

# The *Prism* Across Time

Selected Writings from the Lynchburg College Literary Magazine, 1907-2007

Edited by Casey Clabough and Jennifer La Plante



The *Prism* Across Time

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## **Note from the Editors**

Typographical and spelling errors appearing in original documents have been corrected, but the texts of these pieces are otherwise identical to their original form.

The Editors would like to thank the following individuals for their support of the project: Ariel Myers, Clélie D.D. Steckel, and Taranée Tabaian.

# Foreword

The idea for this collection began, appropriately enough, in LC's Knight-Capron library, down in its remote bowels, in the old President's vault, beyond the big steel door in a claustrophobic chamber where the administration used to keep the campus payroll, but now lies home to a crammed and overflowing assortment of drab grey boxes containing a vast array of moldy papers from the college's past. I was down there looking for something (I think it was one of Sheldon Vanauken's late-life articles on the South) and had become distracted by some old English Department memos from the 1960s. These documents fascinated me on account of the fact their topics and contents were, despite the chronological separation of nearly half a century, almost exactly the same as those sent around via email in the department now (curriculum, deadlines, committee reports, hiring, etc.). The faculty had long since changed but not the events; it was as if new actors had arrived to take up venerable parts in a curious production destined to run forever. In the midst of these musings I noticed on the shelf beneath the English Department boxes a row of grey containers all marked *Prism*. Below that assortment sat an identical row, and another followed it chronologically on the top shelf of the next bookcase over. On and on it went, the rows and shelves seeming to continue indefinitely, forming together a veritable wall of old *Prism* issues. I experienced a sensation akin to awe as I opened the first box and gazed down upon the first volume of the *Prism*'s literary predecessor, *The Argonaut*. Yet even as I did, my eyes began to water and I sneezed convulsively: a violent, loud report in the closed space of the dusty vault. Hastily returning the box to its long undisturbed resting place, I hurried out in search of fresh air, though not without promising myself a return visit.

What ensued over the next few months at snatched intervals between classes and meetings and the other predictable phenomena of campus life was a haphazard browsing of all these volumes—a fair amount of skimming and scanning and even some downright reading that came to be a real pleasure despite the ungainly dust filter and lab goggles I found myself wearing to foil the effects of the mold. A peculiar scene this likely constituted and there were those on the library staff who reckoned I was hiding in the vault from some odious duty or, less likely though certainly possible, had perhaps traded in my humanities training in pursuit of some dark manner of illegal chemical research. In reality, I was merely developing, slowly and steadily—with a sneeze or choke here and there—a genuine interest in and appreciation for LC's literary and cultural history over the course of the last century.

What, after all, is a little mold if one has some riveting reading material on hand?

\*

The volume you now behold owes its content and appearance chiefly to a superb librarian, Ariel Myers, and some immensely talented English graduate students, each of whom pored over endless old *Prism* issues in search of memorable narratives and artwork. The end product you can cheerfully survey and judge for yourself. For me, the collection constitutes a kind of indirect cultural history of Lynchburg College and, to a certain extent, Lynchburg. You'll find in these pages names that are familiar on campus even now: Richard Thornton, for whom the college's visiting writer endowment is named; Sheldon Vanauken, winner of the National Religious Book Award for his book *A Severe Mercy* and perhaps LC's most successful faculty author of all time; and many others, both vaguely resonant and fully recognizable.

The collected writing and visual matter that appear in this book are as varied and interesting as its personages. Thornton's poem for the 1908 senior class offers timeless advice to any of the graduating classes that have followed his, and much of the collection's work, both visual and written, reflects notable changes in the college even as it captures the archetypal essence of what it means to be an undergraduate in any era. There are embodiments of the social aspect of the college experience ("Ode to a Hangover", "Trotters," etc.) as well as concern for society and the world as a whole (see, for example, the written reflections on various social initiatives and wars). And some of the pieces ("Apropos Social" and "The Devil's Own Dance," for instance) are just plain fun, capturing the excitement and whimsy of young people caught up in the euphoria of artistic creation.

This is a collection for those young at heart and eager to recall their undergraduate days on campus, for many of the best days and memorable times of the last hundred years are recorded here—from turn of the century winter afternoons upon the Skating Pond to late twentieth century nights out on Vernon; from Bill Seay's 1940s verse to Erika Seay's 2007 poem which concludes the volume. It's all here—shiny, alive, and completely devoid of mold: the essence of Lynchburg College that A. B. Stanger likened in a 1955 poem to "a flame within the heart":

Whether you walk this sacred soil,

Or fellowship with friends,

Or lift a silent prayer,

It is a flame within the heart, and it will not die.

Casey Clabough

English Department

Summer 2008

# Youth's Yearnings

By Richard H. Thornton

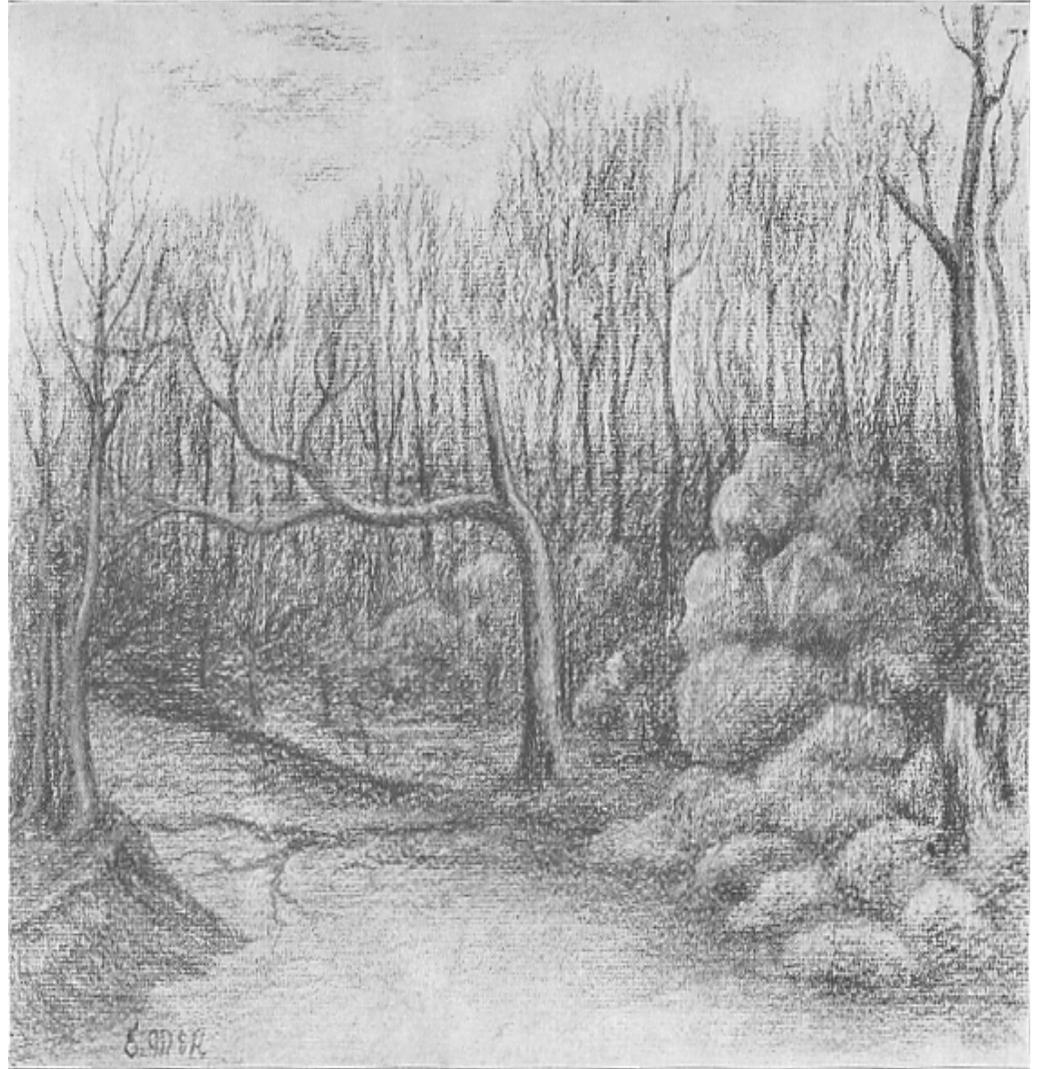
(Senior Class Poem)

With aspirations, hopes, illusions, dreams,  
How beautiful youth ever to us seems!  
For it the halls of fame are open wide,  
And little effort takes it soon inside.

No terror daunts it, danger comes not near;  
Bright visions of great glory soon appear:—  
All boys are heroes fighting in Life's fray;  
Each maid a heroine, and the soldiers' stay.

Would that the vision always might remain,  
And pleasure could forever banish pain!  
But soon, in this alone, the youth would tire,  
And to no worthy object could aspire.

A higher, holier purpose all perceive,  
For seeking pleasure does not mean to live.



*"Swimming Hole," by Edna McPherson, from the 1907-1908 Argonaut*

Noble achievement should be our desire,  
And with the Alpine youth, let each cry “Higher.”

Study, that you may early learn to tell  
In what vocation you may best excel.  
When once determined, let your purpose be,  
To learn it ‘til you know with certainty.

But be not hasty when you think to choose—  
Your greatest talents thereby you may lose.  
Yet some have chos’n amiss, and then have found  
The realm in which they Best could win renown.

Some will perchance be versed in Shakespeare’s art;  
Sweet melodies from others thrill the heart.  
To preach the gospel, or be apt to teach,  
Or study law make great appeals to each.

Whate’er you do, your ideal hold ahigh!  
You ne’er may realize it, but should try.  
Tho’ great the labor, you may lead the way,  
As Cicero or Vergil in their day.

Whose name shall loudest ring, the battle done?

Each has due glory, if his work's well done.

'Tis not the one whose arms did brightest glow,—

Wealth, power, and fame oft weakest manhood show.

The good, the virtuous, then should we prefer—

Nobility is built on character.

And he who thinks and does the best he can

Shall in the end show what is great in man.

*From the 1907-1908 Argonaut*

## Meditation

By Myrtle C. Bell

I know not why the sun is dark today,  
I know not why the bird sings low his lay;  
I know not why my heart is sad always,  
Unless it be, My Love, that you're away.  
Now gone are all the hopes of youth so fair,  
My soul is weary with a heavy care;  
All favorite haunts chill me with blank despair,  
Because, My Love, no longer you are there.  
The brook's sweet murmur now is but a sigh,  
In vain the lure of pleasure—all passed by.  
What need to live since you can ne'er be nigh?  
Than a life without you I would rather die.

*From the 1908-1909 Argonaut*



# Driven From Home

By Viola Lupton

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On the outskirts of an old New England village stands a neat little cottage. A velvety lawn is enclosed by freshly whitewashed palings. Here and there bright beds of flowers break the even stretch of green. The steps leading to the front door seem freshly scrubbed, and all around shows evidence of neatness.

While admiring the beauty of the surroundings, a clear voice came from within. Struck by the note of earnestness in the tones, I listened a moment to the conversation.

”No, father, I will not buy you any more whiskey. I am ashamed to ask for it and I have done it for the last time” Angry words and threats came from the father, who was half-crazed with appetite, and after cursing his son for disobedience, he fell back in a stupor.

Charles Raymond leaned against the mantel for a moment, and then with a face full of determination turned and left the room. His mother met him at the door with an anxious look and asked where he was going.

“Mother, I cannot stand it any longer. He has again demanded whiskey, and I have refused to bring it; I am going.” In vain, the mother plead with him not to go, but for years he had struggled against his drunken father and now the last words had been spoken.

At this point his sister Ada, a beautiful girl, came to the door and added her entreaties to those of her mother. If ever a boy loved his sister, Charles loved Ada. He would have given his life’s blood for her, if necessary. Tears were in his eyes as he felt their warm kisses on his cheek. For a moment he wavered in his purpose as he thought how lonely they would be without him. Then he thought perhaps his father might try to do better if his mother and Ada had no one else to depend upon and that his leaving home might arouse him to his sense of duty to them enough to reform him. These thoughts, mixed with those of freedom in some distant land where he would not be trammelled by the name of a drunken father, made him more firm than before. He tore himself from their warm embraces and started off in the direction of the forest.

The two, with sinking hearts, watched him go, not knowing whether they would ever look on that loved face again. For hours he wandered on, not caring whither he went. At last he sank to his knees on the bank of a river and exclaimed, “O God! Help me to choose my way aright; lead me in all my journey.” He gazed earnestly over the broad expanse of blue, and then, as if in answer to his prayer, a white sail arose above the horizon. Here, at last, was the solution to his troubles; he would hail the ship and sail for some foreign shore where he would be away from the unpleasant scenes of his childhood. After boarding the ship he found a vacancy in the crew, and as any help was acceptable he was soon hard at work. At first he thought the work very hard and in a short time became sick. For weeks he lay in his hammock hovering between life and death. His mates were kind and gave him the best possible care, but he still grew worse. In his wild ravings he constantly begged his father not to strike him. Then he would go through the parting scene with his mother and Ada and his struggle in the forest. How he first saw the sail and how he had tried so faithfully to perform his work. All these scenes he would go over and over again until the sailors gave up hope of his recovery, and went about their work in silent grief; for even in the short time he had been with them they had learned to love him for his strong, manly character and absolute faithfulness to duty. But he was not destined to die then. His strong, robust constitution began to assert itself, and he came slowly back to life.

All save one rejoiced at his recovery. This was the stern captain of the ship. With a jealous eye he saw what a favorite the boy was with the crew and resolved not to recognize such a young upstart, as he termed him. He also had another reason for being displeased, for Charles had come aboard early in the journey and now they were nearing the end of the voyage. All this time they had fed and cared for him with little service in return.

As he became stronger Captain Patterson became more stern and often demanded, "why that youngster did not get to work and earn his food." Poor Charles would tremble under the harsh words of the captain, and try to finish his work on deck, but often his mates would find him in an unconscious state on the floor, where he had fallen when the work was too hard for his feeble strength, and carry him below. Thus, he spent the remainder of the voyage.

They landed on the tenth of December and Charles soon found himself in the busy whirl of London life where, homeless, friendless, and without money, he wandered through the crowded streets. Here we will leave him for a short time to fight his own way while we return to the little cottage home.

How had his mother and Ada spent this time, and what had become of the drunken father? Of the father we know but little. Soon after Charles' departure, he left the home and never returned. In vain, his wife and daughter searched the surrounding country for him. Friends joined them, but all attempts to find the missing one were fruitless. He had often caused them much sorrow and pain, but they loved him still, with that love which never dies, and mourned his loss bitterly.

Alone with their grief they struggled to keep the wolf from the door. Mrs. Raymond had learned the art of dressmaking in her youth and, as far as her strength permitted her, took up her old occupation. Ada secured a position in a small store and added her scant earnings to those of her mother.

One evening, when they had laid aside their work and were sitting in the open door watching the twilight shadows give way to the darkness of night, a tear stole softly down the mother's cheek as she said: "Charles would have been twenty-five tomorrow had he lived. If he had only known how much we needed him, he would never have gone."

"Mother," said Ada, "I believe Charles is still alive and will come back to us yet. I feel as if he was near me even now. Let us prepare a birthday feast for him tomorrow and place his plate on the table as if he were really here."

The next day they remained at home and the preparations for the feast progressed rapidly. Several times they went to the door as if expecting some one, but always turned away with a sad, disappointed expression.

But where is Charles now? What is he doing while all these preparations are going on? Is he alive and nearer than they dream? Let us see. Ten years have passed since we left him destitute in the streets of London, but look as you may, he will not be found there now. After wandering aimlessly through the streets, he became hungry. He must devise some way of getting food. The snow had been falling fast all day, and he soon got a job cleaning pavements; in this way he earned enough to get his supper, breakfast and a bed in a cheap boarding house. The next day he began [to] search for some better employment. His hopes were high and he never dreamed of defeat. Surely he could soon find work. He had never been in a large city, and fortunately did not know the struggle he must make for mere existence. The abuses of his father had taught him to endure the knocks he now received on every hand. The first day he failed completely, and barely earned enough for food and bed another night. For weeks, he struggled on in this way, but success came at last.

A wealthy merchant was impressed by his earnestness and, although he was opposed to hiring any one without references, gave him a trial as office boy. The same straightforward manner and faithfulness to duty which had won him friends on the ship, now won the confidence of his employer. He climbed steadily up. Each time he was promoted he faced the new responsibility with renewed energy and determination to win. At last there was but one more step for him to take. He could go no higher except to become partner in the firm. Could he hope for this? No. He recalled the many times that Mr. Hubbard had said, "I will take no one as my partner; I shall run my own business until I die."

All this time he had never forgotten that dear mother and sister; often he had longed to see their faces and to feel their warm kisses on his cheek. He had carefully saved all his earnings, often denying himself many pleasures that he might have more to lay at their feet when he returned.

With these thoughts running in his mind, he was not at all prepared to be summoned into Mr. Hubbard's private office, or to hear what he had to say.

"My boy," said Mr. Hubbard when the door was closed and everyone else dismissed from the office, "I am growing old and am no longer able to bear the responsibilities of such a large business as mine. I have only a few more years of my allotted time on earth, and it would give me much satisfaction if I could know that my business would fall into competent, trustworthy hands when I am gone. I have carefully watched your every action since you have been in my employ, and I believe I have found in you a person to whom I can safely entrust the future of my establishment. I now offer you the position of junior partner of my house."

It would be hard to describe Charles' feelings at this moment. He laid his head on the desk and wept like a child. It was no sign of weakness that made him give way to his emotions; it was only the surge of his strong, manly character.

For a long time they talked together. At last, when about time to close for the night, Mr. Hubbard said: "I have also another proposition to make, and it is this: I am still able to carry on the work here and can do without your help very well for a time. I would advise you to take advantage of this opportunity and visit your mother and sister of whom you have so often spoken."

Could the dream of all these years now be possible? Would he see those dear faces again? But there was a sting, too, in those words. He thought of his father whose memory he had all those years tried to bury. He had been unjust to one to whom he owed reverence? And who knows but this one might have been saved if he, the son, had continued to be long-suffering and forbearing—but his feelings of happiness overbalanced all else!

With a light heart he boarded the ship, but the time went all too slowly; it seemed the journey would never end. At last after many days of impatient waiting the ship sailed into the harbor and he once more placed his foot on his native land.

He hastened to make his way to the inland village. He walked rapidly over the well-remembered path and came in sight of his childhood home. It was the same little vine-covered cottage, and the same trees stood before the gate.

For the first time he now realized that it was his twenty-fifth birthday. He paused a moment to think of the many changes in his life since he last stood there. Then he walked slowly on, lost in deep thought, until the sudden barking of a dog aroused him from his reverie. Yes, it was a greeting from old Rover; but who is that in the doorway? With a glad cry he sprang forward, "Mother!" and then he was clasped in her loving embrace once more. The joy of hearts reunited after a long separation is too sacred for outsiders, so with a wish that God's blessing rest upon them evermore, we drop the curtain, glad that a soul driven from home returned stronger than when he went, and received his royal welcome. *From the 1909-1910 Argonaut*

# Withered Leaves

By A. L. [The Editors believe this to be Anna Lewis '12, a staff member of *The Argonaut* at this time.]

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## First Prize Poem

The fall of the year is a thoughtful time,

More so than words can tell.

So sad are the mem'ries it always brings,

They are often hard to quell.

'Tis a sad, sad time of the mist-draped fall,

And brings to us much grief;

When among the tings of summer green

Gleams the first pale leaf.

When the first warm days of the fall have come,

We know we must look for this;

But we shut our eyes to the coming change,

And live in summer bliss.

But the first green leaf breaks the reverie,

As it greets the misty eye;

And we know we must wait and see them fall;

And forget the months gone by.

Yet sad as this is the dreary time,

When the clouds obscure the sun.

The wind springs up in fitful gusts,

And the leaves fall one by one.

Then on they come, through the hazy air,

Come drifting, drifting down;

Till they leave the trees with naked limbs,

And robe the earth in brown.

And so the days pass on with storm and fog,

While still the cold winds blow;

Till earth is chilled and the heart subdued;

And winter settles low.

But a time must come for the leaves to fall,

When pierced by the autumn gale.

God willed it so, and He wills it, too,

That our hopes must sometimes fail.



*"Skating Pond," by Edna McPherson, from the 1907-1908 Argonaut*

We know when the leaves are showered around,

By storms of wind and rain,—

When the winter's o'er and spring's returned,—

The trees will leaf again.

So our hopes will grow when winter's past,

And sin no more deceives,

And we lift our heads and raise our forms

From our grave of fallen leaves.

When spring has come and the withered leaves

Are blown from where they've lain,

The flowers cheered by the sun's warm rays

Will burst in radiant bloom.

*From the 1910-1911 Argonaut*

# When Jack Rings the Bell

By Rosa Lewis

6 A. M.

Oh! I hear that bell ring, ring, ringing;

I wish it would stop its jarring noise.

We can never sleep a wink,

It never of us seems to think.

I'm going to sleep again, but no—say,

Examinations come again today.

There, again; come, you'll be late, it seems to say

And there'll be no breakfast for you today.

Hurry, hurry, again it calls in ringing sound,

And soon to Morning Class we are bound.

What we'll hear we know quite well—

Our virtues, our faults and then the bell, the bell.

With frightened tones our hearts are beating,

As the moments are fleeting, fleeting.

Now it calls in an awesome, fearful noise,

To young and old, both girls and boys,



*From the advertisements section of the 1908-1909 Argonaut*

Hurry to Math., Bible, Latin, or Greek

And at nothing but the boards take a peek.

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Though we have crammed and stuffed and crammed,

We're most scared to death, going to be exam'd.

Thus all through the morning it goes,

While the teachers find out what each one knows.

If you'll believe me, I know it quite well,

Just eight more times we'll hear that bell.

Now for dinner we're ready, for 'tis quite noon:

The bell summons us with merry, joyful tune.

Alas! It's over; back to school we went our way,

Oh, shall we ever see the end of this day?

It starts again, we hear it o'er and o'er.

It ceases not, till the hands are creeping 'round to four.

When finally we are out entirely free,

The time is long, long past three.

A brief rest, supper and then we go

To society, girlies' meeting, or some other show.

When finally this worry is entirely past,

It seems as if not much longer can we last.

Well, all is o'er, enough has been said,

So I am going this minute to bed,

And if in my dreams I should hear angels singing

I would think it was that bell ringing, ringing, ringing.

*From the 1911-1912 Argonaut*

## What Now?

By the Staff of the Argonaut

Keep a-thinking, can't be true,

Must be something more to do.

Wond'ring 'bout the "when and how,"

Always asking, "Well, what now?"

Used to think I knew it all,

"Lord it" over big and small,

Now it's quite a different row,

Keeps me asking, "Well, what now?"

World is not running on a bluff,

It wants stuff that's sure enough,

Wants a man that knows just how,

So I'm asking, "Well, what now?"

Kind o' used to things 'round here,

This old place is mighty dear,

Makes me think—I don't know how—

When I think it's over now.

Boys a-singing all the day,

Girls a-laughing 'cross the way—

Best old life just any how,

When I think it's over now.

Good-bye, dear old V. C. C.

Can't help feeling all at sea,

Wond'ring 'bout the "when and how,"

What I'm asking, "Well, what now!"

*From the 1912-1913 Argonaut*

# Apropos Social

By A. Muser Watchemm

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(Beg pardon, Mr. Kipling.)

If you have entered “dear old Lynchburg College,”

And paid your Money to its treasurer,

And never gained a Bit of Social Knowledge,

And never wondered what the Thing was “fer;”

If you have seen the Charming Co‘Ed Beauties,

And watched them come and go before your eyes,

And didn’t let them swerve you from your Duties,

And start you on the road to Telling Lies;

If you have been indifferent to the Dimple,

And Shadow Silks, and Satins, and Perfumes,

If you have never played the Simon Simple

On HER account, and been obsessed with Glooms;

If you have never bought a Box of Candy,

Nor worshipped at some shrine Sometimes for Hours,

If you have never been a Fop or Dandy,

Nor bought Some Girl a Whopping Bunch of Flowers;

In short, if you have never loved a Co-Ed

At Lynchburg College for AT LEAST A DAY,

I wonder if you've eyes at all in Yo' Head;

At any rate, You're Going Some, I'll say.

*From the 1921-1922 Argonaut*

# Sea Longing

By Joseph W. Stone

The white sails dip on the moonlit bay,

And the sea gulls fly before.

There's a whetted knife in the salted spray,

And a light from the distant shore.

The ship swings clear of the harbor bar,

And out to the trackless sea.

There's a luring call to the old North Star,

And a demon wind set free.

There's a furrowed path in the spume abaft,

And a blue-green sea ahead;

There's a hidden wrath in the gales that laugh

Like the sob of the Tortured Dead.

There's a burning want in the soul of me

That land locked shores lack;

It's the endless trail of the wide free sea

That's over the world and back.

There are hands at home that would hold us there,

And love that bids us stay,

But the curse of Cain and a salt sea air

Is the Thing that leads away.

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There's ease to be had at the port behind,

And gold for her land born sons,

But ours is a quest of an age old line,

We are the bread of the Wandering Ones.

*From the 1923-1924 Argonaut*

# Some Hypotheses

By H. L. Hughes

If I could just epitomize

The lure that lingers in her eyes,

The languid longing of her sighs,

Her startled little glad “Oh my’s,”

The way she lisps and laughs and cries,

Her tantalizing “Why’s?”

I surely would epitomize.

If I could fittingly disclose

The classic beauty of her nose,

Her childish mood that comes and goes,

Her emphasis upon her “so’s,”

Her startled eyes, her startled “Oh’s,”

Her teeth as white as Arctic snows—

Why certainly I would disclose.

If I had courage to begin

To tell how fetching is her chin

Her rose-red cheeks with dimples in,

Or lips as sweet as secret sin.  
Her sunlit smiles with Cupids in,  
In brief her ways of charming men—  
Most certainly I would begin.

But “if’s” a mighty barrier,  
Which keeps me from describing her;  
And so I gaze and fawn and purr,  
Too stupefied and charmed to stir;  
In fact, I’m just an amateur  
Among the dozens “if’-ings her—  
And “IF’s” a mighty barrier.

*From the 1924-1925 Argonaut*

# Sad Optimists, Gay Pessimists

By Francis A. Henson

A casual observer might conclude that all of the youth of today are counterparts of that typical modern American which Struthers Burt has characterized in *The Interpreter's House* as, "this strange, absurd, pathetic, conquering, notable Hamlet of the modern world, with his catch words and his motor-cars; a score of platitudes on his lips and a score of unrealized desires in his heart." In this estimate there would be some truth, because America's experiment in giving higher education to the whole of Main Street has inevitably resulted in the colleges being crowded with many embryo Babbitts, both men and women. However, there is a large thinking remnant in the colleges and it is of interest to seek the characterization of these students. To do this it is desirable to portray them.

Regardless of the environment from which he comes, the student finds himself living in a world of movement and change, at least, before he finishes college. Astronomy reveals to him the vastness of the universe. He studies the present knowledge of a star like Betelgeuse. How can he any longer conceive of the earth as the center and end of the universal purpose? Through the microscope, he is able to speculate about the infinitesimal wonders in all organisms and, if Einstein's theory of relativity is true, the concepts of time and space may be altered. In his study of the long upward development of man, he becomes convinced that nothing is static or final. Suddenly, he realizes that he is in a new world of magic casements and he would, now, rather give his brief life time to opening the magic casements one by one, than to dwell merely in the old land of former ideas and feast upon the accumulated knowledge of the ages. He learns to do both by commencing to comprehend the meaning of joyful creative activity.

It is evident that this thinking student of today has more than an intellectual faith in the scientific attitude of experimentation. He increasingly finds his living influenced by his thinking. He becomes an experimentalist in every phase of life. Truth, he discovers, may be smothered by much rubbish of new, as well as long accepted ideas and beliefs which are false. It does not deter him for, if he is a true crusader in the realm of thought, he must tear away the rubbish and reveal reality. It is in this ability to be radical, in the sense of going to the roots, that youth is offered an opportunity for a real adventure.

Before the World War, there was a romantic glamour surrounding the thought of progress. Those who were young in age and in spirit had agreed that the millennium had almost arrived. The brotherhood of man was to be a fact in a few years. Then— it came. No, not brotherhood, but barbarism and hell on earth. Theories were shattered and hopes were blighted and when it ended, even though there were momentary signs of light, a black pall of nihilistic philosophy settled over the minds of men. It was the usual reaction after such terrifying social cataclysms, but tremendously more life-sapping, in this case, because of the enormity of the conflict which caused it. This philosophy of decadence has attracted many of the young intellectuals of America. Many of the most popular poets sing it and the novelists portray characters who live it. There is Mencken and Haldeman-Julius and Jeffers, the poet, and O'Neill, the dramatist. As Jeffers expresses it, "Human life is an unprofitable episode disturbing the blessed calm of non-existence."

This then is the opportunity which youth faces: to assert firmly that our modern nihilism is mainly a reaction, "to state clearly and brilliantly that thinking like Mencken's is the mere in-digestion of capitalism," and in the words of Merrill Root, "to walk into Whitman's huge and thoughtful night, under the wide-flung sky, and there build like free men, patiently, grimly, with no illusions of easy Millennium, the world of economic justice and spiritual freedom. We shall transcend the equal follies of optimism and pessimism; we shall transcend good and evil in the synthesis of creative joy; we shall be sad optimists and gay pessimists." *From the 1926-1927 Argonaut*

# The Bridge-Builder

By Will Allen Dromgoole

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An old man going a lone highway  
Came at the evening, cold and gray,  
To a chasm vast and wide and steep,  
With waters rolling cold and deep.  
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,  
The sullen stream had no fears for him;  
But he turned when safe on the other side,  
And built a bridge to span the tide.  
“Old man,” said a fellow pilgrim near,  
“You are wasting your strength with building here.  
Your journey will end with the ending day,  
You never again will pass this way.  
You’ve crossed the chasm, deep and wide,  
Why build you this bridge at eventide?”  
The builder lifted his old gray head;  
“Good friend, in the path I have come,” he said,  
“There followeth after me today  
A youth whose feet must pass this way.  
The chasm that was as naught to me

To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be;  
 He, too, must cross in the twilight dim—  
 Good friend, I am building this bridge for him!”

*From the 1931-1932 Argonaut*



### Scribblers' Club

The Scribblers' Club was organized as a local literary club, November, 1929.  
 Only those students who have shown marked ability are eligible for membership.

OFFICERS

OLIVE RALSTON.....*President*  
 WINNIFRED BAXTER.....*Secretary-Treasurer*

MEMBERS

Oliver Ralston Winnifred Baxter Margaret Long Muriel Connaughton Nell Tabor Jesse Barbour Rose Kovacs Almeйда Bibee	Mabelle Bamber Paul Lowder Mary Hasselvander Elinor Hartnell Marguerite Motley Cecil Sheets Dr. Robert Beale Dean C. L. McPherson
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1931

*(Right) A page from the 1930-1931 Argonaut*

Five O'clock, October 9

By Marguerite Graham

The wind runs over the hills like a lean-nosed wolf  
with a chill damp muzzle.

Its sides are shaggy and lank

and it leaves behind

after its swift silent passing

the frost of its breath

to mist the mountains

and set the burning gold

trees on the hillsides

shivering in cold.

