

sine cera

a
Di verseCi ty Wri ting Seri es
Anthol ogy

There Is A Shorter Vi ew

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This edition of ***si ne cera*** was compiled and edited by the
DWS Coordinator Joanna Sewall.
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INTRODUCTION

"We at the Community Writing Center, believe that writing has the power to unite communities and build bridges over social chasms such as economic disparity and racial intolerance. Because of this belief, we have created the DiverseCity Writing Series, which provides a way to develop writing communities, and to disperse the thoughts and emotions of people whose stories may otherwise remain untold."

This is the mission statement of the DiverseCity Writing Series (DWS)—the SLCC Community Writing Center's writing group program. Our efforts to start this program began in August 2000, when we worked with writers from local organizations in two-month writing workshops, each culminating in a publication and a public reading. During the first two years, we worked with four groups: Justice, Economic Independence and Dignity for Women; the Liberty Senior Center; The Road Home shelter; and Cancer Wellness House.

In the Summer of 2002, we decided to expand the DWS into a multi-group, year-round writing program. In March 2003, we began training volunteer mentors in collaborative writing group strategies. In April of that year, the first writing groups met. Six months later, we published *sine cera: People Are Strange*, the first anthology of DWS writing; and hosted a public reading to celebrate the participants' work and the publication. Over the past two years, the DiverseCity Writing Series has grown into a program with multiple writing groups, dedicated volunteer writing group mentors, and over 40 community writers who write and share their work within the series.

2004 was a busy year for the DiverseCity Writing Series. We welcomed several new writing groups into the program and celebrated the publication of *sine cera: Awake* and *sine cera: Unlocking My New Doors*. Currently, the DWS has seven writing groups that meet bi-weekly: the Community Writing Center group; the Salt Lake City Public Library group; the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender

Community Center of Utah group; the Literacy Action Center group; the Pathways to Recovery group; the REI environmental writing group, and our newest public group, which meets at The Daily Brews cafe. Some of these groups have been meeting for more than a year, while others have just started. But what matters is that the groups are meeting. People are writing and sharing it with others.

This June, we celebrate the fourth DiverseCity Writing Series publication, *si ne cera: There Is A Shorter View*, which illustrates the efforts and inspirations of DWS mentors and writers over the past six months.

We are pleased with our series and with the work of our writers and volunteers. We hope that, over time, the DWS will continue to grow and that our writers will continue to write. And as long as people keep writing, we will keep publishing their work because the Salt Lake community needs to hear these stories.

If you are interested in becoming a part of the DiverseCity Writing Series, either as a writer, a mentor, or a writer/mentor, contact the Community Writing Center at (801) 957-4992 or cwc@slcc.edu.

PREFACE

Sometimes life is so complicated and time so short that it is difficult to find even a minute to reflect upon everything that *is*. It is easy to become involved in planning the future, looking for an escape from the day-to-day, and lose sight of what is right in front of us. In our pursuit of what's bigger, better, faster, next, we miss life's fleeting moments—the brilliant, the poignant and the bittersweet—whose existence is dependent on being noticed and, perhaps, captured and shared.

The fourth DiverseCity Writing Series (DWS) anthology is titled **si ne cera: There Is A Shorter View**. It is a collection of written snapshots in which DWS writers share the moments that shape their lives. It is a celebration of the *now*, in other words, *the shorter view*.

The anthology features both prose and poetry, opening with pieces that explore the simple sweetness as well as the complexity and pain of love relationships. These are followed by submissions that celebrate family and friendship: vivid, textual portraits of mothers, grandfathers, sons, daughters and cherished family pets. Then, the focus turns to journeys into nature, self and spirituality. Here, writers explore the experiences that have influenced their development and individuality. They ask hard questions and, often, find themselves without answers.

And so, I invite you to read and enjoy *the shorter view*.

Joanna Sewall
DiverseCity Writing Series Coordinator
SLCC Community Writing Center

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To You, DEAR

by Terry Trigger

I know that you are the only one in my life. I want to be with you for the rest of my life.

You are the only one that makes me happy. I have been in love with you from the day that I met you.

This is the first letter I have ever written to you. I hope you understand why I didn't write one to you before. I have never written to anybody because I didn't know how to spell or read.

We've been together for 18 years. We have had our ups and downs. But no matter what has happened in our lives, I've always been with you.

Dear, you know that you have always made me happy. I'm sorry that I haven't worked for the last three years. I am going back to school to get a job, then I can get back to work.

WHAT AM I TO DO?

by Linda Winona Catmull

The sun goes on and on
The days pass slowly
The years go and come
Time in time its champion complete
Eternity is at my finger tips
Time slips by
So little done?
So much to achieve
What am I to do?
Thinking little of time
Thinking mainly of accomplishments
What have I done?
What am I doing?
Where am I going?
Time slips by.

SOLD

by Amy Veach

"My first *real* client, my first job and he tells me," she paused long enough to take a sip of her ice water, "Find me a life. Can you believe it? Not a three-bedroom bungalow, two-car garage, freeway access or good schools—*oh no*," Jean Prucault's voice squeaked, "*that* would be too easy. Find that one in the Realtor's handbook." Jonathon Keep delighted in his girlfriend's animation and smiled taking her hand. "That's my honey, other realtors sell houses, but *you*, you sell lives."

Her 40 year-old client seemed nice enough. His credit rating was good. He qualified for the better neighborhoods. Moved from D.C. for work and to be closer to his kids. All positive she thought, even from a strictly professional level. But it puzzled her, and, as she lay in bed that night listening to Jonathon's steady breathing, she couldn't get this man's request out of her mind. How do you take a house and fill it with a life? She knew it was silly to even think that she could give this stranger so much on a personal level, let alone on a professional level. Hell, she was lucky to find it herself. The covers shifted with Jonathon, and he turned facing her. His eyes were shut tightly on a dream. Stubbornly tight. Unaware that the comforter was hot, or that his arm was 102 degrees hotter against her skin, or that his 22 year-old son was getting home an hour later with company. She wouldn't be the only woman in the house tonight. Father and son were not so different. Jonathon's closed eyelids pounced back and forth. She took his hand and kissed it lightly and whispered, "I love you." A phrase new and naked in their relationship.

That following week she took her new client out to a handful of listings. The first was a 2000 square-foot Victorian, in an influential neighborhood. After showing him the patio, they stood in the fully landscaped backyard next to the trellised lilacs, "So, this is a good life? Don't you think?" He seemed more interested in the large screen TV in the family room. When he strained past the lilacs to look through the French doors at the ballgame, she knew she needed to ease him into suburbia. "I can just see you sitting out here on a summer evening with the barbecue all fired up and a cocktail in hand," she twitched nervously, "or in your case a beer." He gave her the same inevitable answer.

"No."

She was undaunted. When they said goodbye that afternoon, she maintained the positive attitude of Richard Simmons. "Gotta burn a little. Your life is still out here in one of these listings. I just know it."

The fourth month of working with him, she had an epiphany. A life meant love. And love meant a home and a place to settle all of your sentiments. A natural sales woman, Jean invited him to lunch with one of her single girlfriends. "Sara owns a bookstore," Jean bragged as they waited for their drinks. Sara was charming, smart, knew how to wear make-up and by the time lunch was served, she had told them both about her complete DVD collection of Planet of the Apes. "I've told her all about you, that you're my pickiest client, and a voracious reader," Jean affectionately patted her client's hand.

After lunch, she was so eager she waited as long as she could. Five minutes. After the three had said their goodbyes in the parking lot, she called him on his cell phone. "So?"

"Jean, you're starting to be worse than my mother," he sighed. "I've been married and divorced three times and she still thinks it's all my x-wives' fault."

"Well, I'm not giving up on you." Besides she couldn't deny that she was getting more attached to him. He was a "nice guy" and they were hard to find. She could hear the car radio in the background, as he cleared his throat. "No Jean."

"But I thought you guys really hit it off. What about all the book talk and you really sparked on the Barbara Kingsolver novel."

"That's called *conversation*, not attraction."

"It's not there," which meant, *try again*. She took the rejection with the same deference that she built up after four months of showing him empty houses. That night she made a list of all her single female friends for a showing, and added the newest divorcées to her list.

Over sweet and sour chicken she told Jonathon about her failed lunch date with her client and Sara. His back straightened, and to her he looked taller. "Why are you taking this so personally? I know this is your first client, but he sounds impossible." He scooped another bite of rice onto his fork and

managed to dip it into the sauce at the same time. “Do you really think he’ll ever find a house he’ll be satisfied with? Let alone a girlfriend.” She hated that he was right. But admitting it would be even worse.

“It’s just, I’m past the whole book learning, and the etiquette they teach you in school. I want to find it.”

“Find what?” Water splashed over the sink as she rinsed the Chinese take-out off their dinner plates.

“I’m taking all of this personally. I know am. I feel invested in this guy.” She set the two plates on the countertop and turned to look at Jonathon as he tossed the day’s junk mail in the trash. She continued, “I keep thinking if I can find this guy a life that it answers the questions. Like what is a life? And–” she opened the dishwasher and started rearranging the dishes in the rack, “It’s like playing God.”

He came up behind her, and slipped his fingers between the seam of her T-shirt and jeans.

“Well, you’re the cutest God figure I’ve seen.”

“It’s good on me isn’t it?” She turned around to face him, her chin inches from his chest. “Or just practice for when we have kids.” Her eyes teased. He leaned over her and kissed her forehead. “You’ll have better luck with your client.” Then he drifted to the sink and started rinsing his coffee mug. She stopped the water and put the utensils in dishwasher. “Oh God, do you think I’d be a controlling parent? I would just want my kids to be happy. Can’t you see little Jonathons and Jeans running around changing the world.”

“Not really.” He was aloof. She gave him an eye locking, and he answered it, “I’ve already done the kid thing.”

“You don’t want kids?” It became an accusation as much as it was a question.

“No.”

She shuddered. There it was, in a single word her life had changed. It wasn’t that she hadn’t heard it a hundred times, especially from her client, in the last four months. But she had found *her* life. A man whom she loved and, who in turn, loved her. They had already dreamed up their future, and it was together. Traveling through Tuscany in Italy, learning to surf on

the beaches of Costa Rica, going to the art galleries in Santa Fe. She just assumed. Their life together wouldn't be limited to exotic and faraway places. They would walk a path as parents, giving their kids piggyback rides, going on family camping trips and cheering on the side lines as their youngest played little league. It was all part of the completeness. It was her life. But now, the life she thought she found had become as empty as the houses she had been trying to fill.

Jonathon's eyes were wide with the natural disaster on Jean's pale complexion.

"Honey? You're upset?" He took her into his arms, into an embrace facing opposite directions. And she welcomed the distance.

"You knew that I had a vasectomy, Jean. You knew that from the very beginning." But it's still reversible she thought, *with me*.

The topic was dropped. Like a rock on a flat surface of water.

That evening her client was in good spirits at the six o'clock showing. "This one has 3,000 square feet. A three-car garage and the view is a real plus." As they stood in the living room it became evident that the horizon from the bay windows could sell this house at any asking price. Purples littered the sky and oranges stubbornly rested on Olympus Peak. It was breathtaking.

"No." He scratched his nose.

The futility of another day lost on such a promising house sent her past the line of composure. "Why?" Bitting the offense back with her upper lip, it was obvious she had taken it personally. "You can't tell me this isn't beautiful. Any average person would kill to live in a house like this. And you can."

"It's beautiful, yes, but Jean. I don't care how big the house is, where the neighborhood is, or how beautiful the view is." She stared her frustration at an overgrown hair on the tip of his nose.

