With deep appreciation we dedicate this issue to Professor Jack Lynn Brizzi, founder and friend of the arts at the Trumbull Campus of Kent State University.

FALL 1988

Volume XXVII Number 1

ICON, the magazine for literature, art, and photography of the Trumbull Campus of Kent State University, is sponsored by the English Department in conjunction with the Art Department and is funded by the Student Affairs Council.

Faculty, students, former students of the Trumbull Campus, all Kent State Campuses, and other universities are invited to submit poetry, essays, fiction, art work, or photography. We welcome submissions from anyone—student or non-student—in the Trumbull County area.

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Editor: Marla Richards
Assistant Editor: Leslie A. Sams
Art Editor: Wanda Kover

STAFF

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Michelle Edwards
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Vicky Floyd
William E. Knight
Deborah L. Lowman

Debbie Murphy
Jill Nethers
Margaret Pinkerton
Beth Pollard
Thomas P. Sams
Jacquelyn A. Thomas
Grace Toro

Cover Photograph: Robert P. Lewis

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Pappy

I

No one remembers crying at birth...

But we’re all fairly certain that we had,
Fairly certain we began at the edge,
Fairly certain from darkness we were torn into light—
ejected by spasms of pain from black to white.
Life is a tortured gift of God’s.
He must have been fairly certain
we would be grateful.

II

At times, I’m not.
I had learned of his death months too late.
I had learned of his death by mail.
Too late to help. In Nam I had helped many times.
I had strode about playing God, like God.
Pulling scared children-soldiers back from the edge.
Spinning them back from black, back into white.
Back from darkness, back into light.
And for these sins they gave me medals.
Brightly colored medals,
Containing all the colors of the rainbow.
All the colors of the spectrum.
All the colors between black and white.
I’m fairly certain that I cried
when they expelled me from the edge.
Stripping me of my guns and my Godliness.
Banishing me, my poetry, and my madness into
the darkness of the midwest.

III

It was here that I had met him. Burrowed in.
Buried amongst the racists subtle midwest racists.
At a creative writing club, it was he
who had noticed my colors
amid the fears between black and white.
He was black. I was white. We were poets.
He believed in God. I believed I had been God.
His poems were humorous and illiterate.
Mine were tortured and sophisticated.
Had he been famous, critics would color them
primitive, maybe even Patchen-esque.
Had I, mine would hail a worldly spectrum
from black to white.
Pappy died. Prejudice lived.

IV

I’m fairly certain that I cried
when I read about his death.
Lost in a creative writing club newsletter somewhere
between my pain and a poetry contest.
I decided to go drinking, in his memory—of course.
Three days of searching through the blackness,
a flash of brilliance struck me like
a welder’s arc, blinding me from colors
leading me toward the edge.
It was a glimpse of truth,
of Pappy—of God—of love—
But as all flashes temporary and then
best remembered only when the eyes are closed.
But I had lived my life on the edge
with my eyes wide open.
And it was in this opening that I saw my friends
staring up from their drinks and yelling,
"Jump, Jump."

With only his memory attempting to talk me down...

— Richard F. Harvey
Pappy

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—Richard F. Harvey
Poets Are Always Hungry

If poems were all sunshine,
Butterflies and love
Poets would all be dough-boys
Or cherubs from above.

But poets are always hungry—
They hunger after sounds
Not content to follow recipes
Or make the store-bought rounds.

They insist on growing meanings
From tiny little seeds.
And won’t regret the hours
They’ll spend on picking weeds.

Yes, poets are always hungry
For reason, rule and rhyme.
They know the very best of poems
Must stand the test of time.

— Margaret Pinkerton

Reunion

The tiny moth, drawn by the florescent light, fluttered into the room and landed on your shoulder.

Grateful for the slight diversion, I lifted it gently and admired its minute perfection—pale, creamy body accented by a fringe of orange on the wings.

“Put it outside the door. It will be OK.” Your voice had become gentle. Startled by the change, I looked up at you, seeing in that moment the sensitive face I remembered from nine years ago. You raised your hand to the moth, almost touching it in a caress.

And, suddenly I knew that the changes—your business clothes, your management position, your status in life—didn’t matter. Inside, you were still the young artist in bell-bottom jeans I loved so long ago.

The tiny moth, its own life measured in days, in that instant bridged the gap of years.

— Lois J. Cline

Last Spring’s Leaf

Autumn’s chilling breeze dries and loosens the golden and rust-toned leaves on the oak tree outside my living room window. The weakest attached leaves are the first to succumb to the earliest fall weather. Silently, the airborne leaves turn over and over until settling upon the cold blades of grass below. Most leaves accept the “letting go” process naturally, unnoticeably. However, there’s always that one leaf which clings on through the fall, through the winter, with a tenacious, anxious grip that can’t be loosened by the most insensitive whipping winter winds. Perhaps it fears the destiny of the leaves that went before it, needing reassurance before taking that final leap. Or maybe it’s rebelling against its nature-given, three-season life span. Nevertheless, like the grown calf still attempting to seek comfort beneath its mother’s breast, the leaf clutches onto the branch past the season it was to be separated. Like a child staying up on Christmas Eve, it seems to thrive on the excitement of being the only leaf to witness the white flurries it cheated nature to see. Its weakened attachment contests nature’s wrath with a vulnerability that increases each winter day. Outlasting the blustering winds and blanketing snow, survival of the fittest is awarded it each spring. Eventually, the new bud bearing a mint-green leaf forces the hesitant survivor off the branch. Its fully matured, deadened appearance seems to lie with a mischievous peace at having conquered what none of the other leaves attempted. I want to pick it up to ask it if it was worth clinging on through those wildest winter winds. But it lies in peace upon a warmer ground so I dare not disturb last spring’s leaf.

