

sine cera

A DiverseCity Writing Series Anthology

Somewhere in Time

Volume XVIII

April 2016

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All inquiries should be directed to:
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator
210 East 400 South, Suite 8, Salt Lake City, UT 84111

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This edition of *sine cera* was compiled and edited by
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator Deborah Emma Zietz
Cover Art created by Keaton Charles Butler and Richard Clegg

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Introduction

Everyone Can Write!

In August of 2000, the SLCC Community Writing Center began working with writers from local organizations in two-month writing workshops. Each workshop culminated in a publication and a public reading. At first, this DiverseCity Writing Series worked one-on-one with a variety of organizations: Justice, Economic Independence and Dignity for Women; the Road Home shelter; Liberty Senior Center; and Cancer Wellness House.

In the summer of 2003, the DiverseCity Writing Series expanded to offer multiple, on-going writing groups. Volunteers were trained in collaborative writing strategies and became mentors for a variety of open-interest and specialized writing groups.

In the fall of 2003, the pieces written in these groups were assembled to create *sine cera: People Are Strange*, the first DiverseCity Writing Series anthology. The anthology celebrated the work of participants, who were then invited to present their writing at a public reading.

Over the past several years, the DiverseCity Writing Series has grown to include fourteen groups, with an average of 200 community members participating; however, the mission remains the same: The DiverseCity Writing Series bridges the Salt Lake community's diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds through writing, collaboration and dialogue.

The SLCC Community Writing Center would like to thank the mentors and participants who have made this program an ongoing success.

DiverseCity Writing Series Groups

Asian Association

Copper Quill

Gay Writes

Homeless Youth Resource Center

King's English Group

Mt. Olympus Senior Center

The Literacy Action Center

Silver Pen

St. Mark's Tower

Veterans Affairs Salt Lake City

We look forward to the future growth of the
DiverseCity Writing Series and are happy to present
our sixteenth publication:

sine cera:
Somewhere in Time

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Shauna Edson, Keaton Butler, Chris Chambers, Michael Scott, Audrey Weigel, Douglas Woodall, Debbie Leasure, Kelly Albrecht, Diane Lockard, Jim Kelley, JoAnna Johannesen, Michael Scott, Meg Burke, Paula Colborn, Helen Droitsch, Amie Rosenberg, Shirley Fifer, Ben Berger and Peter Muller. Your never-waning faith and support of writers in the Salt Lake community is awe-inspiring. Your time and efforts make the DiverseCity Writing Series not only a possibility, but a success: thank you!

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Somewhere in Time

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Preface

The DiverseCity Writing Series bridges the Salt Lake community's diverse social, economic and educational backgrounds through writing, collaboration and dialogue.

—DiverseCity Writing Series Mission Statement

I was at the San Francisco airport running to catch my flight to Germany. Out of breath I arrived at the terminal, noticing I had about an extra hour left until my flight was boarding. I sat down to collect my scattered thoughts. I reached my hand into my bag to grab my journal. Suddenly my arm got heavy and hectically circled around in the bag like Santa Claus looking for children's presents. But my journal wasn't there. My aunt gave me the journal before I moved to the States. It followed me wherever I went; even if I didn't write I kept receipts, pictures, old movie tickets and other little memories in it. Trying to remember where I left it behind, I figured it could only be at the airport's food court where I ate Phở before running to my terminal.

With one hour left on my side I made my way back to the food court. An older man was sitting in the same spot where I was eating my warm soup of noodles; next to his tray was my journal. The man guarding my journal was Arthur, a retired Japanese film director who was on his way to see his daughter in Europe. He mentioned he had lost many things throughout his life. Arthur handed my journal over to me and said "when things get lost but find their way back to you over an unknown period of time it is meant to be yours and it will always belong to you."

The DiverseCity Writing Series writing groups have encouraged me and many other writers to write down and share their unique stories. Every year in spring the SLCC Community Writing Center publishes these writings in the *sine cera* Anthology.

D.E. Zietz

Somewhere In Time



by JoAnna Johannesen

Somewhere in time, I saw you.
When you looked, I shyly glanced away.
Feelings contained...electric buzz,
motion churns, as heart sways.

Somewhere, long, long ago...
I was approaching sixteen:
though thinking impossibility,
could your love shine on me?

Somewhere inside my head,
I wondered where to start...
it's hard for me to tell you
that you've stolen my heart.

Somewhere in time, we connected
and our two hearts became one.
United in our dreams at last,
as my darkness embrace the sun.

Somewhere, time stood still,
if only to start life anew:
A life was no life at all
til my path crossed paths with you.

Somewhere is now a memory
of a life once shared and loved:
you are still a part of me
though you live with God above.

It Keeps Getting Better



by Rae Miller

A life altering event occurred April 6th 2009, on that Monday morning I could not wake my husband. He was in bed in a fetal position apparently in a coma. I felt numb, panic and horrendous fear as I called 911.

As that day unfolded in the hospital with no signs of improvement I felt hollow and lost with alternating bouts of fear and tears. It was late afternoon before the Neurologist appeared to tell me, "He has lost the part that makes him human." I demanded to have my husband moved to the University hospital. A move that I know saved his life.

I spent all day every day of his 43 day stay at the hospital with him. At first I did the talking for both of us along with lots of touching and hand holding. His progression out of the darkness that engulfed him was slow and agonizing to watch. Almost two weeks later he was moved to the Rehabilitation unit. That day brought a wonderful rush of great optimism.

Work began on all aspects of the therapies he would need. He was unable to speak except for the word yes, which was his response to every question. He could only drink thickened water, was fed through a tube, could not walk, read, recite the alphabet, use or feel his left side. He also lost his sense of smell.

Going to his therapy sessions, I watched him struggle with each and every task with such determination that I was in awe with the effort he applied. Seeing his slow but steady progress brought the realization that he would need to continue working toward recovery. Using the exercises he was taught we set up our own recovery plan which we work on three mornings each week. This endeavor has resulted in an amazing closeness we share, a comradely that gives us an immense sense of wellbeing.

It has been 5 years since his stroke, he sometimes needs a little time to gather his words together, none the less he carries on great conversations. He knows the alphabet and can read a bit. His memory is back; he can walk short distances with a cane, eat and drink what he wants. His

left side has regained most of the feeling. He even got his smeller back.

I revel in his accomplishments, the excitement and joy I feel when he masters a goal, is of such magnitude that I quake with pleasure. He is my soul mate, my best friend, my hero. He shows me daily the treasures one can find moving forward one step at a time. He is a wish, a dream a wonderful evolution of a man who lost so much, yet fights back every day to regain his dignity and his abilities to contribute to life. Not only is he my dream come true, he is a dream well beyond my wildest imagination one that just keeps on getting better.

Winter's Tale



by Ked Kirkham

Five Ravens
Flying
Into the wind
Bravely
Foolishly
Like as many
Charred Pages
From the fire
Racing to reform
To be whole
To begin
That story again

Lovers

by Catherine Wright

I call us lovers despite the fact we appear like a mismatched group of mature women sitting around a nondescript table in comfortable chairs. If that isn't a clue let me mention a few of us wear bifocals, others probably should, a couple are stricken with arthritic hands, most of us can't hear every word read, & there's usually a few walkers parked by the door. Nonetheless we share a common bond, a driving desire which must be reckoned with or we'd spend our days frustrated & unfulfilled.

For we are lovers of words, particularly the written words revealed in cherished novels, buried in treasured books, even discovered in well written magazines articles & editorials. Not surprisingly most of us struggle to capture that one or more profound thought in our own writings & poetry. When these creative forces strike, household chores, errands, laundry, even meals must be put on hold as we labor over our lap tops.

Our passion is wannabe writers. There's an undeniable need to tell our story, convey personal experiences that may have shaped our lives. In spite of this, when our creative writing class started it was just a simple agreeable concept, a group of retired seniors dabbling in journaling, write their history for the grandchildren, or possibly sharing a once in a life time trip they experienced. In other words light writing lots of fluff, staying safe yet attempts at expressing ourselves on paper. Gradually hidden scraps of words, descriptive personal events about our lives surfaced & became woven into our stories/writings.

A nurturing element was developing amongst us; encouragement was freely given & greedily taken until self doubt was replaced with confidence & enthusiasm in our quest to put it down on paper. **We lovers have learned to trust our fellow writers enough to expose our true selves.**

No I haven't & doubt I ever will write every day, enter an essay contest, nor try and publish a grandma book. Nevertheless, I have the unique privilege of meeting every other Tuesday morning with a wonderful group of

brave caring women who patiently listen to my potential masterpieces always smiling approvingly as I finish reading my last sentence & I thank each one of them for that gift.

Growing Shorter



by Peggy Kadir

Parts of me
Grow shorter
Every year—
Height,
Memory
and temper.

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Beautiful Lady



by Andy Vogen

When first we encountered one another, she was standing on a lot, just off the sidewalk appearing rather forlorn and unhappy, also somewhat abandoned. I nodded “hello” to her in response.

“Rather nice day,” from me.

No response. Just a vacant stare. Unblinking. She appeared rather elderly although she not, I suspect being up to conversation, I took my leave and bid her farewell. 1 week later I walked to the same sidewalk and she was still standing on the same lot in the same place.

I inquired of her if she would wish me to talk with her? she did not answer. Just the same blank stare; unblinking. I figured, nothing ventured, nothing gained. I sat down on a large rock and ask her of her family. No answer; however I did detect movement. Hmm, maybe, I thought. Your family are they near? No answer. Abandoned you, did they? When was last you had seen them? Shrug? From her? Possible. Although that same vacant stare, I noted she did appear quite elderly, though I did not consider a gentlemanly to inquire of a lady how many seasons she had weathered in her time.

I surmised possibly in the early 1900’s, judging by her beautiful build. 1922 I thought I heard her say, although with the birds chirping I could have mistaken. Then I thought I heard her say her original family had passed away then the children did not wish to be saddled with an old structure such as she.

“‘We want modern,’ they kept saying. ‘Nothing up to date here.’” They thought I could not hear them. After all I sheltered them from all the storms and kept them warm with my fireplaces and stoves and with all of the parties and happy times people seem to come up and put together; I very much enjoyed all the get-togethers. Now they wish to abandon me for some silly condos or apartments. oh, well, I have heard in a couple of weeks, a young couple will be by to see about buying me and ‘fixing me up,’ whatever that means. We’ll see. I could use some new paint and a roof.”

“Alright dear. I’ll come by next weekend and see how you’re doing.”

“Please do and we’ll talk some more.”

“Would not miss the chance, beautiful lady.”

“Oh, you sweet talker.”

“Later, dear.”

In The Neighborhood



by Trevor Sacre

I never knew how much paperwork there was to become an Eagle Scout.

This was my summer break. I was supposed to be with my crew, not filling out my name on all these forms. If I had to write my name, Trevor, one more time, I would hurt someone. I went to get my crew: Jake (who was three months older than me) and Nate (who was six months younger than me).

I went over to get Nate first. I told him, "Let's do something fun and different. Let's go get Jake."

We got to Jake's home around 1:00 PM. We went to his window and tapped on it to wake him. He opened his window, and we told him, "Get up! Let's go do something."

While Jake got ready, Nate and I went and kicked it on the house next door's porch. The home had been vacant for eight years. Nate wanted to get in the home, and so did I. We went prowling. First, we checked the windows, a glass door, and a wooden door to see if any were unsecured. No success.

We went to Plan B. (If it won't open, make it open.) Nate and I went to Jake's garage for tools to open the door. Digging through the garage, we found a crowbar, a pry bar, and a hammer. Then we went back to the neighbor's house to the wood door that led into the garage. We put the pry bar and the crowbar between the door and the door frame. We used our body weight for leverage to open it. We tried and tried, but we were not successful.

On the way back for more tools, we found Jake on his front porch kickin' it. I went to kick it with him for a little bit.

Meanwhile, Nate was not going to back down to the wooden door. He got more tools, like a roll of masking tape and anger. He went back to the vacant home and taped up his wrists, hands, shoes, and ankles. He pulled the tape tight. When he was ready, he breathed deeply, raised his right leg, and thrust his heel in the area beside the door lock. BAM! Pieces of the door went flying all over.

Nate entered through the doorway and looked around.

He saw a truck with a canvas cover on it. There was visible dust on the cover. Looking at two black aluminum cabinets off to the side, he said, "Bring it on." He thrust open the right door of the taller cabinet. The door fell off its hinges

"...two golf balls, two golf clubs, Vaseline, and a lighter from his home."

and hit the floor. "Stupid door." The shelves were empty. He turned and looked in the short one. "Not bad." He saw a .45 magnum with four clips. Next, he walked over to the truck and pulled back the cover. As the dust flew, a Chevy Duramax appeared. "Sweet."

At the same time, Jake and I were on his porch kickin' it. Just having a good time. I said to Jake,

"Let's play a game, Bro." Jake said, "What you thinkin'?"

I said, "Fire golf."

Jake said, "Cool, Bro. Let's do it!"

Jake and I got the stuff: two golf balls, two golf clubs, Vaseline, and a lighter from his home. We took the stuff to the gutter in front of Jake's home. Then we went to the middle of the road, rubbed Vaseline on the golf balls, and lit them.

Once the balls were on fire, I said to Jake, "I bet you 50 bucks that I can hit mine farther than yours."

Jake said, "You're on."

I swung first. My fireball went flying all the way 100 feet to the stop sign. I said, "Beat that, Bro!"

Jake said, "Is that all?" His fireball went flying 30 feet down the street, hit a tree, and fell on the ground.

I said, "You're short! I win!" Jake said, "Stupid tree."

Then, Nate came running to us. I said, "You got it open yet?"

Jake said, "No, he needs your help." Nate said, "Come see what there is."

We dropped the golf clubs in the street, and then we went with Nate. We all entered the side garage door. He showed us the .45 magnum with four full clips and the Chevy Duramax.

Jake said, "Let's go in the house."

We entered the house. On our right, we saw a six-foot black leather couch, a La-Z-Boy recliner, and a glass console with chrome legs holding a 54-inch LCD flat screen TV in the front room. On our left, we saw a door to the

basement. We went down into the basement.

Jake said, "Would you look at that?" We saw a still. Jake said, "Hey, boys, we're in business."

