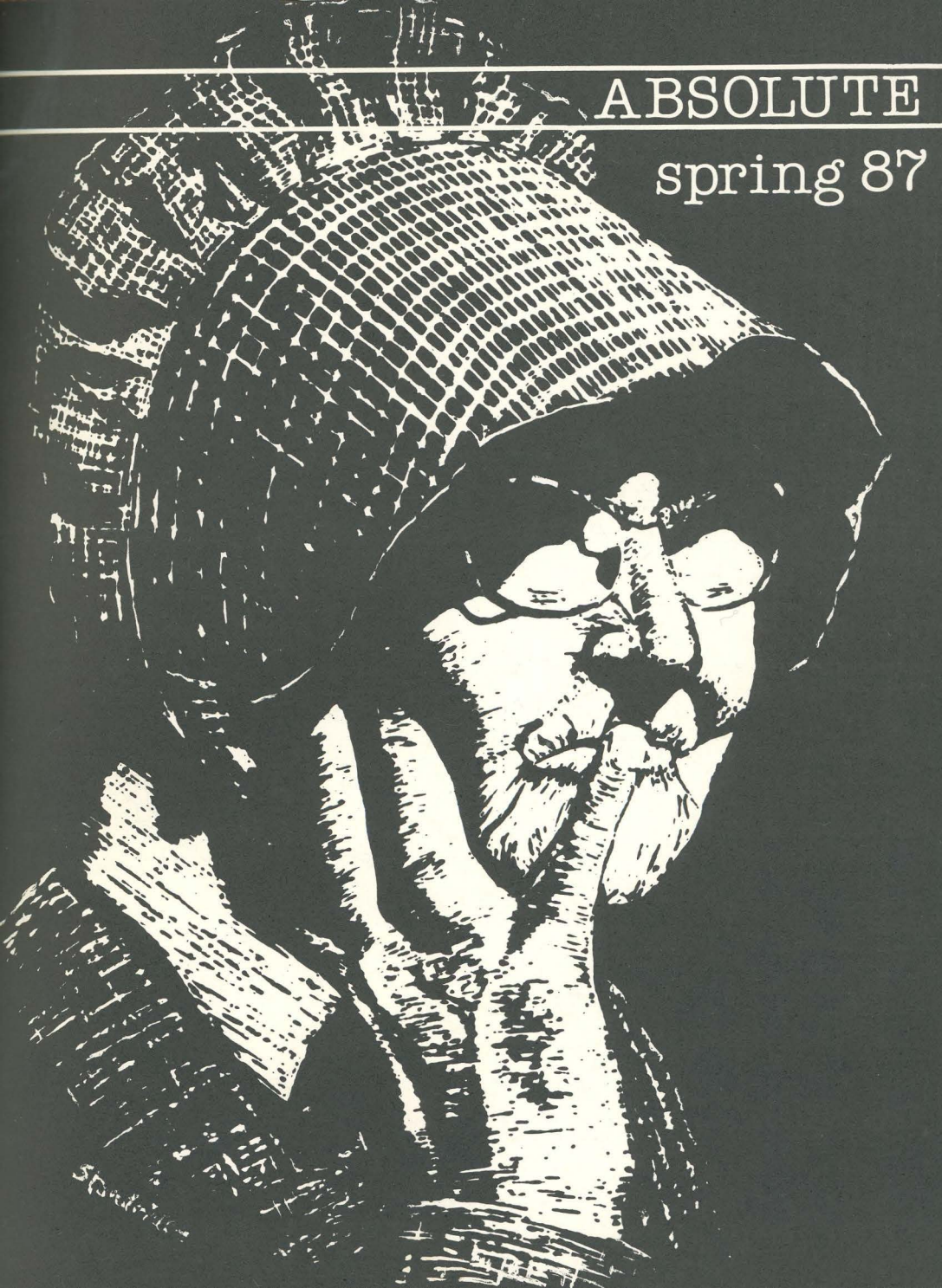
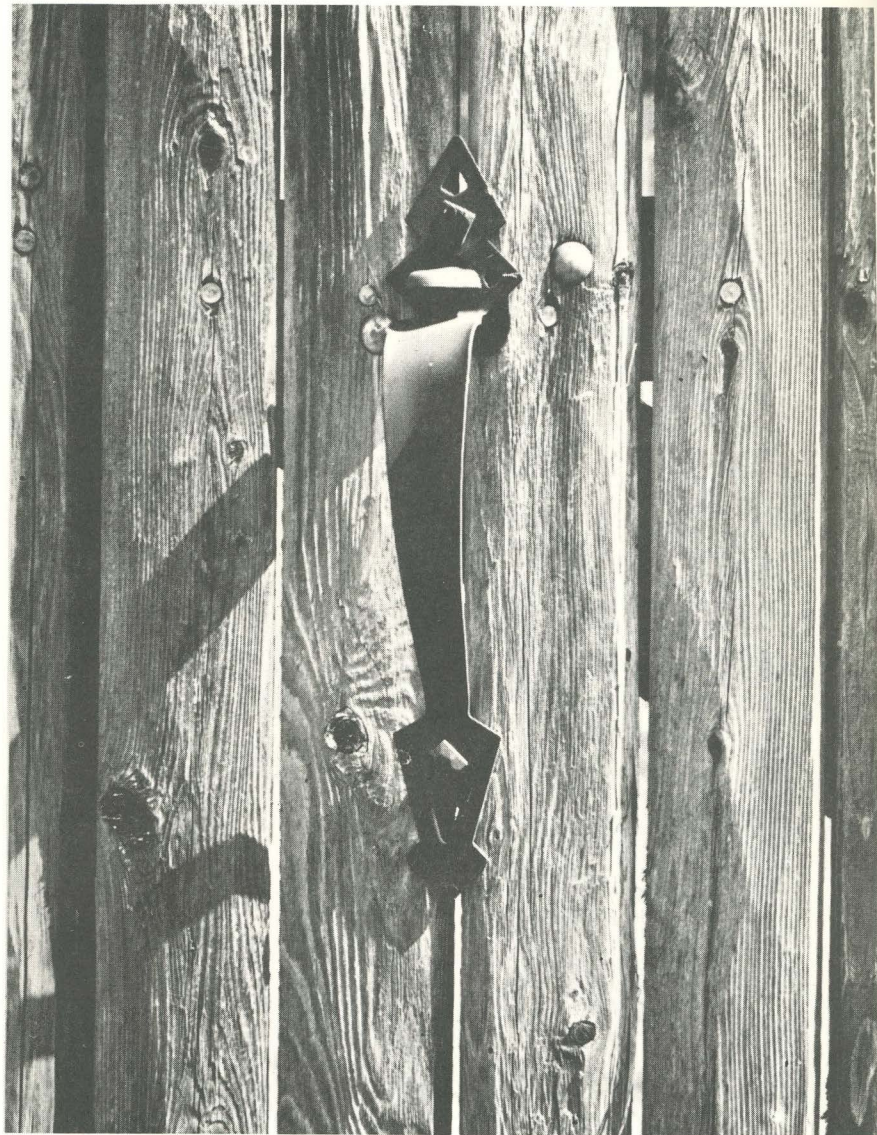


ABSOLUTE
spring 87





—Artie Hicks

Absolute

Spring 1987

Sponsored by the Institute of Communications and the Arts, **Absolute** presents a collection of original art and literature by students, faculty, staff, and friends of Oklahoma City Community College, 7777 South May Avenue, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73159.

