

ABSOLUTE

Fall 1990

# **Absolute Fall 1990**

Sponsored by the Division of Arts and Humanities, **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.

Printed at the college, the magazine is issued twice yearly: in the fall and in the spring.

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Oklahoma City Community College, Fall 1990.

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# Spring Light

The time has come for  
Flowers to bloom,  
you see the light of a new moon.  
When the summer comes, you will see  
what is waiting for you and me.  
When the sky is as blue as a Blue Jay,  
you will find a new way.  
Spring light will come.

—Jennifer Randolph

# London Poem

For Jonathan Swift

Striking out in the Rain

for Saint Bartholomew's

Richard and I slosh down the stone streets  
as Sweeping Rains obscure London town...  
passing the markets, pubs, homes, all streaming,  
We grope for the church in the dark-flowing afternoon.

Old City stains reveal themselves — red, gray, black,  
and then Saint Bartholomew's, surrounded  
by Brick and Iron and so

Catholic, cramped, dripping —  
Monks dead-sleep behind flint walls,  
The Cloister holds damp silences,  
downspouts clog with orange leaves.

Inside, umbrellas pool on the rutted floors,  
A shuddering chill sets in —

Then the blue light of the Virgin dreams  
away the flood, the drowned day,  
and, having heard so many rustling prayers  
of those kneeling here, those who have gone before,  
she listens once more.

—Clay Randolph



## Surviving the Second Shift A Step-by-Step Perspective

As mother superior to a large family, full-time worker and full-time student, I'm often asked how I manage. Mostly, I shrug an irreverent "Who manages? I barely survive," thinking that isn't quite enough. But considering that before drugs such as cocaine and opium were made illegal in this country, the majority of drug addicts were middle-aged, middle-income housewives, most of whom did not work outside the home, simple survival outside an institution becomes an accomplishment in itself for today's working mom. In formulating a less self-effacing answer to the "How do you manage" inquiry, I discovered I rely heavily on a few effective survival tools to get through the day.

The tool I use most often has to be a strong sense of humor. This tool rescues sanity on a regular basis and works as well in keeping peace with husbands as in preventing physical abuse of young children. Take for instance my four-year-old mechanical genius who likes to take things apart. At age two, the child could have suffered permanent damage for removing all the critical nuts and bolts from daddy's weight bench if the sight of daddy on the floor surrounded by the remains of his exercise equipment hadn't produced raucous laughter from the rest of the family.

The next most effective survival tool for second shift moms is selective perception — the ability to see only what one has the power, energy or time to correct. When there are five minutes left before running out the door for work, I ignore the mushrooms growing behind the toilet. If my luck holds out, the cat will eat them before I get home.

When it starts to get tense and the children approach preceded only with the safety of silver crosses, it's time for the next survival tool — escape. Escape can take many forms. My husband prefers hunting. He loses himself in the woods for one or two days, sitting in trees, waiting for something to shoot. It might seem he is transferring his hostilities from home onto helpless forest creatures. Actually, he simply figures that even if the kids track him into

the woods, the little guys will never be able to climb that tree. I prefer locking myself in my room with the oldies channel blaring from the radio or sitting through Rutger Hauer film marathons.

The final and most drastic survival tool was espoused by the enlightened ones of the early 70s as a true therapeutic tool. I find it useful if used only in small and infrequent doses and then only for extreme situations such as coming home to the 13-year-old yapping mindlessly on the phone while the two-year-old smears chocolate pudding across the drapes and the slime-mutt from hell is munching doggie bits out of my new \$30, Santa Fe style, decorative bowl. In such times, I find it refreshing to clench my fists, narrow my eyes, lean forward slightly from the waist, open my mouth wide and engage full force in Primal Scream therapy. I never scream intelligible sentences which might come back to haunt me; I simply scream loud and long. The neighbor kids shrug and say, "Man, your mom is weird," but those who must continue to live in harmony with me hustle quickly to correct the offensive situation.

By using these tools effectively, an overworked mom can survive daily life. I add to that survival a thoughtful, supportive husband, kids worth their weight in vacuum cleaner bags, an appreciative boss and a bevy of interesting, caring friends, and it's a blessing to be a working mom.

—D. Shell

First Place Winner

Women's History Committee Contest

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Closet stuffed.	Ostracized
Proper Attire	Inappropriate
Automatically Pressed	Drip Dry
Matching Colors	Faded
Perfect Fit	Loose
Processed Synthetic	Cotton
	.
	.
	.
	I'd rather be wrinkled.

—Wanda E. Batley

# LIFE UNDER THE BIG TOP

At times when my life is very hectic, I visualize myself as a circus performer who keeps several plates spinning at the top of poles. She constantly dashes from one to the other, spinning and re-spinning the plates as they begin to wobble. I am constantly juggling many values as I strive for that magic balance that will make me the ideal, fulfilled, growing person I envision.

I work thirty hours per week. My work is satisfying, requiring independence and creativity. I enjoy the company of my workmates, and the money is a necessity. My schedule allows me to be home when my four children are.

I value my role, with that of the school, as a co-educator of my children. This involves trips to the library, basketball practices, and activities with their friends. We spend a lot of time just talking, too.

I also am in school, taking my sixth and seventh hours in the Women's Career Development series at Oklahoma City Community College. The work I have done in these classes is helping me plan for my future.

Volunteer activity is an area I am trying to cut down on. I recently served as P.T.O. president at my children's school, and I am involved in many charitable and civic organizations. I empathize with the character in the musical *Oklahoma* who sings "I'm just a girl who can't say no!" I sometimes say no now.

The ideal of a clean tidy home constantly eludes me. When I empty the vacuum cleaner bag, it has both Easter grass and Christmas icicles in it. I have attempted several times to reform my housekeeping habits and get everything organized.

