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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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— Wanda Kover
Fall 1986, ICON
"Taking a new step, uttering a new word, is what people fear most."
—Dostoyevski

This issue of ICON is dedicated to the jobless people of the Mahoning Valley, people whose lives are in a state of transition—those who have taken misfortune and turned it into the opportunity to embark upon new adventures, and who, in the process, are achieving new goals they never before dreamed possible.
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TWINS OF NATURE

Like two clover leaves
Are my lucky charms--
Of the same mold were they cast,
Yet each given his individual
Identity and Character.

Offspring of opposing worlds
Come they--one wild-born,
The other popularly bred,
Of similar age and interest,
They emerge from distinct
Familial faith and societal stature.

So similarly sculptured are they
By the Divine Hand unique,
Portraying to me the World of Man,
So admirable and proud.
Reaching for the stars,
Each is destined to achieve
His wondrous, adventure-filled dreams.

How I love these Twins of Nature!
Their inner beauty thrives,
Though often covert to those unseeing eyes.
Unknown to each other, the pair was
Discovered by the Gemini of equal passions.
Symbolizing Love and Wisdom,
These twins will forever entangle me
In the Mysteries of their lives.

— Deborah Kerner
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FULL CIRCLE

You have given me the gift of myself.
You have taught me
    Who I am
    Why I am here
    Where I am going.
Now I return that gift to you
Because I am a part of you;
I am here to be your own
As you are mine.
The secret places within our hearts are filled
with each other.
Together we complete the Circle of Love.
And together we will fulfill our dreams.

— Barbara A. Banish

TO MY HUSBAND WITH LOVE

As I clean your private sanctuary, I dust your 1940’s style portable radio, the box containing your 1950’s style cuff links, and the comb and brush (no blow dryer for you) with which you dress your 1940’s style haircut faithfully rendered to you by your 1940’s style barber. As I glance at your early 1960’s style tilt-back chair, I remember how often I have pleaded with you to replace these old things with new ones, and how exasperated I have become when you stubbornly cling to them, proclaiming that they are “just right.” As I finish up, I pass the mirror in the hall and catch a glimpse of your 1940’s style wife, and I stop a minute to properly appreciate your stubborn old-fashioned allegiance.

— Grace G. Toro

Old-Fashioned Girl

— A. Richard Segall
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Old-Fashioned Girl

— A. Richard Segall
Dear Daughter

To me you are
As fresh as a spring breeze
And just as delightful.
So full of promise,
As tender as a bud about to bloom,
My dear daughter at age eleven.

You love your dolls, baseball, and nail polish. 
You cuddle your cat, mother your brothers, 
Are embarrassed by mushy TV scenes, 
Yet like a Boy.

You’re between clothing sizes
And “nothing fits right!”
No stage fits right either.
Last night I found you awake and worried
About leaving childhood behind,
Entering sixth grade,
Learning math and changing classes.
You sense your presence at a threshold.

So under your bed’s canopy
We hugged, shared, laughed, and cried
Until after midnight.
You liked the “‘laughlines’” around my eyes
And I admired your “loving heart of gold.”
Nothing changed, 
But we shared confidences.

As I turned out the light
And walked to my room,
My heart ached.
Can I love you
Into young womanhood?
Can I ever nurture you enough
To ease your fears
And help you reach out
Gladly for each new day?

— Marla K. Richards

Pasha

— Wanda Kover
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Sally's Baby Bird

One day my three-year-old daughter, Sally, discovered a baby bird, dead, beneath our lilac bush.

"Come and see, Mommy!" she called excitedly,

"A baby bird! A baby bird!"

She was determined to play with it,
and I was greatly determined to discourage her.

"Sally... Honey," I said kneeling before her--

"This baby bird is dead..."

How wide and knowing her blue eyes were,
gazing at me.

"No-o-o Mommy, it can fly, 'cause it's a baby bird!"
she exclaimed, heaving it into the air and watching it drop.

"Honey... it's dead. Its wings don't move
and its eyes stay shut..."

