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LITERARY REVIEW

Dedication

In keeping with its tradition of featuring community writers, the Review staff wishes to dedicate this edition to Faye Edwards, a much-loved Meridian educator and fine arts enthusiast. Before coming to Meridian to spend the final years of her teaching career at Meridian High School, Faye taught in Mexico, Florida, Turkey and Egypt. Also, she directed the East Harlem Protestant Parish Tutorial Program for ten years and was a guide for the United Nations while she lived in New York City. At Meridian High School, dearly loved by her students, she was named Star Teacher several times. After retirement, she taught poetry seminars for the Missouri Arts Council in the Ozarks and devoted herself to social activism by working with the Amos Meridian Network, Hispanic ministries, Love's Kitchen, and the Mental Health Association.

Above all, Faye was a lover of the arts. She was especially devoted to promoting creative writing, poetry, reading and discussing good literature. Her education was deep and extensive. She received a degree from Randolph Macon Women's College and attended other prestigious colleges such as Vanderbilt, the University of Madrid, and Harvard. She used her education to project a profound and immeasurable sense of literature's importance. Her absence has created a void in the educational, literary, church, and civic volunteer circles of Meridian. Her teacher voice, her flourishing words, her very presence exuded art, culture, and social compassion.

*It is indeed an honor to feature samples of Faye Edwards' poetry and prose
on pages 30 - 34 of the Review.*



This year's Review staff would also like to dedicate this edition to Steve Owen – Teacher & Mentor

*From the ones who miss your rabbit chasing:
"This one is for you!"*

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Portraits In Stone

A tall wrought iron fence surrounds the space.

The large ornamental gate swings open.

Vines from the huge trees sway in the wind.

The air is thick all around me.

This is a quiet, forgotten place.

I feel small among the tall sculptured figures.

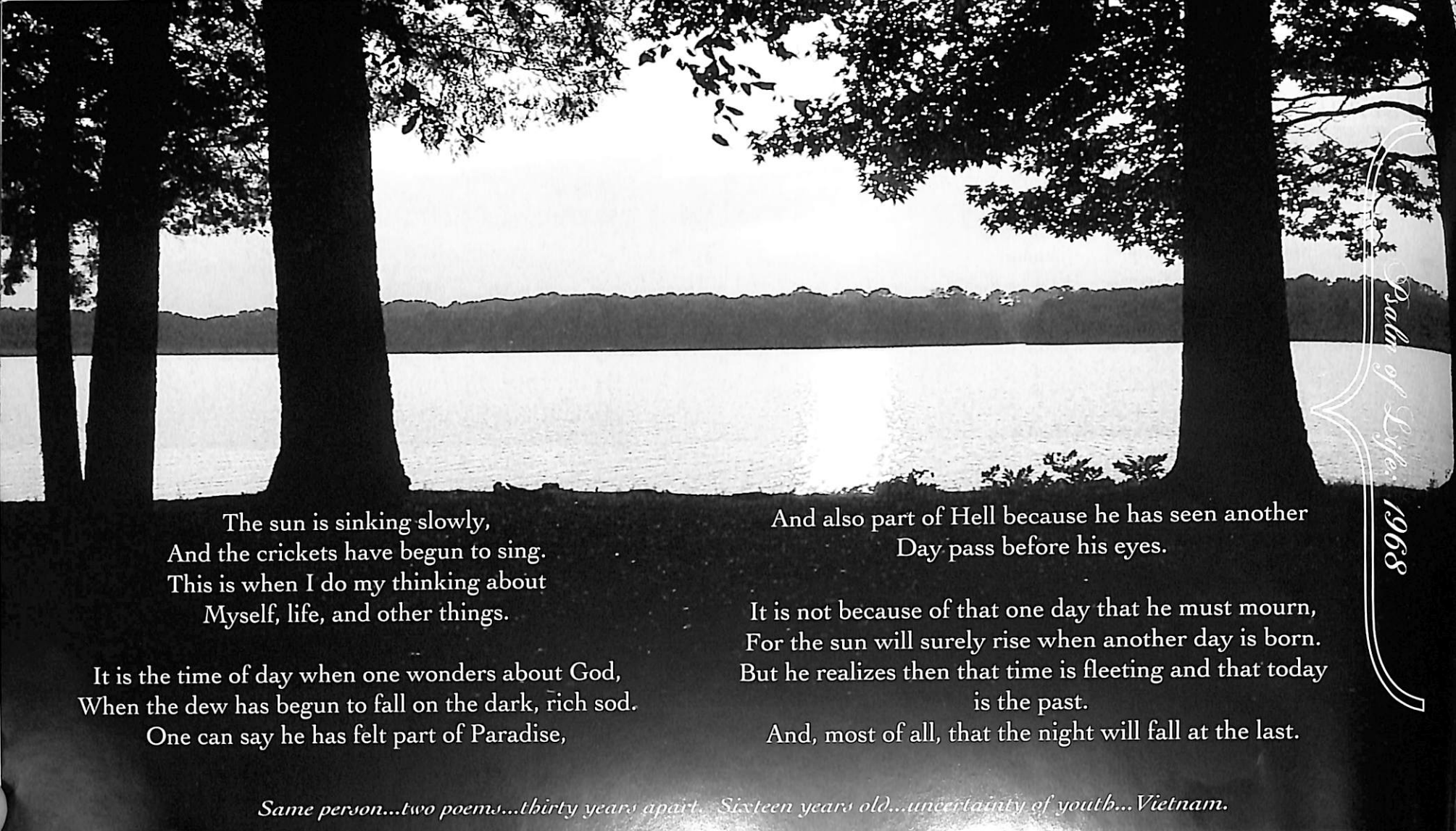
Decaying marble is everywhere.