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**Cover art by Vicki Standridge
Frontispiece, a photo by Artie Hicks**

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Vida Mathey

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Larry Edwards, Editorial Advisor and Institute Manager

Oklahoma City Community College, January 1987.

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Dedicated

To Helen Cullins Smith

for her years of dedication

to this magazine and this college.

ABSOLUTE

Preface

This issue of *Absolute* is my first as faculty advisor. You will not see any substantial changes from previous issues because I am relying heavily on the advice and years of experience of Helen Smith, who retired from the college at the end of the year. The three student editors, Naomi Christofferson, Vida Mathey, and Jana Cossairt, were asked to serve because they had all worked on previous issues and could help to provide a sense of continuity, making the transition as smooth as possible. The magazine will continue to be a showplace for literary and visual art produced by students, faculty, staff, and friends of the college, and by our area high school students, our next generation.

We did not conduct a contest, per se, for the high schools this time. Instead, we asked the language arts teachers to let us see several pieces of work from their better writers. We felt that this would allow us to publish more of their work. We were not disappointed. We received more good writing than we had room to include. We would like to thank all of the students who shared with us their ideas and their visions. And for their most gracious cooperation, we would like to express special thanks to their teachers: Konni Gardner of Noble High School; Vivian Nida, Bobbie L. Roe, and Laura Shoffner of Heritage Hall.

There has been some talk about changing the name of this publication. Almost no one seems to know the significance or origin of the name Absolute. It took a while to find the one faculty member who could fill me in on the details, and even her recollection is sketchy. Sue Hinton says that she was among the group who put together volume one, number one, some time back in the dark ages. One of the articles, stories, or essays dealt with the subject of absolutes; someone asked if that could be the magazine's name; Sue said "Why not?"; and a tradition began.

Because I know of no extant copy of that issue, I cannot corroborate any of this. It may be apocryphal. At any rate, the process of choosing a name seems to have been casual at best. Choosing a new name should present no problems, ruffle no feathers. However, realizing that patrons and alums of this college have a special fondness for old names (remember SOCJC?), I hesitate to take on such awesome responsibility. A contest, perhaps? Let me know how you feel.

Finally, I want to acknowledge the valuable contributions of Khanh (Kim) P. Do, Artie Hicks, and Sandy Van Horn, who know about the messy technical side of this publication, and to Lyn McDonald, who encouraged her brightest and best commercial artists to submit their ideas for our cover.

To all of you whose contributions appear in the following pages, and to those whose works were not selected this time, thank you for making this issue possible, and please let us see your new efforts for the next one. This is your magazine. We couldn't do it without you.

—Gene Bragdon
December, 1986

PERMANENCE

The
permanence
of
a
rock

appeals
to
me
but -

I'd
rather
be
a
tree

—Michael Wilson
Noble High School

SNOW

Snow

falls on high mountain summits
on smoking chimney tops
and on my nose

Like

ice on a bruised knee
rain in the summertime
and light in a darkened room

Melting

only to the sunshine.

—Tonya Lecklider
Noble High School

I AM

I am a surfer lost in a world of cowboys
I wonder if I'll surf the rough seas again
I hear the splashes of crashing waves
I see the sun rise over the blue horizon
I want to escape from this world of red dirt
I am a surfer lost in a world of cowboys

I pretend I enjoy this new and different culture
I feel the desire to escape
I touch the mist off a rolling wave
I worry that I'm to remain here forever
I cry when I think of friends and home
I am a surfer lost in a world of cowboys

I understand that I must stay here
I say I love it here
I dream of someday returning
I try to block my past out
I hope I do well here
I am a surfer lost in a world of cowboys

—Greg Nauser
Heritage Hall

“LUDICROUS”

It's not a real laugh.

The laugh itself is a joke.

It's a cackle issued by twelve witches
controlled by the single demon.

It's like a thunderclap in sunshine,
never synonymous with the situation.

The absurdity of its appearance
can only be described as
funny.

It's noise
made for the sake of noise.

It couldn't possibly be
a laugh.

**—Allen Edwards
Heritage Hall**

HIGHWAY KEY

Two Indians
are one child of motion.
Rubbed up in the Plains,
their souls are small mountains.
Man, barrel stacked and
proud of a woman
short in her saddle.
She is a tiny ovaled gold piece and
strength makes her eyes
laugh like old dolls. She
circles him with winter indifference
and thinks
he is a fine cane to lean on.

—Beth Ruble
Heritage Hall

WINTER SUN

I have written
many war songs
for you
because of the agony
you poked
me full of.

While our mouths met
in sick Indian weave,
my hands shook high
and my back went
back-alley bolt.

Every night
you took
the close hawk out
of my eyes
and fed me rain.

—Beth Ruble
Heritage Hall

Ten years old,
my feet flatten puddles
and the coldness of their
gasoline rainbows
resembles a light sleep
of summer evening.

From your lawn chair
in the shade, you spill
stories.

They are caught by the spider web above.

I see white hair in
wet wisp of red cheek,
remember when you would
half chase me through the pumps.

With elderly and delicate strain
you lift the living side of your face
and call for candy.

From your corner you see my father
selling Pine-Sol and bread
to old niggers for the firecracker night.

So the oldest bikkhu
has kept her son:
he does not wander.

As I place the chocolate in your hands,
the kerosene vanishes from your lids.
Your lantern eyes lower.

—Beth Ruble
Heritage Hall

THE BACK

Alone. He sits, always to the back,
his hair, greasy, and hangs to his face.
A thought.

He looks up, but only for a second.
No one notices.

Glasses are heavy, making
indentions on my heart.

Am I the only one that understands
his moments?

A cruel remark from brother
he just sits.

stop.

Stop.

S T O P.

Wake up. Don't let them get to
you too.

As if he heard my thought
he looks up, down then again
to his sight beyond the snow.

No one can ever go there with him.

He just seems to block everyone out.

How can he? What is wrong with him?

Teacher calls out to him.

I look, his head slowly raises
out of another time.

Teacher angrily walks to another.

She is also blind.

In the old days,

I cried too for the fear of snow.

