



OAK LAWN WRITERS BLOCK

A Literary Review

THE LITERARY REVIEW

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Literary Review is a collection of poems, essays and
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journey with expectations that their insights
and talent will be entertaining
and thought-provoking.

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BIOGRAPHIES

- * **ALENA BUNCAK:** formerly a nurse. As a teenager, she was trapped in Prague at the outbreak of WWII and survived to tell her story.
- * **MIRIAM CALZARETTO:** septuagenarian, who trips the light fantastic with feet to country-western line dancing and fingers which fly over piano, organ and word processor.
- * **WILLIAM DOLLEAR:** early childhood educator and writer.
- * **ELEANORA GAMBINO:** a teacher for more than 20 years, she has Cerebral Palsy. Wishes to go dancing soon!
- * **CATHERINE M. GOEWY:** Wife of Michael, mother of three sons, lives in Chicago. An educator who enjoys writing poetry.
- * **HELENE KOPP:** Retired. Was a published writer. Of late has renewed interest in writing, particularly poetry.
- * **ELEANOR LITTO:** Oak Lawn resident for 38 years. Born in St. Paul. Keeps a daily journal. MVCC alumna. Writes light, positive, slice-of-life stories, usually family oriented.
- * **NADINE M. LOTTIO:** professional artist. Writes poetry.
- * **LIAM McDONALD:** born in Ireland, has resided in Chicago most of his life and has published short stories in Gaelic and English.
- * **BETTY MORSKI:** resides in the southwest suburbs with her husband and four children. Favorite pastimes are her family, writing and community service, especially concerning women's issues.
- * **HARRIET P. MURPHY:** long-time resident of Oak Lawn, she has worked in public relations (H.L. Richards High School). Writes poetry and short stories. Wrote her mother's biography and read it to her mother on her 105th birthday.
- * **MARY NELSON:** public relations professional consultant specializing in serving public and other not-for-profit institutions.
- * **JAMES SHIELDS:** a retired, disabled IBM engineer who invents and markets products for the handicapped. Lives in Country Club Hills.
- * **KAY SIEMECK:** long-time Oak Lawn resident (43 years); retired public relations specialist and journalist.
- * **MARY TOMASZEK:** long-time resident of Chicago, on staff at Roosevelt University. "Writing is a celebration of imagination for me."
- * **GIL YARAS:** resident of Chicago Ridge. As a writer he enjoys the challenge of facing a blank page to create ideas that have insight and are unique.
- * **YVETTE YETTER:** young girl with Cerebral Palsy, writes stories, poems and music using a mouth stick. A computer whiz, she helps those having trouble with their computers.

This is a tale that my mother and the widow Elis O'Connor would repeat after they managed a determination of the future with the dregs of tea leaves in their evening cups. I could never for the life of me see the things in the leaves that they could, then talk the hours away. Unlike reading of a palm, every cup would engender a meeting, a journey, an uncommon death, a stranger. I listened to the tales until sleep would numb their voices.

In the telling of the tale, it is a story of place. I structured it to eliminate the constraints of patrilineage, courtship rites, church bans, and season, and minimized authoritative clergy. There is definitely the influence of James Plunket's Farewell to Companions in the balance of gender of deus ex machina. And again Plunket's Strumpet City in the hoary description of the rats defleshing the corpse of Rashers Tierney in the coal bin of the Dublin tenement in the winter of 1913.

Liam Macdomhnaill

NOT ONLY DO THE LIVING DWELL HERE!

It is whispered in the west of Ireland where the mists of hill and bog abound that the living do not dwell alone. The ring forts and raths laid in stone by ancient hands guard the valleys and coast in their swelling mounds of unearthly secrets. On the tidal islands around Belmullet, shrouded by the sea fogs, the coach of the Tais, the name that na Gael gave to Phantom-Death himself, is yet heard rattling across the causeways at night, crashing the stone into shards from the heaviness of its invisible cargo. High in the barren bogs, or in the treeless Burren, ghosts have walked on mysterious errands completing the unfinished business of lives cut short.

The border between the worlds of light and shadow has been hard to chalk, but easily crossed. It was sometimes said that only a person who had heard the wail of the Banshee, and was therefore doomed to die before the year's end, could see these forms who had kissed the stones of earth before. But the speaking between the dead and the living was neither unknown nor forbidden. At Samhain, the time of All Hallows' Eve, the spirits of the departed could be depended upon to accost those whose hearts still beat, to tell a doleful story or mournfully enlist their aid.

Obligations between friends and kinfolk did not end when the mourners and keepers left the graveyard. At the hob of the cabins in which the Specter might visit, there was a bowl of milk and a platter of oatcakes placed in readiness to abide the tortured spirit of the deceased. Debts had to be paid, and the promises made before death were still to be honoured. If such vows were breached, those who were found in neglect should be prepared for a doleful harvest. There were many tales handed down in the old language to remind everyone of the dire risks.

One story concerned a pair of devoted friends named Manus and Fergus, young men of the bogland parish. They had passed their tender years in each other's company, learning to fish, handle the shoals in a curragh, snare the rabbits and filch from the curate's apple

orchard. Inseparable in school and on the hurling greens, when they grew to manhood, they swore whoever married first would have the other as best man. In time, both fell in love with the same woman. While this measure of things was at pricking the wits of the townspeople, the pair courted her together without apparent rivalry or rancour. Onora was wiser than her suitors; she knew sooner or later a choice would have to be made.

On the day Onora arrived at her decision, Manus was away from home. He had done what no man in the village would do; he had agreed to stand as godparent to the child of an unwedded, poor, half-witted daughter of a cottier. This would be setting tongues astir that would wag for the next seven years. Manus carried the sickly ween along side its shamefaced mother to the parish church in a nearby market town. He announced to all the farmers and tinkers at hand that no child, whatever its parentage, should be denied the hope of heaven. The baptism came none too soon. Safely christened, the ailing child was seized by a fit and fever and hence called to the side of its Maker on the way back to the village.

When Manus returned that night his mother poured him a cup of tea and said that his friend Fergus had come to call. "The likes of him looked pale and haggard," she added. He was in wild need to see Manus, and begged the poor woman to have Manus come at sunrise to the tall cross up on the Taisce moor where two paths met.

Only the cow herd was awake in the village when the young man to find his friend. As he climbed the gorse-brambled moor, he was bewildered by a faint tapping sound, as if someone was putting blows to a door. But upon the ridge, there was not even the sight of a shepherd's hut. When he reached the meeting place, the mystery began to unravel. The salmon glow of the rising sun revealed a long, forked shape swinging from the arm of the cross, its feet tapping on the wooden upright.

Sightless eyes bulging, blackened tongue protruding from a ferocious visage, Fergus was there before him. Manus's screams of anguish resounded off the hills and their echo pursued him back to the village. Sobbing, he ran first to tell the story to Onora. He stood witless while she tore her hair, scratched at her face and nearly choked with wailing.

"So, it's Fergus you folded in your heart?" he said, but Onora's grandmother, who was huddled smoking her pipe by the embers, put her stick to the floor and arose to tell him, "The devil does not always appear black! Only yesterday," she said, "Onora told Fergus that Manus was her chosen!" Then Manus understood the whole matter.

The two young people grieved over their friend, but they saw no reason to delay their marriage. They agreed that there would be no coeli dancing at their feast as a mark of respect for their departed companion. Then they threw themselves into plans and preparations, and banished all thoughts of the suicide's body, now rotting as custom decreed on the gibbet of his own devising.

It came time for the prospective bridegroom to tour the countryside, issuing invitations

to his neighbors, friends and kinfolk. As he rode with his cousin across the moors and bogland, he spoke of a promise, made years before, that only Fergus should be his groomsman when he wed. He would not rest easily, he said, if the vow was not honored, at least by gesture. Leaving his friend to hold the horses, Manus climbed the long slope to the cross that was now a gallows. At his approach, a flock of ravens flew off the decrepit thing that dangled there. Clothing and flesh had been ripped by beak and talons. Earwigs clustered in the caves of eye sockets unmoved by the rank of decay. With reverence, Manus came closer. He spoke up to remind his friend of the promise and told Fergus that the place of the best man awaited him at the nuptial feast. Then, with conscience salved, he went away to speak his words of imitation to warmer ears elsewhere. As he hurried down the slope, he heard the slapping wings and raucous calls of the birds returning to their banquet.

When the day of the wedding arrived, guests came from all over the district, the women in their best lace shawls, and the men in their dark woolens with buttons polished. The poteen flowed as free as the Owenduff stream. Toast after toast was made to the young couple, and they lifted their cups in reply. Then a voice, loud, coarse and mocking as a raven's croaked out, "I must drink to my best friend."

There in the doorway stood Fergus, or what was left of him. Fear seized the guests. The cup dropped from Manus's hand. The specter lurched toward the bride and groom. "Where's my seat? You said you would keep a place of honour for me." Silence was the only reply from the fearful fold. Again the ghost of Fergus began to speak. With a creaking bow, he turned and asked the bride to dance. Onora's face blanched whiter than the ghostly suitor's bones, but her husband spoke up on her behalf. He explained that there was to be no dancing at this wedding feast, as a mark of respect for Fergus's memory. A wheezing, clattering parody of laughter erupted from the wraith's throat. The creature came closer and leaned across the table, its rank breath polluting the toasting cups. Then it reached out to Onora and announced its intentions to kiss the bride. For the first time in his life Manus raised his clenched fist to his friend, but the blow fell on empty air. Next he felt a prickling on the back of his neck and heard a cold sibilant whisper in his ear. It warned him that if he did not wish to see the wedding spoiled utterly, and the marriage as well, he had better meet Fergus at the grisly cross on the moor to make amends. Then the unexpected guest vanished.