Cold slab tombstones call out family names.

Inscriptions trigger my imagination.

This is a place of lost memories.

I bow my head in silence.




The sun is sinking slowly,
And the crickets have begun to sing.
This is when I do my thinking about
Myself, life, and other things.

It is the time of day when one wonders about God,
When the dew has begun to fall on the dark, rich sod.
One can say he has felt part of Paradise,

And also part of Hell because he has seen another
Day pass before his eyes.

It is not because of that one day that he must mourn,
For the sun will surely rise when another day is born.
But he realizes then that time is fleeting and that today
is the past.
And, most of all, that the night will fall at the last.

Same person...two poems...thirty years apart. Sixteen years old...uncertainty of youth...Vietnam.



Worn books, a low fire, a baby's dimple.
An old country church, plain and simple.
A crumbling rock chimney standing alone.
The sound of silence, of water over stones.
The smell of plowed fields, cut grass, a soft rain.
The look of happiness, the look of eyes filled with pain.
The feel of cotton sheets, a warm, heavy quilt.
Watching a toddler running naked with a complete lack of guilt.
A lover's smile, a mother's love, a place to call home.
The pure, simple joy of just being alone.
A beloved old dog whose grave you dug,
Afterwards, the friend who gave you a hug.
The grief of death, the joy of birth.
Realizing they are part of your time here on earth.
Being satisfied with life, the smooth and the rough.
Feeling if this is all there is, it's been enough.
Knowing in your heart that if life should end now
That you played your part well and can leave with a bow.

Forty-six-year-old teacher...happily married...a lifetime of experience.



Brown & Me

I first heard about *Brown v. Board of Education* when I was a little girl enrolled in Brumfield Elementary School in Natchez, Mississippi. Everybody was so excited that our schools were going to get better. The death of Emmett Till and the pictures of his body in *Jet* scared us, but we hoped for a better day. I completed my elementary education at Brumfield but didn't see any changes, if anything Brumfield was growing older and more dilapidated. (It was finally closed and has since been converted into senior citizens apartments.) I enrolled at Sadie V. Thompson located across town, though Natchez Adams High was in spitting distance from my house. At Sadie V. Thompson High we learned more about the Thirteenth Amendment, *Plessy v. Ferguson*, *Brown v. Board of Education*, and watched in horror as riots broke out when James Meredith had to be escorted by federal troops as he tried to enter the University of Mississippi. We waited some more. Things still did not change.

I graduated from high school and enrolled at Jackson State College, now Jackson State University (the school where the Ayers case was launched and where 17 years later the case still languishes in the court). This was the turbulent 60's. During the summer of 1963 I took part in the College Readiness Program. June 11 we were horrified to learn Medgar Evers, Head of Mississippi NAACP, had been gunned down outside his Jackson home. Horror, shock, amazement made us wonder about our state and the future. On August 28 as I waited for the fall quarter to begin the March of Washington brought thousands to the nation's capitol to advocate for civil rights and my heart throbbed as I listened to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. deliver his *I Have a Dream* Speech. The nation and our state had to listen. Didn't they? On September 15 during my first quarter at Jackson State four black girls were killed in the bombing of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. Oh! God! No. Not a church. In November the full horror of it all became

clearer with the assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. We knew it was a conspiracy. Hope was fading fast, but we soldiered on.

The summer of 1964 called Freedom Summer brought civil rights Freedom Riders South with the intent of changing things. I was in Gary, Indiana as a volunteer at the Gary Neighborhood House as part of a summer program for underprivileged children in the ghetto of Gary. The United Presbyterian Church sponsored the program. We at Jackson State were warned that we would lose our scholarships if we became involved in marches and sit-ins and the like. I was on scholarship so I steered clear of the turbulence that raged around Jackson during that era. July 2 The Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed, outlawing discrimination in voting, public accommodations, and employment. I was elated. Now, things would get better. All I had to do was wait. Christians would do the right thing, wouldn't they? That same summer I was horrified to learn of the disappearance and death of Andrew Goodman (21), and Michael Schwerner (24) and James Chaney (21), young people (two whites; one black) who gave their lives fighting for equal rights for Blacks.

I finished college and returned to Natchez pregnant. I gave birth to my daughter, got a job in the Natchez Public Schools and felt very secure, earning much more than the \$15.00 a week that my mother had earned most of her life as a domestic who only had an elementary school education. April 4, 1968 my bubble burst. I was devastated to learn of the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. What were we going to do? The Negro spiritual said, "Hold on, children; hold on." But it was getting harder and harder to believe that things would ever get better.

As part of what the Natchez Public School District implemented to assure that the "deliberate speed" of Brown would take place in a timely manner, I began the day at all-black Anchorage Junior and ended the day at all-white Martin Junior High. Students

had freedom of choice and could attend either of the junior high schools in Natchez. Some opted to change; others remained at the school that they had attended prior to freedom of choice. I was still waiting for that glorious day when everyone would be equal. I just knew it would happen. It had to. The court had decreed it.