— Diane Marie Victoria
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— Diane Marie Victoria
My Children

I saw the cardboard Halloween decoration on his door today,
A smiling Jack O'Lantern with striped legs
That I used to arrange in dancing poses for you.
His cheery face on your door tore out my heart.
It is the small things that trouble me.
Prepared mentally for all the difficult, major changes in our relationship,
I find it is the small things that overtake me
With feelings of loss.
Hearing other people talk of eating their gardens' vegetables,
I think of the hours spent preparing them for you
And feel a horrible, unwelcome lump form in my throat.
Lacking these small, solid pieces of security,
I feel adrift like a boat with no anchor.
I am still your loving mother.
He is still your loving dad.
But, the Christmas stockings are at his house
And the memories are at mine.

— Marla K. Richards

Grammarian Blue

Sometimes I feel
like an indefinite pronoun.

— Anonymous

Ashley
— Wanda Kover
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The Blue Shutters and Red Coat

The house was beautiful. No—breathtaking. She had first seen it through the leafless trees as the black Packard glided up the twisted driveway. She wondered if whoever had built the place had had winter in mind. The paint and snow blended perfectly, the only contrast being the midnight-blue window shutters. She had thought they were black, but as the car pulled up and stopped in front, she had realized the difference.

"It's quite an honor to have the famous London playwright Millicent Mead as a guest in my humble lodgings."

"Humble? Hardly! It's lovely. Just as I've always imagined a New England mansion would be." Edward's voice had wakened her from her earlier musings.

"Shall I tell you a little of Caldwell Manor's colorful history?" He pushed a stray lock of blond-brown hair from his forehead, his violet eyes twinkling.

"I'd be delighted. I think I'll write a history play next. 'The Early Years of New England' or something," Millie laughed as she said this and shook her head, her bobbed black hair glossy in the soft candlelight glow.

"Let's move into the next room then. We'll sit by a warm fire and I'll tell you all that I know. I've ordered tea instead of my usual Viennese coffee in your honor. I've heard about the British passion for it."

She smiled as he pulled back her high-winged, red velvet chair, wondering what his reaction would be if she told him that she had detested tea all her life and personally preferred a strong black cup of coffee.

As they crossed the hall, she glanced out the frosted, diamond-cut window. The sky was becoming quite dark, and the stars were already peacefully winking to anyone who cared to look. Soon the blue hues of the sky and outside house shutters would match. The prisms of the crystal chandelier softly chinked a note or two as the handsome couple passed under it.

As the brass-handled door clicked shut behind them, Millicent surveyed this smaller room. Something pleasurable greeted her at every angle: the amber warm fire, the thick piled rug, a chubby calico kitten asleep on its own pillow. Even the 18th century silver tea set on the little middle table glistened, giving her fond memories of her mother's ivory-tusk and silver-backed hairbrush. Every once in a while, just as a special treat, mother would brush daughter's hair with it, giving it a splendidly silky feeling.

She sank into the wonderful abyss of a large armchair facing Edward's identical one and proceeded to pour the dreaded tea. Some rooms were nothing but cozy, made for only two people. This one was definitely head of that class. Millie could easily imagine herself, feet tucked under her, playing that exquisite chess set with him through the long winter nights. (Even though she hadn't had the slightest idea how the game was played. "Check-mate darling!"") Yes, she could soon become quite comfortable here. Quite.

"This house is haunted!" Edward's voice boomed. Then silence. Waiting for her reaction.

It was quick and decisive, with not a hint of fear. "Really? You must tell me more."

"Although for a miniscule second she had clutched her long length of pearls." "Sorry, I shouldn't have jumped in like that. Let me start again. An ancestor of mine, George Caldwell, had this house built before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. His only surviving heir was a daughter, Georgina, his wife having died many years before. The Redcoats soon took care of his son. He was quite a bitter man, but he loved his beautiful daughter and doted on her, giving her anything she wished. Georgina soon discovered she wanted a man. You guessed it—a British soldier—by the supposed name of James St. Clair. Now here is where possible legend begins. It is a fact that the couple fell in love, and that Georgina became pregnant. She reconciled with her father but died soon after giving birth to a son. The only unknown piece of the puzzle is the disappearance of James St. Clair. One rumor says that he broke Georgina's heart and returned to England. Another, and more interesting one, says that George the father caught him climbing up the rose trellis and shot him, leaving him there to die. Throughout the years since, people claim to have seen his spirit trying to climb the trellis while she stands on her balcony looking down, but always at the last second a shot rings out in the darkness and he falls to the ground. A few of my more nervous servants claim to have witnessed this phenomenon, but I personally never have and very much doubt that it is true. So there you have it in a nutshell, the story of the haunting of Caldwell Manor. Enough material for a new play?" he quipped.

"Quite enough. Very intriguing. I wonder what really happened." (This tea wasn't all that bad, parched as her throat was.)

(her voice is silkier than cognac. I wonder if she'd sing for me, smooth as a silvery flute. . . .) "I don't think we'll ever know. It was hardly spoken about in my family, although the supposed haunting is common knowledge," he answered huskily.

"Shall I pour some more tea? she queried. He smiled at her and she blushed, softly . . ."

Later in her room as Millie stood next to the elaborate canopied four-poster bed and was slipping on her nightgown, she glanced towards the window. There, just outside the balcony, was a pair of watchful, sinister, glowing yellow eyes. She couldn't remember screaming; she was captured by those hypnotic eyes; but suddenly she was in her beloved's solid arms.

"Oh Edward, look, it's HIM!" she pointed dramatically eastward.

"Millicent!" he shook her, "Listen to me. It's an owl. See? Look closely. It's flying away. You've frightened it with your hysteres. I also think you've solved the haunting of Caldwell Manor."

His arms were still round her, he was tenderly stroking her jet hair.

"Oh! I feel dreadfully silly. Please forgive me for causing such a scene, Edward."

Her heart was beating rather quickly, although not from fear anymore.

"Do you know, my dear, that your eyes seem to change color according to your mood?"