He went on, "I don't know anyone here. And my son's not going to want to hang out with Dad. I've lived in big cities in neighborhoods where no one knew me. I'm tired of it." He shrugged his shoulders in resignation. "I'm not trying to make your job difficult, Jean. It's just, I want a community, a life."

That night she slept in her own bed, not for want of being with Jonathon, but for the inconvenience of their schedules. Why

get maternal now, she scolded. To her, having a baby was as frightening as being childless. Her mind drifted, and she imagined two fat Gerber babies. One with yams dried in his hair and the other with crusted breast milk on her chin.

Baby yam said, "You lost him."

Breast milk baby nodded knowingly at her, "But he's thinking about it."

Baby yam shook his crusty hair back and forth, "as he's tearing a ligament from running away. Besides," he readjusted his oversized bib, "Just because babies are bred in the culture doesn't mean you have to follow the herd." They ticked aloud in her head.

When she pulled into Jonathon's driveway that night for dinner, the babies had blurred into fragments lost between the morning shower and office errands. The tick, now dull, like something assigned but forgotten.

"You know what he wants?" Jean's voice was shaky. "I made it so complicated." She looked at Jonathon as they sat alone on the sofa in his living room. "All he wants is someone to talk to over the fence. Just a place to belong." Their shoulders touched. The darkness outside dusted the natural light from the corners of the room.

"Jean," the house was quiet, except for the hum of the motor on the fridge, "do I belong?" How could expectation be false, when she didn't even know what it was?

"You're everything to me." But it was melancholy, the kind that stays, settled beneath the completeness of two, who belong and want to belong.

"I feel a loss either way," she continued aloud to herself, as much to him. "If something happens to you, then I'm alone again. It's not that I'm afraid of being alone."

"What then?"

The motor on the fridge stopped. "It's the rest of my life."

Later that month, she stood on the porch with her client, in the shade of a maple. It was a majestic tree with fire red leaves on the crown. "These are your neighbors, Sue and Griffen." Then she led him to an adjacent porch for a dinner invitation. "This is your neighbor Bruce and his wife Kaye." Across the street, they met the Bakers, and joined a brief game of flag football. While

next door, the Krenshaws offered them cocktails. "Yes." He nodded that night as they walked to their cars. "Jean, you did it." She was as shocked as he was.

"You've found me my life."

The following day she went back to the bungalow with the maple and posted a sold sign. It was on the way home that she saw the envelope icon on the dash of her phone. She drifted into the slower lane, holding her phone against the steering wheel as she dialed her voice mail.

"Hi Jean," Jonathon sounded hopeful. They hadn't talked for month now, "Are you sure you want babies?" Then the resignation, "I miss you. Call me OK?"

She passed the 39th South exit, the same one she always took to get to his house.

To save this message dial 3, the recorded voice continued, to delete this message dial 7. She waited, then listened to Jonathon's voice one last time.

Creating a life was as hard as finding one. Especially when you have to let what you've already found go.

UNTITLED
by Holly Anderton

Feelings bottled up inside is
no way to live.
Sometimes you feel like you just want to die.
“Don’t tell him you like him
cause it won’t ever come true.
Just be polite and happy whatever
you do.”

Getting things out and getting
them solved.

That’s what it’s all about. That’s
what therapy does for you.

I AM THE ONE WHO

by Christine Wink

I am the one who...

Is unpredictable and moody

A respecter of extremes

Beholding to none and all

I am a collection of contradictions

A fish swimming forwards

And in reverse

I am the one who loves to count...

The number of times I can make you laugh

How many seconds I can cause you to writhe in ecstasy

And moments spent basking in the afterglow of our love...

I have never...

Had the chicken-pox

Broken a bone

Or gotten a nose bleed

I have never been in an accident while driving

Performed sex acts in a movie theatre

Or gone skydiving

I have never...

Been convicted of a felony

Held public office

Or born a child

STARTING OVER

by Virlee Baker

Well—here I am!

It's a new year, and we are starting new groups.

I'm beginning some new and old groups, new STAFF teaching with new people to work with.

I'm almost a year older and discovering different things about the way my mind works and my body functions.

It feels like I'm starting over—a lot of new beginnings.

I don't know about you, but I enjoy the process of "starting over," beginning something anew—getting a second chance on something, or with someone, it's like opening up a new gift. The element of surprise hangs nearby.

Anticipation and positive expectancy seem surrounded by hope, joy sprinkles its effervescence like multicolored sparkles floating without falling through the air. I can hear you now, "Gimme a break!" you say disgustedly. "What's wrong with you?"

I understand about why I pick each group. I have strong feelings about each class. So what!

I've got one primary choice as I look at my life in 2005.

I intend to fill the time of each class by giving all of me, to assure time spent; a plan designed to help me physically, emotionally, mentally, socially and spiritually develop during each course, and review material, to help enrich me, and help me add to it and determine more meaningful ways to meet my goals.

They ask us to work on making things better.

Seems like a good idea to me. What about you?

WHERE THE SIMPLE ROOTS BLOOMED

by John P. Wilkes

You'd think the cemetery an odd place for an old woman like me to seek comfort, joy or peace. If you knew that this is one of the oldest cemeteries in the county, maybe even the state, you'd find such thinking completely incredulous. I mean I'll be here for good soon enough, right?

Yet I often seek solace here. When I miss my Edward, ten years gone now (was I that much younger than him when we wed?); when I want to visit Missy, our Boston Terrier who died within hours of Ed and is the only animal buried here, right next to her poppa; when none of the kids or grandkids have called or visited in a while or I'm just plain feeling sorry for myself for getting this damn old, a walk through this graveyard lifts my spirit. How's that for irony?

Throughout my adult life, cemeteries have held an allure for me. Wherever we traveled, when we passed any final resting place, I'd nag Ed until he stopped the car. Arthur and Phillip thought it great fun to run around the markers with the dogs and play tag. I'd persuade the old goat to get my supplies from the rear compartment of our Rambler station wagon while I searched for family names and noted their positions. Then I'd return to those monuments of interest to make charcoal rubbings on special paper, spray them with Gesso, let them dry in the sun, then seal them in poster tubes. (Our old shed's still full with them.) Finally, I'd take a photo of those gravestones, gather the boys and pets and we'd move along on our journey. During the entire time I spent in my endeavor, Ed would lean on the hood of the car, eat ring baloney and Colby cheese, and smoke one cigarette after another. I sometimes feel guilty that he died of lung cancer. This was no speedy process and though he'd constantly grumble about what he called "Dorothy's Bone Dusting," Edward always stopped for me. We haven't done this in years; so many years I'm surprised I remember.

Unfortunately, I've also spent too many unhappy times in cemeteries. When Gracey, our only girl, succumbed to pneumonia giving birth to Phillip. When Arthur drowned in the Grand River.

Ten years ago, when Ed.... How this old woman's mind wanders.

I never did rubs here. That's not what attracts me to our cemetery. It's not the elaborate markers etched with romantic poems or mournful epitaphs. It's not the imposing mausoleums. It isn't the greenness of the grass or the cool shade beneath the ancient firs, oaks, maples and sycamores, nor even the robins and orioles that sing, perched upon the branches. All of these are beautiful, but I would still abide here without them. Lately I see more of what *doesn't* make me love this place than what does.

You see, Edward and I ran a greenhouse for many years. After Gracey died in childbirth, we took on Phil and Art, her sons, our grandbabies. There was no longer time for anything but them, the vegetable garden and a small patch of simple blooms. We gave up the floral business. I miss it. Still, the township asks me and our boy Phillip, the caretaker here now, to beautify the urns on those special holidays; V-J and V-A Days, Labor Day and July 4th. It's an old cemetery and many families with ancestors planted here have moved far away or simply can't be bothered.

Decoration Day is a week away. Tomorrow Phillip will deliver some flats of petunias, marigolds, coleus and green wild rice for cover. Then he'll haul over a load of our richest soil from the back yard where the vegetables once grew and our spaniel Penny is buried. While we root the plants deep in the soil with our bare hands, we'll laugh, cry and reminisce. We'll fertilize, water and wash off that urn and move to the next. When we finish each day, we'll eat ring baloney and Colby cheese

Just as me and my boy have done every year since he was five.

I hope to perform this sacred ritual well into my dotage and when I'm gone and my boy Phillip finally moves away to New York or somewhere to become a famous writer, I hope he finds time to visit his old folks' plot and plants some colors once in a while.

FRIENDSHIP

by John Tally

I'm glad for
friends that
care. People, I
can trust
when I have
troubles, they
are there.
Brothers and
Sisters on
planet earth
waiting for
Mother Nature
and Spring's rebirth.
Friends what
special people
they are.
As I look into
the night-time
sky I thank
my lucky star
for friends.

BEING TOGETHER

by Joseph E. Jimenez

In the summer of 1996, I bought three tickets for the wrestling show and two tickets for Disney on Ice. I took my sons, Eric and Joey, to the wrestling show. We got there and I bought some popcorn and some drinks so we could enjoy the show. We cheered for our favorite wrestlers to win. After the show, we bought a wrestling book and a title belt.

The next day, Nicole's mother was supposed to take her to Disney on Ice, but she didn't because she went with her friend. I took my daughter to Disney on Ice and we had a great time. I bought some snacks and drinks like I did with my sons. I also bought her a little monkey cup. It was a good show. I and my daughter had fun together.

MY FUNNY VALENTINE

by David Roestenburg

Well, it's that time of year again, a time when people begin to think of love, romance and that special someone in their lives who they would like to show in some way that they care about them and maybe even spend the rest of their lives with them. It is because of this that I am going to share this story with you. It doesn't necessarily have to do with love and romance, but more a unique way of telling someone what you are thinking about them on Valentine's Day.

When I was in my teens, I had this book about different types of codes that were used in the military and for other reasons. It was from this book that I got the idea to send Valentines to some relatives that were written in code. So, I got some Valentine's Day cards and, on the back of each one, I wrote "Happy Valentine's Day" and who it was from in code and then, below that, what letter in the alphabet each code symbol stood for. I then went over to my sister and brother-in-law's house and left my cards on the front porch, rang the doorbell and ran quickly back to my house. Later on that night, one of my nephews who lived next door came over and told me how much he liked his card and that his dad was still trying to decipher the message that I had written in code on the back of each one. Needless to say, I was happy to hear that and it turned out to be one of the most special times of my life.

YOOHOO AND OTHER CAUSES OF CANCER

by Rob Luckau

I knew I had some somewhere. My monthly care packages usually contained them, though I wasn't sure if I had seen them in the last one. I fished through my cupboards, past the packages of Ramen, the probably fermented boxes of apple juice, all the way to the back and, covered in dust, there it sat, a six pack of Yoohoo.

I was introduced to this chocolate drink during my brother's wedding in Pensacola, Florida. In fact, all of my memories of the week contain beef jerky, Yoohoo and a wedding ceremony. I thought it to be a glorious day, the day Yoohoo appeared on the shelves of my local supermarket. My mother, when visiting me at my apartment at Newcastle-upon-Tyne, would bring me some along with other food items to keep me eating, as mothers do.

I pulled the six-pack out from the cupboard and dusted it off. It was warm of course, but that didn't matter. What did matter was that I could not find an expiration date. I'm far too neurotic to ingest anything that may even come close to its expiration date. I searched all over the bottle, but found nothing printed that would set me at ease. I did, however, find a 1-800 number and, as I had nothing better to do, I picked up the phone.