The others at the wedding gathering made halfhearted efforts to rekindle the festivity, but it was clear that Manus's thoughts and those of his bride were quite elsewhere. The couple withdrew and agreed that it would not bode well to ignore Fergus's request. Unplacated, this specter could blight their lives in ways too hideous to contemplate. Soon thereafter the guests made their tongues soft in excuse and departed from the hostelry leaving the innkeeper in wonder at the plates of untouched food and barrels of uisce beatha unbreached. "It would all," he reminded Manus, "have to be paid for."

Manus brought Onora to an old cabin near the lake of Carrowmore. Then, with many regrets, he left her to pray for his safe return. His last sight of his new bride was her bent figure at the half door. And he wondered if the bride's bonnet would be replaced before the

next day's sun by the widow's shawl, as well as did she.

Assisted by the beams of the moon, Manus approached the awful moor hill where that cross bore its creaking burden. But as he set foot on the slope, he heard some wail or voice that sounded like it was calling his name! A horseman rode fast toward him. Manus waited, half in fear, for he knew no one in the district with such a magnificent white horse. The horseman saluted him: Manus had never seen the likes of the rider's garb except in the tales of the Great Finn. Manus responded with a greeting in the old tongue, but apologized for not recognizing someone who nevertheless seemed to know him. The horseman said that he knew where Manus was heading at the dangerous hour. He offered the aid of his mount. Sensing this person to be someone of terrible honour, he climbed behind the horseman. They pulled up a short distance from the cross, stark and gruesome, and in the spotting of the moon through the malefic clouds, the bundle of bones could be seen swaying in the night breeze. As Manus dismounted, the horseman instructed him to approach the skeleton without hesitation, clasp the right foot, or what remained of it, with his right hand, and affirm to the specter that Manus, a friend, had come to learn what it wanted of him.

Manus did as the stranger had bidden him. His hands clutched the viscous bones and he could feel the pits and cavities picked clean by the ravens and even the binding sinews moistened by the night air. Then he asked Fergus what he desired of him. The skeleton kicked violently, sending Manus flying; the bones began to lurch about as though battered by a coastal storm. Then there came a groan, not from the thing hanging on the gibbet, but from the ground beneath it. It was the voice of Fergus, much distorted, yet it offered to the night menacing curses and intonations that Manus had never heard pass the lips of living man. It roared abuse at the mysterious horseman, whose intervention had deprived him of his rightful prey. Without this stranger's aid, the bridegroom's bones and not Fergus's would be swinging from the cross and the fair Onora would find a very different husband in her bed.

Manus ran back to the horseman whose features he had not yet discerned and who was indifferent to the rain of curses. There was nothing more the bony creature could do to Manus, the horseman assured him. He pulled Manus up behind him and sped down the hill.

TERRIFYING ORDEAL

By *ALENA BUNCAK*

Prague, Czechoslovakia, 1941: When Germany declared war against the United States, mother and I were picked up in an inconspicuous manner by a plainclothes officer and escorted to the Czech Police Headquarters downtown for questioning.

At that time we did not connect the two events. The man who appeared at our door that day asked us to pack an overnight suitcase in his presence and enough food to last us three days. We were not allowed to leave a message for our family about our sudden departure. No legitimate explanation was given to us for this abrupt intrusion into our lives, leaving us baffled and frightened. We knew that in the Nazi regime, people taken into custody had only a slim chance of ever returning to their homes.

Instructions were given to mother and me by the officer that our conduct was to be as natural on public transportation as if we were making an out-of-town trip. The man warned us that he would not hesitate to use his revolver should we try to escape. He walked closely behind us, watching our every move.

At the headquarters, we entered a spacious room and were seated on benches similar to those seen at train stations. The two officers standing guard forbade us to communicate with others in the waiting room, urging us to remain silent even with one another. Nevertheless, we learned that others were also American citizens. Another detainee, a man from New York, quietly passed the word that we might be expatriated to the States through the Red Cross, via Switzerland. This was discouraging for me since my parents were separated and I was unsure what returning home would mean.

I can recall a man, his two children with their caged bird, and their grandmother, who began serving roast goose to the family from her packed food basket. Wild speculation and thoughts about our immediate future ran through our minds as we sat on the bench, talking together in a low whisper.

After long hours of waiting, our turn came to enter the adjoining room where a high-ranking Nazi officer curtly greeted us in fluent English. Confronting an enemy who spoke perfect English hit us like a bombshell. The moment called for absolute composure on our part, with no sign of surprise or fear. The officer's lengthy interrogation led us to believe he had already considered all possibilities of having us flown back to Cleveland. The accuracy of the information he read to us from a thick file about our relatives in both countries was uncanny.

Due to my family's circumstances, our existence in Ohio would have been bleak, and flying over German territory at the time of war sounded risky. In order to survive, mother and I had no choice but to remain in Prague with grandfather until the end of the war.

Moreover, judging by the nature of questions directed at us by the interrogator, his chief concern seemed to be whether any one of us was connected with Resistance.

The German police finally gave us clearance and dismissed us with the understanding that we would remain in Czechoslovakia. I have never forgotten how the Nazi's stern eyes bored through us as we left the room. And long afterwards, the click of his boots still reverberated in my mind. Exiting through the back of the police station, mother and I let out a sigh of relief.

Several days later we were notified about a rule announced by the Gestapo that American citizens were not to leave the city without written permission. The handful of Americans living in Prague during the war faced severe penalties for not reporting to Gestapo Headquarters every Wednesday. In the Gestapo's view, every alien automatically fell under suspicion for conspiring against Nazi Germany.

Secretly, mother and I were pleased to think that the Third Reich considered us a threat.

Next: Other first-person war-related accounts.

SPACE INVADERS

By *Mary Nelson*

No body position or body movement has a precise meaning. In other words, the body language parlor games and generalizations that we have all heard about do not necessarily apply. Crossed arms do not always mean, "I will not let you in." Rubbing the nose with a finger does not always mean approval and steeping the fingers does not always mean superiority.

Body language and spoken language are dependent on one another. Spoken language does not give the listener the full meaning of what a person is saying. The same is true of body language.

However, the need for "space" is a territorial need that exists in all human beings. Man has a sense of territory and a need for a shell of territory around him. This varies from the tight, close-knit shell of the city dweller through the larger bubble of yard and home of the suburbanite to the open spaces a country person enjoys.

No one knows how much space is necessary for any individual. What is important in the study of body language is what happens when individuals have their space or territory threatened or breached or invaded. The guarding of our space zones and how we invade other people's zones are two of the basic principles in the study of body language or non-verbal communication.

For example, I had lunch recently with a psychiatrist friend of mine. We were seated at a small table in one of Chicago's downtown restaurants. At one point, he took out a package of cigarettes, lit one and then put the pack down about three-fourths of the way across the table, right in front of my plate. He kept talking, and I kept listening, but in some way I couldn't quite define, I was uncomfortable. The feeling grew as he rearranged his silverware, napkin and plate so that all of it was being lined up with the pack of cigarettes, closer and closer to my plate, all on my side of the table. Finally, as he was making a point about something in his conversation, he leaned almost completely across the table. I didn't appreciate what he was saying because I was very uneasy by this time. I was his guest and didn't want to commit a breach of good taste, but I almost reacted by telling him "to sit down before you spill something."

Obviously, he recognized my distress and took pity on me. He explained that he had just favored me with a demonstration of a very basic step in body language. He had aggressively threatened and challenged me. He put me in the position of having to assert myself, and it bothered me.

He continued with the explanation by saying that moving the cigarettes in the first place had broken the unspoken rule. Unconsciously, we had divided the table in half, half for him and half for me. In our minds we had both staked out our territory. Ordinarily, we

would have shared the table by some unspoken, civilized command. He had deliberately moved his cigarettes into my territory which was a breach of my space. Unaware of the deliberate action, I was uncomfortable. When he continued by moving his plate, napkin and silverware, and finally, by actually intruding himself into my space, I was very ill at ease without knowing why.

This was my first real experience with the fact that we possess zones of territory and that we carry them with us wherever we go. We react in different ways to the breaking of our zones.

I decided to try the technique on a friend of mine at dinner one evening. We were in an Italian restaurant where a bottle of wine is placed in the center of each table. I deliberately moved the wine bottle from where it had been placed into my friend's zone. Then slowly, and still talking, I followed this invasion by rearranging the wine glasses and putting mine in his zone along with my napkin. Seemingly quite ill at ease, he shifted in his chair, moved to the side and rearranged his plate and napkin in front of him. Then, in a sudden, almost compulsive lunge, he picked up the wine bottle and set it down with a thud in its original position. He had reacted by defending his zone with retaliation.