His smile was rather wicked and for once Millie had nothing to say. She was hopefully waiting for him to say something else. Anything . . .

"You nearly scared the life out of me when you screamed. I couldn't bear to lose you. Not now that I've just found you . . ." his voice trailed off.

Lost in their own private paradise, Millie and Edward didn't notice the other couple in the room watching them. Their dress was rather old-fashioned, the young woman in a long, full skirt and the man in a sort of uniform, a bright red coat. They were both smiling. Then suddenly for a long moment they gazed into each other's eyes. James St. Clair took Georgina's hand and kissed it while they faded away into the starlit darkness.

— Mia Raechelle Gundy
The Blue Shutters and Red Coat

The house was beautiful. No—breath-taking. She had first seen it through the leafless trees as the black Packard glided up the twisted driveway. She wondered if whoever had built the place had had winter in mind. The paint and snow blended perfectly, the only contrast being the midnight-blue window shutters. She had thought they were black, but as the car pulled up and stopped in front, she had realized the difference.

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"Let's move into the next room then. We'll sit by a warm fire and I'll tell you all that I know. I've ordered tea instead of my usual Viennese coffee in your honor. I've heard about the British passion for it."

She smiled as he pulled back her high-winged, red velvet chair, wondering what his reaction would be if she told him that she had detested tea all her life and personally preferred a strong black cup of coffee.

As they crossed the hall, she glanced out the frosted, diamond-cut window. The sky was becoming quite dark, and the stars were already peacefully winking to anyone who cared to look. Soon the blue hues of the sky and outside house shutters would match. The prisms of the crystal chandelier softly clinked a note or two as the handsome couple passed under it.

As the brass-handled door clicked shut behind them, Millicent surveyed this smaller room. Something pleasurable greeted her at every angle: the amber warm fire, the thick piled rug, a chubby calico kitten asleep on its own pillow. Even the 18th century silver tea set on the little middle table glistened, giving her fond memories of her mother's ivory-tusk and silver-backed hairbrush. Every once in a while, just as a special treat, mother would brush daughter's hair with it, giving it a splendidly silky feeling.

She sank into the wonderful abyss of a large armchair facing Edward's identical one and proceeded to pour the dreaded tea. Some rooms were nothing but cozy, made for only two people. This one was definitely head of that class. Millie could easily imagine herself, feet tucked under her, playing that exquisite chess set with him through the long winter nights. (Even though she hadn't the slightest idea how the game was played. "Check-mate darling!"") Yes, she could soon become quite comfortable here. Quite.

"This house is haunted!" Edward's voice boomed. Then silence. Waiting for her reaction.

It was quick and decisive, with not a hint of fear. "Really? You must tell me more." Although for a miniscule second she had clutched her long length of pearls. "Sorry, I shouldn't have jumped in like that. Let me start again. An ancestor of mine, George Caldwell, had this house built before the outbreak of the Revolutionary War. His only surviving heir was a daughter, Georgina, his wife having died many years before. The Redcoats soon took care of his son. He was quite a bitter man, but he loved his beautiful daughter and doted on her, giving her anything she wished. Georgina soon discovered she wanted a man. You guessed it—a British soldier—by the supposed name of James St. Clair. Now here is where possible legend begins. It is a fact that the couple fell in love, and that Georgina became pregnant. She reconciled with her father but died soon after giving birth to a son. The only unknown piece of the puzzle is the disappearance of James St. Clair. One rumor says that he broke Georgina's heart and returned to England. Another, and more interesting one, says that George the father caught him climbing up the rose trellis and shot him, leaving him there to die. Throughout the years since, people claim to have seen his spirit trying to climb the trellis while she stands on her balcony looking down, but always at the last second a shot rings out in the darkness and he falls to the ground. A few of my more nervous servants claim to have witnessed this phenomenon, but I personally never have and very much doubt that it is true. So there you have it in a nutshell, the story of the haunting of Caldwell Manor. Enough material for a new play?" he quipped.

"Quite enough. Very intriguing. I wonder what really happened." (This tea wasn't all that bad, parched as her throat was.)

(her voice is silkier than cognac. I wonder if she'd sing for me, smooth as a silvery flute. . . .) "I don't think we'll ever know. It was hardly spoken about in my family, although the supposed haunting is common knowledge," he answered huskily.

"Shall I pour some more tea?" she queried. He smiled at her and she blushed, softly. . .

Later in her room as Millie stood next to the elaborate canopied four-poster bed and was slipping on her nightgown, she glanced towards the window. There, just outside the balcony, was a pair of watchful, sinister, glowing yellow eyes. She couldn't remember screaming; she was captured by those hypnotic eyes; but suddenly she was in her beloved's solid arms.

"Oh Edward, look, it's HIM!" she pointed dramatically eastward.

"Millicent!" he shook her, "Listen to me. It's an owl. See? Look closely. It's flying away. You've frightened it with your hysterics. I also think you've solved the haunting of Caldwell Manor." His arms were still round her, he was tenderly stroking her jet hair.

"Oh! I feel dreadfully silly. Please forgive me for causing such a scene, Edward." Her heart was beating rather quickly, although not from fear anymore.

"Do you know, my dear, that your eyes seem to change color according to your mood?" His smile was rather wicked and for once Millie had nothing to say. She was hopefully waiting for him to say something else. Anything . . .

"You nearly scared the life out of me when you screamed. I couldn't bear to lose you. Not now that I've just found you . . ." his voice trailed off.

Lost in their own private paradise, Millie and Edward didn't notice the other couple in the room watching them. Their dress was rather old-fashioned, the young woman in a long, full skirt and the man in a sort of uniform, a bright red coat. They were both smiling. Then suddenly for a long moment they gazed into each other's eyes. James St. Clair took Georgina's hand and kissed it while they faded away into the starlit darkness.

— Mia Raechelle Gundy
Feathered Harbingers
(For Martha, 1953-1983)

We shared summer's backpacking
high as the golden eagle's
soaring and tipping
miles above the rocks . . .

