

The Loyalhanna Review



2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Azure Blue (photo) by Diana Williams.....	OFC
From the Editor	IFC
Remembering Fred Rogers by E. Kay Myers	1
The Promise of Spring by Colleen Hansen.....	2
Sometimes You Just Can't Win by Ed Kelemen	4
The Summer of My Father by Mary Ann Back	5
Luke by Dave Landsperger	5
Joe by Patricia Orendoff Smith	7
Asynchrony by Hanna Ufnar.....	7
Run for the Roses: Atlantic City, 1985 by Rebecca Dunn.....	8
Words of Peace by Paul F. Kennedy	10
The Deer by Sarah Proulx	11
Tiger Swallowtail on Gooseneck Loosestrife (photo) by Diana Williams	11
Open Door (painting) by Pat Dickun	12
Kissed by the Sun (painting) by Pat Dickun.....	13
Cosmic Caterpillars (art) by William Patterson.....	14
Calendar Daze by Nancy A. Clark.....	15
Estate Sale by Steve Shilling	16
Journeys by Lou Steiner.....	17
Lost by Richard Bagdill.....	17
How Facebook Broke My Heart by Helen Collins Sittler.....	18
Smokey Intervention by Natalie DeFee Mendik...19	
Landing in Pittsburgh by Steve Shilling.....	20
Small Hours by Sarah Proulx	20
Music Scored by the Board at a Nonprofit by Barbara Kepich.....	21
Endstops by Robin Strachan	21
Author Bios	22
Advertising	23
Ligonier Valley Writers Info	24
Ion Wind (art) by William Patterson.....	IBC
Butterfly Garden at the WPNR (painting) by Pat Dickun	OBC

From the Editor

Since the last issue of this literary magazine appeared, Ligonier Valley Writers has had an eventful year. Our website was hijacked and held for ransom. Who would have known such a thing was possible? Recovery was rocky and time consuming but ultimately successful. Winners of our flash fiction contest read their stories at West Overton Museum and Barnes & Noble. We sponsored a successful mystery dinner theater as our major fundraiser, presented library workshops on character development, and provided poetry lessons for teachers and writers. From editor Cathi Gerhard Williams, we learned about submissions for and behind-the-scenes work at another local publication, the *Laurel Mountain Post*. We enjoyed fall picnics, holiday parties, and a limerick contest. Our Student Poetry Awards ceremony at Barnes & Noble, produced the largest ever crowd of students and their families. The student readings, certificates, and keepsake booklets of all the winning poems have become very popular. *The Review's* first publication party is a reception honoring authors and artists. This year's conference brings four multiple award winners to our community: Faith Adiele, Kirk Nessel, Ellen McGrath Smith, and Karen Williams. And the beat goes on. We hope you'll join us.

Ruth McDonald, Editor-in-Chief

Special Thanks to Our Friends and Supporters

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Topaz Butterfly Creations	Stephen Kelemen
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*Great Appreciation for The Loyalhanna Review
Editorial Staff – Especially Judith Gallagher*

Front Cover: Diana Williams created "Azure Blue," the butterfly photo on the front cover, and another piece on page 11. The tiny Azure is also called Common Blue, but in this artist's photo, this beautiful gem is anything but common.

Diana Williams says, "I have been shooting photos of flowers and butterflies since I was old enough to earn my first Brownie camera selling seeds as a child. I have no training as a photographer, only an eye for what seems pleasing in form, color, and design. My perennials and rose garden provide nectar which draws the adult butterflies for digital capture."

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Remembering Fred Rogers

by E. Kay Myers

I first met Freddie Rogers in Sunday School class in 1930 at the Latrobe Methodist Church when I was five years old and living on East Main Street in Latrobe. I was sometimes invited to cross the street to play with little Freddie when he visited his grandfather, Mr. McFeely. His mother's father had built a two-story playhouse for Freddie and his little sister Laney, more formally known today as Nancy Rogers Crozier. That beloved grandfather lives on today as Mr. McFeely, one of the favorite characters from Mister Rogers' Neighborhood, who continues to make public appearances, helping to keep Fred's memory and work alive.

It's true, he was a little rich kid, but Freddie never put on airs and was friendly with all his classmates. In the mid-1930s with all the news about the kidnapping of the Lindbergh baby, his parents were worried about his safety and frequently had their family chauffeur, George Allen, drive Fred to school and pick him up.

Fred Rogers first attended Jane and Juliet ("Juge") Robb's kindergarten in the summer, held at the Robb cottage near Kingston Dam. He then went on to Latrobe public schools, where one of his classmates was Peggy Moberg, who added McFeatters to her name when she married. She lived down Weldon Street, a few doors from Jim and Nancy Rogers's family home. Peggy sometimes rode home from school with Fred. Since he ate alone, she was often invited to stay for lunch, served by the cook in the Rogers's Weldon Street home.

After lunch they would go upstairs to his fabulous third-floor playroom filled with wonderful toys, stuffed animals, dolls, puppets, and marionettes. Even at that young age, Freddie liked to put on puppet shows.

In Latrobe High, he was a member of the National Honor Society, appeared in the All Class Play, was president of the Student Council and was editor of *The Latrobean* yearbook his senior year (1946). He was an Oratorical Contest finalist, and as a senior, he won the Kiwanis Extemporaneous Speaking Contest.

Fred also became a lifelong friend with another neighbor, Jim Stumbaugh. Jim was a three-sport letterman at Latrobe High. Jim was injured playing football and was laid up for a time in the hospital, so Fred would take his lessons to him and help Stumbaugh keep up with his courses, thus forging a lifetime friendship.

As a little boy Freddie was chubby, and too often, his classmates made fun of him. The friendship of the athlete and the fat kid ended the school teasing that long had plagued Fred. In fact, years later when Jim was diagnosed with terminal cancer while living and working in North Carolina, Fred Rogers took time

from his busy schedule to visit his old friend.

I think that early teasing is why, as Mister Rogers grew up, he was always very considerate of people, a friendly trait that became a hallmark of his television career.

Fred began college at Dartmouth. I remember his father, Jim Rogers, gave him a Packard convertible to go away to college, and his mother, Nancy, added a case of scotch (although Fred never did have a taste for alcohol). George Allen drove the car to Hanover. After his freshman year, Fred discovered Rollins College in Florida, which was more to his liking, with its courses in music and television production.

In 1950, following graduation, his old Latrobe friends were thrilled to hear he had landed a job in New York City as an assistant floor manager for the Monday night NBC-TV Firestone Hour. At that time, I was living and working in my wife's hometown of Shamokin, and we would drive 20 miles to a bar in the mountains to watch Fred's program on a flickering black-and-white screen. Cable TV came a year later. For all that, we never saw Fred, but his name was on the credits.

We did see my old Princeton roommate and another Latrobe neighbor, Robert Kelly McCormick, a former Princeton football star, whose nickname was "Chis." At that time, he was an aspiring actor living in Greenwich Village. Fred hired Chis to be the blacksmith when the Firestone Symphony Orchestra played "The Anvil Chorus." The program was live, and Chis looked great with his glistening, muscular arms swinging a sledgehammer--except, true to form, he struck the anvil with an almighty swing that was a second behind the drummer's boom.

Rogers did other TV shows and worked with Gabby Hayes, the white-bearded old-timer who introduced a weekly cowboy flick. I recall Fred telling me that he sometimes had to travel with Gabby, whose limousine had hand-tooled leather saddles in the rear seat for each passenger.

When the first public television station opened in Pittsburgh, WQED-TV, Fred came back to the city so he could create a worthwhile children's program without ridiculous gore and stupid behavior, so typical of kids' TV fare in the 1950s. He came up with something different, an hour-long program he produced and acted in called *The Children's Corner*, with a bouncing, exuberant cohost, Josie Carey. Fred wrote the script and songs, played the piano, and was Josie's straight man.

That program was so successful that Fred was lured away to do his own show on a Canadian TV network. His popularity had grown so that it wasn't long until Freddie came back to Pittsburgh to produce *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*, which soon was carried by

PBS stations all across the United States and made Fred a national celebrity, beloved by parents and children alike. The show gave Fred an opportunity to relate to children by offering music and skits with puppet shows. The cast, from his Neighborhood of Make Believe, featured King Friday XIII, Daniel Striped Tiger, Lady Elaine Fairchild, Queen Sara, and X the Owl.

From the first time Mister Rogers walked onto the TV set, shucked off his shoes to slip on sneakers, and donned his famous cardigan sweater, Fred invited children everywhere into his safe, familiar and caring world. And they loved it. (Incidentally, Fred's mother, Nancy, knitted his sweaters.)

Even as his TV career burgeoned, Fred took several hours each day to attend Union Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh to become a licensed Presbyterian minister. When he finally received the title Reverend, his charge was to minister to children-- which, as we all know, he certainly did.

The last time I saw Fred Rogers was at Idlewild Park when the park was getting ready to open a new attraction, Mister Rogers' Neighborhood. Fred had brought his son John to Ligonier to look it over. It still is a big draw for young people.

I am proud to say I knew Fred Rogers when we were kids, even if he preferred to play house to my favorite cops and robbers. Fred managed to play house all his life, including 40 years as a TV celebrity. Even today reruns of Mister Rogers continue his beloved heritage, attracting a new generation of kids.

Now Saint Vincent College has a wonderful Fred Rogers Center. As Fred had planned shortly before his untimely death, it is dedicated to training educators to research and improve childhood learning while watchdogging the influence of media on children. I am certain that Fred would be pleased that his concern and love for children will continue for generations to come.