A number of basic facts emerge from this brief demonstration. No matter how crowded the area in which we live, each of us maintains a zone, an inviolate area that we try to keep for our own. How we react to invasion of our space and how we encroach other territories are basic elements of non-verbal communication.

All of the time, possibly without even knowing it, we are playing the game of SPACE INVADERS.

BOOT-SCOOTIN' SENIORS

By *Miriam Calzaretto*

Turn on "Achy Breaky Heart" by Billy Ray Cyrus and hordes of senior citizens from the Lake Michigan area jump up and grind to the latest, hottest trend: Country-western line dancing. What used to be for the young blooded only has found its way into the retirement community. Sixty to eighty-year olds are bustin' buns to the tush push, sleazy side and funky cowboy.

When a group of gyrators line up in rows of ten each, you've got geriatric Rockettes, stompin', turnin', and kickin' in unison. Aerobics, ala Jane Fonda or Richard Simmons, are excellent for strengthening the heart and toning the body, but when it comes to receiving the same healthful benefits and enjoying every moment of it, there's nothing like rootin' tootin', leather slappin', boot-beatin' music.

Texas two-steppin' is great for couples, but if you're a widow (and five to one you are) square dancing and round dancing are out, line dancing is in!

Line dance instructors are invading senior citizen centers and making sod bustin' addicts out of urban and suburban great-grandparents. Ballrooms are being converted to country-western music faster then you can scoot your boot.

Put a couple hundred thigh thumpers (fifty percent of them seniors) in lines, winding left and right, turning, kicking and bending in tandem and you have a well-ordered stampede going. Get a few mavericks in the middle who forget which way to turn and you have a combination of confusion and hearty laughter. No one cares. They're all having too much fun grinding away. There's no stopping until the music ends.

Perhaps the band will play a mellow western like "She's Not Cryin' Anymore" or a country cha-cha and all the toe tappers cool down, gracefully turning and dipping to the country line, stationary cha-cha or any of many smooth line dances. There's no sitting back in the saddle thinking you've got all the dances under your belt, because every new cowboy song hitting the airwaves is a western choreographer's delight and galloping goodies are being turned out as fast as you can clap your chaps.

"I've accumulated sixty-two dance patterns to date," said one senior cowgirl, "And I know I've only scratched the surface!"

Although country-western has been around for many years, it is only recently that it has taken the number one spot in dancing. Just lately, line dances are appearing on aerobic videos. "Cotton-eyed Joe," is making a come-back along with many songs from years ago. "Calijah," sung by Hank Williams in the late forties, has returned with a vengeance. The "Matador," sung by Sylvia, brings out the raging bull in the elderly, as they shout "Ole" during certain stamps.

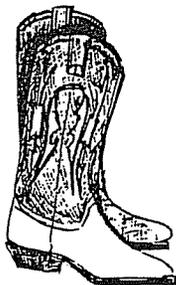
Not all dances are done in lines, however. The rose and the circle jerk are performed in a circle and, if viewed from above, would resemble the opening and closing of a flower, reminiscent of the June Taylor dancers on a vintage Jackie Gleason Show.

One of the greatest assets of line dancing is the positive effect it has on arthritis. As one struttin' senior put it, "My doctor says to keep moving to alleviate the pain and stiffness. Believe me, this keeps me moving and I have no time for aches."

"They call me 'swivel hips,' which makes me feel great, because I have two artificial hips!" said another.

"I've never had so much fun keeping healthy," said a side-stepping septuagenarian.

A twenty-year-old may be hitchin' alongside an eighty-year-old, and both are as happy and frisky as a coupla' bronco busters. This communion between young and old is healthy, clean and invigorating. Bridging the gap between the age groups is something sorely needed in America today.



A SECRET PLACE
By *Mary A. Tomaszek*

Just a little south of 87th Street, not even forty minutes from Chicago's Loop, is a special place. Not many people know of it; dog owners and others cling only to the outer edges of the forest preserve and rarely venture outside of its periphery.

But not me. I like to sit near the bank of a large pond, usually with a small lunch and a pair of binoculars at my side. Turning my head to the left, I see the tiny stream that spills into the pond. It rattles and clatters over its rocky bed, its waters in a great hurry to join the larger water of the pond. Small wonder. The pond and its surroundings are beautiful. Rushes and cattails grow in the shallows along its bank, choice perches for the resident redwing blackbirds and an occasional kingfisher. The leaves of the trees whisper and rustle in the wind, their music blending with the song of a cardinal and the cries of the redwings.

Across the pond a deer takes a drink, freezes suddenly, then turns and bolts back into the forest. Why? The only thing I can see is the great blue heron landing among the rushes, a danger only to the small fish it hunts. And a grave danger it is. Catches and devours several, then takes off, circling the pond twice before soaring away over the trees.

I notice a tiny movement to my right along the bank, then spot a mouse chewing on a wild strawberry. Suddenly, there is a quick flurry of activity as a sparrow hawk silently dives and captures it. It mantles over its prey and leaves with it, flying low and close enough for me to admire its beautiful markings, a living copy of Horus. No wonder the ancient Egyptians revered these royal birds!

Sunset is approaching and the mosquitos are massing for an all-out attack on me. Two or three of the advance guard are already buzzing around my head. I sigh -- it's time to leave. I get to my feet, brush off the dirt and small stones clinging to my clothes and start down the forest path, leaving the pond to its residents. But I will return again and again. Because no matter what turmoil there is in my life, the peace of the pond never fails to invade my mind and relax me. It's hard to believe this place is so close to the noise and confusion of city life.

Where is this oasis? I cannot tell you. If I did, it wouldn't be a secret any more -- would it?



Winter Interlude
By *Mary A. Tomaszek*

With its bone-chilling cold, snow and ice, winter is not my favorite season of the year. It's a cruel season; people and wildlife die of exposure or starvation, many plants freeze and never recover. It's a lonely season; heavy snows in parts of the country isolate people, and "cabin fever" is a common complaint.

But take a walk with me now down a forest path in the nearby nature center. Be sure to bundle up and put your boots on. Even though it isn't below zero, there's an annoying little breeze blowing, a breeze the country folks in Scotland call a "lazy wind"; too lazy to go around you, so it cuts right through. So you'd better take that scarf, too. And where are your gloves?

The path is well trodden; apparently others enjoy the brittle beauty of the forest in winter, but today there's no one on the path but us. Walking silently, careful not to disturb anything, we make our way down the winding trail as it takes us deeper into the forest. After walking a mile, I stop and seat myself on the stump of a tree. Wait a minute! I have a stone in my boot. Removing it and putting my boot back on, I raise my head and spot a woodchuck stretching an inquisitive nose out at us. I reach slowly into the pocket of my jacket, take out a piece of bread and offer it to him. He wants the bread, but he's cautious. I laugh and toss a part of it to him; he sniffs at it, then takes it.

But it's too cold to linger long. Getting to my feet, we continue to follow the path. Suddenly I hear the clear winter song of a cardinal, and look around for the bird. You nudge me and point to the right and up. I quickly see him sitting high in the branches of a tree, a bright dot of red against the sky. His song sparkles, filling the crisp air with its music.

The forest floor is covered with the tracks of animals that passed that way on the business of survival. There are the signs where a deer searched for food, pushing the snow around in his quest. Nearby we see a large patch of packed snow and realize this is where our deer slept in the shelter of the low-hanging bushes.

All too soon the sun is setting and it's getting colder. The wind picks up and there is the moist touch of snowflakes on our cheeks. Walking quickly, we reach the car and head for home and a cup of hot chocolate in front of the fireplace. As I curl my hands around my cup, I listen to the snap of the burning logs and feel the fire's heat on my face. I close my eyes and think of the afternoon spent as the guest of Mother Nature and promise myself to return to the winter-silent forest, because I found peace and beauty there.

Even though winter is my least favorite season, it *does* have its moments. But only if you know where to look.



EVERY 6.4 SECONDS TECHNOLOGY STRIKES ANOTHER AMERICAN HOME

By *James F. Shields*

I awake to a vision of Bo Derek entering the bedroom with my breakfast on a tray just as we planned before drifting off to sleep last night. In the distance, I hear ring-g-g-g, ring-g-g-g ring-g-g-g. Why, I wonder, would someone be calling me now! Can't they see I'm busy? Suddenly the image in the doorway begins to fade and I am left with only the sound of a pesky phone ringing in the distance. I realize that Bo was a dream and, yes, the phone really is ringing. My brain slowly regains on-line status as I slowly reach for the devil with a bell jumping up and down on my night stand. Glancing at the clock, I see it is 10:33 am. I could be up and gone by now, even though it is Saturday.

My hand stops short of its target and my brain snaps a command to all parts of the body paying attention, "Roll over and batten down the hatches, that boon of technological marvels, the answering machine will get the call." Drifting away I hear the fourth ringy dingy trip the machine and my voice say "You have reached ———." What happened, did my piece of technology blow a transistor? Not hardly, the dirty blankety-blank hung up! Whoever it was who succeeded in canceling my breakfast date with Bo Derek now decides I don't deserve to know his identity. I don't understand; once the machine answers the call it goes on his bill so why not say something, if nothing else, just "guess who?"