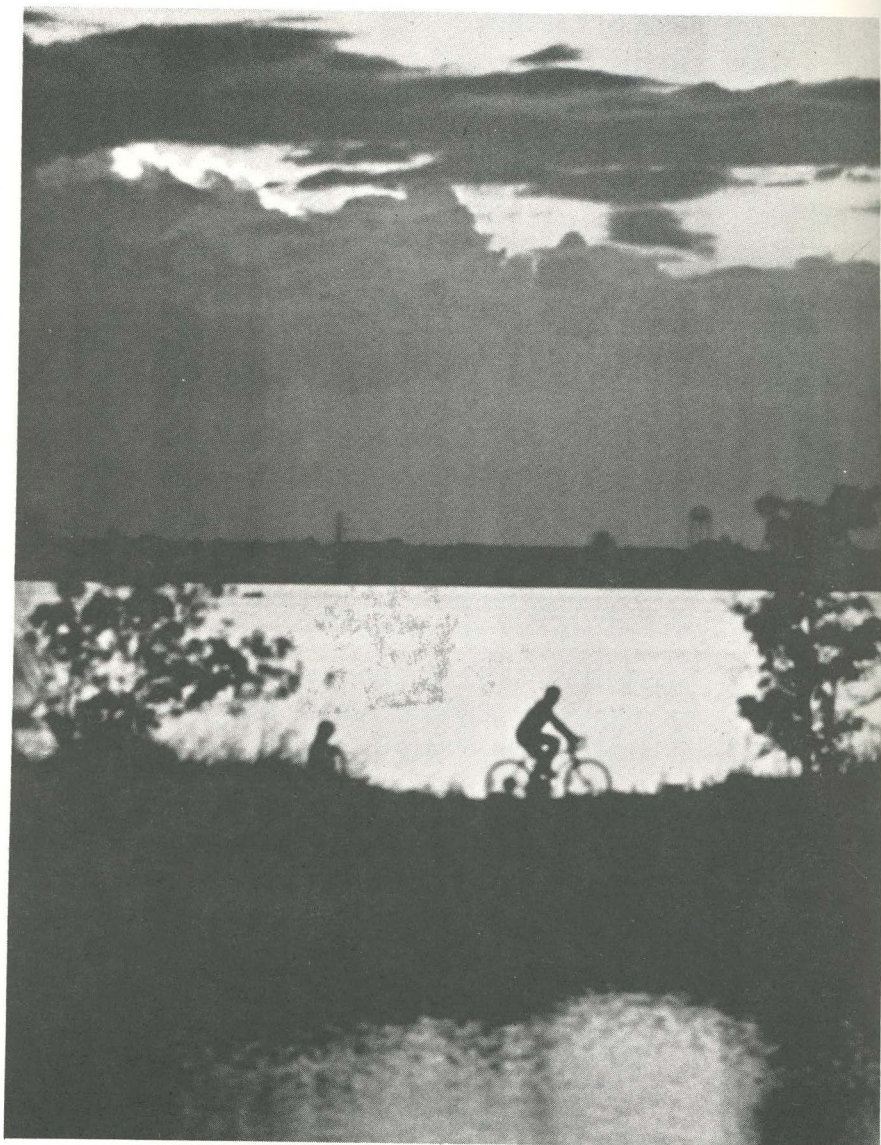
Dad says blizzards made me hide.

Now the sun has come for me,
melting the snow. Or has it?

Can *this snowman* be the one
we search for?

Only now in Spring do I understand,
In search of the Sun
we lost the beauty of the snow
and only he lives on in
white white snow.

—Mindy Stiles
Heritage Hall



—Karen L. Chapman

SUGGESTION

Deep in a despondent mind,
iced with winter's seclusive breath,
are sketched visions
and feather touches,
of a child's hungry desire for a bicycle summer
that rides forever.

Do not tunnel so deeply into blue-cold restraint,
that this child is smothered
and no longer mocks silence
and huddled crowds
with laughter
and eternal wonder.

—Karen L. Chapman

MERRY-GO-ROUND

Once, it seems a long time now,
I looked on the world as a sort of merry-go-round
With blurred smiling faces and loud happy colors
And I knew that my merry-go-round would never stop
But ever keep turning and playing its off-tune song.

But the carousel stopped and the colors faded.
The faces became clear and the song died out
And the blur of the world beyond my little world crystallized
And I realized that life is not what it seems.

The answers to life never come easy,
But the questions are ever present.
The choices may not always be right,
But aren't they mine to make?

Oh, to ride that ride where all is happiness and carefree
To feel the Giddy sensation of having the world at my feet
Childhood and innocence -- lost forever.

—Linda R. McDowell

"REINCARNATION?"

I have lived before
I knew me when....

I was a little boy at Treblinka
staring through barbed wire
waiting for the butterfly to come closer
Not to fill my aching, empty stomach
but to fulfill the needs of my empty, aching heart.

I was the little girl in Derry
when Ireland was freed, but not for me...
I cared for my father who'd been tortured,
his hair pulled out, his fingers broken one by one
when they interrogated him for being Irish.
He lay in his bed for many weeks, silent,
and I wanted to absorb his pain,
to bear his anguish for him.
And when I saw the bodies fall
at the Easter Rising
I would have died for any one of them...
men who loved their lives,
men who loved their children
men who died for the love of their country.
It was I who should have taken their place in death.

When I was a teenager in 1969,
I prayed and meditated
Would God save my brothers in Vietnam?
where they didn't want to be
where I didn't want them to be...
My friends lost their minds to mind-bending drugs
unable to force peace upon the world
unable to live in it otherwise

their souls converged on Jim Morrison.
I would have given myself as a sacrifice
if I could have taught my worldly neighbours simply to
love
that love is all it takes.

And I was a little boy in Beirut
hiding under the staircase, clinging to my twelve year old
sister
SCREAMING! STOP THE BOMBS! THE HOUSE IS FALLING IN
ALL AROUND ME!
Sound so loud...boards crashing, beams falling, windows
breaking,
my mother's scream as she was pinned and could not reach
me...
It seemed as if the entire world screamed
then it was over.

And I was a pious man, two thousand years ago,
as I watched them nail a man to a cross
for professing love and kindness.
I watched filthy soldiers spit upon him
as the blood ran from his body...
and he loved them
and he loved me
and I thought on the questionable things I had done
and knew I was flawed, that I should die before this man
this "man" who came to save the world.

And I was a child in Hiroshima, quietly doing my schoolwork,
when the world Exploded, Imploded, Eroded around me
when the food my mother was cooking
flew up and hit her in her newly blind eyes...
when the factory my father worked at blew in instead of out

pressing my father's body into the ground

with those of his workmates

MY FATHER - who loved his children and asked for only peace

MY FATHER - who never struck a man or ate an animal

MY FATHER - whose face is now imprinted in the ground like a
fossil,

like his ancient ancestors

And there was no time to think or mourn

that so few men could destroy so many

and that a baby came into this world and died this way in a
single moment...

And there was no time to run and hide

or to call my mother and ask her what I should do.