Natchez was a stronghold for the KKK. Ben Chester White had been killed in 1966 because the Klan thought killing the 65-year old caretaker would lure Martin Luther King to Natchez. Wharlest Jackson, father of one of my students, had been blown up in February of 1967 shortly after he was given a promotion to a position previously reserved for whites at Armstrong Tire and Rubber Company. My dad joined the Deacons for Defense, an organization that was characterized as a black militant vigilante group organized for defensive purposes in retaliation for Ku Klux Klan activities. My 70-year-old aunt and others were taken to Parchman Penitentiary for picketing and were given a concoction to clean them out despite the fact that they were crammed in a room with just one toilet stool. But I waited. *Brown v. Board* would make things better. It had to. People would obey the law eventually, wouldn't they? What we learned in school and what we were teaching the young to believe affirmed that all men were created equal and the supreme court, the highest court in the land said, separate meant inherently equal. A better day was coming soon? Wasn't it?

The court order came down that "deliberate speed" meant just that and no more delaying tactics would be permitted after all 15 years had already passed. School closed in December. When we returned after Christmas break, the great day finally arrived. *Brown v. Board* would guarantee equal access. The second semester that year was tense to say the least. In May the superintendent of the Natchez Public School District called me in, asked if I had a child (a fact I had already divulged on my application for employment). I said, "Yes." He then asked if I planned to get married by September. I said, "No" since I wasn't even dating seriously at the time.

I was informed that I would not be able to teach in the district unless I got married. *Brown v. Board* had messed me up. I was fit to teach at Anchorage, not Martin. I would go where *Brown v. Board* meant something.

I left the South never to return. I moved to Cleveland, Ohio, but I found the same prejudice; it was just veiled. I hated the cold weather. I loved Mississippi. There is nothing more beautiful during the pilgrimage than Natchez where the old south still lives. I returned one year later after the principal of Quitman High offered me a job, despite my failing. For ten years I taught at Quitman High School and was named Star Teacher there by one of my white students. During my sojourn at Quitman High some black students told me I favored white students; some white students told I that I favored black students. My heart told me that I favored students. I knew that *Brown* would make things better soon. All I had to do was wait, but how long, Lord?

I moved to Meridian High in 1981 after I grew tired of the 50-mile commute each day. Quitman had limited housing. I worked one month and learned that I would no longer be employed, this time because of budget cuts. As last hired, I was first fired. Deja vous all over again. I substituted for a couple of months and drew unemployment. My daughter loved the Meridian Public Schools and did not want to leave Meridian. She had enrolled as a first grader at West End Elementary School, later attended Carver, Kate Griffin and finally Meridian High I guess I would give *Brown v. Board* a chance for my daughter.

In the thirty-five years, however, that I have taught I have observed a trend that is frightening to me. So many of our young black students are getting lost. For a few years they were making significant progress. Today, they are losing ground. Why? Children learn what they are taught, not just what the lesson plans show but what they believe others perceive about them. I taught my daughter to believe in herself. I shared my failings with her, but I let her know that she is special. She was named Miss Meridian High, was president of the MHS Student Council, was a cheerleader, and graduated with honors. She attended Jackson State University on a five-year program, three at

Jackson State and two at Georgia Tech. I was named Teacher of the Year, Milken Educator, was inducted in the Mississippi Hall of Master Teacher and am National Board Certified. But my heart breaks when I see so many of our young people who are letting the vestiges of the past still control their thinking. Others do not believe in them, do not challenge them, and do not feel that they are capable. The results are predictable—students not working to their potential and acting like thugs and gangsters. *Brown v. Board of Education* opened the door. Many students still feel that the classrooms are not warm and inviting bastions of learning, but cold and heartless places, still separate and unequal. Fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education* I weep.

THE SOUND OF EMPTINESS

The Empty Nest
by Robert Berg

From the depths of dreaming
You are frighteningly awakened
To the heaviness of the cold, still
darkness.

Lying down not to make a sound
For fear of shattering the crystalline
night,

You scan the stillness.

Smoothing under sheets of quiet,
You surface, gasping for tiny bits of air

Just before your mind blacks out.
Moving from room to room

You find them filled with emptiness
And an opaque stillness

That no longer echoes familiar sounds.
You now sit within the cold darkness
Surrounded by only a baby's comforter

As your cries are swallowed up
By the emptiness

That comes with change.





Sack Annie

Naive and not-so-old enough
To know better,
I believed

My mom's mortifying tale
About that sack on your back
Carrying willful, disobedient children
Away to who knows where.

Your black skin, different from mine
Added to the evil.
You stalked down my street—
With face staring straight ahead.
I knew you knew my sins—
Your back sack rasped my name.

Mudpies and cupcakes sprinkled with sand
Lost their allure
When my mind glimpsed you
Hiding behind shrubs and tree trunks.
The winds rustle and leaves scraping concrete
Were your steps creeping up on me.

In bed at night you stuffed me
Into your sack.
Suffocating, I tumbled into an abyss
As dark as your face
Until daylight's bright white
Erased midnight
And chased you away.

I learned the truth years later
With relieved regret
But conscious of damage done to you—
A black woman I never knew.

Villainized to my eyes
Yet hardworking and innocent
Your back sack filled with white shirts
To starch and iron
For those who taught their children
Lies and fear.

—Sue Ammon

The bird peeps
through the tree.
With a sharp
little tweet,
and then a tweedle.

He chirps
and chatters
without getting caught.
Singing sweet songs.
Then with a flit and a flutter he flies away.