The Promise of Spring

by Colleen Hansen

Sweet Birch Lane. This was it.

Eve took a deep breath and turned the wheel of the Honda. The shaded edges of the narrow dirt road were still hard with frost, but a bright sun was climbing, flickering through the thin treetops. She avoided the deepest ruts and finally pulled onto sparse gravel a few yards from the front door.

Stretching, she stepped from the car and ran a critical eye over the old farmhouse. Faded white paint peeled on the south side wall next to two cracked windows, but the lines of the porch and the foundation were still clean and straight.

Eve let herself into the musty foyer, hearing the faint echo of Scott's easy laughter the first time they'd come here together so he could meet her grandmother. She'd tripped over the raised sillplate and would have sprawled flat on her face if he hadn't reached out to catch her in his arms. Flung off balance himself, he'd turned under her, cushioning her body as they both fell in a heap at her grandmother's feet. They were still laughing together as the older woman helped them up and dusted them off like two children.

Scott had been gone six months now, after a brief bout with cancer. He would have loved to be here this morning with her, scanning the barely green fields, shading his eyes from the early-morning sun, and eager to go for a walk.

It never failed to amaze her how her city-raised husband had taken to the land like a dyed-in-the-

wool farm boy. He'd adored the old place from the moment he'd set eyes on it, and never turned down the opportunity to visit. After a long workweek spent at the successful Philadelphia contracting business they'd built together, the two-hour drive north to the farm was relaxing for both of them. Her grandmother had welcomed them there through the years with open arms, to the land she'd come to as a bride and worked with Eve's grandfather all their married lives. Now the farm belonged to Eve . . . alone.

Shoving away the thought, she walked briskly, shivering as she climbed the stairs and entered the unheated rooms. The furniture was gone, except for her grandmother's rocker, sitting empty in one upstairs bedroom. Eve stepped around it to glance outside through the dusty window, noting that last year's weeds had almost swallowed up the rusty mailbox at the yard's edge. Brown, matted grass along the fence was almost as high.

She sighed and trudged down the stairs into the antiquated kitchen.

Eve paused in the doorway, imagining her grandmother working at the old, chipped porcelain sink, humming an off-key tune. She wondered idly how many potatoes had been peeled over the years with those slow, methodical strokes. As she opened the back door, her face felt the sun as it lit the fields with broad, gold-white bands, and a warmer breeze stirred the budding lilacs.

She loved this place, too. She had come to live here with her grandmother after her parents had been killed in a car accident when she was twelve. After graduating from high school, she had taken a few business courses at a community college in the city. Scott had been in one of her classes, and she still remembered the thrill of sitting beside him after he'd saved her a seat. For both of them, the connection had been instant and complete, and there had never been anyone else in their nineteen years together. They'd been married the following spring, with a simple ceremony in the side yard here, as apple blossoms fell on her hair.

Suddenly, unbidden and unwanted, the memory of her last day with Scott flashed into her mind. As weak as he was, he had still held her in his arms in the hospital bed. Though she'd tried to be strong for him, she just couldn't bear the thought of never growing old together.

"I can't lose you," she'd cried, her tears soaking his sheet as the impersonal beeping of the hospital monitors sounded incessantly in her ears. "I've lost everyone else. I can't lose you, too."

"You won't lose me, Evie," he'd whispered into her hair. "You'll never lose me. Somehow, somewhere, I'll always be there for you, and you'll find me. Just look for me. I'll be there. . . ."

Those were the last words he spoke to her. A few minutes later, he was gone.

Waves of loneliness washed over her. She tried to gaze at the stubbly field before her, but it began to shimmer and distort, and she sank into the old wicker porch rocker as tears coursed down her cheeks.

Even the birds were silent in the still, sunny morning as she sobbed out her pain. "You said you would be here for me! I can't find you! I can't feel you! Where are you?"

Where are you? The words echoed slightly as Eve cried, feeling she would never stop. Finally, the tears slowed, and she began to shiver on the shady porch.

Dully, she raised her head. The smell of cold mud mixed faintly with something else. Like a wary doe, she stood a little unsteadily and tested the air, searching for its source.

Her gaze caught a patch of yard that looked different from the rest. As she stepped off the back porch, Eve remembered her grandmother working in her herb garden. Wearing a floppy hat and an ancient flowered housedress, she would work all summer in the rows of chamomile, calendula, echinacea, and

other herbs. In the fall, she gathered large clusters of perennial blooms and pinned them in groups on the clothesline to dry in the sun. Some weekends, Eve worked beside her, learning the plants' properties, while Scott happily drove her grandfather's old tractor around in the alternating fields, razing the last of the cornstalks to the ground. Her grandmother stored the fragrant dried plants in dark jars in the garden shed. She used them for teas, filled tiny pillows and sachets, or patiently extracted the essential oils to make creams and salves.

Eve knelt down in the wet grass at the garden's edge, instantly soaking her slacks. Her fingers pulled at the tangled dead growth to reveal a sturdy new clump of Monarda. The bee balm was slender and spiky, its dark green shoots struggling to find the sun. Each time her hands brushed against the leaves, a rich scent floated in the warming air, evoking images of mint and basil combined.

Suddenly addicted to the sight of emerging life, Eve kept weeding. Her grandmother had told her once that when new plants began pushing through the ground, it was a sign that spring keeps its promise. Once as a child, she had asked her grandmother to tell her what spring promised.

"That it will come, dear," her grandmother replied. "Believe that. Spring will always come." As Eve pulled the weeds free of the soft earth and tossed them onto a growing pile at the end of the row, she found a rhythm to the work. The sun was hot on her neck, and robins hopped and twittered in the yard, hunting for insects. The smell of the earth was all around her.

She thought of how she and Scott had talked about retiring here and selling the vegetables and herbs as a side business. For a moment, Eve imagined opening an online store, and mentally began designing a website for it. She was surprised to find herself humming a tune that seemed to keep time with the slow, occasional breeze.

Lost in thought, she worked until the early afternoon clouds swelled darkly and a cool rain began to patter softly onto the newly turned soil. As Eve dashed up the steps onto the porch, she turned around for a last look at the neat rows behind her. Then with unhurried steps, she turned and went into the house.

Half an hour later, she locked the door behind her. By the time she turned onto the highway, she was humming again. Beside her on the seat rested a single dark-green stem of Monarda.

Spring and Scott were keeping their promise.

Sometimes You Just Can't Win

by Ed Kelemen

Unpublished authors crave approval. And not just anyone's approval. Spouses and children already consider us the greatest thing for paper since the word processor. Our friends and relatives who may consider a more truthful assessment of our works are all too aware of the fragility of our self-esteem. They know that a negative review of our latest masterpiece may result in suicide and/or homicides not necessarily confined to paper. So they never deliver anything less than adulation.

I am in the middle of what I hope will be the final rewrite to a detective novel. One evening, after sweating the right words into the hard drive during a long session at the keyboard, I finally went to bed. I was distressed at the way Chapter Seven was going. I tossed and turned for a full ten minutes before entering REM sleep.

My dream found me at the mother of all writers' conventions. Every author-hero that I had ever encountered on the written page since childhood was there.

Joseph Altshelter, the creator of Henry Ware of pre-Revolutionary War fame, was standing next to a nearly life-size world globe in what appeared to be a reading room. He was expounding on the plight of the Native Americans when their land was first usurped by the tide of Europeans coming to the New World and their violent reactions to those events.

Agatha Christie, sipping from a teacup, held forth over a coterie of wannabe cozy writers. She was dispensing advice on the genre while dripping grandmotherly mayhem.

A chill air distracted me for a moment. It appeared to originate from a large wing-backed sofa in an adjoining room. A passing waiter noticed my confusion and muttered, "Lovecraft."

I nodded.

Off to my right stood Mr. Stout, warning a clutch of aspiring novelists to be careful when creating characters. "Do you have any idea what a pain in the ass it is to share one's cranium with the likes of Archie Goodwin?"

Leaning against a doorjamb, just as the Continental Op used to do against a mist-enshrouded San Francisco lamppost, was Dashiell Hammett. He sardonically observed the machinations of both beggars and choosers.

I was transfixed, unable to move in the presence of such literary power. Standing there, manuscript under my arm, I felt as vulnerable as an ant at the start of the New York Marathon.

Murmurs preceded a celebrity of stellar proportions. An unmistakable profile was backlit by the rays of the setting sun filtering through swirling draperies. The owner of the famous profile turned full face in

my direction, and carefully enunciating every word, said, "Young man, you have something for me. Bring it here."

Ohmygod-ohmygod-ohmygod. Alfred Hitchcock wanted my manuscript. *The Alfred Hitchcock* wanted my manuscript. The one and only Alfred Hitchcock wanted to read my manuscript!

"Young man, I have only so many lifetimes."

My feet uprooted and propelled my sixty-year-old frame toward the immanence of His Eminence. Wordless, I gave him custody of my baby.

Holding it gingerly as though it might bear unpleasant surprises in the folds of its diaper, Mr. Hitchcock disappeared into an unending hallway to oblivion.

In my dream, hours passed without notice. My next awareness was of being summoned to an audience with Mr. Hitchcock. He sat on the other side of an imposing wooden desk that was bereft of ornamentation save my manuscript lying before him. It was a butterfly impaled on a pin for his examination.

Cotton-mouthed, I strove to say something, anything to break the intensity of the moment.

"Mr. Hitchcock," I stammered, "I have been slaving over this book for years. It means the world to me. All I want to do is write. Please tell me if this is a mere pipe dream. Don't lead me on and hang me out to dry. Let me know if I am wasting my time and yours."