I tried to convince her.

"It didn't die--'cause its Mommy isn't here, and it didn't die--'cause its Daddy isn't here!" she argued boldly.

I took the poor, cold and stiff bird from her,
and when I was sure she was distracted, I disposed of it.

Later that evening, a bird swooped past us
as we sat together on the porch swing.

"See, Mommy!" Sally said proudly, "I told you
that baby bird could fly!"

How happy she was as she smiled, and her tiny arms
squeezed about my neck!

With smiling, tear-filled eyes, I spoke softly,
proudly, "Yes, Honey, yes, I do believe you're right."

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— Peggy Sue Byrnes
Some Thoughts
of a Mother
Whose First-born, Only Son
Is Coming of Age

I remember my mother saying
"Some day I hope you have one just like yourself"

. . . he graduated in June
six feet two, one hundred eighty pounds
of mouth

When he puts on his three-piece suit
and looks into the glass,
he thinks he's his own biggest fan

but he's wrong
(I am)

And I try not to think about the fact
that he is going to college in the fall

And suddenly the day is here and gone

And I hate the people who conspired with me
to make him perfect and ready to leave me

(especially the orthodontist who gave him
that wonderful smile)

And I try to recall the times I wished
he would take his noise and his mess

And go--somewhere, anywhere else

And all I can remember are the times he said
"I'll do that for you, Mom"

and "Your hair looks pretty foxy like that"

And the smile, his smile, his wonderful smile

— Michelle Griffiths

Yesterday's Child

— Wanda Kover
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A Father's Request for Pardon

The old oak tree is weary now,
gray hair outlines the bushy brow.
Winter's chill and summer's sun
etched in the wrinkles--every one.

With trembling fingers stiff with age,
shall I attempt to soothe your rage?
Dare I to ask another chance
from you, my handsome, blue-eyed branch?

Tired eyes behind the frames . . .
wiping tears that bear your name . . .
Ears that long to hear your voice . . .
could you but take me as your choice.

The stone-like bark has softened now;
time has altered stem and bough.
I fear the frozen ground may claim me
before, my son, you can but name me.

Forgive the storms that made us weep;
forget the words we did not speak.
These arms that might have held you then
hang empty--yearning--for a friend.

— Jeanne Bryner

What Is Man?

— Leon Snowe II
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— Jeanne Bryner
At Gullible Eight

The night he
told me tomorrow
was the end of the
world, I believed every
big-brotherly word and spent
Lake Michigan’s final roar submerged
in starched linen and eiderdown. It
muffled each hour struck nonetheless
inside the ticking mahogany shell;
and soothing as I found the
familiar pounding chime, it
dwarfed against dreams the
size and shape
of death.

— Pearl B. Segall

THE SECRETS OF YOUR SOUL

Hidden, locked, and guarded
The secrets of your soul,
How heavily they weigh
Although you’ve paid the toll.

It doesn’t go unnoticed
The torment you disguise;
Pain is seen so clearly
In your cold, blue eyes.

Even in the darkness
You cannot hide your fear--
For there upon your pillow
Is a single,

lonely
tear.

— Jeane Beach

FIT IN

I still see you, now and then,
In an unexpected burst of laughter
On a face that toys with all your features
So long after you have gone.

A student asks a question,
Clears his throat,
Raises eyebrows--
And for an instant I submerge into a desperate
"What if? Wish you were--Why?" frustration
That wells up from my heart
Into my throat and eyes, and I know I will cry
Or scream!

The overwhelming questions whirl,
But their answers died with you
Inside the complex, intricate fibers of your
Too sensitive,
Too brilliant mind.

Well, you win—we lose.
But did you not believe your life meant more to me
Than all the rules?
Did you not believe that I would have broken every
Mold to help you "fit in??
Or were you going to show me, too? Well, you did.
I share, too late, your grief, pain, frustration.
How tragic that DEATH was the ultimate place
Where you "fit in."