It hunted down the sun and left it cowering,

then huddled

on the peak of the mountain

hid in its own fog-breath.

*From the January, 1938 issue of The Prism*

January 1938

# THE PRISM

Vol. 1 No. 1

## THE PRISM

THE PRISM is published monthly by the Nu Beta Chapter, Sigma Tau Delta English Fraternity, at Lynchburg College, Lynchburg, Virginia. Price, fifteen cents per issue, one dollar for one yearly subscription.

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Hide Mano DeWitt Strange Russel McBride  
Tommy Jones

## By Way of Introduction

FOR several years there has been felt on the Lynchburg College campus a distinct need for an organ for expression of student endeavor in the field of creative writing. Through the generous cooperation of Collegiate Publishers, of Macon, Georgia, we now have an opportunity to fulfill this need. It is with the idea of providing an outlet for student expression that *The Prism* has been organized.

In the college library are a few musty copies of our predecessor, *The Autocrat*, published formerly by students of this college, a magazine whose life-span extended from 1911 until about 1921, as nearly as we can determine. Although going under a more lofty-sounding title than our present publication, its aims, we think, were certainly no higher. By this we mean—merely that *The Prism* will try to present the best and clearest of student thought in the way of criticism, poetry, exposition, fancy, and the other more worthwhile paths that sudden thought takes.

It is hoped that the purpose and aims of this magazine will find substantial and unanimous support among the student body of Lynchburg College, that the students will consider it not a thing apart, but as the manifestation of a definite phase of college life, and that they will make it a progressively better publication by criticism and contribution.

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(Right) The first page of the first issue of The Prism, January 1938

# Poem

By Margaret Fuller

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Down the mountains, across the hills,  
    To the plains I make my way,  
Until I come to the water's edge,  
    Where the land looks out on the bay.

My journey's end is a sandy spot,  
    That only the sea gulls know.  
'Tis here I sit and watch the waves,  
    And the roll of the undertow.

The waves come up with greedy hands  
    And snatch away the shore;  
Then back they come for a handful of shells  
    To pave the ocean floor.

Far out on the bay I see a ship  
    Moving dark against the sky,  
And over the ship the white clouds hang,  
    While the wind hums a lullabye.

'Tis the end of the day and far to the west

The red sun sinks in the sea;

O'er the water is thrown its crimson hues,

'Til startled by night, they flee.

The winds come up and the stars burst out,

And out of the night rolls the sea;

Still I sit and watch the little white caps

Play tag with the beach and me.

Then off to the South the clouds roll up,

And the foam on the wave piles high,

But I stay and watch by the edge of the sea,

'Til the rains come and wash off the sky.

Then away from the shore and the water's edge,

Where the land looks out on the bay,

Across the plains and the foothills I go;

Up the mountains I make my way.

When at the door of my home I stand,

I turn my face toward the sea,  
And lock the gate of the garden wall,  
That guards my memory.

*From the February 1938 issue of The Prism*

# Tobacco Market

By Marguerite Graham

All the dirt and confusion and noise that exists  
Crowded into the stifling warehouse  
Where unshaven farmers with anxious eyes  
And immaculate buyers wiping off beads of perspiration  
From smooth pink jowls  
Rub elbows and follow the auctioneer.  
He goes from one row of piled-up tobacco in baskets  
To another, and always he cries  
In the same tone:

“I’ve got three—four—

Give me four!

Four cents—five cents—

I want more!”

“What did you bid?!”

(And the armful of golden pungent

stuff is thrown down. It

makes a crunching noise,

very soft, yet somehow

stands out in the clamor.)

“Eight and-a-half—.”

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He takes up the song again, like a peddler shoulders his pack,

And the throng goes on to another pile.

And after them come the rumbling trucks.

And negroes,

Their black faces shiny with heat and excitement

Bear the baskets away.

Tobacco smoke and tobacco dust and the breath of men,

And greasy coats and the self-esteeming voices of well-fed men

And worried murmurs of gaunt ones clad in dirty overalls,

And the sticky, sickening heat of an Autumn day

And of a crowded building

And scraping feet on the tobacco-stained floor,

And a confusion of voices are rolled into one reeking, penetrating pulse.

And it all is only that men

Have worked and are working

And are brothers-in-toil.

*From the June 1938 issue of The Prism*

# Blind Man's Bluff

By Jimmy Wynne

Rochard Richards sat placidly in his creaking armchair and puffed heavily on his scarred and charred old pipe, exhaling the smoke in ever-rising enveloping wreathes ceilingward. Rochard was blind, the result of a flying piece of shot from his own lines during Germany's bid for martial supremacy in the latter stages of the war. His affliction had turned his attentions toward literary lines and quite a few short stories and poems had found their way to various magazines and papers.

For quite a while, however, no exchange of manuscripts had taken place between Rochard and the publishers, consequently no clinking of coins sounded in the Richards coffers, and the family of three: father, mother, and eight-year-old daughter were becoming sadly in need of many of the common necessities of life. Only that day, the grocer had seemed rather brusque in his manner toward the piling bill, and the man from the credit store had replied rather shortly to the farewell greeting of Mrs. Richards. If he only could get started on an idea. He must do something or they would die of starvation, or come face to face with abject poverty.

He pulled a battered typewriter toward him and methodically placed a piece of paper in the roller. In a few seconds, it landed in the wastebasket, soon to be followed by others. Finally, he struck on a theme he had had in mind for some time. It was a story based on his experience in France during the few months of hell that he spent at the front before his disabling wound.

The keys banged an uneven tattoo as he started off, uncertain, wary, but soon increased in speed and in a few moments he was lost in his inspiration. Mrs. Richards had long since gone to bed, soon to be lulled to sleep by the unceasing clatter of the typewriter. The pile of fresh paper at his left was rapidly diminishing as the new pile started on his right swiftly grew. Page after page filled with booming hundreds of guns, droning of planes, clashing of mental forces, whole companies being wiped out in a single charge all left him sitting at his machine pounding away like a demon, as his inspired fingers flew along the keys, unheeding of either time or sleep.

Finally after weary hours had passed, his pace lagged, and soon stopped altogether. He pushed the machine away from him and crawled to bed. For one night as his tired, sightless eyes closed on the pillow he was unworried. He had just completed his masterpiece, yet for the life of him he couldn't remember a thing he had just written. It was all a perfect blank, vague, uncertain, yet something inside of him whispered that all was well. He had a feeling that he had made a success of his night's work. The publishers couldn't help but grab it up. It was his life's story, his very soul. And besides, Anne needed some new dresses and a new spring coat. The other one had done for the past two years and a new one should be gotten right away. He knew she would protest, but this one time he would take the stand. Then, too, Mary's shoes had felt shabby and worn when he had carried them up to her room after supper. It wouldn't do to let her clothes get behind the rest of her friends. He was afraid they would shun her. She was so sensitive. And the grocer. And the collector. All of them would be taken care of. They wouldn't have to worry about anything for a long time to come. This would give him a start. He could ask for his own price when the public started buying it up. And so his weary brain rambled on till he fell into an untroubled sleep.

He awoke the next morning, taking a new hold on life. Thinking of things in a different light. Robinson would be over soon and he would be the first to read his creation. Robinson was his friendly advisor and counselor. He would be able to tell him just where to send it. He knew all the big publishing people, and a word from him would go a long way in getting a man a fresh start after months, even years of idleness. He was up, dressed,

and breakfasted before Robin, as the family called him, arrived. Rochard immediately dragged him off to his study.

“Robin, Robin, I’ve done it at last! You’ve got to read it at once! Can you take it to Pendington’s this afternoon?”

“Wait a minute, here. What are you talking about? Take what to Pendington?”

“This. I worked on it all last night. It’s been going on in back of my head for years, but I never really got around to it.”

“Oh, now I see. You’ve written something and you want me to pass my approval on it, and then take it down to Pendington. Well, it must be plenty good for you even to think of sending it to that old wind-bag.”

“Good? There’s no question about it being good. It has to be good! If it isn’t—well, we won’t think about that.”

“So this is it, eh? Looks like you’ve given me the wrong pile, old man. There’s nothing here but blank pages. Let me help you look around for it. It must be somewhere around here. Maybe Anne put it some place when she dusted.”

“No, she didn’t have a chance. I just wrote it last night. She hasn’t been in here since yesterday. I put it right—”

“Rochard! You mean to say that you wrote it last night? Don’t you remember? Yesterday you told me to take the old ribbon out of your machine and to bring you a new one today. It’s here in my pocket now. There’s nothing here but a lot of blank sheets!”

*From the October 1938 issue of The Prism*



*(Right) Illustration of “Blind Man’s Bluff” from October 1938 The Prism*

## Fill the Seats of Justice

By Henry Solter

You wouldn't think that I once killed a man, would you? It took me a long time to realize it, and even now I find myself trying to doubt it. But now that I am older I can see things as they really happened and I know without a doubt that I was responsible for a death, a death which might have been prevented, had it not been for me. I do not mean the few deaths which have occurred while I have been practicing medicine; you see, I am a doctor and have had my own patients for over a year, and I do not blame myself for those deaths, for I have done all that a doctor can do for those who have come to me. What I am speaking of, is something which happened when I was a child, something which I remember as clearly as if it had happened yesterday.

I remember that it was March and that I was very proud of my eight years. A group of boys had been playing cops and robbers that afternoon and I was a robber and was hiding in the bushes of Old Man Williams' back yard when Mother called me in to dinner. I said nothing about this to Mother or Daddy, for neither one of them liked Old Man Williams because they both felt that he was a great nuisance to the neighborhood; and I suppose he was, because he was not very clean and he did not keep his house or his yards clean. I noticed that Daddy was worried, and he ate in a hurry, complaining that he was very busy, that he hardly had time to get from the office and eat and then go back again (sometimes he worked at night), and that he hardly had time to think that day. I was so young that my father's fussing did not worry me a great deal, although I did feel sorry that he had to work so hard that he had no time to notice me or to talk to me, as he usually did at meal time. I was crazy about my father and admired him more than most boys admire their fathers.

We did not hear the news of Bold Bragan's death until the next morning. The boys told me about it on the way to school and, boy-like, I wanted to go to the scene at once. Bold had been murdered and how it thrilled my heart to discover that he had been found dead in old man Williams' cellar. Hadn't I been in Old Man Williams' yard the day before? Hadn't I passed right by the steps leading down to the cellar? And hadn't the door to the cellar been open when I was crouched in the bushes? Immediately, I became a kind of hero in the eyes of the boys—boys who just yesterday had taken me for granted and had merely considered me as one small part of their group. We talked about the matter before the early morning bell and again at recess. Excitement was high, for Daisy Echols had heard Miss Fulton say that Old Man Williams had been arrested because Bold had been living in his basement and because everyone naturally thought that he had killed the man. The whole town knew that Williams and Bold were not the best of friends, just as my father and Williams were not friends. In fact, my father did not like Bold, either. I don't know which of the two men he disliked more.

Daisy also told us (she went home for lunch and, therefore, gathered the news) that the police had released old man Williams after talking with him for an hour or two. They were sure that he had not killed the man.

Naturally, the boys of the little school guessed as to who could have murdered Bold Bragan.

"I think that Bold killed himself, if Old Man Williams did not do it," said Timmy.

"Aw, no," came a chorus of dissents. "Bold is too mean to have killed himself."

“Besides,” added John, “he couldn’t have hit himself in the head with a hatchet.”

We all agreed that he certainly could not have done that. After a slight pause, I said something that I had determined not to tell anyone, not even my father. I don’t know why I did it, unless it was because I wanted to be the “big shot” of our little group. “I saw a man coming out of the basement when I was hiding,” I said.

“Gee!” the kids exclaimed. “Who was it?”

I hesitated a moment, not knowing whether to tell them or not. But I had seen a man coming from the basement; it was right before Mother called me in to dinner. “Old Man ——,” I answered, finally. I just could not get the “Williams” out.

The rewards of being a hero are sweet, and for the rest of the afternoon I was probably the most popular boy in town. But I had no idea that everyone, young and old, would become excited over my simple statement, or I would not have told anyone.

Walking home late that afternoon, I wondered if I had done the wrong thing in telling the boys whom I had seen coming from the cellar the day before, for they were more convinced than ever that Old Man Williams had committed the murder.

Dinner that night was not a very pleasant meal, and I didn’t have much to say, for Daddy was still talking about how much he was overworked at the office and about how he had not yet recovered from all the work that he had done yesterday. Mother listened to Dad and I didn’t get much attention, even from Dad.

I was doing my lessons that night, and Mother and Daddy were conversing in low tones (about the murder, of course; it is not often that a murder occurs three doors from the house in which you are living). Suddenly, the door bell rang. I remember that I jumped when I heard it. I ran to open it and a policeman and another man came in and entered the front room where, by this time, Daddy was seated in the big chair and reading the newspaper. I shall never forget the expression on his face when he looked up and saw the two big men there. Instantly he arose and with a frightened look said, “Inspector, I—.” I knew that he thought that I had done something terrible, for I had gotten in trouble once before with the police when a ball I threw had broken a costly window, so I said quickly, “Daddy, I haven’t done anything.”

The big man smiled and said, “Wright, is this your son?”

“Yes, that’s Bill, but—,” Daddy said, and he still looked frightened and bewildered.

“Well, I want to talk to him for a few seconds. Come here, Sonny.”

He sat down and drew me against his knees.

“Tell me, Bill, where were you playing yesterday?”

When I told him, he said, “Someone told me that you were in Mr. Williams’ yard late yesterday afternoon. Were you?”

“Yes,” I told him reluctantly.

“Where were you hiding?”

“In the bushes in the back yard.”

He nodded with satisfaction. “Now tell me,” he said confidentially, “did you see anyone while you were there?”

At this time my father interrupted. “Please, Inspector, you have no right to—”

The big man laughed heartily. “I’m not scaring him, Wright. Am I, Bill?” He went on with the questioning, but I could not keep my eyes away from my father’s face. He looked so miserable and uncomfortable that I felt sorry for him.

I could not tell the man that I had seen no one leave the basement, for that would be a lie, but I hated worse than anything to answer him, for I knew what the next question would be. With all my heart I wished that I had never told the boys whom I had seen.

“Now, Bill, you’re almost a big boy and I know that I can depend on you, can’t I? Whom did you see coming from the cellar while you were hidden in the bushes?”

I tried to put him off. “A man,” I answered.

He laughed again. “Do you know the man? Do you know his name?”

I looked at my father pleadingly, for I knew that he would not like it if he knew that I had been playing around the house in which Old Man Williams and Bold Bragan lived, but the news was already out, so I said slowly and hesitantly, “Old Man Williams.”

The big man breathed heavily, but he said, “Are you sure, Sonny?”

I nodded. I could not have spoken then. Daddy was looking at me in such a strange way that I was frightened. The inspector released his light hold upon my arm and I ran to my father, crying, “I won’t do it any more, Daddy. I promise you. Oh, I wish I hadn’t gone there.”

Daddy stroked my hair. “And I wish it too, son,” he said gently but with a queer edge to his voice.

The big man rose and said to my father, “Well, Wright, I guess we have the right man now. Of course, this son of yours will have to testify in court. I don’t see why we didn’t keep Williams when we had him this morning. I knew his story seemed too good to be true. Wouldn’t have known about this unless Mrs. Hallett had phoned down tonight, saying that her little boy kept telling her that Bill here had seen Williams coming from the basement. Well, I guess the case is practically settled.”

After he had gone, Daddy said to me, “Son, did you really see Williams coming from that basement room?”

“I saw someone,” I answered slowly.

His eyes narrowed. “Well, are you sure that it was Williams? Could it have been someone else? It would be terrible if an innocent man should

be sent to prison or be electrocuted.”

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I did not answer him but grabbed him around the neck and hugged him tightly. (I was not too old then to have outgrown my childish way of showing affection.)

The next few weeks were exciting ones. Due to the intense public feeling regarding the case, the accused man Williams came to trial within two weeks. I attended court every day and every word that was said then (that is, every word that I could understand) is written on my mind and I know now that it will always be so.

Old Man Williams was a pitiful figure, always staring straight in front of him. He did not even look at his lawyer, but he did stare fixedly at me when I testified that I had seen him leave the basement about six o'clock that warm March afternoon. His look was not one of hatred or dislike, but it was one of brooding hopelessness.

The trial lasted about five days, and when it was over, I was not sorry. Everything at home had been upset for that week and I was glad to get back to a normal, everyday life. Daddy became himself again and soon the boys in our gang had other things to interest them and to discuss, but it took me several years to forget Old Man Williams' face when he was sentenced to be electrocuted. Nor can I forget the way I felt on the morning that he was killed. Even my father was not as upset as I was. I felt as if I were the guilty one and that I was the one to have been killed, for if it had not been for me his electrocution would never have taken place. I tried to comfort myself by the thought that it was not entirely my fault, for the lawyers had not asked me how many men I saw coming from the cellar. I had seen two and Williams was the first one.

I said that my father seemed to forget the matter quickly. I do not see why he should have because, you see, he was the last man I saw coming from old man Williams' basement.

*From the February 1939 issue of The Prism*

## Pulling the Athlete Through

By Betty Brydges

Spring is in the air again! Nothing makes us so conscious of the fact as the sound of bat hitting ball down on the ball diamond. No sooner had we completed the basketball season that we plunged at once into the height of this, America's favorite outdoor sport. All of this brings to mind the vital part that athletics play in college life. It is a deplorable fact that very few subjects can be brought up that they don't remind someone of a fond story they heard the other day, et cetera, et cetera. Anyhow, I have come across a few concerning that phenomenon of our day, the college athlete, that I should like to pass on to you.

So the story goes, a certain large university in the South hired a certain young man from the North to play football for them. The boy had been brought up in the coal-mining district of Pennsylvania where, his parents being very poor, he had received little or no education. At any rate, he was very much surprised one day to find himself attending college. It had been arranged for him to stay in the back of an old pool room. The place was small and dark, and the only furniture of which the room boasted was an old cot on which he was to sleep. How he managed in the classroom we can only imagine, but his success on the team was unparalleled. It so happened that the first game of the season was to be played away from home, and when the time came, our hero went gaily off with the team. After distinguishing himself in the game, he went with his teammates to a nice hotel for the night. Upon his arrival back at school the next day he was complimented on his playing. "Aw! that was nothing," he said modestly. "But," he continued, his face lighting up with enthusiasm, "you shoulda seen where we stayed—sheets on the beds and everything, just like the rich kids."

One of the best known eastern universities is credited with this: One of the paid athletes who had starred on the football team with the previous year returned to school and went directly to the registrar's office. He told the registrar that he wished to sign up for two courses, "The History of the Pipe Organ," and "The Appreciation of Music." (He probably arrived at his decision after looking through that section of the catalog that recommends courses for athletes.) Anyhow, the registrar informed him that he couldn't take either of these subjects. The boy was insistent, "Of course I can take them," he said, "I'm interested in these things and they're what I'm going to study." "No, you can't," said the registrar. This went on for some time until finally the boy demanded to know why he couldn't sign up for the wished-for courses. A smile passed over the face of the long-suffering registrar, "You can't take them," he said, "because you took both those courses last year."

Last comes the story of a boy who had been hired to play football. He did splendidly on the team, and so when the football season ended, he was urged to go out for basketball. On the first day the players reported for practice, the young man in question saw a basketball for the first time. "Gee, Coach," he shouted, "look what somebody did to the football—they pushed it in."

There! now that's over with until someone or something else reminds me of a grand one I heard the other day, et cetera, et cetera—oh nutz!

# Americanism

By William Garbee, Jr.

Today, all Europe is embroiled in a titanic, life and death struggle, the results of which no man knows. The United States, facing serious internal problems, is in constant and increasing danger of being sucked into the maelstrom abroad.

Hence, in these momentous years which are immediately ahead, it behooves the people of America, and especially the youth, to stop and to take stock of our fundamental values of life, to refurbish our dormant ideals.

In fine, by Americanism I mean a set of standards, peculiarly American, by which we of America can cope with the mighty problems of today and tomorrow with some degree of success.

And what is such a set of standards? Without preaching and without offering panaceas, let us attempt to redefine such values will buoy us up in these troubled times.

First, there are the key-stones of liberty which the totalitarian states so abhor: free speech, an untrammelled press, right of assemblage, freedom of religion, right of redress, competitive, free enterprise, equal rights of minorities, and moderate governmental regulation of business rather than governmental strangulation of business.

We complacently take these precious rights for granted; we forget that other peoples have been deprived of them in the wake of internecine wars. We need to realize anew these principles; we must determine to maintain these rare liberties inherited from our English ancestors. For only upon these rights can we have life and happiness.

Only in proportion as the youth of today possesses character can it order the confused world of tomorrow. Washington and Lincoln, whose birthdays we observe this month, along with Lee, have left to us the indelible heritage of character.

By character I mean honesty, purity, sobriety, tolerance, obedience, understanding, thrift, and the other ancient virtues which we would forget in our head-on rush to be "modern."

Honest, hard work and, concomitantly, duty are likewise components of true character. It was Lee who said, "Duty is the sublimest word in the English language."

Andre Maurois, the modern literateur, has said that "humanity has always been divided...into optimists and pessimists." More than ever we need a steady, intelligent optimism of the kind of Browning, when he wrote, "God's above us, all's well with the world."

Today the doctrine of defeatism is too much indulged by us. Rather, we need a youth of courage and bravery. The words from Smollett's Humphrey Clinker have a present day application,

"And hearts resolved and hands prepared

The blessings they enjoy to guard.”

Christian character bravely defending freedom, valiantly seeking to solve the world’s problems, interminably striving for progress—that is Americanism.

Americanism has in it those elements which are potent enough to change a reprobate world.

*From the February 1940 issue of The Prism*

# Lynchburg's First Poet: Bransford Vawter

By Harold Thornhill

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“I'd Offer Thee This Hand of Mine”

I'd offer thee this hand of mine,

    If I could love thee less.

But heart so warm, so fond as thine,

    Should never know distress.

My fortune is too hard for thee,

    'Twould chill my dearest joy;

I'd rather weep to see thee free

    Than win thee to destroy.

I leave thee in thy happiness,

    As one too dear to love—

As one I think of but to bless,

    As wretchedly I rove.

And, oh, when sorrow's cup I drink

    All bitter though it be,

How sweet 'twill be for me to think,

    It holds no drop for thee.

And now my dreams are sadly o'er,

Fate bids them all depart,

And I must leave my native shore,

In brokenness of heart.

And, oh, dear one! when far from thee,

I ne'er know joy again,

I would not that one thought of me,

Should give thy bosom pain.

*Lynchburg, Virginia, 1826*

This simple and charming lyric, first appearing anonymously in the Southern Literary Messenger, and later set to music and sung throughout the United States and foreign countries, remains today as the only literary memorial to the creative ability of Bransford Vawter (1815-1838), Lynchburg's earliest poet.

Little is known of this obscure poet-artist who dreamed, loved, and died a forlorn man. He was born in a little frame house, which occupied the position of the present Law Building, and was the second son of Benjamin Vawter, a tailor.

Bransford revealed his fondness for literature, especially poetry early. When he was four years old, his father would often bring him into his shop to recite his favorite selection, Goldsmith's "Elegy on the Death of a Mad Dog." Bransford failed in his apprenticeship as a tailor and later attended private school only to leave and become a clerk.

Vawter is described as having a frail, graceful figure, with a clear-cut, intelligent face, dark brilliant eyes, and a genial expression. Despite dissipation and ill health, he was a very popular man and became an officer in the Lynchburg "Invincibles" and president of the Patrick Henry Debating Society.

Tradition has it that Bransford Vawter fell in love with Miss Ann Norvell, a Lynchburg debutante of the time. Realizing that there was too much difference between their stations in life, he gave up his suit as hopeless, and addressed to her this poem, an eloquent and tender expression of a love, that he realized could never be consummated.

Ann Norvell eventually married another man, one who was said to be the choice of her parents. As for Vawter, his death was as tragic as his life had been. At the age of twenty-three, just as the vista of a brilliant career was opening before him, he contracted tuberculosis and died at his home on the corner of Fourth and Polk Streets.

Until October 14, 1936, his body occupied an unmarked grave in Lynchburg, about one hundred yards from the entrance of the old Methodist Cemetery. On this date, in the midst of Lynchburg's Sesqui-Centennial celebration, the Carter Glass Chapter of the Quill and Scroll Society presented a memorial to be placed on the hitherto unmarked grave of Lynchburg's first poet—Bransford Vawter.

*From the December 1940 issue of The Prism*

# Why a College Magazine?

By Kingsley M. Stevens

A college magazine has two major purposes. The first of these is to provide a readable magazine for the students written by fellow students. The second is to give all students an opportunity to have their written work and art work published.

These two purposes are, of course, very closely interrelated. The greater the number of students that contribute, the greater the variety of the material. Variety in subject matter, diction, and style are very important in that greater variety will naturally appeal to more readers. Any reader will then probably find something he likes in the publication.

Written work for a college publication can be in any one of many fields. The short story offers limitless opportunity on subjects ranging from romance to mystery and adventure. The essay is almost as broad in its sweep from the personal essay to the highly impersonal form: travel, dreams, and thoughts. Articles have now become the most characteristic and widely read form of literature in many current magazines. Some of these magazines consist entirely of articles. With the increasing specialization in colleges, semi-technical and scientific articles should find a large group interested.

Drama has not received as much notice as is its due. The New York stage is now enjoying a good season; new plays appear weekly and old ones continue to run. These plays had to be written first. A college magazine gives young dramatists a chance to start: good points and bad points are much more easily seen and rectified in published material than in unpublished copy.

Humor adds much to life's enjoyment. Perhaps it is unfortunate, perhaps not, but people are frequently remembered only for the witty and humorous remarks that they have made. Humor can appear in many forms. We find it in the form of jokes, stories, articles, and poems. Aside from jokes, humor is really an element and not the whole of the work. For this reason it can pervade practically any form of writing.

Poetry is still an important portion of literature, although it does not stand out as it once did as the preeminent form of literary composition. Short poems have a wider appeal than longer ones now, but aside from this the subject, manner and style is almost limitless. While the statement that a "poet is born, not made" is in all probability true to some extent. Even great poets always polished up their works by frequent research and study of versification. Writing while in college will give good groundwork and help eliminate errors.

Art work too has several phases. One can portray landscapes, people, or still life with pen and ink sketches, water colors, or oils. Or he can try his skill and imagination in the growing art of cartooning.

Photography has literally millions of adherents today. With very cheap equipment and a good sense of balance, imagination and some technical knowledge, almost anything is a subject for the photographer. The wide circulation of the news and picture magazines and the greatly increased use of photographs in newspapers and magazines of all kinds attest to this fact. Many of these leading photographers develop in college magazines.

This rapid scanning of the variety of material that is used in college magazines demonstrates that no matter where literary and artistic interests and abilities may lie, you will find ample opportunity to develop these interests, both for your own good and for the good of the school in THE PRISM.

*From the October 1941 issue of The Prism*

## Merry Christmas?

by E. F. [The Editors believe E. F. to be Elaine Fitch, editor of *The Prism* at this time.]

The ground was cold and hard and frozen beneath our feet. The trench in which we were standing was deep and narrow. There were frostings of ice along the sides. All of us were silent. We were listening for the signal to go over; also it was Christmas Day. We had no desire to talk. I looked up into the icy arc above me. I saw only a frigid expanse of sky reflecting a white waste of land. The falling snow flakes felt like feathers on my cheeks. I wondered if a small round face I so well remembered was pressed against a pane so that she too might watch the snow. I was thinking about the kind of Christmases we used to have.

That morning some presents had come for a few of us that made us remember. Several cakes, some tobacco, and the like. Most of the men had not received anything. But my package had gotten through. It was a pair of hand-knitted gloves with a little piece of holly enclosed. I had pinned the holly on my coat. I fingered it now—unable to feel its prick through my heavy gloves. It looked almost ridiculous against the hardness of my trench coat.

I was thrust abruptly from my nostalgia by the long-awaited signal. Thinking and acting as one man we scrambled over. We were plunged once more into the horror of shoot or be shot. We finally broke their lines. Men fell indiscriminately about me, but so far I had somehow managed to get the first shot. I was running for the cover of a shell hole. As I was about to throw myself into it I looked directly down the barrel of a gun. I fired. I saw the soldier slide back into the hole. I half-fell, half-slid in behind him. I lay there a moment crowded close to his still warm body. I would not have looked at him twice, for I could not view death with matter of fact acceptance. I would not have looked at him twice had I not noticed a dirty blood-stained bit of mistletoe pinned to his coat.

*From the January 1942 issue of The Prism*

# What To Do In Case of An Air Raid!

By the Editors of Prism

Cooperating with National Defense, The Prism presents the following rules for safety in an emergency:

1. As soon as the bombs start dropping, run like Hell. (It doesn't matter where, so long as you run like Hell.)
  - (a) Wear your track shoes if possible. If the people in front of you are slow, you won't have any trouble stepping over them.
2. Take advantage of opportunities afforded you when air raid sirens sound the warning attack, for example—
  - (a) If in a bakery, grab some pieces of cake, etc.
  - (b) If in a tavern, grab a few beers.
  - (c) If in a movie or taxi, grab a blond.
3. If you find an unexploded bomb, always pick it up and shake it thoroughly. (Maybe the firing pin is stuck. If that doesn't work, heave it in the furnace. The Fire Department will come later to take care of things).
4. If an incendiary bomb is found burning in a building, throw gasoline on it. (You can't put it out anyhow, so you might just as well have a little fun).
  - (a) If no gasoline is available, throw a bucket of water on it and lie down—you're dead.
    - I. E. The properties of the bomb free the hydrogen from the water causing rather rapid combustion—in fact, it will explode with a helluva crash.
5. Always get confused and excited and holler bloody murder. (It will add to the fun and confusion and scare the kids).
6. Drink heavily, eat onions, limburger cheese, salami, etc., before entering a crowded air raid shelter. It will make you very unpopular with the people within your immediate vicinity, eliminating any unnecessary discomfort that would be more prevalent if people crowded too closely.
7. Knock the air wardens down if they start to tell you what to do. They always save the best seats for themselves and their friends.
8. If you should be the victim of a direct bomb hit, don't go to pieces. (Lie still and you won't be noticed).

