

THE — PRIMER





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THE

PRIMER

Statement of Editorial Policy

It shall be the policy of the Editorial Board of the Primer to provide an open, accepting, and flexible medium for creative communication. Its thrust shall be directed toward enjoyment for the reader and a mechanism for personal expression for the contributor. The material for this initial publication was such that the Editorial Board was able to choose at least one selection from each contributor. However, due to space limitations, we could not include all material received.

For future issues, we invite both those of you who are experienced writers and those of you who consider yourselves novices to share with us your written words. If you have never written before, try it!

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TITLE AND LOGO

The editorial board solicited and received a variety of suggestions for title and logo design for this publication. The Primer and accompanying design, submitted by Frank Geer, was selected. We want The Primer to provide not only a vehicle for sharing what we want to say to each other, but to also "prime the pump " of the great well of untapped creativity that lives in each of us and spills out when we are " primed " by shared meaning in another. We hope your creativity and courage to share with us will be encouraged and stimulated.

The Primer Staff wishes to acknowledge appreciation to the following people who have been gracious enough to share special talents and skills. We would also like to thank the assemblers of The Primer , whose names were not available at printing date.

Title and Logo.....	Frank Geer
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NINETEEN HUNDRED QUEENS ROAD

Twelve strong men met
With but one thought,
To meet a pressing need.
The thought became a vision -
The vision called forth a people -
The symbol is of brick and wood,
The shape, a cruciform.

John Wagster

CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA
OF A MONDAY AFTERNOON
NEAR SIX O'CLOCK

At nearly six o'clock
the city draws itself
to itself

where water plays over geometric bronzes
like silver music like silver
breath from a cavern underground

the cavern is a place no one has ever found
and the paths of the water streaming up
are paths no one has ever traced

a thirty-year-old man
with ancestry from several
continents

his skin
the color of light American oak
and European yew

and the African baobab
stands on the edge
of the water-curtain blowing

in the updraft
from under the Public Library
across from the yellow light

just turned on
at Duffy's pub
he stands at the edge

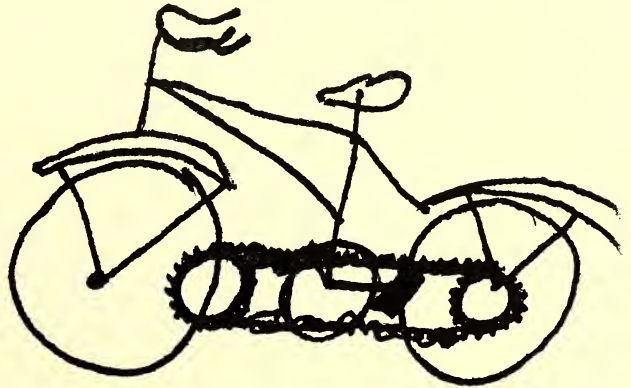
seeing nothing seeing the water
his eyes turned inward
where the water is flowing flowing flowing

Tom Heffernan

HOW TO GIVE A DOG A BATH

The first thing you will need is a dirty dog.
There is no sense in cleaning a clean dog.
The next thing you will need is some soap, some water,
A towel, and a bicycle so you don't get wet.
Now comes the hard part - catching the dog.
If you're smart, you'll set up the stuff while the dog
Isn't looking and then catch him.
Then throw him into the tub.
Wash him, then rinse him off, and then
Get on the bicycle and split!

David Outwater



LULLABYE FOR THE SEVENTIES

Sleep, my child,
Plump cheeks, bright hair on the pillow.
Soft winds blow their poisons, foul and free;
Your blood flows fast with its heavy load
Of fallout and DDT.

Seeds of unimagined plagues
Beat on their test-tube jails.
Deadly gas moves overland
On frail spines of roadways and rails.

Bubonic virus is bottled now, my love.
And rusting hulks leak their fatal slime
Upon Atlantic reefs.

Under oceans and over clouds,
Buried beneath bare sands,
Ready to fly, the missiles wait
The hour of their commands.

Death is available for all, at bulk rate.
Yet the matching game goes on,
Lit by the phantom glow
Of a thousand Hiroshimas.

College greens shriek blood and fire.
Cities are hushed with stealth.
Hunger stalks, its dagger raised,
The neon streets of wealth.

For the bombs and murder abroad,
Bombs and murder at home.
For the blank eyes and swollen bellies no balm
But for the man who has everything,
A DIAMOND-STUDED, MINK-TRIMMED BOTTLE OPENER,
ONLY ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS.

Gamblers play one hand at a time,
Not caring about the next round.
Embalm the forests! Pave the fields!
Flood the delta's black ground!

Once-crystal lakes rot.
Birds hatch deformed young. If they hatch.
Grounded gulls slither on black beaches.
But the factory owners and the oilmen
And the poison makers
Have their money,
Hallelujah,
To breathe and swim in and eat.

Old folk shut out the world with double bolts.
The young flee it on pot and speed.
Everywhere we turn out the lights
To escape in love's strong need.

Soon our three billion will be seven,
Needing bread and multiplying garbage.
The Pope says, No pill. No I U D. Count.
Abstain from the sweet giving of love for love's sake.
The enlightened man in the street says,
No one can tell me how many children to have.

So,

Dream, my child,
Plump cheeks, bright hair on the pillow,
Heart beating fast with hunger
For the promised feast of the years.
Feed your heart on dreams--

Of green grass in plenty,
Open spaces
Cool shade under full branches
Smokeless sunlight

Birdsong;
Of long evening walks in a quiet town
Streams for fishing
Lakes to swim in
Wide white bands of sand

And time.

Of clean meat
Rain-washed fruit
Sweet water
The pure taste of snow cream
On a winter night

And time--

For leisurely growing up
With safe, lazy days for thought and play
For growing serious slowly
And strong inside,
For dreaming under peaceful skies
Of a home someday, and babies,
And being free
And having a future

With time

To love
And be.

Mary Crews

ON WAITING WITH A SQUIRMING FOUR-YEAR-OLD FOR
ONE HOUR AND FIFTEEN MINUTES IN THE DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Wait.

Fret.

Wait.

My neck gets tense.

Wait.

My child gets restless and wiggly.

Wait.

It is hot.

Wait.

The Muzak is annoying.

Wait.

People come.

Wait.

Patients go.

Wait.

Finally --- they call our name.

We are seated in another room.

Wait.

Linda G. Christopher

NO ORDINARY MORNING

What if I had not been home
the day they came
that flock of goldfinch flying north
chasing spring's unrolling edge.
They pause where water welcomes them
in her backyard.
Seeing them, she
lifts her telephone to a window
and there describing, gives them to me
the yellow flecks, the dew
so rare she has to tell.
Listening, knowing her window,
the cool yard
I see them
until her sigh says
there they go
and morning becomes wide and green
an exquisite emptiness.

TREASURE

Everyone I know
is out collecting
Chippendale or children
rooms, dollars, smiles.
Today I met a woman
who's subtracting from her life
last year a husband
now a house
nine rooms to three.
She must select
a placemat for herself
and one for company
which chair or table
dish and picture.
There is no longer room.

Mary Kratt

MIXED EMOTIONS

I am secure
knowing you could survive
should a careless car
careen down the same street
on which I walk
or some new stubborn bug
speed my death
before scientists such as you
find answers
in petri dishes.