Against a long wall were about 30 shelves. I went over to one of the shelves and said, "Sweet, moonshine! It's in jars ready to go."

Nate said, "Hey, there's some rooms down here."

I left the moonshine and went down the hall with Jake. The first room looked like it had everything from 9 mm, shot guns, rifles, RPG, and stinger missiles. This big room was two times bigger than the room with the still. It was a well-equipped armory, ready for whatever.

We headed to the second room. The floor had a small opening, partly covered by a rug. Part of the seam in the floor was showing. We opened it and saw dirt stairs going down a dark hole. I said to Nate, "Get some lights."

Minutes later, Nate came back with three LED flashlights, and we went down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs, we followed the hallway to the right, and then we saw on the left a man hanging by four ropes. He was spread eagle, with each limb tied to a rope. He had on bloody jeans and a bloody short sleeve shirt. The blood was all down the front. He had four knives in his chest.

I said, "Hey, looks like they used him as a dartboard." Jake said, "That sucks."

Farther down the hall, we saw a large, metal vault door complete with a silver, spinning handle. Nate grabbed the handle. The handle went clunk. The vault door was locked!

Jake asked, "What do you think is inside?"

Nate said, "Grandé money."

As my crew talked, I reached my hand into a cutout in the stone wall to the left of the door. Eventually, I felt something—a small piece of metal with cuts in it. It felt like the ticket—the key.

Behind the door was a good-size room. The thermometer on the wall inside read 34°F. We saw about 50 body bags filled with bodies. The bags were stained with blood. We realized we were in a refrigerator with frost on the walls, floor, and ceiling.

The sign on the wall said the next job date was today. Three names on the paper by the sign were Jake, Nate, and Trevor!

We stared at the paper for a minute. When we realized it was real, we left that cold room in a hurry. We secured the refrigerator then bolted past the guy hanging. Then

Jake fell over a leg. I said, "Let's go, Bro! We don't have time for this! Come on, get up!"

Jake said, looking back, "What was that?"

I yelled, half way up the stairs, "Don't worry about it. We're next if we don't get out!"

Nate said, shouting from the top of the stairs, "Get up here!"

Minutes later, Jake and I closed up the opening and ran back into the armory. As we caught our breath, we looked around more. Nate grabbed an m16 and a 50-caliber rifle. He strapped the rifle on his back. I strapped a 10-gauge shotgun on my back and grabbed an SKS. Jake strapped an RPG on his back and dueled two desert eagles.

Jake asked, "Are we ready, boys?" Nate said, "I'm ready."

I said, "Let's do this, boys."

Jake said, "Alright, let's do this."

I said, "Hey, should we get some grenades or not?"

Jake said, "Ya, put 'em in your pocket. We all will do it."

I said, "kay."

Jake said, "The object is to take 'em out and then get in the D'max."

I said, "We got to do this right. We only have one chance or we will be back in the refrigerator and in the next bag!"

Jake said, "Trevor is right. We only get one shot or we will be back in the fridge."

Nate said, "Alright, let's do this."

Then we heard a noise that sounded like a car pulling up in front of the vacant home. Jake said, "Let's go." We left the armory and started up the stairs to the main floor. Jake said, "I hate this place."

Nate started to open the door to the main floor when we heard the noise of a car door in the garage close. We could hear them talking. One of them said, "Hey, Jim, do you want some?"

Jim asked, "Some of what, Trey?"

Trey said, "Do you want some moonshine?"

Jim said, "Yes, but wait for the others. See if they want some." Trey said, "kay"

We heard two more come in. One said, "Trey, someone broke in the garage side door, and they are still here!"

Trey said, "So they're in here maybe. So who wants some moonshine? Two per person, okay? I'll go get ten bottles. Will that be good for now?"

Jim said, "Yea, that will be good enough."

Trey went over to the basement door. As he turned the

knob and opened the door, we barged in. Jake grabbed Trey, but he broke away. Quickly, Jake pistol-whipped him in the temple, dazing Trey. Jake seized the opportunity to grab Trey from behind and pushed his desert eagle into the back of his head.

While Nate and I prevented the others from stopping Jake, Jake pushed Trey onto his chest and sat on him. Jim ran to get Jake off of Trey, and I shot Jim, with the 10-gauge, in the middle of his forehead. Jim's head exploded. Grey matter and blood shot all over the room. His body fell to the floor. Then, I pumped the 10-gauge.

Jake said, pointing to Jim's dead body, "Are the rest of you going to work with us or will that be you?"

One of the last three guys said, "Shut up! You guys will pay for this!"

Jake said, "Whatever." Then, Jake said, "Nate, get a cutting board from the kitchen and then find a cordless drill."

Nate said, "Okay."

Minutes later, Nate came back with a cutting board and a DeWalt drill. Jake said, "Okay, now find some fishing hooks and fishing line."

Nate said, "Okay."

Jake grabbed the DeWalt and the cutting board. Jake put Trey's hands on the cutting board.

Nate came back with the stuff. Jake said, "Trevor, you get the others and, Nate, you hold the desert eagle on Trey's head."

We said, "kay."

Jake drilled into Trey's fingers. Trey screamed! One of the three guys ran, with his knife out, to get Jake off of Trey.

I quickly lifted the 10-gauge, aimed, and shot the guy between the eyes. His head exploded on impact. Blood and guts flew all over the room. The body fell to the floor. I looked around the room. Blood and guts slid down the walls. The carpet had a big pool of blood.

The last two guys tried to overpower us. The fourth guy tackled Nate away from Trey. Suddenly, the last guy jumped onto my back and wrapped his arm around my neck in a choke hold.

I carried my little buddy over to the wall, tucked in my head, bent my legs to ninety degrees a shoulder width apart, and swung his head through the drywall. He lost his hold. I got out from underneath him and behind him. With

my right hand, I grabbed his chin, with my left hand on the back of his head, and I snapped his neck. I let go. The body fell.

I ran over to help Nate, but he had it under control. I heard the sound of a crack. Nate had broken number four's arm. Then Nate got out and pulled the trigger to the desert eagle. He shot the lucky guy's knee cap and the guy let out a scream.

Jake finished drilling the holes in Trey's fingers. Blood was on and around the cutting board. Jake grabbed Trey, like a grizzly grabs its lunch, sat him up, then pulled him up to a standing position while I fetched a kitchen chair. I helped Trey step onto the chair. Jake and Nate had tied fishing line to the fishing hooks then they put the fishing hooks in the holes in Trey's fingers. They tied the other end of the fishing line to an exposed ceiling joist. I kicked the chair out from underneath Trey. Trey was dangling by the fishhooks and screaming.

Jake said, "Shut him up."

We saw flashing blue and red lights outside. I said, "Cops! Cops!"

Nocturne



by Steve Proskauer

The clarity of night
Is deeper than
The clarity of day

The sun uses
Its brightness
To conceal its flaws

Sun's pride shining
On moon's face
Fades to humility

The moon doesn't mind
Showing its craters
To Earth's inquiring eyes

Up to us elders to bear witness
The realities of one age
Turn to illusions later on

The last verse sums up the rest
Sometimes loud but mostly soft
And to the point if point there ever was

These tears grieve for what never was
And what I knew for sure
Not much difference now

The hardest part is feeling
The gradual receding
A little each year
Each month each week

Sometimes I wish for suddenness
To skip the subtleties
Of slipping away
Decohering bit by bit

But I am thankful now
To be here for the show
All the gritty
Ups and downs

Blinded by passion
Deafened by prattle
Crippled by certainty
Upheld by nonsense

Life in the end
Is reaching the bathroom in time
What do feelings
Matter then

As the fire
Settles to embers
My true face shines through

The bumps and scars
From a lifetime lived
Cast paler shadows now

Smooth skin wrinkles
Strong hands tremble
Sharp mind wanders

Who am I
Who was I ever
No firm thing for sure

Perhaps a breath of wind
Playing over harp strings
That cease their singing
When the breeze moves on

The Ski Trip



by Richard H. Goms, Jr.

It was in the spring of 1995 when I picked up my teenage sons, Matt and Mike, at their home in Victorville, California, situated at the foot of the San Bernardino Mountains. It was a bright, sunny day, not a cloud in the sky, as we drove to our destination, the Mountain High resort. The glistening, white snow on the slopes appeared ever so inviting, and we looked forward to a great day of skiing together.

After the divorce, I had been separated from my five children for seven years by three thousand miles. Visitation was limited to a few days each summer. I had recently located and accepted a computer programming contract in Los Angeles, expecting to stay for at least eight months, and was spending a lot of free time with my children. Arriving just a few days earlier, I took an apartment in Palmdale, halfway between my work and their home, about an hour in each direction.

Our ski equipment had to be rented. When the ski adjuster asked me what was my level of expertise I made told him, "expert." Although it was true little did I realize how he would make use of that innocent statement, or how it would change my plans for the rest of the time I would spend in California.

The ski area was not the bunny slope, neither was it the most difficult, but all the slopes were crowded that day. It was so warm; there was no need for ski pants, sweaters, masks, or goggles. We took the chair lift to the top. There was a trail, trees on both sides and branches overhanging it. I skied past everyone on the trail of compacted snow, and waited for my boys to catch up. The slope below us was not extremely steep, and appeared to be the same compacted snow I had just traversed, but there were no trees to protect it from the warm sun.

After they caught up I took off down the slope. I was feeling overly confident and thought I would show off my skills to my children, who had never seen me ski before.

When I was a teenager my parents had put me on a bus with a lot of other teenagers for a Saturday of skiing

at White Pass near our home Washington State. So many skis stood upright in a rack on the front of the bus I did not know how the bus driver could see to drive. When we arrived on the slopes I had taken the money my parents had given me, rented skis, boots, and poles, joining the beginner class on the bunny slope. By the end of the season I had advanced to an intermediate level. Later excursions and lessons had brought me to what I considered an expert level.

"...I did not see the patch of snow the sun had melted and had refrozen into ice."

Slaloming at high speed now I made it about half way down. I did not see the patch of snow the sun had melted and had refrozen into ice. I skied over the thin layer of ice at high speed, lost my balance, and went head over heels for what seemed like eternity.

When I came to a stop I tried to assess the damage. The skis were still attached to my boots, so I thought I could just stand up, but after a minute or two an excruciating pain set in. Lying there on my back in the snow, in the middle of the slope, with skiers zooming down all around me, I just waited for the pain to subside, hoping no one would run over me. After a few minutes my level of pain had reduced dramatically. Having been through this before, I felt confident I would be able to get up and finish my run; however, I did not take into account that I was now forty-six years old. I tried to get up again, except my legs would not work. One nice young woman stopped to ask me how I was. I told her my situation. She calmly lifted my head out of the snow, and put it in her lap while another person skied down the hill to inform the ski patrol.

By the time the ski patrol arrived on the scene with their sled the pain in my legs had almost gone away. However, as they took off my skis, placed me in the sled, tied me down, and bounced me down the slope to their infirmary, the pain returned. A cursory examination showed my left leg was severely broken. I was then informed if I had not told the person who adjusted my skis I was an expert skier he would not have adjusted my bindings so tightly, they would have come off during the fall, and I might have been spared the broken leg. Boy, did I feel like a fool, especially in front of my boys.

I do not remember how I got to the hospital in Victorville, but Matt was eighteen and could have driven my car. I was loaded into the back seat of the car where I could stretch out. It seemed like forever to get to Victorville and to the hospital. After an X-ray, the doctor informed me I had broken the knee in four places. His advice was to cast it at an angle.

I was invited to stay at their mother's house that night, although I was up and down all night with unbearable pain. The next morning they took me over to my place in Palmdale, and at my request to the hospital there. The doctor who examined me was quite upset the other hospital had set my leg at an angle. After removing the cast, resetting my leg straight, and placing me in a wheelchair with my leg up, the pain went away.

I had to remain in the wheelchair for a couple of weeks and then was moved to crutches for another four weeks. That first couple of weeks I do not remember how I got food. Maybe my home teacher or the Relief Society brought it in. While in bed and in a wheelchair I was unable to drive, so I could not have gotten it on my own. A nurse came in a couple of times a week to check me over, but I know she did not bring in food.

One day there was a knock on my door. I was surprised to see my ex-wife and the children. They came to help me clean up the apartment. I will always remember their sacrifice of driving an hour each way for me. They may have also brought food, although I cannot remember.

I could not have remained in bed too long. I had a contract to fulfill. By the time I was on crutches, I was able to drive my car to work by putting the driver's seat all the way back. Remember that it was my left leg in a cast which left my right leg free to use the gas and brake pedals. After six weeks the cast was removed. To the therapist's surprise my leg had atrophied, and needed extensive physical therapy for another six weeks.

A couple of times a week I drove to the hospital and met with the physical therapist. He or she would place me on my stomach on a table, get behind me, and, while I screamed in pain, place one hand behind my knee pulling back on the knee joint while pushing my foot toward the back of my head. They had me exercise my knee and leg in a warm, therapeutic hydro-massage tub. They also gave me exercises to do at home. At the end of the six weeks I had close to 95% usage of my knee and leg which I retain today.

Highway 24



by Winifred Walker

My mind goes back to that little old town on Highway 24
when my pop was the only doc in town and people who
were poor

would pay their bills in chicken and eggs, and sometimes
in the night those labor pains would begin to appear.
Who cared if the time was right?

And on those days when the ground was wet and the
back roads were might muddy, my pop would hop in
his Model A car—the one he called his buddy—

and drive to where he was needed real bad if a person
had a fever. He had so many patients, he became an
overachiever!

But by and by, he was plumb wore out and he had a
heart attack!
So he knew the time had come to slow down and try a
different tack.

Then we moved away to a larger town and he practiced
in a clinic where the roads were dry and the
mountains were high
and the scenes were photogenic!

But you know, I miss that little old town back on
Highway 24
where the folks felt free, when they were sick, to just
walk right in the door.

Weekend with Mom



by Trudy Parrott

I grew up in Bucyrus, Ohio, which claimed to be the Bratwurst Capital of America with a Norman Rockwell charm and Mayberry friendliness and service. My two favorite memories of weekends with my mom in the 60's and 70's were our Saturday shopping sprees and the annual Bratwurst Festival. I always knew that I would get something out of it.