I soon learned that Yoohoo does not expire. "There are certain vitamins and minerals that will go off in six months," the customer service lady explained, "but Yoohoo is still safe to drink." So, if this is true, Yoohoo was going to become my drink of the Apocalypse.

Confident that I was not going to taste curdled milk, I promptly opened a bottle and chugged away. Something did cross my mind however: "What is this indestructible, imperishable substance doing to my body?" "It's probably giving me cancer," I joked in my thoughts, "but it sure tastes good."

It was at this point that my mother arrived. I knew she was coming on this day, but it had slipped my mind. My father was with her, which was strange as he was usually working the days she would make the drive up to Newcastle.

She and my father walked up the steps to my living room, something they hated doing. They always complained about me having an upstairs apartment. My mother was holding a box of "provisions," as my father called them. She brought the box into

my kitchen and began unpacking, handing me things as she went. The third or fourth item out of the box was the prized six-pack of Yoohoo. She held on to the Yoohoo as she sat down at my kitchen table, placing it in her lap. She looked troubled, sad. My father came into the room looking like he was going to make an announcement. He certainly did. There in my kitchen, with the Yoohoo sitting on my mother's lap, he told me my mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer.

The city of Newcastle once thrived on the shipbuilding and coal mining industry. Unfortunately, years ago, all of that work ended bringing a new age of poverty and unemployment. The only thing that could bring a smile to the face of a Newcastle resident nowadays was a pint of their famous Brown Ale and their beloved Newcastle United winning a football match at St. James' Park, something they were having a tough time doing lately.

On that day, as on every match day, the city was empty. Every ticket holder in town went to support their team. Throughout the game, wherever you were in the city and especially in my apartment, 15 minutes walking from the stadium, you would know when something happened because you would hear the triumphant or saddened roar of over 50,000 people. On that day, with my parents in my kitchen and the periodic shouting from the stadium permeating the city, I felt as if those fans were my own personal chorus of approval and disapproval.

"Now," my father started, "we don't know how serious her condition is."

At that moment a joyous roar floated in from the distant fans. Someone must have scored a goal.

"But that's because the doctors aren't sure how long she has been carrying the cancer cells."

A roar of disappointment sounded, must have been a near miss.

"Are you going to have some kind of treatment?" I asked my mother.

"Well," she hesitated, "the doctors say that they are going to avoid performing a mastectomy."

A gasp of anticipation mixed with horror whooshed through. The away team must have the ball close to our goal.

"But they are going to give me a series of chemotherapy treatments."

A roar of anger and disgust resounded. The away team just scored.

Throughout the 1980s my family lived in West Berlin. Communism was rife in the east and at times the relationship between the two cities was sour. Not sour enough, however, to restrict members of the western occupying forces from coming over to purchase their cheap products, which any French, American or English person had the privilege to do once per month. My mother was on some sort of diet at this time. She had tried many different types of diets since the idea first cropped in her head, but nothing seemed to work for her until she made a terrific discovery: diet pills that actually worked.

She found these pills at an East German pharmacy. No prescription was required and she could purchase as many bottles as her dieting heart desired. Not long after she started taking the pills, I walked into the kitchen one night and saw her putting something into her mouth.

"What are you eating?" I asked with as much interest in my mother's business as a 16 year-old could muster.

"I'm not eating anything," she swallowed "I'm taking my diet pill."

"You're on a diet?"

"Yeah, what's wrong with that?" She filled her glass up again at the sink.

"Nothing. Does that pill even work?"

"I don't know," she drank, "But it sure tastes good."

She claimed that they tasted good because they gave off a sweet flavor and zinging sensation if you left them on your tongue for long.

After about a month of taking the pills daily, they started working. Those diet pills from East Germany, with unknown ingredients and probably without any safety regulations, started to shed the pounds off my mother quite remarkably. There are pictures taken of her after having lost the weight that show just how thin she became, almost as thin as her chemotherapy ravaged body towards the end of her life. It was this memory from

Berlin, among many others that played in my head as I stood silently in my kitchen after my father made that announcement. It was as if I was searching for some kind of clue, some kind of answer as to how this could be happening.

From that day, it took five years for the cancer to take my mother's life. Five years of wondering when it was all going to end. Five years of trying to hide the sadness in your eyes every time you looked at her. Five years of Newcastle United experiencing some of their greatest losses in their 112-year history. Five years without drinking Yoohoo. Not long after I was told the bad news, I went off Yoohoo. Every time I saw a six-pack of Yoohoo, I was instantly taken back to that day in my kitchen.

It's important to remember that my mother's last five years were not a constant battle against pain and misery. Many things happened in the life of our family and in life generally. My mother continued to go about her business of collecting just about everything, two of my siblings were married, a few grandchildren arrived on the planet, birthdays were celebrated, I graduated from university, a new president was unofficially elected, a war began, Newcastle United got a new coach and began having a few good games and Yoohoo came out with a new flavor: Double Fudge. I was still abstaining though.

Unfortunately, the strongest memories I have of my mother are from the last week of her life. She was hospitalized at Harrogate District Hospital in North Yorkshire. She was very thin and pale. Most of her hair was gone. She had deep purple blotches on her breastbone trailing up to her throat, an effect of the cancer. She was attached to a morphine drip that injected a new dose every 30 minutes. She wore an oxygen mask constantly, a vital signs reader attached to her continuously beeped and she could barely open her eyes or even speak.

The hospital was short staffed, most national health hospitals are, so I and the rest of my family took it upon ourselves to try and get our mother to eat something. Two weeks prior to being hospitalized, my mother lost her ability to eat solid food, or her interest anyway. The only thing that we could give her was one of these meals in a can called 'Ensure', a thick mixture of nutrients with a chocolate or fruity flavor.

"Are you hungry mom?" I asked. I knew the answer.

"No," she replied over the hiss of the oxygen.

"Well have a drink of this anyway."

"What is it?" She asked. The hum of the morphine injection sounded.

"It's a drink called Ensure, it's chocolate flavored."

"What's in it?"

"I don't know, looks like a lot of stuff," I drank from the can and grimaced, "but it sure tastes good," I lied.

It soon reached a point where no amount of Ensure or anything else for that matter was going to do a bit of good. It reached that point where everyone in the room knew that it was just a matter of hours or even minutes.

The night she died, I was at my parents' house with the rest of my brothers and sisters. We had developed a routine of waking up in the morning, going to the hospital, surrounding our mother, saying positive words to each other, returning to our parents' home for dinner around 6 in the evening and then returning to say good night by 10 o'clock. It was during our break for dinner that she decided to go. We all hurried out to our car and back to the hospital where everyone took their turn entering our mother's room to see her in her final state. I had no intention of seeing her lifeless. However, I was urged by my father to "really see her" one last time. I wasn't sure what he meant by that, but I soon found out.

When I entered her room all of the noises I associated with her pain and discomfort were gone. The oxygen wasn't hissing, the morphine drip wasn't humming, the vital signs monitor was no longer beeping and in that silence all I saw was my mother lying on her bed peacefully. My sadness was replaced by a subtle happiness as I thought to myself that where ever she was now, I could be sure she was glad it was all over. So was I.

The next morning I decided to go out for a walk. I left the house without speaking to anyone and headed into town. I wandered around, thinking of the events of the past week and certainly the event of the last evening. I walked past a pub, an Irish place called Scruffy Murphy's. The volume of the TV was bursting out of the doors. It was the pre-game analyst chatter for

a match between Newcastle United and Arsenal. I entered the pub, ordered a Pepsi and sat down at one of the tables. It was my hope that the game would take me out of my thoughts and feelings for a while. Newcastle ended up beating Arsenal that afternoon 5 to nil, an incredible and dominating win. It seemed that the black cloud that hovered over Newcastle United for the past five years was dissipating.

When I returned home, I encountered my brother Jon in the kitchen. He had just been out himself to the grocery store and purchased a number of items.

“Look what I found.” He was dangling a six-pack of Yoohoo by his thumb and finger.

“They have a new flavor,” he continued, “Double Fudge.”

He pulled a bottle off the ring.

“Did you know that this stuff never expires, so who knows what’s in it and what it’s doing to you,” I said, pulling off a bottle for myself.

“I don’t know,” he said in between gulps, “But it sure tastes good.”

It sure did.

DO WE NEED GOD, DOES GOD NEED US?

by Diana Lee Hirschi

The dynamic between God and us is interdependent. We need God. He is our one reliable source of unconditional Love. God needs us. We are the Beloved Ones, the recipients of His unconditional Love.

If we see God as Love, not as Force, the reciprocity between the Lover and the Beloved takes on a whole new meaning. This relationship is one based on mutual respect. Respect is due God, not because of his Power, but because of the Love with which we are surrounded. We dance with God in a partnership of awe and wonder, not of fear. God respects us because without the Beloved there can be no Lover.

God needs us because without us, God is impotent.

Simone Weil, the French mystic who fled the Nazis during World War II, said that God presents himself to man as Power or Perfection; He then leaves it for us to choose. Scripture exhorts us to be perfect even as our Father in Heaven is perfect. I see these two examples as using the term “perfection” to mean “love.” If we see God as Power, we respond with obedience, but not necessarily with respect. God may be the Creator, for which we might owe Him his due, but devotion is hollow when motivated by fear.

To see God as Perfection is to see God as the Lover. When believers are told “be ye perfect,” it means to Love one another even as God loves His Beloved Ones. We cannot be perfect in the literal sense of flawlessness, but we can love.

Albert Einstein said that this is the most important question we can ask about the Universe: *Is it a friendly place?* I choose to see the world this way, to believe it is a friendly place. I embrace the contradictions, the paradox of human life. This has led me to unlikely places for a white middle-class woman of privilege. I spent the better part of a year living in a tent in the Nevada Desert witnessing for peace at the gates of the U.S. nuclear test site. I have monitored the train shipments of nuclear weapons components. I have tried, often unsuccessfully, to put the Gandhian principle of *Ahimsa*, “Do No Harm,” into practice both with the guards at the gates of federal facilities and with other peace activists.

I consider George W. Bush to be the worst president in American history. However, to vilify him and blame him for the country's woes and the occupation of Iraq is to dodge my responsibility as a citizen. To speak truth to power with love is a constant challenge. On the first Thursday of the month I stand with my community of Quakers on the federal building plaza as we hold in our hearts both the victims and the perpetrators of war.

God is our Lover and we are His Beloved Ones. He expresses his Love through us as we strive to love each other. God needs to embody His Love through our interactions with each other—expressing Himself as Lover. We need God to embrace us in the safety and nurturing of his Love; thus, Lover and Beloved are both fulfilled in this eternal dance.

I Do Not Know

by Jimmie L. Freeman

I am writing a story about the things that I see going on, thinking about how to do them. I wonder how to do things that I do not know. If I could do it, I would like to. I would like to do everything for the fun of it. I want to learn how to run that hard word program for my computer just for the fun of it. I want to learn how to read the software better, because four years ago I had a dream about how to run a computer. That dream came true, so my goal now is to get better.

PROMPTINGS

by Raymond G. Briscoe

Three stories to make a point that promptings do occur and should be listened to.

Saturday morning I was reading the paper, not fully dressed. My neighbor had surgery just a few days ago and the thought entered my mind that I should go see him. I put on a shirt, combed my hair and walked across the street. It was still early, about 9:30, but late enough to be socially acceptable. I rang the doorbell and his wife opened the door. The surprised look on her face elicited a comment.

"Is there something wrong," I asked?

Her husband had tried to get out of bed and had fallen to the floor. He could not get up. He is a large man and she was not strong enough to do the job. The two of us got the unfortunate man comfortably in bed.