Yet I take comfort
feeling you would not have
another wife
should my life end first --
until you know
the emptiness of sliding
your hand across the sheet
to touch my skin
and find I am not there;
to come for lunch --
discover no homemade soup
simmers on a busy stove;
feel silly and sad
to pick up a ringing phone
and still expect
my voice to call your name.

I would not want
these hurting days and nights
to last too long.
I think you'll know
when to hunt for pen
and fresh paper
on which to write.

Grace Freeman

STATESMAN vs. POLITICIAN

The English language often suffers because it lacks the fine shades of meaning which might sharply distinguish what one word means as compared to another that is frequently used in the same context. Two such words are Statesman and Politician, and the overlapping or interchangeability of those words often applied in describing a given candidate or office holder has been one of the undermining factors of our democratic form of government.

The dictionary defines "statesman" as (1) "A man who is versed in the management of affairs of State," and very specifically as (2) "one who exhibits ability of the highest kind in directing the affairs of a government or in dealing with important public issues." That seems clear enough, doesn't it? And then in its definition of "Politician," we read, "one who, in seeking or conducting public office, is more concerned to win favor or to retain power than to maintain principles." That seems clear and specific, and fully contrasts the two words, doesn't it? Yes, until we also read that one synonym for "politician" is "statesman"!

And that confusion or, more correctly, contradiction is indeed frustrating. We wonder how it is possible for two words, which seem to vividly contrast the attributes of political candidates or office holders, to be defined as synonymous. The answer, of course, is that the dictionary attempts to define words according to the meanings that our usage has applied over the years, not limiting the definition to its original meaning. And we must agree that over the years much or most of the American public has not cared, or dared, to insist that our candidates and office holders be statesmen instead of politicians. And therein lies the real tragedy, the cancer, in our political processes and the administration of government.

In the middle of the last century Alexis de Toqueville, of France, lived several years in our country and was an astute appraiser of our form of government. His writings are frequently read and quoted, one of his best known statements being that "America is great because she is good, and if she ever ceases to be good she will cease to be great."

But de Toqueville was even more specific. He said (and I paraphrase): Democracy in America will succeed until the politicians and office holders realize that they can perpetuate themselves

in power by promising everybody everything. As I see it, de Toqueville was clairvoyant and prophetic, because that's exactly where we are today: a predominance of politicians and a scarcity of statesmen. Thus the long-range good of our citizenry and country is generally disregarded in favor of the short-range and expedient benefit of politicians so capable of exploiting our short-sightedness and gullibility.

Archie Carroll

LIVING IS GREAT!

The dogwoods are blooming.
The airplanes are zooming.
The birds are humming
Guitars are strumming
--- And everything is mighty gay!

The weather is springing.
The kids are all teaming.
Roadways are all filling.
Why have any killing?
--- It's better to have it this way!

The Church is gaining
Sorrow is waning.
Everyone is sharing.
Music is blaring.
--- Let's everyone have a great say!

The season is spinning.
The teams are winning.
The robins are singing.
The sun is shining.
--- God put it all here for a stay!

Beulah Smith

I SAW MY SON

I saw my son last week -

 A round-eyed crew-cut baby wearing red,
You saw him, too?

 Oh, no, that wasn't he;
It must have been some other mother's child.
 Though it wasn't long ago that -

But still...

I saw my son last week -

 A jean-clad kid with books beneath both arms.
So earnest.

 But no. My boy's more sophisticated now.
It must have been another's teen.

I saw my son last week -

 The level gaze from hazel eyes,
A boyish man - or is it a mannish boy?
 His vision of tomorrow shows,
Leaks a little through the rapid studied carelessness,
 The sharpened conversation.
Perhaps that really was my son.
 I saw him just last week.

I wonder if he saw me too.

Gini Osborne

REMARKS FROM "MINTY"

82 is wormwood; 82 is gall ---

But better to be wormwood, than not to be at all!

Nancy Green

PROBLEMS

Problems
Strengthening
Musclebuilders
Sand in my diet
Pebbles in my crop

They wear my teeth
Shatter my nerves

Please, Lord
One meal of Prime Rib
No sand

Delbert Bowles

TOO MUCH

She risked only small offerings
At the beginning
A timid smile
A tremulous greeting
A furtive glance

Later
Lingering conversation
Entwining hands
Stolen embraces

Finally
Love
Commitment
Everything

He would have been glad for less

Nancy Geer

ENNUI

Listless, lifeless, spinning,
Endlessly beginning,
Death painstaking, grinning,
Moving, mocking, winning.

Winging, singing, flying,
Effortlessly trying,
Life, precarious, sighing,
Having not lived is dying.

Nancy Geer

GOODRO'S RUN

MY GRANDFATHER
GEORGE GOODRO
WAS A FRENCH CANADIAN
FUR TRAPPER
IN WESTERN NEBRASKA
IN THE 1800's

THIS IS A STORY OF
HOW IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

She chinked another notch in the log beside the well -- he had been gone six days -- no matter -- there was supper to be fixed and two cows to milk. She set about directing the children in their chores of caring for the livestock and bringing in the firewood.

The crisp evening air curled at her skirts as she lowered a bucket into the well; the first of many that would be pulled for watering the stock and for the kitchen chores. She ignored as best she could the uneasy feeling he might be sick or injured and alone out on the trail. Experienced trapper though he was, things had become more difficult for him since he had broken his arm two winters before. His ability to set the traps and retrieve the bounty was all that existed between him and extinction. If he had luck, he could survive on the meat and strip the skins for exchange at the trading post.

If he didn't --

He had started out the first morning aimin' to set a two day run of traps along Guessin' Creek, then gather up and clean his catch of hides on the return. He had said he would be home the evening of the fourth day. He would then stretch and dry the hides until the early part of the year when he would hope to have collected enough to make the long haul into North Platte, where he would exchange the hides for sugar, salt and other staples. Another collection toward springtime would be exchanged for seeds and tools for planting. If his catch was better than usual he might surprise one of the girls with a piece of "store-bought goods" from which she could fashion a dress. There weren't many chances for fancies or frills, what with fourteen in the family, and, always, it seemed, another one in the "oven".

She thought of the times they had had together -- of how they had come to be in this strange and lonely place -- lured by the promise of fertile soil and the good life. She thought of how she had wanted to go to a fancy school back East, and how her father had said it "weren't fittin'". And before she knew it, here she was with a husband and a brand new baby, carving out a life on the frontier.

It was not like him to be gone over his stated time -- he was a good dependable man. The uneasy feeling that he might be sick kept pace with her supper preparations.

He had taken the only pack mule with him, leaving her and the children with no means of searching for him save to follow his trap lines on foot. As she mixed the flour for biscuit dough she decided she would send the two older boys to find him if he hadn't arrived by the next evening.

He sat on the creek bank skipping rocks across the calm surface of the water. A rabbit he had snared was roasting on the camp fire. The shadows of the brush played hopscotch with the flames. He hoped she wouldn't be too anxious over his staying longer than planned. This had been an especially good run for him and his eyes danced in rhythm with the fire as he planned all the extra surprises he would be able to trade for. She had wanted curtains for the kitchen last spring but after the necessary seeds and staples were bought, there was only enough for a small wash pot.

He thought of the times they had had together -- of how she had come with him to this strange and lonely place. He thought of how through child after child she had been the strong one. He, of course, had helped her with all the deliveries -- the closest doctor was in Corzad. Besides, a doctor was only for real emergencies.

He thought of how they had named each of their children together and how they managed to have a special meal together after each birth, a sort of Christening Ceremony.