Saturday mornings, mom and I started out early and walked downtown because the stores opened at 9 AM. If we got down there before 9, mom would say that we could stop in the L & K Restaurant for breakfast. I always tried to hurry my mom so we could eat breakfast. Most of the time, we would walk right past the restaurant, the movie theater, and Howy's Pizza. (We often had Howy's pizza delivered to our house. It was our favorite!)

I remember waving to the people downtown. The people made me happy when they waved back at us. Sometimes, we even stopped and talked with them. In fact, the banker and barber always took time to talk to us. Often times, we saw my friends and their mothers. That was nice.

We would continue to walk and do, what we called back in the day, window shopping, which was looking in the store windows and talking about the outfits, shoes, and purses on the mannequins and seeing whether or not we liked them.

Sometimes, we went inside and tried on some of the clothes to see what they looked like on us. However, the clothes never fit us the way they fit the mannequins in the windows. If mom really liked one of the outfits that she or I tried on, she would often buy us a matching set!

Montgomery Wards did not have windows, just a brick wall, because it was a catalog store. We would spend hours inside looking through their many catalogs.

After leaving there, we would stop at Clady's Soda Fountain for pops. Then, we crossed the street to the 5-&-Dime store, where we could buy a candy bar for a nickel! We bought each one of my brothers a candy bar, plus a

kite, water gun, or even a cap gun with those red round bullets so they wouldn't feel left out. We didn't even spend fifty cents on each of them.

In the early afternoon, we would get hungry and tired. We would cross the town square to the diner to order hamburgers, fries, and one vanilla milkshake that we would share with two straws. We sat in a red booth with our shake, waiting for our food. We would blow the straw wrappers at each other. We came there almost every weekend so they always brought another shake with our food and wouldn't charge extra. The little jukebox on our table charged twenty-five cents for three songs. We played three songs each. During the last song, mom would call the taxi to drive us home because we had packages to carry or we were just tired.

"...My best memory was the German clothes we all had to wear during the festival."

August brought a special three-day weekend—Bucyrus Bratwurst Festival. This festival was a way for residents to return to their roots as its first settlers were mainly of German ancestry when the town was established in 1822. The entire town was blocked off for the whole weekend. The streets were full of smoke from grilling all of the bratwursts and chickens. My mom and I would split a bratwurst and a bloomin' onion every night.

My best memory was the German clothes we all had to wear during the festival. The men and boys had to wear black hats, jackets, and pants that only went to their knees. The men all grew beards just for the festival. The women and girls all had to wear long dresses with matching bonnets. My mom and I wore matching outfits. (Since the 1980s, they no longer wear the German clothes.)

Every year, the festival had a different theme. For example, 2015's theme was Bratty Believes in Bucyrus, 2014 was The Big Brat Theory, 2013 was Brattie is Rockin' Again, and 2012 was Brattie for Better or Wurst. When I was a kid, my mom and dad were on the naming committee.

The festival included a nightly parade with floats and marching bands. Candy was thrown from the floats. Sometimes you would get hit in the head by flying taffy.

We would all run around, even my mom, like crazy kids grabbing candy off the ground.

The festival also included lots of eating contests, like bratwurst, ice cream, creme puffs, and pizza. Many people entered the competitions, like “king of the best overall, most creative, most original, and longest beard or mustache,” “famous men’s legs,” or the best hoop shot. My favorite was the yodeling contest. Every year my mom practiced before the festival. I enjoyed watching and listening to her yodel for the crowd. She could yodel really well. I don’t remember if she ever won. Mom tried to teach me to yodel, but I could never do it.

My second memory was about buying a stein full of root beer. There were two ways to buy a stein. First, we could buy refills for Friday only. This cup with a yellow tie on its handle cost \$5. (Today, it’s \$10). Second, we could buy refills for the whole weekend. This cup had a blue tie and cost \$10. (Now, it’s \$15). My mom and I shared a blue tie cup. The root beer wagon had about ten different root beer flavors. Mom would only drink the plain root beer, but I wanted to try them all. We would walk up to the wagon and get Mom’s favorite flavor—plain. We could go back as many times as we wanted. (I, however, always wanted to try something new.)

I will always remember the weekends Mom and I spent together shopping, eating, and dressing up for the festival. In fact, I try to go back to Bucyrus to visit my son, Israel, each year during the Bratwurst Festival so he and I can carry on the tradition Mom and I started—eating bratwursts and sharing a bloomin’ onion.

Mom was my best friend. The Lord took her home in July 1977. I miss her so.

I love you, Mom. This story is for you.

The Key to Annabelle's Legacy

by Diane Lockard

Annabelle in her Grandmother's modernized kitchen,
drops an ice cube tray, ice cubes fly through the air.
Eyes drawn to the parlor, her body goes limp, and
slumps to the floor. Silence...

A vision appears—her grandparents in formal attire,
sitting together on a settee; shadows cast by the fire
near them.

Grandfather places a jewel box in her hands, what lies
before her?

Anticipation

She, slowly, pulls the end of a velvet ribbon
encompassing the box. Grandmother lifts the lid, a
display of magnificent diamonds.

“These are our treasures, smuggled out of Germany
when we left.”

Tears glistening, she cannot speak...

Grandfather walks to a roll-drop desk, presses a drawer
concealing

A secret box and removes an ornate key.

Moving the painting over the fireplace, a keyhole in the
wallpaper.

Grandmother watches him intently...

Handing him the precious jewels, her grandfather sets
the box inside.

She ties the key to a velvet ribbon, opening up a new
life.

“We can rest easy now,” returning it to a safe place...

Annabelle awakens from her stupor and retraces their
steps.

Pressing the desk compartment, she picks up the ribbon,
turns to the fireplace—Gazing at her Grandmother,
beautiful, smiling, key in hand.

“Thank you, Opa and Oma,” Annabelle opens the hidden
door.

She gently caresses the jewelry case, their legacy...

Three Gems



by Karlene Kelley

Three gems set
in a heart of gold
a ruby at the point
two diamonds up above.

Three gems came into my heart
to raise and cherish there—
a ruby in July,
to April diamonds after.

He and I, our love expanded
to include three special gems
not within a circle
but embraced within my heart.

The Constant Table



by Charles Tabaracci

The year 1968 was full of change and turmoil. Protesters were filling the streets against the war in Vietnam and for racial equality. Students were taking over college administration buildings. The sexual revolution was in full swing and television was reflecting all of these ideals. It was also the year that my parents decided to make a change in the house.

I was fourteen years old in the fall of 1968 when all these changes were to take place. We lived in a mid-sized tract home built in the 1950's which carried the hopes and dreams of a normal middle class family who wished to live the good life of home ownership. Although only about ten years old, the house was beginning to show the signs of wear and tear from raising a family, and mom wanted all new things. She was a woman of style and fashion who liked to keep up with the times.

Out with the old beige carpet and pink kitchen, in with the new! It was time for a modern look; avocado green and dark walnut. All the living room furniture and kitchen appliances were to be replaced. The only thing to remain was the dining room table, but it was to be re-finished to match the rest of the changes. The table was purchased by my parents shortly after they were married and, although it was made of very light blonde-colored wood, it was built to stand the test of time and the whims of fashion.

"We'll just take it downstairs and re-stain it" said my dad. I knew what that meant. Being 14, I was loath to do any more work around the house than I felt was absolutely necessary and this meant extra work. I wasn't going to like it, but I helped carry it down the stairs. My first job was to help strip off the old gloss finish. To this day I still remember the smell of that varnish remover. It was a gelatinous goo that had to be brushed on, and then scraped off. It was hard and nasty work, but I managed most of it and my dad did what he could when he wasn't working. I cursed that table many times during this process and

muttered to myself “why didn’t they just buy another table along with the rest of the new furniture?”

After the old finish was stripped off, my dad and I sanded it down and it actually looked like it was going to become fairly nice. Finally it was time to apply the new stain. Dad showed me how to apply it with a soft cloth

so that I could rub the stain into the grain. As this process went along, I began to see the beauty of the wood come through, a beauty that had been hidden all those many years. I began to appreciate what my dad had told me, that if you buy a quality piece of furniture it will last a lifetime. I was amazed at how great it turned out. When the table was finished, we turned our attention to the six chairs. After my experience with the table I was more than happy to work on them and see how they would turn out. The finished product was something that my dad and I could be very proud of. That was the year that table, and to some degree my life, was transformed.

As I now look back on my life, that table has always been the center of our family life. You can’t view an old home movie or look at family photos without seeing it in there. Roughly 1,275 birthday candles were blown out on that table. During the holidays, it was expanded by the use of a picnic table and card tables, stretching through the living room. The added size was needed to accommodate our Italian family which included the grandparents, aunts and uncles, and cousins all sharing in the holiday feast as one. Graduations, anniversaries, and any other special occasions were also held at this special table. It was the center of life for the simplest of gatherings, even if it was only coffee with neighbors, friends, and relatives. Eventually grandchildren came to eat and sit around this table to visit. This table carried so many memories of friends and relatives who are no longer with us, or who lived a very long distance away.

“Roughly 1,275 birthday candles were blown out on that table.”

It also served as mom's work and quiet area. Many evenings she would place her sewing machine there to mend torn clothing, or to make something new, especially matching outfits for the girls at Easter. She would also use its solid, trusty surface to do the budget and write out bills. Other evenings she would sit there quietly and pen letters in her beautiful cursive handwriting to distant friends and relatives, and let them know the latest news. Then, of course, there was the annual Christmas card gala. She would get out her address book and have cards spread all over the table so that she could hand-write a personal letter to everyone on her list.

The table was the scene for a photo of a get together of my mom and her sisters. Little did they know it would be the last photo of all five of them together. It's where my dad was sitting, having breakfast when he suffered a fatal stroke.

Mom's mind had been failing her, so the decision was made in 2008 to move her into a retirement center and, after fifty years from when it was built, the house was sold. She couldn't bring too much with her to the new place but she insisted that the dining room table would go with her. All the leaves were taken out so that it was small enough to fit.

I lived several hundred miles away when that move happened, and so I went up to help her unpack some things and do a bit of organizing. As I was getting ready to fly back home I went to her new apartment to say goodbye. I remember her as I was leaving, sitting at that table, gazing out the large, south-facing window at the distant mountains, and unconsciously running her hand gently back and forth across the surface. It was as if she was caressing and comforting an old friend. And she was.

Growth



by Mary P. Garrity

I grew tired of so many
small things;
so—
I went outside
only to find even smaller things.

A new rose stem
no bigger than a pencil
but emerald green
inside its brown skin.

then a starling scoled
me with the only song
it knew

I returned to my room.
The sunlight filled the window.
My thirst was huge,
but a cup of tea sufficed.
The only one that grew
was myself

The License Plate

by Annette Denis

I thought we would never recover from the overwhelming exhilaration of the last couple of days. Linda and I were on our way to visit my new wild mustang horse. Linda was enamored with horses. I didn't really care about them one way or the other.

We walked into the barn with Dad and we saw the deep-brown mustang. He was beautiful and carried himself proudly, head held up high.

Linda immediately fainted. She had an interesting way to show her excitement While Dad was still working on reviving her, I walked over to really watch my horse up closer. I reached up to pet him. I had never touched a horse before and his hair was surprisingly soft, and his body felt smooth, like satin.


We had celebrated my twelfth birthday a few weeks before in the summer of 1963 and could hardly believe this belated birthday gift! I was in awe that I'd won the radio contest I won this beautiful horse, free riding lessons, a hand-tooled saddle that smelled like deep, rich leather, and I would make an appearance on the local teen dance show on TV. Because the TV show required that you were at least 14 to be there, I had to give that prize up.

I sent my entry in to my favorite radio station, KXOA in Sacramento, CA. The entry was to be sent to the attention of one's favorite DJ, so if they called the license number on their show, they knew exactly when to listen. I sent mine to "Buffalo" Bill Birch who had his morning show. I adored him! During his show he would pull out an entry from the plastic case with the small door. He would do this two or three times a day, as each of the other DJ's did during their shows.

On the entry postcard the entrant had to print his car license plate number, and that was the information they needed for the drawings. If your number was called on the daily show, you would win the six pack of Birely's orange soda, and your entry card was put into the barrel for the grand drawing. This continued until they had around 600 entries, about six weeks earlier.

I looked out the window, and it was very dark and dismal outside. It looked like it may soon rain. I didn't want to go to summer school. We were going on vacation the following day, and I wanted to get ready and pack my stuff, and be lazy instead. I asked Dad if I could, and he said it was ok. That was the day that Buffalo Bill pulled out my entry on-air and called the car license plate number had written on it I had to hurry. I had only 10 minutes to call to get my soda and a chance at the grand drawing. I was so excited I shook, as I dialed the wrong number. Frantically, I dialed again and got through. I had never been so thrilled to win orange soda in my life! The conversation was taped and played throughout the show. I got calls all day from people who wanted to know everything that happened. I felt so important, so significant. If I'd gone to summer school I would have missed it all!

I asked Dad if he would take me and Linda to the shopping center for the drawing the next evening. He and my mother were going to Palo Alto to pick up my sister from the children's convalescent center to bring her home for the weekend. After I'd done my best at sad faces and "PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE," he agreed to take us on his way to Palo Alto and pick us up on their return home.



**"The clamor
and fervor of the
people waiting was
infectious."**

When the drawing was ready to begin, animated people were hurriedly coming over to the old wooden stage in the parking lot of the store. The clamor and fervor of the people waiting was infectious.

The license plate number was called. No one came up to the stage right away, so they decided to wait another ten to fifteen minutes. Since you had to be present to win, and no one claimed the entry number, there was a second entry to be pulled.

Did I mention that this contest was the "Double Mustang" contest in celebration of the first 1964 Ford Mustang making its first appearance. Well that was the other mustang. The prizes were the horse and everything that came with him, and also one of the first Mustangs that were to be seen in this summer of 1963 in Sacramento.

The disc jockey reached into the barrel, “K-Y-L-5-8-9.”

No way! I told Linda I won and she laughed. They repeated the number and I quietly raised my hand and meekly announced that was the license plate number I’d sent in.

The DJ in charge carefully walked down the four rickety stairs. I was right to the side of them, He took my hand and led me up to the stage.