*From the February 1942 issue of The Prism*

# Soliloquy of a Campus Draftee

By Regina Thomas

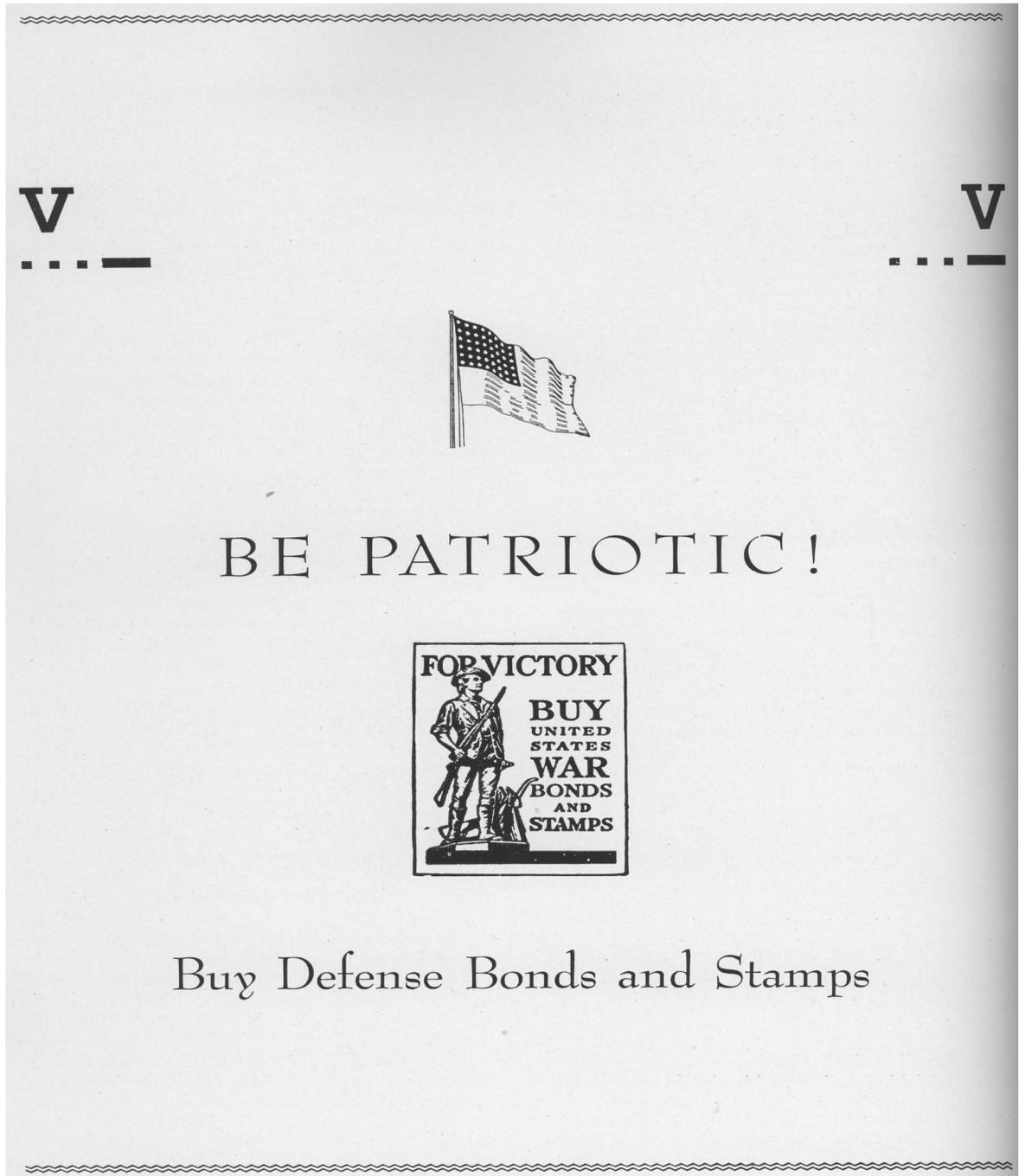
'Tis bitter irony that the Draft Board  
Invited me into the army this present spring;  
But perhaps in some far-off tropic heat  
I shall rest a moment and remember.

The croaking of the frogs on College Lake,  
The gnats that fill this hazy air;  
And pale green grass beneath the trees  
Where little grey squirrels frolic.

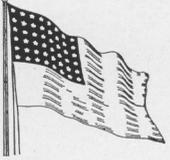
Humming bees on the red maple buds,  
Fresh fragrance of earth before sunrise,  
Sunlight on the Ad Building,  
And Freckles in his daily strolls;

The mellow ringing College bell which breaks  
Up chattering social groups in the hall,  
The quiet atmosphere of chapel twice a week,  
Are such a small list of things I want to remember.

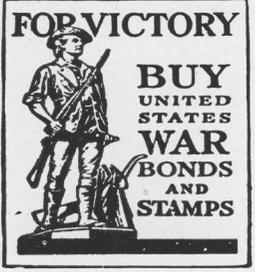
*From the April 1943 issue of The Prism*



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BE PATRIOTIC!



Buy Defense Bonds and Stamps

*An advertisement from the May 1943 issue of The Prism*

# The Meaning of Good Citizenship in Wartime America

By Carol Potee

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First Prize Winner in the Second Annual McReynolds Citizenship Essay Contest

We are Americans, and we are at war.

Nearly all of us on this campus are native-born Americans. Citizenship became ours at birth...it was part of the heritage which our parents gave us as they gave life itself. But it is only too true that what we come by with so little effort on our own part, goes easily unnoticed. We do not appreciate what we will probably never be without. Yet if this minute all of us had reason to believe that we might lose the right and privilege to call ourselves "Americans," we would speedily plumb the depths of its significance. And before it was too late, perhaps, we might snatch back the fleeting prize.

Fleeting it is in our world today, too, and precious. Why, we are waging this war to recover and protect, everywhere, the democratic ideals and institutions which we Americans have come to understand, even take for granted. If all this is worth fighting and dying for, it is undeniably worth living for, and living as a good citizen. Not just words, but thought and action are the means by which we best react to the state of being at total war...the thinking and acting of a stoker on a merchant vessel; of a famous Metropolitan Opera star among her Victory garden tomato plants; of an American sniper up a tree on Guadalcanal; and of a white-collar worker, a housewife or a shipyard riveter.

To them and millions like them, being a citizen has taken on a far greater significance in time of war, like countless other things do...few have ever gone to Webster's and thumbed through to read the accepted definition of the word "citizenship." And why should they, really? It is so familiar to them and much more real than print that the citizen is he who enjoys the freedom and privileges of "belonging" in a nation, he who owes allegiance to a government and is in turn entitled to its protection. The powerful tie of loyalty which he cannot help but feel, implies life, liberty and property, and obligations, as well. And because ours is a democracy, we have even more than these...we have suffrage and other political rights.

Originally, the democratic countries were the little ones of the world. They were made up of people who loved the smaller units of life, because living in families and villages as they did, it was easier to have a picture of God as a Father and of human beings as brothers. Thus, you see, democratic society represents the spiritual maturity of humanity. This type of community calls for equal opportunity for every man in economic and social life, and encourages private initiative and advancement. It carries certain moral authority, too. It can and does temper a man's hunger for prestige and power. On the other hand, when a State takes control of the culture, the vocations and the homes, in fact, all phases of a people's life...that is totalitarianism; herein patriotism is the supreme virtue and the State, man's chief glory. We in America pledge allegiance to "God and country," but God is infinitely higher, in our eyes, than State. When men realized that democracy relies on the fellowship which is religion, they set their faces toward God the Father, clasped Man the Brother by the hand, and democracy took root and grew.

A community and an outlook of this sort necessitate responsible living, for citizens of a government of, by and for the people...that is, if they are to be good citizens...can do no other than feel responsible for the nation's actions. It is ours to make those choices which are right, or which seem right to us until they can be proven otherwise. It means sharing power through the social institutions which "fit" our chosen pattern, in order to create a balance among all functions of life. This balance is supremely important. War alone will not bring it about; you cannot talk it into being, either. The only solution is found in the conscious and purposeful striving of each citizen. Thoughtfully, prayerfully and perhaps a little fearfully, we must enter into the

highest possible organization of human life. And we in America think we have found the best promise of this in democracy.

Good citizenship in peacetime America involves much. Good citizenship in wartime America involves more. Perhaps it is harder to be a good citizen in such a time as ours. Certainly it is more challenging, I think. The State, like the Sabbath, was made for man, not man for the State, and our State needs us desperately...rather, we need ourselves, for we are America. Now, more than ever before, it is vital that we fulfill our duties and obligations, and cherish our returns. The stronger America's call, the more eager must be our response...output mounts in proportion with demand. We simply must rise to the hour. I think we have, but there is much to be desired. Thank God for the stars!

The realization of the service we may render to country, to fellow citizen and to the God of our democracy, is not conceit. On the contrary, it ought to make us hard workers, humble workers. Consider for instance, the right to vote...we all know that a large percentage of American citizens do not step up to the ballot box and express their thinking and from-the-heart honest opinion. An authority on rural life, addressing us recently, reiterated the statement that many a bad man has been put in office by good men who did not vote. But she went on to describe, with infectious enthusiasm, the League of Women Voters in which she had become interested, and which has developed into an organization of boundless worth. What does good citizenship mean? It means fulfilling the obvious. And it means infinitely more...there's "getting along with the other fellow," too. Maybe Christianity does begin at home, but it must spread to all or it is not Christianity as it was meant to be. One and all, we are citizens. There can be no difference between me and my neighbor on either side of the tracks. How can a man of average intelligence ignore the apparent logic of equality among citizens, and discriminate against the man next door whose color chromosomes happened to be slightly different? Interestingly enough, the phrase "race relations" has sounded less harsh and forbidding on the campus since the visit of an exceptional glee club and their highly trained and pleasant principal from the Negro High School. This very day, Wartime America lays out, in the sight of all, the possibilities of service and selfless giving...there are innumerable contributions, like victory crops, bandages and blood banks, neatly crushed tin cans, war bonds, farm machinery for the scrap metal drive, and not least, our confidence, patience and efforts. Everything counts, great or small. None of us would for a moment consider severing the very real bonds between us and home, and our men in service, which time and space cannot weaken...no more can we turn our backs on the nation's need, or the need of any nation.

No one knows better than the front line men that war does not mean glory to America and her people. It is not an end in itself. Winston Churchill's statement as to what he was bringing to his people is so classic already that it hardly needs repeating. If the great and heroic qualities which war reveals, do not remain in evidence when the peace is achieved, if this conflict does not pave the way for greater strides toward brotherhood and amity, it has been worse than in vain...and it will have been our fault.

War in our country admittedly means curbing of free speech, censorship of the press and of mail; it means a greater degree of power, in the hands of our leaders, which seems approaching the dictatorial; it means high taxes, and regimentation of our daily living and our free will; and it means killing and death. For the duration, whatever that may come to include, war means dictation of vocations for youth throughout the nation. Neither men nor women now have unhampered choice in the matters of schooling and livelihood and the place where they will live and work. We college young people can do nothing less, if we are trying to be good citizens, than apply ourselves to the tasks at hand...the time left us may not be long. It is hard to study and persevere and "stick to it" but it is not so hard as to be prohibitive, however often we may think so. We cannot forget that college is our life at the present, all the life we have right now. Some of us may not yet have reached the so-called accountable age, but we do count and we must do our best, as did one man of whom I read last month.

Memorials to this late renowned and beloved American author paid special tribute to his contributions as a citizen: “His concern for the changes of American background kept him dealing with the moment before the news arrived; his war poems began as the signs of war began, years ago, and when America finally joined the war, his work was ready for use, perhaps beyond any other American writer’s work. For he had never gone off into false nationalism nor been led into temporary sympathies; keeping his own ground, he was writing work for the page and the air and the film that could be used for the broad works of showing and declaring and affirming the meanings of the war...He was able...to turn himself and his talent over, at once and completely, to the war; this man who had been concerned with early beginnings ever since his own, and had widened that concern year after year to meet a democratic need.” Do you remember the “Four Freedoms” posters hanging in the auditorium until recently? Stephen Vincent Benet wrote the text of the painting entitled “Freedom from Fear.”

Good citizenship in wartime America means all these things, and so many more that it can not be fully expressed. But we can try...we must!

*From the May 1943 issue of The Prism*

# Campus Evolution

By Marjorie Harmon

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During the five weeks that have passed since the term started, many changes have occurred on the campus of Lynchburg College. There have been changes in the campus itself, physical changes. There have been personal changes in my opinions of fellow classmates, of my classes, [and] on certain ideas. All of these things have been on my mind for several days. I am just as interested as, I hope, my reader is, to see how these thoughts will appear on paper.

The most apparent change is in the campus itself. The beautiful green trees have become individuals in their various brilliant colors. Never has autumn been as colorful as it has been this year. The grass has changed from velvet green to an olive drab which harmonizes magically with the trees. The poetic nature in me has been stirred by the gorgeous panorama of the fall out-of-doors. The falling of leaves has disclosed Westover Hall which has been hiding behind them since last spring.

Another change which five weeks of college life has brought about is in my ideas of religion. I had always taken my religion for granted and accepted the Bible as a whole, never questioning it or wondering about it. Now I am interested in its origin, its authors, its history and growth. My religion has changed from a mere existing factor in my life to a deep and vital subject of interest. Like the changing of the leaves, my religious life has taken on a rosy hue, a brightness that will last throughout the seasons, not dropping and decaying in the dust.

A change has occurred in my opinions of people, individually and collectively. Before coming to college, I formed opinions of people hastily and seldom changed them. It was just as though I was seeing and criticizing each leaf on the tree instead of the tree itself. College life has broadened my views on the subject of friendship. I am learning to like people as they are. I am learning to accept the tree, good and bad limbs together.

In speaking of changes, it would be pure carelessness to neglect mentioning my classes. From the first, I noticed the distinct difference between college professors and high school teachers. Classes moved in somewhat the same order but the attitude is distinctly different. In their attitudes, I see the crispness as well as the color of the leaves. Most of the students put forth genuine interest and effort in class. In high school the students seemed to have an attitude of disinterest and carelessness in their studies. I was surprised at the ambitiousness and industriousness of most of the students, and it inspired me to take a real interest in my studies.

The last personal change which I shall mention is the mental change in myself. I discovered, to my disgust and surprise, that I had an inferiority complex. This, I decided, demanded my immediate attention. Taking my pattern from the leaves I began to follow the example of those around me and attempt to change. This was a matter which was hard for me to discuss and analyze as I was the subject. My friends did this for me, and I have begun to feel the difference. However, I am hoping that this new existence will not leave with the falling of the leaves.

Like the falling of the leaves, some things are gone. Like the gorgeous fall colors, most things are brighter. Most of the changes have been for the best. The deadness of winter must not complete the evolution of personal and physical changes. To obtain the most from college means to grow—to grow means to change. A change is usually the result of a challenge, figuratively speaking. The fall leaves are a challenge to change—for the best.

*From the November 1943 issue of The Prism*

# Liberated

By George Williams

I stood in the sunlight at the corner of Locatius and Vian Dona across from the bombed city hall building. Many times, I had stood in this place and watched the troops of Benito Mussolini and his Fascist leaders march by. Many times, I had seen Hitler speed by in a state car followed by thousands of his storm troopers. Yes, I have seen the heart of the dictators' power and strength go by this street corner and cross the Villa Aquan. Hitler and Mussolini often visited here because that was Naples, the Queen of Italian cities, heavily fortified to defend herself and this part of Italy from attack. But now, I was watching something new...I was watching something that made me thrill inside, I was watching troops, trucks, tanks, and supplies move north-ward...troops, trucks, tanks and supplies not of Germany but of the United States, Great Britain, and Canada. I along with thousands of other Italians was cheering these men whom we had once been forced to fight, but who were now our friends and allies.

So very much had happened in such a short period of years and now I was watching men move through Naples...men who I knew were helping to liberate our country from the Germans and the Japanese. Just a few years before the war started, I was a Fascist youth, as I had been brought up under Fascist rules and regulations. Later, I was employed at an industrial plant outside of Naples and my position there kept me from service in the Army. I stayed at home and worked and I felt the tightening grip of regulations and rationing placed on us by the government. Many of us here in Naples were displeased and wanted to be on the side of the Allies. We all hoped for an invasion of our country which would free us.

Small bits of information did leak through to our people even though our government and the Germans restricted the truth. We did learn that the Allies had successfully invaded and occupied North Africa. The government said that all attacks by the enemy had been repulsed and the enemy had been driven back. Still, the increasing casualty lists spoke for themselves. Increased air raids signified that the Allies were close at hand. The British had sent hundreds of planes over Naples on a few occasions but now each night and several times during the daylight hours, mighty armadas of planes swept down and bombed and strafed our military installations. Our large manufacturing plants were leveled to the ground and many of our naval and merchant ships in the harbor were destroyed.

After a few weeks, we received news that United States and British forces had landed in Sicily. The government told us that all their landings had been repulsed but the refugees from the south told us that the Allies were in Sicily in larger numbers and they were advancing steadily. Rumors spread very fast and we were afraid that the Allies might be losing. However, all of us knew that it wouldn't be long before the Allies would be marching through Italy.

My uncle, who had lived in Sicily, visited me and told me that our troops and the German troops had been withdrawn to the mainland...and that wasn't all. He said that British forces had crossed the strait between Sicily and Italy and had established beach heads on the Italian mainland. A few days later it happened...German troops took over control of Naples and all of Italy. Later I found out that we had surrendered and that Mussolini was out of the government. Late that night we heard the rumbling and roar of cannon fire to the south and the next day I learned from a friend who had lived in Salerno that American troops had landed there. Air attacks came every few hours. The Germans had established martial law throughout the countryside and in Naples. Naples was becoming a tangle of wrecked buildings and ruined German supplies and equipment. The British 8th Army was moving rapidly up the east coast and the American troops had taken Salerno and were moving northward. The plant where I worked was destroyed so I left for my home of east Naples. When I arrived home, I was informed that my brother had been killed in action at Bizerte in North Africa. That was

very hard to bear. How-ever, it would have been much worse in Sicily with the Germans.

Each day the noise of battle came nearer, and soon the harbor of Naples was bombarded from the sea by the United States Navy. The next day German forces rushed in full retreat through Naples. They plundered the city—set fire to it—killed some of its inhabitants—stole its valuables. And then... Yes, the next day... American forces marched into Naples. The first were infantrymen advancing from house to house and then the trucks, tanks, jeeps, and command cars filled with soldiers entered the city.

That was almost a week ago. Now most of the inhabitants of Naples have returned...but hundreds of civilians lie dead in the streets. Hundreds of soldiers of both the Axis and the Allies lie dead. Yet, life in this city still goes on. All around me today are people who realize that they are free now. They are cheering the passing Allied troops. Yes—these people are happy and so am I. I am happy because I am free....I am free, and now I can help in the building of a new world based on democracy. I am free. I have been liberated.

*From the November 1943 issue of The Prism*

# The Chief Value of A College Education in War-Time

By Marjorie Harmon

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“A place where ideals are kept in heart, in an air that they can breathe;

A place of worship, work, and play for the youth of every clime.

List to the spirited rhythm of youth, humanity’s pulse at its best,

Intermingled with beats of a slower sort, the rhythm of wisdom and age...”<sup>1</sup>

The spirit of the American youth when he is called upon to surrender his time, talent, and life for the preservation of values is the spirit that is the most honorable and worthy characteristic of the youth of any nation. It is this unconquerable quality, the same one upholding men in battle, that is guiding the educational leaders of America through the difficulties and disputes aroused by the war. The greatest problem that has faced the institutions of learnings has been the problem of deciding whether or not the sacrifice of students, sports, and extra financial support is more important than the values of higher education. It is necessary to recognize these values and become acquainted with them before an adequate decision can be made.

“The development of government all over the world, is towards a more numerous, more elaborate, and more highly trained bureaucracy.— Therefore it is necessary, year by year, for it to command a great supply of diverse and well-trained officials, mostly specialists of one kind or another.”<sup>2</sup> Who will be these officials and specialists in the post-war world? They will be the young men and women who took the dare of responsibility and set immediately to the task of becoming educated in the problems of the adult world and the means by which these problems may be solved. Now, more than ever before, the scholastic requirements of educational institutions are being lowered and thus admit more people who are of the opinion that they must get an education but are not certain why. The intelligence of these people, however, is still above average, and they must get a thorough understanding of the need for well-trained and rational leaders to succeed the departing generation.

It is a well-known fact that after the war, when the defense industries are evolving into peacetime industries, there will be millions of unemployed, uneducated people depending upon the government for survival. Plans are being made to create jobs for these people in reconstruction camps and government projects, but these will not be permanent nor will they provide more than a meager existence. Necessarily, the American standard of living will be lowered until the proper adjustment is made. Who will lead and be of the most help in bringing about a morally sound and physically capable generation to build the long dreamed-of post-war world? Only those who have had a higher and more fundamental education will know how to cope with the problems and how to provide a lasting foundation for a new civilization.

“Education must aim at making them (the people) all capable of freedom, for they are all to be free.”<sup>3</sup> Although this statement was made with an entirely different purpose in mind, it can easily be adapted to the present situation by considering the fact that most of the younger people occupied in war industries received no more than a high school education before going to work. The idea of high and steadily increasing wages was very appealing and seemed a marvelous opportunity. But what is going to happen when this money is no longer in circulation and jobs are only for the few?

If they have made plans to continue their education they will have no particular handicaps, but will, along with the ex-servicemen who had the same foresight, go to college and prepare themselves to take their places in society?

"It is true that in the old countries where opportunities are limited, if a man gets a little ahead he hesitates to take a risk because if he goes down he fears he may never get up again."<sup>4</sup>

What a wonderful feeling it is to know that somewhere and somehow there is and always will be an opportunity to build anew what has been lost! By making the proper preparation America again will know the blessed freedoms—freedom from fear and want, of speech and religion! But if the future citizens preserve this freedom, so sacrificially won, and are to again rise to the place where they are concerned with the higher, most worthwhile aims in life, education must go on! There must be no half-decisions, no submitting to pecuniary desires, no purposes that will be only echoes in the future! Here's to college education and the freedom it can and must provide!

<sup>1</sup>M. E. Bennett, *College and Life* (New York, 1933), p. 5.

<sup>2</sup>Gilbert Highet, "The American Student as I see Him," *Modern English Readings*, (New York, 1942), p. 343.

<sup>3</sup>Robert Maynard Hutchins, 'Education for Freedom,' *Modern English Readings*, (New York, 1942), p. 353.

<sup>4</sup>James Truslow Adams, 'Why Are Americans Different?' *The Reader's Digest*, April 1944, p. 5.

*From the May 1944 issue of The Prism*

# Before Ultimate Victory

by Joseph F. Jones

Screaming headlines herald the victories of today! The enemy repulsed, new advances made, one-hundred thousand of the enemy slaughtered. Victory, they say, is coming soon. What do they mean by Victory? Does that familiar term mean merely the marching of khaki-clad soldiers through Berlin's Brandenburg gate and down the Unter der Linden?

When we speak of victory, let us not desire to convey by that term any such restricted meaning or transitory triumph. Nay, let us rather speak of Ultimate Victory—triumph in the hearts and lives of men.

The victors shall be faced with the difficult task of gaining the confidence of the vanquished. Nations, even after the cessation of firing, will be shy, suspicious of each other. It will be left to the victors especially to conduct themselves after the strife of battle so that the defeated nations will trust, honor, and esteem their friendship. This confidence can be acquired by a strong tie between all nations on the eternal principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Every nation must adopt these principles if the world is to enjoy an ultimate peace. A vast majority of the American people seem to think that only the subdued nations will be compelled to change their principles and policies. But, as one nation alone did not bring on this war, so neither can the rehabilitation of just one nation bring us the peace for which we are striving. This matter is not an argument between cold facts of logic or a contest between flowery speeches by leaders of nations. It is a deal between men and men, and no victory on the battlefield—no decision at the peace table can reach into the hearts of men like magic, and remove prejudice, fear, jealousy, and hate. There must be a genuine change in the heart of each individual of every nation.

It was a lack of brotherly love that brought the world into this chaotic condition! It was distrust of nations which prepared the fertile ground for the seed of war! It was selfish schemes and ambitions, political desires and urges, envy and malice that had corrupted all nations, and which furnished the fuel to start this destructive flame of war and bloodshed!

America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, must be willing and ready to show all the nations, not only in word, but in deed, the unselfish principles upon which she was conceived and dedicated. She must be willing to share, and share alike with all nations in open, just, and upright terms.

The entire world has been plunged into the philosophy that greatness and power are to be found in material masses. The motto of the nations today is, more ships, tanks, guns, and bombs! Only the mobilizing of armed forces, and the planning of military operations seem to be of any significance. The place of the individual life in society, and the value of the human soul have been trodden under by the forces of material masses. To lose sight of the value of human life means the physical, moral, and spiritual deterioration of mankind.

The evil influence of war today is tremendous. Radio reports, newspaper articles and photographs, flashy motion pictures are all justifying war, declaring that it is glorious, that it is noble. The immature minds of our children have been penetrated with false teachings about the abundant life, and the only real, true way of obtaining peace.

Today's generation will determine whether there is an ultimate victory or not. If it is reared in the spirit of hate, prejudice, and envy, we can expect only another devastating conflict in the future.

Children need love and attention, personal security in the family, and the proper types of community life, if they are to be the full developed men and women of tomorrow, capable of maintaining the ultimate victory for which we are now striving. These needs are not being supplied to our children because of the evils of war, which take mothers away from the home to work in war plants and factories, and fathers away to fight in the fields of battle!

America needs an all-consuming purpose before her eyes, a purpose which will guide her in paths of the abundant life, and which will lead her to the ultimate victory. This purpose must be the recognition of the most noble virtues of life. Someone said, "War displays the virtues of courage and sacrifice, but it does not create them." The glamour of war arouses one's sense of color, music, and pageantry. But it does not, it cannot create a desire for the highest value of life. What then can rival the glamour of war? Is there any aesthetic substitute for it? Music, art, science, work, pleasure, humanitarianism are not adequate. Their appeal is too limited. The only thing [that] can rival the glamour of war, that can give men something to live for, and even die for, is the philosophy of religion of Jesus of Nazareth—that philosophy which can change the heart of each individual of every nation, and will bring "peace on earth, and good will among men." This virtue should permeate all of America, all countries in the present conflict, and should reach to the end of the world. To this end let America toil and pray, that she may enjoy with all nations the real, true ultimate victory.

*From the November 1944 issue of The Prism*

# The Last Wait

By Bob Owens

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From the upstairs porch of the barracks, a few veterans watch the recruits march out to the firing range. These recruits are mostly boys dressed in fatigues, carrying full field packs which they don't need, to get them accustomed to carrying packs. M-1 rifles, helmet liners, and boots are slung over their shoulders and their cartridge belts are sagging with the weight of full canteens. This going on the range for the first time will show that some will become experts, others marksmen, while some will disqualify. The observing veterans note that the equipment is different from that used in their basic training days. These recruits have clean, new clothes, not at all like the ragged fatigues which the observers wore years before, back in '42 and '43. Each of the recruits carried an M-1 rifle while back in the earlier days, the infantry had carried only a few M-1s with the rest carrying '03 and wooden rifles. In earlier days the clothes had been second-hand, even third-hand, patched and threadbare, and sizes had never been quite right.

There they go around the barracks square counting cadence — “hup–two–three–four; hup–two–three–four.” One of the veterans speaks to the strangely silent group, “Same ole garrison life, same ole grind.” This remark breaks the silence and leads one or two to compare their own basic training to this new army. This new army is taking their place and it's allowing them to be released.

Yes, this is their last day in the army. The last week has been a very trying one, even for the veterans. Hours of waiting in line to sign papers, turn in clothes, receive back pay, hear lectures about civilian life, and a thousand and one things necessary to get out of the army. It seems harder to get out than to get in. For instance, the physical examination is severe because if anything is wrong, one will be sent to the hospital, thus delaying discharge for weeks, sometimes months. It's sweating it out all the time, sweating it out up to the last minute. There are hour-long talks by military-minded officers trying to persuade the men to re-enlist in the regular army. Many of these officers have never seen war: they only know the tactics of battle.

Posters are tacked everywhere for the veterans to read, posters with the long arm and finger of Uncle Sam pointing at them—Uncle Sam with his serious face, his eyes looking directly into the eyes of the veterans. In huge red letters they demand: “Re-enlist, Soldier.” (Are these posters necessary?) Re-enlisting isn't compulsory so the ones who have points feel that they've done their duty and now they can go home. They can look Uncle Sam in the eye and say, “I'm going home. I've done my part.”

How do the veterans feel toward the recruits? Toward these men here in the same camp who have been there three days, a week, three months. Look at these veterans on the porch, watching the recruits close order drill on the field across the road. First, these recruits have the job of getting the veterans through the discharge procedure and second, they are taking their places in the new army. These men work night and day, doing a splendid job in discharging thousands of veterans. Perhaps the reason is the recruits feel that nothing is too good for the veterans, or the veterans feel that these new fellows would have done the job just as well as they. These things go unsaid by both parties, yet the veterans and the recruits understand each other because they are all in the same army.

In the barracks soldiers are playing in their shorts for stakes. A PFC enters and yells, “At ease, youse guys. Youse guys whose names I call fall out. We're trying to get youse out of here by four.” The soldiers pull on their pants and shoes, while some dress in civilian clothes sent from home. A soldier yells, “Okay, Brooklyn, I'm ready!” Someone says, “First time you've been ready for anything in the army.” They pick up the PFC and carry him downstairs. He tries to line them up in some sort of formation, but they can't hear in the confusion. He leads them over to the separation center in the best way possible. They flop around on the grass waiting to sign the discharge papers. A disgusted major enters the room and begins procedure.

There are a few recruits around to police up cigarette butts. A WAC enters the building and blushes furiously at whistles and comments. Someone starts the song: “The WACs and WAVes have won the war—Parley vous” and everyone sings until the major appears and yells, “At ease, men. Let’s have it at ease or you’ll be in the army next week.” Someone retorts, “You got the brass. I’ve got the points. Get these men out of the hot sun.” After every man has signed they dash back to the barracks to pack up. They pack their bags with army clothes they were supposed to turn in, and loot from overseas; and others pack army equipment which would mean a court martial if they were caught.

The army runs on the “hurry up and wait” system. For instance, you run like mad to catch a truck and then you wait three hours for the truck to arrive while half the time the darn thing never shows up. Sweating it out all the time, waiting, waiting, and waiting. Waiting in a chow line, waiting in a pay line, waiting for transportation, waiting for the bugle to blow retreat, waiting for a furlough. Finally, waiting for a discharge. The last wait. The first year is to wait impatiently and curse all the time but after that it’s to wait patiently and curse anyway. Yes, curse the army for everything it is, for everything it does. Don’t forget it’s the best army in the world, best fed, dressed and paid and it’s the worst disciplined. Curse it all the time because the army calls that morale when the soldiers curse. Stay in five years and you’re a soldier so don’t try to get out then because you’re not fit for anything else. Tell another soldier you like the army and you’ll get hurt.

The last wait. Look at them now, dressed in their uniforms. See their decorations, battle stars, purple hearts, oversea stripes, and a few hash marks. Look at those guys with the hash marks and discharge papers in their hands. They’ve forgotten civilian life. They don’t even know what a blue stamp is or that shoes are rationed. There they go through the gate to catch buses to carry them to the station. The buses are loaded with recruits coming into the army. The buses stop and the recruits pile out blinking at the mysteries surrounding them—the high fence with M.P.’s standing at the gate. Prison? No, Fort Meade, Maryland. Why the barb-wire fences then? They don’t know. The veterans never found out either—they were here only two weeks. The veterans scramble on the buses and wave “good luck” to the recruits. Someone hangs out of a window and yells, “You’ll be all right!”

Will they have trouble getting readjusted? No, they are too happy to get out. For some it may seem strange—like a new existence—to put on civilian clothes of their own choice, to walk along familiar streets, hatless, and always knowing they can go where they want to and stay as long as they wish. Forgetting to an extent the islands of the Pacific, or Europe and the misery, the fear and horror of combat. Time will heal, somewhat, the memory of dead comrades buried under the snow of the Alps or under the sands of Africa or on the many remote Pacific Islands. They will think of the ruins of St. Lo as a nightmare, not as a reality. They will walk, hatless and with their hands in their pockets of civilian clothes along familiar streets, among friends of the past. They will forget.