Once I brought a basket of more than two hundred socks with me to the corner of Thirty-second street and Classen Boulevard. Here I did crossing guard duty. After all the school children had crossed, I had a few minutes to kill. That day, I sat on the tailgate of my station wagon with my kids, and we all paired and folded socks. A woman drove by and then circled back. She thought we were having a sale! Her laundry was behind, too, and she



thought she'd just buy some clean socks.

The way we deal with housework is to "do our best, and leave the rest." I delegate a lot. My children are responsible for their own rooms and laundry. They cook on Saturdays and my husband helps on Sunday. We all clean up after meals.

I am always trying to invent labor saving strategies. Some have turned out well, such as my master grocery list. Items are listed in the order they occur in the store where I shop. I make several copies, so there is a fresh list on the refrigerator each week. Anyone can circle an item as we run out of it. The children clip coupons and attach them to the list, too. We all shop together. The kids are good at selecting produce, comparison shopping, bagging, and unloading and putting away the groceries.

As busy as I am, I have a great need for solitude. I wake up an hour earlier than the rest of my family so that I have time to read and contemplate, and for religious reflection. I also need time for exercise and my hobby of sewing. I have found that the time spent in solitude, along with the companionship of my family and friends, are what helps keep me in balance when my world seems to falter in its spin.

— Peggy O'Connor  
Second Place Winner  
Women's History Committee Contest

# **BREATHE**

Exhaling life's air.  
Expulsive violence of  
Bubbles ascending.

# **BUBBLES**

Opalescent spheres'  
Oscillating, upward dance.  
Cell-like, dividing.

—Neil E. Finley



## The Second Shift

Wife, mother, mother-in-law, grandmother are all words I could use to describe myself. Now, I can also be referred to as student as I begin my second shift in life. As a forty-one-year-old, I was diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis, resulting in almost total disability. My illness is now in remission, allowing me to return to a more nearly normal life and attend Oklahoma City Community College. Today, I am a new and better person, not only furthering my own education but, by becoming chief babysitter for my grandchildren, allowing my daughter Annelle to attend Oklahoma City Community College. Every day I thank God for giving me a Second Shift.

My daughter began attending Oklahoma City Community College in the fall of 1987, seeking a degree in the Physical Therapy Assistant program. My second shift began when she started her quest. Keeping my grandsons, Matthew and Ryan, has been both challenging and enjoyable. Financially, Annelle would not have been able to attend school unless she had help with her two children, so I volunteered.

As a mother of two grown children, I had forgotten all the little details needed by small children. Meals, doctors' appointments, preschool, and kindergarten began to fill my days. Yes, quiet time became treasured, and schedules needed to be compromised, especially after I began attending school two years later. However, I would not change one moment of the past three years even if I could. Sometimes I wondered if I would make it, but I always did.

My life is filled with both negative and positive happenings. I try concentrating on the positive features, knowing success can be mine. How do I know this? Because I will watch Annelle walk across the stage May 4, 1990, receiving a degree in the Physical Therapy Assistant program. I will be the mother with the wide smile, bursting with pride, thanking God for giving me a special second shift.

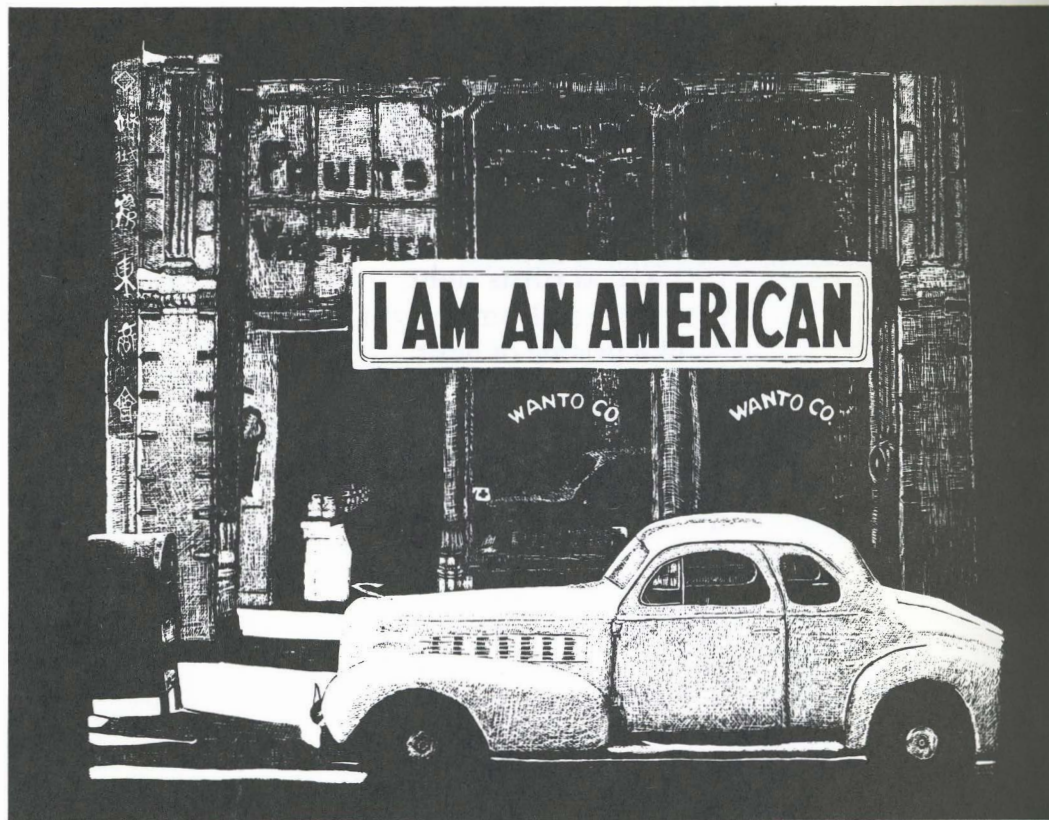
By using my second shift in a positive way, I have helped liberate both Annelle and me for the '90s. I know this new decade offers us the challenges we once were unable to cope with but now look forward to with great anticipation.