There were so many people watching me, so much of a hubbub. There was lots of applause, yelling and laughing. When they took me over to the microphone, they asked me my name, the license plate number and my age. The crowd was absolutely overwhelming. Since I was barely twelve and you didn’t have to be 18 back then to win something like that, it seemed a lot of the reason people were so emotionally charged.

“She’s just a kid” they’d say, particularly the teenagers, adding “it’s not fair.” The DJ asked me if my parents were there and I replied, “No, but they will be” He chuckled and said, “I bet they will.”

I glanced to the side and saw Dad walking up towards the crowd. I stammered, “Oh, and there he is now.”

One of the radio employees walked over to him at the same time that Linda and I ran over to him, me yelling, “I won, I won!” to which he replied, “yea, yea, yea. We’re tired. We need to go home now.” He said at the same moment that one of the DJ’s reached to shake his hand and announced “Your daughter just won you a 1964 Ford Mustang, Mr. Lind.”

We had to go back to the radio station to sign papers and do some PR, so Dad took Linda and the family back home. We returned and were given scripts about how wonderful KXOA was, and Dad made one that said something about KXOA having good family music and contests. He then signed some papers and we left to finally get back home. All I could think of was to crash! It had been such an unbelievable night.

As we pulled down our street there were crowds of people mulling around, and all over our front yard. It had been announced over the radio and then spread to the neighbors. It didn’t look as though we’d be “crashing” anytime soon.

Two days later all the family and Linda went to the dealership to pick up my 1964 Caspian Blue Ford Mustang, with only twelve miles on it. As we drove along the streets,

people honked, waved and cheered us on. It was definitely fun, although embarrassing. The PR tapes were played on the air several times a day for about 2-3 weeks.

As we all returned to school after summer, we were excited and scared to finally be starting junior high. Our first assignment in my English class was to write a paper on the now famous "What I did on my summer vacation" theme. If you were to have read my paper without knowing the events of my summer, you would have chuckled to read the story that the most exciting thing I did on vacation was to win a six pack of Birely's Orange from a radio contest!

A Hot day in L.A.



by Don Hale

That summer day in 1965 was hot and humid, pretty typical of L.A. I was working as a driver-salesman for a dairy company, delivering to small neighborhood markets in the Watts area. It was the first route I had served in a black area and I liked it just fine. My customers were all good and friendly people earning their living by working hard just as I did.

My next stop was a small market run by a petite, white-haired, grandmotherly black lady of small stature, but large spirit. If she had the opportunity to influence her grandchildren, I'm sure they all went to church every Sunday and didn't give any back-talk to anyone. It wouldn't surprise me to learn that they all graduated from college and became successful professionals.

She always kept curb space open for me in front of her store on the days I delivered to her because parking space was scarce in the area and there was no alley behind the building. Today was no different, and as I pulled up to make my delivery, she didn't return my wave as she stood at her cash register. She looked in my direction and nodded. No need to get TOO familiar.

Grabbing my order book, I hustled into the store. My "Good morning," was returned by another nod. She was the captain of this ship and wasn't about to let me or anyone else forget it.

I inventoried her dairy case, made up my order and went out to my truck to pull the product. About half-way through the process, her phone rang and she came out to tell me I had a call. It was my supervisor at the plant.

"Come back to the plant right now," he said.

"I have half my order for this stop assembled on the sidewalk. Do I have time to finish making this delivery?"

"No. Throw that stuff back on the truck and get back to the plant right now!" The phone went dead.

When the lady saw me throwing her order back onto my truck, she came out and asked me what I was doing.

“My boss told me to come back to the plant immediately. He didn’t say why. He just said do it now and hung up the phone.”

Genuinely concerned, she said, “I hope nothing is wrong.”

“Something has to be wrong, but I don’t know what it is. I’ll see you later.”

I jumped into my truck and headed out of the subdivision toward Central Avenue to return to the plant. That street presented a sight I hadn’t expected. A full-blown riot was in progress. People were running every which way across the street, smashing windows, starting fires, and looting stores. Clouds of smoke drifted in different directions on the wind.

It didn’t take long for me to realize this was a dangerous situation. The people I was looking at were angry, very angry, propelled by the mob spirit. The only choice open to me to get back to the plant and out of danger was Central Avenue. There was no way around the riot. I had to go through it.

My truck was old, very heavy, and underpowered. Turning into Central, I floor-boarded it through the gears and kept it there in the top one. The acceleration was so agonizingly slow it felt like I was pushing a wheelbarrow full of rocks up the Pike’s Peak Highway.

The people I was watching destroy their neighborhood had long ago abandoned their cool. Their intense anger had rocketed them way beyond a rational state of mind, but fortunately for both of us, they shied away from the big blue truck they saw running stop signs as it hurtled down the middle of the street toward them. Somewhere deep in their consciences the idea of self-preservation prevailed. No one ran in front of my truck.

On that day, fifty years ago, self-preservation was on my mind too. If someone had run in front of my truck there wasn’t much I could have done about it because that heavy old truck was just as hard to stop as it was to accelerate. Another tragedy would have occurred. I’m very grateful it didn’t.

Feeling My Age



by Peggy Kadir

Once I was agile
 I danced with great ease
Now I am fragile
 I have aching knees
My fingers are knobbly
 My hair white as snow
One foot's been broken,
 And my walking is slow.
I still do the crosswords
 To keep my mind alert.
But I'm losing my memory
 And my answers are curt.
All day I am tired
 From lack of sound sleep
'Cause all night I've been counting
 Flocks of white sheep.

Finding Jesus



by Christine Fraizer

Francis Hermans was a large man, with broad, square shoulders, brawny arms, and legs of a husky proportion that pressed against the seams of his pants. He walked against a natural sway of his large frame and that combined with the jagged scar running down the right side of his face, roughly from below his eye to where it tucked in behind his walrus moustache, said something about the background he said was all part of finding Jesus. His dark hair, parted on the left and combed high to the right, made his forehead appear taller above his eyebrows than it was.

He couldn't see quite clearly, tending to squint at his Methodist bible and standing a distance from the wanted criminal posters he liked to read. Eye glasses are for the old and weak, he'd say, although eventually buying a wire oval frame set that he'd pull out of his breast pocket for photographs and when referring to the medical books he arranged in a steamer trunk next to vials of laudanum and paregoric.

He never did say much about his life before leaving London in 1870, and no one knows if the surname Hermans was from birth or later of his own making. His story about coming to America, finding religion, and his wife leaving him alone with a baby boy was mostly phony, at least the part about God and family. I got my own version. This is the way I see things about the man. This is the story my grandma preferred.

Grandma said the man claimed his life turned around the night he was stumbling home along the docks from a day labor job in East London. He was a handsome man, around 20 at the time, and made a habit of stopping in any number of public houses. He'd get roaring drunk on a shilling of beer and sometimes played dominoes to kill the time before making his way to a single room he and his wife rented. Their boy, Samuel, was two.

He was particularly tired this night, having recently gotten over a bout of serious illness. The drink was sour in his mouth and feeling sick to his stomach, he stopped to gain balance, but his legs buckled. Someone grabbed his

arm and led him to a bench at the back of a big hall.

"Listen," the stranger said.

A preacher standing in front of rows and rows of benches was saying how he had been a drunkard and a gambler.

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God," the preacher said, his voice rising above heckles from benches to the front of Francis. "Go where you will throughout this kingdom. You will find that the fact of total abstinence is a bond of union which draws Christians together in a wonderful manner."

Hermans said he leaned forward. He was interested and for a moment interrupted by a comely woman next to him putting her hand on his forearm, squeezing the flesh between two fingers. He said he resisted her advances. My grandma said that was malarkey.

"He had a better idea," Grandma said. "He was that kind."

The next morning, he went home and told his wife he was giving up the drink.

"I found God," he told her. "I'm signing the pledge. You should, too."

His wife was angry, having hardly slept from the anxiety of his being out all night. She wanted nothing to do with signing any pledge. She begged him not to go.

"I ain't ready," she said. "I can't sign the pledge. Not yet."


He went anyway, and there outside the hall, he said, was the same woman from the evening before. He knocked on the door and the preacher answered.

"I told him I was ready to sign the pledge," Hermans said.

The preacher motioned toward the woman, asking if they were signing as a couple, seeing they were looking so cozy the evening before.

Hermans said he couldn't talk for her and he didn't want to give the preacher a wrong impression on his blessed day of reformation.

"I had to lie," he said. "I had to lie but it was the last lie I ever told in the face of God. I said he was mistaken. I said I didn't know her. It was only a small lie, anyway. I never did more than push her hand off my arm."



"She wanted nothing to do with signing any pledge. She begged him not to go."

My grandma said it was a big lie he told.

"He did a lot more pushing than that," she said. "You can be sure there."

The pledge was no easy thing to keep, he told anybody who would listen. His nerves were all gone. He walked the floor that day in agony. Every muscle was in a quiver and that night he could not sleep.

His wife, he said, tempted him like Eve handing him the golden apple in the garden. She set his glass at the place he always sat across from her at the table when they go to their drinking. She poured the glasses full from the bottle she took from the counter. He refused. She screamed at him and cursed the Lord. He wouldn't look her in the eye. He wouldn't give her the satisfaction of spite. That just got her madder and madder, he said. She came after him with the bottle that in her rage she had smashed against the table edge. He grabbed her wrists as she lunged at him. A jagged edge of the broken bottle she held in her left hand tore a line down his face before he was able to wrestle her into a tight hold.

Often in the telling, Hermans would pause at this point and take the kerchief out of his breast pocket to dab his eyes. He would point to the scar running down his face.

"She left that for me to always remember her," he said.

His wife was not there the next morning.

"She didn't take the baby," he said. "She didn't want him."

He said he missed his wife, at least at first, but was happier with the change in his own life. He never did see her again and eventually he stopped looking.

Seduction



by Mary P. Garrity

In the hot and musty church a child sat, saying a prayer.
She longed for the delicious sun-soaked dust of the
playground.

She intensified her prayer.

But the world was making world-noises in its turning
and

peered at her with sun streaming through the stained-
glass windows.

It sang her a love song. She began crooning her answer.

Startled at the distraction, she riveted her eyes on a
cross she was yet to understand.

She prayed for an end to her life's "nothing"
and the beginning of anything.

But the world was wiser and knew.

Knew that the child would eventually tidy up her
despair

and leave to play in the forbidden dust.

Now in the hot and musty church the world sits,
smiling.

Between Two Trees—Oil and Gesso on Canvas

by Rebecca Pyle



sine cera: Somewhere in Time 42

Cinder the Texting Dog



by Doug Woodall

I have a beagle. Her name's Cinder, and she's six years old. Last week I inadvertently set my phone on the couch where Cinder was sitting and saw her...send a text.

I thought this was grand. Cinder's home all day. If somebody broke into the house, she could tell me. If a water pipe broke, she could tell me. If UPS dropped off a package, she could tell me. The night before last, I got Cinder a phone. Sure enough, she knows how to text. Yesterday, she sent me...887 messages. She sent her first one at 5:17 a.m.

Feed ME!

Over the next 24 minutes, I got a demand or threat every minute.

I can't feed Cinder too early in the morning. She'll want her dinner at two. Then I'd have to feed her again at eight. That's way too much food for her.

Yesterday morning, I couldn't stand listening to my phone. I fed Cinder at 5:42 a.m. and got in the shower. When I got out of the shower, I had 34 new messages.

Need more.

What! You think I'm a Chihuahua?

I'm a huntin' dog.

I'll tell you a few things about Cinder. She's always hungry. She hates cats and other dogs. She hates skateboarders. She hates the children who pass our house on their way to and from school. And she sleeps 18 hours a day. Think about it: Cinder sleeps 18 hours a day and she still sent me 887 texts.

One minute after I left the house, she sent me a new batch of messages, 113 total.

Where do you think you're going? Come back and feed me NOW!

CAT!

CAT!

CAT!

I hate kids.

Roxy's off her leash and in my yard, AGAIN!

About eight thirty, Cinder went to sleep. She woke up

about twelve thirty and sent me 181 texts.

I'm hungry. FEED ME!

Skateboarders should burn in hell.

Cheerio under fridge. I WANT IT! NOW!

About two fifteen, Cinder went to sleep. At two thirty, she sent me this message:

Why does the UPS man have to ring the doorbell?

She sent three more messages. All nonsensical four-letter words....Yep, swear words in Dog.

From that time on, Cinder intermittently fell asleep and woke up. She sent me 227 more messages.

You're killing me. Literally!

I'm reporting you to the ASPCA.

When I got home at 5:38 p.m., I fed Cinder. I thought that'd be the end of everything. Starting at 5:53 p.m., she sent me the rest of her 887 messages.

About eight thirty last night, two social workers from the ASPCA knocked on my door. They were going to call the police and have me arrested and take Cinder to a foster kennel. Then they found out she's a beagle.

"Beagles are always hungry," one of the social workers said. "They'll eat until they make themselves sick. Don't worry, man! Everything's cool."

I told them I'd just barely got Cinder a cell phone, and I planned to take it away from her.

"You can't do that," the other social worker said. "If you give a dog a cell phone, you can't take it away. That's animal abuse."

OK. Taking a phone away from a dog is animal abuse. What's it called when a dog sends a human 887 or more texts day in and day out?

Riverside, California Races



by Paul Rosser

In 1981, my friends Skip, Carl, and I went on a vacation in Skip's truck with a camper on the back. We went through Arizona to go to the NASCAR race in Riverside, California. We drove all the way to the race and back. We slept in the camper all the time.

We didn't cook. Instead, we made peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and bologna sandwiches in his camper. We ate at a Village Inn twice—once on the way out and once on the way back. We also stopped for lunch at McDonald's in Phoenix, Arizona, on our way out.

When we got to Riverside, California, we camped out at the race track. We played with our RC (remote-controlled) cars in the parking lot at the track. On Sunday, we watched two races from the grandstand—the NASCAR Winston Cup race and the West Tour race. I took pictures of the NASCAR race cars as they went around the track. I took pictures of Dale Earnhardt, Richard Petty, Dave Allison, Rusty Wallace, Ricky Rudd, and Harry Gant's race cars. Later that day, we also saw some of the West Tour race.

Then, we went to San Diego to visit Sea World, a wax museum, the park, and the zoo. Afterwards, we went to Los Angeles to visit Universal Studios.