My brain, now on full alert, starts snapping questions I can't answer. Was it your mother who can't talk to her sister or machines, your publisher with good news, your boss with an invite to his lake house, your brother about the money he owes you? Who? Who? Who? Who? Could it have been Bo wondering where I disappeared to?

By now, I'm done showering, dressed and out the door to breakfast at Jim's Place as I have every Saturday for the past two years. As I depress the auto-unlock button on the key holder that came with my new Belchfire X-911, I see the trunk pop open. Reaching the car, I close the trunk and hit the button again, up goes the trunk lid. I slam the lid back down and unlock the door using the key.

In front of Jim's, I drop the required quarter in the automatic paper machine, open the door only to find no papers inside. Again my brain comes to life and says, "The reason there is a little window in the door is to verify the existence of a newspaper before inserting your money." I bowed my head towards the paper dispenser hoping that my brain could see that the window has been covered over with advertisements for the hand car wash at Our Lady of the Hard Disc Computer School last month. My only hope is that the bus boys have saved a few papers abandoned by patrons.

Jim, the owner, is standing by the register at the front counter, and I ask "Did you call me this morning?" I pick up a paper and move to my usual table. Mary, the waitress who has served me for the last two years, pours me a cup of coffee as I ask, "Did you call me this morning?" I'm just checking all possibilities. "Just bring me the usual, Mary, two eggs over

medium and three strips of bacon well done." I notice that the sugar bowl is void of the little packets of sugar and ask Mary if she could please get some sugar? She says, "Use the artificial sugar. There's plenty of that in your bowl. I jokingly say, "I don't like to use artificial sugar. I'm afraid of catching artificial diabetes!"

Half way through the sports page, my breakfast arrives and I put the paper aside. The eggs are perfect, as always, but something is wrong with the bacon. I motion to Mary and over she comes. I say "There is something funny about this bacon, I think it's spoiled." Mary says "No, Jim's trying some new breakfast entrees, it's bacon made from turkey, less fat and really better for you." "That may be, but it tastes like strips of Corinthian leather." I ask, "Would it be possible to exchange it for the old fat bacon?" She replies, "Not until Monday when the next order comes in. Jim did order some but the new telephone input ordering system transposed a 4 for a 3 and he received three cases of eggless eggs instead. Sorry."

Not hungry anymore, I give Mary her tip and leave. As I near the parking lot I can see my trunk has opened. I walk to the back of the car and sure enough, my golf clubs have escaped. Slam! Back to Jim's I go, passing a sign that reads "Municipal parking lot. Not responsible for lost or damaged gobbly gook and so on and so forth." Back at Jim's I get on the pay phone and dial my agent. "You have reached the Fly by Night Auto Insurance Agency. Our offices are closed until Monday morning at 10:00. If you are reporting an accident, please depress 4 and then the star, if you are reporting a theft, please depress 5 and then the star. In either case, at the tone please leave a brief message explaining in detail the nature of your call, your agent's name, and your policy number. If a police report has been filed please give the report number located in the top left corner and the precinct that made the report. Thank you." BEEP -- "Guess who."

On the way back to my apartment, I pass Midnight Auto Sales where I purchased the car and decide to see if I could get another remote that may open the doors rather than the trunk. Pulling into the lot I see the "CLOSED" sign on the service center door, but since the dealership is open I may as well see if they have one available. "We would have to reprogram your remote which we are not equipped to do here in the sales area," was the response I received from the only person I could find in the showroom. "You could leave your car and they will get it to it first thing Monday morning." "No thanks, Slick," and out I go. Back at the apartment I decide to remove any other valuables in the trunk just in case it happens again.

After shutting off the engine, I sat there for a moment and wondered if all this new technology was making a better world or just one that is a little more scary. I better get moving to visit Mom, who usually leaves the house on Saturday around 2:00. I hit unlock and watch the trunk open in the rear view mirror. I get out, walk around the rear of the car and lift the small emergency tool box out of the trunk. I firmly close the trunk and start for my apartment. I reach for my keys and, Eureka, no keys. Now what? I probably left them in the car. Something says "you better get down there fast before the whole car escapes." I

drop the tool box and run out to the car. Thank God it's still here. "Okay, smart guy," my brain taunts, bow your head and view your keys on the front seat. But how is it possible that the door is locked? Brain again says, maybe that was that extra little click we heard as you slammed the trunk lid down.

Looking around the lot, I see the building manager's pick-up truck and start for his apartment. Luckily he's in and can open my apartment. I grab the extra set of keys and return to the car and unlock the trunk. I check for any other valuables but the only thing left in there is a cute little tire and a contraption laying on top which I assume to be the jack. I retrieve both these articles and place them on the floor in front of the rear seat. Perhaps I would be better off just going back to bed.

MIRIAM CALZARETTO

An assignment from our writing teacher, Barbara Schaaf, was to view ourself through the eyes of a pet.

By writing what the pet was thinking, the personality and habits of the owner were to be revealed.

Not content with the typical dog, cat, fish or bird, I choose a lovely cut-glass vase that belonged to my grandmother as a pet, and why not? I love it as dearly as I have loved my animals.

THE PRISMATIC VESSEL

By Miriam Calzaretto

The sunlight streaming through the window refracted shafts of colored lights from the prisms of the cut glass vase.

"I am beautiful in the sunlight," mused the clean cut vessel, "and when I glisten, no diamond can outshine me."

Oh, vase most vain! Even the greatest beauty should have a semblance of humility. Ever since it had been placed on the window sill where the beams of light brought to life its charismatic transparent body, it had become a haughty, naughty vase.

The owner of this sassy, classy glass had come by it from her mother, who had in turn, received it from her mother. It wasn't until the last owner placed it on the window sill that it developed hauteur.

"I knew the minute she put me here in the window that my beauty would captivate many," proclaimed the prissy prisms to all who would listen, "I knew the minute I felt her caressing me, firmly yet gently, that I was in good hands."

"Funny thing about her though," continued the container, "She can drink water as happily from a paper cup (ugh!) as she can from one of those long-stemmed flint glasses over in that cabinet."

Just then the owner of the tiny, talking tankard breezed through the room, gritty, grimy and gruesome, heading for the shower to wash away the sweat and dirt from the garden work.

"Did you see her whiz by?" questioned the quartz-like queen, "You watch now! In ten minutes or so she'll be back out here sitting at the organ playing a Bach Prelude. She can go from a loam laborer to a lissome lady faster than shafts of light spring from me. She really should spend more time cleaning this window and polishing me than groveling around in the

dirt outside."

At that moment the owner returned and picked up the vase, walked into the kitchen and filled the vessel with flowers and water. Placing it on the table, she turned, opened the refrigerator, grabbed a piece of cold chicken and ran to answer the phone, which was by now on the fifth ring.

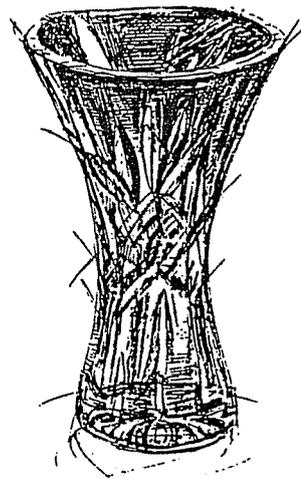
"I hate it when she does that," shuddered the crystal container. "It's so uncouth! And these itchy flowers are another thing I can do without. Besides, I know she'll leave me here for a couple of days without changing the water and I'll get smelly and vapid. Elegance should never be subjected to such treatment. How would she like staying stinky for a day or two? And she is always getting cuts and bruises from thorns and weeds, yet she has no compulsion jamming scratchy stems into me. How dare she try to detract from my beauty with a shortlived bouquet? I will not forgive her until she cleans me up and I am back in the window, spotless again."

If the owner could have heard the above conversation, she would have merely shrugged it off with a 'who expects loyalty from royalty?'

"Oh, no, here she comes in her sweats!" gushed the glass, "That means twenty minutes of that barbaric beat while she makes massive moves like an overstuffed ballerina."

And that's how this grandiose piece of glass, in order to tolerate the noxious noise, fell from it's pedestal by rapping with the owner's aerobic record.

"I'm a great cut glass.
I'm a glass with class.
I'm a vase with a face.
That'll win any race.
Gonna say it once more
It's me I adore
An' you can bet yo' ass
I'm a top notch glass."



FINAL PERFORMANCE

By *William Dollear*

(Two actors, a man and a woman, both in their seventies, are preparing for their final performance. They are married and have been performing the same roles for fifty years. They are sitting in chairs, facing a mirror. Their make-up has just been put on. They are smoking cigarettes in holders. Their world has not changed for fifty years.)

Characters:

Sophia: Grande Dame of Theatre, she refuses to see talking films, only silent movies suit her. She is crocheting a very, very long blanket. There is an ashtray between the two actors.

Howard: Master of Theatre, believes all women view him as a thriving sex symbol. He has been married to Sophia for 51 years. He is doing a word puzzle.

Sophia: (To exiting make-up artist, who is unseen by audience) Thank you, my dear. To think, Howard, tomorrow, and all the days thereafter, I shall have to do all that myself.

Howard: Why? More cutbacks? I told you, did I not? Unions are the death of theatre.

Sofia: No, dear, tonight is our final performance.

