bed?"

"Miss Musick! I don't think that is any.."

"I'm sorry. I'm just curious."

Eric hastily changed the subject, "I don't know where that street car is. I think I'll get a cab. Taxi. Taxi."

A Checker cab parked just up the street responded to Eric's hailing. He opened the door to the greetings of a hard-nosed cabbie, "Where to bub?"

Eric turned to Ginny, "Can I drop you anywhere, Miss Musick?"

"Yes, please. I think I'll go back home. I'm too late as it is."

"Where to bub?"

"Where to Ginny?"

"418 Harmon Estates, please."

They both took a seat in the cab and travelled in silence through the crowded streets.

Finally Ginny broke the silence, "Tell me something Mr. Lovell. Are you happy?"

"I guess so. I've got a nice home and a good business."

"But are you happy? You see it's a crime against humanity for a Libran to be unhappy. They are so creative and full of life that unhappiness can destroy them. They've got to go where they want to go and do what they want to do. They were born to be free, to live life to the fullest...to open unopened doors."

"I think I'm free to do as I wish."

"Good. I'm glad you're together. Most people these days aren't."

The cab came to a halt and the driver barked, "418 Harmon."

Eric looked up the lawn toward a gorgeous Spanish ranch house.

"Is that yours?"

"Oh, no. This is my parents house. I just came in from Berkeley this week end."

"Your parents must be very wealthy?"

"Well...nobody's perfect. Would you like to come in for some coffee or something?"

"No. I'd better not. Blanche is waiting for me."

"Alright, bub. I ain't got all day."

"I enjoyed talking with you Ginny. I learned a great deal about myself."

"Maybe we can talk again someday."

"Listen, buddy. Do you want to go or do you want to stay?"

"Good-bye, Mr. Lovell."

"Eric."

"Good-bye, Eric."

"Listen, Mac, I ain't waitin' no longer."

"O.K. O.K. Here's ten. Keep the change."

Eric and Ginny stood on the curb watching the yellow auto vanish in the distance.

"Well, good-bye, Ginny."

"You're not coming in for awhile?"

"Oh, no, really. I've got to get home."

"Then why did you get out?"

"I don't know. I didn't really like the driver. He was obnoxious. I should have gotten his name and reported him."

Ginny smiled. "You wouldn't have done that, would you?"

"No. I guess not. I should have but... I don't know."

"Well if you won't come in, let me call for another cab."

"You don't have to. I just live a few blocks from here. I was going to walk through the park anyway."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. It's such a nice day, and I love the park."

"Well, Eric Lovell, I hate to run off, but I should help Mother get ready for her dinner party. I have really enjoyed talking to you. I apologize if I've embarrassed you in any way. I didn't mean to."

"It wasn't embarrassment...more along the lines of shock."

"Well we Ariens aren't known for our tact."

"More astronomy?"

"Astrology."

Eric laughed at himself. "I'll get it straight someday."

"I know you will," Ginny said with reassuring confidence as she extended her hand.

Eric took her hand, "Good-bye, Ginny."

"Good-bye, Eric." She tip-toed closer, kissed him on the cheek, then turned and walked toward the house.

Eric waved, but she never looked back. He watched her until she was inside the house. After she had disappeared, he focused his attention on the setting sun. That, my good friend, was an interesting young lady, he murmured to himself.

He looked down the street in the direction of the park and proceeded to amble along. He loosened his tie and unbuttoned his collar. The three hundred dollar Christmas coat that Blanche had given him was draped over his shoulder and the 'Blue Chip' portfolios were pitched from hand to hand in time with his stride.

An unknown melody accompanied him down the row of elegant houses, beneath the giant shade trees, and into the expanses of Sea Pine Park. Eric momentarily stopped whistling as he stood in awe of the beautiful colors before him. The greens of the grass and trees were enhanced by the blue of the sky, the golden sun, and the vast blue waters. He walked toward a small grove of pines with the tune again on his lips. He tossed aside his coat and dropped his papers as he settled midst the brown needles. He listened for a moment but there were no sounds, save the crashing of the waves. Well, looks like I've got the place to myself.

Propping himself up against the trunk of a pine, he gazed out over the bay into the Pacific. Out of the corner of his eye he saw a small boy playing in the sand. Eric smiled. Looks like Nathan when he was little...I wonder what he would look like today.

He pulled his wallet from the coat lying next to him. Upon opening it, the first thing he saw was a picture of his son: "TO DAD...LOVE ALWAYS, NATHAN. Saigon '67."