*From the December 1945 issue of The Prism*

# I Won the War with a Shovel

By Bob Owens

## BASIC TRAINING

In basic training, they will tell you a foxhole is four feet in diameter and as deep as you are tall, with an extra foot for added protection. For practice, they will have you dig these holes, then they will call you a fool and a “civilian cream puff” for not digging them right. Dig one right, then, measure it for correctness, camouflage and they will call you a fool anyway. Gripe all the time you are digging and be indifferent and they will transfer you to the Air Corps. Throw away your shovel and go AWOL; come back, in two weeks and they will make you a squad leader. Take your work seriously and they will send you to a psychiatrist. Any attitude you take is wrong, even that big talk—“go-in-with-an-open-mind, son”—is bunk.

## ILLUSTRATION

I dug six holes by army standards, but they were all in the wrong place. The captain noted the depth of my new foxhole and called the platoon over to look at my work. The acting PFC laughed in my face as the captain addressed the platoon, “Shallow foxholes can be shallow graves” then he cursed for ten minutes in solid profanity and wound his speech up by calling us “civilian cream puffs.” Then our good captain went back to the barracks to take a nap, and we went to sleep too.

## OVERSEAS

After the rough fundamentals of basic training, we were sent overseas without being told anything about it. They bribed us aboard the boat before we could make other arrangements. Some of the guys seemed resentful as we sailed out of New York, and they didn’t hesitate to gripe. The closer we got to England the more anxious we became to get there and start digging on advanced training. Most of us were so anxious we painted our shovels with navy paint and dropped them overboard in excitement. Fearing a statement of charges for the loss of my precious shovel, I guarded it closely and carried it all over the ship, but then one night someone, by mistake, grabbed my shovel and threw it into the sea. It upset me considerably because the army had given me the shovel as a gift and I was fond of it for sentimental reasons.

## BRITISH SOIL

We started digging in South Wales but the farmers of that country claimed we were ruining their farms and breaking up their quiet, settled life. It is true that we drank four towns dry and chased the civilians out of the pubs, but I couldn’t believe it when one farmer, who was trying to sue us, claimed his wife was chasing the cow home for the night and the cow and his wife both fell into one of our foxholes. He said the cow died and his wife broke her leg. I can’t believe it because I didn’t see it happen. Killing the cow was our last affair in Wales. They chased us across the border into England—then the farmers of Wales set up a defensive along the border.

## FACTS ABOUT ENGLAND

In England the “terra wasn’t so firma” and everywhere we dug was like digging a well. It is known that England is sinking into the ocean and we were cautioned to put the dirt back in our foxholes because it was as knocking a hole in the bottom of a tin boat. As an expert on English soil I have

seen the ocean rush into my foxholes and flood the fields. These facts account for the large King's navee. Up in Scotland, out on the Scottish moors the ground sags like a mattress, and if you drop a rock on the ground it will jump up like a rubber ball and hit you in the face.

The ground heaves up and down because the sea is underneath. It is the only place on earth that man can walk on water. At that time, the people of Scotland were still excited about the capture of Rudolph Hess, and the farmers all carried pitchforks and kept their heads turned upward at the sky. Getting back to foxholes, I might mention that some of my best works can still be seen on the high ground of Scotland, where the soil comes up easily and shovels are not needed. I often dug with my mess gear. Digging in chalk is an unusual experience, and I had this pleasure in the Dover section. My uniform is still white from my research in chalk.

Unfortunately, several of the men in our company went mad with this constant digging summer of 1944 and we were ordered to leave off digging and spend more of our spare time in shooting and saluting. Our medic called it foxhole madness. It was "redic," as they say, to hear some of our best men go around screaming "rocks." Others screamed "roots" and the rest started carrying bottles out into the field instead of canteens.

### GREENER FIELDS

D-day was nothing—our division was still digging in England; but D plus 15 we crossed blue beach with our shovels out ready for action. The Germans ran all the way to St. Lo when they saw us coming. Foxholes dug on D-day were nothing compared to those we dug beyond St. Lo. We dug holes that couldn't even be called foxholes because they took on a new shape and depth. My first foxhole dug in Normandy reminded me of that Welsh farmer, his dead cow, and crippled wife. Many changes took place in our company; it was no longer necessary to stress the need of deep foxholes. Some of our worst cases of foxhole insanity could be seen pounding away in solid rock or digging trees up by the roots. Our good captain could out dig the best of us and it is surprising to note that he had never used a shovel before in his army career. He confessed to us that he once dug with the W.P.A. The second lieutenant in our outfit was waiting around for the captain to get a purple heart, but our



Illustration of "I Won the War With a Shovel" from the March 1946 issue of The Prism

captain stayed in his foxhole too much to get hurt, while the lieutenant waited outside with his pistol cocked. They called it legal murder.

Our life in Europe was not quite without humor. I couldn't help but laugh the day the major came up to inspect us for shaves. It seems the major was looking for our lieutenant to tell him that he was finally a captain. Some of us thought it would be cute to shoot over the major's head like they do in the navy when they welcome an officer aboard a ship. We fired into a burst of three. They said later, the major turned white, quivered like a rabbit and made a one-man retreat. The funny part of this story is that he ran six miles back to the rear echelon, across a field being blasted by artillery and down a mined road.

#### THAT DAY IN MAY

In the Hurtgen Forest (some fellows call it the "Hurt Again Forest") after the break through in December (the time our division was wiped out) and after the big push toward the Rhine and the Rhine crossing, we were pretty well wiped out again so we just quit and went swimming in the Rhine. The situation was tense for the Jerries; the Russians were digging in the east, the Americans were digging in the west and in the south. Not to mention the mighty French army quartered in Paris, or the sweeping British advances across the Cherbourg peninsula, and last but not least, my division was looting up and down the Rhine. The Germans were giving up by the thousands and giving up to us instead of the Russians because they knew the Russians didn't have any of those good American k-rations. They finally gave up altogether, but the war wasn't over because fraternization set in.

*From the March 1946 issue of The Prism*

# Reflection

By Norma Bowen

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We faced a dawn four years ago  
And watched a satin quilt of gold  
Thrown back upon a mountain top.  
The sun woke up and stretched her arms  
To yield her rays of dazzling light.

A morning bright—the day began  
With youth and laughter—work and plan.  
All nature tried to lend her aid  
As wind and clouds together played;  
Oh—thunderstorms blew from the main,  
But sunshine somehow conquers rain.  
A lake was near to cool the day  
With tree and shade along the way.

A change in light and shadow tell  
That afternoon has come as well.  
'Tis eventide—now day is done—  
And once again we see the sun  
Draw up her quilt that's fired with gold

And close her eyes—so tired and old.  
From depths of darkness crickets call  
With voice so shrill for ones so small.  
The firefly tells its whereabouts  
As stars light up God's mirrored house.

The clock is nearing twelve again  
No extra minutes can time lend.  
The day seemed short—the hours so long;  
Each moment filled with tear and song.  
This fleeting day of happiness  
Must take its stand with all the rest,  
And when we talk or laugh or think,  
The memories—times we've had—must link  
Each heart and mind to some spot dear,  
Which leaving brings a choked-back tear.

But Seniors—bid your fond farewell  
To friends and trees—the birds and dell.  
With courage, face a new day's dawn!  
Go find your place—it's waiting there—

There in that world where you belong! *From the Summer 1947 issue of The Prism*

# My Journey by the Rails

By Bill Seay

I left my home so long ago,  
That I really can't remember,  
Perhaps it was a day in June,  
Or a day in bleak December.

I never cared to settle down;  
The world was mine to see.  
I always wondered about a hill;  
How the other side would be.

The Northern Lights have passed me by  
In my tour upon the rails,  
I've heard the lonely Kee Kee Bird,  
On frozen arctic trails.

I've seen Old Reaper operate  
In his silent, ugly way.  
And I heard a deacon loudly shout  
To jest is sinful play.

And life has been both good and bad

On my journey by the rails,

But if the choice was mine again,

I'd recross the same old trails.

*From the May 1948 issue of The Prism*

# The Almost Perfect Professor

By Ed Hiestand

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The entire affair was quite cleverly planned. It was to be murder—willful, premeditated, and profitable. The intended victim was the wife of a small town college professor: a man of impeccable reputation in the community, as foreign to mystery and intrigue as the most venerable church father. The would-be murderer was a miserable scoundrel who let nothing but money stand in his way to securing more money. Oddly enough, the professor and the scoundrel were the same man!

Ten years before, Professor Wilberts had married the woman of his schemes, accepting her in the belief that it was for better or for purse. He had intended from the beginning that it would be the latter, so it was toward this end that he had quietly built up a substantial amount of life insurance through the years, in his wife's name and with his wife's bank account. No one had doubted the wisdom of this rather strange investment, for Mrs. Wilberts herself and three of the very best horoscopes had freely predicted her early demise. However, as time went on, the professor had come to regard "early" as meaning in her early eighties or nineties. He was all the more certain that this was the correct implication when Mrs. Wilberts fully recovered from double pneumonia and acute appendicitis in one short week. The insurance had grown by this time to the immense sum of \$30,000, a sizeable figure that Phoebe Wilberts' waistline seemed duty bound to emulate—the professor roughly estimated his wife to represent, in a state of suspended animation only, somewhat less than \$100 a pound. He therefore resolved to market her for the money and to do so in such a way as to escape censure by their friends, and of more importance, by the local constabulary, who would doubtlessly be adverse to such an ambitious transaction. In other words, Professor Wilberts decided to have a try at the perfect murder.

The essence of the perfect crime is the inability of the law to affect a solution, and the ability of the master criminal to create this happy situation. The professor had several reasons to believe himself capable of playing such a select role. The first was obvious even to the dullest of observers—he had none of the robustness that one unconsciously attributes to a murderer. His physique resembled more the "during" of a "before and after" slogan than it did that of a man bent of the destruction of a human life. His outstanding reputation would do even more to confide his relationship with the police to the annual purchase of \$2.00 license plates. For the entire period of his marriage (regarded by the professor as more of a "sentence" than a period) he had been the model husband: the pride of the Methodist bowling league; a three-time speaker of the Women's Temperance Society, and a veritable pillar of respectability. These, together with one other prerequisite for Utopian homicide, would mean the difference between success and failure—he now sought only the unassailable alibi.

After several weeks of constant deliberation, the professor had a crudely formulated plan of action; after six weeks, he had every detail worked out with mathematical exactitude. He was now fully prepared to step out of character and get away with murder, literally and figuratively. Hence, when the day arrived for him to help the insurance company dispose of their money by doing the same for his wife, there was every indication of a successful, pleasant murder. Even fate, that extremely fickle element, seemed to have sided with the professor; his favorite horoscope had asserted that this day was the one day in a million in which nothing could go wrong for him. With odds like that, he would gladly have shot his wife in front of the police station, pleaded guilty and felt assured of being declared innocent by a jury of his wife's closest friends and relatives.

Everything was progressing wonderfully. The morning was as perfect as the professor's well-laid plans—it was a day especially made for baseball, walking, or killing one's wife. Professor Wilberts ate a leisurely breakfast; brilliantly discoursed the merits of the two-party system over a bowl

of warm cereal, and remained at the table twenty minutes longer than usual. When he kissed Mrs. Wilberts for what he expected to be the last time, he was confident that he had done everything to allay any suspicion on her part that things were not all that they could, or should be. Her only fear was that her husband would return from the Saturday shopping excursion with the usual amount of incorrect purchases.

At one o'clock, the professor was ready to take his plan from the drawing board and put it into action. He rehearsed it over again once more in his mind as he made ready to leave the house.

"Will you be home early today, Elmer?" the wife asked, passive as to whether he would or not.

"Well, I rather expect I'll stay to see a show after I get the things. You say that Charlie Walton will be going in with me?"

"He should be here now. And I don't want you inviting him here for dinner. I can't stand the man!"

Professor Wilberts made a mental note not to leave Charlie out of the forthcoming funeral ceremonies; perhaps he would even have him act as pallbearer. The announcement of his riding with him into town was anything but a clog in the professor's plans. That was one essential piece of the puzzle that the investigators would have to put together. Walton was an invaluable pawn—it was his testimony that would save him from the indignity of the electric chair. He had no desire to spend any part of his time in jail, least of all in the electric chair. The toaster at breakfast that morning had reminded him of it, and he had wondered idly if they would ever get around to inventing a chair like the toaster in which you popped up when you were done. The arrival on foot of Charlie Walton put an end to the professor's speculations.

Shortly after the customary inquiries into the wellbeing of all concerned, the professor enacted the first part of his tragedy by driving out of the driveway with Walton, waving a fond if insincere farewell to his wife, and calling out to her that he would see her about seven that night. The first step in his alibi had been established!

The trip into town was uneventful and marked only by the occasional conversation between the two men. After they passed over the Rockinway bridge that spanned the state's largest river, the verbal communication ceased almost entirely.

When they arrived in town, the usual Saturday afternoon crowd was milling about, oblivious to everything but the 79¢ specials and unusual store window displays. The professor parked the car in a non-parking-meter area and, together with the obsequious Mr. Walton, walked three or four blocks to the main shopping district. The two shopped until 3:00, returned the purchases to the car and once again headed toward the center of town.

The professor had some trouble sounding casual as he put a very important question to his future alibi.

"Say Charlie, how about taking in a show? You don't have anything particular to do this evening, do you?" He was relieved to see that Walton did not notice the anxiety in his voice. Charlie reacted entirely as depended upon. He said he was sorry, but that he had some important business to transact (something the professor had known two weeks before). Wilberts managed to express a feeling of regret.

"Well, that's too bad. How about having dinner with us tonight then? The wife will be glad to have you."

The dependable Mr. Walton again fulfilled his part.

“Now I guess I could do that. You know my wife is out of town this week.”

The professor did know it. “I’ll just call Phoebe to make sure she hasn’t other plans. Be all right though, I’m sure.”

Here was more of the Wilberts ingenuity. The phone call was made with Mr. Walton personally thanking a petulant Mrs. Wilberts for her hospitality; verifying beyond a doubt that she had been alive at approximately 3:30!

It was working like a five-dollar nail file. Mr. Walton accompanied the professor as far as the Rialto Theatre; saw him buy a ticket and ask the cashier when the performance would be over. He then reaffirmed his inability to see the show and made plans to meet the professor at 6:00 or shortly afterward when the picture was over. The professor turned away and disappeared into the jostling mass of theatre-goers. The alibi had been established!

After five minutes in the theatre the professor quietly left by a side exit, confident that he had not been noticed in the commotion in progress on the screen. It was a very wild picture. In fact, the professor had seen the same show several days earlier in a neighboring town. If need be, he could give a running commentary on the entire performance, down even to the cartoons and coming attractions. He arrived at the car, unexcited and unobserved and drove carefully back to his home for the fruition of the entire scheme—the murder itself.

The car crept into the driveway at precisely 4:05, a mere two minutes behind schedule. The exclusiveness of the neighborhood and the hour minimized the chance of stray passers-by noticing the inconspicuous gray automobile entering the Wilberts estate. The professor drove into the garage and shut off the motor. He knew where to find his victim; she was in the living room, reclining on a couch, absorbed with a yellow covered woman’s magazine.

It was a matter of four quick steps, the grasping of the fire poker in two gloved, determined hands and a pitiless raining of blows until the woman lay completely and quiescently dead. Thirty thousand dollars for three minutes work. Elmer Wilberts now belonged in that class of forlorn humanity that start whenever a traffic cop looks twice in their direction. He was a murderer, but unquestionably a rich one. He didn’t remain to philosophize on his position, though; the master criminal now attended to the smaller details that are so vital for criminal perfection. The body of his former wife the professor lay neatly on the sofa with the poker thrown carelessly to one side to emphasize haste. He threw open drawers right and left to create the ostensible motive of robbery rudely interrupted, and then retreated out the door. It was as easy as that! As he was leaving, the ever-alert professor had a sudden inspiration to set fire to the house in order to collect additional money in fire insurance. He decided it wasn’t practical in view of the wretched housing conditions. He gained the car and drove out to the road with the feeling of having masterfully handled a difficult situation. There remained only the trip back for the rendezvous with Walton and the shock of discovering the brutal murder of his wife. He rehearsed the facial expressions that would be called for to portray uncontrollable grief and utter disbelief at her tragic death. It was exciting, not unlike being in a play. The salary had been collected; the pantomime was yet to come.

The time was now 4:30 P.M. For the first time in several days the professor felt completely at ease. He relaxed in his seat: the events of the hour already forgotten. Visions of the future drove any regret or feeling of conscience from his thoughts. An unmarried man can do a lot with \$30,000. He deserved the money anyway. After being married ten years to a woman like Phoebe Wilberts, it was somewhat less than ample recompense. The road broadened into a highway. It was becoming darker with every revolution of the car’s wheels. Time sped alongside the gray auto that was rapidly losing its identity in the gathering mist. One hour and Elmer Wilberts would be free—free as the poet’s verse; free as a housefly crossing first class in the Queen Mary. There was one chance in a million that anyone could associate the professor with the murder. He had been extremely cautious, even as he

was now in driving along at an unhurried thirty-five miles an hour.

As he rounded the curve leading out on the Rockinway bridge he saw something that made him rear straight up in his seat and stare forward with the fear of a man watching a hangman's noose being placed around his neck. He couldn't make it out at first. It was composed of lights and shadows and mysterious movement. The motion of the car was now imperceptible. The lights, once faint, became lanterns flaming forth from the hands of an undeterminable assemblage of dark figures. All thought of retreat was abandoned; the car was close enough to be remembered if he attempted a turn. With a false gesture of bravado the driver shrugged his shoulders and drove onward, pulling the trench coat closer about his throat. Whatever it was it wasn't meant for him. Perhaps there had been an accident; he would keep on, nothing must keep him from getting back into town unnoticed. His entire alibi hinged on his ability to prove he was in the theater, enjoying the simple machinations of a hearty Western movie. To be seen now was to broadcast the fact that he had not attended the Rialto, he had not remained in town, but had been somewhere between the bridge and murder scene when the crime occurred. He would not be more guilty if he had killed his wife on the center floor of Madison Square Garden between the halves of a double header basketball game. For the first time, the professor regretted the evening's activities.

The group on the bridge disintegrated into individuals, the individuals into men, somberly dressed and officious in appearance. To drive swiftly by was now impossible, a road blockade barred the way. There was nothing to do but stop. Instantly, eager faces crowded around the car. They seemed to bear no malice. The lights shone in on a face that had the lifelessness of wet granite. One head detached itself from the rest and protruded against the closed window.

The man encased within the automobile could hardly make it out through the thickness of the safety glass. The voice mumbled something about his car; something about being the one millionth car, and the Rockinway bridge—the one millionth car to cross the Rockinway bridge! Fate had injected the million and one shot into Professor Wilberts' life. The professor who had never won a lottery or a contest had come through in the face of impossible odds. He had driven the one millionth car over the bridge and up to the door of the death house. He would be acclaimed with honor and perhaps given the key to the city. Several hours and then the key would be taken and thrown away—forever! The sobs of the professor were drowned out by the explosion of flash bulbs and shouted congratulations. No doubt a band was somewhere playing, "I'd give a million tomorrows."

*From the Spring 1949 issue of The Prism*

# The Granite City

By Mrs. Aurora del Carpio McQueen, Translated from the Spanish by Kenneth Knight

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Smoke dances up through the haze,  
and dusk turns the grey city greyer.  
Houses of stone show a sober front,  
but out of their throats of chimneys  
the tea-kettle hums its song.

The harbour lighthouse in the distance  
sense its calls in language of light.  
Cautious and grave, a foghorn  
sounds its signal of warning  
to red-bearded, steely-eyed men,  
who, like their forerunners,  
Peter and Andrew,  
have gone out to the sea  
for fish—their daily bread.

Two rivers, Don and Dee,  
are the arteries  
that flow through the City's recumbent flanks,

dour, like the men on their banks,  
wordlessly murmuring,  
they bear their secret to the sea.

Cavities, somber and grey,  
the massive quarries of granite  
are gigantic bowels of the earth,  
torn up by Herculean arms  
and sent in chiseled blocks of stone  
to the four corners of the earth—  
there to build  
brave palaces and tall cathedrals.

Slow-sinking fog turns into crystal,  
and with sparks of ice  
covers bare trees and trembling grass;  
frost on hard pavement,  
on roof of slate  
and on the granite walls.  
All is aglitter with white diamonds!

At last night falls,

Aberdeen sleeps.

Motionless lies the thousand-year-old rock,  
where Druids worshipped fire and nature  
and sacrificed Man  
as a burnt-offering.

Like a glittering sword, a ray of moonlight  
cuts out the many-angled silhouettes  
of tombstones in the graveyards of the city;  
but by their side  
life springs again in gardens  
of spikehards, tulips and lilies.

From the pointed Gothic arch of a belfry,  
John Calvin watches, stern and austere,  
he keeps his watch over a faithful flock  
who sleep the sleep that knows no dreams.

The sibilant wind  
whistles through twists of narrow streets  
of medieval Old Aberdeen,  
where in centuries gone by

Catholics and Protestants gave their lives  
in bloody battle  
defending a dogma  
and upholding a faith.

The needle-tower, topped by countless spires,  
like a majestic finger  
points up into the heavens.  
In this lone, solitary night,  
as my spirit soars  
beyond the old, ancestral rites,  
before the moon's holy water,  
my rosary a ring of stars,  
I adore the Almighty Creator.

My soul is become a votive lamp  
on this vast altar of stone!  
—Aberdeen Scotland,  
February 24, 1949

*From the November 1950 issue of The Prism*

# The Green Light

By Van Veatch

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The bus swerved, hit the shoulder of the highway, and then lurched again back onto the pavement, loudly blasting its air-horn at the crazy driver who just escaped pushing us into the ditch alongside the road. It was that sudden movement that forced my mind from its deep contemplation of the recent past to that of the present which was now enveloped in darkness, pierced only by a light that lay always in front. I glanced around the unlighted inside of the speeding Greyhound and noticed the outline of the figure across the aisle. Only a handful of people had gotten on in New York, yet none had sat where this strange person was now slouched. It was then that I realized how much my mind had been occupied.

Time had drifted into nothing. I reached into my side pocket and drew out a near empty pack of cigarettes, and by force of habit I felt my other pocket, checking my wallet and its remaining \$17 which was snugly wrapped U-shaped inside. I found my lighter in my coat pocket and was for a moment blinded by its brilliance as I lit the cigarette. A feeling of importance possessed my body as the smoke began to fill this portion of the bus; I felt an air of greatness, for I was at the present an individual, a human being with the power to think and do that which I believed to be right even though it is ridiculous to another. I had the urge to whisper to the strange figure across from me that I was really somebody. Yet, I knew like the leaves know of the coming fall that my future and inner success would soon fall victim to that section of the mind which breeds fright, defeat, and despair.

I sheepishly fell back into my slouched position and felt disgusted at my ignorant conceit and warped thinking. Yet, I had to succeed for my own sake, for what is man worth when defeated and feels that life has been in vain? I knew only too well the consequences of my journey's end—a large city, populated with others like myself, struggling with life's barriers which attempt to hinder the full growth of the body's potentialities, people living with their own problems, having no time for others' thought unless it benefitted their own living.

I would have no mother eagerly fixing supper after a day's end or an interested father asking his son what plans he had for the future, then advising him accordingly. Yes, I had left home, because in my mind I knew that I was ready to plan and carry out my future as I thought fit. I didn't necessarily have a dislike of home; it was just my desire to be an individual. No two people can agree completely with another's wishes. So too with me, I wasn't quite able to concede my life to their cause, for I now had dedicated my soul to life and not to personal desires.

I crushed my cigarette and noticed the glow of city lights coming weirdly out of the darkness, growing in intensity with each passing mile. The crucial moment soon would be at hand, and the bus could protect me no longer. I felt a slow chill creep through my body; it was like getting before a crowd of people who were watching and waiting for you to perform. Ahead of us I saw a small traffic light approaching; the first I had seen in several hours, throwing down its sparkling green shadow out into the dark misty street, welcoming me to my task. It looked as though it were grinning at me in its own way that life was waiting and to fear not his coldness and dinginess, which man had produced from his set machines.

“I have no soul or heart,” it seemed to say, “but you, youth, are gifted with that mysterious power to think and to build your own plans in life; while I, I am made to suit others. Do not be afraid of my body; I can do no harm; but look and beware of those who hold that power which has been likewise granted to you—be cautious that they don't take and mold your body as mine was so made. I was born not to resist; but you—oh, life can become beautiful and sacred because of the faith and belief of what life represents.”

I was held in awe before this small gadget of man's origin; but then, I thought, so was I an origin of my fellow man, though unlike that traffic

light—I had a mind, a soul, and a heart to accompany me through life. Again and again we passed quickly under many other such safety signals; yet none held me quite so fascinated as that first, a true veteran of many storms.

My thoughts jumbled as we lurched onto the driveway of the Washington Bus Station. People, people all over: It seemed odd that so many humans should look so confident and secure, yet I know too well that they were having their own fight in existing.

Straightening up in my seat, I tucked my shirt-tail a little farther in and waited til the few remaining passengers were off. I got up and pulled down my suitcase and was soon stepping from the bus with my eyes lowered, half-afraid to look up and face the world which was now a reality. My mind was blank, my steps were slow as I entered the lobby of the bus station. The big wall clock pointed to ten past seven. On my right I glanced at a news stand displayed to the extreme with papers from all sections of the country. I gave the man a nickel and folded the paper under my arm and started for the empty seat at the far end of the lobby. I sat down realizing that my immediate future lay inside that newspaper in a section called “want ads.” I unconsciously reached for a cigarette but to no avail; there were no more. I again went to the newspaper stand and gave the man my twenty cents for the cigarettes. As I walked back to the empty seat, the message of that green light returned: “Go, and fear not, for the challenge is yours.”

*From the Fall 1952 issue of The Prism*

# I Remember Now

By Van Veatch

I opened my eyes and with a hurried glance, scanned my surroundings. I then closed my eyes and began to think, where was I? Everything's so strange and new, where should I be? I couldn't figure out where I was. My failure to realize where I was seemed, in one sense, funny. I felt as if I had just awakened from sleep and found myself in a strange bed. I reopened my eyes and took a less hurried look. Before me I saw a figure, a sort of thin figure shaped like a man. I tried to call, but couldn't. I saw him crawling from me, fading into the night; no, there he was, hunched over on the ground. The figure began moaning, faintly at first, but it became louder and louder and suddenly the moaning had turned into shouting words, "Why, damn you, why is it? Why, why? I HATE YOU, WORLD." These words later changed into sobbing. His voice then turned into a gasping and spitting sound. Had he gone crazy? Maybe I was going crazy. Why didn't I know where I was? My memory was lost beyond consciousness. I know, I would go back to sleep, away from this nightmare and wake up far away in my own bed. Then I could laugh at this funny dream.

I again closed my eyes. Only then was I aware of the cold pain which the cold drizzle enwrapped my body with. I fell into another world far different from the one I had just experienced. There was a man shrouded in a robe standing before a mass of people. He was frantically waving his arms and shouting, "He calls us all, we all must come against That which we must be judged by. Please believe and trust and trust and..." He was slowly overrun by the mass he was speaking to. I could now hear the other figure in my nightmare crying, "All is lost, all is lost. Why?" All was now black.

The blackness now transformed itself into a wet darkness. Again, I saw this damning figure; he was lying still, stretched upon the ground. I tried to lift myself up, but couldn't. I guess I was too weak. Suddenly, I felt a slight pain in my legs which grew and became worse. My arms then came in contact with a metal object. What was it doing here sitting on my legs? Why would anyone want to put anything like that on me? I hadn't done anything to anybody. The pain became a burning pain. Why didn't I wake up? I wanted to go to work. Why didn't the alarm ring? Damn it, I want out; please let me go. My wonderment now became a cold fear. I was lost, no, what's that? Glass, bits of broken glass. My God, it can't be! Wait a minute, there ahead, lights. They were coming toward me. The whole area had now turned into a mass of lights. I could see clearly now, glass, metal, other figures—two, three, four, they were all lying about me in mangled heaps. Yes, I remember now, there was a car, it came toward me. We crashed.

*From the Graduation 1952 issue of The Prism*

## The Devil's Own Dance

By the Staff of the 1954 *Prism*

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The quiet boredom of a Sunday afternoon had settled in somber dignity at Westover Hall. As the girls sat, each with her own thoughts, someone turned on the record player. As the strains of "Mystery Sheet" shattered the solemnity, Joyce Long and Nancy Bozarth began to sway to the pulsating rhythm. The tempo mounted; others joined in the spirit of the dance.

As each felt the thrill of the music, she added her impression to the dance. With sheets draped across beds as a backdrop, the first performance of "The Devil's Own Dance" was performed with makeshift costumes. The enthusiastic participation in this first dance provided the initiative for preparing costumes, planning make-up, and casting of specific roles. Nancy Bozarth assumed the role of the Devil. Other dancers were: Betty Ann Parker, Innocence; Kay Stout, Devil's woman; Joanne Guthrie, society girl; Mary Ann Williams, Parisienne; and Joyce Long, sin. The scenes were set in hell and became the girls' interpretation of how different types of people would react upon awakening in hell.

Out of the pure joy of dancing, this completely unrehearsed, spontaneous production evolved. Yes, out of the evening shadows that Sunday evening was born a new medium of expression.

*From the June 1954 issue of The Prism*



# Welcome Freshman!

By Don McAfee

Welcome Freshman!

To the Legions of the Learning;

Welcome to the weathered walls

Where the midnight lamps are burning.

Welcome to the stuffed shirts

And the tattered, giggling levy;

Sip with us where the knowledge spurts

And the load of books are heavy.

Welcome to our rounds,

Where the brilliant-minded dabble—

Where the intellectual expounds

In philosophic babble.

Greetings from the dusty shelves

Of Socrates and Plato;

Come in, read yourselves

These “Essays on the Potato.”

Come join our dizzy pace,

Subscribe to our routine;

Place your entry in the race—

Prepare for excitement unseen.

Join us in the daily rush

Where the days are fast and the nights too swift;

Sit with us in the quiet hush

And receive tradition's time-worn gift.

Talk with us of English and dancing,

On the Dodgers of toothpaste we'll surmise;

And with the morning light advancing,

Join the chorus with the gay and wise.

Welcome Freshman!—

But that's only a name;

You're one of us now

And your rank's the same.

The College doors are open wide

And all within is also yours

Come on, take a look inside

And click your feet on its ancient floors.

We think you'll like it as we do,

We wager you'll not regret

The things that happen as you walk through—

And you surely won't forget.

So we hope your years at L.C.

Are by far your best years yet;

And so we say, 'the water's fine—

Come on in and GET WET!

*From the 1954 issue of The Prism*

# VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Board, Twelve Dollars per Month  
Tuition, Five Dollars per Month

PLACE BEAUTIFUL—MOUNTAINS IN FULL VIEW—FIVE  
SPRINGS ON CAMPUS.

Come with us and we will do you good

---

MOTTO: "Christian Education the Hope of the World."

---

**Address J. HOPWOOD, President**

*An advertisement from the 1910-1911 Argonaut*

# Lynchburg College is a Flame Within the Heart

By A. B. Stanger

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Lynchburg College is a flame within the heart!