— Claranna Morgan  
Third Place Winner  
Women's History Committee Contest

# TWENTY-FIRST BIRTHDAY

As courage drives fantasy  
and hopes delight  
Your dreams become reality  
just out of sight.  
Beyond the bend where  
the road turns right,  
Your future gleams bright  
like prisms of light.

—Mary Lou Acers



—Scratchboard  
by Belinda Upton

## PROMISE

Falsified promise;  
December's swelling treebuds;  
spring is months away.

## WATERFLIGHT

Human, I, not fish,  
but smoothly gliding in my  
silent swimming flight.

## LOST CONTINENT

What myths! Atlantis?  
Ancient, barnacled glory.  
Man's high reach brought low.

## SPACE?

Claustrophobia.  
Entombing, sweaty panic.  
Fresh air, anyone?

—Neil E. Finley

# Catwalk

White glow

soft fur, albino snow

Green ice

motion freeze framed in eyes

that stare

past the present, nowhere.

Motion

liquid ease, smooth as lotion

drips down

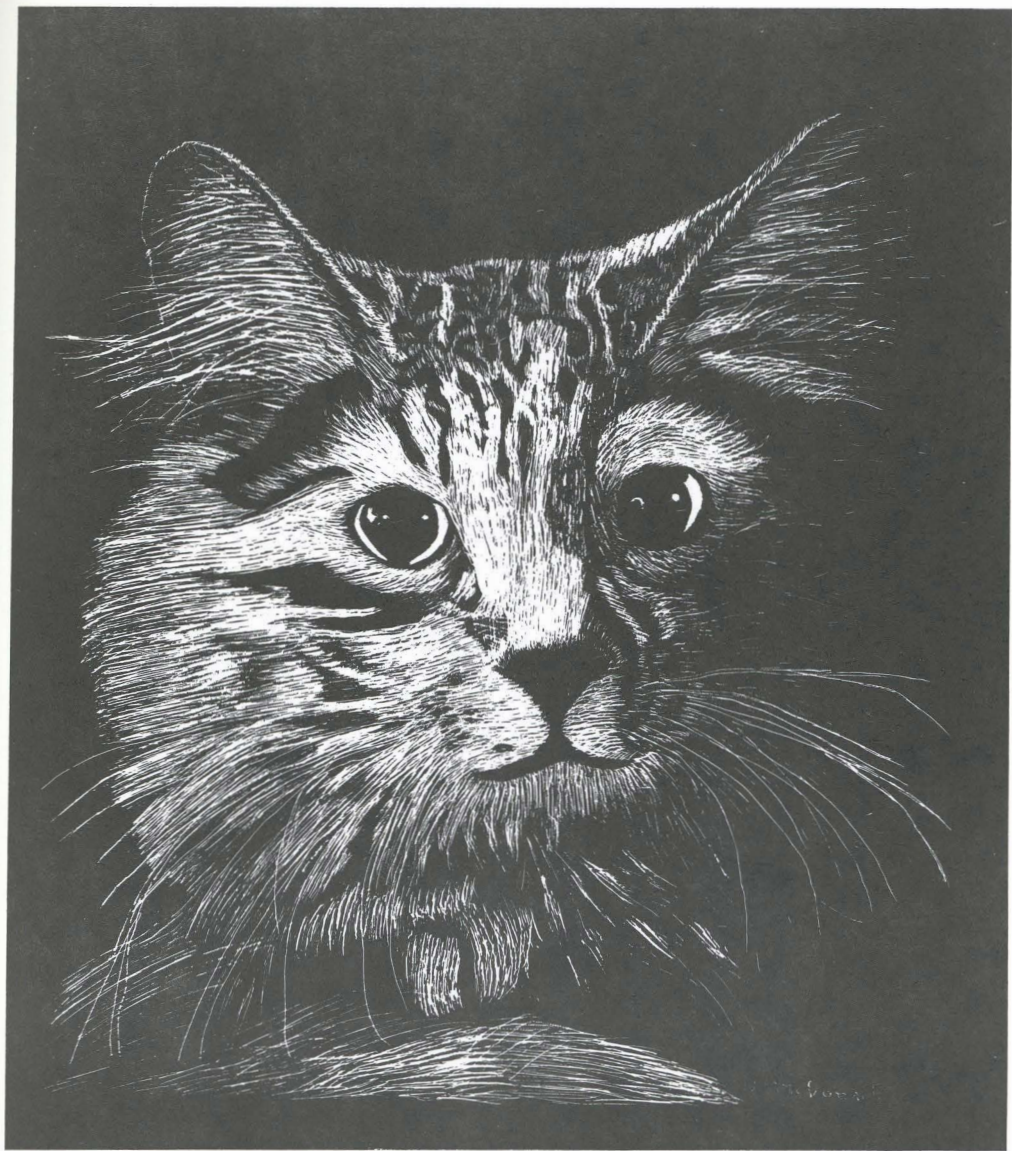
stairs, out doors, across town

No end

she preys when dark descends.

—Della Eckmann





—B/W Scratchboard  
by Bernice McDonald

## The Last Homecoming

I can't remember the first time I met him. I can assume from what I now know that I emerged from a warm, comfortable, secure place, kicking and screaming, into a world of bright lights, harsh voices, and giants. I was handed from one giant to another until I was delivered into the hands of the one man who has been the most influential in causing me to be who I am, as well as who I will become. He spoiled me and spanked me; praised me and scolded me; he loved me and taught me to love.