A Death in the Family



Refusing to let the issue drop, Cissy leans over, and with a black lace glove partially covering her pouty crimson mouth, protests loudly to her husband, "It just ain't right, Andy. Louise didn't have any business making any kind of decisions without consulting the rest of the family. Lord knows what else she would have done if we hadn't driven straightaway from Jackson when we got the call. That girl just ain't right."

Irritated, Andy points his finger knowingly at his wife.

"We've been over this a hundred times, Cissy." He scolds harshly. "I don't want to hear you talking about my sister that way...especially not here. This ain't the time nor the place for your hysterics. You know as well as I do that Louise has just done what she figured was right."

Wishing he was somewhere else, Andy scans the crowd. The black-clad masses fan themselves carelessly, trying not to melt in the scorching Mississippi heat. Amid the soft whispers and uncomfortable coughs, the mourners crane their necks, searching for friendly, familiar faces in the shiny sea of folding chairs skillfully positioned into a half moon design. Typical Southerners, the Coffedelians have poured out from every corner of the county just to attend the funeral of Thomas Jefferson McKinley, a well-noted and well-regarded lawyer.

Crossly, Cissy slumps in her chair and taps her foot impatiently. "Why are you sticking up for her again, huh?" she snaps. "I ain't the one making a scene at my daddy's funeral, no siree."

Rolling his eyes, Andy pulls a tarnished pocket watch out of his jacket pocket, rubbing his fingers tenderly over the illegible engraved initials. Never looking up, he quietly murmurs, "Cissy, she's just grieving the only way she knows how. Lord knows, we're all

barely hanging on by a thread. Besides, you know she hasn't been the same since Richard left her."

Cissy sternly narrows her eyes and hisses, "Is that so? Well, you know what, Andy McKinney? I feel mighty sorry for Louise and her loss and all. But, that happened fifteen years ago. And, I should hope that she's still got enough sense left in that head of hers to know that you don't come to your own daddy's funeral wearing a damn bright blue dress!"

Suddenly, Andy catches sight of his youngest sister, Louise. In the back row, clothed in her sapphire outfit, Louise sits innocently posed in her chair, white-gloved hands neatly folded in her lap, graying auburn curls framing her tilting face—she was modeling like a patient Muse to please her curious audience.

"Why," Cissy continues. "She looks like she's going to some kind of goddamn birthday party instead of a funeral."

"Cissy," Andy threatens slowly, calmly, as he tucks the pocket watch safely into his coat pocket. "That is quite enough." Not wanting to argue any longer, Andy gives a nod to the reverend, indicating it is time to start the service.

Throughout the memorial service, Cissy stares hatefully at the silver menace sitting on the table. She felt the thing was gaudy, with its engraved dancing angels and the large letter M in

the center. After the preacher leads his flock of curiosity seekers in the final prayer, Cissy scowls twice as hard when she realizes Louise has taken the stage to address the crowd.

"Thank ya'll for coming," Louise chirps, all smiles, placing her hand loving on the silver urn. "I know how much it means for Daddy that his best and dearest friends are here." She pauses and puts her ear to the urn's side. "What's that, Daddy?" She looks up and grins widely at the audience. "He says he's very pleased." She pauses again, losing her train of thought, and scans the crowd blankly, ignoring the amused and shocked looks on the audience's faces.

Mortified, Andy looks down and pretends to take great interest in his freshly polished black shoes. Meanwhile, Cissy smirks, amused at Louise's outburst. Under her breath, she mutters, "I told you she ain't right."

Regaining her train of thought, Louise continues. "I don't have much else to say, except that Daddy wants me to invite all of ya'll back up to the house to eat some good old country-style cooking." Then, Louise snatches up the silver engraved urn, turns toward the crowd, and hollers, "Musn't forget Daddy!"

A wave of gasps echoes throughout the audience as Louise happily skips up to the house, urn under her arm. Sadly watching

her go, Andy knows his sister isn't handling their father's death as well as he would have hoped. Fearing the worst, he takes Cissy's hand and trudges toward his childhood home.

Under the shade of Tom's prized pecan trees, a generous spread is set out for the funeral guests. Plopping the steaming mashed potatoes and fried chicken onto his plate, Andy mentally notes that Louise has seen to it that only Tom's favorite dishes are served and that each table holds a white bud vase full of daffodils, Tom's favorite flowers.

After seating himself, Andy scours the tables for Louise. When he finally spots her, he observes regretfully that Louise has placed the urn right next to her plate. Shaking his head, Andy wonders silently why his sister has never really been the same since Richard's funeral.

"So, what's the fruitcake doing now?" Cissy smirks as she takes a seat beside Andy, interrupting his thoughts. "Is she trying to feed the old man, or is she trying to eat him?"

"Can't you just shut up for once?" Andy irritably snaps as he smashes his black-eyed peas mechanically with his fork.

Wounded by her husband's harsh outburst, Cissy silently begins shoveling the food into her mouth. Andy watches her silently for a few minutes, regretting having snapped at her. Restlessly

dropping his fork, he fiddles with his pocket until he produces the unpolished gold watch.

Still wounded, but hiding it well, Cissy continues nonchalantly, "At least you found that old watch before Louise did. Who knows what she would have done with it. You know she probably would have tried to drop it into the urn with your daddy's ashes." Pleased with herself, Cissy smirks and fluffs her hair.

Wearily, Andy places the watch back in his coat pocket. "Time to go, Cissy," he mutters as he rises from his chair. "I'll meet you at the car. I have something I need to do first."