Howard: Tonight? Good heavens, I thought next week was to be our last. What shall we do? And do you know a word beginning with 'F' which means confused?

Sofia: Flustered.

Howard: Yes, that's exactly how I feel too.

Sophia: No, no dear. The word for the crossword puzzle. Flustered. However, we shall have to live like commoners after tonight. Open our own doors.

Howard: Wait in lines.

Sophia: Apply our own make-up.

Howard: Heavens! We should have made plans.

Sophia: You could go into politics. You've played a duke now for 50 years. You could become president.

Howard: There could never be an actor for president. The majority could never be fooled.

Sophia: I believe there was one, not long ago.

Howard: No! How did you hear this?

Sophia: I overheard a stage hand telling someone else. Suddenly the poor boy realized he was in my presence and immediately silenced himself.

Howard: There is another world beyond the stage lights, dear.

Sophia: I know, yet I don't know.

Howard: How are the children reacting to this being our final performance?

Sophia: I don't believe we had any. We were too busy in our roles. Now, they are over.

Howard: (He rises and pats his stomach, and draws it in.) Legions of ladies will undoubtedly be disappointed. I can hear their breathing of anticipation. I certainly shall miss watching their admiring eyes on me. How many more minutes until we go on?

Sophia: Those legends of ladies have approximately 15 breathless minutes to wait.

Howard: Keep your sarcasm. Remember, I still carry Rudolph Valentino's torch.

Sophia: Mr. Valentino's torch went out long ago, dear. The only ladies you have left breathless are those waitresses waiting for you to decide upon the proper pastry.

Howard: Your jealousy is showing again, my love. It is not my fault if women bestowed upon my head the crown of sexual god.

Sophia: Please, you'll make me miss a stitch from laughter. Oh, Howard. (She sets down her needles) What shall we do?

Howard: Movies? TV?

Sophia: We shall have to buy one first. Besides, I'm 72, not brain dead. Have you seen what passes for 'acting' on television? No, no television for me.

Howard: Think of everything we've missed. The Brooklyn Dodgers, for instance. Now,

we'll have time to go to Brooklyn and see the Dodgers.

Sophia: I believe they've moved.

Howard: Good heavens! Where to?

Sophia: California.

Howard: Why there?

Sophia: I am sure I do not know. I shall finally be able to finish this blanket. (She resumes knitting)

Howard: Who the devil is that for, anyway?

Sophia: My understudy's baby. It will be perfect for her crib.

Howard: More like her rocking chair. Your understudy's baby has children. Besides, it looks large enough to cover a theatre, or at least the mezzanine section.

Sophia: And your crossword puzzle? Roosevelt was president when you began it.

Howard: And I've only one more row. And one more performance.

Sophia: We've never stopped and really looked around us.

Howard: Indeed, I almost forgot how beautiful your eyes are, and how they sparkle. (They hold hands)

Sophia: I almost forgot how your smile still makes me feel like a little girl.

Howard: Shall we go and begin our final performance?

Sophia: Not until after the first in a long running series of kisses. (They kiss, then stand and leave, holding hands. A loud applause is heard.)

The End.

SUNDAY IN THE PARK

By *Eleanor Litto*

The young woman groaned as she sat down hard on the grass near me. I had purposely chosen the largest oak to shelter me from the intense heat. She turned around, facing me, her back leaning against the giant trunk, and removed her sandals.

"I walk too far," she complained. Soon four of her children clamored to her side, digging into the brown bag for sandwiches. The white bread was smashed thin as I watched one child try to peel it apart to glance at the filling. A nice-looking boy pedaled up to the scene on his small bike. I noticed his beautiful almond-shaped eyes, dark hair, and perfect teeth. He was very excited about the swimming pool and begged his mother to come back in a week when it opens. Very persistent for one so small, he told me to look up in the tree to see how high 12-feet would be. I actually did as he commanded. Then, three times he asked if I thought he would sink if he went in the 12-foot pool.

"You had best learn how to swim first," I warned. He argued that his friend can't swim and he dives into the pool.

"Mommy, I want to take swimming lessons," he whined as he took off on his bike. I resumed my reading, wanting to finish the final chapters of an engrossing book. She broke the silence by asking if I were studying and going to college.

"No." I replied. "Just looking over notes from a writing workshop. I don't go to college." I thought to myself that it was strange that this family would sit so close in this large park. It sort of bothered me as I had come seeking privacy for reading.

Nevertheless, I took this opportunity to glance up at the pretty faces and watch the children run and tease each other. What a handful, I thought.

The pretty, dark-haired lady volunteered the fact that she had two boys and three girls. Suddenly, the boy ran after one of the girls. Although she had a good start on him, he caught up and pushed her to the ground. His mother didn't get up but yelled and shouted in her foreign tongue. Then in English she screamed, "If you touch her, I kill you!" To that he yelled back, "Shut up!"

The mother sheepishly said, "They learn bad things from television." I really wanted to finish one more chapter of the best seller, *The Survival of Jan Little*, before going home. Now, the children were back and the smallest boy with his charming round face and with the beautiful curly hair told me again that he would go swimming and jump into 12 feet of water. He seemed obsessed with this. Again he inquired, "Do you know if you sink if you go in 12 feet of water?" I answered, "You would have to move your hands real hard and keep your chin above the water. Did you ever hear of the 'dog-paddle'?" I asked.

"Do you have to kick your feet?" I told him he would. The little guy then gestured by making claws with both hands that he would climb up and over the fence to get into the pool.

The kids asked their mother how she was going to walk all the way home. She sighed. She asked if I lived around here. Then later asked two times if I had a car and drove to the park. After she told me where she lived, I said, "That's really far, especially if wearing sandals. They aren't suitable for walking that distance. I told her my experience of walking only a few blocks after wearing sandals. Definitely she was hinting for a ride home. The ten-year-old took off on his bike, but before leaving he shouted, "Mom, aren't you going to tell me to be careful?" She didn't answer. Then he called again, "Mom, I'll be careful. Don't worry."

How sweet, I thought. He really does care for his mother. I had planned on staying at the park long enough to go over some of the writing workshop papers but instead, I asked the lady if she needed a ride home. She immediately jumped up and called the children from the play area. Then I folded my chair and picked up my books and purse.

On the way home she volunteered that she was from Jordan, but the kids were born here in the United States. While they had lived in Detroit, too, they wanted to go to California as "it's so pretty there." She admitted that it can be boring going to the park every day.

I reached her corner home several long blocks from the park and this lady from a different world was very grateful for the ride.

Another period of silence, and then Jackie advised, "There's no getting around it, we're at the age when we have to watch every single mouthful we eat."

I could feel ripples of rebellion surging through my body. I wanted to stand up and say, "Frankly, I don't give a damn!" Instead I went over to the counter and bought a chocolate mint pie. My husband loves it and I'll eat a piece or two. What's 300 calories anyhow?

I ordered the cruise tickets, too. And, shortly we'll be heading into a variety of beautiful islands, eating, drinking, dancing and having fun. Aging warriors deserve it and I'll leave the guilt trip to anyone who enjoys the agony of eating a piece of lemon meringue pie.

THE FIFTIES

By *Kay Siemeck*

The fifties, the fifties, what a time to be alive! You didn't have much "bread," but life was hardly ever a drag.

Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected president in 1952. He was a war hero and a father-figure, which seemed very important at the time. We liked his grin and the fact that he was very much for home, mother and apple pie.

The country was busy trying to recover after two wars. The want ads had plenty of jobs but they didn't pay much. When you're young there's a lot to excite you. Superman arrived on the scene. The roller derby was in full swing. Joe Lewis was knocked out by Rocky Marciano and Ray Robinson defeated Rocky Graciano.

Four of our top baseball heroes were Ted Kluszewski of the Cincinnati Reds, Willie Mays of the New York Giants, Mickey Mantle, New York Yankees, and Al Kaline, champion of the Detroit Tigers.

If you were looking for a special chick, you hoped you could find one who looked like Marilyn Monroe, Doris Day, Ava Gardner or Shelly Winters.

Two-piece bathing suits brought whistles from the guys but dads didn't like them at all. Bikinis were just on the horizon.

Milton Berle was the most popular TV star in the early fifties. Then there was "I Love Lucy," "Kukla, Fran, and Ollie," "Gunsmoke," and everyone listened intently to Edward R. Morrow.

Jitterbugging was still popular and so were ponytails. Everyone loved Frankie Lane singing "Mule Train," Eddie Fisher singing "Oh, Mein Papa," and Johnny Ray made you cry

OFF ON A TRIP

By Kay Siemeck

I sat at the kitchen table looking over an assortment of brochures I had picked up at the travel agency. An aging warrior likes to take voyages to new and exciting places. A cruise sounds like fun, but to where?

Later that day, three of my friends met me for lunch and to chat. After our lo-cal, fat-free, 300 calorie meal, we decided to have a piece of pie. The restaurant is noted for the delectable assortment of 4-inch high pies.

Before we could even begin to make a decision, I realized that I was going on an immediate trip and it wasn't a cruise. Guilt was settling into my hips and thighs.

"I shouldn't do this," Jackie said, "I need to lose at least 10 pounds."