Were wakened out of sleep
frozen in upper bunks
frightened by girllike screams
of great-horned owls (preying or warring
or dancing of death . . .)

Surely the same heron graced our skies
as we walked the miles to school . . .

Of common blood, bone, passion,
rollerskates, bicycles,
pleated skirts and sweaters;
how can I remain
alone?

I watch for the heron, the eagle,
listen for the owl who will cast
a moment's shade upon my path . . .

Where are you? Where are you?

A baby robin lies quietly dead against
the warm black earth of my flowerbed.
I grieve a moment on my knees,
then bury it beneath the forsythia.

— Kathy Snider

To Fly A Kite

"Mommy," she said, "me and Daddy are gonna fly a kite!"
The exuberance of her announcement intruded
on the disparity of my current economic mood.

"Mommy, come o-o-o-on."
I wished I could stretch dollars
like she could stretch syllables.

But I declined her invitation—
sent her off with her dad.
The two of them made a good pair
of kite pilots, I thought.

I watched them from the window.
He, the leader, crossed the field
Showing her how to run and judge the flight;
She, the follower, mimicking his jerk and pull,
The kite undulating in frenetic frenzy
In the unfriendly sky of March. Father and child—
A pretty, but disconcerting portrait.

For I was never one to fly a kite—
To tie my feelings to a string, and watch them
Slap against the sky, to be repelled,
To soar again, and then be left to fall
Without reason, 'cept for the ceasing of the breeze.

I'd rather stay inside the house,
Walled up, with boundaries defined.
"Your father deals with life his way,
And I, my love, earthbound, will deal in mine."

— Margaret Pinkerton
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For Kristin

The waiting rooms in hospitals seem always the same—smoldering amber ashtrays coated gray, chipped formica tables holding ancient copies of *Time*, an out-of-focus television set in the corner muttering through a game show. And bowed, withdrawn people dressed in jeans or track suits, all so tired, all praying or sleeping—dark notes of the still, sad music of humanity.

I had been there all day, holding an unread stale magazine in my numb hands and staring at the green wall. "The baby is experiencing deep decelerations," they said. "Do not worry, but the baby is experiencing deep decelerations." The starched white nurses kept coming in to tell me. "Deep decelerations. Everything is fine, but oh those deep decelerations..."

I went in to see your mother (they let grandmothers do that now). She smiled—my little blonde girl, still looking about twelve with her hair spread out across the pillow and her pointed face thin and tense. "Breathe," said her coach (your father) just a little tightly. "Breathe in the oxygen." I watched the monitor drop from 140 to 30 in a series of green beeps as it registered yet another deep deceleration, and I went back to the anonymity of the waiting room. I wanted to take my daughter home. I wanted to take her pain and fear myself. I wanted to return her to babyhood and pick her up and rock her. And there was nothing, nothing I could do.

And so I sat in that green smudged room and thought about the bright nursery—the fairyland castle your artist father had painted on the wall, the brave red and yellow Walt Disney curtains hung at the windows, the crib with its yellow quilt, the white rocking chair. I thought of the flowers we had planted that had grown knee high along the front walk; your mother wanted you to come home to your front door carried between two walls of red and pink and gold. And the tiny clothes, all washed and waiting. The silver christening cup, not yet engraved. All the lovely ceremonies of innocence waiting for you, child of my own beloved youngest child..."

"The baby is having deep decelerations," I informed God, "and I can't stand it. Please," I said. "How can I help if there is no baby? What should grandmothers do when there is no baby? I'm fifty-seven," I said. "You can have anything. I've had it all. I'm fifty-seven," I said.

Your aunt came in and took my hand. "Come on, Mom," she said. "We just had a baby girl. Don't cry, Mom, the baby is all right, and Beth is all right..."
For Kristin

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Your aunt came in and took my hand. "Come on, Mom," she said. "We just had a baby girl. Don't cry, Mom, the baby is all right, and Beth is all right..."
The birthing room was crowded with the doctors and nurses of the neonatal crisis team. Your father, flushed and excited, still wore his green smock, and a nurse was smoothing the sheets of your mother’s bed. But all I really saw was the flannel-swaddled bundle in your mother’s arms. I reached out my hands to take that warm, living, folded little person in pink blanket and cap, breathing and moving, the eyes still closed. That’s all I really saw in those first blind moments—the miracle of you.

The first time that I held you in my arms
I promised love for all the long, gold days
Of your small girlhood, pledged moon-silvered charms
To keep you safe out on the fields of praise.
I dreamed for us some very simple dreams—
Of finding angels in the winter snow,
Of rocking chairs, and autumn’s firelit gleams,
Of planting seeds, and watching flowers grow.
A grandchild looks two ways: one back, to see
A dark-haired girl with children of her own,
And forward, past the dimming sun, to be
The one sure immortality that’s known.
I did say, "Thank You" then, as I recall,
"I’m fifty-seven, and I have it all."

— Elizabeth Hoobler

Stonehenge

An heir of mystery, grey and somber as a shroud,
Rests upon your massive shoulders.

A fine English mist bathes and softens
Your granite loveliness. I am mute—
In awe of your beauty.

Silent lumen gazes.
Merlin conceived your being.
Ravens poised—trembling,
Gargoyles of night.

A child of Arthur, an orphan of the present.
I seek, I desire, the embrace of your ancient wisdom.

Thus enfolded, I shall sleep
In the company of kings.