Only time to watch the Living/Dying/Dead fly by me
in a wind from a thousand monsoons...

time for a heat from all the fires that were ever built
to burn my body and melt my desk on top of me.

I have died and died again.

I wait for the end, but it never comes

I wait for the world to be better, but it never is

I wait for a love so deep that it will carry us all away in a
flood of one-ness...

And I throw myself into the pit

hoping not for Heaven or Hell

but only for darkness and solitude

So I can sleep

And no one will hurt me

so I don't have to die again.

—Kaet Wedel



—Bill Hodgson

HAIKU--A WAY OF BECOMING AWARE

Richard Cates

I've never been extremely fond of poetry because of what I perceived to be an overly stuffy obsession, on the part of my literature teachers, with the mechanics of poetic construction. I seemed to be always stumbling over my iambic feet while trying to grasp an alexandrine couplet in order to gain an extra meter. Perhaps there was no rhyme or reason in this but I couldn't help but feel a little bit deficient or unscholarly when the conversation at the local pub would turn to poetry. Just imagine how delighted I was at one of these intellectual gatherings to be able to announce that not only did I have a fair knowledge of a rather obscure and esoteric poetic form, but that I had even written some. My poetic bombshell was none other than Haiku, a Japanese verse form with ancient roots. I had become interested in Haiku some weeks before when a friend gave me a book of Japanese verse for my birthday. That gratifying flush of recognition has long since subsided but my discovery ultimately showed me that, with all of its complicated simplicity, Haiku is easy to write, a lot of fun and very useful.

Haiku is an ancient form of Japanese poetry with rigid construction and content consisting of three lines of poetry with no rhyme or meter and containing no more than ten words. The three lines must contain five, seven and five syllables respectively, hence totalling seventeen syllables; no more; no less. The Japanese language seldom uses pronouns, and grammatical tenses are not used. The subject matter is a concise description of the poet's observations with no room for his feelings or opinions. That is for the reader to add for himself. Haiku are always concerned with a season and a natural occurrence.

One of the first and most famous of the Haijin (itinerant Haiku poets) was Basho who lived in the last half of the seventeenth

century. Much of his poetry is still recited from memory by modern-day Japanese. It is said that in comparing Haiku with a *painting*, *Haiku would be a mere sketch or outline* of a painting or better still would be only a suggestion for the title of a painting. Basho's Haiku illustrate the rich imagery of this better than any description:

(I show the first Haiku in its original Romaji Japanese to illustrate the construction of syllables and lines.)

Furuike ya
Kawazu tobikomu
Mizu no oto

The ancient pond!
A frog plunged--splash!

A crow is perched on a bare branch;
It is an autumn eve

Alas! The firefly seen by daylight
Is nothing but a red-necked insect

There is no sign in the cicada's cry
That they are about to die

The snow we two beheld--
Hath it come down again this year?

But Haiku is not just a relic of antiquity that is studied only by bored Japanese schoolchildren or scholars of Japanese poetry. It is a vital part of Japanese culture. Almost everyone in Japan writes Haiku--from small children at their birthday parties to doting grandparents capturing a poignant observation to commemorate the wedding of a favorite grandchild.

The first time I read Haiku, I was struck by how the imagery of those words had the power to transport me mentally to other places and other times. Some of them conjured up old memories and some took me to places I hadn't been but all of them were very real. Why did it have this impact? The reason, I found, was simple. The Haijin merely supplied the setting of the time or the scenery and allowed me to pour my feelings in and around his elements.

I am not a poet nor have I ever aspired to be but I thought, "Maybe I can do this. After all, it has no rhyme and no meter so it shouldn't be too hard." With embarrassed apologies to Bashosan and a lot of experimentation, I was able to formulate some rules.

Since I did not have the advantage of the Japanese language with its Chinese ideographs, I decided to eliminate the rules allowing only three lines with their five, seven and five syllable format and I would not hold myself to only ten words. Furthermore, I decided to allow feelings and emotions and a bit more description in addition to the seasons and natural occurrences. But I held rigidly to the rule of exactly seventeen syllables. I found that the extreme discipline of this rule forced me to write exactly what I meant and the economy of words did not allow me to disperse my observations or adulterate my feelings.

And so I began to write. I've discovered that it is a way of finding out how I am really feeling sometimes when I am in an ambivalent state of mind. When I want to put my mind in a quiet place and stop all of that mental "traffic," very often a Haiku will do it. All of my Haiku are written for me but sometimes I can share them with someone else. It is a sort of therapy for "well" people and I have recently found out that it is being used as an adjunct to counseling for some emotionally troubled people.

One advantage of writing Haiku is that it is totally non-competitive and whatever you write is good--for you.

Here is some of my stuff:

Moist light green smells
Earthen taste in my mouth
Sharp crystal trills catch my senses

Lonely little girl
Anger masks the hurt
Of the lost little girl things

Fear and anger, black clawing void
This will help, if only for a while

It won't come back, that innocence
It's all right though now that I can cry

I pick two daffodils for two friends
Spring has come to my house at last

Some of these would need to be explained but even the great Haijin masters were often sought out to explain exactly what they were describing. Not wishing to seem too presumptuous, these are good Haiku. They are good because they are true for me and conjure up a precise image in my mind. Rereading these is somewhat akin to looking at old yellowed snapshots; a little sad and comforting at the same time.

Find a comfortable place away from the noise and traffic. Think of an event, a beautiful scene or what you are feeling right now and narrow it down to its basic elements. Write a Haiku. Put yourself inside it. Marvel at it. Yours will be a lot better than mine--for you.

—Richard Cates

HAIKU

A few weeks ago, I didn't even know what a Haiku was, and now I keep having these 5-syllable, 7-syllable, 5-syllable visions, such as