"Ten pounds--I'm 25 pounds over the weight chart in my doctor's office," Ann commented sadly, "and the holidays are just around the corner!"

Jenny, no relation to the famous weight loser with about as much excess weight as a bird's feather, had a comment too.

"I pinched almost an inch of fat in my stomach and there's no telling what next," she whined.

I remained silent, already on my own guilt trip while savoring the vision of the lemon meringue pie I would order. I only eat this favorite once or twice a year. I reasoned that 300 calories isn't actually that much more.

We all selected our favorite pie and for a few minutes the itinerary of our guilt trip slowed down as we enjoyed every calorie-loaded bite.

When I mentioned the possibility that my husband and I might take a cruise, there were several moments of complete silence.

"Do you know Greta down the street? She piled on 12 pounds on a five day cruise." Ann stated, eyeing me with serious scrutiny as she bit into the last bite of her banana cream pie.

"You can stay on a diet during the cruise," Jenny said. "You could even lose a few pounds if you spent extra time in the ship's gym, did all the aerobics and walked the deck several times a day."

"To heck with that," I commented. "If I'm going on a cruise for a good time, it will include eating, drinking--even over-eating on occasions."

Automobiles were the status symbols of the 50's. There were more accessories on them each year--more doo-dads--more chrome. One man described the Cadillac de Ville as a shrine to the Holy Mother. The gas mileage became less as the tail fins grew longer. Washing and polishing cars was the highest priority on weekends.

Before long there was a need for two cars, then two bathrooms, two refrigerators, His and Her perfume, towels and more dancing lessons for the kids. Finally we needed more time away from the suburbs.

We began to camp, go boating and golfing. Travel in space was an exciting reality. We found a cure for polio and developed stereo recording systems.

We spent more spare time at the movies watching Jimmy Dean, Marlon Brando, Judy Garland and Bridget Bardot. We worshipped western heroes like John Wayne, Gary Cooper, Gene Autry and Roy Rogers. The Lone Ranger was a favorite and we loved his faithful friend Tonto.

We made some mistakes. We discovered new things about ourselves. We raised families. We danced and sang. We laughed and cried. We loved and hated but best of all we survived.

The fifties-the fifties-what a time to be alive and the nineties-what a time to look back and enjoy where we've been!

when he sang the song by that name. Nice guys Nat King Cole and Perry Como were at their best and Frank Sinatra was in top form but they all had to watch out for a newcomer. Elvis Presley not only sang but did bumps and grinds in the most suggestive way ever seen.

What did women wear? The strapless look was in--full skirts with frilly underskirts were considered sexy. Pedal pushers and very short shorts were very popular and women wore hats to church and out to dinner. Some even wore them when they shopped. They also wore aprons over their house dresses. The sack dress made an appearance, as did sloppy joe sweaters and baby doll pajamas, and rhinestone jewelry was the top accessory. Saddle shoes as well as pumps with four-inch heels were in. Before long the most wonderful discovery in the world, drip-dry material, appeared to shorten our long hours of ironing, usually done on Tuesday.

Men began to loosen up too. Pink appeared in shirts, suspenders and socks. Baggy, pegged pants looked similar to what we wear today and men even considered wearing Bermuda shorts to the office. White buck shoes and blue suede shoes, who could dispute their arrival?

We read McCalls, Life, Look, Harper's Bazaar, Esquire, Mad Magazine and True Romance and were shocked to open the first copy of Playboy and see a nude centerfold. It was Marilyn Monroe.

We began doing the twist at the end of the decade and rock and roll was shaking up society.

We fell in love in the '50s, got married and began the baby boom. The population increased by 28 million in 10 years. There were no disposable diapers, no ready-made formula or pre-sterilized bottles. We did have Dr. Spock and our little, cozy nests in the suburbs.

Rows and rows of look-alike ranch homes were being built away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Many of us bought them for under \$10,000. Men became commuters. They felt lucky when they acquired a power lawnmower because yards were big.

There were backyard barbecues, Cub Scouts, Campfire Girls, Little League, PTA, Dance recitals, neighborhood dances and block parties. New churches were being built everywhere as well as additions on all the existing schools.

The kids loved their bikes, Barbie dolls and Lincoln logs. We spent \$100 million on Davy Crockett coonskin caps and bought 30 million hula hoops which spun merrily for a few years. Many of us became artists with paint-by-number kits.

We read Catcher in the Rye, Peyton Place, From Here to Eternity, Micky Spillane mysteries and many comic books.

NATURE
By *Gil Yaras*

Whether we enjoy nature or not, much can be learned from it. The closer we draw, the more we have to respect its immensity. We are a small part of the earth. It, as well as we, are finite. We use and abuse natural resources. We continue to multiply, and if we don't reach a population equilibrium soon, nature will deal with us. We continue to modify the earth with roads, dams and homes, encroaching upon its beauty and integrity. Industry pollutes the earth and sky. The effects reach into the most remote areas. If we do not have more responsible management of our use of it, permanent change will occur. The air we breathe, the water we drink, even the earth we walk upon and take for granted, will turn on us and force us back to the equilibrium that nature demands.

NURTURE
By *Gil Yaras*

How can we not be affected by standing upon some lofty mountain to increase the scope of our vision, both external and internal? To stop long enough to hear our own heartbeat? To slow down the pace at which most of us are going? What therapy it is to be in untampered country that is quiet and clean and to come across other creatures that neither abuse nor take it for granted? What therapy to the soul to not be afraid to be alone or to become childlike in what we see and feel!

This great gift of nature is there for all to enjoy and appreciate, for the serenity that can be attained when lost in its open arms is like a song without words, but with lyrics created by the songs of birds, the power of rushing waters and the feel of the wind rustling through the pines as well as one's heart - a place where one can find peace!



REFLECTION ON MOON LAKE

By *Gil Yaras*

I awoke early in the morning. The day was calm and I walked to the lake alone. I sat on a small pier and listened to the silence that surrounded me. And, except for an occasional bird, it was the sun, the water, the trees and I. Like so many times in the past, it's as though I sat with such good friends, words were not necessary.

As I sat there immersed in serenity, even my thoughts were at a standstill, again a recurring experience – that of being one with nature – rushed throughout my being. And I was comforted and felt accepted and felt I belonged.

Overhead, the clouds painted the sky with their fluffy purity, and on the water I gazed upon their reflection. As I compared this double portrait, the reflection on the water drew my attention. I observed that not only was the reflection on the water, it was also within, and where the bottom of the lake was visible, the reflection went beyond it, too.

Like so many things in life, there was more depth to the reflection than I first observed. Often we see things and accept only their surface value and may not look beyond for deeper meaning.

Looking above, I focused upon the original portrait and REFLECTED upon the lack of boundaries, endless shapes, and again the purity. I looked within for comparisons and felt limited. The purity of this soul has often been tainted, but in looking above, I saw, too, another side of clouds, when they darken and grow and light and sound emanate fiercely from within.

And so it is throughout nature – that which appears pure may have its dark side; that which lives, will die. The strength of nature lies in its balance, its equilibrium, and so, too should ours. To be really free is to be able to contain the many forces that lie within us without looking at them as good or bad, but merely a part of our being.



DANDELION RIGHTS

By *Kay Siemeck*

There's not a dandelion on anyone's lawn,
Up peek their golden heads and, pfff, they are gone.
Get out all the weapons, kill the miserable weed.
Spray 'em and burn 'em, don't leave a single seed.
Nothing as lowly deserves to thrive,
But God in highest heaven, willed them alive.
The lawn that is sodded, watered and fed,
Can't cope with a misfit that is heavenly bred.
Blossom out, sweet dandelion, let the sun shine on your face.
Not an orchid or gardenia can ever take your place.

THE BIRTH OF A POEM

While studying for her Masters on cerebral palsy, Eleanora Gambino, who had been afflicted with Ataxia c/p since birth, was watching a movie in class for later discussion titled "Like Other People." The movie was set in England and depicted two young people with c/p who wanted to marry and were getting a lot of grief about their decision.

A man studying to be a speech pathologist also attended the class. He always came late and had never seen "Nora" walk. After the movie the professor went around the room asking for responses. She purposely waited to come to Nora last. The man's response was a very painful to Nora. He said that the movie was ridiculous because people like "that" can't love. He stated that disabled people could only feel for themselves. When the professor approached Nora she was too devastated and angry to speak. She stayed calm, as she did not want the man to know that he had gotten to her. She told the professor that she would be ready with a response at the following week's class. That evening, she wrote the poem titled "Like Other People." Ironically, Nora had just become engaged to the man she had been dating for the last seven years who also had c/p.

Just for clarification, Ataxia C/P is a form of cerebral palsy that affect a person's ability to maintain proper balance or to walk at a steady gait. It can range from slight to profound and may involve other precise motor skills as well, like overshooting an item reached for. It is attributed to brain injury rather than the muscles. It may be associated with other diseases like measles, small pox, and many other causes.

The following week Nora walked over to the man, looked into his squinty eyes and said "Read this."

LIKE OTHER PEOPLE

By *Eleanora Gambino*

Fall 1975

Curious eyes turn and stare,
telling lies of how they care.
Wondering eyes try to guess of
how we live in such distress.
Little do they really know of
how we live and how we grow.