— Catherine E. Dohar
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— Catherine E. Dohar
Meeting With Death

I see your shadow now,
dark upon my wall—
I've always known
one day you would come for me,
take my hand, and guide me down
this long unfamiliar road.
It is strange I had forgotten
this road was here, but I had—
will you wait while
I close the windows, lock the door,
and get my sweater,
for it promises to be cold tonight—
we pass the houses
standing empty on my street,
their windows now dark and broken—
on the silent air breathes
the hushed voices of conversations past.
What ghosts lurk here in the stillness
behind the draperies of my mind?
Somehow, I thought it would be different,
difficult to walk on by
the things I've known
and those I haven't—
the dry leaves scatter themselves
across the pitted path
as we move along—
at the crossroads I turn,
there on the hill, black against the sky,
the willow weeping,
murmurs sweet and low—
the sun is setting now,
in a sky I've never seen look more golden.

— Teresa M. Fiore

Empty Eyes

I locked the doors and turned the lights off just as I did every night before going to bed. My husband, daughter, and sons were asleep, so the house was tranquil for a change.

On my way to bed I checked on Denise to make sure she hadn't kicked her covers off. I noticed the rapid eye movement which meant she was dreaming; even in sleep those eyes were in action. When she was awake, her eyes sparkled with excitement, showing all of her emotions with vibrant flair. Anyone could see when she was happy, sad, confused, or even bored, just by looking in her luminous eyes.

I then proceeded to my room for a good night's sleep, not knowing that in a few short hours I was to awaken to a living nightmare. "Mom, something's wrong with Denise! Hurry!" yelled my son. I hurried out of bed and down the hallway, feeling my heart pounding with a sense of doom. I then ran down the stairs, hardly feeling the steps beneath my feet. What I saw at the end of the steps will be imprinted in my mind forever.

My husband gently picked up the rag doll figure that lay at my feet so lifelessly and put her on the couch. I quickly took my place beside her, but what I looked at was not my daughter. This was her frail body before me; however it wasn't she, at least not the essence that made her Denise.

Her eyes were staring straight ahead showing no pain, no emotion, no life whatsoever. Flecks of color that once shimmered in the pools of her eyes were now nothing but deep bottomless pits. I then noticed a bump on her head and a cut that resembled a zipper. Suddenly I felt heartsick, as if nothing would ever be right again; all I could think of was brain damage. Somewhere deep inside me I screamed. I screamed, but no one heard me because it was a mother's scream, one that echoes within her very being for her child.

Little drops of moisture appeared on her face, but I soon realized they were my tears falling on the shell that was once my daughter. Again, out of desperation, I looked at her eyes, but their vacant stare was all I could see. Her eyes reminded me of windows in an abandoned house where there had once been life, but now there was none. Where was that sparkle? That impish twinkle? Would I ever see it again?

Holding the hand that didn't hold mine, I bent over to kiss her forehead. It was then that I noticed a small glimmer of light where there had been darkness. More and more the light grew brighter. I felt as if I were watching the sunrise, bringing with it the hope of a new day. Hours had passed in only a few minutes, leaving Denise drained and weak, but at least they were her eyes that once again looked back at me. My husband and I rushed her to the emergency ward at Warren General Hospital, where they immediately admitted her. After agonizing hours, we were finally told that our daughter's epilepsy had progressed and that she was now having Grand Mal Seizures. The doctor then explained that what we saw was actually the end of the seizure and that the worst was yet to come.

After she was released from the hospital, the worst did come; I was soon to see the whole seizure and it was frightening, but not as frightening as the thought of losing my daughter forever. Now I can handle the seizures emotionally because no matter how bad the seizure is, my daughter will return to me with eyes that will shine with life.

— Linda S. Rocco
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dark upon my wall—
I've always known
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— Linda S. Rocco
The Alien

Out of the light, intruder to this world,
The alien advances on the rest.
Into the open mouths, his skins are hurled,
Beneath the watchful eyes of hope-filled breasts.

So foreign, yet so tall and handsome too—
You hear the nervous chitter from afar.
They wonder if he’ll speak before he’s through,
And fades away bound for some distant star.

Should one be brave and speak to see the order
That sent him on his mission to this land?
He finally speaks, requesting one last quarter;
But all are frozen to the spot they stand.

Too late to change, if only one had called;
Their hair’s in curlers, and their shape’s too fat.
A warning system needs to be installed,
When handsome men invade the laundromat.

— Richard F. Harvey
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— Richard F. Harvey
An Adopted Father

It is his voice I'll remember long after the strains of unforgettable music have died away. He could have been a concert pianist if he had so chosen. Deft fingers have only to touch the keyboard and the enchantment begins. It doesn't matter what he plays: Beethoven, Chopin, or old hymns like Softly and Tenderly or The Lord's Prayer with the entire congregation joining in. One feels lifted not only by his talent but by the love that flows from the piano to each person sitting in the pew.

Yes, he could have been a concert pianist, but it is the gospel that is his first love. He's preached it in large churches, small churches, conferences and college settings both here and abroad, and churches that have no building, only grass and open air. Very simply, with just a trace of an English accent, the voice tells its listeners of God's love; he will raise it only to make an important point, but its softness often envelops the listener with a compassion one feels is not unlike the compassion of One whose love is all encompassing... eternal.

Len Evans had garnered a fame of sorts, but to my way of thinking the greatest thing he ever did was to let me adopt him as my "honorary father." You see, I've only seen my real father twice in my life. And until I grew older I never realized all the negative effects his absence made. I had no particular ambition and was content to drift along as a waitress in a small family restaurant.

That is until I met with Reverend Evans one day in his office. He told me I seemed intelligent. Me? "Well," I thought, "if a man of his intelligence thinks I'm intelligent, I must be." "Go back to school, to college," he encouraged. Me? But I went back wondering if I could ever keep up with all those eighteen and nineteen year olds just out of school. However, I worked hard and managed to keep up with them (except in running games in Elem. Phys. Ed.) Next year I'll be graduating. Me? Yes, me.

The day I joined the church he had pastored for so many years he told the congregation about the "adoption." "I'm very proud of my girl," he told them. His girl was "thirty-nine" but then he'd gotten older, too. Love can be many things: honesty, kindness, thoughtfulness, compassion. It is also having faith in another person. I've done many things I never thought I could do because one man believed in me.