My early memories of him are those of homecomings: you see, he wasn't with me all the time. He was a Chief Petty Officer in the United States Navy, which meant he was sailing the Pacific Ocean while I was learning to walk and talk.

I was nine years old and living in Honolulu, Hawaii. He was coming home for the last time. (He finally managed to get a shore duty assignment.) I put on my Easter dress, a sleeveless dress of white lace lined with baby blue satin. It didn't matter that the lace was scratching my neck and arms; he was coming home!

I piled into the station wagon with my brothers and sisters, and mom drove us to the pier where his ship would dock. We waited for what seemed to be hours; the wind was cold and strong, and the sea smelled of salt. Suddenly, I noticed an enormous grey whale in the harbor, drifting aimlessly towards me. As it drew closer, I found that it wasn't a whale at all. I could make out the tall mast, the huge guns, and the four levels of decks, each level having perfectly formed rows of sailors in their dress white uniforms.

My heart raced faster and faster as I scanned the sailors' faces to see if he was among them. The naval band thundered out "Anchors Aweigh;" I could barely hear the squawking of the seagulls that circled overhead. A lead line was thrown overboard, and a sailor attached it to a gigantic winch that creaked with the weight of the heavy mooring that wrapped itself around the spool. Finally, the gangplank was raised and sailors descended, each one saluting the American flag before reaching the pier where their

families were anxiously waiting. The whole ceremony was awesome to me. Just as I was about to give up, I saw him on deck. I let out a squeal of joy, broke loose from the crowd, ran halfway up the gangplank and sprang into his arms. I was the happiest girl in the world; Daddy would never leave me again!

He died last year. After the memorial service, my brothers and sisters and I flew to Hawaii where we once again piled into a station wagon (rented this time) and drove to the pier where his ship had docked so many years ago. No anxious families waited, no band thundered, no seagulls circled overhead but the wind was still cold and strong and I'll never forget the salty smell nor the deep dark green of the sea. Without ceremony, we poured his ashes into the wind and watched with tear-filled eyes as they scattered into the Pacific Ocean. As we said our goodbyes, I remembered what he would say to me each time before he left, "Don't be sad or afraid; Daddy is always with you in your heart. Just close your eyes and I'll be there."

He is sailing the seas again and although he'll never come home, I just close my eyes and he is with me.

—Janet St. Pierre





—Pencil Drawing  
by Jerry Gundlach, Jr.

# THE EMERALD COAST

The afternoon sun stares back at yesterday's  
Beach, scorching the skin of the vacationer  
With its mesmerizing memories: sugar  
Sandcastles washed away by evening tides  
Into childhood oceans, only to live another  
Day by the hands of beachside architects.  
The world calls us from the seashells of  
Solitude into the belly of its machines to  
Labor for our books and bread, where the days  
Run together like key lime pie in the sun, and  
Eyes look away, to watch a wave sail ashore,  
Curl around the mind and go to sleep, to  
Dream of greener grass, sand and you.

—Audrey Streetman

# Worship

searching for satisfaction

we worship

huge homes, perfect health,  
fame, music, popularity,  
wealth, power.

current religious revivalists,

we worship

huge sanctuaries, healing,  
fame, music, acceptance,  
prosperity, power.

we worship worship.

Patiently He waits.

—Wanda E. Batley



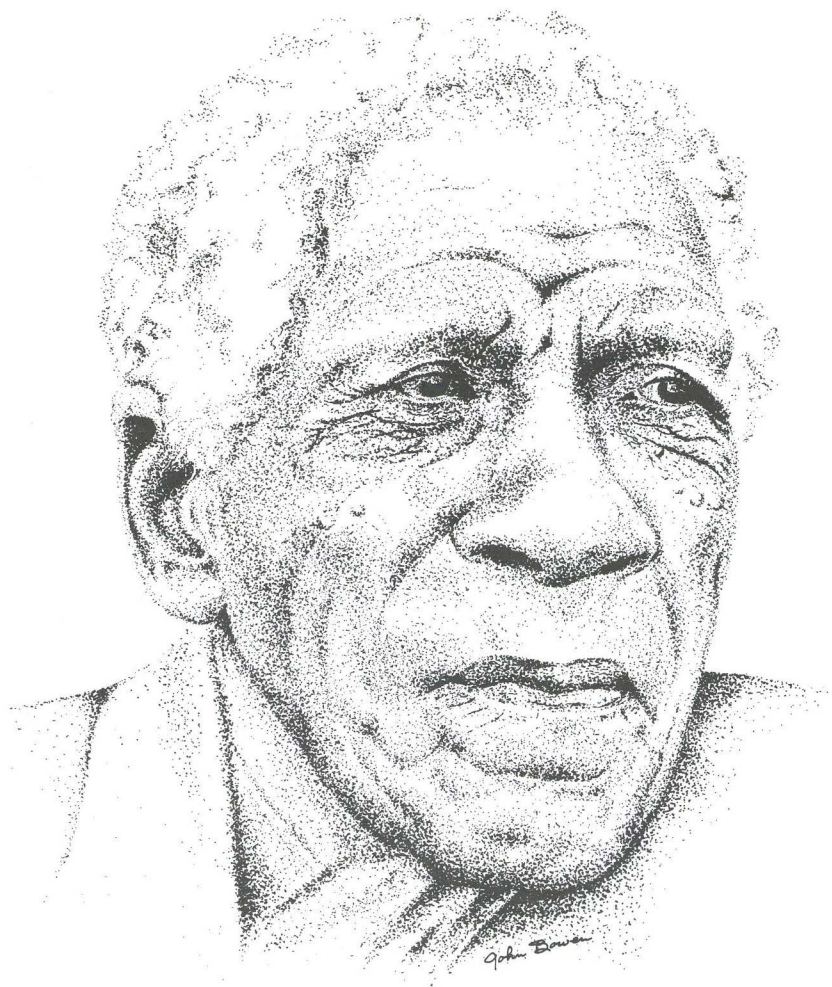


—Litho Crayon  
by Sandra Mason

# THE TEST

The  
spat  
spat  
spat  
of water  
testing  
porcelain  
in the  
incessant  
silent  
night.