"Don't take too long, honey," Cissy calls after Andy, as he briskly marches toward the house.

Andy found Louise in the library, curled up in their father's favorite armchair, reading the tattered family Bible. Louise had placed the urn on the mantle and had flocked giant Magnolias around it. On the marble-topped end table near Louise's chair, small white candles flickered gently and cast a warm glow around Louise. Entering hesitantly, Andy feels his heart break when Louise stops reading and tearfully looks up at her brother.

"You think I'm crazy...Don't you, Andy?" Louise asks dejectedly, her wide eyes brimming with innocence.

Andy looks on silently, studying Louise, wanting to say the

words to comfort her fears without having to lie to her.

"I'm not crazy, Andy. Please believe me." Louise pleads with her brother. "I know what people are saying about me." She wipes her eyes. "But, I'm not crazy. I only wore this silly blue outfit because Daddy always said it set off my eyes so nicely. I...I just wanted a special way to honor his memory. After all, he did so much for me when...when Richard left me."

Tears brimming from his eyes, Andy grabs his sister into a strong embrace.

"And," Louise continues, resting her head on Andy's broad shoulder. "You know how nervous I get when I have to speak in front of crowds. I must have sounded like I went off the deep end. And I know Cissy hates me for having Daddy cremated. But I just couldn't bear the thought of him lying in that cold, deep, lonely ground."

Andy ruffles his sister's hair affectionately, trying to soothe her. "I don't think you're out of your gourd, Lulu," Andy reassures her. "This whole situation has been stressful for all of us."

"But, Andy, I should have asked you first before I had our Daddy reduced to ashes... I'm sorry."

With a guilty grimace, Andy releases Louise and fishes through his pockets. Producing the watch, Andy gingerly places

it in Louise's trembling hands. "You were a good companion to Daddy," Andy tells his sister, closing her hands around Tom's treasured pocket watch. "So, you should have this. It's what he'd want."

"Oh, Andy!" Louise beams her Cheshire cat grin at her brother. "You found it! You found it! I thought I'd lost it forever and ever." She snuggles the watch to her cheek. "I'm going to place it right here next to Daddy so I can look at it whenever I want."

A heavy weight lifted from his shoulders, Andy happily kisses his sister goodbye and makes her promise to come visit him in Jackson sometime soon. Through a library window Louise watches her brother bound merrily down the steps, pleased he is finally leaving her to her own thoughts. All these thoughts of Richard and Daddy and death have left her exhausted. After watching Andy drive off into the purple-hued twilight, Louise plucks the urn and the watch off the mantle and carries them to her father's bedroom.

Once inside, she gently sets the urn and watch on her father's bed. "Well, father," she tells the silver container, holding it lovingly in her hands. "It's just you and me...Would you like our watch now?" She tenderly opens the urn and drops

the gold pocket watch inside.

Snuggling the urn to her chin, Louise sighs blissfully. "Andy just wouldn't have understood about the watch, Daddy." Louise starts again. "He would have thought I was crazy, and we both know that's not true."

Cradling the urn in her arms, she dances over to the window. "See how beautiful the moonlight is, Daddy? You know how much I love the moonlight."

Louise sits in the windowsill, placing her father next to her. "Richard loved the moonlight too, Daddy. We use to look at stars together. Do you remember, Daddy?"

Slowly, a frown tugs at the corners of Louise's thin lips. "Richard said he loved me too. Said he wanted to marry me. Said he'd be with me forever. Said he'd never leave me. Do you remember that, Daddy?"

Louise picks up the urn and gazes at it indifferently. "But, Richard lied. Richard did leave me. And, they buried him in that dark, deep grave down by the creek bank."

With a long exasperated sigh, Louise puts the urn back on the window ledge and looks again at the moon. "But, you told me I didn't need a Richard; I just needed my daddy..because daddies never leave their little girls. And, Daddy, I made sure this time I

wouldn't get left."

Louise picks up the urn and kisses it. "I hope you understand, Daddy. I went through all this because I love you."

Cheerfully, Louise strolls leisurely toward her father's bed. "Yes, it's marvelous that you'll always be with me, Daddy. And, I can take care of you just like you took care of me."

Carefully, Louise snuggles the cold, silver container into a soft white pillow on the bed. Right now, though, it's your bedtime. Good night, Daddy. I love you."