— Shirley L. Phillips
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ORPHIC LUTE,
Summer 1986

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TWO CARPENTERS

If I can see him anywhere, it is in the mountains: laughing as sun flecked streams cascade over the rocks or driving over dusty roads, knowing every curve. He did for me the things my uncles would have done had they lived. I felt secure around him—the way I would if I had an older brother. It is his hands that I remember best—hands that seemed to be able to fix anything. Hands that took materials no one else wanted and by some creative power from within fashioned other people’s remnants into something useful. With only an eighth grade education, he taught himself to fix cars, build porches, construct fireplaces, patios, and roofs. It was a gift, one that fascinated me because, no matter how I try, my mind does not work that way.

"How did you learn to do these things?" I asked.

"I told myself I could do anything I put my mind to," he replied.

I look at the screen door and I can see him there smiling at me as if to say, "What have you got yourself into now and how can I fix it?"

He was the first of my friends to die. Other people I had known had died—but they were always older, sicker, somehow closer to death’s claim. He had not been sick. I had had no premonition, no warning. In silence I walked through my house not wanting to believe it—not able to cry but reaching back for memories, as if memories could hold me, comfort me until my mind could finally realize he was no more.

I attended the funeral amid friends and relatives. As we filed past the coffin, I caught a glimpse of his wife sitting in front. I knew if I looked at her I’d cry, so I gazed straight ahead. I turned over so slightly to take one last look at the man who had always treated me like family. "Goodbye, Dave," I whispered.

I thought of the hammer his children had put in the coffin, a symbol placed in the hands that had helped everyone who had gathered to say goodbye. I couldn’t think of a person there he had not helped at one time or another. As my eyes surveyed the winter earth that would soon receive him, I thought of another Carpenter whose hands bore the scars of love, and took comfort in knowing my friend was now at home with Him.

— Sandra Percy

Night Walk

Sometimes the lane seems narrow,
And I walk through murky haze,
Sometimes the ghostly whips will laugh
In haunting, hollow ways.

Sometimes I hear the voices
Of the Ones That Went Before:
My mother and grandmother,
And the child I never bore.

And then I hear the voices
Of the Ones I Left Behind;
They call me out of foggy mist
Back to their land and time.

My steps then increase urgency
Propelling me towards home—
Away from roads of shadows
Where I fear to walk alone.

— Margaret L. Pinkerton

Crossing Over

— A. Richard Segall

15.

Fall 1986, ICON

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If he left me tonight . . .

If he left me tonight
Would the world stand still?
Would the backyard flood
And the basement, fill?

Would the kids all need braces?
Would the rent be raised?
Would my mind be a jungled,
Flooded maze?

Would the neighbors all gossip
In unending dirge?
Could I put down the knife
And resist the urge?

Or, if he left me tonight
Would I find I can stand
On my own two feet,
As tall as a man?

Would there be a little more
Room in the bed?
Would I sleep uncrowded
By worry and dread?

Would I find I can stretch
And, in stretching, grow?
Would I wake with the slam of the door
Were he to go?

— Margaret L. Pinkerton
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— Margaret L. Pinkerton
Safe Haven, Intimacy

The "gang" is together again,
Four couples, all old friends,
With all the children.
Disappointment reigns
When it rains too hard to have the picnic
So we gather at Roe's house
And it is good.

The teens huddle in the garage
In their Van Halen T-shirts,
Talking about girls and skateboards and guitars.
The younger boys talk football and Robotech on the back porch.
The girls don bathing suits
And stage a dance recital in the basement.

We eight old friends gather on the living room sofas
And spill out our hearts
Amid the comforting warmth of friendship.
Two friends could lose their jobs at the steel company
And are selling their family homes.
Two of the group are losing parents to terminal illness.
The space and time fall away
And the old intimacy and concern are present once more.
Like a refuge for weary hearts,
Consolation and love fill the room.
The toddler just smiles
From his position in the middle of the room.
He is innocent and unaware of everything but the affection
That surrounds him.
It is the very best of life
In spite of the very worst;
Sweet, safe haven, intimacy.