We visited for a few minutes and we both knew that I was not there by accident.

When I was teaching at Westminster, a second opportunity to help occurred. It was a little more spectacular for me because the day before I had had some special training on how to be efficient. I came to my office determined to follow the organized procedures to keep me from wasting time. I made my lists for the day's activities and worked the list in an orderly fashion.

In the middle of the morning I had a thought that I should go to the bookstore. I resisted! It had no purpose and would be a waste of time. The prompting intensified until I dropped my efforts for the day and made my way across the plaza.

I met a student I had a few months ago, looking through the books, who now lived in another state.

"What are you doing here," I asked?

"Just picking up a few things I need," he rejoined.

"You have lost a lot of weight," I commented, "How did you do it?"

He turned and looked straight into my face and with saddened eyes said, "My wife is divorcing me."

I was a professor of Behavioral Sciences and he was student for whom a relationship had developed. I invited him to my office

and listened to his sad story. I suggested counseling and helped him find professional help. With the contacts made that day, a marriage was saved.

The third story came when I had to interview some people in Knoxville, Tennessee. I had not taken time to make motel arrangements and that dominated my mind as the plane landed at the small airport. I quickly rented a car and proceeded to locate a motel.

I open the trunk to learn I had forgotten to get my bags. I hurried back to the airport and headed for the baggage area.

On the way down the corridor I saw a young woman standing next to a pay telephone with a little one year-old playing at her feet. Her head was bowed, her shoulders slumped and her body language suggested difficulties.

I stopped and slowly approached, "Can I be of help?"

She looked up and tears were falling from her cheeks. She did not speak and I persisted.

"What is the matter, surely you will let me help."

Slowly she choked out her story. "I married my husband here in Tennessee. I am Jewish and my family abandoned me because he is a Baptist.

"We have a little girl and she will be one year-old this week. I wrote to Grandma and she decided she was going to come see her granddaughter no matter what the family thought. She was supposed to be on a plane arriving here."

"Why are you crying," I asked?

"She is coming from New York and her plane ticket is to Nashville instead of Knoxville. It is supposed to land in the next half-hour and there's no one there to meet her."

Her tears flowed again as she sobbed out the sad tale. The thrill of seeing Grandma and sharing her little one was now just a disaster.

"Come with me, let's see what we can do."

She picked up her darling little girl and we rapidly made our way to the Delta ticket counter. I engaged the agent in an understanding of what was happening and what was at stake. One look at the bereft woman and she knew it was a true story. She

immediately got on the phone and came back with wonderful news.

"The pilot has her on board and someone will meet her at the airport." Then she added the unexpected, "There is a commuter flight from Nashville to Knoxville in just two and one-half hours. Do you want to wait for her here or come back to the airport when she arrives?"

The airline went beyond what would ordinarily be expected. I left the airport with my bags, assured there is a power prompting many of the things we do.

ASK FOR HELP

by Erik P. Hanson

A tragic occurrence on July 4 created motivation for this headline. James Swinemore of Cloudcover, Alaska found himself driving a rental car through the Mohave Desert on his way to Salt Lake City, Utah. Reports from Twenty-nine Palms, California say temperatures reached 121 degrees on the July 4th he was traveling.

Apparently, the car's tire blew while on Interstate 5. Mr. Swinemore had no tools, nor a spare in order to get moving. At some point, the vehicle's coolant leaked out and while in an attempt to cool himself, this man started the engine for the air conditioner and blew the engine. His shoes were found next to the automobile by the Sheriff, filled with sand and a hair piece.

The irony is that twelve cars traveling along I-5 for the annual celebration in Palm Springs reported that they stopped and offered to help. Their offers were all refused. Palm Springs was only 9 miles away. Elton John and his limousine were among the twelve.

INTEGRITY

by Anne-Marie Ford

Integrity is being honest with yourself and others. You don't make excuses for your errors. You need to accept your mistakes and be honest in the things you do. Don't take office supplies home that don't belong to you or anything that doesn't belong to you, even a pencil or a pen.

It's easy to compromise—thinking it's not important to return things, but integrity is being honest in big things and little things.

WHO ARE YOU? WRITTEN TO THE ABUSER

by Donna Nish

Who are you?

How do you suffer?

Things must have been hard for you to have you
turn into an abuser.

Oh, I see you now,
a child neglected,
abused, suffering...

You were abused, neglected then you became the
Abuser.

You find it easy to abuse now. The fear that is
always with you.

There is power in anger.

There is power in control.

There is power in abuse.

It feels so much better to feel the power of
unrighteous dominion.

Anger

Power

Control

I disengage.

I become the Observer.

My stewardship is the Child inside me. My job is
to make her happy and take good care of her.

Who are you?

I do not know.

But this I do know. I did not cause your problem.

I can't control your problem. I can't cure your
problem.

I choose

to walk away

and find

something to enjoy.

THE BAR

by Mark Schroeder

I saw the sign from the highway, got off at the next exit and headed back the half mile of dirt road. It was just what I was looking for. An older, white building of vertical clapboard, it had that homey, country look that said "Howdy" and "Come on in!" After seventeen nights of singing in bars just like this one, I needed a busman's holiday and my throat craved the soothing sympathy of cold beer.

The sign outside creaked as it swung from its chains in the breeze. On it was a crude painting of a pair of tan leather gloves, worn and dirty; still in the shape of the hands that wore them, and bent around a coil of rope. A western hat sat beside the gloves and rope. Over the painting was written "Day's End."

The rain was a silent shroud that cloaked the night in a lonely chill. Unconsciously, I pulled my hat down on my head and my slicker tight around me. The street lamp out front cast a puddle of dim yellow light in the parking lot.

This was my first night of freedom in three weeks. I was a girl on the loose and in need of some fun. One more song about broken dreams and heartaches would have put me in a tailspin, heading full throttle for a blue moon. What gets to me is singing about a man crying in his beer while watching a man crying in his beer. And I want to tell him to get his ass off that bar stool, and go knocking door to door until he finds someone with real needs, and then gives them that twenty bucks he was going to blow on two more pitchers of self-pity.

Maybe it's really myself I'm disgusted with. I don't feed the swine but my singing helps set the mood for a night of wallowing.

All this went through my mind like a string of ticker tape, between the old truck and the front door of the Day's End. As I put my hand on the door I saw a painted-over sign on it that said "NO EXIT," and I wondered what that was all about.

I stopped just inside the door, waiting those few vulnerable moments for my eyes to adjust. It smelled good in here, like French fries and cowgirl perfume layered over the stale but reliable odors that marked it as the territory of sweaty cowboys and booze.

Before I could see, I heard two women's voices giggling from where I thought the bar should be. One of them sung out, "Hi honey," in a voice like an old friend. I guessed it was meant for me. I could feel a smile moving the corners of my mouth in the darkness. I thanked her silently.

When I could see again, I looked in the direction of where I had heard the voice. Two women were looking at me and smiling. One of them was dark-skinned with long black hair. She was thick and squat, with a moon face that was all teeth and dimples when she smiled. The woman beside her was taller, a bouffant blonde, delicate, with wisps of hair framing her thin, pale face. Her eyes were kind and steady.

They looked comical sitting there together, Day and Night keeping happy company. I laughed to myself as I walked into the warmth of their presence and sat down at a bar stool beside the shorter one. Her name was Gladys and her friend was Chelsea. I was already primed to like these two and I wasn't disappointed.

I found out during the course of our conversation that I was being used. The two were waiting on a couple of guys they had met the week before and the guys were bringing a third gent, a brother to one of them. Gladys and Chelsea showed up a couple of hours early to get "relaxed and comfortable" as Chelsea put it. I didn't care much for the idea of a 'sort of' blind date. But I was having a ball talking and laughing with my two new-found friends, so I stuck it out.

It was eerie how much I felt like I had just run into two girlfriends from the past. We giggled our way through a couple of pitchers and the night was taking on the feel of a little girls' sleepover. It seemed surreal in the atmosphere of the bar. Selfishly, I had begun to wish that the 'boys' wouldn't come at all.

I had barely noticed the other customers in the bar. During a lull in the storm of girl-talk, I took the chance to look around me. At the far end of the bar were two cowpokes in their own world of conversation. One was talking through a face of seriousness and using his hands for emphasis while the other listened intently, nodding in agreement on occasion and mumbling short sentences. Their relaxed and soft-spoken words drifted through a light haze

of smoke and landed on my ears like the muffle of distant thunder.

A couple sat at a table in the corner by the juke box. His eyes were like polished coal as he held her hand and flirted in that relaxed way that familiar couples do when the spark of their desire is always within easy reach. Her back was to me so I couldn't see her face. She moved, smooth and rhythmic, in an arc of which he was the focus, encouraging seduction.

The jukebox in the corner sang hot and sassy, then low and mellow and now a country gospel song, taking us from the sinful, hormonal heat of a hot-blooded Friday night, to the naked glare of repentant light streaming through the holy window of a Sunday morning. "Hold on, hold on, hold on to God and not the way of the world."

At first, the accompanying voice that came from a nearby table sounded like part of the recording, a deep and rich bass, smooth enough to melt chocolate and with the power of a rumbling wave. With the help of the dim light, I could make out an elderly gentleman with long white hair, in braids on both sides of his head. He was Native American, probably a Flathead since this was their stomping ground. In front of him was a water glass with ice and a straw and a half-empty bottle of coke. He sang with a practiced voice and a fervent yearning, like he was looking in the eyes of God while he sang. A chill went up my backbone.

His hands were folded in front of him and he sang to them without looking up. When the song was finished I watched him get up slowly, putting both hands on the table for assistance. I caught a glimpse of his glistening, coal-black eyes as he rose, turned and walked toward the jukebox. There were tears in his eyes. He looked straight ahead of him as if no one else was in the room. After making his selections, he returned to the table in the same fashion, but he remained standing there beside his chair.

When the music started again, I watched him shift his weight slightly from one leg to the other, in time to the music. Then he began bending each knee in turn and shuffling his feet, one at a time, a few inches out, a few back. With his lower body moving to the music, he brought his arms up in a dancing position as if he

had a partner. One of his giant hands held her imaginary waist and one held her hand out, in his.

He was dancing the two-step. He held his head high and looked out and up with his eyes only open halfway and tears streaming down both cheeks. His lips moved slightly in a murmur or a tremble—maybe both.

The two cowpokes at the end of the bar were still talking. The one who was facing this way nodded toward the Indian and his friend turned around for a look. He laughed and then turned back around toward his buddy.

Something about this big Indian moved me. He looked so lost and alone. I watched through misty eyes until I could sit still no longer. I got up from my stool and walked over to the elderly gentleman. Extending my arms with my hands open, I waited for him to accept my offer to dance. At first, he looked surprised. And then he looked around him as if he had just awoken from a dream and needed time to adjust to the strange world in which he found himself.

I reached out and touched his hand. He looked into my eyes with a steady gaze, as if looking for something to hold on to, as if looking for a piece of reality he could trust—an unmoving rock in the storm. There was a child behind the windows of the big man's eyes.

He took my hand in his and put his other arm around my waist. Without a word, without breaking the spell of his gaze, we danced. We danced to songs about loss and sadness and dying embers and the grief that's left behind.

The sadness rested its weight on me. I felt dizzy and burdened and I wanted to stop but the big man held me up with his eyes and his strong arms and hands as the rivers of our tears continued to flow.