—Audrey Streetman



—Ink  
by John Bowen

## Half

## Finished

Born half-way unwanted

I was half-way educated

Half-through college  
half-way down the aisle

Bearing two children  
I finally did something

Living in a  
half through marriage  
working a half-paid job

half-way through life  
but they half-thought  
finding I was only half-dead

I'm spending the rest  
half-reading books

half-cocked that  
half-wishing I

into a half-crazy world  
in public schools.

I married wondering  
if it were right.

half like me,  
half-way right.

half-finished house,  
half-divorced,  
half-way by force

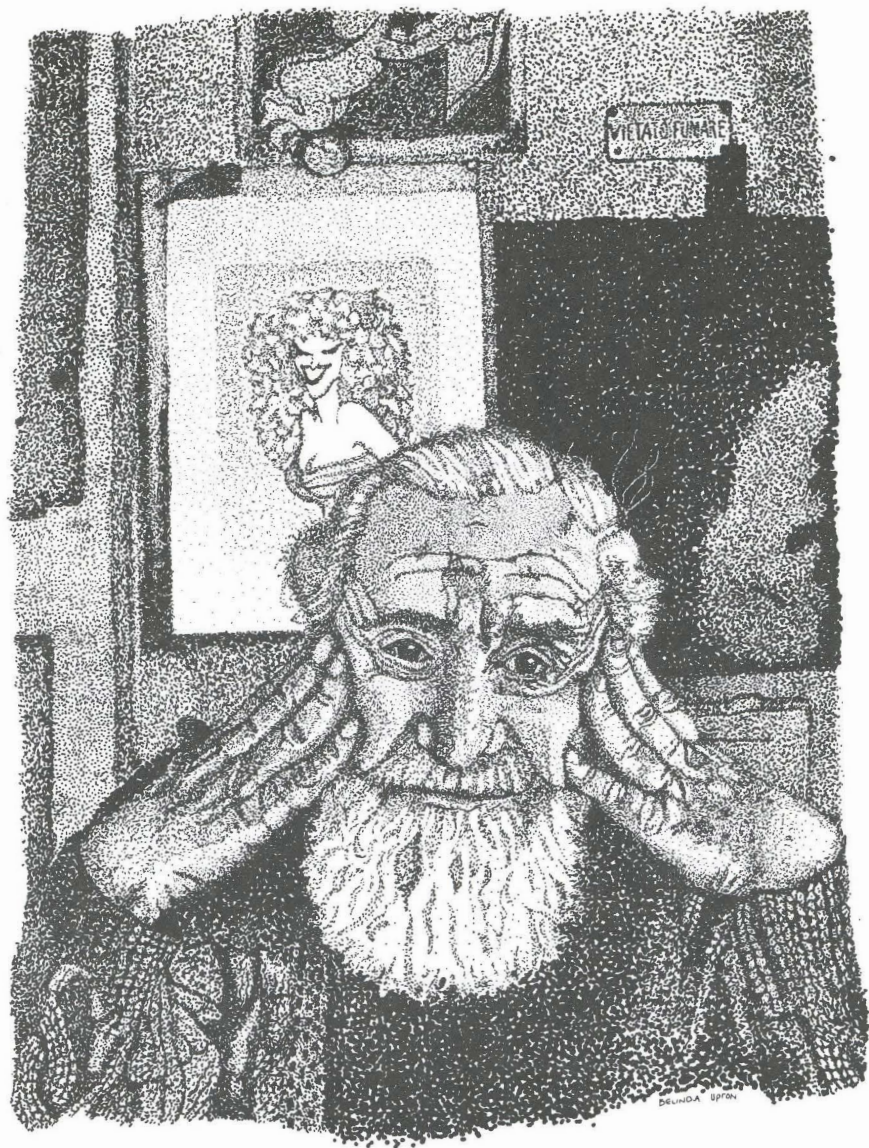
I died  
they heard sound,  
half-way into the ground.

half of my life  
I'd not read,

I lived,  
were dead.

—Wanda E. Batley





Pen & Ink, Stipple  
by Belinda Upton

**TACT**

The  
Totally  
Tactful  
Are  
Totally  
Tactless

—Wanda E. Batley



## SHAVE

George Rigotta meticulously scraped the white, creamy lather off John Minahan's throat. The straight-edged blade made a scratchy sound as it moved slowly over white skin toward the chin area, slicing each black hair in its path level with his fleshy neck. Next, he took a hot towel from the steamer, allowed it to cool for a moment, and then wiped the remaining traces of white from John's face. George's face tightened just a little as he patted on the shop standard: Aqua Velva Blue. George picked a mirror from the linoleum shelf in front of him; "Here you go, John. How's that?"

"It looks great. Never a nick. That's what I like about your work — precise and quick. I'll see you next week for the usual." John smiled as he spoke, revealing two dulling gold teeth along the top row.

"Okay. You take it easy and don't be chasing too many women at one time."

George watched the man walk to the door. His shirt was wrinkled in the back and clung, wet, to the skin between his shoulder blades. John's wife had left him a year ago. She ran off with the guy John had hired to do his taxes.