— Marla K. Richards

KITCHEN TABLE

Years of sugar cereals--
   pancakes--
   chicken dinners—all have
graced the cracks and crevices in our
   "Old Kitchen Table."
The heavy drop leaves are no longer
too bulky for us to lift and brace,
And the wax-splattered legs stand secure.

Daily scrub-downs for spilled milk--
   syrup--
   and mustard stains
have helped to add a natural stripped-
   antique look.

Years of piled homework and books,
    projects, glue, markers, holiday baking
have given impressive stains that the
   best of decorators seldom achieve.

Too soon, it sits silent--
    Locked inside are the memories of
    Mashed potato slings,
    Pudding fights,
    After dinner giggles . . .

Patiently, it now waits for grandchildren
to relive the joys--
   and tears--
From the marshmallow-hot chocolate
to coffee years.

— Shirley L. Phillips
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projects, glue, markers, holiday baking
have given impressive stains that the
best of decorators seldom achieve.

Too soon, it sits silent--
Locked inside are the memories of
Mashed potato slings,
Pudding fights,
After dinner giggles . . .

Patiently, it now waits for grandchildren
to relive the joys--
and tears--
From the marshmallowed-hot chocolate
to coffee years.

— Shirley L. Phillips
She Loves Me

There is barely any gravel remaining in the small twisted road leading to the church. That church must be at least a hundred years old. It looks like one from a calendar or post card, the old white steeple stretching against the blue sky, multicolored trees of autumn serving as the backdrop curtain.

As a child I attended that church on Sundays, when we were visiting Mother. I remember even on the hottest summer morning, the church was cool inside. It smelled musty and the hymn book pages were yellowed with age. My grandfather would sit outside in the car and then take us home after the service was finished. That time seems so long ago.

Walking in the church cemetery, voices from long ago prod me not to tread on anyone’s grave.

Her tombstone is visible now and there is no hoop-la to her gravesite. The smooth gray granite simply states her name, date of birth, and date of death. “Forty-seven years is not long enough,” I think to myself. But then I’m thinking of myself as I stand here, an uninvited visitor to the small community of sleeping corpses.

To me, it seems that the tombstone should state more than date of arrival and date of departure. Those are but two breaths in time; the long run in between should be mentioned somewhere.

It is so lonely here, and even though the day is warm, I feel very cold. Pulling my blue sweater tighter, I feel guilty that I do not cry, though I am sad. The nameless illness that kept her from me in life now holds my grief at arm’s length with her passing.

Pushing my auburn hair back from my face, I feel spikes of anger poking through the cloak of sadness. Why did it happen to my mom? What did she do to deserve the sentence that provides no parole for its victims? Mental illness, disease of the mind, tormentor of the soul, destroyer of family.

“What’s wrong with Mommy?” I used to ask. And someone would always say, “Be good, be quiet. Mommy is sick, Mommy is depressed.” “What’s depressed?” I would think, but my lips were silent as I walked back to my bedroom to play quietly with my dolls. My older sister would shout at my two small brothers to stop wrestling. My father would smell of liquor, and his eyes looked empty after a long day at the mill.

Her illness rippled through our family, tearing at our vulnerabilities and holding us all in its mighty grip.

I can only imagine what it was like for her. She must have said good-bye to us hundreds of times over the years. She wrote us long letters that smelled of her perfume. I used to read each one over and over, imagining her beside me—now reading a story, now letting me help her bake a cake. Then I would tuck the letter under my pillow, thinking maybe tomorrow, maybe then she’d come home and never have to go back to the hospital.

Repositioning my glasses, I shake my head gently side to side at the memories of the fantasy world of children.

“Shock treatments,” we would hear them whisper. “What’s a shock treatment?” I asked my sister. “Don’t ask stupid questions, it’s something awful they do to Mommy at the hospital. They do it to all the crazy people.” “But Mommy’s not crazy,” I screamed in her defense. “Then why isn’t she here taking care of all you little brats, why am I the one wiping noses and changing diapers?” Her questions faded, demanding no answer, as she stomped into her bedroom crying. At twelve, she was supposed to be worried about Girl Scout meetings, not getting the laundry finished.