Images came to me, forgotten, unbidden images. Wrenched from the mire at the bottom of my consciousness, they floated to the surface and heaped themselves onto my growing pile of grief. And they wouldn't stop. My body convulsed as I let go of the last ounce of resistance, the last remnant of a desire to stuff the overwhelming sadness of a little girl who lost both her parents in a fire.

I felt my knees go limp. I was about to fall. The big man held onto me and eased me into one of the chairs at his table. With my head in my hands, I sobbed.

The flood of tears carried more memories in tow, and more tears. It was the pain of remembering pain, like a sword slicing through scars to open old wounds. I wanted the hurt. I wanted to hold it in close, like a man welcoming his enemy to control his fear. I wanted to hold it in close, to squeeze the pain until it turns in on itself and dies of its own device.

But the pain refused to be held, refused to be contained. It slipped from my grasp here only to renew itself over there. I let go and sank into a deep sense of sadness and loss, beyond tears, beyond feeling.

At that moment, the Native American reached over and placed his hand on mine. He began singing softly in his native tongue. In his voice I heard the lilting song of birds in still morning air, the rush of wind through grasses, and the laughter and prayers of children. His singing laid itself like a soothing blanket of mist on my river of sorrow. In the shelter of his song, the raging storm of pain within me recognized its own rhythm and was calmed.

Tears filled my eyes again. But these were the tears of spring rain and bubbling waters. And through them, I felt the warmth of sunshine and human touch. Behind my closed eyes, I saw death in its new shapes and colors: purple crocuses and green grass and the white down of chicks. And the visions and sounds in my head were those of hope.

When I opened my eyes, the old Indian was smiling. His eyes glistened like black, polished glass. We looked at each other without words. Then he put a hand on my shoulder, rose and walked toward the exit. When he opened the door, he looked down at the painted-over sign. The old man paused and turned to me, smiled once more...was gone.

ST. JOHN

by Ross Hammons

The dragon by incest
Upon the womb
And breast of goddess sprang,
Michelangelo was left at his post

Innocent at art,
Was his love,
Was to teach his love
And serve her art

At the first things,
The dragon spoke,
At what matter he left
To serve his cause

If it were at incest
The dragon spoke
No more force
But bent spear

Robed in sorcery,
The devil's spy
Bent to reduce
Incest to matter.

Bracing his step,
Michelangelo met
The charge that left his wife

Incest the bath,
From which the dragon sprang
Looked for its like,
In damnation born

Michelangelo, raised correct
Had no incest in his step

Elder sorcery, cast in three
Did the devil brace,
All to temptation, Michelangelo's
Will to face.

No taint of the new sin,
Was found in the saint called Taliesin

Without incest the child
Was born, meek and mild.

They came to ask,
What business be,
At the old angel's treachery.

'Do you incest?"
Was the devil's spy?
On that rock broke the
Devil's gist

A new sin espied,
At the angel's bed to bride

"We are untainted" called the nine,
And watched at Babylon,
The devil's bride.

All around, the realm of dead,
Spread its wings about the head.

Of the judge anew war damned
Against incest, left its mark in sand

The angels then, they did decree.
Incest was sin and treachery.
For months the order, did they brace,
The worldly sin embrace,

The devil's cause was now to know,
Incest came to heavy blow.

At devil's cause, it came to court,
No incest was law
And soldier's fort.

A vision of hell, and majesty,
There were no causes for the free,
Nonetheless the devil's cause
Was bound to be
Robed in darkness majesty

With angel's dread,
The law came to pass,
With few the fighter's blood to last

No incest was Michelangelo's new law
And so to complete artist wife,
A rock for temptation to break its strife.

TORN AND TATTERED

by Shirley Draper

A mother and five little kittens dropped
off in the center of the road
Lost their mother
All torn and tattered
Not even a month old
Three found homes and two didn't
I arrived all torn and tattered today
Because I was up all night with two little
kittens.

MY MASTER'S LIFE

by LaRayne R.

My Master opens up the basement door fully dressed, ready for a trip to Pathways, and we have a talk. I usually meow a greeting and she pets and picks me up, carrying me while I let her stroke me. She feeds me good, dry cat food. Then, I allow her to pet me while I eat. She then goes into the other room and plays with Sassie, my rascally little brother, who likes to tease her. She later comes back down to kiss us goodbye and gives us a hug. About 9 hours later she returns, changes clothes, opens up the door and, if I decide to give her a present, she thanks me and heaps a lot of praise on me. She plays with us again, then heads upstairs. Sometimes I go up with her, sometimes not. She comes down again later to feed us dinner, usually a can of some juicy, smelly meat dish. Petting us again, saying hello, she leaves us alone to eat and heads upstairs to eat her own dinner. Later, after she has finished eating she watches TV in her room while I snooze on the foot of the bed. Once in a while, I will get up from my napping and pitter-pat up her legs to press my cold, wet nose on hers or whisper in her ear—especially when she has a book or newspaper in her hands to get her attention. She usually will put down the paper or book and pets me and she knows just the right places to make me purr like a lion roaring in the wind. She has a special brush for me that massages me while she strokes gently down my body. My Master is very busy, but still finds time to take care of Sassie and me and to show us how much she loves us. The feeling is mutual.

THE DESK

by Julie Zych

The desk. The single most obvious connection to work there is. A desk does nothing else but imply work; it is designed to hold work by cradling all the equipment needed to complete assignments. However, components such as computers and phones all can be linked to entertainment, but not the desk. Try as you may, dressing up your work space with personal knick knacks does not disguise this fact. The desk is what it is, work piles up on the desk, the bills get tossed on the desk and children begin formal learning from a desk. We have help desks, information desks and reference desks. Forgot your razor? Need more shampoo? Head on down to the Front desk. No one can escape the desk.

Adopting the notion that it takes work to find peace, an adventure is sought and an attempt to escape the desk is calling. After all, without work, being away from it would not mean as much. Without the responsibility of our occupations, leisure time would blend and it could be said that if you are not leaving something behind, you are not getting as much out of being away; the bigger the escape the better the trip and the more you need the break the more you anticipate the trip. It's been said that "you can't take it with you." If so, then why do we program our computers to auto-reply to emails and our voicemails to announce the date of our return? To a degree, the desk and its supporting cast of characters still work for us in our absence. We need work for all the obvious reasons, but most importantly we need it to give us an excuse to get away. When setting out on an excursion, leaving it behind is the point, but hitting the road for that journey is all the better when you have something to leave behind. Without one the other is not so sweet, so, to coin another phase, "don't quit your day job." We may not be able to escape it, but it is critical that we do our best to get away from it.

I, outdoor enthusiast, hereby bestow my desk complete with files, rolodex and assorted office equipment. I seek adventure and wide open spaces. I leave you to decipher my passwords and respond to those interruptive ring tones. Do not cry for I am in a better place. A place where the air is thin, yet I breathe better, taking in big gulps just to taste the difference. I will seek a place no one else is and pretend I am the first to get there. To sit in that

stillness and wonder how it is possible for everything to be so quiet, so motionless, and so perfect.

I want to click with my inner explorer instead of clicking the Internet Explorer. Sniff the air instead of the white-out. And I prefer the hours of dawn to dusk instead of 9-5. I am seeking the perfect peak to see the sun dip behind the mountains, casting shades Crayola wishes they could duplicate and later counting the colors the jumping flames create on the firewood. It's time to Google at something rather than *for* something. To make my camera my new window to the world and surf the digital images retracing my steps to freedom and leaving the stock quotes, sports scores and breaking news back on the desk.

When I return, the red-orange dust that is airbrushed to the side of my car will leave passengers wondering and their cars jealous. The dust will defy rain and by-pass the car wash so it can serve as a temporary bumper sticker with a permanent message of inspiration. A dust that speaks volumes simply by being tattooed above my wheel wells. The residual dirt will translate into an adventure had, a story to be told or a memory to savor. That same dirt will be stuck to my shoes and stain my socks, both serving as scars, telling tales of time well spent.

Upon returning, the absence from the desk has not made my heart grow fonder. A shower may have washed away the vacation leftovers, but rolling my chair back behind the desk I can again taste a grit, but this time it is the grit of work. The type that lingers and hides in your skin, the type you reluctantly chew. A grit that is much harder to swallow in this office environment versus a natural one. With each message returned and question answered, another shackle clamps me in and I start to suffocate behind my familiar confines. The trap has been set and I am the prey, unable to escape, I opt for survival. The only hope is for a quick accumulation of vacation days with a new excursion to plan and set on the horizon. I must bide my time and wait my turn and for now as the papers and to-do lists pile up; daydreams of that trip will have to suffice me.

CRYSTAL TOP

by Frank Moxley

As in a dream, we walked slowly through the enchanted forest.
Our feet never touch the ground.

Magic was in the air, and we used it.

Virgins of old made good companions, as we alighted over the
forest floor, creatures of earth were numerous without count,
including the famed unicorn.

Thirsty for knowledge, forever learning, we search for
immortality.

The mist is thick, hovering above. The moon is full, just as you
would expect it to be, yet treason is in our hearts.

We go on as the night progresses, our way is clear.

Lifting up to the crystal top so we can see, planets revolve and
stars shine-on into infinity, yet what is our crime?

SHADOWS FROM THE CAVE OF LASCAUX

by David Gravelle

"To become oneself is so exhausting that I am as others have made me."
--Henri Cole, *Self-Portrait*

I see my mannish profile,
In the shadow against the wall.
I recline and read and,
In the light of a bedside lamp.

In the shadow, I see the point
Of my bald, receding head,
as it pushes back
from my too thick brow.

I see now that Madame was right.
When teaching a lesson
About the Cave of Lascaux,
She pointed to my head.

Even my little boy's head was a perfect example
Of a pre-historic cave man's.
Yes, madame la maitresse was and will
Always be right.

I am what I am made of.
And the ink cast against the stone
Gives the same impression of the artist
As this shadow against my bedroom wall.

In the shadow, as in the cave,
There is an ancient sadness,
An ancient acceptance,
An ancient resignation.

I want to rest, to recline
And to gaze upon my own shadow.
Not so much to see,
And not so much to realize.

And an ancient exhaustion
Rests in my primitive bones.
I will never be given to the
Peace of rest.

I am what others have made me.
Tired with exhaustion, not exertion.
And a wish that others
Could have made me more.

STARS!

by Marylee C. Clarke

Stars are big and little. They are all gases and are millions and millions of miles away. Even though on a clear night and Luna, the moon, is full and bright. They make special pictures by the stars. The Little Dipper and the Big Dipper. They have many many shapes and lots of names. I was taught when someone goes to heaven there is a special star for everyone to talk to so you aren't so lonely and still feel close to your loved ones and our Heavenly Father in Heaven.

THE CRIPPLES OF KABUL

by Danny Quintana

When I told my family and friends I was going to Afghanistan to help deliver wheelchairs, they were certain I had finally gone over the deep end. But, if we don't add excitement to our lives, we stagnate. Having traveled to Costa Rica and Mexico with the Mobility Project, I knew the trip would be reasonably safe. The Mobility Project is a non-profit group of humanitarian volunteers who travel to various poor countries and fit people in wheelchairs. This organization has given away thousands of wheelchairs in 12 countries.

The Mobility Project is the only organization directly delivering wheelchairs to the poorest of the world's poor despite the corrupt governments they deal with, certainly not because of them. They fit poor people in wheelchairs all over the world, provided the security situation on the ground is acceptable. If Steve Oliver, the courageous and unrelenting president of this organization determines it is safe, then we deliver wheelchairs and hold sports camps.