Politely waiting for my eruption of emotion to subside, he pursed his lips, tented his finger, and simply said, "Not to mention paper."

Some days you just can't win.

Some nights: likewise.



The Summer of My Father

by Mary Ann Back

It was the summer of 1990. My concept of time was based on the stabilities of my life, playtime, dreaded bathtime, and bedtime: natural enough for a five-year-old. Time even appeared to stop when my father, atop his Harley (nicknamed the Midnight Express) pulled me in my rickety wagon, around and around our yard in ever-growing circles. We flew at the speed of light; the rush of the wind against my tangled hair and sunburned cheeks blew the August heat away from my grimy, sweat-soaked skin. I knew during those magic rides that my daddy belonged to me and I to him. Ritual defined that magnificent summer--ritual as pure and constant as my father's love.



One particularly glorious day, it seemed as if our ride might never end. We flew with a passion so intense it felt like we were spun into two halves of the same whole. When the last rays of sunlight filtered through the gaps in our tall wooden fence, my father turned off the engine, whisked me from the wagon to the roughhewn fence, and sat down, cocooning me in his massive arms. Tears caught by the setting sun shone like diamonds and slid silently down his cheeks. Capturing a single tear on the tip of my pudgy finger, I stared, mesmerized. I'd never seen him cry.

"Punkin, I have to go away for a while." His wavering voice rocked my tiny world. "America needs me to make something right in a place far, far away."

"Further than Grandma's?" Surely, there was no place further than Grandma's.

"Yes, baby. It's so far away I won't be able to take you on our magic rides or tuck you in at night for a while. But you and Mommy stay right here and wait for me. I love you more than anything in the whole world."

"How many rides will you be gone, Daddy? How many bedtimes?" I asked.

"Oh, don't you worry about that, Punkin. Time has a way of flying just like we do on our magic rides. I'll be back before you know it."

Fly as time might, its wings were not destined to bring my father back to me. And now, nineteen years later, my concept of time is not so very different from what it was back then. When I close my eyes, it is still 1990. My father and I still fly like the wind in dizzying circles, weaving an eternal web of love. It is still the summer of playtime, dreaded bathtime, and bedtime. It is still the summer of my father.

Luke

by Dave Landsperger

I first knew Luke by reputation. He went to a neighboring high school, and we frequented some of the same places: burger joints, dances, that sort of thing. We didn't acknowledge each other, though, because we were from different worlds. I was the college-bound All-American kid, while Luke was considered something of a hood. He strutted around with a turned-up collar and a turned-down lip, daring anyone to mess with him. Luke wasn't headed for college. He wasn't headed for much of anything from what I could tell except a dead-end job if he was lucky.

In my smugness, I had written off Luke as one of life's losers, an aimless rebel with a short fuse and a bad haircut.

During college, I worked at a local steel mill in my off semesters. One of my high school hangouts was a bowling alley with pinball machines and a bar next door called Sid's. This had been one of Luke's hangouts as well, one of the places where we ignored each other. But we were both 19 now, and we both had managed to bluff our way into getting served at Sid's bar. That unspoken conspiracy was what drew

us together, I'm sure. We gradually warmed up to each other, and I was taught the old "Don't judge a book by its cover" lesson ... again.

Luke was living at home with his mother and two younger sisters and worked as a counterman at an auto parts store. He was decidedly a hell-raiser, but I learned he was also a guy who was fiercely loyal to his friends, which meant I had a badass bodyguard as well as a new friend. With a quick wit and a dry sense of humor, Luke was clearly more than his public persona. We had some fine times driving too fast, talking about life, hiking the Allegheny Ridges, and chasing (but rarely catching) women.

We became comfortable regulars at Sid's and even named ourselves Sid's kids. One night while we were toasting our brashness, one of Luke's neighbors walked into Sid's. "Damn, we gotta get outta here." Luke whispered. "He'll tell my mom and my ass will be grass." Luke went out the back door, and I bought a six-pack. We headed for a back road to drink our beer, kidding each other about our pathetic regression to high school behavior. Luke made me promise to keep this embarrassment a secret.

About the time I headed back to college that year, Uncle Sam drafted Luke and sent him to Vietnam. We lost track of each other while he was overseas but found each other again when he was discharged. We were 21 now and had passed another milestone: legal drinking. We didn't have to bluff our way into bars anymore; they were now happier than ever to take our money and fuzz our brains.

While I had sharpened my social skills at fraternity parties, Luke had gotten a whole different education in the jungles of Southeast Asia. It was great to see him again and listen to his stories of that place a world away. We had both grown but in different ways. I was drinking less now that I was legal, but Luke went the other way, inevitably ending up in some blue mood.

One chilly November night we were leaving a club, talking to two girls in the parking lot. Without warning, Luke unzipped and urinated in front of us. The three of us stood there speechless as the urine channeled itself into a steaming stream flowing across the blacktop. I offered a lame apology to the girls, saying Luke had had too much to drink. By the time he was finished, the girls were gone.

"Luke, what the hell are you doing?"

"Huh?"

"You can't do that!" I barked at him.

"Do what?"

"Piss on the street in front of those girls. That's what."

"We did it in 'Nam all the time. What's the big deal?"

"You're not in 'Nam now, Luke. You're home."

"Hell, I don't know where I am half the time, dude. Sometimes I just don't know where the fuck

I am. Everything was different over there, and I just can't keep the rules straight in my head."

"C'mon, Luke. Let's go to Sid's and listen to Frank the bartender tell us one more time how he was almost famous. I'll buy you a beer and you can explain to me how pissing in public impresses the girls in Vietnam." I slapped his back and pointed him in the direction of his car.

At Sid's, we had a few more rounds, and Luke began to tell me about the life of a grunt in Vietnam. It was a pretty scary story. Night patrols in enemy territory. Friends getting shot. Never being sure who was on your side. Not even sure why you were there sometimes.

"We had this second lieutenant, fresh out of ROTC and a real asshole. Everything by the book, and the sergeant couldn't make him understand that the book was a guide, not a bible, out there."

"Yeah, we have those guys marching around college, Luke. We call them the rot-see gods. Real flamers, man. I had to take five stinkin' semesters of Army ROTC. What a waste. One semester those clowns gave me 35 demerits. I guess I wasn't doing a very good job of hiding my disdain for the whole concept of toy soldiers. The thing is, the real Army officers who taught the classroom stuff were pretty cool guys. They'd give me merits to offset my demerits just for swapping jokes and doing a couple of simple chores for them. But those uptight student officers were by the book all the way. Look, the world is full of assholes, Luke. You were just getting your quota."

"But he was messing with our lives, man. He made us do risky things, dumb things, things that might make sense on a blackboard but didn't stand a prayer of working against the gooks. This wasn't 'pretend'; guys were dying out there."

"Did you try to explain to him?"

"Sure, we all did, but he just wouldn't listen.

In his mind, he was a future colonel who had the bad luck of getting stuck with a bunch of stupid fuckin' grunts." Luke stared at his beer for a few minutes, swirling it slowly. He took a long drink and exhaled in a slow shudder.

"Finally, we couldn't take it anymore, Dave.

We all agreed that something had to be done about this idiot. The next day, we were on patrol in gook territory. We let the lieutenant get a little ahead of us. One of the guys cried out 'sniper' and everybody opened fire at once."

"What happened? Did you get the sniper?"

"There was no sniper. But the lieutenant died a hero."

Stunned, I stared disbelieving at Luke. Tears were welling in his eyes, spilling onto the bar.

"He was dead before my round hit him, Dave. I swear it."



Asynchrony

by Hannah Ufnar

I love when one lane closes
At night
In the dark air
And car headlights must find their way
Merging to form one lane

Like a zipper pulling close
It seems like such skill
For this synchronization

But the red lights know
How to take turns
And how to give
And how to take
And how to close
The zipper

We are like that lane opening
From one to suddenly two
And now we have that freedom
And now we are pulling apart
Like that zipper

Because we have no other way to go
Or perhaps it's just my navigation
Because I feel too close
Because I want my own lane
Because I am in the dark
And can no longer find your red lights
But can only see
Green

Joe

by Patricia Orendorff Smith

Being carborexic, one father avoided power-consuming devices such as air conditioners in order to conserve energy--just sweated the small stuff. He enjoyed his staycation while rewilding in his mind the flora and fauna of his state. That may strike you as strange, but think of his hypermiling, maximizing gas mileage, to economize. Just an average Joe, he became a locavore, eating food sourced within 100 miles or so, taking advantage of green ideas. Being a moofer, someone who works away from a fixed workplace, via BlackBerry/laptop, etc., he became a frugalista, a person who leads a frugal lifestyle, fashionable and healthy as he swapped clothes, bought things secondhand, and grew his own produce. He frowned on futarchy, a theoretical government controlled by speculative markets, avoided stag-deflation, but became an edupunk, styling his hands-on self-education with no concern for schools, corporations or government. He refused to overshare, that is, divulge excessive personal information on a blog site. Average Joe was appalled at the use of throwies, a form of graffiti, and the art of photobombing, inserting oneself in the background of someone else's photograph. Joe was not obsessed with youthanasia, the controversial practice of performing medical procedures to end lifeless skin and wrinkles. No, Joe liked himself just the way he was and intended to stay that way.

Run for the Roses: Atlantic City, 1985

by Rebecca Dunn

"Hey Rache! The Elephant Man's in my underpants! Wanna see?"