As a teenager, I was angry with my father most of the time. I guess I figured he should have been able to correct all the chaos in our family. That would have taken more than a man, it would have taken a miracle.

Father must have felt in some way responsible for her illness. I guess he felt inadequate as a mate, since he couldn’t help her to “snap out of it.” It must have been lonely there too, a man against the nameless thing that had stolen his woman and made his children cry. The warmth of the liquor was perhaps his only comfort, though it left him more empty with each binge. He too became a stranger.

Alone in this place of the dead, sitting Indian style in the grass, there are a few first leaves crumbling and crunching under the weight of my thighs. “I wish to speak to you, Mother,” I say to the gray tombstone. I listen closely, but the soft rush of a cool wind is my only reply. I sit longer. “Maybe an answer will come.” I think. I watch some long-tailed squirrels scampering near the base of an old oak tree where they are hoping to grab some food for the coming winter days.

As I rise to leave and brush the burrs off my Levis, I hear her voice. “So you have come to talk with me—only the dead lie here. Why do you sit near my grave on this sunny day? Surely there is more for you to do than stir the soul of a peaceful spirit. For I am at peace now. There is no taste of despair on my lips as I speak to you. My quest for that which life did not provide is abundant here in the stillness of death. Do not weep, my daughter.”

I feel a closeness; a hand brushes away the tears. Tears—rivers of tears—for what? A woman I did not know, a mother whom I fantasize about, self-pity for a child who is now a woman.

“But Mother,” I sob aloud into the autumn air, not caring if anyone should hear me, “I never really had you, can’t remember your touch, I wonder—did you have a favorite flower?”

There is a brief rush of air, and some leaves pass over her gravesite. All is still and a lovely voice speaks. “But I remember having you. I recall the softness of your auburn hair as I combed it, the sound of your cry in the night, the touch of your cheek next to mine...all of these things I shall never forget. And yes, I had a favorite flower—it was you.” The lovely voice (or the wind) is gone as quickly as it came.

As I walk back to my car and pull the keys from my pocket, I think how all this must be my imagination. Rubbing my wrist under my nose, I glance around. There’s nothing here—just an old church, a small cemetery, my Chevy, and my memories.

When the keys turn in the ignition, I hear the voice again in my head, “Yes, I had a favorite flower.”

“So do I, Mom—daisies,” I yell out the side window as I start down the hill and head for town.

— Jeanne Bryner

Memorial

A. Richard Segall
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"So do I, Mom--daisies," I yell out the side window as I start down the hill and head for town.

---

Jeanne Bryner

Memorial

A. Richard Segall

Fall 1986, ICON
The Long Voyage to Hope

The cargo shifted anxiously within the hold
Of the rickety boat that was very old.
The boat furrowed on through ocean blue
Towards the land that they dreamed of as fresh and new.

A congregation of weary passengers
Were fleeing from a land much worse.
Most minds enfeebled by near-constant depression,
They had grown bone tired of such evil oppression.

These huddled, cold people whose spirits had been damp,
Assembled on starboard
As they crept into harbor
And gazed in awe at the bright-burning lamp.

The tall, stately Lady was hailing her welcome
To the land of the free—the people’s new home.
She poured hope in their hearts with her illumination.
Oh, it felt good to again have such passion!

— Leslie A. Fisher

Clang...Claang, Clink...Clanng

There... Can’t you hear her? Drone and thick as the fog
and as much a part of the ocean as its seas.

Ah... There she calls. The bell in the distance... sonorously
clanging. Belonging, perhaps, to an ancient mariner’s
salt-soaked livelihood. Or maybe she is proudly perched
aft on a great man-of-war, whose youthful crisp whites
polish her haughtily bronzen casing ’fore dawn.

Lonely, she resounds her message. Reverberating warning to
man and vessel of approaching skyward peril. Or oftimes
telling braugfully of a bounteous catch. The message...
she faithfully communicates.