"Guess all those evenings they were takin' inventory of the store, they were inventoryin' each other," he had said with a small laugh catching in his throat. That was the Saturday after she had gone. He had sat that day in the same chair from which he had just risen.

George consoled himself as he ran hot water over the razor, wiping the sharp edge carefully with the white towel that hung from his waist. Emma would never leave him; she told him that the day he married her. He and Emma had been together for thirty-five years. Thirty-five years of quiet. That's what he liked about Emma; she never bothered him, never nagged him. She was always there — patiently there — there when he needed her.

George locked the door at exactly 6:00 p.m. He never stayed late on the weekend. He walked down the flower-lined pathway which led to the shop. Emma had planted those flowers earlier that spring. She had told him the customers would like them;

that's why she did it.

He turned and headed north along Main Street for Burke Drive, walking without thinking. As he passed the Presbyterian Church, he saw Reverend Wallace talking to two men in dark green overalls. As he spoke, the minister pointed to the rose garden bordering the west side of the church, now and then motioning to the lawn in front.

"Hello, George." Reverend Wallace threw up his left hand. "I expect you and Emma will be here Friday evening?"

"Sure we will. Haven't missed one in twenty years." They always had the annual church dinner the Friday before the fourth of July. He nodded at the two men and dropped his eyes downward to the porous grey sidewalk as he continued his walk home. Sprigs of grass grew up between gaping cracks that extended to the edge of the walkway. He thought of how he could justify a proposal to the town committee to build new sidewalks. Rehearsing to himself, "Well, boys, nothing lasts forever...."

He automatically turned left onto Burke, never lifting his eyes from the ground. He pushed the front gate back, the metal hinges squealing like suckling pigs with each inch of movement.

"Emma, where are you?"

"Out here, cleaning beans."

He followed the sound of her voice around the side of the white clapboard house to the back yard. She sat in her favorite cane chair, a stainless steel bowl balanced on her lap as she reached down into a bucket filled with runners. He watched as she used her thumbnail to break the top sprig of the green bean and pull the fine string, unzipping it down one side. Her hands were small, delicate. They weren't worn like those of most women who tended a garden.

"How were things at the shop today?"

"Oh, pretty much the same as usual. Nothing exciting. Old John Minahan came in today. Just for a shave today, no haircut."

"He comes in nearly every Saturday, doesn't he?"

"Yeah. He doesn't seem to know what to do with himself since his wife left him. I guess he's lonely."

"I suppose he is."

"I wonder why she up and left him like that. He seems like a nice enough guy. He was always fun to be around in school. Doesn't make good sense for a woman to leave a good man."

"No, it doesn't," she said, not looking up, "but sometimes things just happen. You can't know what another person is thinking — what they'll do."

The bean in Emma's hand snapped in half and fell onto her lap.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sweat lined Emma's upper lip as she reached into the oven and pulled out the rack holding two French apple pies. They were made from her mother's recipe. She had baked her first apple pie on George's eighteenth birthday. He didn't care for apples much though, she had learned. These two looked to be her best pies yet. Everyone at the church dinner always complimented her on her pies, everyone who got a piece, that is. She smiled to herself, savoring the thought that someone would enjoy her cooking, her company, that evening. The phone clanged on the kitchen wall, sounding more like the town fire bell than a telephone.

"Hello?"

"Emma? How are you?"

"Oh, just wonderful."

"I just called to let you know I'll meet you this evening at the picnic. We can talk there. Maybe we can even be alone for a few minutes."

"I'm really looking forward to it," she smiled into the receiver.

"Me, too. Did you make one of your famous pies?"

"No. I made two."

He laughed. "You are too sweet. I'll see you tonight, honey. Bye."

Emma placed the receiver back into the cradle. She thought about what she would wear. Her red dress with the small white flowers. That was his favorite. She went into the bathroom and started the water running into the iron-legged tub. She reached behind the stack of towels in the linen closet and got out the



bottle of perfumed bath oil: rose scented, her favorite. She wanted to be very careful, to dress just right for tonight. She hadn't had the chance to dress up for anything since her niece was married two months ago in May. She laid out her pantyhose on the bed beside the red dress and went back to the now full tub, allowing the rose scented warmth to envelop her like the arms of a lover.

\* \* \* \* \*

George looked at the clock on the shop wall: 5:00. Just an hour until closing, and then he could walk right down the street to the church dinner. He had told Emma he would meet her there at about 6:30. That morning at breakfast, she had chattered about her plans for the day.

"I've got to go to the grocery store, just to pick up a few things. I told Alva I'd bring the potato salad and, of course, my pies."

Her grey eyes had sparkled with flecks of golden amber as she spoke, much the way they had the first time he saw her at Crowley's Drug Store when she was sixteen. She still talked more with her eyes than with words; she always had.

George picked the ring of keys from above the shop door, stopped to check the light switch beside the brass coat tree, and locked the door behind him. He walked across the grassy front lawn of the church. The picnic tables were off to the east side of the building, away from the garden this year. He walked over to a table filled with desserts. Part of one French apple pie remained in the glass baking dish. Gazing over the crowd, he searched for Emma. He wondered what she was wearing. If he knew, she would be easier to spot. Everyone seemed to fade together in the crowd. Alva Williams emerged from the edge of the group that he stared into.

"George! Well, how have you been. I haven't seen you in months."

"Oh, just fine. I keep busy at the shop. It gives me something to do. Keeps me out of Emma's hair, you know."

The woman laughed and grabbed his forearm with the leathery hand of a farmer's wife.

"You poor thing. You work too hard. Why don't you get a plate

and come sit with us?"

"I'm looking for Emma. Have you seen her?" he asked as he pulled his arm free.

"Not for a while. She helped me set up at 4:30. Come to think of it, I haven't seen her since then."