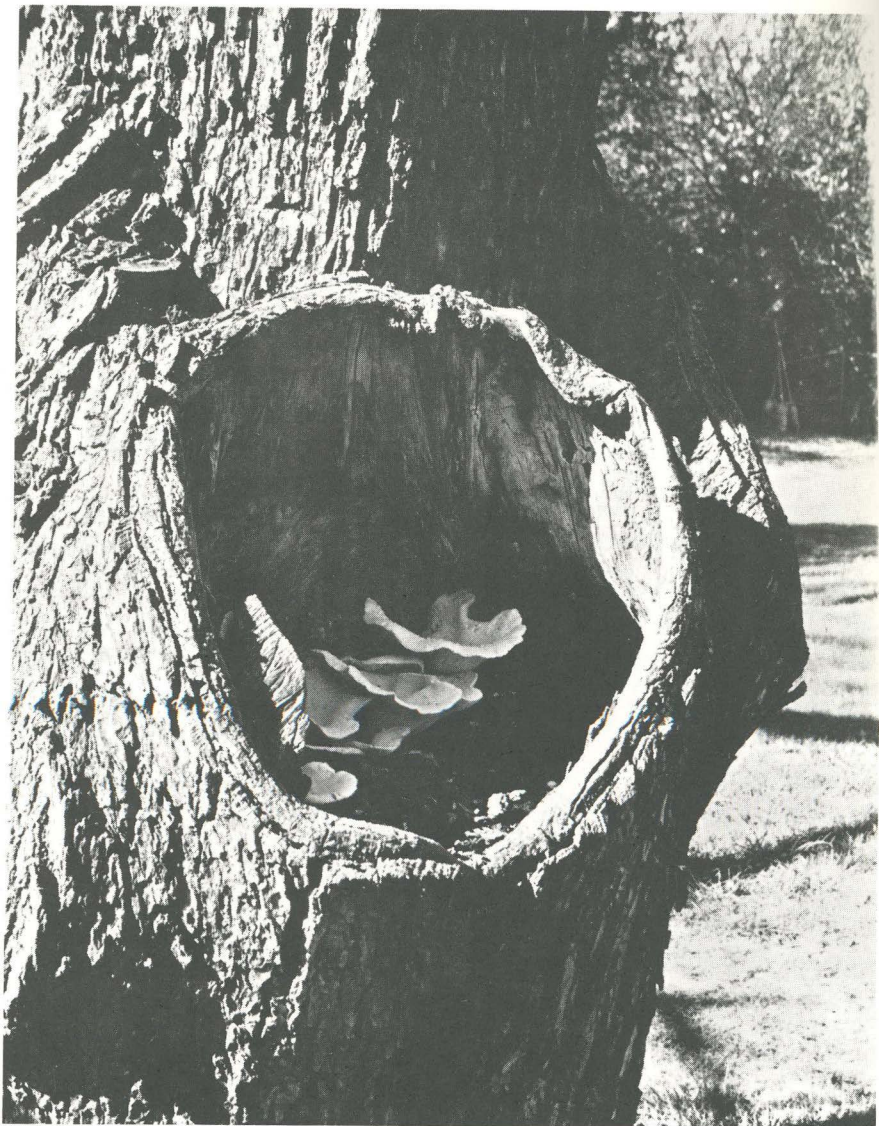
His strong muscled arms
warily enfold the child,
his new infant son

Burning embers glow,
Casting shadows on our hearth
this cold winter night

He touches her face,
Can feel the beauty there and
wishes he could see

Soft petals unfold;
a rose bud yawns and rises
from her thorny bed.

—Dorothy A. Lupp



—Artie Hicks

TREASURES

What treasures the tide has left today!
Six smooth stones reflect the day.
While scattered in the wake of waves
a feather; a rock with barnacles on;
a small pink shell the color of dawn;
and dampened grass of ocean lawn.
The tide-pools skim a bare reflection of light,
as the sun casts shadows awaiting the night.
A group of gulls, and a wayward kite.

—(16 Oct 1977)
Peggy Neuner

SEDUCTION

A smile, a touch.

A warm-eyed wind whispered,
Come and play.

My heart tilted and whirled,
A kite in the blue sky.

I gave it more string.
Laughing at the wind,
Racing with the clouds,
Flirting with the sun,
It dipped and swirled,
Ignoring reason.

And then --

Silent it lies, crumpled,
Abandoned.

Silly thing! It should know.
March winds are only for kites.

—Naomi Christofferson

HER KIND

I have gone out,
possessed witch
Haunting the black air,
Braver at night
Dreaming evil
I have done my hitch

Over the plain houses
Light by light
Lonely thing,
Twelve-fingered, out of mind
A woman that is not a woman, quite,
I have been her kind.

I have found the warm caves in the woods
Filled them with skillets, carvings, shelves
Closets, silks, innumerable goods
Fixed the suppers for the worms and the elves
Whining, rearranging the disaligned
A woman like that is misunderstood
I have been her kind.

I have ridden your cart, driver
Waved my nude arms at villages going by
Learning the last bright routes,
Survivor
Where your flames still bite my thigh
And my ribs, they crack,
Where your wheels grind
A woman such as that is not ashamed to die.
I have been her kind.

—Keri Leigh

SANTA FE

Cloud shadows sprawl
all over the
black-stubbed mountains

As if shouting,
"This is mine,"
Clinging with tenuous fingers
to the white, bright peaks.

Why don't they
stand on tiptoe
on the mountain tops,
These limpid, fluid cloud bodies?

Yesterday
only two or three
flowed over the hilltops.

Today
a tribe has filtered
down through heaven's alley,
Taking gentle possession
of the quiet brown valley.

Santa Fe town
doesn't even know
it has been conquered.

—Naomi Christofferson

SMALL BROWN BIRD

She mistook my open doorway
for a path between two points.
A large-paned window blocked her errand,
and she fell to a carpeted ground.

How could the small black eyes,
imprisoned in a near weightless body
of brown feathers and tapered wings,
perceive her world was framed in curtains,
and camouflaged by a bushy green lie?
(An indoor wilderness with macrame vines.)

For all her speed, the plume-padded body
caused no more stir than a soft thump,
and a tap of beak on glass.

How could that small drab bird,
stilled in her futile flailings for escape,
understand the two hands encompassing
and pressing her wings to her body?

Could she ever know that her trembling,
her fluttering heart, her glassy black eyes,
and her curling toes,
grasping an imaginary branch for safety,
communicated so much fear
that I too trembled?

Could I ever tell my captured brown bird
that I knew her fear?
That I have felt it too?
That I too have grabbed imaginary security,
with my mind curled in confusion?

Her trembling stopped.
But her heart and breath still fluttered on.
Her eyes closed,
too weary to remain open.

Weighing little more than air,
she seemed far too heavy for me.
Her fragility sapped any strength
my fingers may have possessed.
I doubt she was conscious of being outdoors again.
Eyes still closed she rested in an open palm.
The wind lifted several feathers around her neck,
prodding her awake.
But still she stayed.
Disbelieving?
Afraid?
Understanding?
I hope so.

Looking into the thicket,
who would wonder
beyond the brown clusters of movement?
Querulous but benevolent flutters.
One branch briefly weighted down a breath,
rising two.
Startling a little brown fluff,
and sending a wave of black silhouettes into the sky.
Coming to rest again in the brush,
three here,
two there,
more than can be seen.

I think of a small brown bird
captured no longer.

—(12 Feb 1979)
Peggy Neuner



—Bill Hodgson

THE DERRIERE

She was perfect; that should have tipped me off. She was the sort of girl it almost hurt to look at, with a way of walking that made me wince and chew the ends off Bics. I had to meet her. Of course, I expected her to slap my face, then have some power-lifting boyfriend level my pace, but she was worth the risk.

Her name was Laureli, and she liked me from the first. That should have alerted me, too, but I'm a little slow sometimes. This girl was enough to bemuse anybody's thinking processes, reduce them to spinal reflexes, anyway.