Over years... she has prevailed. Her hollow, hallowed
distant voice echoing continually amidst
the endless tides of time.

— Laura Coe

Ah, Robert

I did not asked to be entwined
In joy of research paper finished;
I was only doing my job,
Correcting sentences,
Trying to remember all the rules.
I felt you lean on me,
Revelled in the sureness of your voice,
Accepted compliment,
Refused the coffee,
Looked forward to your next paper.

Then, somehow, what was written became less important
Than what was said.
And you saw the me who carries more than grammar in her head;
And I saw the you who cares for more than tests and observations.
And I, too, felt the weight of impending obligation.

But my mind says there’s no man worth trial or tear
For the coldness of the one that I held dear.
So hush, before the question becomes spoken;
My answer would be “No”; our friendship, broken.

— Margaret L. Pinkerton
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One Woman's Tribute to Virginia Woolf

(Based on "A Room of One's Own")

Virginia envisioned
A world more equal for women.
So she reached a decision--
And called it her "mission"--
To improve women's lot with her pen.

She had sought information
On women's historical condition
Based on their writings in this long ago time.
Imagine her chagrin
When she found no works within
The historical boundaries of time!

So she introduced us to Shakespeare's
"Wonderfully gifted sister"--Judith, so rare,
Whose creative spark was tragically wasted.
This poor girl lacked learning
In spite of her yearning,
For her vocation then was to wed.

A woman in centuries of old
Surely had tales that she wanted told;
But to write she first needed her own wealth
And her own private place--
Impossible then to nurture creative health.

These souls lacked written power,
Their circumstances so dour!
Many died at their own hand
To escape sorrow in man's land.
Long dead--their silent heart poetry is now ours.

At long last the feminists write,
Their talents arising to fantastic new heights.
For they want their thoughts bared--
Their dream of freedom shared--
For is sex equality not right?

— Leslie A. Fisher

Don't You Recognize Me?

Don't you recognize me
For what I truly am?

I'm a child
Trapped in a woman's body.

I'm an angel
Trapped in a human shell.

I'm a poet
Trapped in a world with no voice--
Trying to get a message out . . .

— Peggy Sue Byrnes

Eau de Mot

The afternoon poet
Samples evening words
Like drugstore perfume
Between Prescriptions
And Vitamin C.
They clash as new scents
Sprayed on one
The other; and au naturelle
Still claims her
Its own.

— Pearl B. Segall
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— Pearl B. Segall
To the Nth Degree

Miss Thompson’s face: rage
in a bucket
of numbers from zero
through twelve with all
their multiples I’d
ever command unless
punished to the Nth degree!

Never one to wrestle
with figures and win, I’d
pinned my hopes on chance
and lost. At three,

Long lines of laughter
skipped happily home
--fun awaiting, and
warm cookies and kisses
even I knew multiplied
to love. While Thompson’s

Rage grew dark
as the sunless sky
and she and I broke records
for stubbornness and stamina, I
finally learned (as never before)
seven times twelve multiplied
to an irretrievable eighty-four.

And the long path home (when
all alone) equalled one howling
dog, a terrified child of ten,
a fraction of one night’s sleep
times thirty-six years
remembering.

— Pearl B. Segall

Algebra 10005
(Dedicated to Lawrence DelPizzo)

‘‘Quadratic equations!’’
I shout and I scream,
‘‘Quadratic equations!
A horrible dream.’’

Now, negative numbers
For me hold no fears.
I’ve used them to balance
My checkbook for years.

I can factor out a’s,
And b’s, c’s, and d’s.
I’ve no problem with them:
I’m quick as you please.

And, ‘‘iff’’ with two f’s--
This mathematical word
Means ‘‘if and only if’’
And that’s not (ab)surd.

‘‘But, oh these equations!’’
I scream and I shout,
‘‘Quadratic equations!
Let’s just throw them out!’’