He finished eating the roasted rabbit, gathered more of the scarce firewood for his camp fire and prepared to bed down once more before the final leg of his trip which would have him at home by tomorrow evening, and wouldn't she feel fine when she realized there would be new curtains this spring!

She rolled out and shaped the biscuit dough, cut and placed them on trays and popped them into the oven. The table had been set by the girls and son Roy had just brought in a fresh pitcher of milk.

Where could he be, this husband? Surely he must be hurt -- no, she couldn't think about that -- he was just slow because he had to chase the mule -- that's it -- or worse yet -- he might have been caught in one of his traps -- time to serve the stew.

As she ladled out the vegetable stew and served piping hot biscuits to her brood, she wondered if he had decided to go on to the trading post -- rejected that thought because he had more hides drying here that he would want to take with him.

He checked the mule, saw that it was tied and secure for the night, and banked the fire for the final time. As he settled into his bed roll he imagined there might be enough hides to exchange for a small surprise for each of the children. He busied himself with planning just how he would go about selecting each special gift for each special child.

After the meal she sat beside the fire, trying to see well enough by the light of the one oil lamp to finish knitting a sweater she had begun several weeks ago as a birthday present for the oldest child, Roy. He would be fifteen soon and would probably be thinking of marrying and starting a family of his own. Her thoughts drifted off to the evening Roy was born.

She remembered how frightened she had been, and how he had been the strong one and stayed with her, singing a soft lullaby and stroking her back. She remembered after Roy was born, the three of them had huddled together all night for warmth against a severe winter chill. And the breakfast he had cooked and brought to her bedside where they ate and talked to their new babe.

She scarcely allowed herself to wonder if there would be any more moments of closeness between them. Surely he would be home by tomorrow.

One by one the children went off to bed after their story telling and she, tiring of her knitting, blew out the oil lamp and fashioned a pallet beside the fire -- telling herself it was for warmth, but knowing she wanted to be close to the door in case he happened to come home.

At daybreak she was up scurrying around, a large fire rekindled, a pot of mush on the stove and children out with the morning chores. She had been saving the eggs for his homecoming breakfast but if he didn't come soon, they would have to use them. The few chickens produced about eight eggs a day, enough for a twice a week breakfast feast of scrambled eggs, mush and dozens of hot biscuits.

She would have to pack supplies for the boys to take off on the trail early in the morning if he didn't come home. Eggs and biscuits would give them a good full stomach for the trip.

The first early rays of the sun had peeped over the ridge. He popped open an eyelid, shook the dew off his thick eyebrows and getting his bearings, looked around quickly for his mule and the hides he had worked so hard to gather. The mule looked back as if to say "let's get on with it". He hopped up, stirred the fire and rummaged around looking for anything he could call breakfast. He had just enough of the precious coffee grounds left in his pack to brew a cup for the trail. As the can of water from the creek bubbled on the campfire he loaded the hides onto the mule and packed up for the trip home. He would make it by dusk if the weather held and the mule behaved properly. He doubted it could do anything else considering the heavy load of hides. He fairly danced about as he remembered again how successful his trip had been and was eager to be at home.

After breakfast, as the children made the beds and set the kitchen straight she built a fire out in the yard, under the wash pot he had brought her last year. It did make washing the clothes a lot easier but she had secretly hoped he would bring her the curtains she had all but dreamed about. Oh, wouldn't he feel fine if he could come in from a long hard day and relax by the fire while she readied supper in her new kitchen with the Razzle-Dazzle store-bought curtains -- what a silly thing to be thinking new when he was probably needing her help somewhere out on the trail. The uneasy feeling of yesterday did battle again with her clothes washing -- she must not let it win. Instead, she watched the children.

There had been talk among the folks around of building a school house for the children and of hiring a teacher, but so far it had amounted to only talk. She had been determined that

each of her children would at least learn to read and write, so each day she had insisted upon a lesson time when they all would be required to learn the alphabet and their numbers. She had taught Roy when he was 5 or 6 and each year she would add new words from her own limited vocabulary. As each child reached the age, the next older one helped with his or her alphabet and numbers. It wasn't easy for them to concentrate today. She was afraid that she had made them worry about their father being gone so long. Lesson time would have to wait. Instead she set them to getting ready for the noon day meal while she finished the laundry.

He had walked, half pulling, half being pulled by the mule, along Guessin' Creek, quickening each step, wishing he had the energy to run the entire way. The last few traps were just ahead, and after their catch had been added to the already sagging animal he would be free to aim straight for home. The hours seemed to drag by and he reckoned they were having their lesson time right now. He couldn't imagine what good it would do them to know how to read and write if there wasn't anything to read and no one to write to. She had wanted it this way and he went along with it because he really couldn't see any harm, although he tended to think a body should be out earnin' his keep by workin' hard all day long.

He located the last group of traps, pulled up the mule for some grazing and a rest while he readied the hides for travel. He might have enough time to build a fire and roast a small piece of meat while he worked. He had another large take.

As the sun streaked the afternoon sky she found it more and more difficult to keep her mind on the clothes washing. She had washed and hung to dry four loads and was heating the water for the final wash of the day. No one had been very hungry at noon time and for the first time in recent memory she had food left over. Little Chance had refused to eat anything and Bess just played in hers. They had half-heartedly sung songs and danced around, played hide and seek, but she could sense their pain and the uneasy feeling was once more with her.

Before long it would be time to go to the well again to fetch water for the evening chores. She finished the wash, called the children to begin the afternoon ritual and trudged toward the log beside the well. Tonight there would be seven

Notches and she was caught up in the urgency of finding him now. She shouldn't have waited one more day. He had never been this late before. She momentarily slumped over the log, then recovering, slowly began lowering the bucket into the water of the well.

Georgie saw him first. He was in the chicken coop gathering eggs when he glanced out the back window. Just a speck at first. Could it be? His eyes glued on the speck -- it seemed to be getting larger. Could it be? It is!! Georgie got so excited he took off running to the well, dropped two eggs and almost upset John carrying a pail full of freshly drawn milk. It's him!! He's here! Look over there!!

She dropped the bucket full of water and ran toward Georgie to see if she could see the speck in the west.

The mule was holding up well -- somehow sensing his great need to make it home -- he was at last allowing himself to begin to feel the tiredness that had been his companion the last two days. He strained to see if he could see anything ahead -- surely the house would be in view soon -- yes -- there it is -- closer now -- yes -- I think I see her out by the log, carvin' one of her notches again -- that woman is a born school-marm. Someone's runnin' out of the chicken coop -- durn foxes musta got in there again. Oh -- must be worse than that -- she's running toward the chicken coop -- oh, I've got to hurry and help them -- come on, mule!

By now they were all yelling and running toward him. She had stopped to pick up Little Chance and Roy had Bess. They met midway amid great shouting and hugging.

He had not been a demonstrative man. He shied away from the close contact, thinking it not quite manly. He wasn't sure what he was feeling right now but it felt good.

She and he stopped, looked at one another, and then she spied the mule so laden down with hides it could barely walk. Not only would there be eggs for breakfast -- there just might this year be a brand new pair of curtains for the kitchen window, and wouldn't they feel fine.

Theлма McLaughlin

THE TURKEY

There once was a turkey named Peter
Who had a friend the anteater.
They were very good friends
Until right to the end
When they took a nap under the cedar.



A PUMPKIN

There once was a pumpkin named Bobby
Who had a very good hobby.
His hobby was to stand still
And it gave him a thrill.
He did a good job in the lobby.