In Afghanistan, thanks to the United States military and our allies, the city was secure enough to safely deliver approximately 1,000 wheelchairs to the poorest of Afghanistan's poor. There are many countries that want wheelchairs, but Steve will not allow distributions until the ground situation becomes more secure. We flew into Kabul from Dubai, on Ariana Airlines. (The locals call it "Scariana Airlines.") The previous flight from Paris was uneventful and long.

They use 727s to fly in to Kabul twice daily. The airport has one runway. On one side there is a plane that was shot down in one of the numerous firefights that have plagued this war torn city over the last 25 years. On the other side of the runway are military vehicles that were blown up and are still there as a reminder that war is not a distant memory. The main terminal is peppered with bullet holes and large murals of President Karzai and their national hero, General Ahmed Shah Masood, the charismatic leader of the Northern Alliance who was assassinated by Al Qaeda on September 9, 2001.

Once on the ground, ISAF forces keep a visible presence. French, Italian, Spanish, German, Canadian and Belgium troops

patrol the streets in heavily armored vehicles armed with 50 caliber machine guns. The locals hardly pay attention to the troops as they ride their bicycles, cabs, horse-drawn carts or walk on foot.

Shops have sprung up like mushrooms after a rain among the destroyed and bombed out buildings. Literally every building that could have been bombed was. A trip to Kabul is like a visit to Berlin after 1945 and the Allied victory.

To understand the level of destruction and suffering of the people, imagine that what happened to the 26 million Afghans occurred on the same scale in America. We would have approximately 16.5 million war dead, 30 million wounded, 30 million refugees, ten million war widows raising their children alone with limited access to work. There would not be running water unless you lived in a rich neighborhood and had your own well and septic tank. Electricity would be available from 6:00 in the evening until just past midnight. Every building would have bullet holes or only the walls still standing. And there would still be 100 million land mines planted in farm fields, paths and playgrounds of America.

Like Poland, after they were liberated from the Nazis, the Afghanistan people are ecstatic to be finally rid of the Taliban. The Western media did not fully capture the horror and brutality of this extremist religious group that briefly terrorized this wonderful country.

The Taliban had killing quotas. Women were considered just barely above property under their despotic rule. If a woman was in public alone, that was grounds for a severe beating or worse, a public execution. Women were not allowed to work, or have any type of education. The public was not allowed any type of entertainment activity. Television, movies, videos, soccer and kite flying were forbidden. Music was outlawed. The only approved public activity was prayer.

One public event used by the Taliban to keep their brutal control over the people was the use of the soccer stadium to execute people. Approximately once a week, the stadium would be filled and various individuals who had protested the Taliban rule, or just simply did not meet with the approval of the extremist Saudi taught religious government, were punished. There they

were hanged from the goal posts. Others were shot in the center of the soccer field. Some were just maimed as their arms or legs were amputated. Meanwhile the crowds watched, some in horror, some cheering; others, especially those who were related to the victims, crying. The executions and public amputations left a lasting mark on the people of Kabul.

I was one of three coaches who had the honor to teach some disabled athletes about wheelchair sports. In a country where 17% of the population is disabled, there are plenty of potential disabled athletes. The estimates vary on the number of wheelchairs needed. Some are as high as 2.5 million others as low as 500,000.

The amputees are everywhere. With ten million landmines and at least 60 people per month losing limbs, the Bush administration still refuses to sign the Landmines Treaty. Some amputees crawl on the streets begging and others drive simple hand-made carts to get them around. The single-leg amputees just walk with their crutches and try to get on with their meager lives. Since antibiotics are almost non-existent, the paraplegics will die with the first bladder infection or pressure sore. The city's only hospital lacks medicines, enough doctors or even functioning elevators.

After our wheelchair distribution at what pretends to be their hospital, the Mobility Project held a three-day sports camp at the soccer stadium. We had approximately 24 amputees and paraplegics. We even had female athletes or at least participants. We brought donated sports chairs from America. Then we contributed these chairs to the Afghanistan Para-Olympics Sports Program.

Since there are no tennis courts in all of Afghanistan, we made a make-shift tennis court using a volleyball net. The basketball courts were functional. So we put the Afghan athletes in sports wheelchairs and I got to do what I love, play tennis. The Afghans are extremely competitive. Once their country recovers, their wheelchair athletes will be as fierce in sports competition as they are as warriors. We had a blast. The athletes and coaches and volunteers laughed, played and competed. At the end of the sports camp, we gave them the wheelchairs; they gave us flowers

and we both went back to our homes with the impression that peace can work.

The country will probably recover. The Afghan people, despite their internal differences, are creative, hard working and determined to revive their nation. Construction is going on



Photo by Danny Quintana

everywhere. In most places, the construction is taking place with 6th century means. The Afghan people are taking mud and straw and making bricks. The city is very crowded with the thousands of refugees who are returning to try to reclaim homes that were once theirs and shops that once flourished.

On my second-to-last day, some terrorists kidnapped three UN workers within blocks of where we were staying. We could see the helicopters combing the skies in search of the bad guys but to no avail. The city is one of contradictions. Next to beggars are 10,000 and 15,000 square foot homes equaling anything in Naples, Florida or Irvine, California in beauty. These homes are alleged to belong to government ministers. Surprisingly they can manage their \$60.00 per month pay, yet afford such luxury.

On the last day we had dinner with the American troops at the military base. Our troops are tough, alert and very professional. Colonel Ramirez and Major John were gracious hosts. They fed us steak and lobster and told us some interesting

war stories. The freedom enjoyed by the disabled athletes and people in Kabul would not be possible without our presence. The overthrow of the Taliban and their Al Qaeda allies is not only in the best interest of Afghanistan, but Americans who love freedom and liberty. As we enter this holiday season, we need to be thankful for living in a society that has so much and remember those who only have their freedom and dignity.

This trip to Afghanistan was one of my more interesting adventures. It made me appreciate the numerous blessings we take for granted here at home, like a hot shower, telephones, the Internet and rule of law. In this new century, in a world full of war, hatred, and the millions of disabled, it was true poetic justice to help do something good in an soccer stadium where the Taliban had committed so much evil. This winter while I am skiing and playing wheelchair basketball, I will wonder what my fellow athletes in Afghanistan are doing. How they are surviving with little work and no money. How they are getting around without accessible sidewalks, ramps into stores, disabled parking and accessible bathrooms. Next summer, while I am river rafting, water skiing and of course, playing tennis, I will wonder what the disabled athletes in Afghanistan will be doing. Hopefully they will be in good health. And hopefully one day they will be able to participate in international competition. All of this will be possible if they will continue to have peace. For with peace, come the benefits of liberty and freedom. To contribute to the Mobility Project, go to their web site at mobilityproject.org.

MEMORIES

by Anne-Marie Ford

The Dunn family had children my age and younger. We always stayed at a motel called PinnFinn. It had a swimming pool and the ocean beach was right across the street! The sandy beach felt so good under your bare feet. The pier was a few blocks away, where fishermen would fish for all kinds of fish—even sharks. We all enjoyed playing in the ocean waves. One day I was in an inner tube. My friend Cassandra was playing in the ocean too. I went quite a way from the beach line when the tide threw me out further. The lifeguard yelled, “Everyone out of the water! The tide is coming in!” I was scared to death that the tide had me as small as a dot in the lifeguard binoculars! The waves kept throwing water over my head. A lifeguard with scuba equipment came all the way out to get me! He brought me back to shore. It took us a while to get back. He was so good looking, everyone teased me that I just did it on purpose...to get a cute lifeguard!

BACKWARD SKATING

by Dan Christensen

He cuts the ice
with one blade,
two,
one behind the other,
backward skating, the kind
his father practiced.

He leaves sprays of snow
and curved scratches
segmented by his shifts of weight
and lift of knee,
advanced with the speed he gathers now,

trailing hands in front of him
on a pond whose end
he does not see.

For my father's 90th birthday, March 11, 2005

GRAMPA IN SCOTLAND

by Sandra Albertson

I was listening to a Scottish story (in fact it was one that Deborah picked) the other day and it made me want to call my Grandpa, which I did. He was surprised because I never call him. He always calls me. He wanted to know what was up, why I called him. He was asking, "Why are you calling me?"

And I said, "I do not know. I think I got homesick for you."

Then I remembered and I asked him, "How many kilts are there in Scotland?"

He said there are 32 clan kilts for 32 different clans; they are all in the same pattern only different colors. Blue kilts are for boys four or five years old. Red and black kilts are for bagpipes or if you won a war. The wedding kilt is blue and white with doves. Then there is a walking kilt. Anywhere you go, you can wear that kilt. It is a red and green and blue plaid and it hangs down a little farther than other kilts. Then there is a red and brown kilt for girls. Then there is an orange and brown and green kilt that is for St. Patrick's Day. The death kilt is gray and black and mustardy green. And your marching kilt is the red and black plaid kilt.

When you get married in Scotland, it is called the wedding march. The groom marches on one side with his family and the bride marches on the other side with her family. And then the bagpipes march in the back and play a wedding march. They meet at the Protestant or Catholic altar. The man's wedding outfit consists of a kilt which is black and red and a white silk shirt with ruffles through the top part and the sleeves.

Now we go to the woman's wedding gown. It consists of a long white gown with beads around the bosom. She wears a shawl around her shoulders pinned by a cameo pin. She has a sash around her waist. The sash has shell blue, shell pink, shell beige, shell lavender and shell green lashes.

After the ceremony, the wedding families—his brothers and sisters and her brothers and sisters—kidnap both the bride and the groom. There is a dance, and during the dance someone in the family approaches them separately, in fact at different times. The wife is usually the first victim. And it is his family that kidnaps her. And then it is her family that kidnaps him.

There is a place in Scotland called the purple heather. It is called purple heather but it is not purple. If the sun is just right and the fog is coming in, it looks purple. It is a big field of heather. The bride and the groom are dropped two hours away from each other. Their shoes are taken away from them. Then they are told to find each other. Their love will make them find each other. If they do not find each other, it means that they do not love each other and the marriage has started with a bad omen. They will stay married—the Scottish do not believe in divorces—but they have a bad omen. It means their marriage will start out rough. Most couples do find each other. The husband usually packs some sandwiches and wine and a pillow and blanket and a candle made of pig fat. Usually they do find each other in less than an hour.

My grandfather just moved back to his house in Scotland. Scottish people cannot own a house; they can only own the land. The house is by a hill of heather. He is happy to be back in Scotland. Grandma is fussing, but she used to love Scotland and she will be happy when she settles down. My Uncle Ian was living in the house when my grandparents were living in Italy. They had been living in Italy five or six years. I think they have moved back permanently. According to my Grandpa, he does not want to move anymore. He wants to stay home.

They have a neighbor who is a good friend, named Mertle. I like Mertle. My Grandpa likes Mertle. Even my Grandma likes Mertle. He is an old “kitkill.” That is a Gaelic nickname for a guy who likes to bring joy to you. You could be sad or angry and he will make you laugh, until you are on the floor rolling. He has this Scottish attitude and you cannot help but laugh. He bounces his drink on his knee and watches it tilt. We always think it is going to spill, but it does not. He has known me since I was a little lassie. He says his wife changed my diaper—he would put it on backward.

Uncle Ian works at Drummond Whisky Factory. They give free samples every day. They drink so much that maybe they stay sober. I have seen Uncle Ian drunk. He is funny when he is drunk. He puts stupid hats on. And he does funny things. He dumps stuff on his head, like a glass of water.