"I'd say that you would like the girl I met today, Nathan. She was bright and witty

and very, very pretty. Made quite an impression on your old man. You two would have probably hit it off real well. Of course, you always were a little ladies man, weren't you. I remember when you were 10..." a tear formed in the corner of Eric's eye as he paused, "I guess I think back too often. Must be the romance in me."

"You know, it was on a day like this that you left for Viet Nam. Yeah, the sun was bright and everything was green. You looked very smart in your uniform. PFC Nathan H. Lovell reporting. I never told anyone but I wanted to hold you that day and never let go. I still don't know why you wanted to enlist. Maybe it was all of the war stories your Grandpa Hayes used to tell you. Maybe it was because you didn't like school. I just don't know. I can't help but think, though, that it was something I did...something I said. Your mother insisted that you were old enough to make your own decisions, and maybe you were. But still at eighteen, you had better things to do than get shot at for a cause you didn't understand...nobody understands. Why did you go? Why did you die? Dammit! WHY?"

Eric's sudden outburst startled the little boy on the beach. He took one glimpse at the man who had interrupted his world and fled to safety farther down the beach.

Eric looked at him running away and tearfully said, "Good-bye little boy. Good-bye my little man."

He sat there for a moment with tears running freely. "Nathan, if you can forgive me for whatever I have done I can...I can make everything work. Please son, I loved you so very very much. I didn't want to drive you away."

As he sat sobbing, his conversation with

Ginny flashed in pieces through his mind...
'crime to be unhappy'... 'good father'... 'un-
happiness can destroy'... 'born to be free'...
'live, live, live'...

"Why the hell do I feel guilty? I didn't do anything. As bad as it is, I'm not the only one to lose a son." He looked up at the reddened sun and screamed, "Thank you, Ginny Musick!"

A chill ran up his length as the cool spring breeze blew in from the bay. He jumped up from the ground and did a little jig. He picked up his coat and papers. He gave a long look at the photo in his wallet. "Son, I loved you very much but I didn't fail you. I will love you forever but I didn't fail you. Now, if I can reach your mother, I can once again be a Man."

The walk home seemed to pass quickly but the church bells said otherwise. "10:00. I've got a feeling that Blanche isn't going to be too happy."

The Tudor house stood dimly before him. The only light that he saw went out just as he stepped onto the porch. The front door opened giving both he and his daughter a start.

"Oh. Hi, Daddy."

"Hi, baby."

"Bye, Daddy."

"Where are you off to at this time of night?"

"I'm going over to Stephanie's for the night. Mother knows all about it."

"O.K., Honey. You be careful."

"Night, Daddy."

Eric drew a long breath and entered the house. He made his way through the living room giving the portfolios a careless toss toward the sofa. He walked through the double doors into the kitchen. He noticed a

message on the oven.

Eric,

I waited until 7:30 but you never came home. I had to attend a bridge party at the Westover's. I should be home around 10:00. If you're hungry, there is a steak in the refrigerator. Try not to burn the pan if you fix it.

They are so hard to clean. I want to talk to you when I get home.

Blanche

He crumbled the paper and tossed it into the trash basket. As he was walking into the bar, he thought to himself, 'This isn't going to be easy.' He fixed a scotch and soda to sip while he waited. The sport jacket was removed and laid across the dark oak bar top. Just as he picked up the remote device for the television, the doorbell rang. Now why would Blanche be ringing the doorbell? he thought.

Before the door was completely opened, he heard the all-too-familiar voice of his neighbor.

"Heh, Eric, old buddy. You got a beer for your thirsty neighbor."

"Oh Sam. It's you. I thought maybe it was Bla..."

"I saw you coming in and thought you might want some company. Martha called a few minutes ago and said that she and Blanche would be a little late."

"Come on in, Sam."

Eric desperately wanted to tell Sam to go home, especially tonight. When they entered the bar, Eric picked up the remote device and collapsed in the over-stuffed chair directly in front of the TV. Sam helped himself to a beer and tried to make conversation with his host. Eric interjected a few "uh-huh's" but focused his attention on

the television.

"...at least three are dead in a demonstration at Kent State University in Ohio where escalation of the war into Cambodia ignited the protest. We'll have details at 11:00 on Eyewitness News..."

"Well, the young fuckers are finally getting what they deserve."

None of Sam's earlier remarks had made any impression on Eric, but this assanine statement brought him to life.

"What did you say?"