At the end of the week, we raced home, not stopping anywhere for anything.

I had fun on this vacation. I would like to go on vacation again. This time, I want to go to the Daytona 500 race.

Chaperoned at the Senior Center

by Jim Kelley

I had twisted my knee at the hotel where we were celebrating our fortieth wedding anniversary. I was on crutches. With six steps to get out of the house, I was feeling isolated and desperate to get out.

"How about lunch and a movie?" I suggested to my wife. She understood I meant lunch at the senior center and Friday afternoon movie there.

"Know what's playing this week?" She asked.

"Return to Me it says here. Know any thing about it?"

"Sounds like a war movie."

"I'm not big on war movies but it might be worth checking out. We can always ask for a refund."

She gave me her lopsided ya right grin at the idea of getting a refund on a free movie "Lets wait until after the free pop corn OK."

It was a good lunch. We settled into the TV room. I wanted to move the other armchair over by my wife but didn't think I could move it and stay upright on the crutches. I settled for a chair from the lunch room.

"Wouldn't you be more comfortable in this, beside your Sweetie?" Tracy asked as she sunk a hip into the other arm chair and pushed the two together. Only the mother of teenagers would think to wag her finger at us and tease, "No making out during the movie you two."

I was quickly transported back to early teenage boy-girl parties by this mother/hostess/chaperon warning. I thought of staging a slapstick making out scene but... After forty years of being Mrs. Jim Kelley, she knew what I was thinking. I still don't have her figured out but I did understand enough to know that look means it's a bad idea.

After setting everything up and turning the volume high enough that we could hear (and probably everyone out on Main street), the chaperon left us alone. The smell of popcorn filled the theater shortly before hostess Tracy appeared with an industrial size stainless steel bowl full of popcorn and large serving bowls.

She's really an experienced chaperon I thought as I considered putting my arm around my date in the other arm chair. It would have been easier to put my arm around a girl with her seat belt fastened on the far side of a big Cadillac with deep bucket-seats. (Not that I'd really know what that was like.) It's just as well I thought as I raised my arm with an arthritic shoulder and remembered what it was like to sit through a whole movie with my arm around a girl. It was hard enough holding her hand—balancing a bowl of popcorn on my lap—eating with my left hand and not make a mess. At least I didn't try that teenage thing of tossing popcorn up and catching it in my mouth

I have long suspected—now I am sure—it's a script that chaperons are required to memorize. Chaperon: enters the darkened room.

>>> "Oh, I forgot you guys were here."

Check on everyone in the room.

>>> "Gotta get something out of the cupboard."

Return to me turned out to be a love story. A good one with an interesting twist.

I remained in the awkward teenager on a first date mode as I tried to balance on my crutches and back into the door to open it for my date. I almost fell as my wife/nurse pressed the automatic door opener.

Squinting in the bright sunlight we stepped into the refreshing springlike air. Across the parking lot two red tail hawks soared and played in the up draft. I want to be a hawk some day and soar around like that I was thinking as they soared and danced over head. I quickly came back to reality as I leaned too far backwards and struggled to catch my balance with the crutches.

My wife/nurse/chauffeur followed me to the passenger side of the car and helped get me and the crutches in. I kissed her quickly on the mouth. She was too busy grinning to kiss me back. "No making out." she giggled while imitating the chaperon wagging her finger before lovingly touching the end of my nose.

"In the movie " I finished her sentence for her.

Raising one eyebrow I suggested "Want to go over to your place or mine?"

"Yours." she said without hesitation "What are you fixing for supper?"

I Dream the Dreams



by Helen Alison

I dream the dreams of a woman
soft...warm...and close to
someone who laughs
and is gentle and tender

I dream the dreams of a woman
who has heard the first cry of life
and wondered about her role
in the creating

I dream the dreams of a woman
who is surprised with the suddenness
of desire...and the tiger abandon
that is within her

I dream the dreams of a woman
needing the interaction of friends
but also a very real need
just to be alone

I dream the dreams of a woman
who gains strength from the stability of mountains
who delights in the texture of a rose
and the honest understanding of a smile

I ponder the reality of my woman dreams
and the entire depth of their meanings
for if I dream the dreams of a woman...then why
do I cry the tears of a child

Dance



by Steve Proskauer

everything
 has designs
 on dancing with me
 but I hold back
thinking
 I must learn
 how to dance
 without scattering peanuts
or spilling lemonade

then I remember
 clumsiness invites
 playfulness
 freeing peanuts
 eager to flee
 the bowl
 liberating lemonade
 that yearns to anoint
the floor

Feathers Further

by Richard Clegg

I, to my delight
 wrong
 not right
Not about this “moment”
 this “life”
 for they are luscious now, rich and
 undeniably mine

But wrong about
 “one last stunning sign”
When an angel fought to death for me my demons
Spreading feathers to the cobblestones
 to the cosmos
From whence they fall still from time to time
From where Hubble sees first hand to my mind
 my world
 upon a pathway
 upon my pillow
 to unexpected places and
 with such sweet tender care
 they still comfort there

I was wrong
For
Four less than a score ago
 I was shown for sure to know
 his presence in a sign and not one final
 stunning sign
 Yes they are all still mine
 still mine
 the signs
 they’re still there everywhere for
 we DO still share

To my delight,
Gone is grief and
 pain stripped bare of my share
 of this world’s sadness

Time has polished death's sharp and ragged edges
Upon which were snagged and snared the fragile
threads

of my despair
my fear
when left alone
hour upon hour
day upon day
year upon year

To my delight
Gone is the anger that bred my rebellion
fed my silliness
Like cortisone injected against pain
Dissolved are the uric acid crystals
Gone death's agonizing crystallized rub against
fragile sensitive membranes
Survival has melted ice-jams of loneliness and

I smell baking bread

To my delight
All things dreaded dead

REPLACED

by dreams of another
touching me kissing me
talking with me
of love
of a "moment"
of what might be left of a "life" together

Perhaps too old?
So far since four less than a score ago
Only empty longings that beg the question

Is there a place in a gay blade's heart
space for an old fart?
all the while I knowing there's no fool
like an old gay fool

As does Athena I have still the owls near
some given some bought some happily

simply happened
upon or sought
no need hiding my feathered fixation
it's public domain
fair game
and wanting in on the action
One such gifted owl perches now glitter encrusted
High atop a perfect white century old window
moulding
molting
asking "Whoo?"
answering his own with
"I know who will share all this
such bliss with you"

And like Churchill, I sit straining at stool and
glance up into his daytime eyes
no pellets as was then to be found
'round my garden stairs
just his wise be-glittered stare

He molts, not down, but glitter
"Who?"
he
who molts not fluffy feathers, but
sparkle flecks
glitter bits
the size of a pin head or smaller

Glitter
Candide
"Glitter and be Gay"

just as it all began long ago
with a single white feather on a
Spanish stair
NOW
glitter everywhere it seems

A new sign not warning me of grief's mire but
easing my fear of owning such
desire
encouraging a fresh start
for this old fart

He lives in glitter speaks in a sparkle
He caught my eye there
 minuscule
 in a tiny rainbow hued fleck on the slick
 black granite surface
 the complete color spectrum in a
 sparkle seen from across the room
 changing from blue
 to magenta to red
 as I moved my head
 a hair
 from here to there
Or on my kitchen counter of a ten
decades old style
 white chicken wire tile
Or on concrete
Or a busy street
Or on the hardwood floor by the baby
 grand
Or on the nubby black bath matt
 'neath the moulding
 'neath the molting

 Suggesting I love another urging me
to find that man in my Easter Eve dream
 who spoke to me of love
 who? is anyone's guess
 God and he know who AND
 just when to woo another

 I'll listen to their voices in
Glitter
A rainbow speck when observed beneath a
 neutron microscope would surely reveal
 what is to Hubbell so very real

NEBULA

The Holy Book, often wrong, this time,
To my delight,

right shares with us all

“Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God
For God IS love.” *

And what is more enduring than DEATH?

LOVE

Nature's Paradise



by JoAnna Johannesen

The Sun sets on the crimson horizon...shimmering, reflecting personality upon the world. In all its glory, nature is awakening to Her feelings of joy, for She is delighting in the glory of the creative process of color. She ask herself if there is more to add...but alas, Her beauty is so perfect, so majestic in its liaison with the world that there is nothing else to add.

The wind sighs gently, gazing upon the soldiers of trees, who are saluting the world respectfully. Clouds are hovering above, with faces smiling...animated, laughing with expression of pure delight. They are overlords of the world, judges of us all. Some clouds are embarrassed, they blush and blend with the sleeping mountains: everything stands still, unmoving and yet unaware of how nature is still fully alive...the shy clouds quietly begin to depart and fade with the rest of the alluring, hypnotic sky.

If one could put one word to explain it all, one word to explain how it all came about, one word to explain the creator of who made nature's television possible...that one word would be GOD. He loved the world so much that he created this exquisite beauty. He knew it was just too magnificent to enjoy alone, so he sent His children to share and revel in this splendid creation: through our eyes, through our thoughts, and through our joy, we share this joy with Him. Through GOD, we experience His glory: through GOD, we experience His world: and it is through this beauty, that we come to know GOD'S love.

Early Season Heli-tack



by Margaret Cortsen

Heli-tack crews work with helicopters to fight forest fires. I joined the Indianola Heli-tack on the Salmon National Forest, Idaho. The fire crew came on prior to the helicopter and was composed mostly of rookies; both to fire and Heli-tack. A couple of us came with fire background. Two were returning, lead crewmembers; Ed Christy and Kelly Fredrickson. I came with four seasons of forest fire fighting, joining this crew at 25. We'd been through a couple weeks of intense training; safety, fire, safety, Heli-tack, did I mention safety?—We ate drank and slept safety practices, very good and very necessary training.

This story begins with a training burn, local crews and agencies joined in. Heli-tack was dispatched to a real fire, around 3:00pm. We left our colleagues at the training burn for the first call to duty. We had yet to meet our helicopter, so this was to be a hand crew fire, likely a good way to throw a rookie crew into duty. We loaded into our crew chase truck pumped for the first call to action. Just a few miles into the rough, hour drive back to base we paused with a flat tire; the inside tire on the left set of duallys on the big ol Heli-tack chase truck. Orders from the base:

“Drive on it, get in here! The other wheel can carry it.”

We arrived at the base and scrambled for our personal gear. Each fire fighter takes a ‘red bag’ also know as ‘off forest’ or ‘war’ bag. These bags are the size of a suitcase, designed to carry all of our personal needs for a 21-day, camp out tour. Then of course our line gear; web gear with fire shelter, two to four canteens and a small pack. Picture this if you will. There are five fire fighters, with full gear for a 21-day tour. Our tools were to be issued later, good thing. The five of us, and our gear, were loaded into the ranger’s sedan to make the hour journey to the Salmon Fire Center. We packed in, gasping for breathing space; bags and human appendages waving from every possible opening as we rolled down the highway.

At the fire center we were issued more supplies and tools. Begin the infamous Forest Service ‘hurry up and

wait' game. We joined other area fire fighters to make a 20-person crew. The duty day wore on, our initial enthusiasm waning. Hours and agitation later the bus pulled in. This was no tour bus, nor was it a traditional fire bus. Are all school busses built the same, or was this bus built just for little kindergarteners? Fortunately, we each had our own seat, in which we sat sidewise and sprawled over. The driver must have been called to duty on our behalf, presumably from a hot date, which he clearly was determined to return to in record time. While he was driven by his passionate fantasies a mad man drove us. Our bored attempts at twisted discomfort and sleep were displaced with rude awakenings. Thrown forward, side to side, the sound of screeching brakes our eyes flew open and witnessed the high-speed terror. Headlights illuminated a sheer wall seemingly not ten feet away. We knew we were doomed. Another screeching, banking hard left throwing us again and the road appeared in front.

**"Another
screeching, banking
hard left throwing us
again and the road
appeared in front. "**

We arrived at Boise Interagency Fire Center in the middle of the night. There were several crews ahead of us, sleeping in piles of bodies and gear like a wind blown picnic across the vast lawn. We joined the slumber party, haggard from our continuing travel saga. About 6:00am the officials called us in to breakfast; following which we congregated in piles on the lawn anxious to be on our way. Docile rounds of hacky-sack and Frisbee filled the dead hours of waiting. There was an occasional buzz of possible fire situations we may be dispatched to.

"Hey maybe we'll get there and have a fire storm like the Mason Fire last year!"

Came an enthusiastic shout from the Nez Perce National Forest group. Followed by:

"Yeah you're dreaming, by the time we get there it will be nothing but mop-up." The crews lounged on their gear, or wandered aimlessly to elude the nagging wait. Around noon the officials called us to lunch, we migrated to the call, a line of zombies from the tombs.

Crews slowly dispersing from the field, off to their respective fires, we were bored with every diversion we had created. Tormenting those sorry souls lucky enough

to sleep became our greatest pleasure. Six o'clock, the officials called us to dinner. Eat, sleep, wait – "Hello? We're fire fighters!" About 10:00pm our plane arrived, Alaska Air. We lethargically loaded our gear and boarded the plane. I sat between two Heli-tack buds, Ed Christy and Carl Amondson. We all love to fly-in helicopters. Turns out these two were not so fond of fixed wing flying.

Perhaps they called this pilot to duty from the ol watering hole. Granted there are certainly air pockets and turbulence, but...We dropped out of the sky, guts left a hundred feet above, several times. Then there were the unforeseen wing dips. The men on either side of me were white knuckled to their shoulders. Ed having one solemn chant;

"WE'RE GONNA DIE!!!"

I'm sure I too would have been far more frightened; if not for fighting to restrain the chuckle these two were provoking in me. Somehow, we landed safely in Albuquerque.

We were shuttled from the airport, in fire busses, to our fire location in the Gila National Forest. Either this driver was sane, sober, with no waiting lover, or we were just too spent to know or care. As dusk fell, tools in hand, we began hiking to our area taking the midnight vigil on the fire. We weren't actually seeing fire as we hiked and not likely we would. The storm was brewing and picking up force. There was a burst of energy and noise, a huge tree split by lightning. Followed by the wise advice;

"Drop your tools, hit the dirt!"