— Sandra Percy

Saturday's Blues

The pounding, driving rain
Crashed against the window.
Sadly, she turned away
And began again to play.

C, D, E, then F
She turned and looked
Still raining...
Why today not tomorrow?

G, A, B, then C
It was her day.
She sat soberly
Playing the scale.

D, E, F, then G
Mom told her,
"Do your lessons
And Saturday is yours."

A, B, C, then D
"Stupid rain!" she muttered,
"Wouldn't you know... My day to play is also yours!"

— Jill Nethers.
An Adopted Father

It is his voice I'll remember long after the strains of unforgettable music have died away. He could have been a concert pianist if he had so chosen. Deft fingers have only to touch the keyboard and the enchantment begins. It doesn't matter what he plays: Beethoven, Chopin, or old hymns like Softly and Tenderly or The Lord's Prayer with the entire congregation joining in. One feels lifted not only by his talent but by the love that flows from the piano to each person sitting in the pew.

Yes, he could have been a concert pianist, but it is the gospel that is his first love. He's preached it in large churches, small churches, conferences and college settings both here and abroad, and churches that have no building, only grass and open air. Very simply, with just a trace of an English accent, the voice tells its listeners of God's love; he will raise it only to make an important point, but its softness often envelops the listener with a compassion one feels is not unlike the compassion of One whose love is all encompassing . . . eternal.

Len Evans had garnered a fame of sorts, but to my way of thinking the greatest thing he ever did was to let me adopt him as my "honorary father." You see, I've only seen my real father twice in my life. And until I grew older I never realized all the negative effects his absence made. I had no particular ambition and was content to drift along as a waitress in a small family restaurant.

That is until I met with Reverend Evans one day in his office. He told me I seemed intelligent. Me? "Well," I thought, "if a man of his intelligence thinks I'm intelligent, I must be." "Go back to school, to college," he encouraged. Me? But I went back wondering if I could ever keep up with all those eighteen and nineteen year olds just out of school. However, I worked hard and managed to keep up with them (except in running games in Elem. Phys. Ed.) Next year I'll be graduating. Me? Yes, me.

The day I joined the church he had pastored for so many years he told the congregation about the "adoption." "I'm very proud of my girl," he told them. His girl was "thirty-nine" but then he'd gotten older, too. Love can be many things: honesty, kindness, thoughtfulness, compassion. It is also having faith in another person. I've done many things I never thought I could do because one man believed in me.

— Sandra Percy

Saturday's Blues

The pounding, driving rain
Crashed against the window.
Sadly, she turned away
And began again to play.

C, D, E, then F
She turned and looked
Still raining . . .
Why today not tomorrow?

G, A, B, then C
It was her day.
She sat soberly
Playing the scale.

D, E, F, then G
Mom told her,
"Do your lessons
And Saturday is yours."

A, B, C, then D
"Stupid rain!" she muttered,
"Wouldn't you know . . .
My day to play is also yours!"

— Jill Nethers.
Itinerary

I WAS very thirsty, and the taste of an icy-cold Coke was on my tongue. During the last hour, visions of a frosty can had taken precedence over algebra equations. I glanced at the wall clock, and figured that I had just fifteen minutes to get downstairs and back up before the next class started. I told myself I could do it, but I’d have to hurry. Reassuringly, I patted the two quarters buried safely in the bottom of my jeans’ pocket. It was all the money I had.

As I darted out the door, I thought that if I really hurried, I might even have enough time to look over my notes for the next class!

So, latching my hands tightly around the straps of my book bag, I sped down the hall, dodging people with armloads of books, swinging purses, and swaying bags.

As I ran, I began mentally figuring the time I’d need along each leg of my trip: thirty seconds to the end of the hall, a second or two around the next corner, forty-five seconds down the next hallway, another sixty to get down the steps; I’d better allow a full minute more to cross the floor to the Serv-o-Mation machine, another second or two to pop the money in the slot and wait for the can to drop, an additional couple of seconds to grab the can and snap it open, then I could be back on the way upstairs! “Why, I would have plenty of time!” I reasoned. “I’d even be able to look over those geology notes!” I thought. Still, I knew I’d have to hurry.

I moved faster, rounded the first corner, and swerved to avoid a trash can I couldn’t remember having seen in that spot before. My heart flopped over in my chest as I congratulated myself on the quick footwork I’d done in avoiding a collision and eliminating the possibility of having to slide through someone’s left-over lunch. As my heart resumed its rhythmic beating, I continued down the hall.

As I picked up speed, I frantically added and subtracted seconds in my mind, planning my route in advance of each step. It was imperative that I hurry; I didn’t want to be late for class.

I could taste the first swallow of Coke as it flowed down my throat, cooling the length of my esophagus, leaving its icy-coldness lingering in my mouth.

Swiftly, then, I flew down the hall, haphazardly steering myself around a group of girls who had stopped to talk. But, being unable to control the aim of my book bag as it swung out hard at my side, I groaned as it slapped against another bag dangling precariously from the fingers of one of the girls, knocking it out of her grasp. Books and papers flew everywhere. I skidded to a halt and swung around. Bending, I began retrieving ink-stained papers and flung-open books, apologizing as I stuffed them back into the bag. After looking around the floor to make sure I’d gotten everything, I stood, and grabbing the straps of my own bag in my shaking fingers, I turned and again began running down the hall.

As I tried to regain my former pace, my breathing became harder and my heart pounding became a loud noise in my ears. Then, I became occupied once again with counting of seconds as I moved along. “How much time had I lost in stopping?” I wondered. My prior calculations hadn’t allowed time for that. I would have to move faster now to make up for the time lost.

The walls blurred as I ran. Their doorways became dark blobs of space.