Sometimes, the person just doesn't live up to their looks. It didn't seem possible, but this girl was perfect there, too: companion, friend, lover, even cook and housekeeper. She lavished attention on me, waited on me hand and foot, eager to please and easy to please. Had someone been listening in on my dreams?

I absolutely worshipped her, from her feather-soft, spring-fresh hair to the baby-soft soles of her feet. Have you ever felt a dolphin's skin? Every girl on earth would love to feel that soft and smooth. She did. She had this thing for high-tech toys and settings, and she loathed rough cloth and sharp things, but who would want to get either near something so precious? Why couldn't more women be like her: a rose without the thorns?

I couldn't understand how I had gotten so lucky. Only one thing bothered me. Now, I'm not really any different from the average guy, but I feel a prize package deserves admiration of both front and back. This girl, though, hid her bottom with more determination than a sea urchin. At the beach she wore a one-piece suit, a racy style but quite concealing in back; jogging sweats; took showers alone; stayed firmly seated when in friendly baths. Even when she would allow some light in the bedroom, she

hid under the covers, and slip a hand that way? Forget it. I tried to pass it off as an unimportant personal hang-up.

I didn't succeed. I have to confess it became like a fetish. Every *derriere* caught my eye, intrigued me, invoked fantasy comparisons. I found myself studying every one that passed, and unfortunately some of their owners found me studying, too. It was useless. Not a one seemed quite as right, quite as perfect, quite as tempting as that one, so close, that I couldn't touch.

Finally, I asked her about it. She gave me that little-girl pout that was her ultimate weapon and said she was just shy about some things, that I should give her time.

Needless to say, I gave her time, but nothing changed. She was perfect, better than a fast car, a big house, three horses, a boat, or a good dog -- all put together, even. I was actually treating a woman like a real person. Why did she have to go and spoil it? That one little problem dogged my every day. I tried to get peeks, and of course underwear and slinky dresses and bathing suits assured me that everything was normal and lovely, but that just worsened the problem.

There was little to do but gnash my teeth and wait for the right moment. I was not going to give up, at any rate. I knew I was risking the best thing I would ever find in life, but I just had to know, to see (I promised myself I would not touch) just once if never again. I crept upstairs one sunny afternoon when she was taking a nap. There I sat, peeking through the barely slit door, waiting. At last, it happened. She rolled over from her usual defensive position.

Forward I went, crawling inch by inch across the floor. Up alongside the bed I crouched, hoping my knees wouldn't crack, or a board creak. Luck was with me that far, though. I eased the single sheet aside. She moved, snuggling down into the bed. When my

heart started beating again, I moved my hand down, inching by tiny inch her panties down.

Once she wriggled, and I stopped and swallowed. Once she idly swung a hand down, as though to ward off a fly, and I stopped breathing. At last I'd done it. Down they went. I leaned over to look, to soak up one good dose while I could still resist touching. Perfect. Why hide something like that? It seemed such injustice. Yes, I had finally seen. I started to slip the panties back up, but I couldn't help myself. Just once. I ran one hand gently, reverently, over the nearer. Smooth, smooth, smoo -- huh?

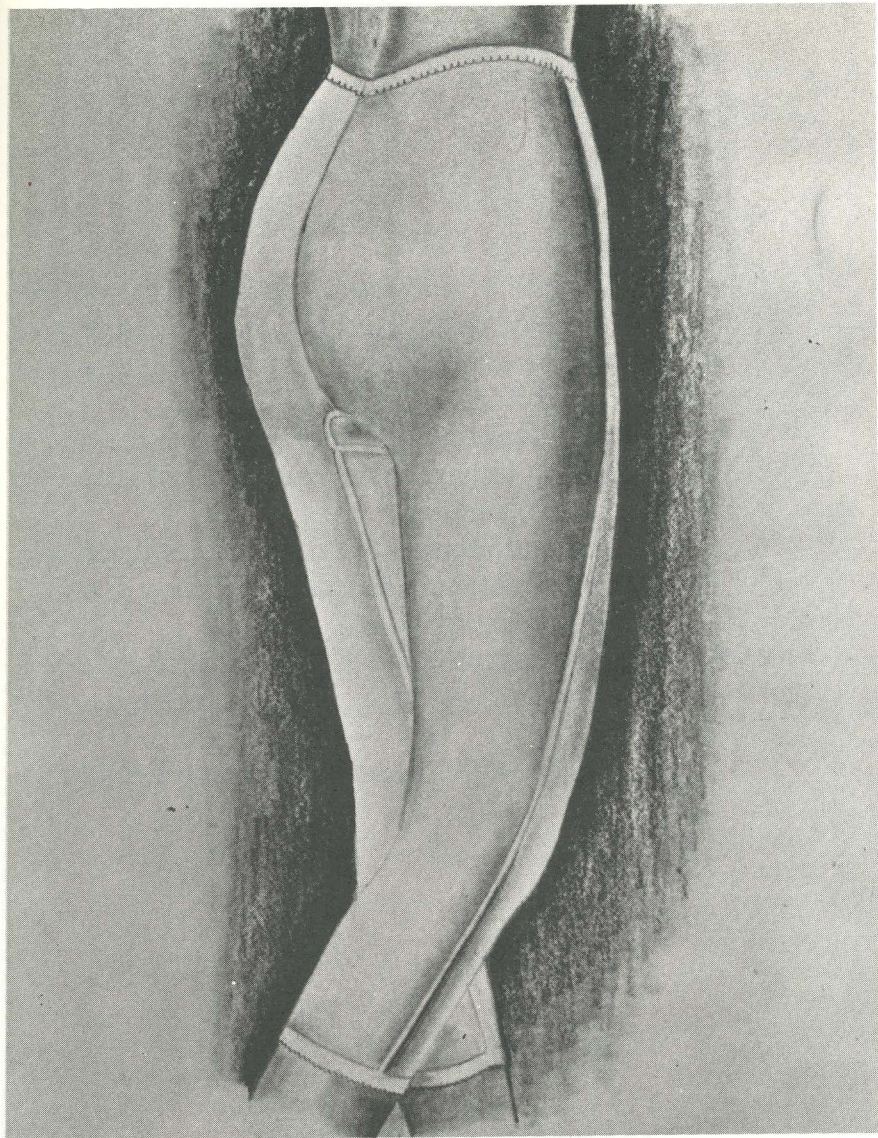
Something odd there. I bent over for a better look. There, indented in the flesh not like a brand or a tattoo but, impossible though it might seem, like an imprint:

Manufactured in U.S.A.

by

Lndt. Gydroids, Inc.

—W.J. Hodgson



—Kathleen Schuller

APART

As I sit here
at my desk
looking through the glass
made of sands
clear and sharp
the panels seem only to realize
the separation
it causes me

—Ron Bright
9/18/86

I SEE

I see you but refuse to accept you seeing me.

I criticize you but you must edify me.