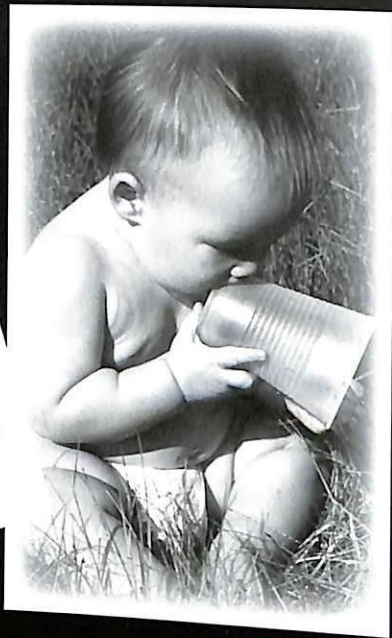
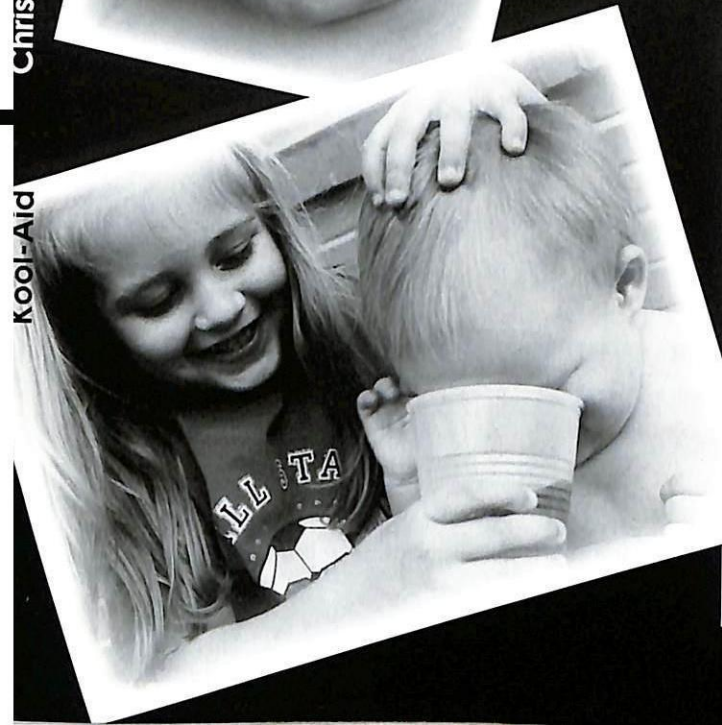
She kisses her father's urn and gently tucks the bulky patchwork quilt around it. Tiptoeing gently out of the room, Louise gives her father a small wave. As she starts to close the door behind her, she whispers sweetly, "Sweet dreams, Daddy. I'll see you in the morning."





Kool-Aid

Sweet sugar liquor
Drunk through a straw much quicker
Than slurping and gulping messily.
Rainbow colors set free.
Mustache in each cup.
Big smiles kids, drink up.



Ghettoblaster

I am kunky chunk of metal,
Heaped on strong shoulders,
Blasting out loud street tunes,
To a race married on rhythm.

I am blaring trumpet tunes,
Of the melodious Coltrane;
I seduce summer heat,
With sultry Marvin Gaye.

My speakers (chrome-trimmed)
Vibrate plunging bass—
Spitting rap-laced lyrics,
Preaching to ghetto children.

Rich folks stare, confused,
Peep out fancy passing cars,
Stare at nappy heads, shaking asses,
To beats I boom in the hood.



Quixote's Return

Returning to my hometown after thirty years of exploring America has had moments of apprehension and irony. Case in point, I recently attended my thirty-fifth Meridian High School reunion – my first appearance since graduation in 1966



– and found this gathering of old friends and adversaries a mind-boggling experience. A trip into Rod Sterling's Twilight Zone comes to mind. Some of these classmates even thought me dead. That is not surprising since friends and family always said my lofty idealism and ludicrous manner would likely get me killed. Cervantes could appreciate my youth. Since early adolescence I'd been lowering my lance and charging visionary windmills, my quixotic tendencies always provoking calamity. But, I survived the harrowing journey, returning to Meridian a wiser man at peace with his world. My perceptions about most everything have changed, especially regarding relevance to my hometown. In my youth, I blamed Meridian for most of my inherent problems. It lacked size, opportunity, open-mindedness, interesting people. But my new insight into that turbulent, adolescent era now relates a different account. I now see clearly the problem.

One grand incident comes to mind when recalling ironical events of my early adulthood in Meridian. It was a time right after my 1972 graduation from Business School at Mississippi State University when naiveté, confusion and fear ruled my existence. My odd career choice of banking didn't help matters. Here I was, this freethinking, radical, misfit trying to assimilate to the mentality of the most conservative institution in the world of business. Talk about the proverbial round peg in the square hole, or vice versa. Of course, I had feelings of inadequacy, a defective proletariat among the nobles of capitalism. Even my business school professors considered me a refugee from the psychology department. And, my supervisors at People's Bank of Mississippi were moving toward that same conclusion as my lack of conformity raised concerns. So what if I wore my hair too long and rode a motorcycle. Underneath that unconventional exterior lay the mind of an Alan Greenspan. I had my moments of clarity and it came during a Monday morning loan meeting in the Executive Vice-President's office.

Once a week all lending officers met to discuss noteworthy loan circumstances transpiring during the previous week's business activity. My objective during these conferences was to blend into the dark mahogany paneling and achieve nonexistence while sitting on my sweaty palms. Speaking at one of these meetings terrified me, but when venturing an assertion, I somehow delighted in the cheap thrill. All of a sudden I heard one of the Vice Presidents announce, "Who's been making loans to all these long-haired, hippie-looking characters I've seen in the bank, lately." All eyes in the room instinctively shifted in my direction. A knot developed in my stomach as I felt another cheap thrill at hand. I needed a quick, defensible response and my mind strained for clarity. And then, the profound words burst into consciousness. With bold authority, I announced, "Hey, these guys work for Peavey!" To my astonishment my colleagues sat in silence displaying looks of bewilderment. As I scanned the room, searching for affirmation of my brilliance, each colleague's lips appeared to be forming the same "O" shape as they prepared to respond. From around the room, the unanimous retort was, "Who?"