I had a steady hold on my lipstick, puckering into the mirror, when Bernadette's proclamation from the washroom stall rose above the piped-in Muzak. I pressed my lips together, setting the glittery pink cream.

"Thanks, Bern. I'll pass." I made deliberate eye contact with the woman at the sink next to mine. "She's an artist."

The woman moved away quickly, sporting a wedgie that would get attention in the casino lobby.

Stella, the washroom attendant, snickered. "Elephant Man. Now that's a picture I'd pay for. Anybody else pay for that?" she called out.

Women exited the plush lounge en masse.

"Gonna be much longer, Bern?"

"Hang on," she called. "I'm doing a preliminary sketch."

"Of your underwear?"

Stella laughed gleefully as she polished the long vanity mirror in the anteroom.

I sat down on one of the deceptively comfortable-looking chairs. Upholstered two-by-fours, I decided. Look good; don't encourage people to linger. I ran a finger over the fabric, tracing geometric designs in the nap. Bernie would see something else in the design. She could look at a Formica tabletop and connect the random dots into a recognizable image. Cuddly teddy bears and fanged cougars shared space on her kitchen counter. Her bubble-patterned shower liner sported contours of the Virgin Mary, chrysanthemums, and carnations. They were usually preliminary sketches too. From mundane inspiration she would move to charcoal, watercolor, or pen and ink.

"So, I'm gonna tell the guys at work I spent my vacation in the bathroom at the Claridge." I spoke to Stella, but loud enough that Bernie could hear.

"I'm coming," Bernie called with the overwrought, world-weary tone that was her vocal hallmark. She bustled out of the stall, flapping a small spiral-bound notepad. "Look, look at this."

Stella was closer and got the first peek. She arched her eyebrows. "That be the Elephant Man all right, mmm, mmm."

Bernie flipped it toward me.

"Bern, that's pornographic!"

Stella grinned wickedly. "You can leave that for my tip."

We left the hotel lobby and stepped into Atlantic City's September sunshine, heading up the ramp to the boardwalk. Bernie's clogs clattered on the weathered wood. I started to stroll toward Bally's, but Bernie turned to face the carny attractions.

"I wanna go to the fortune teller," she announced.

"No way, girl. Last time you got really upset. Why go through that again?"

"Maybe this one will have something new to add. Forewarned is forearmed, they say."

She said it lightly, but I sensed something else in her words. Grudgingly acquiescing, I walked with her to Madame Marie's shack. It was little more than a ticket booth with occult symbols painted on the dilapidated boards. A faded placard advertised rates.

"I'm only doing the palm reading at the window. Five bucks is enough to waste. If you go in for the card reading, I'll hold your purse so you can't lose more than the twenty in your hand. Okay?"

"Yeah, that's a plan," she agreed.

I stepped up to the window. A bundle of bright-colored cloth lifted to reveal a grizzled, gap-toothed face. Her eyes were half-closed.

"Cross my palm with silver." The accented voice was remarkably strong in spite of the shriveled state of its owner.

I dutifully placed a Harrah's Casino dollar in the claw-like hand. Her fingernails were dull yellow against the leathery brown of her skin as she inspected the coin.

"What service do you require?" she asked.

"A palm reading, Madame Marie," I tried sounding more nonchalant than I felt under the woman's lidded gaze.

"Very well. Pay now five dollars, please."

I handed over the fiver and she immediately began tracing her index finger over my wrist and down my palm. Her eyes opened wider for a brief moment as she tapped my calluses and examined the shape of my fingernails.

"This one works hard," Madame Marie began. "You will never be happy until you work for yourself only. You will be successful if you let go of the bad influences that surround you now."

I curled a lip at Bernie.

"When your birthday?"

I briefly considered lying, just to see if the litany would differ from the standard I'd heard for Capricorn on all our other visits to so-called psychics.

"January 19," I replied.

She looked at me suspiciously, aware of the hesitation and its implication.

"Long life. Good health. Everything comes in twos. Two paths. Two men. Which will you choose? Never easy to decide. One way, okay." She shrugged a shoulder, making a "so-so" gesture with her other hand. "Another way happy. How will you know? Step inside. I will read your cards."

"Thanks, but not today." I slipped free of her smooth dry grasp.

"Your turn, Bernadette." I crooked my finger at her. "Give me the purse."

"Cross my palm with silver," the voice followed me as I wandered over to the oceanside railing. I looked over my shoulder in time to see Bernie slipping behind the beaded curtain to Madame Marie's inner sanctum. Turning my attention back to the glimmering beach, I tried to figure out if the tide was coming in or going out. The faraway hiss of waves on white sand and the incessant screams of circling gulls filled my head. I let a daydream carry me away.

"Gimme the purse."

"Gee, that was almost as fast as my five got me," I stalled.

"We're not done, I need more money."

"Oh, no. Remember the house limit. Twenty is all you can spend on the pseudo-psychic."

"Yeah, well, I changed my mind."

"Just what did she say that's different from the others?" I asked, trying to calm her down.

"Nothing. So far everything's the same. But this time, she says she knows how I can avoid the outcome."

"What outcome?" In our other readings, Bernie had alluded to dire outcomes, but never disclosed the predictions.

"I can change my fate, but she wants another twenty to tell me how."

"For less than twenty I can get you a book –the Gypsies all read the same book. Then you'll know how to change it for yourself and you can hang out a shingle to sucker other believers."

"Give me the damn purse." She said it with such force and desperation that I surrendered it without further comment.

Bernie clattered across the boardwalk and parted the beaded curtain. Scant seconds later she was charging back, shouting, "Wallet!"

"Bernie –"

"She's gonna toss me, then I'll have to start over!"

I gave her the wallet and she ran back to the shack. I began calculating how much she was going to borrow from me before the week was out. This mental exercise occupied my brain until the clop-clop of Bernie's clogs cut through the ocean sounds. She leaned against the railing, both of us looking out to sea. I waited. It was a long wait.

Her bitter laugh caught me off guard.

"Why don't I listen to you?"

"Because you're an arrogant asshole?" I suggested.

"That was harsh."

"How much she take you for?"

"Gas money for the month."

"How do you avoid your fate?"

"I die."

"We all die."

"It's the way I die."

"Dammit, Bernie, you can't know that!"

Madame Marie can't know that!" I was furious.

"Unless you're planning to do it yourself, there is no way you can know that!"

"They all say the same thing. It's in the blood. I won't make it past thirty," she said it calmly, resignedly.

"Damn nonsense. 'It's in the blood.' Good Catholic girl like you buying into that. It's all rote, I tell you. The minute you tell them your birthday, it's the same story."

"I told Madame Marie my brother-in-law's birthday."

We stood by the railing for a while, gazing into the gathering haze of an afternoon that promised high humidity with storms to follow. I couldn't read tide tables, but I was good at reading the weather signs.

"I'm hungry," Bernie announced. "Let's skip Bally's and head out to Zaberer's, huh?"

"You're broke," I pointed out.

"I drove, you're buying dinner," she replied.

"We decided that when?"

"When you gave me the wallet instead of tossing me over the railing like you should have."

"Oh, so now it's my fault?"

"It's always your fault. Remember, we agreed sophomore year that it would always be your fault."

"You were so stoned sophomore year, how do you remember anything from that year?"

The whipping wind carried our bickering out to sea.

* * *

Her uncle's voice on the phone explained that it was a brain aneurysm. It blew out in a critical area, shutting down involuntary functions like breathing. She was brain-dead in an instant. It was five days before her thirty-first birthday.

Bernie's parents purged her belongings. Her mother found one of my journals in the college-era debris and sent it back to me. I flipped through it, and behind my scribbles were some of Bernie's preliminary sketches and a poem. As I read the poem a melody came to mind, and I realized it was actually the lyric to the Dan Fogelberg song "Run for the Roses." The recurring theme of sad regret haunted me then, and it haunts me still.

Words of Peace

by Paul F. Kennedy

Last year my wife and I traveled to Israel to see Biblical holy sites. Our tour company was Palestinian Christian, so we got a different view from the typical American tourist. The first night we stayed in a hotel on the Mount of Olives, overlooking Old Jerusalem. The neighborhood was Arab Muslim, and poor. Arab kids begged us for money when we ventured out to take in the spectacular view. At about 3:30 a.m., an eerie sound floated into our room, waking us up: the call to prayer from a nearby mosque. I said, "Patty, I don't think we're in Greensburg any more."

The next day we walked into Old Jerusalem with its high walls and narrow stone streets. Dark Muslim women wrapped in traditional garb and bearded, black-clad Orthodox Jews seemed indifferent to the heat, unlike the sweating American and European tourists. Little shops and haggling peddlers lined every pathway, pushing food, T-shirts, and souvenirs. We walked the two-mile-long Via Dolorosa, tracing the steps of Jesus carrying the cross. We visited the sites of Jesus' crucifixion and burial. Religious feeling is intense in Jerusalem, with Jewish, Muslim, and Christian sites straddling each other and jealously guarded. We took our (thankfully) air-conditioned bus to the Garden of Gethsemane, Bethlehem, and the Wailing Wall. Gun-toting Israeli soldiers were everywhere, especially at the Wailing Wall.

English is widely spoken by both Israelis and Palestinians, so communication was not a problem. The tour company owner's ten-year-old son was fluent in Arabic, Hebrew, English, and French. He spoke English better than most Americans. He attended a Catholic school in Jerusalem where a cousin of mine had once taught his father (a spontaneous "small world" discovery). But being addicted to studying languages, I had practiced Hebrew and Arabic before the trip. I could make simple conversation in both. The typical reaction to this very American-looking tourist spouting Semitic verbiage was a smile and obvious appreciation. Most of the people I spoke with had one heartfelt request: "Pray for peace in our country." A Palestinian Christian saleswoman gave me a word of hope that she said is a common Arabic expression: *inshallah*, meaning "God willing."