"I said all of those young hell-raisers are finally getting what they deserve. I mean, they don't do anything but cause trouble and this might set an example for the rest of those hippies."

"What the hell kind of example is shooting a bunch of kids?"

"They're not kids. They're animals. Look at the way they dress and act. No self-respecting kid in America would act like that."

"How do you know? Have you ever talked to them?"

"No. And I would never lower myself to do it."

"Well I have!" The words blurted from Eric's mouth as he recalled the talk he had had with Ginny earlier. "These kids have some legitimate gripes about this war of politics."

"Eric, old buddy, this isn't a political war. It's a deterrent to keep the Red's out of our back door."

"Dammit! Viet Nam is not our back door."

"Besides that, this little ol' war is good for the economy. You ought to know that. You're doing pretty good at Blancher's ol man's brokerage, aren't you?"

Eric exploded with all the fury he could

gather, "What the hell kind of moron are you. There are kids over there getting killed who can't even vote while you brag about the profits we're turning over here. I'll tell you just how good this war is for the economy. I invested a son..."

Sam suddenly became quiet as Eric continued. "...and didn't get a damn thing in return. Not only did I lose one of the few things I loved, but I lost my self respect for two years. I felt so guilty over Nathan's death that I crawled in a shell and hid. I let people like you walk over me when it was you and your Commie-hunting friends who were really the ones to be held responsible. How does it feel Sam? How does it feel to be one of the main cogs in a machine that grinds away human life? Think about it when you try and sleep tonight. You know that the damn Communists will take over Viet Nam eventually. Everybody knows it. So why waste any more lives?"

Both men stood angrily in the middle of the bar room. A few seconds passed before Eric spoke again--this time in a calmer, more collected voice.

"I think you had better leave, Sam. Blanch will be home soon, and I want to talk to her alone."

Sam stormed out of the bar, through the living room and slammed the front door behind him. Eric didn't watch him leave. He was walking over to the telephone at the end of the bar. A long sip of his scotch cooled his throat as he dialed a number.

"Hello, Carol. This is Eric Lovell. I hate to call this late, but I need to talk to you for a minute. Have you got a pencil handy?"

He took another drink while he waited for

his receptionist to return to the phone.

"O.K. you're ready? Tell Blanche's brother to handle all of my accounts for awhile. He needs the money anyway. Get ahold of the Johnson kid and have him run out to the house tomorrow to pick up the files I have here. You have a spare key in your desk. Call the Westovers in the morning and tell them we can't attend the opera. When the messenger delivers the tickets, send two to the Westovers and you keep the other two. Who knows, you may enjoy it..."

While he was talking to Carol, Blanche walked into the bar. Eric noticed her and gave her a quick wink. She looked at him puzzledly.

"...Carol, Mrs. Lovell just came in and I need to talk to her. Can I call back in a few minutes. Great...Bye Bye."

He hung up the phone and wheeled to see his wife going up the stairs.

"Blanche, can I talk to you?"

"I'm really tired, Eric. If you want to talk, let's go to the bedroom."

He followed her up the stairs and into the bedroom. Before him he saw the two double beds that had been a barrier between he and his wife. Blanche was busying herself turning down the beds.

"What was it you wanted to talk about?"

"Blanche, you are my wife and I belong next to you, awake and asleep..."

"What's gotten into you?"

"Just let me talk for one minute, please. I know that I have been hell to live with for the past few years, but I want to make it all up to you. I loved you when we married, and I love you today, but I'm afraid that you no longer love me. I want you to do something for me. If you still love me, I want you to come over here and look me in

the eyes and say, 'Eric Lovell, you silly goose, of course I love you.'"

Blanche looked dumbfounded. She stood at the foot of her bed completely motionless. Seconds passed slowly.

Finally she spoke, "We'll talk about it in the morning. Your bed is ready and I'm tired so goodnight."

Eric's face was expressionless. He left the bedroom and went back down to the bar. While picking up the phone and dialing Carol, he noticed his hand shaking a bit. The phone rang a few times before Carol answered.

"Carol, this is Eric Lovell again. Call the florist in the morning and order some yellow roses. Send them to Ginny Musick at 418 Harmon Heights. Have you got that? O.K. ...Oh a card?...O.K. get this down...'I got a couple of doors opened, but the biggest one was bolted shut...Thank You...The Astronomer....'"

"Will there be anything else, Mr. Lovell ...Mr. Lovell...Mr. Lovell....?"

"No, nothing else. Goodnight, Carol."