— Lois J. Cline
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ANOTHER LOVE

Long and thin
Around and down.
The feel of silk
Mmmmmmm.
Young necks . . .
or old.
May I touch?
Between my fingers
you slip.
Ahhhh.
A tease, yet fulfilling.
Does my pause
reveal the way I feel?
Or the tilt of my head?
You've made the right choice.
The perfect tie.

— Pam Morgan

Quarter Till Six

Yawn, stretch, it's a quarter till six,
Adrenaline, coffee--give me a fix!
I'm so groggy, I can't seem to focus my eyes,
Yet I'm driven to walk by the size of my thighs.
Walking's good for my heart, it puts stress to flight--
Is it healthy to walk by the dawn's early light?
For the dogs that might bite me, I carry a stick.
So far, all they've done is to give it a lick.
So, for weeks I've been walking (so I'd be a winner),
But to my chagrin, just my WRISTS have got thinner!

— Marla K. Richards

A Visit With Grandma

The winding blacktop road that takes me there
has not changed much in my lifetime.
A few homes have been built along the route;
More have fallen into gray rotting heaps
for want of repair.

At first glance, I say to myself, "She never changes."
But I am only fooling myself.
As I gently hug her, there is the soft,
sweet smell of oldness about her.
Her wrinkles are crinkly as my lips
brush her cheek with a brisk "Hello" kiss.

Like an outgoing tide of ocean water,
the blueness of her eyes has diminished slightly
since our last meeting.
Behind the tiny gold-rimmed spectacles
they absorb my every move.

Whispy curls of gray hair encircle the face of my father's mother.
Her voice is hushed now, her words slow and deliberate
as she pushes mental cobwebs aside
to convey her thoughts properly.

Beige plastic appliances are visible
in either ear--
Twentieth-century science assists a nineteenth-century lady
in acceptance of the sound of today's world.

Standing beside her
I get the impression she is shrinking.
Or could it be that I've grown?

Frail skin over protruding veined hands--
silent testament to life's labor.
Hands that gathered eggs, milked cows,
dried tears, changed diapers,
kneed bread, washed clothes.
So busy were these hands--
they are content to rest now.
They need not hurry anymore.
She is thankful that they have
maintained the skills of bathing and dressing.

Like snow melting from a rooftop,
independence is slipping from her grasp.
Aging--the thief who took it from her,
has come and gone without her consent.
ANOTHER LOVE

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Around and down.
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Somewhat wobbly legs warmed by heavy stockings shuffle to her favorite oak rocking chair. Each day her naps are more frequent. Now there is no need to rise at daybreak. Even in July's heat, she wears a sweater. Her complaints are few: "Too many pills," and "No need to visit the doctor so often."

In her presence, no meal is started without grace. She would like to see hemlines longer... and men's hairstyles shorter. On the mantle, a picture of her and Grandpa. How she must miss him... a wheel without the hub. And yet she has continued to roll along despite the void.

We talk about my father... what he was like as a boy, a young man. What she was like as a wife, a mother. I am star-struck by her simplicity and knowledge. Can I ever hope to know as much?

I'm hurrying to leave now... the quartz watch on my left wrist says I'll be home in three hours. I must work tomorrow; there will be laundry to do when I get home. I should wash the car, maybe run the sweeper.

I grab my car keys and hustle toward the door, another quick kiss and hug---"Yes, I'll be back soon, when I can stay longer."

On the white-pillared porch, waving good-bye, she is but a fragile fossil. "I love you, Gram," shouts my desperate voice through the car window. A feeble hand rises from the cane to bid me farewell...

How many farewells are left? I wonder. She is ninety-two.

— Jeanne Bryner

The Only Rose
The only rose
was a lonely rose.

It didn't have a vase
And it leaned in the cup
And I looked it up
And the only thing that I read there
was sadness.

The only rose
was a lonely rose,

Though it smiled at me
With petals so red,
Though it came from a friend
Whom I'll love to the end--

The only rose
was a lonely rose,

And none of my tears
Could change that...