These were Peavey's formative years, and it was self-evident they would grow into the giant of music commerce we all know today. The young company was employing musician friends of mine, and I was loaning People's Bank's money to them for cars and boats. Simply put, Peavey made the best amplifiers on planet earth, and I knew it. But it was obvious from my colleague's collective response, they didn't. In summation of my defense that morning in the loan meeting, I

announced, "Peavey's going to be the biggest thing to ever come out of Meridian, Mississippi." Chuckles from around the room greeted that decisive forecast.

Soon after this incident, close examination to ensure responsibilities. All is well had a favorable conclusion. I continued making loans the blade from that old Three months later, weary round holes, I resigned from Aspen, Colorado where the nature. Re-entering banking the newly chartered Crested and-for-all, but primarily to for a career in finance. environment made all the

As I drive around Peavey signs prominently a peaceful feeling comes knight-errant and his



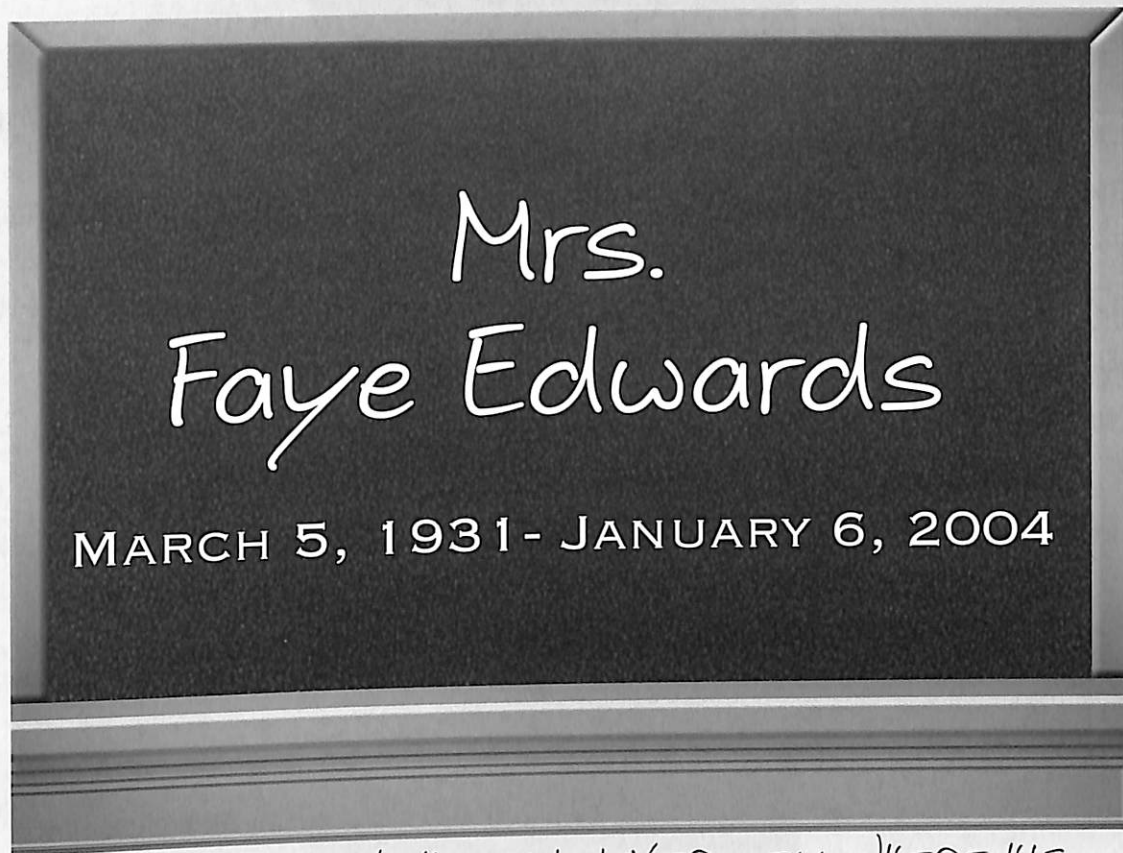
every loan I'd made came under I'd not exceeded my lending that ends well, and this situation No improprieties were found, and to Peavey personnel. However, windmill had come awfully close. from forcing square pegs into People's Bank and moved out to lifestyle was more conducive to my a year later, I went on to found Butte State Bank, proving once-myself, that I had the "right stuff" A little courage and the right difference.

Meridian these days observing displayed on so many buildings, over me. I'm reminded of that chivalric, yet ludicrous ways.

He fought his battles as best he could and survived to tell the tale.

The foundation
of every state is
the education of
its youth.

-Diogenes
Laertius



Education's
purpose is to
replace an
empty mind
with an open
one.

-malcolm
Forbes

Only the
educated are
free.