George looked over the other tables and then walked toward the rose garden. She would probably be there. Roses were her favorite. She had told him once that being in the midst of all those blooming flowers made her feel alive and young, like she did when she had carried their son, Eaton, nearly thirty years ago now. She talked off the top of her head sometimes, he thought. In the center of the garden there was a prayer bench surrounded by tall trellises covered with small red and white roses. They would be in full bloom now; the heat always brought them out. He followed the turn in the white paved sidewalk that led to the arched wooden lattice adorning the entrance into the garden. He looked down the narrow path to the center of the garden where twelve rows of roses merged into one large flower bed, creating a glorious burst of red, circling the trellises that formed a sort of makeshift gazebo. He walked along the well-worn row that led to the housed prayer bench. He stopped. Emma's voice came from behind the white criss-crossed wood.

"I have to go, for now. He's coming soon. I have to get back to the picnic. Someone might notice I'm gone."

George walked forward and leaned his face against the latticed wood. John Minahan stood, holding Emma to his chest. Her head rested on his shoulder and her arms were draped loosely around his waist. Her red and white dress meshed with the flowers that dotted the trellis as she leaned her head back and drew John's face towards hers. She smiled. George turned, retracing his steps — not stopping — not thinking. He reached the edge of the garden. Grabbing the arched entry for support, he pushed the open palm of his right hand into a rusty nail. He stifled the loud gasp that ached in his throat. As he looked in the direction of the trellises, a trickle of warm liquid running down his wrist made him mutely aware.

He stuck his hand into the pocket of his gray tweed slacks,

walked to the first table along the edge of the picnic area and slid onto the bench. He placed his head in his hands and leaned over the table, tears mingling with the droplets of blood on the rough grey wood beneath his face. He felt Emma's hand on his shoulder.

"George, are you okay?"

"Sure, I'm fine," he clipped at her. "I just cut my hand at the shop. I cut it on the edge of my shaving razor."

"Are you gonna be okay, honey?"

"I'll be fine. It'll just take a little while to heal."

\* \* \* \* \*

John Minahan sat in the chair with his head tilted back and his face pointed up, smiling obtusely at the ceiling. George swished the stubbly bristled brush in the moustache cup.

"Are you ready for a close one, John?"

"Sure am. I look forward to this luxury every week. Seems silly to get so much pleasure out of havin' someone else shave you, somethin' you do for yourself every day. I guess I just get tired of it and want a change."

"Yeah. I know what you mean."

George brushed the cream onto John's whisker-shadowed face, being careful not to cover his lips. He picked up the straight razor and reached his right arm around John's thick neck. Starting at the base of the neck, he scraped the rich lather off in an upward motion along the top of John's throat. He cleaned the razor and returned it to rest just below the ear lobe. He hesitated, and then began to scrape down from the ear and along the double chin line. He did it without thinking. The razor slipped as his hand trembled, just a little, nicking John right at the center of his throat above the Adam's Apple.

"What the hell are you trying to do, George! You could have cut my throat."

"I guess I slipped. My hand is still sore from where I cut it last night. I stuck it on one of those rusty nails out in the rose garden by the church. I was looking for Emma. I got there a few



minutes early. I guess she wasn't expecting me that early. Someone should do something about the condition of that trellis in the rose garden. Someone could get hurt out there."

John looked at him, holding a finger over the strikingly smooth cut on his throat as blood trickled onto the white barber's drape.

"Yeah, George. Maybe I'll talk to the Reverend about that. I can probably do something to help out myself."

George still held the red-edged razor in his hand, oblivious to John's mute words. He stared beyond John at the blood on the drape, thinking about the time he had gone hunting after the first snow the winter of his thirteenth year. When he had skinned the rabbit taken from the metal clinched trap, his strongest memory was of the warm redness as it seeped through his fingers and dripped to the ground around his feet, beautiful in its stark contrast against the snow, bringing with it the tide of death.