We traveled into the heart of Palestinian-controlled territory, the West Bank, to see Jericho, Elisha's Well, Lazarus' Tomb, and the Mount of Temptation. The first stop was an Israeli military checkpoint at which soldiers boarded our bus. The commanding officer spoke excellent English. He asked where we were from, and when we told him Pittsburgh, he praised the Steelers. He told us he hoped Obama would be elected president. About a mile down the road was the Palestinian military

checkpoint. One soldier gripping a machine gun walked through our bus. Another waved and welcomed us into Palestine. The State Department warns that the American embassy cannot help you inside the West Bank and advises that Americans not go there. It was a different world from modern Israel. We drove through garbage-strewn streets and watched barefoot boys with sticks beat a donkey. A goatherd led his flock and one loose camel along a dirt road, moving them out of the way so our bus could pass.

We stayed at a gated resort with a swimming pool in Jericho. Everyone was pleasant and happy to have our business. In the pool my wife spoke with a young Muslim woman in a head-to-toe bathing suit whose boyfriend attended college in the United States.

The Palestinian economy has been devastated since Israel now prohibits most Palestinians from working in Israel for fear of suicide bombings. The poverty was heartbreaking. Trinket peddlers and child beggars pleaded with us. We bought a few things because we felt sorry for them. We drove by pathetic refugee camps with bomb scars still visible.

Back through the checkpoints in reverse: first Palestinian, then Israeli. We stopped in Nazareth, the hilly town where Jesus grew up, and visited New Testament sites around the Sea of Galilee. We renewed our wedding vows at Cana. We saw miles of green, irrigated farmland and visited kibbutzim, where we ate delicious fresh fruits and vegetables. Interestingly, hummus and watermelon accompanied every meal of our trip, whether in Arab or Jewish restaurants. We swam in the super-buoyant Dead Sea and danced the "Hava Nagila" on a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee.

The modern cities of West Jerusalem, Haifa, and Tel Aviv have broad streets and remind me more of America than Europe--everything is so new. Israel has made the desert bloom in its sixty years.

On our last day, as we prepared to leave for Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion Airport, we heard rumors of a shooting in the presence of French President Nicolas Sarkozy and reports of a "broken truce" in Gaza. We could sense the tension in the streets. Israelis are used to this, but that doesn't make it any easier. It was a wonderful, rewarding trip, and we never felt unsafe, but we were glad to be going home.

I was struck by how many people in Israel asked us to pray for peace, which has eluded this area for most of its history. The ubiquitous Hebrew greeting *shalom* means "peace." The Arabic word *maasalame*, meaning "with peace," is said in parting. The political situation is bitter and difficult, but there is still hope on both sides for peace . . . *inshallah*.

The Deer

by Sarah Proulx

A deer on the rocks,
Trapped by the tide
And the ocean wall,
Ran wild, up and down
A treacherous spit of rocks
Above Boar's Head.

The sister and I, down
From the Friary retreat,
Saw it flailing, slipping,
Bolting on frozen feet.
And just when it seemed
It would break a leg and drown,
Against all possibility,
It made a heroic leap
To a high rock and then
An amazing arch
Over the high metal rim
Of the tidal wall and down.

It bolted across four lanes of
Traffic on the Ocean Road.
Startled Sunday drivers
Converged with a screech.
It limped between the cottages
And across the semi-solid
Saltmarsh into the stunted trees.

It was early sunset.
No dry bed awaited
For it to heal and sleep
After the tortuous fight
To survive, just a freezing
Wet February night
Huddled alone somewhere
Alive.



Tiger Swallowtail on Gooseneck Loosestrife by Diana Williams

Diana Williams: I grew up in the little town of New Florence, Pennsylvania, and have no formal art education but have taken classes at the Latrobe Art Center with Jackie Dixon as my mentor. I also belong to the Community Arts Center of Cambria County in Johnstown. My work has been selected to show in juried and open shows and has won numerous awards. The most prestigious award for me is People's Choice, which I achieved for my painting "Repose" in the Latrobe Art League's Intra Club Show 2006. That painting also took first place in the show. In 2005 the GLSD Art Conservation Trust purchased my painting "Paschal Birthday" for the Greater Latrobe High School Collection. Two others have been chosen for the Latrobe Art Center calendar 2009 and 2010.

Patricia Dickun: I grew up in “rural” Monroeville and for the past 23 years have lived in Washington Township, Westmoreland County, with my husband and two sons. I have had an interest in art all of my life but had fallen out of practice for many years. Then I became inspired by my artist son and have been painting for the past eight years.

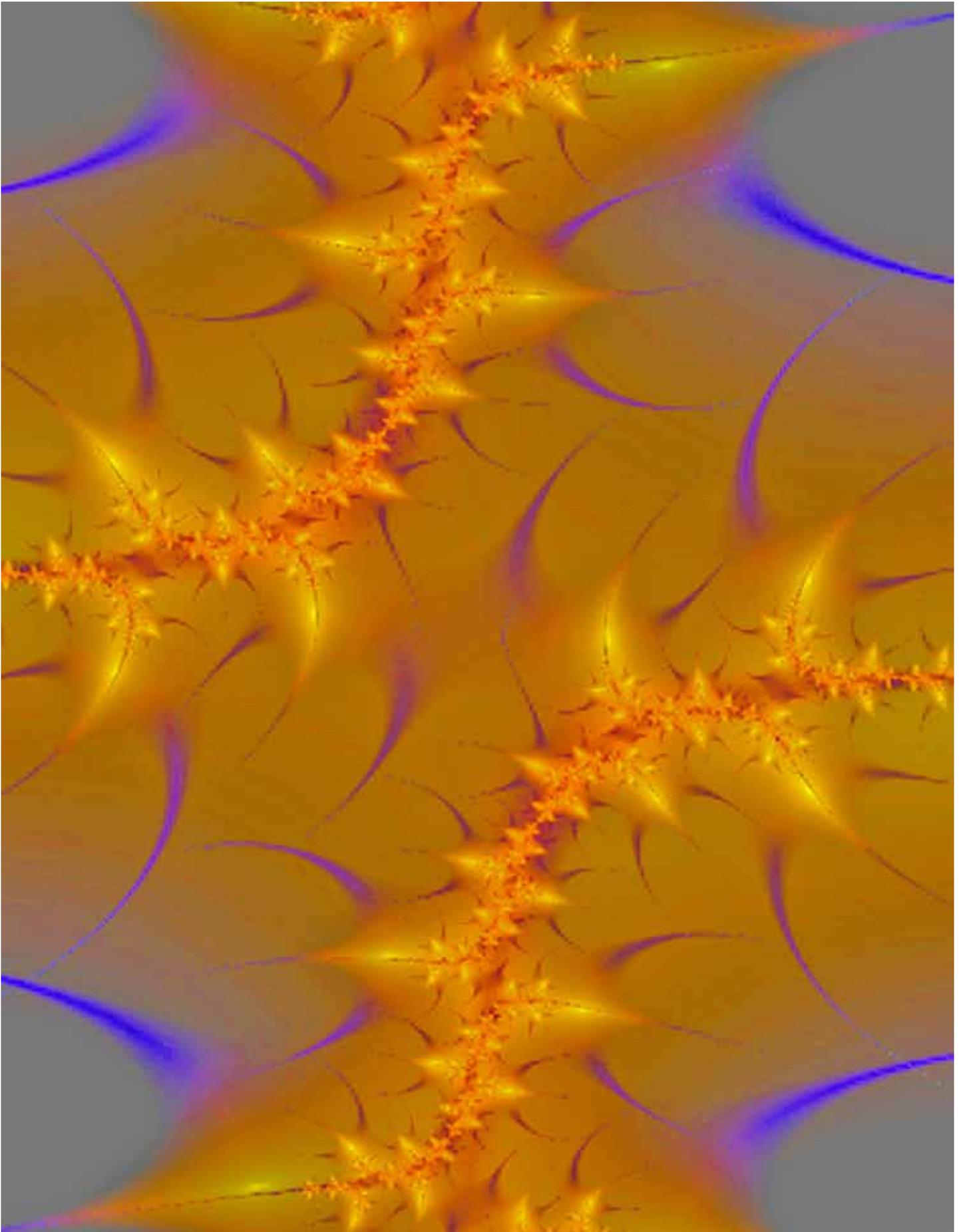
When I look at art and it evokes a calling of the spirit, a memory, a recognition, a knowing: *that* is most exciting! My goal in creating art is to call that spirit in myself and then to move others to do the same. I work in two dimensions with oil, acrylic, ink and pastel mediums. Pastels are the most rewarding due to their immediacy of translation to paper. I am drawn to the human expression of face and form, but also find inspiration in natural and architectural landscapes. (*Pat's work may be seen here on pages 12 and 13 and is featured on our back cover as well.*)



Open Door by Patricia Dickun



Kissed by the Sun by Patricia Dickun



Cosmic Caterpillars by William Patterson

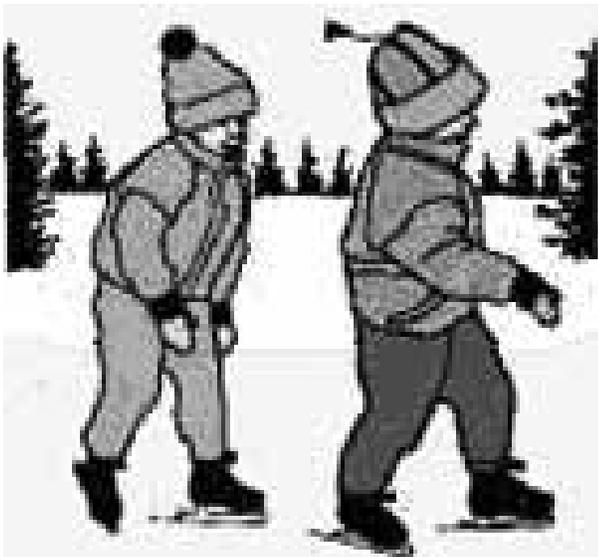
Calendar Daze

by Nancy A. Clark

There are sparkling jewels and precious stones the likes of which I'll never own, but I do have a gem with an inherent value that cannot be assessed. The object of my attention is a calendar created by Wisconsin artist Mary Singleton. It hangs from a wall hook in our kitchen, and for one year I gazed at it every day. More than just tracking 365 days in time, the Americana-style collection of paintings resurrects parts of my own history and instills in me a new appreciation for my past.