Oh yeah, just twenty human lightning rods waiting to be zapped on this ridge. Then launched the pouring, drenching rain; fire? Where? Our fearless leaders ordered our spent and soggy bodies to base camp; we'd be on mop-up tomorrow.

Had Mel O. Kerns made this fire he'd have declared it a complete success. Mel was a seasoned Heli-tack crewmember remaining at the base on this first call of the season. He always said he went to a fire for the food and the view. By daylight, the view was marvelous, high-forested mountains and lush green valleys below. As for food, the Forest Service often commissions local community folks to provide our meals. On this fire the very appreciative ranchers came out in force. That was some serious good eating; Mel sure missed out on this one. To me, aside from the horribly mundane hurry up and

wait, it was all a good adventure and a good time. With the added advantage of being one of three women among sixty some guys. Their shower was a hose over a basketball hoop, while the ladies; all Indi Heli-tack, myself, Kelly and Marlene, were granted hot showers in a local home.

Soulful



by Audrey Weigel

Uncomfortable
Fly from known establishment
To present I am

I remain steadfast
Blinking considerably
Sensitive present

Enveloped I
Indistinguishable I
Caretaken magic

I look out alive
Take in goes through tinkling I
Melodic soulful

A Little Story of My Life



by Linda Granada

I was born and grew up in Colombia, South America. I have a brother whom I loved very much. His name is David. When we were kids we visited always in vacation our grandmother in Narino, a small town close to the city.

It was a great place, had horses, cows, pigs, chicken and other animals of farmer, many trees of guayabas and other fruits. We liked to climb on tree for take fruits.

My grandmother made good food, chicken soup, rice with milk (sweet), chicharron (pig skin fried and crunch) and other typical food Colombian. The food in my country no used spices to difference here.

My grandmother told ghosts stories in the night, after we can't sleep. I remember a particular story: The hojarasquin of mountain. It was a boy not obedient with your mother. One day he left his house after fight with his mother, and went inside in the mountain. In the night he was lost and did not return home.

Beginning to eat to live, animals and other things found. When the boys are disobedient and rude with your parents, they can listen the hojarasquin cry and shout. This story made has feel fear and we can't sleep.

She is not alive her, we miss her much but we have good memories our vacation.

Now, we remember all moments in the grandmother house and we smile and tell our children. We hope live more moments with our currently family.

Three Notes

by Ked Kirkham

I.

Phragmites

Heady

Waving above the bull rush

The cattail

Lining the canals

Cover for the heron

The coot

The starling

II.

Snow blown smooth

Over the cut

Ice attached to the fallen tree

By splash and spray

III.

Ravens hunker

For defense from the wind

Hawks hunt

Suspended

And gulls rise and fall

Confetti white and silver

Above the water gates

Spousal Abuse

by Winifred Walker

A movie called The Burning Bed attracted my attention.
It told about a most unhappy life.
A woman who had been abused beyond one's
comprehension
had killed the man to whom she'd been a wife.

It brought back many memories about my situation
when I was young and very easy prey.
Although my husband never left a sign of mutilation,
he brutalized my spirit day by day.

One time when he was angry, he just pushed me from
the car
because I went to see a college friend.
Another time he called my boss and told him with a
snarl
my training sessions simply had to end!

No wife of his was going to go to work outside the home!
I think he was afraid he'd lose control
if I were free to talk with friends who just would not
condone
the things that happened in my hilly-hole.

Oh I admit, except for his attempt at strangulation, he
never left my body black and blue.
But using words to tear me down was also suffocation!
The fact that I put up with it was due

to having been a Daddy's Girl who never learned to say
"You're hurting me, you fool! Now cut it out!" So I put
up with his abuse until there came a day
that I took action rather than just pout.

Now decades have gone by since I just packed my bags
and left, then let him have the kids at our divorce.
I did what I thought best, and yet I've always felt bereft
because he didn't ever show remorse.

Save Those Shoes



by Don Hale

It was 1943. World War II was going full blast. The British were bombing the life out of Germany, and in the East, the Russians were beginning to thump them really well with the help of some old guy called “Uncle Sam.” In the Pacific Theater, Sam led the charge and his sailors were decimating the Japanese Navy. I believe that by this time the Japs were beginning to wonder if they had done the right thing at Pearl Harbor. By August, 1945, Sam’s explosive temper convinced them they had not.

I was five years old in the early part of 1943, and although the attack on Pearl Harbor created a lot of fear on the coast of California, my parents, in my presence, treated the war as something far off in the distance that I shouldn’t worry about. I had experienced the air raid wardens and black-outs in the previous year, but thanks to my parents, I knew no fear. I was pretty much unaware of what was going on, except for rationing.

A lady wanting to bake a cake for her daughter’s wedding would have to scout around among all the invited guests to round up ration stamps to obtain enough ingredients for it. Flour, sugar, and shortening were all rationed. No single household could possibly scrape up enough of these commodities to bake a large cake, or sometimes even a small one. Whatever it was you wanted or needed, you could depend that it was rationed.

Having saved up enough gasoline ration stamps to make the trip, my parents decided one day to make the 90-mile, four-hour trip from our home in San Jacinto to Huntington Beach to visit my aunt. Not only was gasoline rationed, there was also a 35 mph national speed limit. There were thousands of tanks operating in the field that got only one mile per gallon that must be fueled. Civilians got what could be spared.

When we arrived at my aunt’s, she served lunch and then the adults settled down to their long-anticipated card game. This left me on my own, so I went outside for a while petted the dog out there my aunt had told me was

vicious. Becoming bored after a few minutes, I went exploring.

Right across the street was an oil well I had noticed when we arrived. What boy could resist an oil well? It was fascinating. It had an old-fashioned wooden derrick reaching way up into the sky. It had big gears, flywheels, cables and all sorts of intriguing equipment, AND on one side there was a pool of crude oil.

It was black and shiny and stinky. The surface was like glass and reflected the sun and clouds in the sky. Stretched across it was a thin, weathered old board, about six inches above the smelly goo. I stepped up on the board where it was supported by the ground and started to walk across. CRACK! SNAP! It broke and I found myself standing in the crude. Fortunately, it was only a couple inches deep.

I figured I was in deep trouble, but there was only one thing I could do. I walked back across the street and started banging on my aunt's back door.

"Come one in," she hollered. "It's open."

"I can't," I answered. "You have to come out here."

Puzzled, she did, and when she saw my shoes she said, "Stay right there; don't move. Doug! Suzy!" she hollered. "Come out here!"

My father, having worked briefly in the oil fields, knew right away what could have been my fate, and he seemed to be confused about whether he should hug me for being alive or whip me for ruining my shoes. He did nothing but carefully take them off and set them on some newspapers which immediately became part of one big blob with the shoes and oil.

The three adults held a conference to decide what to do. The first action they considered was to throw the oily shoes away and get some new ones when we got home. My mother vetoed that idea by reminding the others that shoes were rationed, those I was wearing were brand new, and it would be quite a while before she would have enough stamps to buy more shoes, which meant that the oil would have to come off. How?

The obvious answer was gasoline. Since the idea of rationing was to cut civilian consumption immediately and sharply, the amounts allowed were not generous. Every

**"CRACK! SNAP!
It broke and I found
myself standing in the
crude."**

drop was a matter of concern. The two women and my father emptied out their wallets and purses on a bed and rounded up all the gas rationing stamps they could find and bought two gallons, two scrub brushes, and a bucket. Rubber gloves were not available.

When they got home, their anticipated long evening of card playing no longer possible, they went to work on my shoes. I offered to help, but was rebuffed. Perhaps the adults figured one disaster a night was enough.

The gasoline they had purchased was just barely enough to wash out as much as possible of the oil, which left the problem of washing out the gasoline. It wasn't easy. These were the days before detergents, so they had to use soap powder, a much weaker cleaning agent, especially with greasy objects. A lot of labor had passed into history, along with the moon and stars, before the job was finished and the first rays of the sun began to appear in the eastern sky.

My parents, a nervous pair, and my aunt, raised on ranches, always an early riser, skipped breakfast and got up for brunch, about 10:30. The house still reeked of gasoline.

Social Media Learnings



by Deb Young

For the past three years, my learnings about social media have been by, about, and from the Internet. My investigation has focused on how to use social media to promote our adult literacy organization in such a way that draws in increased financial donations and additional volunteers. The knowledge and application of purloined ideas from social media have not been simply on the Internet waiting for me to just “plug and play.” I have had to invoke my vision of needs, identify key words to conjure up the content, interpret my findings, and then, based on specific goals, best practices, and philosophical underpinnings, determine how to use the results most effectively and efficiently. Here are three takeaways and a call-to-action that have emerged from this process.

Bandwagon

Everything I read about business marketing stresses that our center should be thoroughly engaged in social media (but not to the exclusion of the traditional formats, such as public service announcements on radio, TV, and websites, handwritten notes, or phone calls to individual donors). The term social media represents a large, complex category of opportunity. This media, according to business marketing books, videos, and blogs, includes Linked-In, Facebook, Instagram, websites, Pinterest, YouTube, podcasts, blogs, email blasts, Twitter, e-newsletters, and infographics. These current major social media connections are touted to be important for any company expecting to raise awareness, funding, and customers (or, in our case, donors, and volunteers).

Marketing isn’t just about putting the “brand” out there and getting noticed—telling people that our literacy organization exists—but driving traffic (moving souls) to our website, capturing their emails, giving them value in return for “stopping by,” and then providing them with repeated reasons for returning multiple times. The literature strongly demands that I focus on response rates,

**“...by
obsessive reading
and ongoing
commenting...”**

click-throughs, and calls to action in order to cultivate followers who will befriend the center and share our information with others. And, if I deliver enough high-quality content and value, massive amounts of ongoing financial donations and face-to-face support (a.k.a. volunteers) will ensue.

What I’ve learned is that the Internet is all about bandwagon mentality. The center needs to engage in social media because that’s what everyone else is doing. If we don’t involve the public through our social media presence, then social media gurus condemn us to be viewed as behind-the-times, out-of-touch, and inaccessible. In turn, our lack of social media engagement then reflects poorly on and brings into question the quality of our instructional delivery system. So which bandwagon(s) will get us more funding and more volunteers?

Passivity

Many websites, videos, and highly-priced online learning packages tell me that “you too can make money while you sleep.” Nothing to it. Put up a website, and the money will roll in. The more honest sites tell me that I have to be working my “game” continuously. Sure, these people sending these messages live in exotic places, but are they truly free? Are they really doing nothing and just living off their passive income? No. Not at all. That is, if they want to continue to get paid “while they sleep.” I’ve learned that these individuals are tied to the Internet for many, many hours every day. When they aren’t, they had better be learning something new (or gleaning ideas from other people’s posts) to teach their followers. As such, passive income is not passive! Passive income earners are extremely aggressive on a daily basis.

And, for goodness sake, passive income is not free. First, learning the ins-and-outs of social media platforms in order to understand their criteria and capabilities is extremely time-consuming. Second, staying informed through continual engagement—by obsessive reading and ongoing commenting—with all of these social media

outlets is exhausting. Third, thinking up new content is exhilarating but uses a lot of behind-the-scenes brainpower and chews up time. Lastly, the bottom-line is that keeping up with everyone who might add insight into what we do, in addition to sharing with those who might follow us for our content and value, takes extraordinary amounts of time and multiple energies.

What I've learned is that passive isn't really passive. I need to plow a whole lot of energy into social media in order to make things happen "while I sleep." The purported benefit of increased awareness, donors, and volunteers will not "roll in" unless I've been extremely aggressive throughout the rest of each and every day.

Mind bending

Keeping up with—no, let's be real—digging below the surface of social media from the point-of-view of a marketing specialist is causing me to re-think. Initially, when I was forced to start our Facebook page in September 2009 and voluntarily began our first blog in June 2010, I didn't know what to say. I was intrigued by what others told me could happen in these two arenas. My mind, however, was empty. I did not know what to do or how to use these two tools for the center's benefit.

During the process of brainstorming and mapping this topic for this paper, I have come to the realization that my mind has finally made a switch. My mind is actually seeing situations and data in novel ways due to my daily obsessiveness and fixation on social media. My thought processes are adapting to accommodate requirements of the different media outlets.

For months now, I have been forcing myself, at the end of each day, to think about what was tweetable or noteworthy from one of the social media platform's point-of-view. I look for ways to share our everyday events and learnings via social media to help our followers better understand how learners' lives are changed by what we do (through donors' contributions).

Where I used to think nothing and see no potential content, I now see endless possibilities of strong content filled with great value. For example, as I drafted these notes, I also created two infographics about learner and volunteer demographics and developed a list of thirty photo opportunities illustrating the use of literacy

in ordinary daily life over the course of a month (for Instagram and Facebook).

Final thoughts

What I've learned is that I do have the business acumen for developing and implementing a social media strategy for our adult literacy program. The catch is time and resource management. I struggle with managing the time required to bring these ideas to fruition. Now that I understand many of these social media technologies and can generate ideas, I finally feel comfortable and confident in engaging volunteers, with well-developed skill sets for culling and creating content and value, in moving our center forward.

First, based on what I've learned, the numerous social media bandwagons require much aggressive attention. As such, I need resources beyond me. Our social media needs to be run by a team of volunteers with various interests, skills, and expertise to build our brand and oversee our message. The team needs to work together to develop and implement a strategic plan complete with posting calendars, consistent and cohesive messaging, amazing content, unique engagement activities, delegated tasks, etc. In addition to recruiting new donors and volunteers, this plan must include methods for retaining and growing each person's commitment to our center over an extended period of time.

Second, while volunteers want to come in and take over our social media, I've observed that most of our social media is not best done by outsiders. Therefore, at least two of the social media team must spend time at our center with a mind's-eye focused on collecting content and value in all that happens around us; thus, turning our everyday, ordinary events into marketing potential. This team should also include one or more learners. Together, these individuals would cull and hone those special moments into social media splashes that draw in and engage followers. The "inside" team members would provide guidance to the other team members – the "outsiders." The outsiders could then supplement and greatly enhance the culminating products. The success of this strategic plan would be measured by the amount of funds raised as well as the number of new donors and volunteers recruited.