As you stand upon the campus,

Look up at a sunrise or sunset

From the hill.

Feel the breeze blowing upon you

Through the trees.

And wait—you know.

Lynchburg College is a flame within the heart!

As you walk the paths with friends

And clasp their hands

You feel the pull of love deep

Set within the heart.

The fragrance of the flowers comes

From wooded way.

You stand and feel His power.

Lynchburg College is a flame within the heart!

As you sit with those you know

In classrooms and hear the challenge  
Of those who would lead you  
To search for the truth.  
You try to understand.  
You wonder, and you feel your life  
Pulled up to heights of strength and knowledge.

Lynchburg College is a flame within the heart!  
Whether you walk this sacred soil,  
Or fellowship with friends,  
Or lift a silent prayer,  
Or seek the truth—  
It is a flame within the heart, and it will not die.

*From the April 1955 issue of The Prism*

# Hero

By Bob Seward

It sure would help if I could forget about the crowd watching me, and forget about their yelling and everything. Worrying about the eleven guys on Wilson's team and how I can best run our team is enough to be thinking about. This is my first and probably last game if I don't snap out of it. The first half I sure made some dumb mistakes. The coach sure did "chew" me out. But damn, I had the boys going good the first time we had the ball. We were moving good, and picked up a couple of first-downs. Then, with third-down and less than a yard to go, Coach had to send in that pass play. Right in the middle of the field, right in front of the bench, and I had to goof-up that damn pass. It wasn't my fault though; the lineman hit me about the time I was ready to let it go. Still, I can't understand how I missed so far; Morgan was right in the open, right across the line; all I had to do was jump up and drop it in his hands, but it slipped or something; what I can't figure is how the hell did I let the thing fly way out to their safety man? Damn, I guess I was a little shaky and tight; but their lineman did hit me. Coach can't blame me; when he looked at me, I was on the ground.

And if that damn fullback of theirs wasn't so damn big, I wouldn't have goofed on that tackle. Right in front of everybody I had to goof. I hit him pretty good, and slowed him up for somebody else to knock down though. If I hadn't slowed him up, he probably would have gone all the way. Anyway, Coach can call me "chicken" if he wants, but if he thinks I'm going to hit that big bastard low—with those big feet of his lifted high—then Coach is nuts; he's crazier than hell.

"Steve, what's the next play going to be?" George, the center asks—interrupting my thoughts and snatching me back to the ball game.

"Huh? Oh, well lets—"

Danny squeezes into the huddle. "I'm in for you, Tom. Steve, the coach says to use '86' on the third count. You linemen block! Okay, break!" Of all the plays he could send in, why did he have to pick a triple fake! Damn! Well, here goes nothing; better get ready to get that snap from center. Look mean. Better look over the line and the defense. Those guys sure are big. Here goes nothing—"Ready, One-Two-Three—" Good, spin around fast to the left and fake to Masters; now swing back to "the Full" going up the middle—give him an empty hand; now give to Crocket; that's a boy; now act like I still have the baby; pick up your feet—run; hot dog! I have sure faked this sucker coming at me. Just as well quit faking and let him know I don't have the ball. Ugh! Damn! What the—you fool—you bastard—you hit me anyway. I bet he did that on purpose, the —. That's all right—Took him out of play anyway; and say, look, we didn't do so bad after all; we faked their jacks; we got a good fifteen yards.

"Okay guys, hustle back, huddle. Nice running Crocket; and good blocking guys. Okay, we're going all the way this time: '86 pass' on four. Morgan, go down four stripes and angle in; everybody else, block! Break with a lot of pep and ginger; let's go!" Damn, I have to fake three times and then hustle back and pass. I'll probably eat that damn football. Well, I'll try and look good doing it. Look over the line and the defense. Look meaner 'an hell; you're just as rough as they are; you pull your pants up over two legs just like they do. Okay—"Ready, One-Two-three-four." Got it! Now to the left, fake to Masters; back to "the Full," make it quick; now push past Crocket; now, get your ass back a couple of yards; good enough; turn; now, where is Morgan? Where the hell—there he is! Remember he's slow; not too much lead; throw the damn thing!—Ugh! Whew! Damn! Where the hell did that lineman come from? He sure hit me hard.

Hey! The crowd's gone wild. They're yelling and beating the drum. I'll be a—Morgan must have caught it. Get up, get up—get off me you big

goof—damn, he did catch it! He caught it! That damn fool caught my pass. My first ball game, and I threw a touchdown pass.

Listen to the crowd and the band. They're playing the touchdown song. I always have liked that number; yes sir. "You've got to be a football hero."

*From the Summer 1956 issue of The Prism*

# Elegy on the Death of a Tree for All Its Friends

By Gertrude E. Teller

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Death is the absence of the thing we love—

A hollow void, a yawning emptiness,

A frightening gap, a hole of black and gray,

Torn into time and space,

Forever here to stay.

In vain, the eye and ear, the heart and soul,

Stretch out a groping hand,

In hope to find the form that was so dear,

The spirit's vessel and its earthly seat

In the familiar place

And the immediate here—

And find but nothingness—and hurt, and bleed.

Till from the darkness that the senses meet,

From the appalling lack

Of all the response to their despairing cry,

The eye turns inward to that timeless sphere,

Where it can see, intact,  
The image through the tear.  
Where what in time and space to us is lost  
And to the world around has disappeared,  
Where what this life no longer knows or holds  
Has conquered death and lives  
Within our memory's folds.

Thus gazing at the void that thou, o tree hast left  
Between my window and the sky,  
When by a murderous ax thy stem was felled,  
My anguished heart, in helpless rage and silent pain,  
Shrinks with dismay from the oppressive sight—  
And then, before my dazzled eye,  
Thou standest, o my tree! erect again.  
I see again thy trunk,  
So ghostly, tall, and dark,  
From which, like mighty thorns,  
The spiny branches part  
In weird and wondrous forms.

And while all things around thee change from day to night,

From sun to moon, and spring to fall,  
And trees grow leaves they soon again must lose,  
Thou, wiser than this earth and heedless to its call,  
Remainest ever bare, the same, aloof,  
A symphony of static lines,  
A counterpoint to change and move.

So man pronounced thee dead and boldly underwrote  
His sentence with an ax and knife  
And did not see that in thy rigid shape  
And rugged bark was writ the mystery of life.  
For only what outside and half beyond  
Reveals Life's deeper truth,  
Its structure, form, and norm.

Farewell then, my old tree, who to this world didst give  
No longer shade, not red nor green,  
The fleeting pleasures of a sensuous kind.  
And yet the one who had a keener eye to see  
Will carry the strong imprint of thy beauty  
And of thy ecstasy  
Unaltered in his mind.

Another ax, swung by a ruthless reaper's hand,  
Will one day strike—and shut this eye  
Thy sight entranced and where the tears now gleam.  
And only then when this Heart's joy and pain shall end,  
Will it be freed from its nostalgic dream  
Of thy dark silhouette  
Against the vaulted sky.

*From the 1957 issue of The Prism*

# College Is...

By Patricia Beatty Martin

College is an inarticulate thing. It is a wonderful period. It is the feel of cashmere and tweed skirts. The way the leaves crunch in the fall. The boy, the soccer player, and the late, late, minutes. It is the high school valedictorian packing for home after first semester finals. The letters from home and missing it. But rejoicing that this, too, is home. It is feeling so happy and proud that you are sad...and belonging.

It is the study dates all winter and promising yourself that you won't cram for the finals and doing so all the same. It is the broken coke machine and the eight o'clocks you slept through.

It is suddenly meeting people you have needed to meet for a long time. It is getting a thousand miles from home and seeing new things. And knowing there is so much more to see. It is growing up; so much of college is growing up.

Quiet hours when no one is there. Parties and beer; formals and cocktails. It is the suddenness of Springtime and the fresh greenness of the Circle. It is the cut classes and wondering who will be chosen for May Court.

There are no words for college. Four years and we say goodbye to the eight o'clocks and there just are not any words.

Yet something in us knows...

It is all right to leave...

You see,

We take so much

with us.

*From the Spring 1958 issue of The Prism*

# You Call Me “Beat”

By Pauline Rose

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Yeah, mister, you call me “beat.” You look down your nose at me and say I have no values in life. You label me as a part of that silent generation that finds its release and enjoyment in rock and roll, yelling like crazy at a football game, or staring continuously at a T.V. set being identified with the guy in the Western.

Yeah, you make your speeches that America is headed for a decline, because my generation doesn’t care about being well-informed. We don’t seem interested in government or ideals. Yeah, you remind me that I take crap courses in high school, and that I conform, I always try to belong to a group, I can’t stand to be an individual.

Well, listen mister, you’re right in some ways, but listen to me for once. Let me tell you the why behind these accusations. One of my first memories was of my uncle going off to the Army. I was in one way excited because I received picture post cards from him, but I missed having him to tell me stories. I didn’t understand why he was gone, so my parents and others of your generation, mister, told me he’d gone to fight evil, hateful, no-good Japs. You told me to hate the Japs and Germans because they were no-good and dirty. You told me that these people needed to be killed. So I used all the energy of my youth in hating them.

It wasn’t long until it was over and my uncle was home. We all rejoiced and felt great that Hitler was dead, but we cried when Roosevelt died, and nobody at my house worked for a week. Everybody cried. At night, I sat around and heard everyone talk about the war, and how we Americans won it by dropping a bomb. I asked a lot of questions about a bomb, but the men were too busy to pay any attention to me. Britain, France, Russia and especially the U.S. were the ones that were praised on those nights as we looked at Churchill’s History of World War II. I asked my uncle a lot of questions about what it was like, but he didn’t talk much. He seemed changed, and restless those days.

Seems as if I grew up fast after that. Soon I was in the seventh grade, and I gloried in all the scientific discoveries that had been and were being made. I was told how great it was to be a part of this “Great Atomic Age.”

At about the same time, I was studying communism, and I was learning what an awful thing it was. I found out that I was mixed-up about Russia during World War II—they weren’t to be trusted; they were evil, conniving enemies. To be a Communist was not to be human. I was taught that it would be better to die than to be a Communist. Then I was shown what the Communists could do at a small peninsula called Korea. A good friend (three years ahead of me in school) went to the war...excuse me, I mean “police action,” mister, only he didn’t come back, so I couldn’t ask him questions.

In the meantime, you took me to church, and taught me about God. “God is good; God loves everyone,” you said. Then you added, “But you’d better be good or else you’ll burn in a hot fire (a Hell). If you don’t do what God wants, something will happen to you.” I listened to you—I listened and my imagination went to work. I believed you, and these teachings became a part of me.

About the same time, I made a new finding. I saw a little boy who was a different color than I. He was just like me in every way except that he was black. I was surprised, and I asked you why he was black, and I was white. Mister, someone told me that he was a “nigger” and that I wasn’t sup-

posed to talk with him or to be with him. Well, I was still young, and I hadn't learned not to ask questions, so I asked why I should stay away from him. "Cause he ain't as good as you are," I was told. "He's bad—if he gets a chance, he'll cut you with a straight razor, or hit you in the head, or do anything he can to hurt you. I've knowed a lot of niggers, and you can't trust 'em. If you give 'em an inch, they'll take a mile." You generation answered my questions, mister.

Around this time, my brother went to the Army. This time I knew what it was all about, and I already hated Hitler, and I told my brother to get a German for me too as he headed for overseas duty. I didn't understand, though, why my mother spent so much time crying those days, and why all those women went to church every Wednesday and prayed for a certain number of silver stars that were on a blue flag background.

Now I learn that we have enough bombs to blow Russia to bits; the only catch is that they can do the same thing to us. Also I know that in many other countries, the "black" people are trying to get liberty. We're supposed to be helping them, but I can't help but remember what you told me long ago about colored people. At the same time, you holler at me that everybody must do his best, get educated, try to meet this situation; but you close the schools down here, so my younger brother quits. My minister tells me we've got problems but that the church has to tread slowly and softly. "After all, we can't make people mad, because they would quit coming, and we couldn't meet our budget." My brother-in-law doesn't have a job, and about 150 others in my home town don't either, but you tell me that we're more prosperous than ever before.

Yeah, mister, I'm "beat," but I was beat before I began.

*From the Spring 1959 issue of The Prism*

# Ode to a Hangover

By Dick Wynne

The morning sun cracks sharply,  
    Against my battered head;  
It pounds upon my window,  
    And seeks me in my bed.  
I pull the wrinkled bedspread,  
    Then slide below its form;  
The sun, the day, can go to Hell,  
    'Cause I'll stay in the dorm!

*From the November 1960 issue of The Prism*

# The Agora

*In response to the requests of both students and faculty members, the Staff of the PRISM has decided to institute a letters to the editor column to be known as The Agora. All persons connected with this college are invited to submit short essays on any timely topic. The literary staff of the PRISM reserves the right to judge each essay and choose those which will be published. The Agora is an organ of free speech, and the reader is reminded that the views contained within are not necessarily those of the Staff.*

## THE QUESTION OF JUSTICE

When Socrates, the Athenian, who sought justice and truth in the agora of Athens, was lawfully condemned to death for "not believing in the gods in which the city believes"; injustice crept between the radiant pillars of the Parthenon, chilling as hemlock. When six young Virginians who sought justice for the Negro and sat together in brotherhood, harming in fact no one at all, were lawfully condemned to imprisonment, injustice rose like a miasma round the courts of justice . . . and round the crosses of the Just Christ.

The question posed by these and a thousand other cases where law and justice were not synonymous has perplexed mankind down the ages: how to deal justly with just men who break the law in the name of justice. I cannot answer for the abstraction called the state; perhaps it must condemn them. But the state is not more than men and women, and, speaking for myself, I must support the just.

My own position has come to be, after much thought, that a committed, believing Christian *must*—and a true patriot *should*—stand ready to put conscience above the law, if necessary. Surely it is clear by now that the whole crime of the Nazi officials and the German people was, precisely, that they did *not* put conscience above the law. For that they will answer as there's a God in Heaven.

I have the deepest respect for the English common law on which our law is based and a deep respect for the too-often-abused rights of private property. I abhor

lawbreakers. And yet, as a professor of history, I cannot forbear to add that but for massive lawbreaking we should all be both Roman Catholic and subjects of the crown of England. This might or might not be a good thing; but those who hold that it is preferable to be Protestant or American or both are simply *not* in a position to condemn whole-heartedly lawbreakers who put conscience above the law. To be sure, a distinction can be made between safely dead lawbreakers (such as the early Christians, Martin Luther, Thomas Crammer and Sir Thomas Moore, John Bunyan, Tom Paine and George Washington, Henry Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, and Mister Jefferson) and the live ones who are still dangerous fellows. This distinction would run as follows:

Dead—good; Live—bad.

As a handy rule of thumb, it is convenient and does not strain the intellect. As a position, it has a certain logic, and it has the supreme merit of being comfortable. Thus those in the past who put conscience above the law and were duly jailed or beheaded may be retained as harmless saints and heroes; but the dangerous ones who do the same thing today may, since they fail to meet the simple requirement of being dead, be roundly condemned. How else, indeed, without this useful distinction, can we of the present day provide heroes who have suffered for their beliefs for the future.

—SHELDON VANAUKEN.

*From the February 1961 issue of The Prism*

# We Came to a Field Whose Only Name Was Peace

By Carol Edwards

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(In potter's fields the grasses blow  
Between the clay-heaps row on row...)

The sun thrust a few grubby rays  
From its cloth-of-cloud pockets,  
Then hid its face, ashamed of the  
Derisive gulls that skirled over  
The island.

It was a miserly day, abundant only  
With fog that devoured our footsteps.  
That day we had to deposit only three...  
Two derelicts and an old hag, who had  
Probably picked up pennies and  
Pop bottles for a living.  
It was gritty work, slicing  
Into the stale earth, tossing  
Rocks and old scraps of rust  
Into a heap near the monument.

(It was gray marble and read “Peace.”)

“This is their retirement plan,”

Chuckled the other digger.

“All they could afford with no pension.”

He began whistling “America the Beautiful.”

The fog wouldn't let us work.

It filled the holes and curled itself

Into a gentle, moth-colored shroud

For the boxes. It cushioned the jeers

Of the deathless gulls.

The fog wouldn't let us work

With the usual detachment,

Pretending we were digging holes

Only to cup the spring rains.

The fog was our albatross.

We read our own guilt in its weeping.

We glanced across the cluttered

Field and watched the fog

Creep among the little hills,

A faceless thing in itself,  
Seeking out its faceless own.  
The clown said something about  
What lousy weather and how  
He wished spring would come.

“Poppies,” I said, and  
Leaped at my own voice.  
How did that tie in with  
Death and nameless graves?  
Poppies—hideous, plastic ones—  
Were sold on Veterans’ Day.  
And then I recalled a poem  
Seen somewhere on a dog-eared page:  
“In Flanders Fields the poppies...”  
Heroes, helmets, the howl of death  
That mortar fire could not smother...  
Limbs torn by limbless machinery  
and ground into the April mud.  
Then peace...and poppies.

Crosses deserve heroes and here

There were no crosses,  
Only a hunk of pigeon-colored marble  
With PEACE scratched into its bulk.  
Ranks and faces blurred by the hurried step  
Going nowhere,  
And only silent cries of agony  
And no clean hill to die on.  
This PEACE thing...  
It was all the monument  
We could give them now.  
And this was not our gift,  
Not ours to give.

We shut the door of the cabin,  
But we could not shut out  
The fog. It clawed at the glass  
And begged for an answer.

The jolly digger started the boat,  
And the fog followed us, weeping,  
Then fell back and was dissolved  
In a sudden burst of light

From the sun's precious horde.

The clown kept his eye on the gray wharf looming ahead,

A sentry for the slowly waking city.

At last he spoke and on his face

There was no smile.

“Yeah, poppies would look nice.”

*From the Fall/Winter 1962 issue of The Prism*

# October Journal

By A. Kenneth Lloyd

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October 23, 1962

Someone said here in the dorm that tomorrow could be the beginning of a nuclear war. Tomorrow night may see the end of our first, and only, nuclear conflict. In reality, no one knows if tomorrow will bring anything more than the same waiting we have all known for over ten years. Perhaps the certainty of destruction would be better than living with fear...

It is strange to see what fear and anxiety are doing to the people here at the college. Most of us attempt to hide ourselves in flippancy—crude jokes and remarks about last meals, about last actions we would take before the end. Characteristically, the boys here always mention women in their last actions. I wonder how many are thinking about the families, wives, and friends in other places... We are never alone in a situation like this, for there are always others, too numerous to count, who are suffering the same pangs.

Here is our better world, through chemistry, about to go down before the ultimate weapon—man himself. And won't the people of the new future laugh at how we put ourselves down! We are a brilliant people... How we long for a bow and an arrow to pit against the greater challenge of a living beast. Now we are forced to cope with only an animated beast, an outsized mushroom, which has never heard of struggle—only slaughter.

But this pen is too morbid.

I don't believe that we are going tomorrow. There is every reason to believe that we are—perhaps that fact alone makes me rebel. Maybe I just don't feel like facing the possibility of raging death around and in me. Where are you going, Adam? Certainly not down to the river to drown? And still you go down, Adam.

There is a horrible fascination surrounding the whole spectre of nuclear war—or war, period. This generation has never had to fight to protect its heritage. Never. Many of us want to fight for ourselves, once. Yet, there are ways other than killing to defend an ideal. We just haven't discovered them.

Death draws us on, anyway. We like to watch tragedy and death. Sometimes, however, we forget that our faces might be among those of the dead very shortly. Then, how do we like our tragedies? Not so well, I think.

And where is God, someone asks. And an answer comes, saying, God is in you, man, and you won't let him free. That whistling you hear in your mind is not angels but other heavenly mechanisms. Handle with care! Explosives! But then, we've always been that way—explosive. The whole race is an explosion of the first magnitude: BOOM.

Question:

Who cares if Kennedy is right or wrong about taking a stand on Cuba? Moral and political righteousness is not, unfortunately perhaps, involved here. Why criticize what has already occurred? Besides, somewhere, someone had to say no. Why shouldn't we, the greatest living yes-men, be one of the first to get up and say it?

All right, ole Adam, say your no and praise God, smile when you accept your consequences. You are your own worst enemy, you know. But don't let that realization bother you. When you have been around for a million years, you will one day on the other side of the equal sign make an equation? Does one day equal a million years?

Who am I to decide?

We all say that we'll join up. We are courageous. And in twenty-five years, so will our children be courageous. Alas, Eden, rise again. Come with me, Adam. God is in the garden.

October 24, 1962

The day after the night before—and nothing is happening. But there is still time, brother. Today is not in the past, and we are not yet alone.

After last night's entry, today I should say something cheerful. Cheerfulness that is not a false front, however, is difficult when we are all thinking about dying. The bad part about the whole situation is, of course, that none of us know why we may die. Some entity called death merely begins harvesting—and who knows why?

Today we have been joking about my journal. In ten thousand years, we were saying, some new culture will dig this writing up and know what the last days were like. We have decided, though, that I am too vague to be historically accurate. I didn't want to be a Pepys anyway. Bill is sure that he will be called into active duty any time now. This afternoon he has been sewing his new stripes on his uniforms and has been getting his gear in shape. He is quite worried.

The newspaper headlines today read:

KENNEDY ORDERS CUBA BLOCKADE

AS REDS BUILD A-BASES ON ISLAND

The little island of Cuba is only a short distance from the southern tip of Florida in the United States. In a very few minutes of intensification, a military force could eliminate it. Strange that something so small should prove so mammoth. But we are that way—a people of great things in small parcels. Consider the atom, how it neither sows nor nourishes. Yet how great is its reaping...

Am I becoming a pessimist? I don't think so. I am trying to be more than myself, more than one.

The whole tone of campus is one of waiting. In reality, most of us are curious, I think—curious about the feel of war. I am the same way. Yet,

who wants to die, or to see countless others die, just to satisfy curiosity?

Damn the bomb, says Russell. Passive resistance be praised! The time for passive resistance is over, and the time to register our vote of No has come. Who will stand with us? Everyone here says no. But then we are youth and we have negatives in our veins—no blood. Perhaps we have the good fortune to be a youth of positive negatives.

Today I received a little card from a girl. The card was an invitation to a campus activity—maybe the very thing which we are forgetting now. On the card were the words:

COME TO VESPERS

TAKE TIME OUT TO PRAY TODAY

We don't take time out enough, do we? No, we pray on the run. This then is the Marathon where the Greeks won an overwhelming victory. How about us?

Now several hours later.

We went to vespers and Dr. Stranger knelt and prayed with us. Nothing else was really needed. To those who knelt with him came the sense that God had not, in fact, lodged his veto with the human race.

But the ships keep coming on, and the wire services of the United Press International say that the complexion is changing. The acne of Soviet ships is being treated—but who is to know that we are not merely covering over the blemishes?

A mighty fortress is our Fallout Shelter! Everywhere Civil Defense, the Great Mother of us all, rears its head and draws us into its warm, protective arms. And the “arms” race is on in a new sense.

Anyway, one fact keeps us happy here in ole Carnegie. That fact is, of course, that most of the civilized world seems to be with us, not against us, as so often happens. Some of us are still worried about the draft. Especially the A-1's.

Bill put away his uniforms this evening.

What will tomorrow be? Someone said, though, that we only have today and must drink the life out of now before moving on to tomorrow's wine or vinegar.

HAPPY UNITED NATIONS DAY!

October 25, 1962

I had a strange reaction today: I did not want to hear about Cuba. After being concerned with war and dying for two days, I suppose that anyone would look for other news. I even forgot to pick up my newspaper. I did see a headline, however, which said that most of the Soviet ships were turning back, although many were still coming on their planned courses. I am almost sorry that all of the ships will not keep coming. I feel as if we need the chance to follow through our punch—even if it means sinking another ship. We need the exclamation point on Cuba.

Do people really have to die before we can make a point? Is pain so essential in our world? And so Winter comes upon us with the frozen November crawling through the cracks in the windows. Put on your coats, you fools. Winter will not be offended. Before you go out the door, though, tell me where you are going—and why.

I wonder how many people have taken up praying in the last few days...are they praying on God, saying, keep me safe? Have mercy upon us, miserable offenders...we didn't mean to offend anyone anyway. We are inoffensive.

Question:

What would you do if you could be God for a day?

Answer:

Weep.

Question:

And what would you do if Christ suddenly came back as a human being?

Answer:

I would crown him with thorns.

Question:

Don't you feel small and insignificant when you look at the vastness of the universe?

Answer:

I feel a great joy, knowing that there is a God.

Question:

Who are you?

Answer:

A moon, I hope.

Maybe the questions and answers mean something. They probably don't. The last one is too far out.

So are we.

Rise up, o poets of God...

*From the Spring 1963 issue of The Prism*

# After the Battle

By Kenneth L. Arnold

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Woman, your son is there among that crowd  
Of unknown faces, now himself unknown.  
The war has crumpled into dying men  
And crucified the hope of freedom on the hills,  
While you walk now into darkness with your light  
And call to vacant faces precious names,  
Listening for the cry that will not come.  
The night has muffled living with a wreath.

Walking with your lantern, you bend to see  
A face that wears the mask of your creation;  
But in darkness and in death, all dead men  
Emulate your son—and you, their mother.  
Mother of the dead you are, a woman  
Living in a city built of gravestones.  
Did they call your name, these children  
When they say their freedom die?  
They remembered, perhaps, your breast  
And reached to touch again your face

Before the war enfolded them in peace.

Mother, your son has died his death.

He is not yours: and you belong to all the dead.

*From the Spring 1964 issue of The Prism*

# The Unknown Soldier

By Ted Walsworth

A Kid

Stealing wine and slurping it in the movies from a Dixie Cup

Hot wiring cars and copping a feel

Drafted

Fighting

Killing

No sleep

Wild-eyed

Running from hill to hill

Flat assed scared

Running—running the wrong way   HOME

Shot in the back of the head

*From the Winter 1965 issue of The Prism*

# Do or Die

By Tom Pumpelly

Once there was a man named Mao, who led a country which had very little food and lots and lots of people. Every time they got hungry, Mao would look for a war to fight so that he could cut the population and better be able to feed those who were left. Those who were not left said very little and so no real controversy arose over this rather drastic solution to the food per population problem, and as expected, no serious revolutionary challenges became evident.

But then one day Mao discovered that a group of Red Guards had been harassed by a somewhat unruly mob of bi-partisan rebels and he realized that another war was long overdue. He searched the Russian front for a nice war, only to find that Kosygin didn't want to play war, but would annihilate all of China in a nuclear holocaust if it would make Mao happy. This wasn't quite what Mao wanted to hear, since he didn't have any nuclear weapons of his own, so he decided against that type of war and looked toward the east for a more tolerable war. Lo and behold, he found Vietnam just a few miles south of Peking within easy commuting distance should the need arise, and immediately began helping the North with political and military aid. Soon though, a slightly involved country named America became allied with the South Vietnamese and again Mao was presented with a somewhat touchy situation. America insisted that if Mao didn't stay out of North Vietnam then he might be annihilated in much the same manner as Kosygin had proposed.

Mao didn't want to see democracy triumph in the South, and of course didn't want to give up his new-found strategically perfect process for preventing population problem persecution. But again, fearing an atomic holocaust which might kill the wrong members of his country, Mao retained his great masses in the homeland and allowed only a few of his suicide squads to infiltrate into the South. By now Mao was tired of being on the receiving end of all these threats, so remembering how he had solved his problems in Korea some years before, Mao declared that any escalation of the war on the part of the Americans would result in all-out participation by his country on the side of the North. Mao, realizing that he was no match for the powerful bombs of the Americans, and fearing worldwide laughter at any such declaration, quickly exploded a bomb of his own which was made possible only through the help of a famous California University.

(Right) From the Spring 1966 issue of The Prism



by TAM ROOD

Suddenly the whole world listened to Mao, especially the Americans who regained their composure only after discovering that Mao had no way of delivering his bomb unless he wanted to carry it. But Mao was now a threat and the Americans postponed any escalation plans that they might have had, because they didn't know what might happen if Mao decided to enter the war. They certainly didn't want to use their atomic weapons against him, but it was obvious that it would be the only alternative under a full attack from the North. Most doubted that Mao would enter the war, but then most had doubted Mao's sincerity in Korea. The problem was quite serious for the Americans who chose to carefully escalate the war against the best wishes of a large minority of their citizens. But the escalation was so slight each time that it had no significant value to the Americans, and provoked Mao only to more threats. Mao realized that he was a new member of the atomic powers, and exploded more and more bombs to perfect his atomic strategy. Mao knew he was not ready for his war yet, and as criticism from within his government grew, Mao looked hard for an ICBM to carry his bombs.

Now Mao was getting greedy, and he was no longer interested in just the Vietnamese conflict, but the whole world, and since the Americans were not escalating to a significant extent, Mao could employ all his resources in building an atomic arsenal. The Americans were becoming more and more afraid of Mao all the time and those who said "win and get out," were hushed by the fear that fiercely feared Mao would breathe his wrath of fire on the South. Little did they know that when and if Mao was ready for his offensive, the question of American escalation would have little bearing on his actions.

So the Americans continued their complacency and missed the golden opportunity to win in Vietnam before Mao would be able to protect his Northern friends which were really to the South.

One day, while outlining his premature anti-missile missile system, Mao found an ICBM and quickly put it into production so that his premature anti-missile system became a belated necessity, and within a few years Mao could protect his favorite parts of China should he want to attack some of the more fortunate countries of the world, which unlike China, had everything instead of nothing, and of course less people.

So now Mao was set. He had his own bombs, his own missiles to deliver them, missiles to shoot down missiles that weren't his, and a beautiful land war in Asia to solve his population problem which was now "criticalest." Nobody was going to threaten Mao, nobody was going to laugh at Mao, everybody listened to Mao, especially the Americans who were still sitting on their thumbs in the South. Mao wasn't bluffing now. He was holding all the important cards and the Americans were wishing they had won in Vietnam a few years before.

For starters Mao moved three million men to the D.M.Z. and told the Americans to beat it. President Reagan, or whoever he was, didn't know what to do. He couldn't pull out because the American prestige would be hurt and the communists would have won in Vietnam. So, with nothing left to do, the President sent three million Americans to South Vietnam and had it out with Mao. Soon there were no more Americans and no more of Mao's men, and so both sides sent three million more men and Vietnam soon made Korea look like a picnic. Mao's men truly believed they were dying for a just cause, but the Americans weren't so stupid. They knew how their government had done nothing during the past and how Mao had taken advantage of their complacency during the Johnson Administration. The other Americans told them that they were dying for freedom but in actuality they were dying because someone had made a grave mistake in 1967, by not really escalating the war and winning it.

So Mao just sat back like a gambler who had drawn inside to a seven high nothing, smiled a little, while reading his Gallup polls, marveled at the American draft card burners, said little about how well his bluff had worked and just loved the way in which the Americans had solved his population problem.

Occasionally Mao would get up, spin his globe, stare at it awhile and sit back down.

The Whole End.

*From the Fall 1967 issue of The Prism*

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## PASS/FAIL

### Or, A Half Hog May Be Better Than a Whole Hog

By Dr. Mervyn Williamson

“Marriage,” G. B. Shaw is reputed to have told Frank Harris, “is a faulty institution, but no effective substitute has been found.”<sup>1</sup>

So (with minor adaptation) is academic grading.