The calendar's publisher describes the artist as one who captures "scenes of rural America that reflect a simpler and more idyllic time. Joy and innocence drip from the tip of her brush." If, indeed, one picture is worth a thousand words, Mary Singleton's work speaks volumes to me. The total effect soothes my soul like a cup of hot peppermint tea.

January - and the light created by Mary's high-in-the-sky full moon gives an iridescent glow to gently rolling hills below, transforming snow-covered slopes, pastures, and meadows into acres of marshmallow cream. A soft yellow light at the farmhouse window implies warmth, fellowship, and perhaps--as it was in our house--a pot of venison stew simmering on the shiny cooking surface of the coal cook stove. Luminescence at Mary's barn windows suggests contented cows nestled in straw-filled stalls and cooing barn swallows roosting on rafters. My mind's eye sees me as an eight-year-old in Farmer John's barn, watching him empty a galvanized catch-pail of "fresh squeezed" whole, unpasteurized milk into our glass gallon jugs. In the mid-light of the crisp winter's night caught on this canvas, a handful of youngsters glide on an ice pond, oblivious to a half-dozen woolly sheep keeping watch on this precious flock. I'd lace up my own skates again and join the fun at the pond, but it's time to flip the calendar page to ...



February. There's much hustle and bustle at Mary's fictional Prairie Junction train station. Passengers and cargo are on the move, and there's a story on every face. I can almost hear the whoosh-swoosh of the steam engine idling at the platform and taste the soot spewing from the engine's stack. The shrill "whooo-oooo" of a 1940s coal-train whistle resonates in my head, and I remember the story one old-timer repeated again and again about the day the railroad water tower collapsed in my hometown. "Stopped that ole train right in its tracks," he'd say, slapping his knee and howling at his own pun. There apparently hadn't been that much excitement in our peaceful hamlet since Old Man Striker's outhouse was set afire . . . while he sat in it . . . reading the newspaper.

While some children launch kites into the gusty **March** winds in the next vignette, others splish-splash in puddles of melted snow in the soggy schoolyard. Mary and I could probably spend hours--nay, days--sharing experiences, events, and expectations that shaped our characters. From the belfry atop her red one-room schoolhouse to the belfry atop my red one-room schoolhouse, the similarities in our recall are uncanny. It was life as we knew it when March melted into ...

April, and Mother Earth awakens from her long winter's nap. Amethysts, sapphires, and rubies drip from the tip of Mary's brush, color to complement the emerald green of hill and dale. Vivid pink and pale lavender blossoms prevail on this tableau and my memory sniffs the intoxicating perfume of lilacs as they bloomed near our front porch. The patchwork quilts airing on the backyard clothesline dance in the warm spring sunshine. Mom aired our bedclothes on the clothesline behind our house, too. No fabric softener has ever reproduced the same sweet, clean, fresh fragrance of bedsheets line-dried in an April breeze.

In the merry, merry month of **May**, Mary's still-life schoolchildren appear to anticipate the last day of school and a break from the 3 R's: readin', ritin', and 'rithmetic. My best friend, Charlotte, and I would search through the thick scrubgrass of the schoolyard for miniature violets and wild bluebells, our floral contribution to Mrs. Phipps's paper-littered desk. We'd stretch out in the sparse shade of newly leafed trees and daydream of the long, hazy, lazy, crazy Pennsylvania summer days ahead: of chasing **June's** fireflies and catching tadpoles; of **July** Fourth fireworks and berry picking; of the dog days of **August** when the circus came to town.

Summer marches on in Mary Singleton's provincial settings as it does in real life. In the blink of an eye, it's **September**, my birth month. Mary's simple

characters appear to relish apple picking as much as I did, and the fruit of their labors is evident in the produce displayed at their front-yard fruit stand. This tableau whets my appetite to taste once again the thick jams and crystal-clear jellies, the red tomatoes and green beans, the yellow corn and golden peaches my folks put up in Mason jars and stored in the cool dark of our own fruit pantry.

The last vestiges of summer are everywhere on the September canvas, and I plunge into the memory of walking to school on cool foggy mornings, of blistering hot afternoons when frenzied bees buzzed at the windows, of the aroma of new leather school shoes in my closet, and of swirling clouds of grain dust rising above the farmer's combiner.

October ... November, and I can sense the characters spawned from Mary's paint palette shifting into a lower gear to acclimate to the autumnal equinox. Our family downshifted, too; but even though we marched to a slower cadence, we were ever aware that there would be pumpkins to carve, leaves to rake, wood to gather, and breads to bake.

Blink again and it's **December**. Mary and I come to the end of a quintessential, year-long journey in which we shared memories and history. A pine wreath on the front door of her Victorian-style house signals that the most wonderful time of year is here. In this final vignette, horse-drawn sleighs outnumber wheeled carriages crisscrossing the countryside, and children bundled in warm wraps celebrate all things winter. I'm swept back in memory to a particularly cold, snowy December night when a small group of fur-muffled carolers ascended our front steps and quietly serenaded our quarantined family. Silent Night, Holy Night. Even the measles couldn't stop the sense that all was calm, all was bright on that long-ago winter night.

Another year slips into history, but the essence of memories stirred and times revisited lingers. A fresh calendar for the New Year is in order, but the challenge of finding one that beckons me to a simpler, more idyllic time looms large.

Perhaps I'll just rehang this gem and revisit these pages with Mary Singleton. The first journey was invaluable. A return tour is sure to be priceless.

Estate Sale

by Steve Shilling

The vultures finally had their day, came and took the scraps from my grandmother's house. The stuff that even we could not keep.

They tracked snow on her carpet, salt on her linoleum floor, something we never dared to do. They picked through her plates at the kitchen table. I'd said my last goodbye to my grandfather there the morning that he happened to die. They made off with her Christmas ornaments. Months from now they will be scattered on plastic pines all over these Western Pennsylvania hills. They hauled off the heavy items in the backs of trucks while she sat in the dining room, sipping tea from a cup until somebody bought it. Then she would pour a fresh cup in the next flowered one, marked six dollars, as I imagined my grandfather across the table, pointing at the next looter to walk in the door. "Jesus, Mae, would you get a load of this guy?"



Journeys

by Lou Steiner

Seeking shelter from the cold morning rain, Barb and I rushed aboard the sightseeing boat docked below Westminster Bridge and found ourselves beginning an unplanned trip down the Thames to Greenwich. In 1976 much of the view along the riverbanks was as dreary as the weather we were attempting to avoid. Derelict wharves and abandoned warehouses crowded in broad stretches of desolate decay gave stark evidence of the powerful, unrelenting economic forces that had devastated the once busy port even more severely than the massive bombing raids of World War II.

On board the boat, we became aware of another disturbing example of the harm that apparent progress can unwittingly inflict. Among the travelers enjoying a day on the river that morning were a number of young children whose presence and appearance undoubtedly discomfited some passengers. These children displayed the horrifying physical consequences of their mothers' thalidomide use. The reactions they elicited ranged from stunned compassion to selfish gratitude as onlookers attempted to come to terms with so many young lives locked in an unending struggle with inescapable burdens.

As we neared Greenwich, it appeared that the downpour was unlikely to ease, and we chose to remain on board for what proved to be a somber return trip through the bleak docklands to Central London. The plight of these thalomid children made it impossible to dismiss thoughts of the damaged lives that by merest chance had so briefly, so hauntingly, and so lastingly brushed against ours.

By coincidence, it was not far downriver from the Westminster Bridge almost a quarter of century later when we first heard the German bass-baritone Thomas Quasthoff perform as a soloist in the "Saint Matthew Passion." Knowing nothing of his background, we were startled to observe that Quasthoff was a thalidomide victim. However, after we heard his powerful performance, the term "victim" seemed wildly inappropriate. He has, despite difficult obstacles, established and successfully sustained a career as an internationally acclaimed interpreter of classical music ranging from the Bach we heard that evening through Mozart, Schubert, Brahms, and on to contemporary composers.

For the two of us, the performance stirred emotional responses well beyond those from the music itself as it recalled vivid memories of the children who had been fellow passengers on our earlier river journey. At a later concert with the Pittsburgh Symphony, Quasthoff revealed a personality of considerable good-humored charm in addition to his musical skills. Few thalidomide survivors may have been able to surmount their personal barriers so

dramatically, but Thomas Quasthoff offers eloquent testimony to the amazing expansiveness of the human spirit and its almost limitless capabilities. Witnessing his example of courage and achievement, Barb and I dared hope that among the children on board the boat that day in 1976, a greater number than we had thought possible discovered similar sources of strength and attained satisfying levels of accomplishment and personal fulfillment.