Cindy Tice



SANCTUARY

By light of Sunday
the group gathers,
holds hands,
waits.
The seance begins.
Voices bring recognition,
closeness sustains.
For some
the table dances.
Holy Ghosts.

Esther Creasman

RELEASE

I cry --
Tears come down
Burning my cheeks
Leaving a salty taste
On my lips.

Tomorrow I'll know
I have cried --
But no one else will
Have heard or seen.

I alone will know
The welling up
And letting out
Of tears.

Beezy Starnes

PRIORITIES

Life today was a hectic race.
I was never meant to maintain such a pace.
By mid-afternoon I was all a-growl
And ready to pounce on the first child to howl.
Just when patience and time had run out,
My ears were pierced by a roaring shout,
"Mom! Mom!"
"What is it?" I screamed,
"What could you possibly want now?"
"Just to give you these," he said.
A more meaningful gift I could never have had
Than violets clutched between grimy boy-fingers.
"For you," he said.
I feel ashamed now that what had seemed so important all day
Is lost to memory because of the way
That child changed my order of values today.

Jane Duncan

FREE?

The soaring sea gull, free to be!
But, on reflection, surely see
The labor that precedes
The easy, flowing glide.
What frenzied flapping goes before
The freedom of his ride.

Jane Duncan



I crouched before the idiot-b
While ninety thousand voice
A great announcer's strident
"Across the last white-stri
Ninety thousand splitting thr
Because a kid in blue and g
Now ten more weary, bloodied
Take up again their endless

The Monday morning quarterbac
Reconstructs with studied c
The glamor of the battle, the
Have faded into nothing --
With cryptic pencilled diagra
A wealth of hard statistics
He blasts the week-end hero,
And pays a living tribute t

There's something mighty head
The short-lived hour of glo
I guess sometimes its worth i
Our brief span of existence
But I think of something more
As the crowd drifts to the
Somehow I know, the final jude
Won't overlook that splendi

0?

a Falstaff in my hand,
cried a single name.
-- "He's got it! He's away!
line, into the Hall of Fame!"
s, a howling, screaming roar,
has plunged across a goal.
ls, scarred and battle-torn,
ask -- to make another hole.

in the silence of his den,
the story of each play.
under of the crowd,
that was yesterday.
a host of dreary facts,
etched upon his soul,
rips off the crown of tin,
the guys who made the hole.

in the plaudits of the crowd,
for the chap who made the run.
in the kind of life we live,
till the seat-banks hide the sun.
when the game is in the books,
bits, and the drums of triumph roll.
when he awards the crowns,
crew -- the guys who made the hole.

J. C. McL

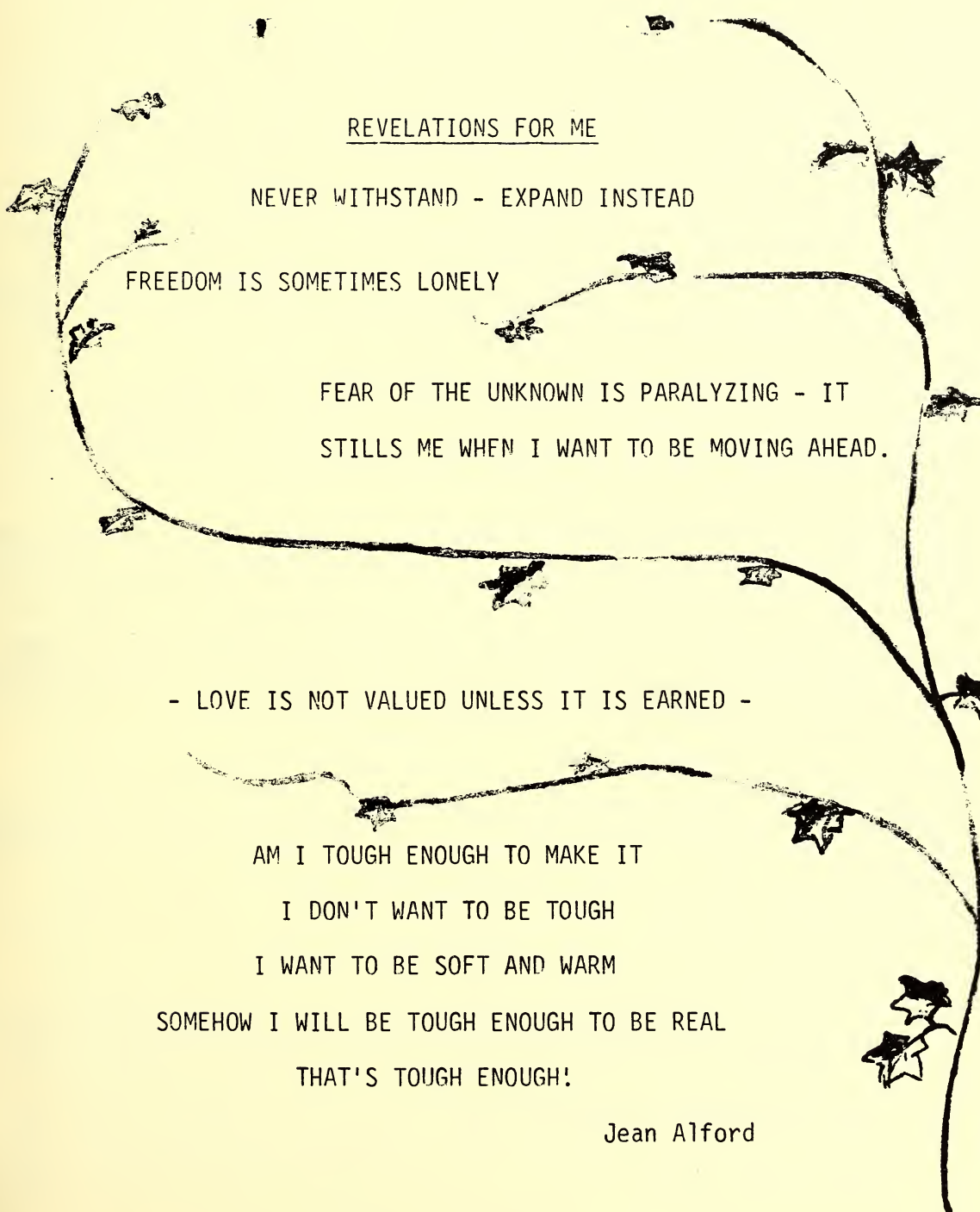
REGRESSION

I smoked my first
Cigarette
In seven years
today.

It was delicious
Whitewarm soothing
Smoke
filled pink lungs
with tars and ashes
The mind
with forgotten memories
of youth
Prowess
Power
Life at its bud
I was eighteen
Again
for a few puffs
A few puffs more
You know
And oh... oh...
there's a lot to be said
for this slow suicide
It might just be
Something worth dying for.

Ike McLaughlin





REVELATIONS FOR ME

NEVER WITHSTAND - EXPAND INSTEAD

FREEDOM IS SOMETIMES LONELY

FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN IS PARALYZING - IT
STILLS ME WHEN I WANT TO BE MOVING AHEAD.

- LOVE IS NOT VALUED UNLESS IT IS EARNED -

AM I TOUGH ENOUGH TO MAKE IT
I DON'T WANT TO BE TOUGH
I WANT TO BE SOFT AND WARM
SOMEHOW I WILL BE TOUGH ENOUGH TO BE REAL
THAT'S TOUGH ENOUGH!