Or: Everyone talks about the grading system, but little is done about it.

Question: Can a partly effective grading substitute be found? Or, if we continue the Shavian analogy, will a partial marriage work?

The tyranny of the GPA (Grade Point Average) is indeed awesome, and it often works not for education but its enemy—and this may be the secret of its power. Gresham’s Law operates in Academe; the bad currency drives out the good. When the symbol can be substituted for the reality, who wants the reality?

Professors complain about students who are motivated solely by the promise of a good grade or the threat of a bad one; in Elysium they would be motivated by a genuine desire for learning. Just as surely, even the better students eschew doubtful courses and unpredictable professors to play it safe with the easy A to jack up the GPA for entry into an honor fraternity or graduate school or whatnot. The spectacle of the student (or his parent) paying good money for a course that repeats what the student already knows is as commonplace as it is illogical.

Parents are frequently not without blame. The question is not what the heir apparent is or is not learning but what his grades are. Even at mid-semester they want grades (maybe a holdover from high school), even though such “grades” are frequently guesses based on precious little data. And influential parents or nervous administrators pressuring for unearned grades or for their own offspring or those of trustees or donors or prospective donors is a phenomenon not wholly unknown at some schools.

Illogicalities and inanities in the grading system are widely discussed though frequently exaggerated. Favorite stories concern the two professors in the same course grading the same paper, one marking it an A and the other a D, and even the same professor, marking the same paper, assigning different scores, sometimes with reasons said to be only slightly academic—having to do, perhaps, with the state of his digestion or the presence or lack of marital harmony at the time. Not quite so frequently heard is the story of the professor reputed to have said to the student: “That was an A paper when I first saw it thirty years ago, and it still is an A paper.”<sup>2</sup>

Though variations are frequently exaggerated, they unfortunately do represent the all-too-human element in the assigning of grades, and this element is hardly minimized by the so-called “objective” measurements. For no measurements are really objective; someone has to develop and apply the instruments, and someone has to interpret and apply the results. And sometimes the combination of the myth of objectivity and a fondness for normal curves leads to the fallacy of misapplied statistics.

Even some schools have wondered why the attrition rate has kept pace with increased admissions standards, never realizing that the fault may

lie in the fallacy of considering the C grade at once average, satisfactory, and minimal! Under such a system, a predetermined number of students are doomed in advance to the perdition of D and F and an approximately equal number elevated to the paradise of A and B, no matter what the quality of their work!

Nor do these considerations exhaust the pernicious results and baneful influences of grades. Few teachers are wholly immune to the blandishments of the “nice” student—especially of the opposite sex—or to the regrettable disorder of the (perhaps Einsteinian?) slob. Browning and shooting the bull are elevated to the arts. “Attitudes,” frequently undefined and undefinable, “are taken into account in the assigning of grades.”

Theoretically, each course should have listed and stated a nice, neat set of objectives, preferably with behavioral outcomes, and grades should be based upon the “objective” measurement of the attainment of these objectives. Practically, as most teachers are aware, such a theoretically neat, systematic state of affairs is difficult, if not impossible, of attainment in many courses. Though they keep trying, most teachers know that grading is tentative and imprecise.

Since we are face with such an obviously imperfect institution, then, let’s change it.

To what?

Suppose, for instance, that we did not give grades this semester at Lynchburg College. Not only would the college administration be a bit puzzled, but also students would raise questions. All that work on that term paper surely should fetch more credit of some sort than that of the roommate who waited until the last minute and barely got by! Parents would be hard put to know whether their money was well or ill spent; at least, with the present system they have assurance, though possibly pseudo-assurance, that they do know whether they have received their money’s worth.

The greatest confusion might well reign into the committee rooms of those who determine eligibility for grants in aid, athletics, honors programs, honors societies, dean’s list, honors at graduation—and so on, ad infinitum. And the arbiter of undergraduate excellence, the almighty Graduate School, would lack basis for admission.

Caught between the horns of this dilemma, some schools have tried various methods of extrication without goading anyone. Some years ago Sarah Lawrence substituted written evaluation of performance (a sort of essay on each student’s work) for grades—but Sarah Lawrence had a student-faculty ratio of only eight to one. Reed withheld grades from a student until graduation—or until he left (at that time Reed had an unusually high attrition rate, according to some faculty members; a casual connection between the two phenomena may or may not exist). A few years ago Westminster decided not to give failing grades, at least in some courses. The student who did not pass simply had not, according to the record, taken the course, and he could keep trying until he passed it.<sup>3</sup>

A two-grade system—Pass and Fail—has often been proposed. Sometimes to these two a third is added—High Pass. Then comes a fourth: and A, B, C, D, F by any other names smell the same. Students, teachers, and parents are not always pleased by a simple binary system.

It does, however, have some advantages. It does mean that the students will be concerned merely with passing the course, and will not feel the GPA pressure. Therefore, presumably, he can take courses in which his chances of A or B under a traditional system constitute a fairly high risk. Furthermore, he can sometimes venture creatively or critically in ways which might, under the Established System, lead him to fear the consequences:

reducing an A or B to a C and thus lowering the GPA. Even (glory!) learning for its own sake might be a motivating factor!

Though this binary system (two grades only, Pass or Fail) does have drawbacks, it is especially useful in some types of courses, such as physical education, creative writing, the performing arts, and other “applied courses,” where performance, not mastery of subject-matter or strictly intellectual skills, seems to make the courses less amenable to conventional grading scales. Such courses are frequently omitted when the GPA is computed, and ordinarily, under such a system, a limited number of such courses can be taken by the student in a given semester.

An even more exciting possibility has also gained some support: that every student be permitted to take a certain number of courses during his college career in which the binary grade rather than a conventional grade would be recorded. Under a completely optional election, for instance, a student might take up to three semester hours of such work each semester with no effect on the GPA. The course and the grade would be recorded on the transcript, but the grade would be either a Pass or a Fail. All such work would be omitted when the grade points are averaged. Such a system could easily be programmed into a computer, with special letters (S and U, perhaps) being reserved for the Pass or Fail marks in such courses.

The first step in instituting such a system would be to obtain from the faculty or administration permission for its use and to set up the necessary machinery. It could be offered college-wide or by departments, depending upon decisions made by the faculty; that is, the student could select such binary courses from the entire curriculum or from the offerings of certain departments, in which case the various departments or the faculty as a whole deemed them inappropriate to the system. Thus faculty control, departmental determination, and academic integrity could be fully protected.

From the student’s point of view, the system of modified binary grades, or a “limited Pass-Fail system,” could be educationally advantageous and exciting. Perhaps, let’s say, a student had always wanted to try a philosophy course or a physics course or a course in painting, but, unsure of his capabilities, he had always deferred to the more “practical” issue of whether the course might pull down his GPA if he should not do especially well in it. Under the binary system, as long as he could pass the course, his grades would not suffer. It would be of especial value to the better student, the one who is sincerely interested in learning but who has to be concerned about the level of his GPA, not wishing to risk the C that might keep him out of the honor society, the dean’s list, or the graduate seminar. It would be his opportunity to increase the range of present interests and experiment with the development of new interests with a minimum of jeopardy. In other words, it could enhance the possibility of his “liberal” education.

Used in honors courses and honors sections of courses, such a system might well mitigate the fear of some students that grading standards will be higher in these courses. Everyone who has worked with honors programs is aware of the sometimes reluctance of students to enter honors courses for this reason—despite assurances and evidences to the contrary.

Limited use of the binary Pass-Fail grading system would not solve all the ills that academic flesh is heir to under the conventional system. Undoubtedly there would be problems that would have to be worked out over a period of time. But it would have the advantage of breaking the tyranny of the GPA and varying the academic lockstep, even if only in small degree.

Some, no doubt, will maintain that such a system is too much trouble. And there are always those who temperamentally are inclined to view with alarm any innovations at all, and who prefer to remain with the tried, even if it is not-so-true.

As George Bernard Shaw once remarked to Rank Harris, “Marriage is...”

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<sup>1</sup>My appreciation goes to Mr. Charles Steele for indentifying Shaw's interlocutor.

<sup>2</sup>This story was told me by Mr. Joel Climenhaga, director of drama at Culver-Stockton College, as having come from a professor at Stanford University.

<sup>3</sup>Much of this material came to me casually by word of mouth and by discussions in meetings, workshops, and the like. I have not checked recently to determine whether these variations are still in operation or whether they were successful.

*From the Spring 1968 issue of The Prism*

# On returning to the simple things in life, or Positively 5th Street

By Kenith C. Crawford

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I saw you,  
while waiting for my boots at the repair shop.  
I was seated on a wall bench,  
but you stood—and shifted nervously in your graying  
overalls and what looked suspiciously to be a pair of Sunday shoes.  
Your rough, lined hands—worn from years of hard labors,  
fingered some leather scraps at the work table.  
Your head was bent, and under the brim of your sweat-stained hat,  
you wore your furrowed face set—  
with useful eyes that moved with your hands.  
Our gazes met across that wooden floor,  
mine interested and only slightly questioning,  
while yours quickly returned to the sawdust world at your feet.  
The ancient aromas of polish and animal hides permeated the room,  
and drifted into my nostrils as I watched the cobbler at his trade.  
I became aware of your mission here  
as you spoke your turn to the shoemaker.  
“...that’s ‘em—the black ones in the corner!”  
Right then your expression changed.

and a new look came into your eyes.

Realizing the moment—I noticed the sinews in your hands seem to tighten,

as you collected your treasures

and moved to the side in order to view them.

You pulled a wrinkled brown bag from your back pocket

and began removing those sheaths of ceremonial constriction one at a time

from your feet.

I saw you stoop and hurriedly apply those worn and battered work shoes

to the affected areas with loving intent.

Rising slowly, and with a smile which I immediately took up—

you thrust open the door (with customer bells jangling)

and strode out into the honking, concrete restraints of 5th Street!

*From the Spring 1972 issue of The Prism*

# Song of America

By Dave Hartman

And there beneath the sea-gray sky—

Was that the lonesome, slipping step,

Upon the wave-tossed steadfast stone,

That they said had caused it all?

(And then you dare to ask me—

Was it really worth it all?)

And yes, my bitter winters tried

To throw you back,

Back to your mutton-stuffed shores;

And my secret, dark-skinned children.

They pierced you, made you bleed;

But still you stayed and drank my milk,

Your rock-haired savage nurse;

The echoes of the forested night,

The owl, the coyote, they sound my call:

You are not mine, not mine at all.

And now, what is this?

Some insolent island dares to wrap its web on me?

You dare to think that I, heathen, proud,

Cannot breathe the breath of life

Into these milk-skinned orphans,

Cannot send my wild and mystic blood

Coursing through their veins?

Drop your hoes, I cried, 'tis time

To feel the North gale on your faces.

Drop your jeering axes and prepare to bleed.

Children, your wild, enraptured mother

Calls you to the field.

And now, Liberty!, you say,

Pork-barrel fresh, wrapped in skins,

As though it were a gift for me.

'Twas not for Liberty I bore you,

Not for that I took you on my back.

Listen to my wind-tossed pines,

My crests all howling with the call:

Freedom, freedom, freedom!

But then you tried to stifle me,

Tried to stuff me with your shame

My sad black sister's child you stole,

Bound his feet, weighted his hands.

You did not hear my mountains rage:

Free him, free him, free him!

You dare to think I'd long endure

Tyrant Cotton's reign?

So from my lungs I breathed the one

Who burned you in his sadness,

Slew you in his sorrow.

He ripped his heart in mourning,

And then you cut him down.

In shame, you cut him down.

And then, you trampled my heart,

Clubbed to death the buffalo,

Sickled them like weak-ribbed chaff,

Blew them to the wind;

Then you sought my dark-eyed first-born—

In winter, fogged their thoughts with drink,

In payment, took their robes;

Burnt them in their teepees,  
Seized them on my plains,  
Starved them on my milk-full breast.  
And I, in weakness, could but watch,  
Could but cloud my eyes with shame.

And then you, bloated in your pride,  
Turned your eyes across the seas;  
Laughed to see my senseless sister,  
Mocked her in her madness.  
Once, twice, you branded her,  
Seared her brow and branded her.  
And I trembled now with palsy,  
Blind and flabby-legged, I feared.

Then on that bitter, blackened noon,  
You shot him,  
shot him dead.

His body molders in the grave,  
His truth cannot escape,  
Cannot go marching on,  
Do my hills still vaguely murmur:

Freedom, freedom, freedom?

I cannot tell.

Their blood no longer strengthens me,

My kind and gentle heroes' blood.

You have fouled me with your hands

Gouged my eyes, stuffed my ears,

Still I hear my gentle sister's wail—

My poor, my doe-eyed sister's wail.

The iron angels sicken her—

You no longer fear my rage?

Mountains, let me hear you storm!

Rivers, sound your battle cry!

Do not lie broken, battered—

What was that mighty call?

Oh, to hear that raging call!

Once more, but once, that awesome call!

...Upon that dusty carpet,

On that solitary orb—

Is this the timid, starting step

That they say will start it all?

(And then you dare to ask me—

Even now you dare to ask me—

Was it really worth it all?

Was it worth it all at all?)

*From the Spring 1973 issue of The Prism*

# The Hunter

By Jeffrey W. Blum

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He awoke slowly, thoughtfully, looking long and hard at the ceiling above him, his mind suspended between sleep and consciousness. His first act of the day was to roll over and glance at the weather through the single window on the opposite side of the small room. The dark, clear sky of the early dawn forced a half smile to cross his face, and as if to celebrate the fine weather, he lit a cigarette and lay quietly smoking. The heat of the early morning was rising and he waited in anticipation of the cooling breezes that came off the Mediterranean and tempered the threat of the French summer. Today was the day, there was no nervousness, doubt or unnecessary haste, only the realization of inevitable duty.

As the yellow curtains began billowing with the first breezes of the morning, Jean lifted himself from the bed, not laboring, nor with any excess energy, but with that rare determined movement one rarely sees in an individual. After relieving himself in the ancient toilet, he gazed in the mirror at his three day growth of beard and unkempt black hair. Returning to the bedroom, he went to the long canvas duffle bag that lay at the end of the bed and took out soap, a razor, a comb, a pair of peasant's overalls, a light cotton shirt and a pair of light summer loafers. After shaving his smooth dark face, and wetting and slicking back his hair, he dressed in the garments he'd chosen from the bag.

Re-entering the bedroom, he replaced his toilet articles in the duffle bag and sat down in the large overstuffed chair, that along with the bed and an old dresser, made up the furnishings of the room. Jean sat in the chair, calmly thinking, his mind wandering slowly over myriad thoughts. Glancing at his watch, he noticed that the day was progressing and he must begin preparing. Rising from the chair, he walked over to the bed and withdrew a long, thin black leather suitcase from beneath the mattress and placed it atop the dresser. Snapping open the two catches and unlocking the small lock with a key he wore on a chain around his neck, he lifted the lid of the case to reveal a custom high-powered hunting rifle in three pieces: barrel, stock and scope. Quickly, knowledgeably, almost mechanically he assembled the three pieces into a solid weapon, loaded it, and pulled the chair over to the window where he had spent many long hours over the past three days. It was 7:30, by 8:00 it would be over.

As he waited, he held the gun lightly, respectfully and allowed his mind to wander back to the first day he had carried it into the woods. It had been before the war; his wife had given him the gun as a birthday present and he was hunting in the woods adjacent to the large villa where he always spent his summer vacations from Paris. He had walked deep into the forest and was standing on a high knoll overlooking a small pond when he saw some movement in the brush near the water's edge. He watched as a hundred feet away a large boar sipped on the roots of the small trees that grew along the muddy bank and then drank from the shallows of the pond. As the boar walked from the bank towards the woods, Jean followed its movements in the scope of his rifle and as the boar stretched so that it may better digest its meal; Jean riveted the crosshairs of his sight to the boar's heart. But he did not shoot, and Jean stood watching as the boar slowly rumbled off into the forest.

For the next few days Jean would be waiting when the boar arrived, he would watch it eat, watch it drink and as the boar stretched he would barter for its life in his own head. For Jean, the boar was his, since he held its life in the palm of his hand, its very existence was dependent on him. The sheer power of complete control exhilarated Jean, but the excitement could not be consummated until he proved his ultimate power. On the fourth day he watched as the boar grubbed for its food and drank from the pond as he had done the three days preceding. But as the boar stretched, he sighted on its heart, gripped the stock of his gun with his left hand, held his breath and slowly squeezed the trigger. The calm animal before his sight was quickly transformed into a writhing, then quivering, mass of flesh, its thick fur matted with blood.

But that was long ago and many animals had fallen before his sights since then. Looking out the window at the village square that lay before him, he slowly surveyed the small shops that made up the perimeter of the center of town. It was a large square with many shops, many cafes and a large cathedral built hundreds of years ago. He smiled as he inspected the tall bell tower of the cathedral, for today it would be his savior.

Jean's attention was drawn from the steeple by a large black limousine that was slowly entering the square, its fenders bearing two small, red flags with black swastikas. It pulled in front of the small café on the opposite side of the square and from its back seat stepped a tall, bald man uniformed in black. The car drew off into one of the nearby side streets as the General and two of his aides seated themselves at their regular table on the porch. Fifty yards away, in the third story window of an old hotel, Jean glanced at his watch: 7:50.

Jean watched through his scope as the General ordered his breakfast and then conversed with his aides. Jean was relaxed; no perspiring, no nervousness, just patient waiting. The General was served his meal, Jean looked at his watch: 7:59; slowly he raised the rifle bringing the crosshairs of the scope to bear on the shiny orb of the victim's bald head. The General ate slowly; Jean waited, his breathing slow, deliberate, prepared.

Then it began, a dull thud at first but momentum soon built and the square was soon resounding with the deafening sound of church bells. A morning alarm for the whole city, the bells rang as Jean gripped the stock tightly with his left hand, inhaled deeply, and slowly squeezed the trigger. The sound of his rifle was lost in the peal of the bells as Jean watched the smooth flesh of the skull explode as another beast's calm was transformed into agony.

Rising from his chair, Jean walked back to the dresser where he dismantled the rifle, put it back into its black case, relocked it and slid it into his large duffle bag. His power proven, his beast dead, Jean walked from the room.

*From the Spring 1974 issue of The Prism*



*(Right) From the 1975 issue of The Prism*

# Icon

Anonymous

The bar stands in a shadow cast by God,  
An icon for a life that seems  
As worried and disturbed as a storm cloud  
Or the black sound of a child's scream.

Illusory, dream-lit beer signs that stain  
The windows with grotesque design  
And the dull droning of the Babbitt box  
Mirror lives confessed over wine.

The juke box sings a sentimental song  
About a love that did not last,  
A glass collects the settling tears  
Of an old man drinking his past.

A shot glass of red whiskey with his beer,  
Dog-eye drunk on a seesaw stool,  
Time passes—passes just to pass away  
For every drunk and dying fool.

And the ash trays cradle cigarettes  
Of old girls on a lonesome stage  
In a forlorn charade. The looking glass  
Reflects dead dreams and smothered age.

*From the Spring 1977 issue of The Prism*

# Portrait

By Janie James

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Is she one who paints...

Lashes whisperkiss her muted cheeks,  
stirring shadows of dusty rouge to parted,  
darkened red rose lips, murmuring  
of the Mona Lisa.

The palm of long fingers presses  
against a softline chin, receiving  
imprints of unpainted lips and  
those brushed lightly, in air.

Speaking of museum galleries  
opening shows and  
how she feels inside,  
air suffocating and dancing  
that strangers and unstrangers  
should see her in such movements.

They say she “exudes a sensitivity  
so rarely captured by the young and old.”

Do her eyes scan the canvas or  
fill it overflowing with fruit color  
and birds?

Eyes, the buds of blue roses, close  
and open, slowly,  
and storm with winter snow.

A pensive love said once he'd found autumn  
beneath her lashes, quivering.

Dappled hair tied loosely  
around the neck of a cream swan—  
fallen strands wisping her breasts, rounded  
into half moons  
by sculptors hands, erasing outlines.

Summer bare arms fold against her naked body.  
Shoulders undraped by muslin eyelet;  
skin, tan and pale, supple  
with evening sun and morning moon.

Does her hair become, like clouds  
transparent when the sun

settles on the canvas?

Does her body quench the colorthirst a

nd offer shade for poets of dry paint?

Another love, an artist, said

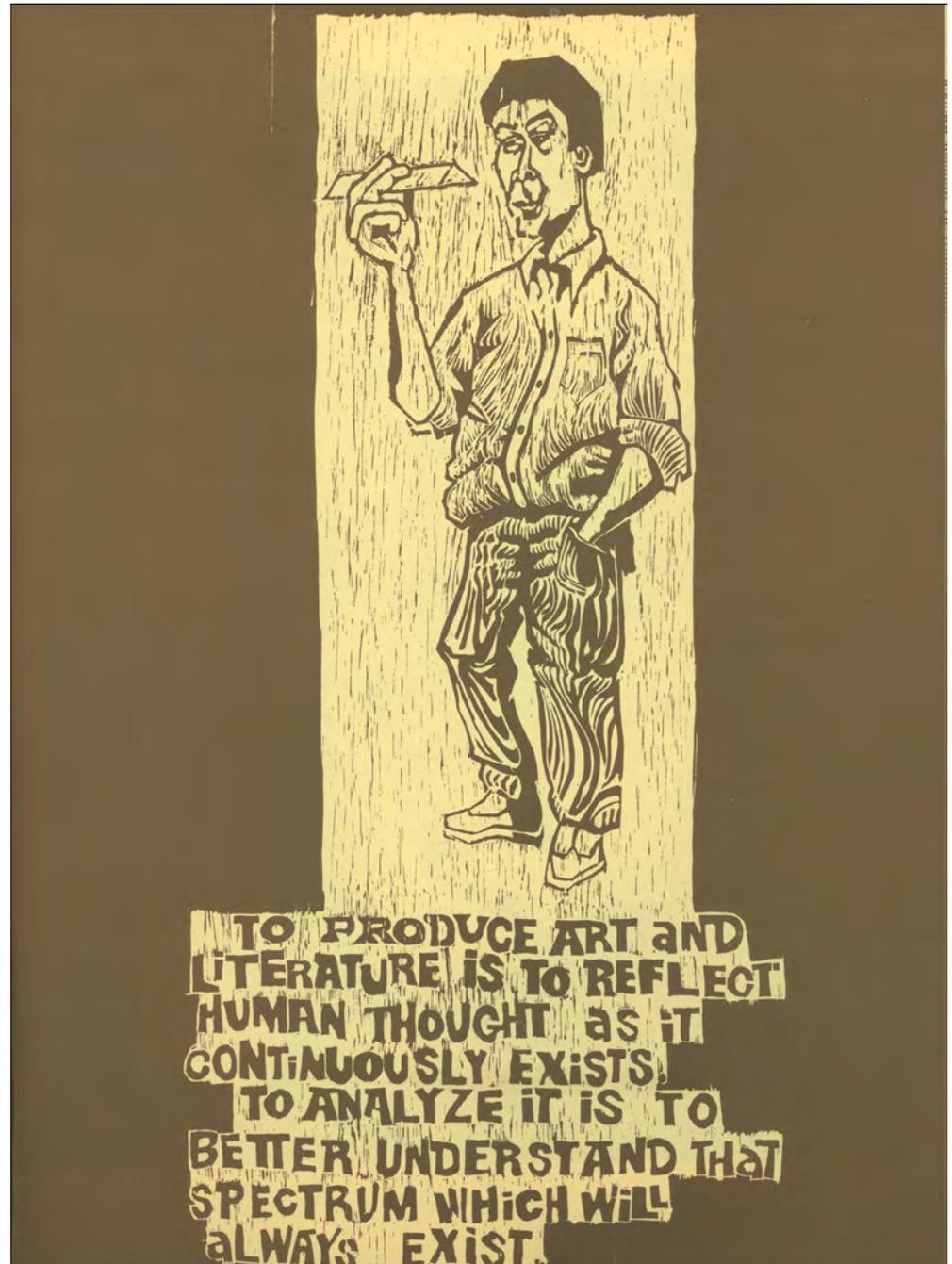
he'd found a landscape

in the smooth slope of her hips,

stretched on desert sand—

Posed for the portrait.

*From the Spring 1978 issue of The Prism*



*From the Spring 1979 issue of The Prism, by John Crank*

# Blood Relations

By Carole Symer

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An unbroken sound of high-pitched chatter carried through the early evening air outside the dining hall where thirty-some young women sat gathered at the dinner tables. Stories were shared with smiles over their dinner plates; the girls spoke about class assignments, upcoming exams, the Senior Chateau Dance, Miss Baldwin's lecture on "Depleting Resources and the Limitations of Growth," vacation plans and butter-brickle ice cream. Their laughter and conversation rose in the warm, spring dusk to the open dorm windows of the dorm above.

Sarah slouched over her desk in front of a window, reading a thick paperback book. She leafed through the book, scanning the pages, and with a tired sigh, turned back to her place and continued reading. She scrunched up her nose and sputtered to herself, "Oh, Anna, please kill yourself and get it over with already."

The sun had disappeared behind Silverthorne Auditorium when Sarah looked out her window and saw two girls walking down the steps, heading toward the library. The laughter dispersed as the other girls left the dining hall and dragged themselves back to their rooms for an evening of quiet labor.

Her door opened briskly, banging against the trunk on the wall behind the door. A slender girl, clad in jeans and crew-neck sweater, flew into the room, kicked the trunk and cursed it loudly.

"How can you study in the dark?" she resounded, flicking on the bright overhead light. "There, that's better. Don't wanna go blind before my time."

"I can see well enough," Sarah spoke defensively. "There's no sense in wasting electricity."

"As long as we have 'em..." the girl answered, meeting Sarah's cold glance, then added, "Miss Baldwin's lecture, huh? Hmmm. Well, I'm not worried. As long as we paid for the darn lights, we might as well..."

Sarah turned back to her desk and stared at her book. She shut out the other girl's voice. The girl continued to patter away—revealing her ignorance, thought Sarah—while rustling through some papers on her desk. Two hundred and fifty-eight pages left to read, she thought as she leafed through the remainder of her book. She scribbled a couple of numbers on a piece of scrap paper. A ninety-four she needed to make on her examination to bring her grade average to a B<sup>-</sup>.

Two girls played Frisbee in "Siberia"—the field in front of Silverthorne—while Sarah thought about her parents and how disappointed they are in her "academic performance of late." She received their letters with reluctance, and usually postponed reading them until the weekend. They wrote often to remind her that she should be doing work at a "higher caliber level."

"Now Sarah," her mother wrote, "you just need to apply more diligence to your studies. Your father and I want to be proud of you, like we are of Bram." Her mother wrote, telling her that her brother was applying for more advanced courses at the University next semester. "The college calculus course he was taking at the high school wasn't challenging enough for him."

She remembered her mother's words at spring break. "...but you, Sarah, you had better buckle down or you won't be accepted at any college." The words harped on her mind.

She reached across her desk and picked up a small, wooden recorder from the vase in the window sill. She turned it around in her hand and placed her fingers on the holes. Staring at the recorder, she thought of her father who had given it to her when she was eleven, and the clear, sweet notes it sang when played.

"Persevere, Sarah...Remember the Jews, Sarah..." Her father's advance rang sourly in her brain, spoiling the sweet music of the recorder. The Jews? As though she could forget. They had reminded her daily of heritage, honor, and her grandparents' suffering and persecution. The stories tormented her, and she slept in fear for a month after her father read Wiesel's *Night* to her and her brother.

Sarah replaced the recorder in the vase with the three larger recorders. Resting her head in her palm, she opened her book again and feigned reading. Her roommate tossed a pen on her desk, added a "I think this is yours...See you later, Miss Rose. I'm off to the library," flicked off the light switch, and shut the door. Unmoved now by the other girl's dramatic mannerisms, Sarah reached casually over to the pile of books and papers on her desk, switched on the small glass lamp in the window sill, and resumed reading.

"Anna, hurry for God's sake."

Later, after her roommate had come back and gone to bed, Sarah picked up her copy of *Anna Karenina* and scuffed down the hall, looking for a quiet place to study. She pulled a chair from the hall into the bathroom, looked around, then sentenced herself to one of the dungeon-damp shower stalls. She spotted another girl against the wall with a calculator, pencil and book. Settling herself on the chair, she opened her book and listened to the dripping of water in the next shower and her neighbor's turning of pages.

About a quarter past three, Sarah dragged herself back to her room, tripped over her roommate's bed, and fumbled around in her dresser-drawer, looking for her toothbrush. She gave up her search and crawled into bed, fully clothed. Still holding her book, she let it drop to the floor, and whispered, "Good riddance."

Exam week went quickly. In spite of her diligence before her exam, Sarah received only an eighty-nine on her Russian Literature exam. Afterward she packed her things together and waited for her parents' arrival. She loaded the car in silence, avoiding their questions about her exams, telling them she didn't feel well and could they wait until later. Her father glanced at Mrs. Rose, who was about to speak, shook his head, and silenced her.

Sarah rode in the back seat of their wagon and listened to her mother as she told her about Bram's acceptance into the summer program at the University. Mrs. Rose spared no pride as she told her daughter. Sarah listened as her mother went on about their summer plans. She told her daughter that she would have to unpack her things as soon as they got home and to repack her summer clothes. Sarah looked at her mother quizzically.

"For your trip, dear," Mrs. Rose said. She told Sarah that they had signed her up to go to Israel for six weeks on an archaeological dig, "...twenty-five miles southwest of Ashdod. It will be a wonderful experience, Sarah."

Sarah sat back in her seat, sighed deeply, and contemplated her defense. She had hoped to spend a leisurely summer sleeping late, reading romance novels and watching old black-and-white flicks on late night television. It's no use, she thought. Rummaging through dusty caves and digging

trenches in July heat was far from her desire, but she knew she would have to relent eventually, and thought instead about being away from her family. She caught her father's gentle aging face through the mirror.

"Sure, Mom. It sounds wonderful," she lied to the black haired woman who gave a smile of satisfaction to her husband.

Sarah wore her thick, brown hair tied back, baggy khaki shorts, and a T-shirt rolled up above her waist and the sleeves above her shoulders. She carted a wheelbarrow, trowel, and dusty bag in and out of the hot, dirty cave. There were nine others working along side her; four archaeologists, an anthropologist, a nuclear scientist, and several other students like herself. Their voices echoed through the thick, still air as they talked about the ancient civilization they hoped to unearth, while working carefully with fine brushes, but uncovering only dust and dirt in the tell.

She frowned at the dust, swore about her mother, and cursed the sun and the ancient people's city which they were searching for, then wiped her wet face with her forearm. The time was as unmoving as the air down there in the cave during the mornings. She choked on the thick, dusty air as she pounded the stubborn rock; but she preferred the trowel and broken nails to the brushes if the time went quickly. She was glad when mid-afternoon came, and they could quit work and return to the local kibbutz, five miles from the site, where they shared the food and hospitality of the people.

Sarah kept to herself there, sometimes helping in the kitchen where the women were kind to her and smiled often, or taking long walks on the beach, or playing with the young children. The other members of the crew mingled with each other and spoke with the men of the families who spoke English. Dr. Robinson, her supervisor, spoke Hebrew with the men about the area and their farm.