Then, after what seemed an interminable time of running, I saw the end of the hallway. I ran faster now and quickly approached the last corner. Rapidly, I turned it, staying to the outside wall, narrowly missing a cluster of people gathered by the water fountain. My ears, however, didn’t escape hearing the words “crazy broad!” as I flew by. I didn’t take the time to wonder who they were talking about. Now I had the steps in sight, and the taste of Coke became sharper in my mouth.

Hastily, I approached the expanse of steps, and looking down them, I thought to myself that there had never been so many of them as there seemed to be now and that they had never looked so steep. But, quickly, I began descending them, clutching the banister, my book bag thumping against my leg, pounding out the seconds as I counted them in my mind: one step, two seconds; another step—three, four; one more step, then another, and another; more seconds going by, a clock ticking in my mind; five, six seconds, and the landing was in sight. Beyond that was the next flight of stairs, the bottom, another minute—“ugh!”—and the unfamiliar smell of leather in my nose and the feel of my body banging against an immovable object.

“Lady, why don’t you watch where you’re goin’?” the animal-smell growled.

Briefly, I stumbled, mumbling “sorry” as I deftly regained my footing. A glimpse, a brown coat moved through my peripheral vision. My heart thumped painfully in my chest as I pictured myself sprawled on the floor at the bottom of the steps.

My legs shaking, my fingers holding more firmly to the rail, I continued down the steps. My mind again became absorbed with the passage of time. “It seems so long ago since I left the room,” I thought. “How much time must I have left?”

Finally, across the landing I moved. Now, the second flight of stairs under my feet; I counted: one, two seconds, a step; three, four, five, more steps; and more, and there, the last! I leapt to the floor, and looking across the lobby, I saw so many people standing around that I knew it wouldn’t be a “straight shot” to the beverage machines. I’d have to skirt around the crowd, taking advantage of any holes in the throng of people. It would take more time to reach my destination than I’d planned. I could make it, but I needed to move fast. I was spurred onward as I began to feel my fingers wrapping around the cold Coke can I had so firmly planted in the visions of my imagination. I could practically hear the wonderful sound of “pop-fizz” as I pulled back the tab on the can.
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Once again, I began running, galloping across the floor, the taste of victory heavy in my mind. Edging myself around the crowd, I began tugging at my jeans' pocket. In anticipation of my soon-to-be Coke, I felt for my quarters, trying to push my fingers down into the tightly sewn fabric of the pocket. "Oh, why did they have to make the pockets so deep?" I wondered in agitation as I touched the precious coins, lodged in what seemed like an unreachable corner. Gingerly, I slipped two fingers farther into the pocket and carefully began sliding the quarters up the length of the fabric, wedging them between the jean material and my fingers. In a second of triumph, I pulled them to the edge of the pocket, precariously balancing them between my two fingertips. And then, at that precise moment, from behind and at my elbow, another body shoved against mine. My arm, the one whose hand held my quarters—my only quarters—was jolted forward, causing me to lose my grip on the coins. From somewhere a muffled "sorry," and then my cherished quarters—"Ah, no . . . ," I moaned—were sent flying through the air spinning, dropping, hitting the floor—"clink, clink"—rolling in a mad arc, circling—a flash of silver—and then, disappearing somewhere between what seemed to be countless pairs of feet.

I shook my head, unbelieving. "No . . . ," I groaned, "Not my quarters!" All emotion drained from me as for an instant I visualized my longed-for Coke can; saw it being stomped upon by a wild stampede of prancing white Nikes and Reeboks; the red cylinder kicked, dented, battered, and finally flattened into a pitiful heap of rejected metal, the craved brown liquid splattered over the nylon fetlocks of the triumphant, retreating herd.

I closed my eyes, rooted briefly in time. I slowly shook my head, still unbelieving, and not quite comprehending. My time, so carefully planned and fastidiously executed, was gone, I knew, seemingly rolling away with my beloved quarters and disappearing somewhere in a yawning, fading haze.

Gradually, then, my subconscious mind, recalling the urgency to get back upstairs, shook my body into motion. Abruptly, I turned away. Memory steered me towards the steps. I gripped the banister, still holding firmly to my bookbag. I began pulling myself back up the stairs, slowly, almost methodically; one step, then two. Now, and yet, only one thought engrossed my mind: "Oh God, I'm so thirsty."

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— Helen Gilpin
Forgive Me, Father

Forgive me, Father, for I have sinned.
Last night, just for a while, I “coveted my sister’s goods.”
I had dinner at her lovely home and couldn’t help but compare all that
she had with the little that I had.

I watched as they had cocktails to “unwind from a long, hard day.”
And I thought of myself coming home from work and right away starting
dinner for my young ones.

I sat down to her table of matching dishes and silverware, and I remembered
my own dinner table where each child chose his or her “favorite” plate.
I walked through her rooms filled with spotless rugs and fancy furniture.

I almost wept when I saw her unused bedrooms, completely outfitted for the
occasional guest . . . and I saw in my mind’s eye my son who sleeps on our
couch, never having a bed of his own . . . and I couldn’t help but ask, Why, Lord, why?

On the drive home I talked to You, Lord, and I asked you, why?

Why does she have a husband, money, and a beautiful house
When I have struggled alone all of these years . . . years without a husband,
without money . . . and living in rented houses.

When I arrived home, my Betsy was waiting for me, and I tearfully spilled
out my heartfelt complaints about the injustice of it all.

She listened to me patiently, and then putting her arms around me, she said
softly, “Yes, but Honey, she doesn’t have me.”

No, I smiled through my tears. No, she doesn’t have my Betsy, or Bobby,
or Christopher, or Billy, or Gary, or Maryann, or Catherine.

Yes, she has her husband, her money, and her home. But I have my seven . . .
And you know, Lord, seven out of ten that’s not bad!