In the factory, Uncle Ian works in the office. He started working at the bottom, carrying barley in, when he was 15. After 25 years working at the Drummond Whisky Factory, he now owns 96 shares of it. It was a family business at one time. It is still owned by the original Drummond family. Uncle Ian is married to Leila Drummond. I have only met Leila once in my lifetime, and that was when they got married. Ian did wear a kilt and I remember her dress. I described it earlier in this story.

Grandpa works for Drummond Whisky as well. He is the guy who brings in the buyers. He is called a traveling salesman—in the old days they were called Jacobites. He has traveled all over the British Isles. He brings samples for buyers. He also started at the bottom, carrying barley. He has been there as long as old Mr. Drummond.

When I was 5 years old, my mom and I were in Scotland. My step-dad was in Idaho—he did not want to go. Which was good. Because we were hoping he did not want to go.

When we got to Scotland, we went to Mertle's house and then the family got together to discuss the privilege of the person to be my godfather. I had three choices, which were Mertle, Michael and Steven. They figured that I should choose because if anything happened, I should get to go to a place where I was happy. And so, I chose Mertle. I had stayed with the others, but I was happiest at Mertle's. Then we set up the arrangements at the church and then I was christened to my godfather; I was baptized, but not like a Catholic baptism. This was a Presbyterian service.

My mom was in Scotland a year, but I did not want to leave when she did. I stayed on until I was eight. I stayed with both my grandparents and Mertle. They lived right next to each other. My uncles Ian and Andrew also lived there. I went to Heather grade school. We did not walk to school. Uncle Mertle would give us a ride. He did this to make sure I did not sluff school. He could trust Ian and Andrew, but not me.

After the play period, I would wander off in the heather—my story was that I got lost. Then when it was almost time for Mertle to pick us up, I would sneak back in to the crowd. It seemed like Mertle always knew when I was sluffing. Then there was the time that Andrew tattled on me. I snuck through the heather and went

home, and Andrew saw me. Later he told Mertle. Mertle was very mad. He told me if I did not go to school I was going to be stupid.

I have never been really mad at Andrew over it. I just let him think I was.

Out in the country, with Andrew and Ian and Grandpa (Grandma was not there), Ian made a stick with a piece of wire on it to catch a fish. And he did catch a fish with it. He put gum on it for bait and the fish ate it after he had chewed it. It must have been the sugar that the fish liked.

Down below the heather, in the evening, there is a dance like a hoe-down, called a Lowdown. The young people let their hair down. Everyone is invited. They have hamburgers and hot dogs and soda water and a food with Polish dogs with sauerkraut and onions and mustard. The people dance all over the place. They take strips of ribbons in all colors and swirl them around when they are dancing. They have hose squirters to get the dancers wet if it is hot.

CLIMBING

by Dave Bastian

Jon and I left home in the late afternoon and headed up to a small canyon not far from home. A canyon whose walls were prized by local climbers, a canyon whose walls would be, in a few years from now, blasted clean away to supply suburban homes in Las Vegas with decorative landscape rock. We walked the trail that wound up to these walls coveted by climbers and suburbanites alike. There were climbers around us working their magic on everything from the easiest routes to the hardest; the suburbanites were still in Las Vegas, unaware of how much they needed this rock.

Climbers were not the only ones who enjoyed the red and brown sunburnt rock of this canyon. There were college students taking a break from the books and walking up the trail for some fresh air; there were retired couples staring at the mad people who seemed to cling to the stone. Children were conceived within its narrow confines, lovers committed to each other in the shadow of its walls, and climbers danced on the rocks all around us. You could say that this canyon was the heart of our town without the slightest hint of exaggeration. Jon took us to a climb he knew, one that would be good for me, a relative neophyte. It was a 5.7, not very hard, but long. We hiked up the back of the red wall on a scree-covered trail, fixing the rope into the chains at the top of a six-foot long and narrow chimney that was the apex of a slender wall. The plan was to rappel down to the ground and a stable platform of rock and dirt perched high above the canyon floor, from there we would climb back to this point and then walk off the way we came. Jon went down first, showing me how to hook up the rappel device and lean back, then he disappeared over the edge. After a short while I heard him yell that he was down. It was my turn. I hooked the device to the rope as Jon had shown, checking to make sure it was correct, rechecking it and then once more. After I was convinced I had it done right I began to lean back over the edge, my back to the fall below me. My body tingled with anticipation and fear. Slowly I began to lower myself down what felt like an unfathomable abyss and, at that point, it became fun. I tried a few slight jumps as I descended and soon found

both feet on firm ground. Jon then gave me a refresher course on the figure eight knot and tied himself off to the rope. Belaying was something I had done many times and Jon knew he could trust me so he began his slow ascent up the rock, finding holds and making every move upward look easy, which it was to any climber with experience. I pulled on my borrowed shoes and old harness and slowly tied myself to the rope, remembering what Jon had shown me. I checked the knot, checked it again and then felt secure and began to ease my way up the face. I was about 25 feet off the ground when I reached the crux of the climb. I felt up the rock as far as I could with my left hand and found nothing, felt the rock as far as I could with my right hand and found a tiny little nub. I looked up at Jon belaying me from the top and back down to the ledge below us, then way down to the floor of the canyon. I reached for the little nub and began to pull myself up. I wanted to push myself, wanted to make this move. I found a decent foot hold and as I continued my slow ascent I lost that tiny nub of a handhold and fell. I dangled at the end of the rope, wrung out the tension and strain in my arms and crawled back onto the rock. I again made it up to that tiny nub and again used it to pull myself up. A little higher than last time and I found a huge jug I could wrap my hand around. Pulling up some more I was able to get the edge of my toe on that little nub and push myself into the chimney and through to the open air. I looked around at the brown hillside, slowly coming back to life after a long winter. I stared up into the blue sky and the peaks overhead, covered in snow. The white sparkled in the sun and I let out a cheer. The mountains had never looked more beautiful.

The rock I climbed that day, along with much of the rest of the canyon, is gone. Decorating the edge of a driveway and framing an artificially green lawn in some gated community. I imagine most that drive by don't even notice the rock, more impressed by the enormous home the canyon pieces sit in front of, now enjoyed only by a select few.

I WENT THROUGH THE CRACKS

by Amy Ruttinger-Jones

I was silenced. In the end I exploded in a rush of violent rage. I kicked the walls of our country's institutions, to shake them, to break them, to crumble their structure of manufacturing plants putting out clones.

They said, "This is for your own good. You're angry, because we know the truth."

The truth is because I'm gay. You don't value me. The truth is because I'm a woman. You don't value me. You Don't Value Me, because I'm not 5'6" with a rib cage showing through my skin and a bust of a 32 DDD.

They said, "No, that is not why! We don't value you because you won't let us fix your dysfunction, now you must die."

They berated me, confined me to isolation. They told my family, friends, peers, that I was sick, that I was a danger to society like I was some non-intelligent beast needing to be locked down because I was loose in a "civilized society," in a "civilized society."

They ignored me, and beat me down yelling dyke, bitch, whore...and it didn't matter what they did to me, but I could not take much more...of them saying no, you can't because you're gay, no, you can't because you're a woman, no, you can't because we need to keep you away from the children. You might recruit more.

I was silenced once. Now I choose to speak, regardless of the consequences, regardless of the hate, and regardless of the rejection. I walk alone, disowned by people I don't even know.

Not again will I try to be functional. Under terms that are too small. I will stand on the outskirts of society pulling others with me. If no one will join, I will stand and not be silenced on my own.

VALIUM

by R. John Hicks

Certainly certain assumptions cause
Controls from fears that flourish
And as always unannounced
With vanilla effect
Effect of valium
I feel vanquished
Solemn sorries sung high and low
So much on the mind
A social Sargasso

NOW I KNOW THAT IT IS SPRING

by John P. Wilkes

Now I know that it is spring;
I feel the life the raindrops bring
The winter chill has lost its power
Against the beauty of the flowers
That will bloom 'round every lawn.
That frigid wind, that blowing snow
Succumb so that the grass may grow.
Soon trees will shade me with their leaves
I'll drink iced tea; no longer grieve
The loves, the life, the time I lost
While waiting for the crisp, white frost
To acquiesce. But that's the cost
One pays for tasting summer fruits;
Those tender, green, sweet, juicy shoots
Which spring provided with the rain.
The seeds I sow which turn to grain
Must spread more seed, then flower and die.
Yet I will always wonder why
A world so wise, so strong and clever
cannot make springtime last forever.

IRELAND

by Tiffany Carver

There was a beautiful little place in Ireland named O'Bide. It was an enchanted forest with lovely flowers all around. Peaceful streams ran through it. On the very edge of the forest, some mushrooms were growing wild. Some little fairies opened a secret door and quickly flew inside. The fairies loved being inside the mushroom because it was so big and all the colors of the rainbow were in there.

There were no tables or chairs so the fairies built some from the trees growing outside. They hung curtains of thin, shimmering gauze to separate their bedrooms. Now they could live inside and not have to walk through the forest that the trolls had put a spell on. The fairies danced and flew around in the mushroom all day long.

One day, one of the fairies said, "Let's plant a willow tree so it will grow to look like an umbrella over our mushroom." As it grew, they were all happy because they were safe and secure inside, away from the evil trolls that lived in a cave on the other side of the forest. But one day, the trolls sneaked into the mushroom and kidnapped the beautiful and powerful fairy named Candice. When her friends discovered she was gone they tried to find her, looking all over in the forest, but they came up with nothing. The wizard, Scott, came by and the fairies talked to him about their friends kidnapping. They told him they suspected the trolls of taking her and asked him to help them find her. He said he would try his best, and with that he disappeared into a wispy cloud of purple smoke. When he reappeared he was riding his horse, Pegasus, nicknamed T.C. T. C. had a great idea! If Candice was anywhere in the forest, she could locate her with her magic hoof. So she put her hoof down and turned around until it lit up. When she looked up, she was facing a huge crystal. When she touched it, the inside of the crystal became visible, and there, they saw Candice! It was like a movie playing before them, but at first, they couldn't tell where she really was. As the picture became clearer they could tell she was on the other side of the hill in a cave, locked up in a cage.

Now, Candice suspected she had been kidnapped because she knew a secret about her friend, a fairy named Katie. Katie and her

husband, Cade, were expecting a baby. But Cade was a fairy that could turn into a powerful troll. In Fairyland, love between a fairy and anyone with troll blood was forbidden. Katie's friend, Aimee, was also having a baby and her husband, Cory, was a very powerful wizard. Aimee flew to Wizardland and asked her husband to please use all his powers to help her friends, Katie and Candice.

Cory had a brilliant idea! He and Aimee hopped on the back of his magic dragon, Casey, and flew into Fairyland. Cory took out his book of magic spells and looked up "Opening Cages." His spells wouldn't work and he learned the cage had its own magic! He called upon his wizard friends, Scott, T.C., and others in the land to help. They also called their friends and pets. Using all their magic powers, Candice's cage began to open. Then they used more magic spells to change the rules in Fairyland, so that fairies, wizard and good trolls could all live together in peace and love. Katie, Aimee and their families had a double celebration in honor of their babies. They all lived happily ever after.

THERE IS A SHORTER VIEW

by David Gravelle

Pungent aromas fill the air
When I reach into the cold, dark earth
To pull reluctant annuals' roots
From their summerhouse of mirth.

Push aside viny nasturtium branches,
Pick through dead and fallen debris,
To tidy up and to assess,
Some surprising growth I could not see.

Now, the soil looks rich and ready
For a thousand possibilities
Of late season lettuce and resurgent lavender
And, even if it snows again, mums or pansies.

A sunny day in November is tinder to a shorter view
To acolytes nearly trapped in a garden's winter pew.