Lost

by Richard Bargdill

Lost, Lost, Lost
In an ocean
Lost, Lost
Dragged out to sea
Lost, Lost
Without a compass--
No direction to follow
To set myself free

Torn, Torn, Torn
From my moorings
Torn from the gods
That believed in me
Torn, Torn,
Torn from my lover
Her whispered words
Had protected me

Hide, Hide, Hide
From the shadows
Hide, Hide
Over there in the crease
Hide from the past
That always follows
Hide from the truth
If the truth is diseased

Fling, Fling, Fling
Your life so gently
Dangle your soul
Out in that breeze
Fling, Fling
Intentions like arrows
May you skip like a rock
Thrown on a stream

Fall away: All
My ego defenses
Fall away: Like
Leaves from a tree
Fall away: From
Misguided directions
Let me break through and
Finally be free

How Facebook Broke My Heart

by Helen Sitrler

OK. So you have a Facebook page because you want to understand what it is that your students spend so much time doing. You tell your advanced composition class that you have thirty-seven Facebook friends. When you say this, some sit in stupefied silence while others struggle to contain laughter. They have two hundred, three hundred, even six hundred Facebook friends.

You feel silly and inept. You become defensive: "I know all thirty-seven of my friends. Do you?" And you show them the comic strip from a March newspaper where one indignant character berates another: "If you had less than 3,000 Facebook 'Friends,' you'd know that!" You want the comic strip to vindicate you but realize that, to your students, having only thirty-seven Facebook friends is still pathetic.

Your nieces — Kelly, age 40; Lydia, age 26; Emily, age 24 — all have well-established, busy Facebook pages with lots more than thirty-seven friends. Still, your thirty-seven friends offer a lot of information. You learn on Facebook that your sister-in-law's stepson and family are moving back east from Idaho. Secretly you are chagrined, as you had intentions of taking that "someday" trip to Coeur d'Alene and Sun Valley Ski Resort. You still can, of course, but will have no family to visit there now. You discovered that a former student you expected to be engaged soon has taken a break from her boyfriend. You drink virtual hot cocoa with Kelly and find that she has posted the official announcement of her pregnancy on her Facebook page. Numerous friends send her congratulations.



You float happily along, enjoying this Facebook experience. You send virtual growing plants and decorate Christmas trees. You give Lydia a ballerina snowglobe, build a snowman with some outdoor-type friends, and sit by the fireplace with others. You drop in on friends' pages to see what they're up to. It is voyeuristic, you realize, but — hey, that new photo of former student Kayli is beautiful, and the photo of Lydia has been unchanged for so long that you know she is inordinately busy teaching third grade and taking two grad courses. You silently commiserate.

You decide to check on Emily, the niece you haven't heard from in over a year. The niece you were so close with when she was little, the niece who invited you to visit her fourth-grade classroom only two years ago. But who seems to be more and more estranged from her father, your brother, happily remarried after divorcing Emily's mother. You hop to her Facebook page to see that she is still dating the guy you met when you last saw her and that they have been to the beach. You don't post anything on Emily's wall; you just look at the photos and leave.

And then some weeks later it happens. You decide to drop back onto Emily's page. But her photo has disappeared from your friends listings. You assume (as with all things computer-related) that you have messed something up. You use the Search box, keyed to her name and her college, to relocate her page. No matches surface. Reluctantly, you guess what has happened. Emily has unfriended you. But still, deep down, you want to believe the computer is at fault.

When you mention Emily's disappearance in advanced composition, the students nod knowingly. They understand immediately that this is not a computer glitch; Emily truly has canceled you as a Facebook friend. They say, "This happens all the time."

You say, "But doesn't it bother you?"

They say, pragmatically, "I have so many friends I'd hardly notice."

And there it is, the difference between their experience and yours. The crux of the whole thing. They are surrounded by friend clutter, hundreds of people who call themselves friends. You are surrounded only by those who actually are. While your students think nothing of losing a friend, all you can think about is Emily's defection.

You finally understand, at a visceral level, how deceptively breezy this Facebook environment can be. You treat Facebook like a game of Candyland--chatting with colleagues like Colleen and Mary, sending flair to Tara. All is spun sugar and nothing is serious. Except that it is. No one tells you that Facebook can break your heart.

Smokey Intervention

by Natalie DeFee Mendik

Alex loaded the emaciated quarterhorse she had just bought into her rusted-out stock trailer. He trustingly stepped up the ramp, his jutting hipbones accentuating each step. She had no idea how old he was or what his background was, but when the sweet grey had fixed his big eyes on her and touched her chest with his whiskery muzzle, it was all over with. Whatever had happened to him in his life, it wasn't a happy story, yet he still had the heart to trust her.

"How about I call you Smokey?" she murmured as she gave him a sweet-smelling flake of hay. He answered with contented munching, his first meal in who knew how long. As her fingers worked at the burr stuck in his forelock, his eyelids drifted to half-mast while he continued rhythmically chewing.

Heading down the highway on her hour-long trip home, Alex mused about him and other horses that she'd rescued at the slaughter auction. The long stretch of highway unfurled in front of her, letting her mind drift. Her heart ached for all the horses she wasn't able to save. They were always there, plenty of them, waiting in the kill-pen, with God knows what history behind them and what fate in front of them. She went to the auction whenever her meager budget allowed her to adopt a new equine friend.

Pulling into the tree-lined driveway to her small farm, Alex was greeted by raucous barking. Her German shepherd, Joey, stretched out his long frame as he raced from the barn to the gate, tongue lolling.

"Hey, boy," Alex greeted him as she hopped out of her truck. She took a moment to stroke his ears before she walked back to the trailer to unload Smokey. Joey stood wagging his tail and waiting respectfully as she unloaded the new horse. The other horses called out a greeting to the newcomer. Backing out of the trailer, Smokey raised his head, calmly taking in the new scenery, and then followed Alex on a loose lead into the barn.

Alex went about her chores, getting her five horses settled in for the night. When all the horses were tucked in, she gave Smokey a good-night kiss. With his whiskers tickling her chin, her eye took in his relaxed and happy stance. Feeling satisfied, she headed up to the house, Joey tagging along at her heels. She popped a frozen dinner in the microwave, too tired to fix herself a real meal. Joey scarfed down his kibbles while she kicked back in front of the TV with her meal on her lap.

Alex was roused by the feeling of Joey's tongue on her hand. Bleary-eyed, she looked around the living room, realizing she had fallen asleep on the couch. Glancing at the clock, she saw it was nearly midnight. Joey thumped his tail and whined a bit. Something was wrong. She slipped on her shoes and coat and headed with Joey back out to the barn to check on Smokey.

Opening the stable door, Alex heard sounds of distress. Hard kicks against the stall's wooden walls were punctuated by a soft groan. She rushed to

Smokey's stall to find him thrashing wildly and biting at his flanks. She knew instantly that he was in serious trouble. She ran to the phone in the feed room and punched in the number for Rich Ivers, her vet.

"Rich, this is Alex Quinn," she said trying to keep the panic out of her voice. "I'm sorry to wake you in the middle of the night, but you've got to come right away! I've got a new horse that's colicking badly."

"I'm on my way," Rich replied. "Keep him walking till I get there."

Rich arrived ten minutes later to find Alex walking the sad-looking horse around in front of the stable. Rich's experienced eye knew Smokey would be a handsome horse if he weren't half-starved and in great pain. Smokey tried to stop walking, a grunt coming from deep in his throat.

"I'm so glad you're here." Alex was relieved by Rich's calm presence. His quiet demeanour quickly won over the horse's confidence. He lifted the gelding's gums and checked his color while monitoring his pulse. After listening to Smokey's gut sounds, he went to his truck to prepare an injection and a stomach tube. He set about administering drugs and treatment and then gently walked Smokey until he began to show signs of relief. Alex watched from her seat on a hay bale, slowly relaxing as she saw Smokey leaving the danger zone. She began to watch Rich, taking in his rock-solid presence--in both body and personality. She had known Rich for years and had always been able to count on him. Like her, he was a bit of a loner, more comfortable with animals than at parties. His sandy blond hair and tall physique gave him a handsome allure she was sure no woman could resist. Why, then, was he still alone?

Rich broke her reverie as he stopped with Smokey in front of her. "I think we can put him back in his stall for now," he said. Alex turned her head a bit, hoping he wouldn't see her blush. What if he knew what she was thinking?

After putting Smokey away, Rich sat down next to Alex, stretching his long legs and sighing. "I think he's out of the woods, but I want to stay a bit longer and keep an eye on him. Why don't you head back up to the house and get some sleep?"

"There's no way I'm going to leave you to manage this by yourself. I'll put on some coffee in the tack room," Alex answered.

Returning with steaming coffee and warm horse blankets, she settled next to Rich. "I wonder if Joey knew something was wrong," she mused. "He woke me up."

"I wouldn't doubt it," Rich replied, sipping the warm coffee. "Animals can be uncanny creatures."

A companionable silence fell, punctuated by the peaceful sounds of the stable.

"Can I ask you a personal question?" Rich asked.

"Sure."

"Why haven't you ever married?"

Alex quickly drew in her breath. "I guess I just never found the right man. What about you? Why are you still single?"

"Same thing, more or less. Most women wouldn't understand the hours I keep with my job. Something like that." Rich rose from the hay bale. "I guess I'd better check Smokey."