Jean Alford

Kissin' Kin

Uncle Joe Simpson came to see us again today. We didn't expect him to come ever again, but we heard the back screen door bang, and there he was, blue denim overalls and sweaty blue shirt and all.

Tish and I were alone, doing the dishes and arguing. Tish was drying a big butcher knife and she held it pointed straight out in front of her. Uncle Joe got as close to her as the knife would let him. When Tish spoke, her voice was casual, but she held that knife rigid and her knuckles were white.

Afterward, we giggled a lot and admitted we were scared. But I think we both enjoyed it, a little. Uncle Joe is very old, and I'm sure we could outrun him. Though Tish says he is a good runner for such an old man.

"Where's John?" Uncle Joe demanded. I could see the narrow brown streams at the corners of his mouth; tobacco juice, gracefully following the lines of his drooping gray moustache.

John--we call him Papa--is our grandfather. "Papa just stepped out to the garden," Tish lied. "Didn't you see him when you came in?" Papa had gone to the store for pipe tobacco.

"Is your Ma home?"

"Oh, she's around somewhere," I answered quickly, though he hadn't looked at me, to show Tish I can lie, too. Mother wouldn't be home for hours.

"I didn't see John in the garden."

"I think he's tending the roses...."

The screen door banged and Papa had come home. He settled Uncle Joe in the sitting room and came back to the kitchen.

"Has he been here long?"

"No, he just came."

It was miserably hot. It usually is in Alabama in August. Even the flies are drowsy. They will just stand still and let you swat them. But Papa did not offer Uncle Joe any iced tea or even any cold water from the refrigerator. He just filled a couple of glasses from the tap. It must have been pretty warm.

Uncle Joe is no kin to us. I don't know why we call him "uncle". He is Papa's last old friend. They were boys together and there are no others left who were boys with them. Their talk usually follows a certain pattern: First they discuss politics and cuss the Republican Party. They remember courtin' days. Papa has never tried to out-brag Uncle Joe about women. I used to think Uncle Joe was lying, but now I don't know. They talk about such things as the size of strawberries when they were little boys and how cold the creek was for the first spring swim. They laugh awhile at some funny thing they remember and they drift into talking of old friends, arguing sometimes as to the exact date of somebody's death.

Uncle Joe came here for the first time about two years ago, soon after Papa came to live with us. He scared me that first day, too. He came in the back door and surprised us in the kitchen. He fell upon Papa like a grizzly bear and began to beat him on the shoulders and back, laughing and talking in that guttural, old man's voice. After a dazed moment, Papa recognized him and began to slap him on the back and chuckle.

"Who is it? Do you know him?" I asked Mother.

"Why, she'd know my old hide if she saw it in a tan yard," he bawled.

"It's Uncle Joe Simpson. He's your Papa's oldest, best friend." She smiled and let him hug her.

"Are these purty little girls yore grandbabies, John? How did an old coot like you have such purty little grandbabies?" He grabbed Tish by the shoulders and she giggled and smiled her million-dollar smile. He kept on patting her and squeezing her arm while he talked. I edged away, but it was all right with Tish. Tish and old people adore each other. They flock to her. She says things that make them laugh and kisses them, if necessary. "Your Letitia," they say to Mother, "is such a lovely girl."

I don't like old people--especially not to touch. Just being polite to them strains me. Of course, I always give Papa a goodnight kiss, a quick peck on his pink leather cheek. But that's different.

I suspect that Papa is a good man, which is saying something, because I am undecided about everybody else. When he came to live with us, Papa insisted on taking the tiny, shabby bedroom at the back of the house. He said he didn't want "the young people" to be afraid to have parties and make noise on account of him. And we do have parties and we do make noise and we never worry about Papa at all. He is a little deaf, anyhow. He listens to the radio--his eyes aren't good enough for TV--and he sits with his ear right up against it, touching it, so he won't have to turn the volume up and make the rest of us uncomfortable.

But the thing that really tips me off about Papa is the garden. The earth gives him roses. Mother had bought a dozen rose bushes, already blooming from clots of earth. We set the bushes out, but they were poor, straggling things and seemed doomed to die. We were sad because they were so beautiful. But nothing we did made those roses love life. Until Papa came. He pruned and fertilized and watered, early and late. The rose garden lived and bloomed. He planted more roses, too, some old-fashioned ones. There is a pink rose, so tiny it looks as if it grew for a doll's house.

"It is a sweetheart rose," said Papa. "It was your grandmother's favorite." I like it very much.

Tish likes the sweetheart roses, too. She wears a little knot of them pinned to her dress every morning when she goes to work at the courthouse. Her summer job was a little surprise from Daddy. He fixed it up with the Probate Judge that Tish should work in his office. The reason he gave went something like this: "My eldest daughter has grown into a creature of such radiant beauty that when school is out for the summer my home will surely be besieged by suitors: pimply-faced adolescents, beardless youths, earnest bachelors, aged widowers--all competing for the hand of Letitia DuPre Byron. They will lurk in the shadows of the trees. The very woodwork will teem with them; they will eat my provender and clutter my abode. There may even be violence and bloodshed." There was more in the same vein. But Dad is really just worried about one boy, Duane Gentry. Last summer, Duane and Tish were always together, at the pool or the movies or taking long--very long--drives into the country.

It has been popular among the teen-agers lately to drive across the state line to Rising Fawn, Georgia, and get married. Daddy is not the only nervous parent in town.

Tish went around pouting about the job for several days. I know she had meant to spend the summer at the city pool, getting a tan and flirting with the lifeguards. But she cheered up as soon as she realized that some of the college boys--especially the ones in pre-Law--would have summer jobs at the courthouse. Tish likes boys. And boys like Tish. Her hair is golden, her eyes are blue. She has a wide, thin mouth and a perfect nose. Her skin in summer is golden brown--except this summer, of course. But even her paleness has set a trend. I notice at the pool that lots of the girls are swimming only in the early morning or late afternoon. They have decided it is more becoming--and more Southern Belle--to be pale. Tish is like that.

I made an excuse to go by Tish's office, once, just to snoop. She had three boys in there, employees at the courthouse, just standing around talking and admiring her. I didn't see a sign of the judge.

I think most days must be like that one for Tish, because she certainly doesn't seem tired when she comes home in the afternoons. Except once. One Thursday. That day she came in breathing hard. Her cheeks were red and her hair was wild. The sweetheart roses on her blouse were crushed, their heads hanging down over the long straight pin that held them on. Mother and I were startled when she rushed into the sitting room.

"What is it, Tish?"

"What's the matter?"

"Uncle Joe Simpson," she said, gasping, "Uncle Joe Simpson came to the courthouse."

Uncle Joe had come into the office just as Tish was getting ready to leave. It was a little past the noon closing time for Thursday, and Tish was alone. Uncle Joe hugged her as usual and

she responded as usual--until he tried to kiss her on the mouth for real.

" I don't think I could have got away--he is strong, that old man--but my corsage pin stuck him and he jerked back and I got loose and ran around to the other side of the desk. He pointed to my birthstone ring and said 'Did some ol' boy give you that ring? I bet you let him kiss you. I'll buy you a ring--purtier 'n' that--if you let me kiss you.' Then he chased me around the desk."

" How did you get away?" I wanted to laugh.

" I just ran into the hall and out the front door. " I'd have done that sooner, but I was afraid someone would see." She looked as if she might be going to cry.