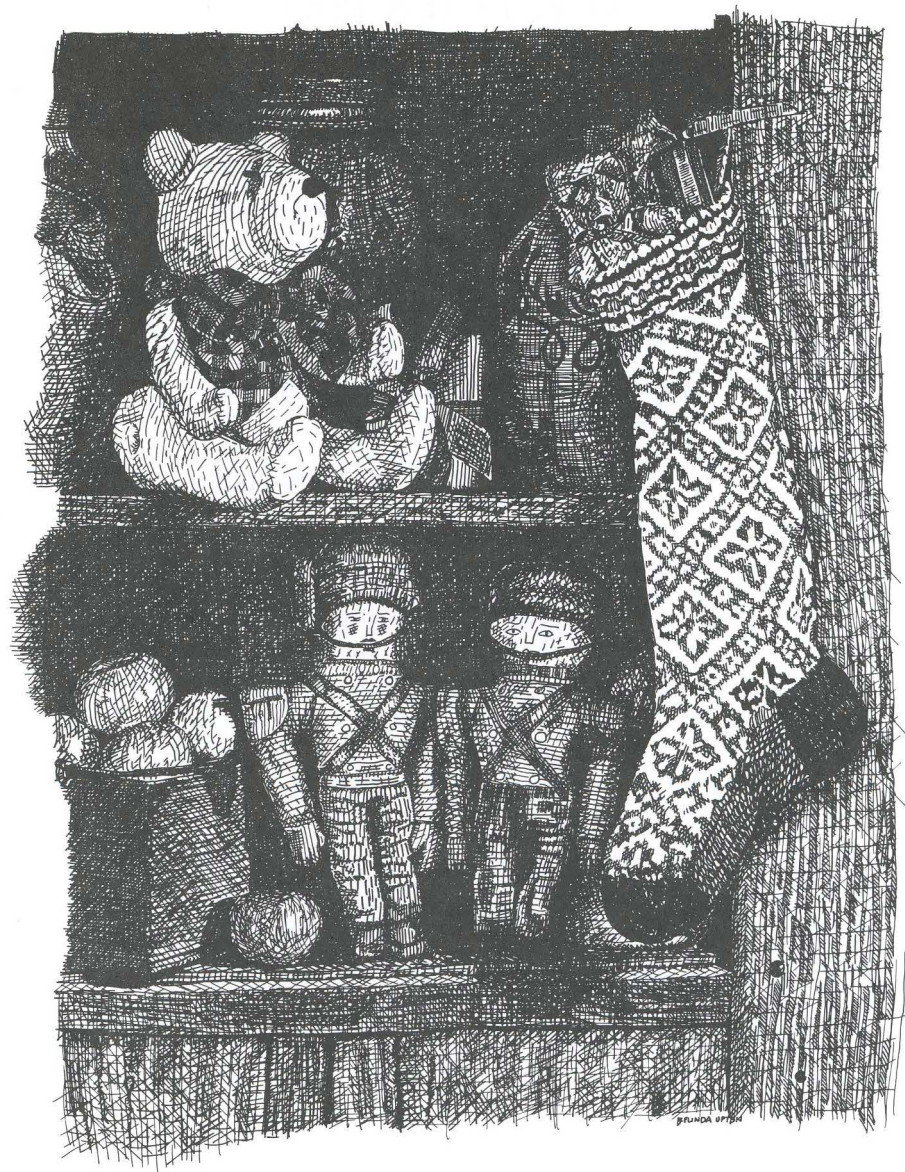
—Waldon D. Eckmann

# THE VISITOR

I enter KELLEY'S IGA in Jay  
The cashier does a double-take and hesitates.  
Customers glance and look away,  
Transmitting silent signals,  
"A stranger is in town."

Amused, I shop and pay and smile,  
"How are you today?" as I go on my way,  
A small town visitor.

—Mary Lou Acers



—Pen and Ink  
by Belinda Upton

# THE PRETENDERS

Brother and sister  
Filled with laughter  
Mischievous rascals,  
What are they after?  
Daddy's big hat,  
Mama's high heels?  
Posed in the mirror  
They giggle and squeal.

—Mary Lou Acers

# CHEERIOS

Little "o"s float in my breakfast  
milk as I spoon in food  
sandwiched between fragmented  
thoughts;

I'm down to two at a time now,  
little wet circles of oats  
sliding down my throat  
fed by a lipstick-smudged spoon;

one stranded on the rim of the bowl's  
belly, atop the blue flower;

three floating lazy like Siamese  
musketeers on a Summer day;

Dare I impose the pain of separation?

Too late, the spoon's current  
has swept a tiny "o" away

to exist free in the milk  
of autonomy.

—Audrey Streetman

## The Soldier

The young soldier at war  
At war with himself  
fighting an enemy beside him  
Shooting guns, throwing grenades  
Death by chance  
Or is it, he wants to kill  
Forced into it, unwilling  
The blood, the pain  
He wants none of this  
All he wants is to go home

Finally he gets lucky  
But luck has nothing to do with it  
His ticket out of hell

Waking up in a strange room  
Full of strange people  
Thinks to himself  
Is this heaven  
Is this Hell  
It looks like Hell  
Everything one color  
Everything no color

He screams and kicks, but can't  
Why? He doesn't know  
He tries and tries  
But his legs won't move  
Then he yells, loud and clear  
Raving like a madman  
Fear and anger  
Denial and acceptance

*My legs are gone*

—Brian Heard





—Litho Crayon  
by John Brown

# SHIRT

Old cotton.

Stretched fabric allows  
perpetually fleeing buttons.

Frayed cuffs.

Such fragile fabric  
my hand went through it as I tucked.  
Comfortable, soft shirt,  
I love it.

—Neil E. Finley

## Winter Night, 1990

### (Rhyming Boy Speaks to the Dogs and Stars)

The night  
so blue clean,  
a slice of dark north  
in this chilled air.

In the light wind  
two dogs romp,  
spewing moonward their  
pale, happy smoke.

(They go before.)

Above, fixed in frigid space,  
the Dipper leans, warm  
and beckoning as  
an old friend's face.

(They go on before.)

Look for the Indian Star,  
for the faint one who hides  
beside his brighter, older brother.  
Spy him, the one only  
the sure-sighted or  
the crafty can see.

(They turn.)

I peer, intent,  
through glass,  
and wonder if,  
in this forty-fifth winter,  
I can yet see.

## Wie Sieleute

"Ein wenig whiskey, die Bibel, und kerzen..."

Inside Arthur Beale's shop, yacht chandlers,  
one London day,  
the squeal of the cabs' tires was only slightly less  
intense than the glistening red of the rain-drowned busses  
on blackened Shaftsbury street.

The store window was wide and glassy as the Salvages  
and held spars, sheets, spinnakers, bright yellow raingear,  
brass and chromium.

Everything was tumbled into its nautical place,  
and ready for the blow that  
...these peculiar Englishmen,  
their eyes sharp and  
their glance wary,  
knew could blow their shining oak counter and  
ordered lives away, overboard.

For centuries, four at least, such men have told,  
to those who would listen, that each of us,  
when cast adrift,  
will need a strong grasp on the tiller,  
a sharp compass,  
and some charts that may mark all we know of the tides  
ahead

ahead.

—Clay Randolph  
(1990 Revision)

*\*The title is German — "As Sailors" — and the first line is from a story by Heinrich Böll. It translates: "A little whiskey, the Bible, and a few candles" — those few items sailors need to weather a storm.*