I correct you but you cannot bring my faults to light.

If you criticize me I say you're judging, if you correct me you are always putting me down.

If you fail to pat me on the back, I say you are ungrateful.
If I do it you should know how I feel.

If the job is small, to me it has no appeal. If you refuse it you are looking to be seen and walking in hypocrisy.

The little foxes I see but not when they are a part of me.

—Geneva Pinnock
November 9, 1985

CLOSE THE DOOR SOFTLY

Close the door softly when you leave
So that if you should happen to remember
What we've shared, you can re-enter quietly...

If you happen to see my smile
In the middle of the day
Or long for the way
I used to caress you...

If a moment of melancholy should slip into your day,
When happy thoughts and friends,
Seem far, far, away...

If that realization of what you left behind
Happens to cross your mind...

You can slip back in,
Without having to knock
Interrupting my sweet, sweet dreams of you.

—D.W. Antrim

CULINARY CONVERSATIONS

"A ham and cheese is fine," he replied, as she burrowed through the amber wicker picnic basket laden with culinary goodies.

Flicking a pesky ant aside, her long slim nail-polished fingers dug past a package of chips, beyond two cello wrapped Hostess Cupcakes until they grasped the requested item.

"I thought you preferred tuna," she queried, dark brows tightly knitted across a plane of finely chiseled features, and handed him a baggie-wrapped sandwich.

"No, tuna makes me sick," he mumbled through a mouthful of Fritos.

"I never knew."

"You never asked."

"What do you mean? Culinary preferences never seemed to be a topic of discussion between us. It always seemed you preferred making love to making conversation."

A bumble bee buzzed low, dive-bombing into his cup of sun-warmed cola, piercing the silence which hung low between them like a long velvet drape. After what seemed like an eternity of only two or three minutes, he countered. "Well, did I ever tell you I hate avocados? Or that tomatoes break me out? Or that I love honey and peanut butter filled celery hearts?"

The dam of laughter she held back now suddenly burst forth in a spontaneous gush.

He reached out and grasped her hand, pulling her long fingers to his lips, one by one, gently kissing each tapered appendage.

Then they made love.

—Gail Goodenough

NIGHT

A dark lady comes, softly creeping,
Wearing cold stars as jewels in her crown.
She sends bright beams of moonlight leaping,
Down upon the sleeping town.

Her dress is made of velvety black,
Darker than the darkest coals.
Her breath sends shivers down your back,
And chills you through
to the depths of your soul.

You think you hear her haunting sigh,
But it's only the wind in the trees.
Then, at dawn's first light she says good-bye,
And as quietly as she came, she flees.

—Andrea Lamkin

PARTS OF SPEECH

One day the Nouns were clustered in the street.
An Adjective walked by with her dark beauty.
The Nouns were struck, moved, changed.
The next day a Verb drove up and created the Sentence.

Each Sentence says one thing - for example,
"Although it was a dark, rainy day
when the Adjective walked by, I
shall remember the pure and sweet
expression on her face until the day
I perish from the green, effective earth."

Or, for example,
"Thank you, the pink pot of
flowers on the window sill
has changed colour recently
to a light yellow due to
the heat from the boiler
factory which exists nearby."

In the springtime the Sentence and the Nouns lay
silently on the grass.

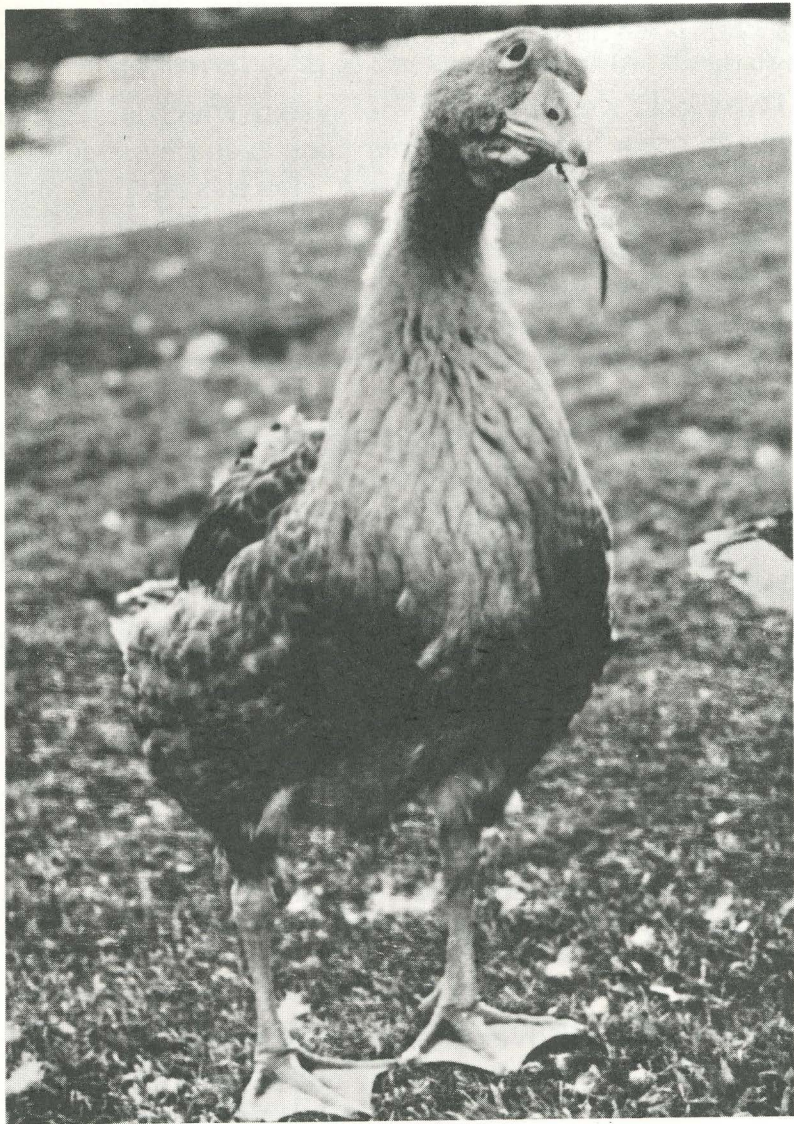
A lonely Conjunction here and there would call, "And!",
"But!"

But the Adjective did not emerge.

As the Adjective is lost in the Sentence,
So am I lost in your eyes-

You have enchanted me with a single kiss
Which can never be undone
Until the destruction of language.

—Andrea Lamkin



—Debi Sanders

SPAINHOWER'S

In 1955, Spainhower Drug and Ice Cream bar, in Calumet, Oklahoma, was sandwiched between Daisy Weller's gossip cafe and a Phillips 66 Service Station.