— Elizabeth Dohar

Dad

this is a poem to my father, Dad
whom I have hurt a thousand
times
whose small and angry eyes
have glazed in frustration at my stupidity
palmed hands and fingers anxious
tapping in despair, pain-filled
back
rigid in anger, stubborn straight
by my failure to agree
I have scarred through immaturity
and disobedience your frail
confidence forever
Because when I needed to grow
you were there to be hurt and
because
I thought you knew
you were understanding and strong
your curly hair and sparkling eyes
but now I see that no one knows
that
about himself, but must be told
and retold until it takes hold
because I think anything can be
killed
after a while, especially strength
so I write this for life, for love, for
you, my favorite father, Dad, age 49,
going on 50.

— Deborah Lowman
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so I write this for life, for love, for
you, my favorite father, Dad, age 49,
going on 50.

— Deborah Lowman
Still Life: A Color Study

Vibrant, violent shades of
Red, yellow, and orange
Continually splash and slosh about
In your head, almost always
Hidden from others

Except in those rare instances
When the simmering pools of
Mental paints boil over, explode,
Erupting and then splattering like
Hot lava onto the cold, bare canvas.

Although you attempt to disguise your
Emotional turmoil by use of outlines
That appear peaceful and serene, the
Tone of your imagery (the intense
Hues that you choose) depict contradictory messages.

As you project your hot, fluid, emotional
Colors onto the cool, white surface,
Tiny fragments of your carefully guarded
Feelings embed themselves in the paint.
The canvas betrays you.

Up 'til now your palette has consisted of
Hot, vital shades you've applied to cold exterior,
Forgetting that mixing tints of true, tranquil blue and
Peaceful green can offer you a fresh perspective
To balance your reflections, to give you hope.

— Leslie A. Sams
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— Leslie A. Sams
Come Walk With Me

There is a verdant forest—
come explore with me—walk
the many winding, pebbled paths that
will lead us anywhere we choose to go;
and in the misty, treasured groves
by streams of fragile blue
we'll sit and share our silent dreams—and
if the hounds rising in their packs
should find our secret cove,
we'll risk a valiant stand,
we'll weather storms of ice or heat
sheltered, within these, our rustic walls,
and as we go along on our way,
we'll grow, flower, and bloom—
yet, never reaching the pebbled end—
but finding paths anew.

—Teresa M. Fiore

Brave Stranger

He came for help—
Said he'd been to all the lectures
And he had the xeroxed copy
Of a friend's well written notes
Four weeks into the semester.

He came for help to write a program.
Blind, or nearly so,
He wanted me to help him see
How all the things he'd heard in class
Could ever come to be.

I didn't know if I could help him
Or if he could learn to write, who couldn't see.
But, oh, my unbelieving eyes
At what that man could see.

Brave stranger, he was,
In a land of seeing eyes.
He entered humbly, left me humbled,
Thankful for my disguise.

— Margaret Pinkerton

Nature's Beauties

— Robert P. Lewis
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HOW SUBMISSIONS ARE SELECTED

Works to be considered for publication are submitted to Mrs. Hoobler, ICON faculty advisor. She substitutes, in place of the submitter’s name, a number; thus only she knows the identity of the individual authors. Each staff member is then given a xeroxed copy of each submission to be considered for the current issue. After final selections are made, the staff’s copies are returned to Mrs. Hoobler and destroyed, thereby prohibiting the circulation of unauthorized copies of anyone’s works. The final step in the selection of material is the staff selection meeting, when the ICON staff in its entirety meets to discuss and vote upon the final selections for publication. This choice is the sole decision of the student staff. Only after the final selections have been made does the advisor reveal the identity of those individuals whose works have been chosen.

The art submissions are given a number, and at the staff selection meeting, each member rates them accordingly. The scores are then averaged and the highest rated pieces of artwork are accepted for publication.

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Lookout Point .................................... — William Byland

Fall 1988, ICON
HOW SUBMISSIONS ARE SELECTED

Works to be considered for publication are submitted to Mrs. Hoobler, ICON faculty advisor. She substitutes, in place of the submitter's name, a number; thus only she knows the identity of the individual authors. Each staff member is then given a xeroxed copy of each submission to be considered for the current issue. After final selections are made, the staff's copies are returned to Mrs. Hoobler and destroyed, thereby prohibiting the circulation of unauthorized copies of anyone's works. The final step in the selection of material is the staff selection meeting, when the ICON staff in its entirety meets to discuss and vote upon the final selections for publication. This choice is the sole decision of the student staff. Only after the final selections have been made does the advisor reveal the identity of those individuals whose works have been chosen.

The art submissions are given a number, and at the staff selection meeting, each member rates them accordingly. The scores are then averaged and the highest rated pieces of artwork are accepted for publication.

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Lookout Point

— William Byland
Contributor's Notes . . .

WILLIAM BYLAND's impressive photography has appeared in several past ICONs and in Trumbull Art Guild exhibits. An expert in unusual film techniques such as his use of infrared and high grain film, he strives for romantic and mysterious images . . . LOIS J. CLINE, who earned an Associate Degree in Office Management, has had her work published in numerous past ICONs . . . This marks the first appearance of CATHERINE DOHAR to the pages of ICON. She's a Sophomore Studio Art major who enjoys theatre, dance, and the "finer things in life" . . . ELIZABETH DOHAR, a Hiram '82 Sociology graduate and mother of seven children (including Catherine mentioned above), has had material published in several issues of ICON.

This marks TERESA M. FIORE's first appearance in ICON. She's a junior English major who enjoys classical piano music, opera, and art . . . HELEN GILPIN is a newcomer to the pages of ICON although she's had work published in a national anthology. She's a soon-to-be Sophomore English major and mother of two who enjoys Egyptian art and ginkgo leaves . . . MIA RAECHELLE GUNDY's imaginative work is being seen in ICON for the first time. This Freshman English major enjoys a variety of hobbies and interests including Ancient Egypt, the Roaring Twenties, astronomy, French and the fine arts . . . It has been several years since RICHARD F. HARVEY's work has appeared in ICON, and we welcome him back. He's a Senior Philosophy major whose work has been published in other poetry journals in addition to ICON.

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