We are like other people.
We live as others do.
We can be strong beyond belief.
We can shed tears to find relief.
From those eyes that make us weak,
it is time for us to speak!

We are like other people.
We love. We laugh. We cry.
We can be loved. We can be
whole.
We have a life. We have a soul.

Although we seem so stiff and
worn,
It was God's wish that we be born.
Curious eyes are so blind.
All the lies are so unkind.
Wondering eyes, please, try to
learn,
How to help with true concern.
Society cannot be fair,
until society is aware
and every eye can really see
that we can, together, really be
like other people.

Twisted legs try to walk.
Broken voices try to talk.
Honest efforts to be free.
ADJUSTING to reality.

Oh, dear God, we have a mind
why are humans so unkind?
Teach them, please, at any cost
that we are like other people.

If they hurt us we will bleed,
If they help us, we'll succeed...
like other people.

Society cannot be fair
until society is aware
and every eye can really see
that we, together, can be
like other people.



JOHN

By *Harriet P. Murphy*

He moves erratically,
As on a crowded jerking bus.
Reaching for furniture he steadies himself,
No more certain of shaky legs,
Than his small granddaughter.
Achieving the chair, he sits too soon,
Half off, feet sideways.
He curses softly.

The doctor says his brain,
Has shrunk around the brainstem.
The CAT scan shows spaces,
Where neurons used to snap orders,
To perfectly good legs.
Now he shuffles, sometimes staggers, rarely falls,
Because of small vacancies in his skull.

A HOLIDAY REMEMBERED

By *Eleanor Litto*

Stop and listen for a moment,
To the silence in this room.
Think back to Christmas eve,
When the party was in bloom.

Mountains of presents,
Were heaped upon or near the hearth.
Where Santa's socks hung only for decoration with mirth.

Stop and see the stillness of the smoldering logs.
Whereas, on that celebration eve, the fire sparkled.

It glistened on the old folks crinkled eyes.
Oh, the excitement grew,
Until it exploded as each ribbon was untied.

Boundless energy filled the space,
With shrieks of delight.
Mom was too overwhelmed to speak,
As she peeked at the color T.V.
To replace their black and white.

Tiny Joy hugged her dolls and one couldn't resist,
A kiss on her soft marshmallow cheek.
The miniature car without a driver was cruising, humming loudly,
Right over Uncle's boot.
Why, it flipped over, but kept on its pursuit.

Now see the large room as neat as can be.
So silent, so empty.
But do I hear a Christmas carol, sung sweetly by the teens?
Do I see a tree so tall and bright?
With angel hair making spider circles around each blazing light?

Do I smell the cook's creation heaped upon a bun?
Later, to discover it was reindeer meat from fall's hunting run.
Do I see a loved one's smile and feel his touch?
Do I detect the merry laughter?
Lifting up to the highest rafter?

It's only Christmas Memories that I shall recall once again,
When the postman delivers my parcel marked,
PHOTOS, Do not bend.



MAGIC IN SPRING

By *Eleanor Litto*

This tale of a butterfly was told to me,
By a miss of nine beneath a tree.

Would you, too, like to hear,
What made an ugly insect disappear?

Jupiter lived in a beautiful forest,
Spring - and it was at its loveliest.

He loved everything in sight,
The trees, flowers, brooks, birds, the twilight.

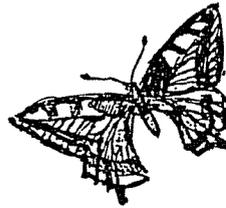
Only one thing worried him,
As he looked at the others on the limb.

I'm so ugly that I wonder why
God didn't use me to beautify?

This home of mine is the loveliest place,
With my looks, I should be in outer space.

I don't want the others to spoil their view
So I'll just hide under this leaf awhile and chew.

When the fairy of the forest heard his unselfish cry,
She turned Jupiter into a beautiful butterfly.



GOLDEN APPLE

By *Eleanor Litto*

The golden apple still hangs on the tree,
Blushing and freckled, appealing to me.

Within easy reach of those who pass by,
"It's ripe, Ma. Let's pick it!" are the cries.

No worm holes to mar a beauty so fair,
It's a lovely sight to all who care.

This gift of gold will remain till late in the fall,
Till leaves turn to scarlet,
Till migrating birds call.



Yvette Yetter
6/15/93

Who am I?
I'm the size of an eye,
I'm the color red,
No, my name isn't Fred,
Nor am I a piece of bread,
I'm not in a frying pan,
But on a can.

I roam around in the dark,
hoping not to hear a bark,
I love pop, suck, suck, suck
Oh no, in the straw, I'm stuck
Help, in here it's hot,
Call police and rescue the 7-UP spot.

Yvette Yetter
8/16/93

Today, a guy died,
Who never wore shoelaces that tied,
His name was Elvis,
Had a very loose pelvis,
He didn't dress like a troll,
But he could play Rock-N-Roll,
Jail House Rock.
Not songs now, from New Kids on the Block,
Are you lonesome tonight?
That's what he sang, not rap, but bright,
He couldn't make a pinball machine go ping,
but Elvis was the real King.

Mary A. Tomaszek
Sept. 22, 1993

You walk through life
With a serene face,
Pretending nothing matters
But the way you seem to others.

Alone with your thoughts
In the dark hours of night,
You weep over your loneliness
When there's no one to hear.

Yours is a solitary heart
Sliced apart by sharp cruelty,
A lonely heart crying out
Not for love, but for tenderness.

No one hears you cry,
There is no one to care.
But sometimes, only sometimes,
There is a hand to hold.



Liam P. McDonald
May 1945

We gazed longingly upon the
 astral lamps,
And then into our own,
Drinking the silence there,
Whose thoughts are e're known.

The moon that houred the sun
 with mellow glare,
Burnished and kissed her golden
 hair.

SO THIS IS THE END

To George
Liam P. McDonald
Okinawa April 22, 1945

The sea this day roils,
To these gnarled beaches.
You were out on the picket reaches,
I on this vile coral,
A bogies out of the west,
And then all was flash and darkness,
The sea claimed you in its grave.

We tramped our native hills,
And the limpid valley rills,
And trod 'neath dripping firs,
How wet we were in smoke and fire,
Pines snapped and flushed their surs,
That was yesterday when we were boys.



CHATEAU LOUISE

Gil Yaras

It was dusk as I entered the chateau,
To a harmonious piano concerto.
A large hushed crowd gathered there,
A step away from the chill night air.

Calming that chill was a white-haired man,
Generating warmth with his talented hands,
With melodies that could make adults weep,
Yet almost soothe young children to sleep.

A certain feeling was shared by all,
But was it respect or was it awe?
For he was the master of those keys,
Capturing our hearts as he pleased.

With songs of love and days gone by,
I journeyed through time with a sigh.
Of what could have been or still might be,
It was a strange spell he cast over me.

Time keeps me from that place and night,
Memory won't let me forget the sight,
Of that old chateau nestled on the green,
Or that master's music a treasured dream.

OUR OWN TRUE LOVE

Gil Yaras

Go with me, my love, to where the fair winds blow,
Softly through the pines in a quiet mountain valley,
To a place where swans and loons do gently abide,
At a hidden lake where evening mists swirl in the hills.

Be with me, my love, where the lark does softly sing,
As the wildflowers sway to and fro in the breeze,
And we shall rest in the bough of our own true love,
To speak softly with caresses and with gentle voices.

Come closer, my love, and let me gaze into your eyes,
To embrace you and to feel the warmth of your breath,
Yet closer still to sense our surging heart-beats,
As we are lost in the heat of our mounting passion.

Lie with me, my love, with the clover in bloom,
With its sweet perfume and your long flowing hair,
We will dance to the rhythm of our own true love,
Where thoughts and time are left so far behind.

Stay with me, my love, in the winter of our life
to reminisce, and our memories of that first day
will reassure us that we were truly meant to be
That our love, an eternal bond, will last forever.

THE OLD WOMAN IN THE WINDOW

Betty Morski

The old woman sat endlessly at her window day after day,
Waiting for some passerby to stop, to wave, to end her loneliness—
But no one came.

Her neighbors shunned her in her deteriorating house,
Resentment boiled within them.
Their neighborhood was spoiled while she lingered on,
All their houses were kept up.
Flowers bloomed, lawns carefully tended,
Aluminum siding shone from every eave—except hers,
Where neglect stood out for all to see!

Widowed for a decade, no savings left, there was no money for repairs.
Back taxes had swallowed all her savings, there was nothing left.
She lived a recluse, no lights at night, no amenities to spare.
Her once well-kept house now shabby from disrepair.

Inside lingering memories of her husband sustained her,
Outside, a sea of wild daisies and dandelions waved to her in the breeze,
While on the gutters, paint peeled in abject forms.
But she saw none of this, and as time went on, she grew more senile,
more frightening to behold,
Yet no one came except her daughter,
To break the monotony of those days.

In her tunnel vision, she saw only the sunny flowers that blanketed her lawn in spring,
And passersby who'd wave to her as they drove by.
She'd always watch for them and when they'd wave, she gleefully waved back.
Arising clumsily from the stark wooden chair, shouting her greetings wordlessly through the window,
her wrinkled face lit up hopefully,
"Could you visit?" she seemed to say, 'tho invariably they went away.