COMPLEMENTORITY

by R. John Hicks

A name meaning lily of God's grace

A promise of only what occurs as a sort of default and

As a matter of fact: a survey of an immense domain of delicate sentiments

Distinctions of worth, which live, grow, propagate and perish.

Art was all we had.

Everything else seems vain except for the preservation of the child.

ALL was what we had

ALL seemed to do nothing but pull here and push there.

That is how it brings about its own survey.

The survey begins where it ends like a point

A point extending into a line and folding back on itself

After it makes implicit every possible form: the planet and the swamp cooler

The word in the heart.

Death is not the end of Being but merely the end

Of the pesky thing we call intelligence.

Intelligence that wants to possess everything.

Intelligence that would destroy its bearer

Only to infuse itself into what can only be its reflection.

So how is it to proceed?

In a language we don't understand.

Years of experiences forgotten;

The classroom and the theater.

The Philosophy of Niels Bohr sits unread,

Sylvester Stallone is on the TV,

Tobacco smoke fills my lungs.

I get back from checking on my suicidal neighbor

who was just out checking on another suicidal neighbor.

I know my place by some strange intuition

Lived out as default

How to search meaning in mathematics?
The future is prepared.
The ghosts draw near to impart half-truths.

Every painting needs a canvas.
The canvas is the simulacrum and Color is the war itself.
The refugees are there to appreciate the outcome of final finding
home:
An explication of the invader's mad design.
Who then was the invader? Thou or I.

Sylvester's in a car chase.
Oh, man? Can it mean enough?
Will he die and become Osiris or will he live
And remain a sort of heaving clay animation.

Now not to throw oneself at too many mysteries at once
Especially the greatest mystery of them all:
How to make of oneself a celluloid marvel.

In Zen Buddhism one cannot return to the childlike mind by
seeking it
For to seek is to seek, it is not to find.
To find is to dig a tiger pit for yourself
Of course, if you dig you'll have accomplished as much as any
Fall would.
You can't escape so you may as well dig til the spade turns
Alluding to Ludi Wittgenstein
He taught me to take the survey like a zigzag.
But it got out of hand...
I zipped when I should have zagged and I wound up in the
psychiatric hospital
(Or was that to have been being to have happened...
predeterministikaliterminalmystically?)

There is nothing but joy in the end of my suffering.
Is it even suffering?
Two irises rolled toward the interior after glimpsing each other.

Ouch!

Severing the optic nerve through tension they then can heal
Secretly in the dark.

“The light,”

“And the way”

And he adds—none may beseech the father without my
endorsement.

Wasn’t that rabbi adept in the Kabbalah?

I mean wouldn’t he sort of have to be to be what he’s supposed to
be...whatever that may be, the Endorser perhaps.

Madness is a method.

It is what makes one an individual.

But madness never ties up loose ends.

It is an unchained melody...zigzagging to complete wreath
looking logic...

The endorser beseeches on behalf of the invader,
Leaving the question of who came first unanswered.

The irises supply the color of the war

Of the child digging a tiger trap until the spade turns

Thereupon finding Noh desire, sits like a miniature monk.

Osiris, tired of stars pinning him at the knees and elbows,
Longs for a good old-fashioned car chase.

And lastly,

Refugees settle into mobile homes

They grew accustomed to constant displacement.

And not to leave out the half-truths of ghosts

They say that the future is preparing for ever newer math

Number is inherent to the mind.

New Math needs to be unfolded for intelligence

To come into possession

Of its reflection

The survey is just a mantra of the sacred word

In the immense domain of the heart.

I promise nothing else.

Lets begin with the unread book,
Through the circuitous route.
Back through Complementarity

BILL LOST HIS DOG

by Jerry A. Elmer

Bill had just been to the park with his family to enjoy the day. He was with his wife, their two daughters, and their dog Sammy. They loved Sammy very much. They went for a picnic at the park. They found a table to sit at for dinner. The girls went over to the playground to play with Sammy. As they were playing, Sammy saw a dog over on the other side of the park and went to investigate. The girls were not paying attention to where Sammy went or who she was with. Sammy meant a lot to the family. Bill had Sammy before he and his wife, Pat, got married. Bill loved his dog. That day at the park Sammy came up missing. The family looked all over the park for her. They could not find Sammy. They looked all over the neighborhood. They did not find her. They were getting very sad. It was like losing a CHILD.

It was hard. For two weeks, they looked for her. They went to the police and made a report. They were getting sadder and sadder as the days went by. They felt like crying.

They had just come home from looking for Sammy again and were almost ready to give up when the phone rang. A little girl was on the phone. She said she had been looking for the dog's owner. After she had heard that there was a family looking for their dog, a dog had come over to her home and was playing with her dog. She was not sure where the stray dog came from. The little girl called the police to find out who owned the dog. The police told her about the family that lost the dog. She asked if they had the phone number. They said yes. Then she asked if she could get the phone number to see if this dog was theirs.

So she went home to call. She called the family to see if they had found their dog. They said they had not found their dog yet. She asked if they would like to come and see if this dog was theirs. Then the family went over to see if the dog was theirs. And it was theirs. The family thanked the little girl.

THE PUPPY

by Dexter McNeil

Down the street a man had a dog that had three puppies.
Three kids heard about the puppies that the man was giving away
for free.

A girl named Ann wanted a puppy for her brother's birthday.

Another girl named Amy wanted a puppy for herself. The
man with the puppies was her grandfather.

Another girl named Sue wanted it for a blind person. It
would be a seeing-eye dog.

Amy came to her grandfather's house first to see the puppies.
He said, "I have one puppy left. I will show you the puppy in the
shed."

She was looking at the puppy when Ann came in. Ann saw
the puppy and Amy and then she saw Sue come in.

Ann said, "The puppy is mine."

Amy said, "The puppy is mine."

Sue said, "I would like the puppy for someone who can't see."

Ann said, "I want it for my brother's birthday. He wants
one."

They argued for some time and the man came in and said, "I
would like to know what is going on in here. One of you tell me
what it is."

Amy said, "I wanted the puppy for myself and Ann wanted it
for her brother's birthday and Sue wanted it for a blind person."

The man picked up the puppy and gave it to Amy and said, "I
want you to have it because you're my granddaughter."

Amy said, "I like the puppy, Grandfather, but I would like to
see the puppy go to Sue so the puppy will go to someone who
can't see."

The grandfather said, "You would? I think it is a good thing."

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

by Ron K. Christiansen

I'm a fringe Mormon; at least that's what I tell my liberal friends who incredulously reply: "Now how is it again that you are an active Mormon?" Often serving as a link between "rational" liberals and "crazy" religious conservatives, I've been asked why Mormons are so vehemently against gay marriage. Here's one conflicted attempt to answer:

It's because my religion is part of a larger social milieu that struggles to understand the diversity of approaches to life; it's because my religion, like all institutions, changes slowly and must do so in order to maintain order and community; it's because my religion believes that if they give up on this seeming cornerstone of family doctrine, then all hell will break loose, the world crashing down with all manner of evil and pain and broken families.

Bullshit.

If I'm honest with myself none of these intellectualizations hold much water when considering real individual people. A few years ago a friend of mine and her partner stayed up all night in order to pace me through the Wasatch 100-mile foot race. At around mile 60 my hip gave out—it hurt so bad I could barely take a step. Hoping to continue, my friend laid her hands on my hip and buttocks, attempting to knead it back to life. It didn't work. Bitterly disappointed, I quit. We drove for about 30 minutes, but when we arrived at their house my legs didn't work. Each of them placed one hand under my dirt encrusted legs and allowed me to hold them around the neck, never flinching at my odorous pits. They lifted me up the stairs and finally laid me down on the couch. My friend then offered me bread and a cooked egg. My body depleted and empty, she watched me partake. Before going to bed she asked, "Is there anything else I can get you?" Pain makes one vulnerable—she brought needed reassurance that my broken body and spirit would recover. Later that day I was at my Mormon relatives. I wanted to share the 3 a.m. breaking of bread, but I knew I couldn't. If I did, it would likely be met with derision, a sharing of pearls before swine: "You mean you slept at a lesbian's house? I hope your bishop doesn't find out." After we left, the comments would shift from ridicule to fear: "That Ron is such a

liberal. He is always so concerned with appearing to be politically correct that he plays with fire."

In reality then it's because my people, my family, my ancestors support hate in an attempt, they say, to create love, community and family values. But how can one support hate while also bolstering the institution of family? I honestly don't know, but it seems we do. Of course, most Mormons will deny that we support hate, but they are either naïve folks who underestimate the power of singling out or plain old liars. A harsh judgment my Mormon friends might say. Still, I can't deny the hate, the naiveté, the lies, but even as I write these words this same relative is presenting a 97-page document and PowerPoint presentation she created for her father's retirement. For months, she collected dozens of letters from past LDS colleagues, ward members, and family, sayings and little drawings her father has said and sent out over the years—it is a gift of charity.

So where is this charity? Why can't many Mormons view gays and lesbians as individuals? We are about love; we are about Christ, but somewhere this gets lost. Some will say it's in the doctrine: "You know God burned those Sodomites." But, hey, if we took everything from the Old Testament literally, we'd be cutting off hands, sacrificing animals, and stoning adulteresses.

Neither attempting to soften my differences with Mormonism nor performing acrobatic exegesis to find solace works because these moves avoid paradox. But I believe both the religious conservative *and* the skeptical liberal can misunderstand the power of moving on in the face of paradox and ambiguity.

Some gays and lesbians and some liberals, not to equate the two, will also rationalize their own hatred, "I don't have to listen to homophobic religious fanatics because they are wrong and don't deserve equal treatment or respect of any kind." This very attitude came out in a graduate course I attended at the University of Utah on discourse analysis. At one point, I suggested we might try to analyze LDS rhetoric about homosexuality in letters to the editor to see what we could learn about the writers and their communities. I was promptly shut down. That was an "untouchable" subject for analysis.

I'm not really surprised that Mormons can't fully accept gays and lesbians (that's not at the heart of the paradox)—most Americans it seems can't—but my eternal frustration is that these Mormons are *my* people, *my* family, *my* ancestors. And, with all these inconsistencies, they still support me and my family through ritual and love.

This past summer was hell for my mother: Her father died after a long battle with emphysema and my sister went through a messy divorce. As the oldest son, I felt utterly inadequate in my attempts to comfort my mother and sister. What could I do? Nothing, at least of my own power.

One Sunday afternoon we set up the children with a Disney movie and went into my mother's bedroom. Then by the laying on of hands I blessed my mother and sister, neither of whom is a practicing Mormon. No Moses like parting-of-water-miracle occurred, but the institutionally-sanctioned priesthood blessing literally opened up the heavens by allowing me to express my love, concern and hope for each of them in ways I could not do alone. As Eugene England, often the spokesman for liberal Mormons, wrote, “the [LDS] Church provides the best *context* for struggling with, working through, enduring, and being redeemed by our responses to those paradoxes and opposition that give energy and meaning to the universe.” After, we cried and hugged, walking out of the room with more faith in life and goodness and hope.

The understanding I'm seeking, to borrow a line from Anna Quindlen about the abortion debate, is “it's too complex to feel all one way about.” In this case the “it” is life, the intimate struggle to figure out our lives spiritually and intellectually. How can we ethically embrace contradiction and hypocrisy? We just do. We do because we want to live another day in meaningful connection with those we care for: these naïve liars, these frail and imperfect beings who both dazzle with charity and insight while also demeaning with fear and intolerance.