On hot, humid nights, Sarah took her sleeping bag to the beach and slept down there where the air was cooler. She preferred to be outside and away from the others, especially on weekends. She didn't care to participate in their worship or be reminded of her heritage and guilt.

On mornings of the Sabbath, she'd rise from her sleeping bag when the sun had just come over the dunes and walk down to the water. She'd sit on the wet shoreline on the deserted beach, digging holes with her toes and waiting for the sun to get farther above the dunes. After the sun had risen overhead, Sarah would disrobe, leaving her shorts and shirt on the beach, and wade slowly into the icy morning water. Afterward she'd lie on her sleeping bag and allow the sun to dry her skin. When the sun was at the center of the always-blue sky, she would dress, roll up her sleeping bag, and head back to the kibbutz in time for lunch.

Her fourth Saturday after lunch, she went outside and spotted Dr. Robinson and one of the older men speaking in confidence near the field. The old man pointed to the field where six or seven men and women were bent over the crops, patting the soil. He pointed upward toward the sky, and then to the sun. Sarah looked in the direction the man pointed and covered her eyes with her hand.

"He says the sun is too hot this time of year for the crops. The crops will die if it doesn't rain soon."

Sarah turned and saw a young man from the kibbutz who had been helping dig for the past few days. His face appeared rested and more peaceful now, in the late afternoon sun, than it had the day before in the hot, dusty cave where they had been laboring unsuccessfully for days.

He looked down at her, smiled, and added, "First time I've seen you standing still since you've been here."

She avoided his deep, inquisitive eyes, shrugged her shoulders and said, "Just like to keep busy, that's all."

“So you can be sure that you don’t like it here,” he added for her.

She shot him a glance.

“Poor Sarah with those deep, sad eyes, weeps and mourns, but she won’t say why.”

“What makes you think I’m unhappy here?” she asked, testing him.

“It’s those gray eyes. They haven’t smiled once in four weeks,” he answered matter-of-factly.

“Well, I’m fine. I don’t need to be cheery and bubbly to be all right,” she returned crisply.

He looked at her in silence.

“Sorry, I didn’t mean...” she stammered in a gentler tone. “My parents sent me here for an ‘enlightening and educational experience.’ I’m a failure as their daughter. They want an intelligent child to be proud of. And instead, they have me.” She read his disbelief and added, “Oh, I’ll be accepted at some college, I’m sure. Just not one they’d like to see me attend.”

David smiled at her and asked her what she would like to do. She shook her head and said she wasn’t sure. They spoke a little while longer, then followed the others inside for dinner.

The next five days of work at the site proved nearly fruitless, showing only a few potsherds for all their toil. The crew grew more discouraged and restless in the summer heat and often quit early in the afternoon. Their time was coming to a close, and it seemed hopeless that they would unearth anything worthwhile.

The weather was unchanging, and the men and women at the kibbutz were also somber, fearing disaster for their crops. Serious-toned conversations filled the gaps of silence in the evenings after the dinner tables were cleared. The women worked quietly while the older men sat by the fire and spoke in dull monotones. Once or twice, a child’s wail would disrupt the sober air and someone would quickly take the child’s hand and lead him out of the room.

Sarah listened attentively to David’s stories of the surrounding area and his childhood at the kibbutz. He had been taught by the older men and women about their God and the law. He read much on his own and later went to a University. He came back a year to help on the farm. When he spoke, his words were always kind and gentle to Sarah’s ears and she listened eagerly.

Sometimes they would walk along the beach, and he’d tell her stories of his childhood.

“...I stole a piece of bread from the kitchen, hid it in my shirt, and ran outside to eat it. One of the older boys spotted me and said he’d tell on me and how angry God was. I started to cry, and the older boy told me there was only one thing I could do. I told him I’d do anything.”

David showed her the back of his left hand. Sarah looked at him.

“He told me to scratch my hand until it bled. He watched me while I did it. I remember I bled for a long time, but I was so glad that I wasn’t going to be punished by God.”

The last week in the cave went slowly. One of the archaeologists said that the remains of the ancient city must have been farther below the layers of stone than they had judged. The last day drew to a close. The crew packed their equipment in their dusty bags, said goodbye to the unknown city, and headed back to the kibbutz.

That night after dinner, Sarah and David sat by the cold fireplace and listened while an older woman sang to the three small children clustered around her knee and lap. David said she sang about Moses bringing the people out of exile into the desert and how angry they were with him and their God. In spite of their anger and impatience, God promised them that He’d bring them to a land richly filled with good crops and cattle.

David and Sarah left the group, went outside, and walked along the dirt path toward the field. David listened as she told him that she didn’t want to leave and how much she would miss him. He was quiet while they walked. They looked at the rows of wilting vegetable plants, lying exhausted, drained in the moonlit field. They walked back to the kibbutz. She said that she’d be leaving in the morning, then waited for a response. When no reply was returned, she turned to the door and whispered, “Good night.”

The next morning when she arose and went into the dining room, she found herself alone. She ate a cold roll with a cup of tea and wondered where everyone was. She looked at her watch and finished her roll hurriedly. One of the young women from the crew stepped inside and told Sarah that it had rained hard in the night and everyone was in the field setting up the plants with stakes. The young woman disappeared into another room and returned with a suitcase and duffle bag, muttering, “God, I’m ready to leave.”

Sarah went in, found her bags, and followed the other woman outside where several crew members were standing by their suitcases. She turned toward the field and spotted the figure of a dark-haired young man pounding stakes, furiously, into the ground. She climbed into the jeep that had just arrived and watched the field as they drove away.

Sarah went back to school in the fall. Her parents wrote often, as usual, and she placed all their unopened letters in the bottom drawer of her dresser. She wrote back, telling them that she was too busy to write and maybe they should write less frequently. She plodded through her reading, wrote almost satisfactory papers, attended nearly all her classes, and even managed to smile a couple of times at some of her test grades. She went to the library, studied Darwin’s *The selfish Gene*, read *Metamorphosis*, *King Lear*, and *The Awakening*, and studied the pH balance and the nitrogen content of the Miller River. She even laughed once or twice at her roommate’s dramatic soliloquies.

In June, Sarah succeeded in graduating with “not-quite-up-to-your-father’s-and-my-expectations” grades. She was accepted at two of the three colleges she had applied to and chose the lesser-known, little-name college in Connecticut.

When her parents arrived, she packed her books, papers, clothes, and recorders into their car. She told them where she was going in the fall. Her mother said it was a shame she wasn’t able to go to a worthier school and added that it almost seems a waste to go at all. Sarah ignored her mother’s comment and told her she would study archaeology. Mrs. Rose looked at her daughter in disbelief and was escorted quickly into the car by Mr. Rose, who reassured his wife by patting her on her shoulder.

Sarah jumped into the back seat of the car with an elated feeling of triumph, looked out of her window at her dorm, Silverthorne, Cutler library, and “Siberia” as they drove away, and thought of potsherds, dusty caves, trowels, and wilting crops.

*From the Spring 1979 issue of The Prism*

# At Trotter's

By Bob Thomas

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The bar was crowded, noisy. Al and I were drinking Heinekens as fast as we could, like always. He has this damned competitiveness about him in everything he does. We went with intentions of getting a little tight anyhow, because that was the best thing to do in a bar like that. There wasn't any band to watch, and it always seemed like they were playing Springsteen from those tiny speakers over the bar.

T. C. Trotter's is right across the street from Randolph-Macon, so it's always jammed with preps, especially on weekends. Trotter's is really more of an older crowd's bar, but I go because the atmosphere is kind of New York-ish. There wasn't anywhere else to go, because I heard a lot of stories about gunfights and Knight Gallery, and once I saw a full fledged scrap between two motorcycle-type women at the Windmill on thirty cent draft night. I never went back there after that.

So here we were on our fourth Heineken in a bar full of old people and preps. Things were beginning to loosen up on this particular beer. I had a conversation with a guy who was fooling around with a camera which looked like mine. He was really disappointing. He told me that the camera belonged to the barmaid. What he was trying to do was look intelligent by flashing a single-lens reflex around. He didn't even know what a fast lens was, and he thought the film speed was the shutter speed. He looked to be about thirty or so, with a beard he grew probably just to look intelligent. Unimpressed with his bogus display, I moved on, being carefully to avoid walking into the flight of darts thrown by a laughing and obviously unsober woman.

I lost sight of Al for a while. There was a good crowd—all the tables were taken, no place to sit down. Walking around was such a hassle because the aisles were jammed with jabbering couples, the waitress zigzagging around them like a sports car. Quite often the best route on such nights was alongside the bar. It was a good test of coordination. Even if you did step on someone's feet, they were so out of control they would hardly feel a thing, for it was late and they were nearly embalmed from Trotter's fair stock of wines, beers, and liquors.

Halfway down the bar, or a couple of Topsiders later, I spied Al playing Space Invaders. This was the bar's only video game, and it was nestled under the staircase that led to the dining room, also crowded and out of control. A small crowd surrounded the machine. Al's eyes were wide, fixed upon the bright screen. He was shouting "Shit! Shit!" through his clenched teeth. The Space Invaders were obviously too much for him to handle. I waited patiently for the next game, leaning against a beam that supported the busy staircase.

From behind me I heard someone mutter something about Jerry Falwell. This was always an amusing topic. I turned and faced two men on stools at the bar, one fat and the other skinny. The fat one looked like Charlie Daniels. Very jolly looking. He wore a leather vest and a cowboy hat with an unusually large white feather angled low on the brim. His high cheekbones were nearly camouflaged by his thick and robust beard. The thin man was tall with dark hair and a moustache. An ideal villain, dark and sinister. The fat man noticed me from the corner of his eye and turned to face me, point blank.

"Have you ever seen Jerry Falwell?" he asked me directly.

"No, sir," I said. "But I've heard a lot about him."

“Where do you come from?” he asked, squinting. He crooked a flannelled arm to his side.

“New Jersey—just a little ways from New York,” I told him. As to whether he was taken by my information or not I wasn’t sure. The tall man said nothing. He twirled the ice in his glass slowly, gazing out into the crowd. Then the fat man extended his plump hand to me.

“I’m Charlie. This here’s my friend Ray.”

I shook hands with both of them and introduced myself. Al was still cursing sharply behind me.

“What school you go to, Bob?”

“L.C.,” I answered.

“L.C.!” he echoed back, amused and grinning widely. “Do you know my brother Jan? Jan Linn?”

I nodded. Personally, I opted out of religion, although the name was still familiar.

“Sure,” he said. “Jan’s a good ol’ boy. He’d come in here and drink as much as I can. He never says...”

Another bearded gentleman, in a green and white rugby jersey, excused himself and slipped between us. Ray walked off. Charlie was still talking.

“Do you know what Jerry Falwell said?” he asked, leaning forward.

“Huh? Oh, no, what?”

“He said he’d like to burn every book in the world except the Bible. Every damn book. Like *Catcher in the Rye* by J. D. Salinger.” He was very serious.

I grinned and laughed. As to why he chose that particular book I don’t know. It caught me off guard. He started laughing, too. We both laughed for a while, then stopped with simultaneous slugs.

“I bet you think old Charlie’s crazy for wearing a hat like this.”

“No, sir,” I said. “I like it. That’s a sharp looking hat.”

“Genuine eagle feather,” he said proudly, then leaned back and downed the last of his drink. His fingers fished around and pulled a five spot from his vest. He straightened it between two fingers and waved it at the bartender.

I felt a tug at my sleeve. I turned and saw Al motioning me to the seat. “C’mon,” he said. “It’s your turn.” I noticed the place was beginning to thin out. Finally sitting, Al and I played doubles, cursing loudly through clenched teeth until the last call, when the chairs were up on the tables.

*From the Spring 1981 issue of The Prism*

# Virginia Ten Miler

By Nancy H. Harper

You who run

make poetry

With the

Syncopation

Of your feet

Your muscled bodies

Glistening

the poetry of your health.

You run in undulations,

Yet in an echoing rhythm

As one sea

Rippling waves —

Jerking elbows

Synchronizing

a melody

of your

pulsing art,

Rowing you Onward,

Onward,

Onward,

To your destination,  
and another  
Race.  
Leaving me  
To trace with words  
Only edges of the  
images  
your  
resounding  
feet  
have  
pounded  
Here.

*From the Spring 1982 issue of The Prism*

# The Test

By Orrie A. Stenroos

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the prof comes in a sense of gloom

pervades the classroom air.

“what will it be? does this spell doom?”

these words buzz through the air.

under the prof’s cold, glinting stare

the student’s blood runs cold,

he thinks, “another test to bear,

it covers all he’s told.”

his shaking hand a pencil holds,

“please let’s get this test done.”

then with a manner oh so bold

prof hands each student one.

the student stares down at his sheets

his eyes hold disbelief,

“this can’t be true,” the student bleats,

prof gives him one more sheaf.

twelve pages long, i just can't do  
this whole thing in an hour.  
prof whirls around at this to do,  
the student sees him glower.

with this the student starts to write,  
his fingers soon will ache  
and still he writes and writes and writes,  
his arms begin to shake.

he's part way done, but time is up,  
he's written up a ream.  
and then his roommate wakes him up,  
thank god, 'twas just a dream.

*From the Spring 1984 issue of The Prism*

# Kisses on the Playground

By Paul Randall Johnson

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Now I know that very soon  
our careers, family, and education  
will separate us  
till we're so far removed that  
we can honestly look at each other  
and wonder "who are you?"  
and doubt any connection between  
us and those long forgotten promises  
of valentine cards and kisses on the playground.

But let me warn you as a friend  
that if you go back and live again  
those bits and pieces hid within  
they'll be no rest, I swear it's best  
to leave whatever stops your inevitable progress  
and look at me now and think no less  
for I am yours till that ever nearing day  
when we meet and speak as parents  
on that same ground where we played

as much ourselves if we had stayed  
and though the words will be buried beneath our graves,  
the epitaph,  
as read by children dark as night  
will burn like the heavens  
and put pity in plain sight  
for you and I both know that truth does not  
necessarily make right  
so if by chance you should wake up  
from this never-ending kiss  
and look upon your mark  
and question what's amiss  
the doubt we both once savored  
has returned and written this:  
“Now I know you are my friend,  
now I know, now and forever, amen.”

*From the Spring 1985 issue of The Prism*

# Coming Home

By Barbara Scotland

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Enthusiastic, I drive home

Excited to see my parents again.

It's been six weeks since school started

And at home the food will be great,

And my room quiet for a change—no roommate.

No beer spilled outside my door

to serve as a sticky morning welcome mat,

Or loud drunken yells in the halls and stairwells.

And talk will be of other things than taking tests or getting drunk.

Mom will have “a few things” for me

That she thought I might like.

And I think that if she keeps giving me things now what will there be left to give by Christmas?

After four hours, I turn the car into the driveway and

Tires spew out rock and gravel with little popping sounds that announce my arrival.

My high beams reflect off the windows of the house.

I park the car and turn off the engine and

Climb out to stretch my body

from four hours of driving.

I'm here, I think to myself.

"I'm home,"

I call out.

And Mom opens the back door a crack

Just to make sure it's me.

We all sit and talk

But after a few hours the talk dies out.

Dad has told me all about the business;

Mom, about the club and her bowling team.

They settle into their own niches.

Mom watches TV while knitting,

And Dad pulls the newspaper up to his face to read.

And then,

I feel as if I never left.

I want to scream,

"C'mon folks, you all can watch TV, knit, or read the paper anytime, but I can't just hop in my car and come home anytime."

And as I head to my bedroom

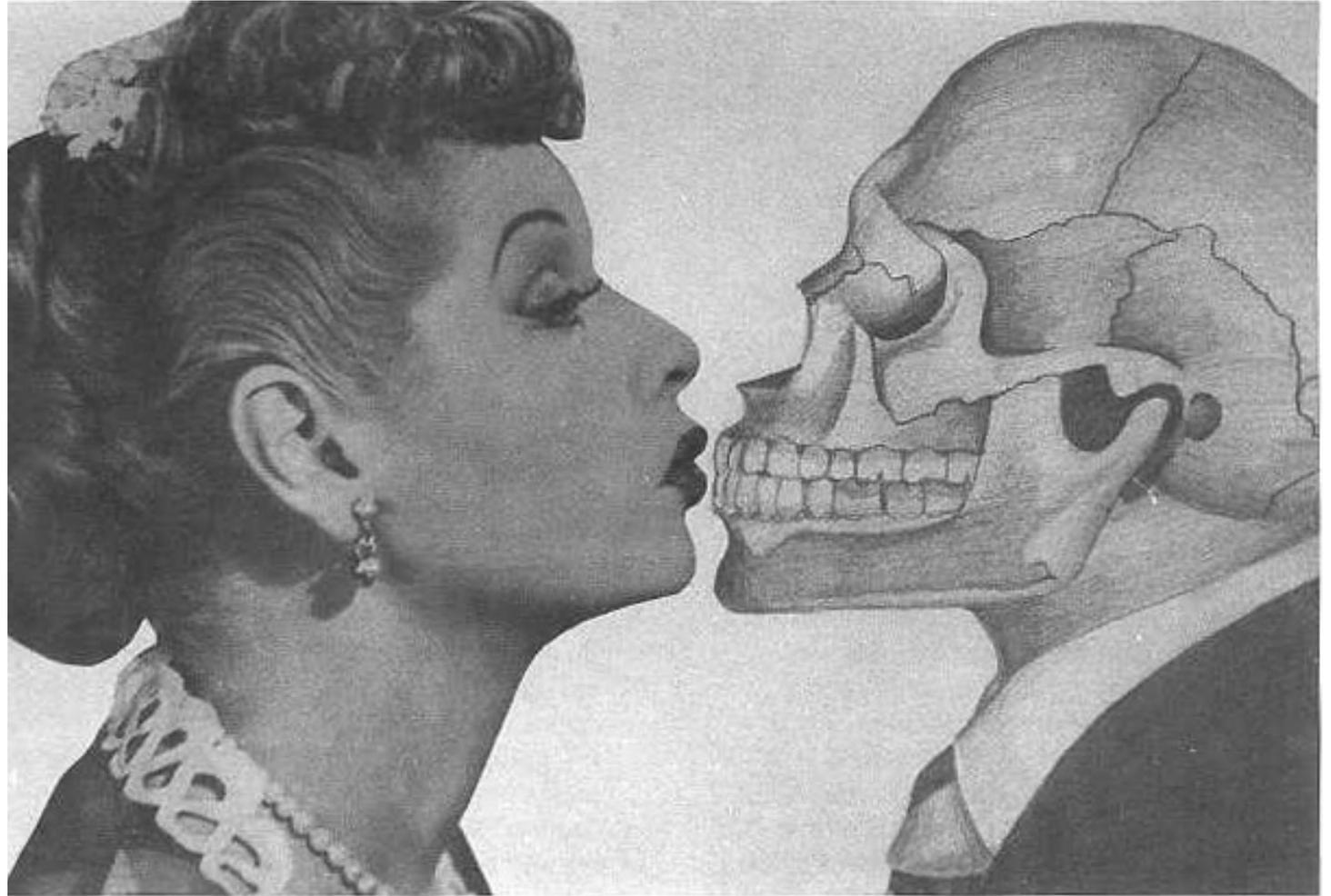
Mom calls out,

"I put some things on your bed for you."

I reach my bedroom and stare inside.  
It looks like a hotel room;  
All my things are back at school.  
Only the gifts on the bed disturb  
The room's cold impersonal unity.

I spend most of my four days at home  
Sleeping or shopping,  
Passing time.  
Days later  
I drive back to school,  
Enthusiastic to see my friends again.  
It seems like I've been away  
Six weeks.

*From the Spring 1986 issue of The Prism*



*From the Spring 1991 issue of The Prism, by Casey Hickman*

# Resurrecting Maude

By Barbara Moore

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I christen this computer Maude,  
since it's both old and crude  
and, much like our old plowing mule,  
so named, lacks aptitude.

Maude was deliberately slow  
and disobeyed commands.  
Besides being floppy and having bugs,  
she'd no memory to expand.

We tried for double-density,  
and things were going fine,  
'til she cracked seven of the disks  
that formed her sagging spine.

Software was of no avail.  
Maude simply had no drive.  
She was stubborn and inert—  
but, as I suspected, alive.

The only processing she did  
took very little thought.

She never did quiet get on line  
but crashed the garden plot.

Her cold start invoked a cursor command.  
She understood shouts and blinds.  
But she never would run our program till  
a boot error hit her behind.

She was tied on, not tied in  
and called up a menu of sweets.  
My last information was  
she was broken and obsolete.

*From the Spring 1987 issue of The Prism*

# Flight from Reality

By John Muniz and Pam Lowe Cox

It was summer again. The heat rose up from the asphalt giving the old statue on Main Street a wavy, ghost-like appearance. The green paint was still there. A vandal's vengeance upon a monument he must've hated as I once did, for the statue was always there. It was a reminder of our stillness, our stagnation. I passed it every day, and every day I longed to free myself, but I couldn't. I wondered where that vandal was now and why the paint was never removed. I was amazed that in a constantly changing universe there were still things and places that never changed, or so it seemed.

At least the town had grown a little. There were more fast food chains and fewer service stations. The crossroads, once known as "gasoline alley," now held a video store, a 7-11, and a Chinese carry-out. Zimmerman's Boutique was now simply Zim's and had moved to the mall. Sylvia and I once had hung out at Zimmerman's and marveled at the psychedelic clothes and paraphernalia and sometimes at Tyson, the owner's son, who had actually been to London. We really believed he smoked pot, and although we didn't, most everyone thought we did. And we didn't mind. It gave us that feeling of "mystique" we felt we so desperately needed. Sylvia and I had long since parted. The last I heard, she was into crystal healing somewhere in Colorado. Tyson, by the way, turned out to be gay and moved to California. It did seem, however, that most of the cheerleaders were still in town, married to the football heroes, with teenagers of their own. I had no teenagers and no husband, but I still had a purpose: to make it, on my own, away from here. I sat in my car on Main Street, next to the old Post Office and watched the statue. I almost expected him to sprout wings and fly away. That's the way I felt. It was time.

It seemed that some of us had managed to make our break: Sylvia, Tyson, and me. But seemed is the key word here. Colorado, California, London, all put distance between us and small town, middle America, and for a time that was enough for me. I wondered if it was enough for Sylvia and Tyson. Had we left for something better, or were we running from ourselves? Did that vandal hate the statue or himself?

I thought about the out-of-state tags on my car as a city cruiser drove by and the driver eyes me suspiciously. There was a time when passing through this town with out-of-state tags was a guarantee of a ticket or at least being pulled over for something or other. I used to think, "How asinine!" and was embarrassed to live here. Now I know it was just boredom or something to generate some excitement, and I could almost excuse it. Anyway, they probably didn't do that anymore. Hadn't we come a long way since the sixties? Weren't we all enlightened? Were we? The cruiser had returned and pulled into the space behind my car. I swallowed hard as thoughts of "Easy Rider" came to mind.

A tall, rather handsome police officer stepped from the car. I was amazed that I was amazed. He wasn't a fat, gum chewing bigot. He was graceful and had an air of kindness about him. He removed his hat and leaned toward my window.

"Can I help you, Ma'am?"

He looked very familiar, and I tried to place him in the yearbook of my mind. He should've fit on some page of my life but didn't. He was about my age, give or take a few years. Was it possible there was someone in a town this size that I hadn't known back then I suddenly realized I hadn't answered his question, and I was staring.

"I'm sorry," I smiled as I answered; "I used to live here. I guess I was on a nostalgia trip. Are you from here?"

It was his turn to smile as he shook his head, “No ma’am, I’m a relative newcomer; I’ve only lived here since ‘74. Most folks single me out as ‘that new dude on the force.’ We don’t have a lot of transients, you know.”

“I’ll bet you don’t. This town is far enough off the interstate to rule that out.”

“Is your home here in town or out in the county?”

“I don’t have anyone here now. My father died last week. I came back for the funeral. He used to run the drug store years ago.”

“I’m sorry. Is there anything I can do for you?”

“Not really, but thank you for offering. I made most of the arrangements by phone. The funeral is tomorrow.”

“Was your father all the family you had?” There was a note of sympathy in his tone.

“Oh, no, I have a married sister in Florida and a brother floatin’ around one place or another. Every so often, I get a letter, but his return address is never the same.” My tone was light and breezy. I didn’t want him to think I was feeling sorry for myself.

“Well, ma’am, if you need a place to stay there are two or three motels a little way out of town on Route 70. You must’ve passed them on the way in, if you came off the interstate. None of them are fancy, but they’re clean and serviceable. Marcie’s Rest gets the lion’s share of the business mostly because the restaurant is about the best around. More folks go there to eat than to sleep.” He grinned again.

I thanked him and drove out of town. Skelly’s Used Auto Parts was still there on the edge of town. I bet old man Skelly was dead and gone; he was an old man when I was a kid. Bill Skelly must be running the place now. I wonder if he ever stopped drinking and settled down? Funny how the junkyard looked the same after all those years. Only difference was the wrecks I could see behind the chain link fence were newer models.

I sat in the booth at Marcie’s Rest smoking a cigarette and sipping my third cup of coffee. The handsome cop was right; the food was something else. The down home cookin’ put a lot of city restaurants to shame and made fast food seem like an obscenity. I looked up and, much to my surprise, who was standing there by “Mr. Handsome.” He was in civvies: khaki pants, a western shirt, and a good-ole-boy hat marked “Farmer’s Co-op.”

“Hi,” he said. “Mind if I sit down?”

I waved him into the seat and wondered if I was in for the local pick-up routine. Maybe I was just flattering myself into thinking that he was interested. Then again, maybe he was just being neighborly, if you’ll pardon the expression.

“Is it possible you suggested Marcie’s so’s you’d no where to find me?”

He just nodded and smiled.

The waitress brought him coffee and refilled my cup. We talked for an hour or so about Bramwell, my remembrances of growing up and the changes that had taken place since I left. From the sound of things the changes had been mostly cosmetic. Deep down the attitudes were the same: nar-

row and hypocritical. All the meanness and nastiness were there, almost, but not quite, covered by the veneer of piety and middle-class respectability.

I used to think names had some special meaning. When I was younger I thought people with ordinary sounding names were very ordinary, and people with fancy names were bound to be different and exciting. I should've taken the clue when Tyson turned out to be gay. It took a few more years for me to learn that names really didn't tell you much of anything about a person.

"Mr. Handsome" turned out to be plain old Robert J. Tucker. Not R.J., mind you, or Bobby Joe, just plain, ordinary Robert or Rob. That sort of shot holes in the stereotype conjured up by the hat and the pick-up he drove.

We left Marcie's about eight, and he thanked me for the conversation and coffee. Then he said good night and drove off, and I walked down to my room. So much for that.

The funeral was small and quiet. Mildred didn't come up for the funeral, and Wayne wasn't at his last address. There was no way of telling when he'd surface again, or where. I was fairly sure if Wayne knew about Papa he wouldn't have come to the funeral anyway. A few of Papa's old drinking cronies showed up and some of the merchants from Main Street, the old timers who knew him. Rob Tucker was at the cemetery, all done up in a suit and tie. I don't know when he came; he was suddenly there. I was vaguely glad he came, probably because he was the only one there who seemed to care. A Reverend Peabody spoke briefly at the funeral home and again at the gravesite, but he was too young to have known my father. Papa had never been a churchgoer.

I wish I could tell you how bad I felt, or how I cried. But I didn't cry, and I didn't feel particularly bad...just depressed. Papa was a mean old bastard who'd made my mother's life a living hell. After Mama died and we all left, the old bastard had no one left to bully. I don't know whether I felt sorry for him or sorry for all those empty years Mama had.

After everyone left the cemetery, I drove downtown and bought a pint of bourbon and some club soda. I just felt like I anted to go back to my room and have a drink or two. It was a little late in the day to start the trip home, and I had the afternoon to kill. I'd put Papa's clothes in the collection box at the mall parking lot, and his other things were in a couple of cartons in the trunk of my car. Time enough to sort them out after I got back. I couldn't bring myself to face that today.

The phone rang about three o'clock; it was Rob Tucker. He asked me to dinner. He caught me off balance, and I almost said yes, but I hesitated. I asked him to call me back in an hour. I told him I was waiting for a long distance call. What I needed was some time to sort out my feelings.

I knew what I didn't need was a casual affair, a one night stand, and all indications pointed in that direction. I know...I know! We are both adults. So? So, there had been enough of that in the past, at least as far as I was concerned. Just once I needed to meet someone who wanted something beyond that. I took the phone off the cradle and laid it on the night table.

I threw my things into the suitcase in a jumble and hurriedly packed the train case. If I could just get away from here in a hurry I could put Bramwell and Papa and Rob Tucker and all the memories behind me. Later, as I drove toward the interstate, I began to wonder if I was running again; from the town, from myself, from reality. Rob Tucker might have been real after all. Somewhere down the interstate it came to me that if Rob Tucker was real he'd find me. There were ways.

*From the Spring 1988 issue of The Prism*

# New World by Thumb

By David Compton

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standing by the road outside New Palestine looking for a ride across the flat lands I drink and bathe in the fog maybe there is such a thing as freedom and all peace is not false the cars go by I guess I am a sight tattooed like the devil light-bodied as an angel hitchhiking at the break of day it wasn't me uncovered all the manholes stole the pigs and ran away or I would be standing here like a lighthouse jerking my thumb at mom and dad yes I would this place if I remember used to be in trees but someone has stolen everything but their wooden shoes where will the goblins and the headless footmen hide and in their place the little black-throated bunting an open-country bird a replacement miracle at the edge of town I'm good to go I had a cup of coffee the girl awes big wagging her ton of bricks behind the lazy broom singing only my love does it good to me across the street from Wayne's Organ Bar the things you hear she said the man fell backwards off a porch hit his head on a painted rock in the yard Chicago at the crossroads of America not too far from here the farmer was the man he plows the earth into shiny slabs that swim behind him like a school of fishes Pearl where are you when I need you pour me another cup of coffee walking Indiana Illinois seed potatoes onion sets I'd settled for a steel horse heading west aimed at Orion and the Great Bear state I'm dreaming who's this real woman walking down the road dirty house shoes blue pom-poms a loaf of Yum Yum bread Mail Pouch tobacco and a box of kitchen matches it's warming some I think the white ponies have gone to drink their fill from ideal Sugar Creek is this the first morning of creation no somebody tell the birds then just listen to them above the brown fields smooth as lawns I hear the scarf-tongued bells in paradise in spring the streams are full of coin they swim into your hands I am so hungry I'll bite into the emperor's petulant lip in the name of his starving grief-streaked people bite off his laurelled head the farmer said it don't take long to count nothing and in the window of the hardware store Gainsborough's dusty kids are fading in their frames I'm too hungry to run I got back pain with nerve root compression syndrome weakness in my legs my feet just slide my head won't turn but hey goodbye Midwest goodbye gray stone a car puts on the brakes I'm gone what does it matter if I tell the more mysterious it becomes for the dog so chewed my old guitar I still got the red harmonica she gave me beautiful laughter the forgotten son a drum roll the hangman let the meek inherit the parking lots the world ends not with a bang but rolling in a red Mustang

*From the Spring 1989 issue of The Prism*

# Blue Ridge in Winter

By Elza Tiner (English Department)

Gossamer dense transparencies

Half undressed by mist

Clothed in barren trees

And icy mud-packed leaves.