" Did anyone see?" There's Mother for you. First things first. Tish shook her head no. "Good. Now, don't say anything to your father. I guess--I'd better tell Papa. Uncle Joe might come here sometime when I'm not home."

"Come here?" I asked. "How could he, now?"

Mother shook her head impatiently. "Honey, his mind's gone. He may even forget it happened. Sometimes old men get funny ideas about young girls."

She did tell Papa, right away. We could hear her in the next room telling him.

"The old fool," said Papa. "The damned old fool." And then he cussed, softly. It isn't really unusual to hear Papa cuss, but that day he used some words I had never heard before.

I smirked at Tish and said, "I am surprised, the way you dress and the way you flirt, that something like this hasn't happened to you before now."

Tish smoothed her hair. " You should have such problems." And it was true.

And I guess what Mother said about Uncle Joe's mind was true, too. Because here he was today, popping in the back door the same as always. Just as if nothing had happened.

Only Papa was different. Instead of the usual ping-pong of their talk, there was just the deep sound of Uncle Joe's voice, worrying some scrap of conversation, but getting in reply only a grunt. Or silence. Tish and I stopped giggling and listened as we dried the dishes. After a time, we heard the radio. There was a newscast. I could imagine Papa sitting with his ear against the speaker, his shoulder raised and his back turned to Uncle Joe. Soon we heard the side door close gently. The radio snapped off immediately.

Papa was standing by the radio, wiping his face with his handkerchief.

"Has he gone?" I asked.

"Yes. I don't think he will be back. I was cold to him. The fool. The damned old fool." Papa thrust his handkerchief in an angry wad into his pocket. Then he went into the garden, where he sat for a long time staring at one red rose.

Peggy Irons

THE DANCE

The dead are dancing one last time
In hopes to show the fate to come
To those who but now are being born.

Today's costumes are nondescript
No brilliance like last autumn's show.
But rise and dance they do
To rhythms of warming breezes which now blow.

From graves upon the forest floor
They leap, together swirl, then flutter down
For they can do no more
After today but lie there in decay.

The dance is done --
Not seen by that new cast of leaves
Who, for now, can call their own
That place up there close to the sun.

Doug Ipock

ON POPCORN

Popcorn is funny
 look at it
it's crunchy
 and Bailey's eating it
it's fluffy
 I like butter salt better than the corn
and the kernels
 so salty and good
popcorn reminds me of the movies
no it reminds me of my father he
eats a whole bowl every night
my sister she's a pig over it
 hey it's half gone
it reminds me of dinner
it tastes horrible when it's burnt
when it's burnt I feel I am about to burn too
 I need some more popcorn
when it's all gone I feel
 thirsty
 full
 like something inside me is popping.

Duncan Campbell
Bailey Irwin
Michael Kröger
Alan McIntyre
Ruffin Pearce

STAND TALL

Amos threw himself on the ground and rested his chin on his hands. His face was red from anger and hurrying. His curly hair was damp from perspiration. "I hate those dumb kids," he thought. "Why don't they leave me alone? I can't help it if I'm tall--taller than anybody around here. Kids, that is."

He lay quiet for a few minutes to catch his breath. He poked a long blade of grass down a hole and waited for it to wiggle. Slowly and cautiously he pulled it up. Sure enough -- there was a tiny bug clinging to it.

He could still hear the taunting voices of the children hollering: "Amos; Amos, too tall Amos. How's the weather up there, Amos? Bean Pole, Bean Pole. Stub your toe in a rabbit hole!" He had pretended to ignore them and had walked slowly away, trying not to let them see they bothered him. As soon as he was out of sight, he ran as fast as he could.

The breeze felt cool, and gradually his anger began to go away. "Heck," he thought. "I can do lots of things those little kids can't do. Like rescuing Mary's kitten caught in the trees or putting things on the top shelf at school for Miss Marlowe or helping Dad in the orchard. And Mom's always saying, 'I don't know what I'd do without you, Amos'."

"Maybe I'll run away. But that's a coward's way, and I'm not a coward, I hope." He sighed and stood up. "Guess I'll go down to the brook." This was one of his favorite places where he liked to sit in the shade of the trees and think and dream. He sat down on the bank and listened to the murmur and chatter of the clear water over the stones. He could see tiny fish dart about and little crabs moving in the water. Everything seemed small but him.

"Hi, Amos! What are you doing down here all by yourself?" Amos looked up. It was his grandfather. "Nothing," said Amos. "Something bothering you, boy?" asked his grandfather. Amos was silent. "Kids been calling you names again?" Amos slowly nodded his head. "You're too sensible a boy to let that bother you very long, Amos. Look at all the help you are around here

because you are strong as well as tall. Be proud of what you are and make the most of it."

Amos thought about what his grandfather was saying. They were great friends and shared many secrets and problems. He knew his grandfather was right, but still... "Let me tell you a story, Amos," continued his grandfather, "about a farm boy like you who had the same problem. He liked to fish and hunt and read. He was tall. Taller than any boy around, and when he grew up, taller than any man around. He studied hard and always did the best he could whether it was chopping wood, doing chores, or earning a living. He wanted to be a lawyer, but the Revolutionary War came along and he joined the army. Again he was the tallest man in the army and had to have a special uniform made to fit him. He was handsome, though, and a brave and faithful soldier." Amos listened intently. "Go on, please," he said. "Well, Amos, at the siege of Yorktown, General LaFayette, the famous French general who had come to help us, selected our young soldier as one of twenty-five men to go with him to open up the trenches so that they might be able to take the fortress.

"Early one foggy morning at General LaFayette's signal, the twenty-five soldiers, armed with muskets and axes, cut and hacked their way through the brush to open up the path. The trenches were protected with palisades, rocks, and long poles sharpened to a point and set in the ground. Slowly but steadily they advanced when suddenly the enemy blocked their way. General LaFayette was leading, and the tall young soldier was right behind him. He looked up and saw a musket aimed straight at LaFayette. Without hesitation, he pushed his beloved general aside and stood in front of him. The bullet went harmlessly through the top of his hat. He rushed forward, followed by LaFayette and the others, and the fortress was taken.

"Long years after in 1824, General LaFayette was the "Nation's Guest," and he visited the old soldier who had saved his life and shared such danger. He had never forgotten his "tall friend". They both wept at the reunion.

"That man, Amos, was your great-great-great grandfather, Amos Parker. This farm where you live was given to him by his government for his courageous act. At the surrender of Cornwallis, he

stood at the right of the line of American soldiers because he was the tallest man in the army.

"Being tall is part of your heritage--so stand tall, Amos!" Amos gazed at his grandfather for a long moment. He stood up to his full height. He looked around at the land he loved. Then he grinned and his eyes were shining. "Come on, Gramps," he said. "I'm ready. Let's go home."

Elsie Fisk Outwater



TWO SONNETS

1.

While disenchanted man extends his reach
Toward goals imagination once denied,
And unexamined pebbles on the beach
Are shifted wholesale, as the rushing tide
Of knowledge bans disease, transfigures night
With radiance, navigates the depths, imparts
To miles the wings of seconds, brings in sight
New earths and heavens shaped by manly art,
Let others stand and gape. Such wonders will
Not make us marvel; we are fortunate
Beyond the realm of things and earthly state.
Accomplishments of insight, strength and skill
Are naught beside the magic of a love
Which vaults itself and bids the gods approve.

2.