CLOSING DOWN

D. Scott Weaver

The final game of eight ball had been shot, the bets paid off, the beers finished and now, as the last of the customers drifted out, the old man turned off the lights in the front window and began to sweep up the butts and dirt that littered the floor around the pool tables in the center of the room. As he pushed his broom he thought of the years he had run the hall and how things had changed. He seldom looked, but tonight was different for he was closing up for the last time. By this time Monday, these floors would be swept by someone else while he would be asleep at home.

The walls around him were dirty and peeling just as they had been when he had made the down payment on the building with his army discharge pay. How long ago was that? December '44 to December '74, that's 30 years, plus 2 more, that's 32, close to 33 years. Damn that's a while. He'd still be here except for his heart and his doctor's orders to take it easy.

He remembered how he had put his first disability checks into paint and fixtures for the place. All through that winter, while news of the Bulge kept everyone talking, he prayed and worried as he worked that none of his friends were in the worst of it. He wondered if he would be in it right now if he hadn't walked into that German machine gun nest in a French hedgerow.

By early spring he had painted and patched the walls, installed fluorescent lighting, and moved in seven slate top pool tables. One wall had been fitted with racks and filled

with cue sticks that were waiting for the customers. He opened in late April and had worked the bugs out of his operation by the time the first G.I.'s came back from Europe. After dropping their gear at home and seeing their families, most of them headed for the pool hall to get down to some serious living again.

Since the day the peace treaty had been signed, he knew they would be coming and, like the magazine ads said, he was working toward that day. As the returning vets came through the door, he met them with cold beer and a loud juke box. For nearly two months he barely closed from one Saturday to the next. The place was nearly always full of ex-G.I.'s, slouched in chairs along the walls, drinking beer, shooting eight ball and kelly, and telling stories about the war and the girls they had nailed from London to the Rhine. This went on until the newness of being home began to wear off and they started to drift away. Some went on to college on their veteran's benefits while others took jobs in town. They came back from time to time while they were still young, but when was the last time one of them was in here? '58? '59?

After sweeping the floor, he got out the dust pan and butt sieve to clean the sand filled ash trays that sat along the walls. From one in the back corner came an unusual odor, like burning rope. Damn kids had been smoking reefer back here again, only now they called it grass or shit. He wished they wouldn't smoke that stuff in here. The cops were liable to close him down. Then he remembered that it wasn't his problem anymore, not after tonight. It was Kenny's problem now--let him worry about it. He dumped the roach into the pan and thought

about the days when nobody in town had even heard of the stuff. Then the hippies started smoking it somewhere in New York, what was it--10--15 years ago. That long? It sure didn't seem that long until you thought about it. Maybe things were better then, maybe not. He didn't know. Now most of the kids in town smoked it before they were old enough to buy their first pack of Winstons.

Once, the big thing was beer. He half smiled remembering the time, long ago, when it was almost a ritual for a boy to walk in on his eighteenth birthday, plunk down his driver's license, and say in a voice loud enough for everyone in the room to hear him, "Gimme a beer." That first one always lasted a long time, because a person raised on Coke and R.C. just wasn't ready for the bitter taste of his first bottle of Miller or Pabst.

The last of the ashtrays were emptied and the butts were dumped into the plastic garbage bag that held the day's accumulation of empties, the floor sweepings, and other things that accumulate during the business hours in a pool hall. Tying it shut he carried it toward the back door. As he passed the cigarette machine, he noticed something under it. Bending over he pulled out a green army jacket. Well, that was one thing that hadn't changed and probably never would. At least once a week somebody left something. Nowadays it was denim and army jackets. A few years ago it was nylon windbreakers. Before that it was car coats, leather jackets and lord knows what all. He tossed the jacket atop the cigarette machine and carried the trash out the back door to the alley. As he came back in he locked the door behind him.

Well that was it--there was nothing more to do. He glanced around the room sadly, remembering events of the last 33 years--of

fights, of pimply faced kids who now had kids of their own shooting on these same tables, of men coming in with smiles on their faces and boxes of cigars with "It's a Boy" printed on the wrappers. Of sad times when an old car with bad tires would snuff out a kid, or sometimes two or three when they tried to take a curve too fast. Of men leaving town and coming home again, he hated to think that he wouldn't be watching it anymore.

As he walked up front, he started to take off his old sweater, out of habit, but then remembered and left it on. Picking up his jacket, he took one last look around, flipped over the "Closed" sign and walked out.