She spent her days like that—waiting, waiting endlessly,
Still no one stopped, and months sped rapidly by.
Still no one stopped, and as the months drifted into years, she grew weaker and then one day—she
was gone.

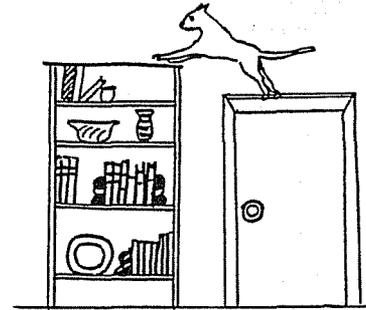
To a better place where loneliness is a thing of the past, and
daisies bloom everywhere, and old as well as young are loved.
At last she will join her husband and those who have been laid to rest.
While back in her living room, in the front window for all to see—
Her empty chair stands in testimony.

OMELET

Nadine M. Lotito

Omelet's an orange and white cat,
Do you know a cat acrobat?
Mix six eggs to spare,
Scramble on his white hair,
The color is that of the cat.

See the calm, whiskered look on his face,
As he walks with arrogant grace.
With incredible poise,
He leap-lands with no noise,
On top of my father's book case!



CHILD WISH

Nadine M. Lotito

I want to go out and walk in the snow,
Where plastic trees spiked icicles grow,
And when I squint my eyes I see,
Stars on my lashes plain as can be,
Frozen snowdrops spangle in the light,
Each a tiny Christmas tree lit up at night.

ON SUCH A NIGHT

Nadine M. Lotito

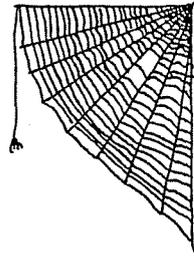
You should have been with me tonight,
The snow was beautiful as quietly it fell,
Looking like moths by every lamp in sight.
I missed you--you know that very well.

Each crystal flake the facet of a diamond jewel.
The lights were winking, glancing off the priceless shroud.
Absorbant as the cotton--silence was the rule.
The sturdy pines had all their branches bowed.

Magically changed were stark, bare trees.
Strange silhouettes--half black, half white,
Like pictures in a fairy tale were these.
Why is it you weren't with me on such a night?

CONVERSATION WITH A SPIDER

Nadine M. Lotito



Don't hide from me, little spider
For, from what I can see,
From an adversarial position
You have the advantage of me.

You lie in wait for your dinner
I shop several stores for mine.
You patiently rest in a loosely hung swing,
First I cook, then I dine.

I must put trash bags to curbside,
You dump wings for me to redeem.
While I'm working hard to earn money
You spin a designer's dream.

I recall when the tap of my toe
Set in motion our porch swing there.
It lets the breezes cool me,
Delicious in hot summer air.

A tap of a toe from an insect foe
Sets your web in acknowledged quiver
And you know your dinner's there,
Yielded up by a disinclined giver!

WINTER IN THE PARK

Nadine M. Lotito

Skiers gliding onward tired and cold,
Come upon a marvelous sight to see
A palace rising from the ice threshold--
The park's glass-domed conservatory!

We stack our skis and clean moist goggles there,
And shed our coats while inward going.
The entrance fills with tropic, perfumed air,
From steamy palms and lush ferns growing.

As deeper into flowers we venture on,
Riots of colors uplift the soul and senses.
We drink in all the beauty herein grown
And in still pools our thrown coins wish commences.

Wishing is fun and reluctantly the end's in view.
With orchids on incredible display
We put on coats and skis and warmed clear through
We glide, refreshed, into the waiting winter day.



COLORFUL THREADS

Nadine M. Lotito

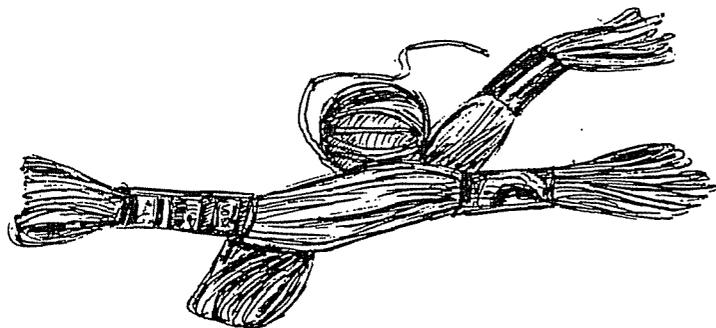
Given the skeins of life's colorful threads,
We work with the ones we are handed
I wish we could choose just the rainbow's hues
And discard the dark threads close-banded.

We had an aunt in Montana,
We went one summer to see,
She gave me a pillowcase pair she'd worked,
As a gift from herself to me.

Her needle a sliver of evening's light,
The embroidered design would unfold,
She could see the pattern coming to life,
But wait 'til her tragedy's told!

A dear son died in an accident,
Another son hurt in the same,
A bend in the road and the car went down,
How she grieved and wept over his name.

O, the heart's pain she must have endured,
Plying her needle so skillfully there,
Sewing roses and knots of colorful threads,
And saying his name with a prayer.



RUSH HOUR IN THE RAIN

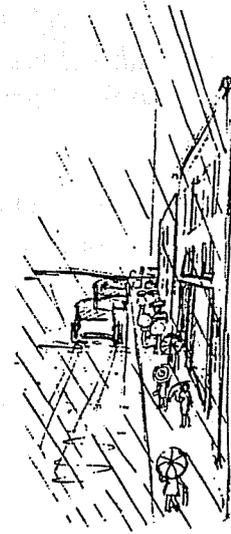
Nadine M. Lotito

Black spattered is the rain glissed street.
Dry tire tracks soon blend to slick,
Bright lights blurring in the distance meet.
Hastening forms click umbrellas up quick,
A shower in the city refreshes all.

The still hot buildings shimmer in the rain,
Renewing the architect's dream blue-print
Umbrellas, sectioned flowers, open out again,
The scene becomes an aquatint,
Hurrying, no one speaks in the sudden squall.

People sprint from door to door as
They cleverly seek to avoid the rain,
Lovers bar-hop, scouting cool hot jazz
Metal coin dispensers unlock the late stocks' gain
Traffic is down to a rush hour crawl.

Home to the suburbs and the green grass lots
Trek-trudge the ones who covet that strife
The city-dweller leopard who denies his spots
Dresses to connect his disconnected life
The city is left to its own to enthrall.



MATURITY

Gil Yaras

Dear, sweet Kate, how you've touched my heart,
Though time and ailments have slowed your very being,
That clarity of thought and spirit never seems to part.

A timeless maid who spent her life nursing a crippled sister,
A more noble deed no man or king could ever surpass,
An unjust reward, a lonely life, could make one grow bitter.

But there you sit calm, serene, unmindful of that fate,
Smiling through your loneliness, accepting the path you took.
At times I wonder if you regret not ever taking a mate.

But there you sit in the twilight of your lengthy life,
With that knowing smile observing the trails we chose,
Not weighing or judging, merely observing our happiness and
strife.

Your family and friends all have gone their eternal ways,
And those desolate hours you spend behind closed doors,
Surely you need a little care in your final days.

Yet those who are so near must seem so far removed,
I also am guilty of being too busy to knock upon your door,
And can only say my thoughts are with you and hope that you approve.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO SCREW TOPS?

Helene Coan Kopp

Oh, it's press down and turn,
And it's line up the arrows.
Or it's just pull the string,
Where the bottleneck narrows.
There's not a thing sacred,
From cereal to soap,
With these easy-off openers,
I just cannot cope.

One day I'd had enough.
Pressure clear off the chart.
Had a pain in my head,
And a band 'round my heart.
So I said to myself,
Life just ain't worth a penny.
Why not end all this strife,
And take one pill too many?

Then I made out my will,
And put on a flowered wrap.
Combed my hair nice and slick,
Took the pills on my lap.
I was all set to go,
Leave this old worldly trap,
As you've probably guessed --
Couldn't get off the cap.

PASS THE SALAD, PLEASE

Helene Kopp

I've lived my life like a full-course meal,
As a child with the soup I started.
And that frustrating relish tray
I am happy to say has departed.

I'm enjoying the entree of middle age,
Potatoes, meat, beverage and all.
But those wonderful carefree salad days
Are the days that I like to recall.

When the rose and the wine
Were red as flame,
And my heart beat fast
At the sound of a name.
A gay good time
Was my highest aim.
And a stolen kiss
Was the creme de la creme.

When I find that my plate has been emptied,
And before I grow old and inert,
May I have just a little more salad
Before I settle down with dessert?

EARLY SATURDAY MORNING

Helene Kopp

There's still some time
Can't I write something?
Something to thrill or chill
 these anxious few
Waiting breathlessly for my undying prose -- or clever poetry?

Alas, the week has gone by and the
 muse is silent
Perhaps he is napping -- or worse
 has gone into hibernation.

Wake up! Wake up! Oh muse!!
Get up on your haunches,
Wipe out the shadows from your eyes
And the cobwebs from you brain.

We must away! We must not disappoint
These fine folks who nourish us on
Saturday morning with food for our bodies.

Huh! Oh, yeah! Next week for sure!!