How rare it is my heart is filled with joy!
I asked not for inebriating mirth;
Nor laughing wished to look on life, the worth
Of which is not in smiles, which thoughts employ;
But rather would I contemplate and start
A process of becoming. First the quest
Inspires, and then it is made manifest.
Of life, imagination is the better part.
But now my heart has made a joyous bound.
(Each year the birds and flowers herald spring.
We knew they would return, and yet we sing)
It's not an unsought treasure I have found.
Till now my life has been a dream of you;
How rare it is indeed, when dreams come true.

Jim Crews

ADD LIBB

The weaker sex
That may be
The stronger
No longer

The meeker sex

A little pushey
To become
The right equal
Sex

Makes one
Suspect
Or wond
(for what ever it's worth)
If they'll be a meeker
To inherit
The earth

Or how
The stronger being
Right civil
Can give a slap on the back
To some goodbuddy
Flip top a cold sudsey
And with or without a hitch
Put an arm around
Some mother's daughter

And call her

A good ole' sonofabitch

Ike McLaughlin

PALM SUNDAY AFTERNOON

Sun warm and balmy.

Spring is coaxing the grass green, the buds to swell.

Daffodils, crocus, camellias in bloom.

I feel yearning and vulnerable

sad and longing

-longing for God to come to me in a person?

for God-in-my-depths to confront me

and say, "I am here," to fill me

and reach out to another?

Is most of life to be spent in meantimes, lonely and longing?

I think my busyness is to cover up this existential loneliness

Why can I not accept it as a state of being that will pass,
better yet as Grace-filled now?

I feel my inadequacies today.

I want to crawl in bed and pull the covers up...at the

same time to walk in the sunshine and drink up the daffodils.

I want someone to hold my hand today and I am too shy to ask.

Veegie Short



Untitled

When I walked into the South Branch Library last night, the librarian said hello, then asked, "Is the moon out yet?" And I knew I'd missed something by not noticing. And I supposed, too, that she knew of several places where a fine view of a rising moon can be had for the looking. She walks a lot.

Last week we watched slides of Mexico that a friend brought over and many of them were of the sunset seen from his hotel room. There was no question that those sunsets were very much a part of his enjoyment of his stay there.

Few of us will get to Acapulco most probably, but Park Road Shopping Center offers a fine vantage point to view the setting sun.

I remember the first time I noticed that. I had just left a litter of kittens at the pet shop to give away. We had found them dying, too weak to whine, and after nursing them to health we had to find homes for them.

They were special to the children and me because of the struggle and involvement with them and it was a time of low spirits. But. Leaving the parking lot, the sky was a splendid display of color and beauty and the wonder of it all brought a good feeling to the time.

It has occurred to me that the sunsets in Mexico are probably similar to those in Charlotte, that the beach at Acapulco offers only a slightly better view than Park Road. The major difference is that we are not usually looking at it here.

We had a visitor from Guatemala, Mexico's neighbor, not long ago. He was 17 and Carlos was his name. Just before he came I made a hurried selection of magazines to place in his room; "National Geographic" on Yosemite, and "Photography" on the Monarch Butterfly.

A small place for books held a picture book of Louisiana plantations, and one on Mark Twain.

I bought tapes of the sound track of "Roots" and Neil Diamond at an attic sale and made sure that Dueling Banjos was

handy. I reserved movies at the library on Washington, D. C. and Union Grove Fiddlers, films on sailing and Helen Keller, the moon walk and the treasures of the young King Tut, Allistaire Cook's episode on America that included Mencken and the Mayo brothers, the leaves of fall in New England and the Grand Canyon.

No comment came for days after exposure to all this, until the last, except polite ones. Riding home from the river one evening though, I caught his grin as Carlos was saying, "I liked so much the sunset".

So. Carlos will go home and tell his folks and word will get around Guatemala City that there is uncommon beauty here and it will be true.

Taking Brett, 16, to West Charlotte when he misses the bus is my least favorite way to start a day. It is far, and I'm not programmed to get out so early and so fast. And I grump the whole way over, spill more coffee than I drink and plot uncommon rewards for myself when I get home.

Then I start back from the school. And I get about to the Charlotte Water Works on Beatties Ford. Men are arriving at work with their brown work clothes and lunch bags and I see it.... across the open place. The sun is rising. Charlotte is waking up. And the traffic is evidence of community. The Excelsior Night Club is closed and deserted. Women stand in wide lines at bus stops. Car horns blow genially and hands go up in greeting. And I'm glad I'm there, though it's not my neighborhood. There's a good feeling there.

This morning, Lisa, our 14 year old, and I were out early, and the sky was the rich pinkish orange that means the sun is rising grandly on this day. And if I hurried over near the Mint, I knew that I could see it much better than from where we were. But there were other things to do, directions to go in, and we turned away. Now I'm sorry. Maybe the next chance I get for glory - I'll take.

Harriet Fortenberry

MORE POPCORN

One day Indians came out with this big pot
and did strange things
put little kernels in
settlers thought they would burn
the Indians did nothing to prevent burning but
those settlers were amazed
when the little kernels popped
in that big humongous pot
settlers stood there and stared and wondered how
in the world kernels could become such delicious food
one settler reached and took a kernel
he was curious
and then another ate one then the Indians
that's how settlers found out but
I wondered how Indians first discovered popcorn
but now how did they learn to make duplicates for next time
it could have been fried apples.

Bailey Irwin

Dark and Light

"Come in," said the House of Dark, "and enter", to the House of Light.

Cast upon my house a glimmer of light so that my shadow can become soaring, soaring, higher and higher till it reaches into the depths of the earth and there I will prolong my eminence, my dark seething, cold, trembling, writhing breath upon the earth. I will release all of my demons upon every living creature and absorb all their light, happiness, joy, and excitement of Life to feed upon my wholeness only to penetrate deeper and deeper into every bone and flesh, heart and Soul!

Thus, the House of Light did enter into the House of Dark and begin to fill its halls and chambers, its portals and its very walls with emanating and pulsating light and energy.

The House of Dark with it's bountiful shadow reaching out into every nook, cranny, and crevice of the earth plane began to draw back, retreat, melt, dissolve, and disintegrate into it's own Darkness where it once again immersed itself Beneath the Shadow of the earth.

Whereupon, the House of Light began to spark, to reach out its vibrant and colorful, bright, shiny rays into every living, breathing Soul upon the earth's plane. It began to ring out happiness, joy, peace and beauty of Life, Harmony and Oneness. The full glory of God shone in its ever radiant robe of Light lest one soul be grasped and absorbed into the Glory of the Heavens amidst the entire Earth!

Ethel Crites

Your Rose

The rose, once sweetly budded,
Opens now,
The beauty at her heart exposed
And full-employed
In purpose fore-ordained,
Charged at her birth:
To be enjoyed.

Gini Osborne

Maintaining The Image

House and garden, home and hearth,
All proper aspirations for the female gender.
And there she stands, representative of her sex,
Outwardly the Mad. Ave. ideal of fashionable wifery,
Pale green garden gloves for weeding, properly wedged
shoes and appropriately crinkled wrap-skirt
for waxing floors (flashing smile) and
baking cookies (ecstatic face).
Yes, there she stands, serene and smiling,
Hoing her little garden of grievances.

Linda Christopher

FEAR NOT

God's angels are waiting to work for you. If you don't believe, read John 13:14, Psalm 91:11, Mark 11:24. They become greater by helping people of earth but they must be asked.

I learned about this one morning when our backyard creek was about to overflow and hard rains were predicted all day. A need attracts a solution. An earth angel called and I told her my fear. She said, "Just talk to the angels of water, wood, and air. They will stop dams and scatter the rain." I did and they accomplished the impossible. The rain still came down, but the creek did not overflow.