Alex leaned back against the hay behind her. She was exactly the kind of woman who could understand a man like that. With the earthy warmth of the hay and Joey at her feet, Alex drifted off to sleep.

Rich returned to find Alex dozing under the horse blanket. He pulled it up under her chin and gently brushed the hair from her cheek.

With the rising sun the horses began to stir. Alex

woke to find Rich watching Smokey over the stall door.

"Looks like we're all clear," he told her, gently stroking Smokey's neck. The horse's eyes were half-closed with pleasure. "He's got a big heart, and he's a fighter, too. I think you found yourself a good one. He did too."

Alex went about putting down hay for the horses, smiling and humming. The morning sky took on a pink tinge; the air smelled cool and mossy. "Why don't you come up to the house for breakfast?" she asked, pausing next to Rich at Smokey's stall.

"I'd love to," he answered. They walked out of the stable into the fresh morning air, hands briefly brushing as they walked side by side. An expansive, hopeful feeling filled her chest. Alex looked up into the dawn sky, knowing a new day was surely coming.

Landing in Pittsburgh

by Steve Shilling

Two hours after leaving the miles of orange groves and mandrakes, bent pines and water-pocked flatlands of Florida, these hills are a welcome sight. There's a barge slugging up the muddy Ohio. Everywhere the baseball diamonds are empty. Clear blue swimming pools wait on silent cul-de-sacs. A couple of days from now, the palm tree I had sent back will arrive. We will plant it in the back, huddle around it and nurse it through winter. People will tilt their heads in the spring. Ask, "Is that?" "Yes," we will say. "It is."

Small Hours

by Sarah Proulx

Mid night for me is not twelve
but the countless hours between two and four,
when I wake to an accordion-pleated
out-of-time zone of refuge
and nourishment.

Whether pale moonlight laces
the bony trees, or a chill
rain crackles at the windowsill,
I am content to be alone
in this inner firmament.

My soul floats; images bubble up,
spill over and run,
deep and strong as love,
mellow as old regret,
new as a stranger at the door;
answers form and questions beg for more.

My fancies breathe and move about,
strange creatures furred with words,
tendentious words that stand on end
and crackle, words that shed easily upon touch
to reveal new ones budding underneath.
My time, endless, rich, untamed,
where shoulds and oughts are banished
to stand and wait until morning, unclaimed.

Acceptance finally brings release,
free-breathing satisfaction, then surcease,
and finally the heavenly peace
of dreaming sleep.

Dream I will, and write I must
before this fountain turns to rust.

Music Scored by the Board at a Nonprofit

by Barbara Kepich

Said the Board Pres, "Tick-tock, ho-hum.
In all things there is rhythm."

"Mildred, type those minutes, please.
Down and up the computer keys."

"T, can we change the fiscal year,
Yet maintain one audit here?"

"Shall we move our site four blocks down,
Then, next year, relocate back uptown?"

"Rich, your resignation clears.
No time here. More time, career."

"That fundraiser, Morrie, shot down,
Will rise next meeting. Be around."

"Pass the mints, candies in a jar,
But no resolutions, so far."

"Let's adjourn, commence next month.
Stop at a bistro. Go do lunch."



Endstops

by Robin Strachan

You reach for my fingers in the darkness
as I lie with my cheek on your chest,
feeling your soft, rhythmic breathing,
the soothing sound of your beating heart.

The glow from the moon washes over us,
painting us in shades of light
that enhance the dark of your skin
against the white of mine.

I know before you say it that this is love,
though we hesitate to sound the words
running in harmony through our heads,
a melody that no one else can hear.

You get up and dress slowly, in measures,
stopping now and then to run your fingers
over my body as though playing a song
that will end too soon, too soon.

Our Authors

Mary Ann Back, of Mason, Ohio, was awarded the 2009 Bilbo Award by Thomas More College for her short story "Sadie's Choice." Publication credits include "A Different Shade of Death" and "Rose Hill Plantation."

Richard Bargdill is an associate professor of psychology at St. Francis University. He is an award-winning visual artist and won the 10th annual Sophie Award for Poetic Excellence.

Nancy Clark says she feels blessed to be living the good life in Export, Pennsylvania, as the contented wife of Tom Clark for 48 years, proud mom of three, and beaming grandma to three.

Rebecca E. Dunn, an unrepentant bookaholic, is a job counselor by day, adjunct faculty by night, and play director by accident. She is currently active with the LVW and the Greensburg Writers Group. Her *Loyalhanna Review* story is dedicated to the real "Bernadette."

Colleen Hansen is a Pennsylvania native and a published author for 20 years. Her interests and inspirations center on my faith, family, friends, writing, reading, music, and travel.

Barbara Kepich is currently enrolled in a job-training program for older adults at non-profit organization sites. Her children's short story, "Let's Laugh," was published in *Sparkle!* November 2008.

Paul F. Kennedy's short stories, articles, and poetry have appeared extensively in local and regional publications. He has authored the books *Pittsburgh Gamble* and *Billy Conn – the Pittsburgh Kid*.

A. David Landsperger was born in Charleroi, Pennsylvania, and married a girl from Charleroi, Belgium. Along the way he got two sons, two degrees, and a career in metals. Now semiretired, he bicycles and writes, though not simultaneously.

Natalie DeFee Mendik of Jeannette holds a master of arts degree from Colorado State University in teaching English as a second/foreign language and has taught in the U.S. and Switzerland. She is a freelance features writer for the *Equine Journal*.

E. Kay Myers, a founding member of Ligonier Valley Writers and a former editor of *The Loyalhanna Review*, writes a Saturday column, "Thinking Back," for *The Latrobe Bulletin*. He and his wife, Gertrude, publish *Around Latrobe* magazine and *The Ligonier Free Gazette*.

Sarah Proulx's poetry, published posthumously, was submitted by her daughter and son-in-law, Mara and Nigel Elliott, of Great Britain. Retired from Latrobe Steel and the Diocese of Greensburg, she attended WCCC and credited the Dead Poets Society at Seton Hill University with encouraging her to write.

Steve Shilling of McMurray, Pennsylvania, has poems forthcoming in *WestWard Quarterly* and *Main Street Rag* and has published in numerous journals, including in *DASH Journal*, *Red Wheelbarrow*, *Reed Magazine*, and *The Loyalhanna Review*.

Helen Collins Sitler teaches composition in the English Department at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. She also works with student teachers in English education and co-directs the Southcentral Pennsylvania Writing Project.

Lou Steiner is a retired businessman and is preparing a collection of brief essays intended to be reflective observations concerning world events, personal experiences, literature, art, and music.

Patricia Orendorff Smith's work appears in 24 publications including *Small Town Life Magazine*, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, *Mature Outlook*, *Writing Basics*, *Tribune-Review*, and *USA TODAY*. Glenn Beck featured *In Their Own Words* on CNN.

Robin Strachan, who lives in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, is an artist, writer, and professional fundraiser. She currently is working on three cookbooks and a chapbook of poetry called *Endstops*.

Hannah Ufnar is a recent graduate of Saint Francis University, with a bachelor of arts in English/communications. She lives in Pittsburgh and is looking forward to volunteering with AmeriCorps this fall. She won the Weixel Scholarship to the Ligonier Valley Writers' Conference in 2008.

Ed Kelemen, a columnist for the *Blairsville Dispatch*, has published in numerous local, regional and national magazines. He lives with his wife, two of his five sons, two big dogs, and a clutch of attitude-ridden cats. Visit him at www.ekelemen.com.

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- * LVW publishes annually the unique literary journal the *Loyalhanna Review* in both hard copy and extended online version.
- * Our quarterly newsletter brings you the latest about writing events, plus valuable how-to articles.
- * LVW hosts a number of workshops each year presented by authors and editors. Members receive discounts on workshops.

Member Application

Fill in this form and mail to:

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Calendar

July 18

Ligonier Valley Writers' Conference, Faith Adiele,
Kirk Negget, Ellen McGrath Smith, Karen Williams

August 1, 2-4 p.m.

Author Book Fair at Ligonier Valley Library.
Talk with local authors and purchase their books.

August 15

Deadline for Flash Fiction Contest.

September 6, 3-5 p.m.

Annual LVW Picnic, St. Michael's Church, Rector.
PA

October 10

Flash Fiction winners will be announced.

Late October

Flash Fiction readings, Barnes & Noble and
Greensburg Hempfield Area Library, complete with
costumes.

November 15

Speaker TBA

December 6, 3-5 p.m.

Annual Christmas Party, St. Michael's Church,
Rector, PA

*Check www.LVWonline.org
for more info*



Ion Wind by *William Patterson*

William Patterson, a former English teacher, residing in Derry, says, “You might say I am the new kid on the block. I paint in oils and create fractal art.”

A fractal is a geometric pattern repeated at ever smaller scales to produce irregular shapes and surfaces that cannot be represented by classical geometry. They are used especially in computer modeling of irregular patterns and structures in nature. To create his own fractals, he pictures a black splotch, or sometimes many, and controls color using linear, square root, cube root, etc.

“I see art and beauty in almost everything. I have so many things in my head that I want to paint; I don’t know when I will get time to do them. I am also a member of the Beanery Writers’ Group and have been writing quite a lot lately.” (He also created “Cosmic Caterpillars” on p. 14.)

“We all dwell in a house of one room —the world with the glorious starry firmament for its roof — and are sailing the celestial spaces without leaving any track.”

— John Muir in *John of the Mountains*



Butterfly Garden at the Winnie Palmer Nature Reserve by *Patricia Dickun*