— Peggy Sue Byrnes

Bloom
— A. Richard Segall
Somewhat wobbly legs warmed by heavy stockings shuffle to her favorite oak rocking chair. Each day her naps are more frequent. Now there is no need to rise at daybreak. Even in July’s heat, she wears a sweater. Her complaints are few: “Too many pills,” and “No need to visit the doctor so often.”

In her presence, no meal is started without grace. She would like to see hemlines longer . . . and men’s hairstyles shorter. On the mantle, a picture of her and Grandpa. How she must miss him . . . a wheel without the hub. And yet she has continued to roll along despite the void.

We talk about my father . . . what he was like as a boy, a young man. What she was like as a wife, a mother. I am star-struck by her simplicity and knowledge. Can I ever hope to know as much?

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Bloom

— A. Richard Segall
EXPRESSIONS OF TIME

Time . . . too much of it is swallowed up
In our everyday scheduled lifestyles.
Work, school, eating, sleeping--
This seems to be a daily routine.

Time . . . it must be appreciated.
We often forget how to enjoy our spare moments.
These moments should be well spent
In Love, Laughter, and Many Good Times.

Time . . . it should be our goal from this moment on
To set aside time each day for ourselves alone,
Time which we must MAKE, for if we WAIT to FIND time,
Other excuses and demands will steal our time away.

Time . . . we should center it around others,
Our family and friends who mean so much,
Who make our lives so wonderful,
And with whom we share our moments of joy and sadness.

Time . . . it is something for us to cherish and savor,
To appreciate our precious moments--so few.
We must learn to live every moment and love every day
Because we never know when our precious time will slip away.

— Deborah Kerner

SUMMER’S END

There is no breeze tonight.
The air is still and heavy.
Summer’s end.
and I sit silently
and wait for spring.
— John M. Allensworth

Yesterday

— William Byland
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INDEX

John M. Allensworth ........................................ 34
Barbara A. Banish ........................................... 3
Jeane Beach ...................................................... 13
Jeanne Bryner .................................................. 11, 21, 30
William Byland .................................................. 1, 17, 34
Peggy Sue Byrnes .............................................. 7, 26, 32
Lois J. Cline ..................................................... 28
Laura Coe ......................................................... 23
Leslie A. Fisher .................................................. 23, 25
Michelle Griffiths ................................................ 9
Deborah Kerner ................................................... 2, 33
Wanda Kover ...................................................... i, 6, 10
Pam Morgan ......................................................... 29
Sandra Percy ....................................................... 15
Shirley L. Phillips ............................................... 14, 20
Margaret L. Pinkerton ......................................... 16, 18, 24
Marla K. Richards ............................................... 5, 19, 29
Alesia Royal ......................................................... 8
A. Richard Segall ............................................... 4, 15, 22, 32
Pearl B. Segall ................................................... 13, 26, 27
Robert S. Segall ................................................... iii, 7
Leon Snowe II .................................................... 12
Grace G. Toro .................................................... 4
Monica Woofter .................................................. 38

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INDEX

John M. Allensworth ........................................ 34
Barbara A. Banish ........................................... 3
Jeane Beach ..................................................... 13
Jeanne Bryner ............................................... 11, 21, 30
William Byland ............................................... 1, 17, 34
Peggy Sue Byrnes ............................................. 7, 26, 32
Lois J. Cline .................................................... 28
Laura Coe ....................................................... 23
Leslie A. Fisher ............................................... 23, 25
Michelle Griffiths ............................................. 9
Deborah Kerner ............................................... 2, 33
Wanda Kover ................................................... i, 6, 10
Pam Morgan ..................................................... 29
Sandra Percy ................................................... 15
Shirley L. Phillips ........................................... 14, 20
Margaret L. Pinkerton ...................................... 16, 18, 24
Marla K. Richards ........................................... 5, 19, 29
Alesia Royal ..................................................... 8
A. Richard Segall ........................................... 4, 15, 22, 32
Pearl B. Segall ............................................... 13, 26, 27
Robert S. Segall ............................................. iii, 7
Leon Snowe II ............................................... 12
Grace G. Toro ................................................ 4
Monica Wooster ............................................. 38

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