Curving slopes reach no point

But ripple and ripple beyond

Over a snow-bed plain

Striving yet to arch the sky,

Unobserved by roaring wind

Smashing itself against the trees:

Ridges admired from a distance

Climbed, conquered, left behind

In translucent blue and silk,

Left to cloak themselves in clouds

And mourn in rainy pines

The gray monologue of wind.

*From the Spring 1990 issue of The Prism*

# The Ballade of the Blue Boy

By E. D. Lowe

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A little blue boy in sticker bushes, face down,  
flannel shirt rotting away into dirt,  
feeding the bushes with his flesh; the sound  
of birds in the branches and stirring  
on the ground in thistles and over  
the blanket of needles from mid-summer pines;  
they were wondering perhaps if he knew where they were  
but if he knew he gave no sign.

Where he lay in honeysuckle all around  
the sweet scent with his smell in the air  
made it somewhat unlikely that he'd be found;  
if some person in the woods walked near,  
an evil in such beauty he would never fear.

And about his head and shoulders the bees could find  
growing magnificent flowers in pine fur,  
but if he knew he gave no sign.

Of the people who missed and loved him in town,

this intruder in Eden seemed not to care,  
to a new love from this heaven is he bound.  
And here among nature he cannot be hurt  
by the fungus and beetles and birds  
which feed on his life on the spot where he died  
they are the disciples and he is the martyred,  
but if he knew he gave no sign.

And forever after, from this day on, the earth will birth  
a myriad of fantastic flannel flowers where he died,  
in honor of young life sacrificed for her;  
but if he knew he gave no sign.

*From the Spring 1990 issue of The Prism*

Please see **DEATH**, Page A-11

By John P. McCaughan

Another day when breaths cannot be counted

They all start out like that

In a quiet moment

I finally cried

Made easy by an easeful folding

of a not-so-kind paper

The simplicity of description

made so carefree

from one stranger to another

Acts that cripple surviving souls,

But only paralyze the passive

In temporary flashes of empathy

Those kids were in Kentucky

That's not here, where I am

but, I have been intruded by sterile facts

Bought for less than a bloody dollar

I know seven boys' names  
all friends, not mine  
That laughed and joked and  
Horsed around, like me

I'll say, "God I'm so sorry."  
I am, but I have to forget  
Diminishing screams from those strangers' souls  
That leap for life once more  
Through columns of sublime madness  
And horror

Can I wonder  
Can I care everyday

I hear a wailing from Kentucky mothers  
For little boys who are meant to run  
Do you hear chaos laughing again  
At our self-ordained maps and timetables  
Plotted so surgically in dreams  
But ripped out and cleaved from our wombs

Blame the road, fault the driver

And try to forget forging

small meaningless plans

Wave goodbye to the loved ones

But sleep fast

For our awakenings are so few

I will cry from unsentimental lines

read on sentimental days.

*From the Spring 1994 issue of The Prism*

# Glory

By Simone Monteleone

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The rising sun against the landscaped hills  
Naked branches embrace the tree's body  
The echoing thunder of horses' hooves  
as marching soldiers halt along the ridge.  
In wind's caress, the Union's flag boldly  
is challenging the Rebels' dominance  
of control over the southern grassy fields.  
The wall of midnight blue is silent, proud  
the rhythmic beat of drums has driven all of  
them forward into the valley of death.

*From the April 1995 issue of The Prism*

# Society for the Reclamation of Intelligence in the South

By Jenny Sandman

There is an unwritten rule in the South: don't be different. Honor tradition and the status quo. If you should dare to be different, do it only in accepted ways, and never, ever flaunt it. I learned this rule the hard way. Most people think that growing up in a small Southern town would be quaint or charming (as evidenced by the mass exodus of families from New York or New Jersey into the rural South), but they are sorely mistaken. My hometown of Appomattox, the redneck capital of the world, was nothing but a breeding ground for ignorance, co-dependency, and Civil War memorabilia.

I knew something was wrong when my high school English teacher had no idea who Neal Cassady was. I became concerned when a deacon in my church told me that Jerry Falwell was the best thing to ever happen to this country (after admitting to me that he was a member of both the KKK and the White Aryan Race). And I knew I had to get out when, at 17, a friend asked me when I was going to settle down, get married, and have kids. My thought levels were always completely different from everyone else's. My family wasn't much help, either. Southern society is very male-oriented, and my parents were no exception. They treated my brother, my sister and me exactly the same—to them, we were all eleven-year-old boys. They never could understand why I wanted Barbie dolls for Christmas instead of a shotgun, or why I wanted to go to the theater instead of going hunting. Conversations never lasted long in my household—while I wanted to talk about Molière, Taoism, and the Doors, my family was talking about the NRA and fishing season. Discussions tended to sound a little like this:

“What are you working on, Jen?” (my mom)

“Oh, I'm writing a paper for English.”

“What's it about? Can I help?”

“It's about how both Shakespeare and Cervantes lamented the loss of idealism in the Renaissance in their respective works. But I can't decide if I should quote from Hamlet or King Lear. What do you think?”

“Um...what?”

“Never mind, Mom.”

“Well, if you need me, I'll be in the backyard cleaning the deer your father just killed.”

My peer group wasn't much better. I can remember reading Dostoyevsky as they were learning the multiplication tables. Southern society is also very vocationally oriented—no one is ever quite sure what to do with intellectuals. The dropout rate in my high school was a good 30%, and out of 164 graduates in my class, only 27 went on to a four-year college or university. The rest got married, went to CVCC, joined the Army, or began working the late shift at McDonald's. The literacy rate, out of a population of approximately 5,000, is only 55%. 25% of those literate can only manage a third grade reading level.

Remember Jeff Foxworthy's stand-up comedy routine, “You might be a redneck if...”? As in, “You might be a redneck if your front porch col-

lapses and kills more than three dogs, your mother and your girlfriend can compare tattoos, and a night of entertainment consist of a six-pack and a bug zapper...”, etc. I never found that funny, because I knew all those people. They lived next door to me. They went to school with me. I had the misfortune of dating them. It scares me when the average Joe can describe in intimate detail the strategy of any Civil War battle, and can’t remember his own Social Security number; when the average woman has three children by the age of 19; and when the collective dream is to own a house without wheels.

I’ve heard that you can never really separate yourself from your roots. In a way, that’s true. Though I hated every second in Appomattox, I still want to live in the South at some point in the future, and in retrospect, I did learn a few things. I learned independence and self-reliance. I learned to shoot fairly straight, how to pick tobacco, the difference between corn and wheat moonshine, how to plow the garden barefoot, and how to put venison in almost every dish, including dessert. Never mind the fact that I would rather have been learning about fine restaurant etiquette, Italian neoclassicism, Stanislavsky’s method acting, and post-war impressionism. I think someone needs to start a society for the reclamation of intelligence for the South. Otherwise, monster truck shows will continue to flourish, and we all know that’s a sign of the Apocalypse.

*From the April 1996 issue of The Prism*

# Girl Against the World

By Caren Gadbois

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Black Doc Martens, with golden laces,  
peek out from under baggy blue jeans.

The cuffs are frayed and tattered,  
sometimes getting caught beneath her boots.

Army green and navy blue striped t-shirt  
hangs loosely to the middle of her thighs.

The t-shirt is pulled tight over her swollen stomach,  
taking attention away from her face.

Creamy white skin, almost ghost-like,  
is occasionally accented by  
straightened white teeth and rose painted lips.

Words are uneasily spoken,  
caught between swirls of smoke  
escaping her blackened lungs.

Green eyes, without lashes or brows,  
are constantly shifting, avoiding my gaze.

Black hair, thin and tangled,  
is loosely pulled into a sparse ponytail  
sticking out the back of a baseball cap.

*From the April 1997 issue of The Prism*

# Down in Virginia

By Jean Stewart Wake

Winding road and rolling hills,  
Autumn's here with many chills  
Dying leaves of varied hues  
Touched with frost and morning dews,  
Ground plowed up for winter grain,  
Valleys deep hug high terrain.  
Whitewashed gates and humble homes  
Trails the Indian spirit roams,  
Tomahawks and arrowhead,  
Memoirs of the ancient dead,  
Blue Ridge skies o'er rocky dome  
Greet the wand'rer coming home.  
Barefoot boys still romp and play,  
Sit and fish throughout the day.  
Apples red and shining so,  
Pumpkins sound and lying low,  
Turkeys struttin' round the barns,  
Cattle lowing on the farms.  
Southern belle with southern beau,

Holding hands, affection show.

Ham a'frying in the pan—

Good enough for any man.

*From the April 1998 issue of The Prism*

# Cinnamon Rolls and Lemon Meringue Pie

By Gina Bruce

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When I walked in she was already rolling out the dough. Her hands were covered in flour, covering the wrinkles and veins in her hands.

“What are you making?” I asked.

“Cinnamon rolls,” she replied, and brought the back of her hand up to her forehead to move a dark, dyed curl out of her eyes.

“Do we have any milk?” I asked, wanting to know because there was no use eating a cinnamon roll without a glass of cold milk to drink it with.

“I dunno, look in the icebox.”

“I’m too lazy Gram, look for me,” I whined.

She looked up, not annoyed in the least by my laziness. She stopped what she was doing without hesitation. She clutched her apron with both hands, trying to get rid of some of the flour before walking over to the door.

“How long till they’re ready?”

“Not long,” she said.

“Will you bring me one when they are done, with some milk?” I asked sweetly.

“Yes, how many do you want?” my grandmother asked.

“Three,” I replied, already realizing that you could never eat too much of a good thing.

“You little piggy, I’ll bring it to you, go watch TV.”

My grandmother moved into her own apartment shortly after that. She still made me food all the time. My mother would go and pick her up in the mornings, and take her home in the early evenings. My grandma would usually bake for us during the day while we were at school and on weekends, always bringing us something really good to eat. My mother never cooked for us the way my grandmother did. My mom’s cooking was always rushed and strictly a chore she didn’t have time for. My grandmother, on the other hand, cooked because she loved to. She couldn’t show us how much she loved us with material things, but showered us with her homemade cookies, pies, and cakes.

I am always amazed at how she could always make something from nothing. She never needed to buy any ingredients; she just always seemed to be able to make to with whatever was on hand. She made wonderful cinnamon rolls, but they weren’t the traditional cinnamon rolls you may be thinking of. Hers were made from a Betty Crocker recipe for baking powder biscuits. No icing, and really, really heavy. She improvised on every recipe, always knowing what she could substitute for ingredients we didn’t have.

I asked her how she came up with the cinnamon rolls, and she didn't know. She just did it. Her style of cooking is probably a result of several things, her childhood on a farm, the Great Depression, and my very cheap grandfather.

While my grandparents were married, my grandfather did all the grocery shopping. She was expected to come up with breakfast, lunch, and dinner with whatever he bought. Most of the time it wasn't what she needed. Sometimes he brought home roast and sometimes beef tongue. It just depended on what was on sale. It was up to my grandma to make it taste good, so she did. No questions asked. Sometimes he wouldn't even buy her bread to make lunches for their five children. My mother remembers eating sardine sandwiches in her sack lunch, but instead of bread they were made of leftover waffles from the morning breakfast.

I remember hearing sad stories about my grandmother when she was a little girl. Her mother was an Irish immigrant who came to San Francisco. My grandmother doesn't remember her, though. In 1925, when my grandmother would have been almost two years old, her mother put her into an orphanage. A relative came and picked my grandmother up after a few months. It was her aunt, her mother's sister. We don't know why she did it, because it certainly wasn't out of love. I think it had more to do with duty and the need for a slave, a child slave. My grandmother had to cook for her aunt and three older cousins. She took refuge in the kitchen. It was the only time she had to herself. By the time she was ten, she was expected not only to prepare full meals, but also to go out into the chicken coop and kill her own chicken. She always told us these stories in a matter of fact tone, never once complaining. My mother would always make sure we had chicken on the days when my grandmother would be over. My mother hated pulling the innards out of the chicken, but to my grandmother it was no big deal. I don't think my grandmother started out cooking because she loved it. It was because she had to do it. Actually it is funny to think that you could ever love doing something that was more of a chore, a punishment. She does love to cook though, and she loves to love us with her cooking.

My grandmother made the best lemon meringue pies. They weren't perfect looking pies like the ones you see in the supermarket. Her pies were lumpy and uneven. The dough was rustic, and curled up unevenly all along the edges of the pie pan. The meringue looked like a toasted cloud, floating atop a lemon colored sky. The meringue always intrigued me. As a child, I insisted that she wait until I returned from school so I could watch her make it. When she had her back turned I would stick my fingers in the bowl and giggle. She would always turn around and pretend to be mad.

"Get your dirty little fingers outta that bowl," she would say.

I would usually slowly dip my fingers in the bowl again, and she would tickle me until I promised to be good. I would always promise to be good because I loved to watch her make the meringue. The way the eggs and sugar turned from transparent slime to stiff dry peaks, filling the entire bowl. Even though I liked the way the meringue looked and felt, I didn't like the way it felt in my mouth after it was cooked. I would always scrape it off the pie, and it was good that way.

The last thing my grandmother made was a sour cream cake. A recipe from our of "Star Magazine," one of those tabloid gossip papers available at the grocery checkout. It was a recipe that was supposedly some star's personal recipe. Something like, "Delta Burke's Pistachio Sour Cream Cake." My grandmother completely believed that it really was that star's own personal recipe. It was good just like everything she made. My grandmother has had a couple of strokes, and it's hard for her to cook much more than a frozen dinner in the microwave now. I try to cook with her whenever I go back home. She can't really help much, but she loves watching me cook. She always likes whatever I make, even when it's not very good. The strokes have made it hard for her to talk, too, and so it becomes challenging for both of us when she tries to tell me how to make something.

When I was home a couple of weeks ago, I got out the old Betty Crocker Cookbook and found a biscuit recipe. I pulled my grandmother into the kitchen and had her show me how to make her special kind of cinnamon rolls. The cinnamon rolls were good, but nowhere near as good as when she made them for me herself.

*From the 1999 issue of The Prism*



—In *exterior*, from the 2001 issue of *The Prism*, by Kristin Lynch

# Coffee Stains

By Ian Moore

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Sipping coffee, scribbling on a napkin,  
Looking down the counter at the other mid-night diners,  
Here religiously every Saturday night  
on a superstitious quest to fight a hangover;  
a cheesy western and a bowl of chili  
with relish and Texas Pete, God knows why.  
The billboard outside reads “open twenty-four hours — Closed Sundays”

Grease-caked griddles sizzle as women well past their prime  
Lean against the counter trying not to show their boredom.  
Plastic plates slide across the mirror polished stainless steel,  
Coffee pots like the back wall like a loaded magazine of caffeine,  
Cardboard placards convey bits of wisdom—  
“No Checks,” “No Profanity.”  
A “B” rating from the Health Department hangs by the door.

Voices echo into the street, lies and laughter;  
Lights glow from the windows, cutting through the cold darkness,  
Warm fluorescent blue paints the shadows.  
A tiny oasis of life in the stillness of the hour

calling the few passers-by in for one last chance.

A quiet smile amidst the deafening roar.

A little foreplay, at least for the mind.

The cigarette machine crunches and releases its agent,

Butane spits, a plum rises to stain the ceiling amber brown.

A bill or two slides under a chipped stoneware cup.

The bell on the door rings momentarily, bouncing off the glass.

Ink bleeds into rings of coffee.

A napkin stuffed into a shirt pocket and

An old blue-eyed dog awaits precious scraps.

*From the 2000 issue of The Prism*

# Blue Squall

By E. Dane Phelps

It was always an addiction for me. I had never thought of it any other way. The glint of the sunrise off of the blue steel of the barrel, the 20-degree Virginia air that would take your breath away, and the blood stained boots and coveralls that had seen so many 4:00 mornings just like this one.

As a 15-year-old adolescent, the sheer power of the firearm was amazing to me. A gift from my father, "Blue Squall," a Browning 12 gauge shotgun with its name engraved on the action, was my only companion on early Saturday mornings in December. Every weekend, without fail, I would attempt to bring home "the big one." I had often tried to think of hunting as interaction with nature, more about the surroundings than the bloodshed, but my addiction wouldn't allow it. The roar from the gun as the magnum buckshot were discharged seemed to shake the very ground on which I stood. The aroma of burning powder was a stimulant to which no drug could compare. The painful sting of the hot barrel as it touched my numb fingers somehow made me glad I was there. Everything was great, I was with my gun and I was happy. Then, on the coldest day of the year in 1998, things drastically changed.

I was awakened by Widespread Panic blaring from my CD alarm clock. The time read 4:15. Somewhere in my tired mind, I was wondering what exactly possessed me to get up so damn early. After rolling out of bed and drinking a half pot of coffee, I headed to the basement to suit up. After my eyes adjusted to the bright light beaming from the bare bulbs, I began putting on my camouflage garb. Sweatpants, tee shirt, two pairs of socks, coveralls, jacket, boots, stocking hat. It was almost habitual; I could've done it with my eyes closed just as easily. After I was fully decked out in my gear (and really hot due to the blazing fire in the woodstove), I reached for the rack on the wall. Picking up a brown leather case, I would slowly unzip it; careful to make sure I didn't scratch the steel. Putting my hands on the warm maple stock, I lifted the firearm out of its case. After oiling it thoroughly and finding shot shells, I was finally ready for the field.

Stepping out of the basement was like being enveloped by millions of needles, pricking and piercing me down to the very core of my body. This feeling, as uncomfortable as it sounds, was actually the only thing that kept me going towards my stand. It was a painful, but integral part of the addiction. This was the feeling that I lived for.

Onward to my destination. Forging creeks, crossing fences and cattle guards, with my toes growing more and more numb with each step. It was approximately a three mile walk, each yard filled with sharp pangs of cold and anticipation. As I crossed the last barbed wire fence and approached the pile of rocks that is my stand, the killer instinct kicked in. My breathing slowed, my heart seemed to grow cold in my chest. All of my senses sharpened tenfold and my entire environment seemed to revolve around me. At this time, it was apparent to me that I was in control of my surroundings; my gun was the catalyst of everything that was to occur. I was one with nature...or so I thought.

After what seemed to be hours, I heard a distant, faint noise approaching through the woods. After concentrating on the noise for several minutes, I heard it cross the creek directly below my stand. It was a deer. I was downwind, silent, watching, and waiting. The deer, a small buck, began to climb the hill in front of me, still unaware of my presence. He came within 75 yards, and I raised the Squall. With the bead sight directly on his neck, I waited still longer for him to come closer. When he came within 50 yards of me, I held my breath, waited until I was in between heartbeats, and squeezed the gold plated trigger. To my dismay, instead of the monstrous report and kick of a mule I expected, all I heard was a sharp "click."

Cursing a blue streak, I lowered the weapon and ejected the misfired cartridge. After I had a fresh shell chambered, I raised the Squall yet again and drew a true aim. What I saw next took me completely by surprise. After hearing the bolt click, the deer had sprinted up the hill further. He paused within 15 feet of me, my barrel being pointed directly at his neck. Looking into the animal's eyes and seeing the sheer terror cut through me like hot razors through butter. I was frozen in my tracks. That one instant glance the buck gave me sent tremors through my body and straight to my soul. I will never, until the day I die, forget that sight.

The deer stood, and I lowered my shotgun. That frightened and innocent look helped me to realize what the sport was all about. For me, it was no longer based on how many deer I could kill, or how much meat I cleaned. This look gave me true insight into the environment, into nature, and into my own self-being. I had been brought face to face with death, life, spirit, and fear in one instantaneous occurrence. It had never been clearer to me that the real joy of hunting was to be one with the outdoors.

I awoke to Phish blaring from my CD player. I drowsily rolled over to check the time. The display read 4:15. As usual, I wondered to myself for a brief moment why I was up so damn early. I arose, got my usual half pot of coffee, and went to the basement to suit up. After bundling up for the "not as cold as yesterday" weather, I departed for my stand. Crossing cattle guards, barbed wire fences and creeks, I pressed on through the sub-freezing temperatures. Once I arrived at my usual stand, I made myself comfortable and pulled out my new grunt call. After only a few tries (and a few hours of waiting) I saw a six point buck appear through the underbrush. I looked at him through my spotting scope and realized his true beauty. It was almost as beautiful as the steel of the Blue Squall, still hanging on the rack beside the woodstove in my basement.

*From the 2002 issue of The Prism*

# The Dorm of My Life

By Melissa Andrews

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Here,  
In the dorm of my life,  
The people keep changing.

Tissues to cry into,  
The wretchedness of the brown carpet,  
The sixteen different rooms—  
Each one with a roommate that never sleeps.

Verbatim history books, each waiting to be read,  
The desk chair, hard and made of wood,  
The holes in the wall,  
Letting sounds travel through.  
My purple rug,  
With such a headache there on the floor.  
The couch.  
The bed that everyone seems to sit on,  
The halls filled with different types of whores.  
The phone.  
Mold taking root in the corners of the showers.  
The doors, slamming at all hours.  
The lights,  
Blinding me,  
Not leaving an inch in the dark.

The window,  
The broken window,  
That won't open and let wind flow in.

*From the 2003 issue of The Prism*

# Mo'm Ling

By Seth Meeks

When Dad died my mom was hilarious.

She drove herself down to the bookstore like a bat out of a slingshot and bought this book on poetry. On how to write poetry, to be right about it. And she took it home and she locked herself in her room upstairs with a yellow legal pad and a chewed up old blue Bic pen that hadn't seen a cap for at least the whole year it spent hanging in the kitchen on a string next to the corkboard where Dad tacked all the utilities.

It didn't take my sisters long to figure it out. Then she called me, woke me up, and explained it to me. See, Mom came over from Vietnam with Dad about four years after the war ended. That's when Grandma Philips, Dad's mom, died and he had to come home since our first mom was bathing in the eternal flames of Hell. I was too young to be able to pronounce her "Vietname" and my sisters were just plain retarded so we started calling her Mom. She didn't seem to notice.

She was a very small woman. As a child I remember being able to knock her over even without much of a running start. And she cried a lot. And she broke lamps and dishes when she got pissed. Like one time my littlest sister drank a bottle of her perfume and I'll tell you, I thought she'd like to bring those four walls down with the tantrum she had. My dad though it would make things better if he let her drink on the weekdays and come to find out he was right. Not entirely, though, because it took her at least two ear-splitting and head-pummeling hours before she was drunk enough to not give a shit.

So Dad gave her the poodle and that seemed to mellow things out. She eased up on the swearing and the unpredictable punches landed less often. He tried to teach her English, too, but he gave up the struggle of waking her up when he got home from work and dragging her to the table where she'd spend twelve minutes of squirming and whining in front of a first-grade reader my sister had borrowed from the school. After that she just stayed in the house like an old dog that could feed herself Spaghetti-O's and deviled ham sandwiches.

If she was ever mad at Dad he'd just bring home a bottle of something, it didn't matter, a sack of Circus Peanuts. She'd wander into the living room, bumping into furniture, take the loot from the couch, and then shuffle back to her room murmuring things in her own language.

"How come you no move out?" was the first thing she said to me in English. "You old enough to work," was the second. So I got a job and moved out and then Dad died and Mom went to the bookstore and got a book on how to write poetry. That's what my sister said anyway. After all those years we guessed she just now had something to say, given the circumstance, and she wanted to say it in a poem. She didn't mention it when I came around the next morning to the service. She wore flip-flops and carried a box of facial tissue in a shopping bag. She wore my Dad's baseball hat. She walked into that place of curtains and casket, round and pale, with the fiercest look ironed on her face. She'd been up all night having Jack Daniels do her hair and nails.

"Who are all these people?" she asked, jerking on my pants pocket.

"Friends and kin, I guess," I said to her.

"Why they all look so stupid?" she hissed.

"I don't know," I told my mom. "My guess is they're grieving."

She put her hands on her hips and looked over the room of strangers, people she had only met inside the scrapbook under Dad's bed. They all looked like old shirts now. She pointed at this fart in an aqua blazer and said, "He look pregnant," because he did.

Then the room started taking notice. And not just of her, but of me, too. I didn't know any of these folks any better than she did. They looked at

us with the same kind of eyes, like we were making things worse on them. But Mom didn't seem to notice our audience was inspecting us.

"They all look so sad and angry," she said loud enough for most people to hear. "He kill himself. You think they be happy for him. He work like a dog, eat like a pig and drink like a fish. Too many animal. No wonder his heart explode."

I don't guess her logic was wrong, just, you know, foreign. I'd seen all there Rambo movies and I knew that her people did not particularly care much for each other or Americans for that matter. That's how I knew Mom was different. She must have loved my dad. She waited for the service to end and when everybody gathered in the parlor for casserole and potato salad my mom began to tap on her glass for a long time until everyone stopped whispering, and then she read her poem. I knew it was going to be good after I heard the first line. It referred to my dad simply as a man from Nantucket.

After that we were asked to leave. Some of the old shirts even offered to give us directions to "Gooktown" or wherever we had come from.

"I thought it was nice," I told her.

"Don't care. Don't matter," she paused until we both got into the car. "I wanted to write him a poem to remind him who he fucking was when I knew him in Vietnam. He was funny and drunk all the time. Good times all the time. And money? He act like it come from the trees." She paused again as we came to the first stoplight. "You know anything about cars?"

"Just how to drive 'em," I told her.

"What about fix?"

"Nah. Dad did all that."

"Who will fix your wagon now?"

"The vee-dubya? I guess I could sell it."

"Good. You sell the wagon. I sell the house."

"What's wrong with the house?"

"Tommy don't come home to it anymore. So I going home."

"Where?" I asked her, "to Gooktown?"

You know that goggle-thing you had as a child. The thing you put those paper disks in and you'd pull a little lever and you could see any kind of place. I saw ancient Roman cities that looked like they were made out of...well something they don't make stuff out of anymore. And I saw Paris and Africa. And the skies were always something else. I had tons of those disks: Germany, France, and England. I never saw Gooktown in any one of them. I remember when I'd pull that lever there'd be a rush of color and blackness, then a whole new, whole different world would pop up.

It was like she pulled on my lever; I nearly wrecked the car with the smack she put on the side of my face.

I don't remember much about the time my sisters and I spent at Grandma Philips' because it was so boring and old there. I played solitaire a lot of the time. I played in different places: on the porch, on the living room carpet. I even set a TV table in the john so I could play while I took care of other business. But I do remember brightly the day I burnt my face up in the lye powder getting some nails off the garage shelf. My face was all covered in sweat because we were in the dog days and all and thank God I had the good sense to close my mouth and eyes. I hurt for a solid month, but after that I couldn't feel nothing.

When Mom slapped me across the face I felt it all the way home.

"What was that for?" I said, not touching my cheek.

"Don't listen to what nobody say about me and where I come from. They funeral people. They don't know me and you. They feel sorry for you because you are ugly, because your father left you with old people who couldn't care for you. It's his fault. I don't ask him to stay in Vietnam. He stay because he hate your mother; she kill herself. He work himself to death. You just go melt away somewhere. I have nothing to do with anything. I go home."

When we got back to the house I let her about by the trash cans. She didn't turn around or wave or nothing. She had left the front door open so she wouldn't have to bother with a key. And even though I was almost on empty, I headed back to my place without getting gas. The phone was ringing when I got through the door. It was my sister, Mary Elliot, the oldest one, I think, the plant-woman.

"So how was it?" she asked. I could hear sneakers squeaking on the other end.

"How was what?" I took off my shoe.

"The funeral, idiot."

"Oh. It was nice, I guess."

"Did the Pear Blossom attend?"

"Huh?" I rolled off my sock and stuck it in my shoe.

"Mo'm Ling?" she said.

"Yeah, she went. I picked her up."

"Good Lord, Danny. Did anyone say anything?"

"Yeah. Mom read a poem."

"Excuse me!" The sneakers got quiet.

"Did you know that Dad was from Nantucket?"

"He's from Linden."

"Oh. Why didn't you come?"

"You know, work. I had a conference and..."

"What about Lynn? She couldn't come either?"

"She didn't show?"

"Nope."

"She and Brant are really busy these days, Danny, so don't get all mad."

"I'm not. They ended up kicking us out."

It was too late. The sneakers had started up again. "I got to go now, Danny. I'll call you...Okay? Love."

I could hardly keep my eyes open so I cut on the TV and started thinking about some things. My Dad hadn't been in the ground for more than an hour. I felt like something had been knocked out of me. I could beg her to stay here with me. Just like Sue said when I asked her why she couldn't come to the funeral. "He's dead, Danny," she said. "And he'll never know anything different."

*From the 2004 issue of The Prism*

# Origami

By Britni Lightfoot

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shivering  
and sweating

winter  
and summer  
synonymous

with our bodies  
folded together

as origami  
craning  
and wrapping

bending  
and folding

our pale green  
paper arms one  
over

the other  
remaining in place

though nothing  
is keeping us

together

*From the 2006 issue of The Prism*

# November in Lynchburg

By Erika Seay

It is November in Lynchburg;  
we are soaking up the last  
of late fall and breathing in  
the mountain air. The sun is low,  
almost over the blue ridge  
turning the leaves on the highest trees  
hues of gold. Even those leaves

have almost all fallen, but there are the few  
vibrant ones left, still drifting  
around in the breeze, floating high  
in the hills and the cresting peaks  
until they fall down into the autumn  
on the boulevard, or the wet grass,  
or the ditches of heaping piles  
gathered by neighbors, the leaves  
waiting in sacks to be burned.

Winter will come—  
but when I see you, I always see  
the free flying leaves of November,  
those few vibrant ones left in the wind,  
the ones in the crowning of the mountain.

*From the 2007 issue of The Prism*

# **The Shadow Under Lynchburg, or Ragnarok at College Lake**

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## *An Epilogue*

"Remember," yells Dr. Mendelson, the funny-looking bearded scientist from NASA, struggling to make his weak voice heard over the wailing campus emergency sirens, "It's only vulnerable when it's out of the water!"

He waves with his rifle for us to follow him, before turning and bolting down the shady eroded path toward Beaver Point, running unevenly, weaving to and fro, like the slightly crazed, middle-aged egghead that he is.

The rest of us stagger after him, most equally uncoordinated: an impromptu gun-toting mob of faculty and administrators—the sad remnants of the campus community— sliding on loose trail-gravel, stumbling over roots, breathing hard, cursing as we all haul ass down to the lake.

By the time we reach the sand volleyball pits, great rippling waves—the astonishing evidence of the thing's subterranean thrashings—are visible through the skeletal budding branches of the lakeside trees.

"Faculty," hollers one of the deans, an erect man, thin in both body and voice, "Spread out along the shore there and cover us! I'm leading my administrators around the lake to assess the opposite bank!"

"Wait!" yells Dr. Mendelson frantically, as they take off along the waterside trail at a steady trot, wild brown beard framing his O-shaped, spittle-flecked mouth. "Wait! Come back! For the love of God!"

They continue unmindful, already nearing the inlet's big curve. Yet even as they gain it a great moving swell appears in the middle of the lake, the size of two or three tractor trailers and hurtling toward them just as fast.

As the paralyzed academics look on in awe, a single nonplussed figure in their midst turns to the man beside him, a wide-eyed senior religion professor.

He spits a wad of tobacco from his mouth and smiles confidentially. "I do believe we're all about to experience what my granpappy used to call 'an existential dilemma.'"

The End