And, finally, based on all the marketing and social

media business materials and sites I've read, I would be remiss if I didn't end this paper with a call to action for you, my kind, generous reader. So here it is:

I represent Literacy Action Center, a 501(c)(3) that uses support from individuals like you to transform print-challenged, English-speaking adults living in Salt Lake and Davis Counties into skilled, passionate, habitual, critical readers, writers, and mathematicians, who are career-minded and tech savvy. What can you do to help our center today? Whom do you know that could help us? Befriend us? Donate to us? Volunteer with us? Join our social media team? Your contribution changes many lives in our community! Check us out at LiteracyActionCenter.org.

You will help us, won't you?

H₂O * 4



by Steve Proskauer

~ WATER ~

Limpid liquid

Lapping aqua

Arcing waves

Streaming cliffs

Earth's embrace

Keeps seas

In their sockets

Lakes in lockets

Grottos like pockets

Brooks like rockets

Streams awarble

Bubble in song

Down pebbled paths

Pools waterfalls

Join restless

Mother ocean

Heaving howling

Smooth as

Black glass

Come evening

^_ICE_^
Harsh chill
Lake freeze
Stiff
Still

Skating
Windfilled
Jackets wide
Frigate wings

Rushing to meet
Upthrust ice
Gloves outthrust
Strike muffled bells

Clink clunk
Gong bong
Floes shift
Surface severs

Booming
Grinding
Yawning
CRACK

@ STEAM@
Hissing damp
Presses skin
Moisture soaks
Into pores

Sauna fills
Throats lungs
Vapor breathed
A captured shroud

Hot fog
Blurs form
Strange
Ghostly

Yellowstone's
Boiling colors
Sudden eruption
Startling strength

Vulcan vapor
Screaming heat
Pressure cooking
Flesh and bone

****SNOW****

Flakes fly
Cloak twigs
Frost white
Bend creak

No school
Play day
Snowballs
Igloos

Whirling drifting
Stinging needles
Paths buried
Blown away

Losing place
Trees erased
Formless empty
Whiteboard world

A Life Well-Lived



by Rae Miller

The sweet little old lady napped in her chair.
She dreamt of the days when she hadn't a care.
A full life she lived a day wasn't wasted.
The adventures of motherhood she often had tasted.

Her family she loved with all of her heart.
Her friends were forever, never to part.
So many memories danced in her dream.
She was so young then so old it did seem.

The aches and the pains that so often came,
She endured with silence, she didn't complain.
Contentment was hers as she lived in the past,
The long life she lived forever would last.

Alas it is true, the end will be there.
The question is when or maybe it's where.
This lady knows her time is so near.
To enter green pastures gives her no fear.

Today is her day to take on this trip.
She'll ride the waves she'll jump on her ship.
To soar like an Eagle to dance on the cloud,
Her life was well lived of this she is proud.

8 Haiku



by Annette Dennis

Flicking silent tongues,
the little frogs jump up while
eyeing the fireflies.

What an awesome price
the honeybee must pay to
rid him of his venom.

My beautiful birds
will sing to me in heaven
when death becomes life.

Shimmery teardrops stick
within the epicenter
of the spiders' webs.

When you held me up
and I kept falling down,
I hadn't let go.

Bathing in sadness
the depression of her mind
plummets in panic.

Torrents of rain bring
crystal tears splashing the leaves
of one lonely tree.

Creamsicle sunset,
glowing embers of the moon,
a breath of the breeze.

Full Moon



by Ked Kirkham

Full moon
struggling beyond the wind,
in darkness.
In darkness there,
for here it is beautiful light;
were not that wind
sweeping away
the leaves,
the snow,
the day.

Regal Queen



by JoAnna Johannesen

The regal queen struts her stuff,
her attitude makes her tough:
a white and gray kitty cat...
looking bad, looking fat.

She clomps along an outstretched trail,
wishing she had a great big sail...
So the wind could just blow her away,
to help her finish a busy day.

I feel like this regal queen:
though appearance is not pristine:
my personality does not hide
and there is this creative side.

Words seem to be my wind,
to sail, as each day begin...
so as I strut my final thoughts,
creative minds just can't be caught!

An Evening With Death



by Richard H. Goms, Jr.

It was a pleasant, quiet evening in that small college town of Warrensburg, Missouri in 1969. I was the only one working that night and business had been slow. A car pulled up to the pump. I got up from my chair in front of the window, and made my way to the driver's side window.

"Yes, ma'am. What can I do for you?" I asked politely.

"Where's your lady's room?" she snapped.

I stepped back as she flung open the car door and got out.

"Around the side of the building."

"Fill 'er up," she demanded.

She smelled like a brewery, but I ignored it.

"Check the oil and tires?" I asked.

Those were the days of service stations. I had been in college, but had to drop out for lack of funds. I was hired by three brothers to pump gas, wash windows, and check the oil and tire pressure of every car that pulled up to the pump. Gas wars had brought the price down to 19 cents per gallon. The boss made most of his profit on the sales of tires, oil changes, and car and truck repairs. We even repaired radiators in a large tank in the back.

"No. Just fill 'er up and wash the windshield," she responded.

As she disappeared around the side of the building, I pulled the hose from the "regular" side of the pump, pulled down on the rear license plate holder exposing the filler tube, placed the hose in the tube, and locked the handle. While it filled the tank I began to wash and squeegee the windshield. As I reached across it I could see a six-pack of beer in the front passenger seat with two bottles missing, although I didn't think anything of it at the time.

During that era driving with an open bottle and driving while intoxicated were tolerated, and not the serious crimes they are today.

She was just coming back when I heard the pump click off. She paid me with a credit card and drove off—north, out of town.

It wasn't long after she left police cars and a fire engine

came screaming by with lights flashing and sirens blaring headed that direction—north, out of town. About an hour later a friend drove up in a police car. From the charge receipt in her car he knew her name and address, and where she had bought gas last.

I had worked as an animal control officer for a time and had gotten to know all the policemen.

“Did you gas up her car?” he questioned.

“Yes,” I responded.

“Did you notice anything unusual about her behavior?”

I proceeded to tell him what I had noticed about her breath and mentioned the six-pack of beer in the front seat with two bottles missing. He told me that if I had reported this to the police they might have prevented her death. She had missed the next bridge and ended up in the river.

“Since you are the last person to see her alive, come down to the mortuary after you get off work and identify the body.”

After work I drove out to the bridge. Spotlights from the emergency vehicles illuminated the scene. A wrecker was still trying to get a car out of the river and back up the embankment.

It was her car.

Then I drove to the mortuary. The mortician was expecting me.

“Here, son. Let me show you where she is,” he said.

From the doorway of a darkened room I could see a clothed female body lying motionless on a table while an overhead light shone on her. I could see it was the driver of the car in the river I had first seen at the station. I was frozen in place and could not enter the room any further.

That sight left an indelible impression on my mind I will never forget. I felt a weight of guilt engulf me.

I could have saved her life.

Petal



by Audrey Weigel

Kiss me tenderly
With your eyes and your light touch
Dew on a petal



by Margaret Cortsen



sine cera: Somewhere in Time 83

Lighting a Drenched Fire



by Steve Proskauer

Crumpled paper blackens slowly
Yellow flickers down dry sticks
Orange flames encase the twigs
That snap like manic crickets

Fuel soon gone
Soggy logs choke on
Curls of hissing smoke
Acrid steam billows up

Wispy tongues wag
And flicker out
Squelched by dampened breath
Smothered in the dragon's mouth

Fire bed is black and moist
Sodden ashes and steaming waste
Dry logs give tongues a second taste
A lick of hope where two limbs meet

We need partners to reflect
Another's warmth to ignite
The possibility of passion
If there's breathing space enough

To Jump or Not to Jump

by Richard Kelley

I surprised myself as I stood on a cliff in Western Colorado paraphrasing Hamlet, "To jump or not to jump. That is the question." Never would I have gone along if my thrill seeking brother, Kurt, had said jump at the potholes instead of swim. The water appeared to be about a quarter mile below. Unlike Kurt, I need safety and security.

"There it is," he laughed. "Jump! Watch out for the pothole monster! It might be just be branches, but if you get tangled-up in them you're still a gonner."

He posed on the edge, then jumped. "G-e-r-o-n-i-m-o-o!" Kerwhoosh echoed from the shadow below. "Come on, Burpie," he taunted, "Jump! Me? Jump? No Way!

"If your little brother jumped off a cliff, would you have to jump too?" Mom used to ask. Yeah, I do.

A girl stepped to the edge and gracefully hopped into the abyss. "S-a-c-a-w-e-e-a," she giggled.

If I had paid attention in church I might know what to do at a time like this. Now, all I have is the image, from a movie, of a priest walking with an inmate toward the execution chamber. Yea, though I jump into the valley of the shadow of death...Little brothers are evil...

Another girl came forward, "Connie, you down there?" she shouted into the shadow.

"How many of us are still here?" came the question from below. I imagined a carload of taunting girls lined-up behind me. She leaped off the edge laughing, 'P-o-c-a-h-o-n-t-a-s-s-s.' The water sizzled.

The thought of chickening-out evaporated like wet footprints on the hot, red sandstone. I took a deep breath; focused on a spot on the opposite cliff to control my thoughts; stepped off the edge of the world.

"G-e-r-o-n-i-m-o." I wasted too much breath trying to sound confident.

The water took me prisoner There was nothing I could do until it decided to release me near the bottom. I kicked the pothole monster. It was just sticks.

Hoping to reach the surface before my lungs imploded, I swam upward as hard as I could. My body gasp at the air

it desperately craved while laughing hysterically. I cheated death! I kicked the monster! I'm alive! Really alive!!

The second jump wasn't so bad. The third was kinda fun. I wanted to jump again but we were late for supper.

I surprised myself when I jumped the first time. It shouldn't have. It's like anything else: The first time I step out of my comfort zone is always scary. With practice it gets easier—even fun. Practice is the key to overcoming fears and doing something well.

Now, fifty-some years later, I still surprise myself whenever I step out of my comfort zone and do something frightening for the first time. It's just like jumping at the potholes. I've kicked monsters before.

The Inversion



by Peggy Kadir

Don't take an excursion
During Salt Lake's inversion
If the air's filled with gunk
Don't stay sunk in a funk
Soon the sun will come out
Then you can smile, run and shout
until then find a quiet nook
and read a good book.

Winter Drive



by Ked Kirkham

Larks rise at the roadside
to be blown back
or away.
Their breasts disappearing
into the grass
and brush,
their backs
scattering
like milled pepper
in the wind.
I hear nothing of their song
and long again
the summer's day.

Incarcerated

by Richard H. Goms, Jr.

As I looked at my watch I realized I was running very late, that summer of 1968. I needed to be at Fort Benning, Georgia, the next morning, and would have to drive all night to make it in time for formation. If only the car hadn't broken down so many times.

During the last year I had been a platoon leader in Army R.O.T.C. at Central Missouri State College. I was made a platoon leader because, as a member of the Civil Air Patrol in high school, I had learned the art of marching in formation and its subtleties. C.A.P. is a paramilitary arm of the Air Force trained in search and rescue. I had joined Army R.O.T.C. in college for two reasons: there was no Air Force R.O.T.C., and I needed the \$50 per month.

I had just completed my freshman year, and was ordered to report to Fort Benning for six weeks of summer camp. Earlier I had purchased my first car, a 1956 Chevrolet, for \$50, thinking I needed a car to date girls. However on this trip from Warrensburg to Fort Benning, a distance of almost 800 miles, it broke down every day, either with flat tires or thrown lifters, requiring me to find junkyards along the way to repair it. Keeping the car running for that distance had really slowed me down.

It was dark when I arrived on the outskirts of Phenix City, Alabama. I looked forward to crossing the state line into Georgia just a few miles ahead. Even though I'd had a driver's license since I was sixteen, I did not have much experience driving. I saw a sign saying, "Divided Highway Ahead." After being on two-lane roads for most of the way, I was excited to be able to speed up onto a divided highway.

Shortly after putting my foot down on the accelerator I saw flashing red lights in my rear-view mirror. The sheriff that pulled me over explained that the speed limit had not changed yet, and I was in violation. He wrote out a speeding ticket, and handed it to me. When I informed him I had no money, he told me that since I did not have the bail he would have to take me to jail. The next morning I could send a Western Union telegram for the money. There

I was, a young, immature college student, flat broke, and hoping my girlfriend back in Missouri could bail me out of jail. I explained to the officer I had to be in Fort Benning in the morning, but it made no difference.

I was placed in a cell with several other men and went right to sleep. I was awakened by the smell of bacon. I was served bacon and grits. I had never before tasted grits, and after that experience, I knew I would never taste them again. The bacon was greasy, and eating grits was like eating desert sand.

One of the men started up a conversation with me. "Do you want to stay here in jail or do you want to get outside on a road gang?" he inquired. He explained further, "You can stay here all day with nothing to do, or you can be outside in the fresh air busily working."

The thought of either choice scared me to death. An officer volunteered to wire my girlfriend that morning for the bail money. I waited in the cell.

Since the money had not arrived before my arraignment, I was taken to the third floor courtroom to appear before the judge. After telling my story to another inmate, he advised me not to be scared and to calmly plead my case. He assured me the judge would be lenient. I was escorted to the courtroom, and waited my turn. Having no knowledge of court procedure, before I could think of what to say I was being found guilty and fined. I was taken back to the cell. Shortly after, the wired money arrived, and I was released.

I arrived at Ft. Benning just in time for formation.

Living Off The Land



by Peggy Kadir

I'm going to
live off the land
I announced
This morning
By this I meant
I shall defrost
a frozen dinner—
not pick berries
plant corn
and shoot
jack rabbits.

Should Be (A Drama/Comedy One-Act Play)

by Doug Woodall

SHOULD BE

(A Drama/Comedy in One Act)

By Doug Woodall

LIST OF CHARACTERS

GRANDMA Cormack She's 72 years old, has a rough edge about her because she grew up in a coal mining town, and is recovering from a summertime case of pneumonia.

JARRETT Grandma Cormack's 23-year-old, gay grandson.

TWUNK Male Ultimate Frisbee player who's about 22 years old and has a build between a twink and a hunk.

SLEIGHT Female Ultimate Frisbee player who's 20-something and looks like a perfect match (girlfriend or partner) for Bear. Her name comes from "sleight of hand."