-Epictetus

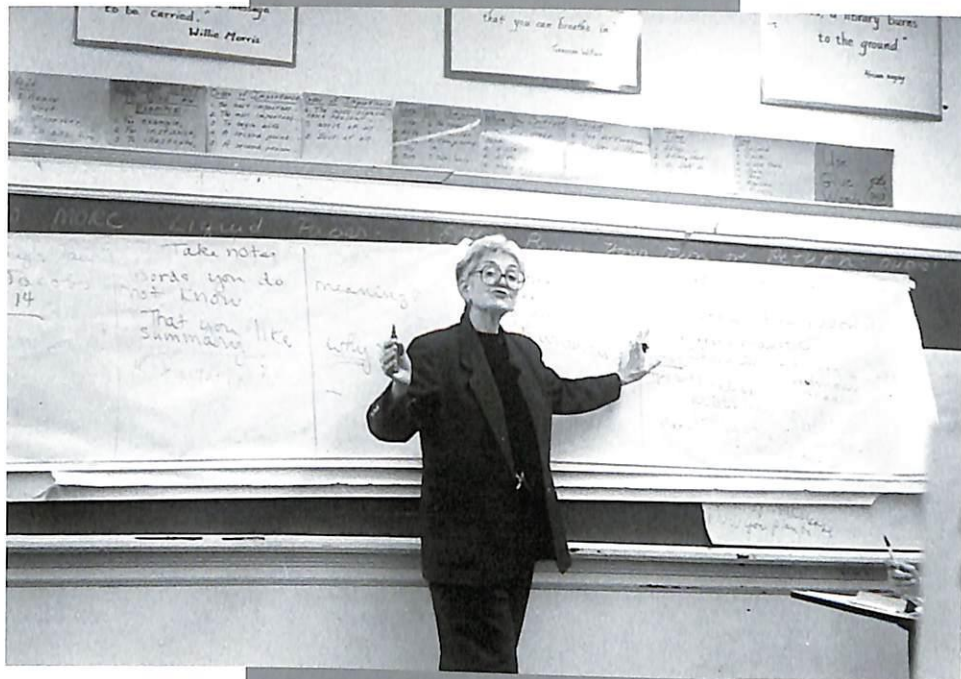
A TEACHER AFFECTS ETERNITY; HE CAN NEVER TELL WHERE HIS
INFLUENCE STOPS.

-HENRY BROOKS ADAMS

"I have two hard and fast rules,"
I said on the first day of school.
"One, do not talk when
someone else is talking.
And, two, do not talk
when we are writing."

And then I remembered
Miles talking to himself
Over the wail of his
trumpet,
And Coltrane
whispering
"Pass the beer."

And I thought of my
own talking to myself
When I walk around
the house
Composing



Never composed
Always in the middle of a piece
A story, a poem, living

And talking it out as I
drive
Through the country
in January
And see that blue
heron
Or that hawk

And here I go again
talking out loud
While I am writing
And riding.

No, my rules are
always wrong.

—Circa 1988

Ruddy horns aurora
tracings
Brass choirs of them
on one stem
Counterpoint
Trefail topping
trefail
A song within a
song
Melody added to
melody
Echoing yourself,
red on red
Leaf on leaf



A flourish of
beauty
A flowering of
brass
Loud and joyful
you sing out
Jubilate!

68999

-January 31, 1988



"Stories"

"Mama, tell about the time you fell in the well..."

I knew the story, had heard it all of my life, could see the wooden well wall grayed by weather, the sun bonnet, the flora bunda roses, could even smell the oranges PaPa carried in a brown paper bag.

Why, then did I beg over and over for the never-ending tale to be told? What was the magic? What primal urge did the repetition afford? Did I hope for variation? No, indeed, I was tickled pink with the sameness, the expected, the security of knowing the story would never change.

And I wonder if Absalom, when he was still in his father's favor, ever begged of David, "PaPa, tell me about the time you killed Goliath." Or did Isaac ever ask Sara to explain again why he was named Isaac (meaning "he smiles"). Or Joseph ever ask Jacob to tell how he wrestled God Himself.

And if truth be told (and it rarely was in our ecclesiastical and family canons), these histories repeated are embellished, enlarged, becoming mythic, even epic. My grandmother, in the retelling, calls the fire department to rescue her

precious, curious child. Goliath grows immense, menacing / the retelling. Sarah's self-conscious giggle becomes a full-blown belly laugh. Jacob is wounded in the thigh. Each telling becomes more detailed, as all good tales must be.

Because story telling is an art and the tellers artificers of the highest order. It is useless to argue if these tales are true or not. Veracity has very little to do with the tale telling. Indeed, veracity has nothing to do with truth. Tales such as these deal with universals and are true. I resonate with the idea that my mother was precious and that I am precious. David's tall tale urges us all to foolish courage. The unimaginable evokes laughter. That she loves me! That I win a trip to Bermuda! That I win a million dollars! And who among us has not wrestled with a belief, an idea a desire, saying, "I will not let you go until you first bless me."

Yes, stories bless us, sanctify our mundane lives, urge us onto magnificent dreams and splendid deeds.



El Dia de los Muertos (The Day of the Dead)

"Let light perpetual shine upon you"

It is All Souls' Day

And I have created a shrine for you

On the let-out table in the kitchen

Where we used to sit on rainy afternoons.

Here on the table

I have placed scones, which you specially liked

And clotted cream and lemon curd

A pot of tea

A bunch of marigolds

A photograph of you holding a cup of tea

And your blessed saint, the Virgin de

Guadalupe,

A light

Bidding your spirit come

To enliven the feast.

-November 1, 2001



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by Bree Noelle Wiginton

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by Aa'Keela Hudnall

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by Amber Felton

Short Story

1st Place– No First Place

2nd Place(Tie)– “So Hard To Find Good
Help These Days”
by Adrian Wilson

2nd Place(Tie)– “A Sense of Darkness”
by Scott Cofield

3rd Place– “Friends Till the End”
by Tiffany Huffman

Essay

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by Hallie Pearson

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by Michael Harper

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Short Story

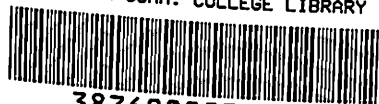
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by Daniel White

3rd Place– "Skatin'"
by Charlotte Swearingen

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