I talk to the tree angels. We had many tall trees too close to the house. I told them that when their time came to fall, to push them in the opposite direction. They did that to the next three trees that fell. One had a big dead limb leaning toward the house, It was thrown 25 feet in the opposite direction. Another was laid down at the edge of the yard where I wanted a "wall" to protect an herb garden.

The most unbelievable reality was the fire spirits' "impossible" task. We had put an ancient street light on a tree to light our parking area. One night as we and some neighbors watched the lightning bolts of Thor, this tree was wounded. The fire was diverted to the electric cord which was run through latticed window of garage. The fire was a 15-foot "waterfall" from wire to ground. The fire spirits melted the wire covering so it would sag and rest on the house's incoming power lines. The charge was diverted to the power line and blew the transformer at the corner.

The tree was fated to die, but it was a real sweet gum and we praised it. The new leaves covered the scars, and I asked the limbs to not fall on my husband's car.

One morning after a night storm, I looked up at the tree and saw that a 30-foot top of the tree had disappeared. The car hadn't been damaged. I walked to the other side of the car and there lay that sweet gum top. It had been picked up by the wind, carried over the car, and gently laid down one foot away from the

car and one foot from the water spigot at our outdoor well.

In January, 1977, I flew to Puerto Rico on a lecture tour where two others spoke of simple healing methods. Clouds were everywhere. As we approached the island, the pilot said not to worry as the plane was equipped for it. I looked out at the potential water clouds and mentally told them, "I have never seen an island from above and would you please move away from it so the people will not be afraid." As we approached Puerto Rico, we could see the whole island.

"If thou can believe, all things are possible."

Alice Steadman

TO 'BECCA

Sometimes we speak of things we do not understand - we just feel them - always we are thankful for the nice things that happen - that letter I received yesterday made my day in a way you can never know. Taking the time to write a note can mean so much - sometimes - I remember some simple lines that say it better than I -

"I have wept in the night -
for the shortness of sight -
that to somebody's need made me blind -
but I never yet felt a tinge of regret
for being a little too kind."

Boice Triplett

AND MORE POPCORN

In the forest
a beautiful lady appeared
behind Indian men
the men were afraid and left and when
they returned to the place she was gone but
the little seeds were left on the ground
they saved the seeds all that summer
in the chief's tent until winter
until Indian women and children sat in a circle
the men were standing
talking about how hungry they were
the chief decided who would try it
each took a kernel and ate it
one threw his away in the campfire
and it popped
yes that's where it came from.

Hunter Kratt

THAT'S MY MOM

I see her beauty and warmth in me
Which makes me so gay and free
Jean's goodness grows from year to year
She loves us all and is so dear

I wish I had more of her qualities
She's fond of her garden and the trees
Jean loves people and lives for tomorrow
And doesn't end up sobbing in her sorrow

I've seen her run a mile at the track
She keeps her cool and doesn't blow her stack
All of Jean's senses are quite keen
She knows her husband upside down and in between

I long for the happiness she's had
The luckiest man I know is my Dad
Jean's marriage is her main goal
My parents live together in a beautiful bowl

I wish to bear children as my mother did
She gave me this wondrous feeling when I was a kid
Jean has given me great incentive
She is creative and has lots to give

She admires me for the person I am
And if I fall down she gives a damn
Jean is quite strong and healthy too
And doesn't give up like many do

I know my mother very well
This is a great gift for I can tell
Jean's helped me in every way
We visit in mind from day to day

That's my Mom and she's all mine
She loves life and has a good time
Jean makes others happy and brightens the room
I live like her, for the sun and the moon.

Rose Herran

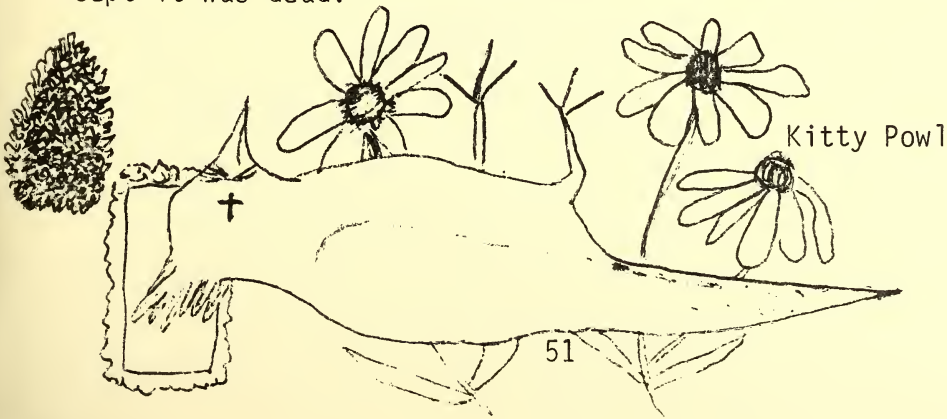
"IT WAS IN PERFECT CONDITION, 'CEPT IT WAS DEAD"

One of our children came in the other day, having found a beautiful, red male cardinal dead from a broken neck. She accorded him the full burial rites befitting his beauty. A pillow for his head, beautiful spring flowers for a blanket, one large pine cone as a grave marker. As she said, "It was in perfect condition, 'cept it was dead."

To begin with, this act of childhood kindness struck me as just that, something that every child does to honor departed birds, squirrels, rabbits, etc. I'm not too old to forget having done the same thing. Then it struck an even deeper chord within me. Here we are, beautiful souls created by God our Father. Unique, capable of creating beautiful music, moving poetry, why the very idea that a man can walk upon the face of the moon! But what a pitiful few of the beautiful souls are given over to growth. Most sit back and let others who do demand their soul's growth think for them. Passive. Passive minds, passive bodies, passive souls.

"It was in perfect condition, 'cept it was dead." Our souls, our very being come from the Power that Is. Let us stretch that core, painfully at first, like an unused muscle. Let us explore. First our own selves, then our friends and neighbors. Explore our own small personal universe, then soar off to explore the larger. Let us not be like a horse with blinders on, seeing only in front but having no peripheral vision. Be open to ALL aspects of living.

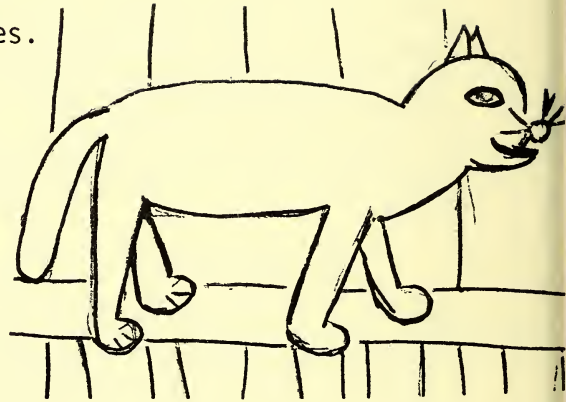
Let it not be said about your soul, "It was in perfect condition, 'cept it was dead."



MY CAT

My cat is lovely and white
with beautiful green eyes.
She has a cute pink nose
that twitches wherever she goes.

My cat can move without
a sound.
She jumps twice her size.
When you look at her at night
she has beautiful gleaming eyes.



THE CHERRY BLOSSOMS

The cherry blossoms fell on
the ground
Like snowflakes
on a winter day.

Tracy Powl