BEAR Male Ultimate Frisbee player who's close to Twunk's age and has the build of an athletic bear.

A well-kept municipal park on a Sunday morning. Enter GRANDMA and JARRETT. They're looking for a spot to lay down a blanket and have a picnic of prepared foods they bought at a grocery store. JARRETT has the blanket draped over one arm and he's carrying a small cooler with drinks and a grocery sack with the food, plastic utensils, napkins, and a second grocery sack for garbage. GRANDMA is leaning heavily on her cane and she looks somewhat unstable on her feet. One time, she stops and has a coughing fit. From off stage and in low tones, the audience hears the sounds of a pick-up game of Ultimate Frisbee. The players are calling to each other and a small number of spectators are cheering them on.

GRANDMA That damn cold of mine lasted seventeen whole days. And I swear, I've aged ten years. I've got absolutely no strength, and I feel wobbly on my feet.

JARRETT It wasn't a cold, Grandma Cormack. You had pneumonia.

GRANDMA Damn! What a horrible bad cold, and in the middle of summer of all things. *(Looks disgustedly at Jarrett.)* You don't know what I'm talking about. You're way too young to understand. Wait 'til you're old as me.

JARRETT You're not old.

GRANDMA Don't be an imbecile. I'm as old as dirt, and that cold—(*JARRETT looks at her sharply.*) I don't want to say pneumonia; for someone my age that's the same as dead. (*She has another coughing fit. JARRETT awkwardly tries to help her.*) Stop doing that. It doesn't help.

JARRETT Sorry.... I think what we should do is find a place to spread out our blanket and get you off your feet.

JARRETT and GRANDMA look around for a spot.

GRANDMA (*Pointing to one side of the stage.*) What about under those trees there?

JARRETT (*Pointing to the other side of the stage.*) I think I'd rather be over there.

GRANDMA (*Looking where JARRETT is pointing.*) Over there? In thirty minutes, the sun'll be in our faces. (*Pauses.*) Oh, I get it. You want to watch the game.

JARRETT I think you'll like it, too.

GRANDMA I'm quite sure you'll like it twice as much.

JARRETT But we have some common interests, don't we?

GRANDMA So you keep telling me.

JARRETT and GRANDMA go to the spot JARRETT pointed out. They lay down the blanket and start setting out their picnic. The audience hears the players' and

*spectators' voices grow in excitement.
BEAR enters from a wing on the run.
SLEIGHT, who has the Frisbee, enters
from the same wing in one step and
stops. She looks around.*

BEAR *(Raises his hand.)* I'm open.

*SLEIGHT passes the Frisbee to BEAR.
BEAR turns to the opposite wing and
passes the Frisbee to an unseen player.*

SLEIGHT Hurry! We can't let Madison and Rich get ahead of us.

*BEAR and SLEIGHT exit to the opposite
wing on the run.*

GRANDMA Well! That was rather exciting, wasn't it?

JARRETT Yes, it was.

*JARRETT helps GRANDMA sit down on
the upstage edge of the blanket. He sits
next to her.*

GRANDMA The field they're playing on is marked for football, but they're using a Frisbee. What's the game?

JARRETT Ultimate Frisbee.

GRANDMA So, they're trying to do what? Carry the Frisbee into the opposing team's end zone?

JARRETT Well, complete a pass in the other team's end zone?

GRANDMA Same difference.

JARRETT Right. What do you want to eat?

GRANDMA Give me a teensie-weensie leg and a spot of potato salad.

JARRETT OK.

JARRETT puts a chicken leg and a small portion of potato salad on a paper plate.

GRANDMA (*Shaking her head.*) It's so odd seeing boys and girls playing a rough-and-tumble game like that.

JARRETT (*Handing GRANDMA her plate, napkin, and plastic utensils.*) Actually they're men and women.

GRANDMA Who says?

JARRETT Nobody important.

GRANDMA starts eating. She keeps her eyes on the game. JARRETT prepares his plate, opens the cooler, hands GRANDMA a soft drink, and takes a drink for himself. He sits next to GRANDMA and watches the game.

GRANDMA Jarrett, who are you watching the most? The men?

JARRETT Yes. I'm sorry, but that's what gay men do.

GRANDMA I don't get it.

JARRETT I think you do.

GRANDMA Oh, no. Never.

JARRETT So, you say. Who are you watching

the most? The men? (*GRANDMA looks surprised, and JARRETT shows he knows her thoughts.*) Huh! You're looking at the men.

GRANDMA Well, yes. But I'm a woman, and that's what I'm supposed to do.

JARRETT As far as I can tell, that's what I'm supposed to do, too.

GRANDMA You think two men can make a baby?

JARRETT No. But neither can an infertile, opposite-sex couple or you, even if you found a 20-year-old cutie to help you.

GRANDMA has a coughing fit.

GRANDMA (*Struggling to speak.*) Don't... (*Speaking about her cough.*) I absolutely...hate... this...(*Overcomes her fit.*) Don't be fucking insolent.

JARRETT Sorry.

GRANDMA Jarrett, I don't want to have a fight with you.

JARRETT I don't want a fight, either.

GRANDMA I am your grandmother.

JARRETT I know.

GRANDMA (*Pulling JARRETT into her and kissing his cheek.*) I love you. And I worry about you.

JARRETT I love you and worry about you.

GRANDMA I know you do.

The audience hears the players shouting to each other and the spectators getting excited. TWUNK enters on a run. He's heading for the opposite wing, but he can't get where he needs to go in time and he stops about center stage.

TWUNK *(Looking toward the opposite wing.)*
Block him!...Oh! Come on!...You gotta be kidding.

Players and spectators cheer.

Jack, you were right there. Why?

TWUNK exits.

JARRETT Grandma, I have an idea, but we need to sit closer to the game.

JARRETT helps GRANDMA stand. He moves the blanket farther downstage and helps GRANDMA to the new place and to sit.

GRANDMA Jarrett honey, while you're up, will you get me one more teensie-weensie chicken leg and another napkin?

JARRETT Sure.

JARRETT puts a leg on Grandma's plate, gets her a clean napkin, sits by her, and hands her her plate.

GRANDMA Why do you want to be closer to the game?

JARRETT So we can do some man watching, together.

GRANDMA To do what?

JARRETT We're going to watch some men shake their asses and dicks at us.

GRANDMA Well!...I've never!

JARRETT But you want to.

GRANDMA Absolutely.

SLEIGHT enters from a wing, stops, and tries to get a feel for the action of the game. TWUNK enters from the same side as SLEIGHT and stands close to her.

SLEIGHT Chuck's going to turn it around for us. I know he is.

TWUNK You think?

SLEIGHT It's a given. *(Pauses.)* There it is. We gotta go back.

SLEIGHT and TWUNK exit same wing as they entered on a run. BEAR enters from opposite wing on a run and follows SLEIGHT and TWUNK off.

GRANDMA Tell me who you like the best.

JARRETT The one I'm attracted to the most?

GRANDMA Yes.

JARRETT Oh, man, this is going to be difficult.

GRANDMA Come on. You're the one who said we're going to watch the players shake their asses and dicks.

JARRETT But I'm with my grandma.

GRANDMA Come on. Maybe we have the same tastes.

JARRETT God! What would that mean?

GRANDMA Stop stalling.

JARRETT (*Haltingly and with embarrassment.*) I tend to like men who are at least 21, so we can go drinking, but not older than 28,...and they have to have a cute face,...and they have to be slender and also fit. I'm not saying they have to be all muscles—a nice natural look is OK, but I am saying—

GRANDMA Don't tell me. Show me. Which dude playing Ultimate Frisbee down on that field is your favorite?

JARRETT Dude, huh? (*GRANDMA gives him a look that says "stop stalling."*) Well... (*GRANDMA shows she's losing patience.*) He's the one who's...(*Becoming embarrassed.*) I can't do this.

GRANDMA You started this. You will finish it. Now tell Grandma Cormack which dude you want to fuck the most.

JARRETT Whoa! Where'd that come from?

GRANDMA I'm the daughter of a coal miner, and my mother was four times tougher than my father. You've known me all your life, so don't give me that faux-shocked look of yours. Answer the question.

JARRETT OK! OK! I give up! (*Points at the field.*) He's going to cross the 50-yard line...

TWUNK enters from a wing on a run.

now!

TWUNK exits to the opposite wing. In a few seconds, he reenters, stands with arms akimbo, and takes time to decide where he needs to go.

GRANDMA *(With disbelief in her voice.)* That boy there?

JARRETT He's not a boy.

GRANDMA What else am I supposed to call him?

JARRETT I'll bet you he's at least twenty-two. Granted some people would say he's a twink, but I think he's more of a twunk.

GRANDMA Twink? Twunk? What kind of jackass words are those?

JARRETT Look, I didn't come up with the names.

GRANDMA Doesn't matter. You need to find someone with more meat on him than that.

JARRETT Wait a minute. You don't know how much meat he's got. Lots of thin guys—

GRANDMA Don't you think for one minute I don't know what you're talking about. *(JARRETT laughs.)* You listen to me. Your granddad was as thin as that boy you say you like, but that's way too skinny for my tastes.

TWUNK decides where he needs to go and exits.

JARRETT Grandma Cormack!

GRANDMA I loved your granddad, but...

BEAR enters from one wing and runs toward the opposite wing. SLEIGHT, who has the Frisbee, enters from the same wing and stops. When BEAR is just past center stage he's in the opposing team's end zone. He turns toward SLEIGHT, and she passes the Frisbee to him. Because he's scored a point, he dances with joy.

the person I'd like to fuck just caught the Frisbee in the end zone.

JARRETT What! (*Sits up straight to get a better look at BEAR.*)

SLEIGHT crosses to BEAR and they hug and cheer.

Grandma, he's huge.

GRANDMA You don't know that. Lots of—I'm going to say solidly-built men—aren't particularly well endowed.

JARRETT Oh! My god! Grandma!

GRANDMA Keep your sacrilege and your skinny-assed twinkie, twinkie to yourself.

JARRETT My what?

GRANDMA You heard me: Your twinkie, twinkie. Whatever your skinny-assed boy is. I love solid, strong men. I'm not saying grossly fat men, but some amount of fat's just fine. There's something comforting about it.

TWUNK enters. He goes to BEAR and congratulates him.

JARRETT Well!

GRANDMA Well, indeed! And may I say, my man has a fantastic ass?

JARRETT appraises BEAR'S ass.

JARRETT You may say that, and yes he does.

All players exit.

GRANDMA There. I think we understand each other a little bit better.

JARRETT Yes, we do. Now tell me, if you truly love solid, strong men—shall we say bears?

GRANDMA That suggests a good crop of body hair, right?

JARRETT Yes.

GRANDMA OK, I like that.

JARRETT If you like bears, why'd you marry skinny-assed Grandpa?

GRANDMA When we got married, I didn't fully know what type of man I liked.

JARRETT Then what happened?

GRANDMA Mr. and Mrs. Sterrenberg moved to our street.

JARRETT Mrs. Sterrenberg? Your best friend?

GRANDMA Oh, hell no! You can't be best

friends with the wife of the man you want to steal. That's insane. I always hated her. That way I could love him.

JARRETT Did you ever...?

GRANDMA Did we ever have an affair?

JARRETT Well...?

GRANDMA I think your question is highly inappropriate.

JARRETT Sorry.

GRANDMA I did my best, but as it turned out, I wasn't Mr. Sterrenberg's type.

GRANDMA and JARRETT laugh.

JARRETT I know that story well.

GRANDMA It's a crazy world, isn't it? I really don't know how the best possible matches find each other.

JARRETT I have a friend who says if you want to find out if you're compatible, you have to go to bed together and check each other out. Another thing he says is you gotta have a fuck buddy so you can experiment and learn techniques. (*GRANDMA'S expression shows JARRETT'S crossed a line with her.*) What'd I say wrong?

GRANDMA Jarrett as you know, I can talk like a coal miner's daughter and I can talk some of your talk. But I'm really not as modern as you are.

JARRETT I guess I knew that.

GRANDMA Let's just say, with me getting over a bad cold—(*Raising one eyebrow at JARRETT.*) pneumonia—and everything else we've been doing and talking about, I can only do so much in a day. Why don't we pack up and start for home?

JARRETT Sure.

JARRETT and GRANDMA start to put their garbage in one grocery bag and their leftover food in another one. Offstage the players and spectators cheer and then talk excitedly. The game is over. BEAR enters, stops, and looks around. He's waiting for someone. SLEIGHT enters, sneaks up behind BEAR, and takes hold of his hand. BEAR is surprised, and SLEIGHT kisses him on the cheek. They continue to hold hands and talk intimately. GRANDMA stops to look at them. She nudges JARRETT to look.

GRANDMA I think that's the most beautiful sight in all the world. Even you have to say it is.

JARRETT Mmm...OK, I think it's beautiful. Then I think all love is beautiful. And so it should be.

GRANDMA Yes. So it should be.

TWUNK enters. He approaches BEAR and SLEIGHT. They congratulate one another and smile. SLEIGHT places BEAR'S hand in TWUNK'S hand and steps aside. The two men embrace and

kiss. Grandma's and Jarrett's eyes widen.

JARRETT Now I think that's outrageously beautiful. What do you think?

GRANDMA Mmm...I want to say it's disappointing. *(Pauses.)* But it is kind of beautiful. *(Pauses.)*

Shit!...All love is beautiful, isn't it?

JARRETT So it should be.

GRANDMA So it should be.

All players exit. GRANDMA and JARRETT, who have packed up their picnic and blanket, follow them. GRANDMA leans heavily on her cane. She stops one time and has a coughing fit. GRANDMA and JARRETT exit.

BLACKOUT

Castle In The Mist

by Richard Clegg



sine cera: Somewhere in Time 107

Stationary

by Audrey Weigel

Rose bush
Steady, aromatic
Wind ruffles
Remains brilliant

Visitors pass
Leaning over
Fragrance
Thorns

Scampering pup
Dashes
Runs
Whimpers

Rose bush
Tall and wide
Occasional trim
Snow comes and goes

In place
Moving serenely
Hummingbird perches
Lightly

Flying away
Hovering
Wings glistening
Underbelly exposed

Morning mist
Moisture
Iridescent
Envelopes

Taking up ground
Not bound
Wielding power
Not stationary