Two blocks west lay the school system which allowed students to have an open lunch hour; therefore, each day, sidewalks were filled with those walking downtown. This was our time to joke, talk and be noseey. The groups were two or more. We didn't elect to be prejudiced toward the unacceptable ones - Judy Brown and Carolyn Magby - although they were poor, backwards, smelly, dumb and ugly. We were unfriendly simply because they were just not our type.

The Ice Cream bar had been a landmark since the early 1900s. The structure had a smaller than normal door and fair-sized windows that were clean and inviting. Thousands passed through these portals, purchasing over the counter remedies, toothpaste, Kleenex, mineral oil, candy, cigarettes, and Ice Cream. The Ice Cream cones were a specialty since all other stores sold cream by the carton.

Behind the counter, Mr. Spainhower was a burly, heavy-set, 60ish man with salt and pepper hair, a big nose, an anchor tattooed on his left forearm, and penetrating eyes which did not miss a single thing that transpired in the busy store, whether it was back, front, or floor. He looked peculiarly out of place, dipping Ice Cream. He should have been serving beer in the honky tonk down the street.

The dangling bell over the store door announced arrival. It was not the musical type you hear today but was more like an annoying cow bell with a clank, clank, bang sound. This small store consisted of three aisles up front, and toward the middle it was divided,

making room for the Ice Cream bar on one side, high-backed booths on the opposite, and a tall bar lined with stools. You had to step up on a step to get your bottom onto the stool. A full length mirror behind the bar revealed every person seated at the counter, a dual purpose which allowed each to see the entire store. Neat, except I loathed to sit down, having people look at me.

Our group tried to pretend the mirror didn't exist, yet it was too large to ignore. We were shy and embarrassed. Doris, my best friend, abhorred the mirror. She had an extremely long, slender crooked nose accentuated by predominant front teeth, so that when she smiled, it reminded you of a beaver. Someone usually laughed or made fun of her, so we exited as quickly as possible.

These daily walks allowed us three choices of places to visit. Horace Wilson's grocery where Horace with one glass eye, head cocked to the side, wearing a blood-stained apron which he constantly wiped his hands upon, would come from the work area and follow us over the store to see what we would take. His suspicion never occurred to us, for we were just there to see whose mom was in during the lunch hour. We would never tell a man that we were just looking in a grocery store.

Second choice was Myaree's grocery across the street from Wilson's where the Mrs. was always excited to see us. She did a lot of talking but didn't say anything. Lonely.

The real action was at Spainhower's. We loved and hated the place. Maxine Walls Evans, who worked the front counter and just happened to be the only Senior girl married, would degrade you while Mr. Spainhower could exalt your spirits with comments of, "Well, well, look who's here today, glad ta see ya girls, whadalla it be for ya," and with a smile as big as Dallas, he would call off the flavors

of Ice Cream, pausing between each one, stepping back and waiting for you to decide, creating a celebrity effect. My whole body radiated with pride to be there buying his cream. Mr. Spainhower loved homely Carolyn, dull Judy, everybody and everybody's dog.

The drug was always crowded. You were wary moving among so many, exerting caution not to get separated from your group, for if you stopped to gaze at the costume jewelry or anything else for that matter, Maxine would inquire, "Can I help ya?" "No, I'm with Doris", or whoever came that day. She would tiptoe, scan the store, visually locating that person, and in a very loud voice gesture with her finger, "Doris, Betty is over here!" How embarrassing.

Heads would turn, including those at the Ice Cream bar. Boys burst out laughing, older men smiled and the ladies shook their heads. The crowd enjoyed those comical moments. Doris and I did not. After one or two of these scenes, we refused to allow Judy or Carolyn to accompany us in. Duty demanded they wait outside until we exited. Then, and only then were they allowed to enter while we headed for school, leaving them behind. I felt bad about this, more so for Carolyn than for Judy, she being the youngest, but because of peer pressure, I went along also.

The last day of school, we made the disastrous mistake of allowing Carolyn to tag along. Arriving, we went in together instead of the usual procedure. After the formalities, smiles, decisions, purchases, down short of the enjoyment of "have a good summer," "I'm gonna miss ya somethin fierce," we started to depart, smug and satisfied. But not quite yet.

A woman approached Carolyn and inquired if she would like an Ice Cream also. Carolyn affirmed, it was purchased. Our mouths fell agape, our eyes bulged, our ears deceived us. Why would this

strange woman buy Carolyn Ice Cream? God knows she was ugly as a mud fence, backwards, super skinny, freckles, dull floppy page boy haircut. It was difficult to determine which sex she was. Her hand-me-down clothes, too big and mis-matched, her extreme shyness plus her awkward gait of walking with her head down, looking at her boy's high top work shoes without socks made her a sad disaster. Was it not possible for her to have some pride? Just last week I received the award for the cleanest and best kept shoes in the Freshman class. Now this was revolting.

We were transfixed as icicles to the house edge in winter as Carolyn received her yummy pink Peach Ice Cream, thanked Mr. Spainhower and the lady respectively, smiled toward us, turned and lightly as a frail fairy, stepped out into the balmy, soft, spring air, eyes upon her refreshing feast. The hush was audible among the noonday crowd. This was more than I could bear. Mustering all of the spirited courage I possessed, I stepped forward, clearing my throat. Mr. Spainhower turned his penetrating hazel blue eyes and scanned my anxious face in question. "Whadda ya need, hon?"

"Who was the lady?"

"Maggie Gardner. Johnnie's wife."

He stopped dipping cream, one hand holding the dip with Chocolate Almond on a sugar cone and the other resting on the counter. "Why do you ask?"

An entire episode suddenly unveiled before my foggy eyes. My father had on many occasions related the story about Johnnie going to Ohio and returning with a bride--an orphan. I had now lost my nerve. With uncertain candid valor, I turned and retreated for I knew why Carolyn was the recipient of a gracious token of pity from one orphan reaching out to yet another hungry for love.

Spainhower Drug is now a mirage. Last week I drove to Calumet. Securing a safe spot, I pulled off the road, shut my engine off and gazed toward what isn't Spainhower's anymore. Daisy's was taken over by a beauty shop. Gone is Phillips 66, torn down, demolished. On the white painted brick wall, graffiti: "Dave loved Sue," "school sucks," "call 893-2570 for a good time," "Steve go to hell," "drink beer, lots of beer," "do speed," "YEAH!" Nonexistent was the structure's interior - the insides were dark and vacant - no aisle up front, no division of the store, no Ice Cream bar, no ceiling fans that cooled in the summer, no pot-bellied stove for heat in the winter. Alas, an empty shell.

The gentleman at Jerry's Quick Stop informed me that the Chamber was considering removal of the remaining structures for a new business. I felt sadness. A part of me experienced the same empty feeling I have when a drinking glass has been shattered on a concrete floor.

I squinted my eyes, peering through my eye lashes; I could still visualize Carolyn exiting carrying her Ice Cream, licking it slowly and savoring, not the least bit concerned that we had gone and left her again.

—Betty McMahan