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the harbingers of spring.  
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h it was no more than a  
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and in this wild flower.  
; for although it was



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# Literary Review

2002

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Publication Adviser

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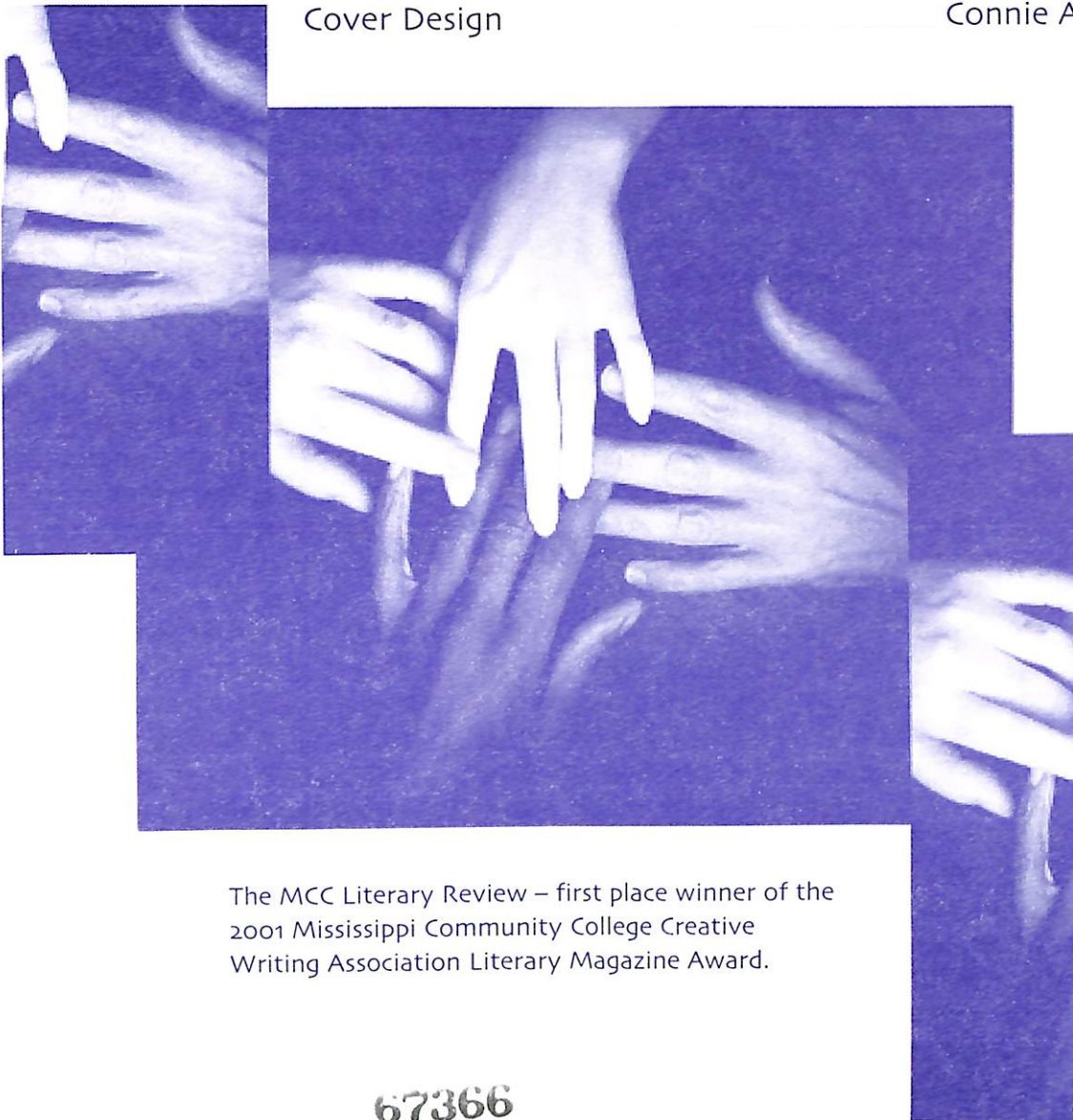
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The MCC Literary Review – first place winner of the  
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Writing Association Literary Magazine Award.

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Wading in summer streams, searching for crayfish,  
Cool mud squeezed between our toes.  
Carefree crustaceans backed unaware  
into clear traps.  
Muddy water swirled in a maelstrom  
Within old mayonnaise jars  
As crayfish helplessly spun,  
Craving release.

Sweet grass smells perfumed August  
meadows  
Where bees bumbled on white clover  
heads  
Securing pollen.  
Ambushing them as they worked,  
We imprisoned multitudes  
Within confines of glass.  
Belligerently buzzing,  
Their fuzzy bodies struck  
Against solid transparency  
To no avail.

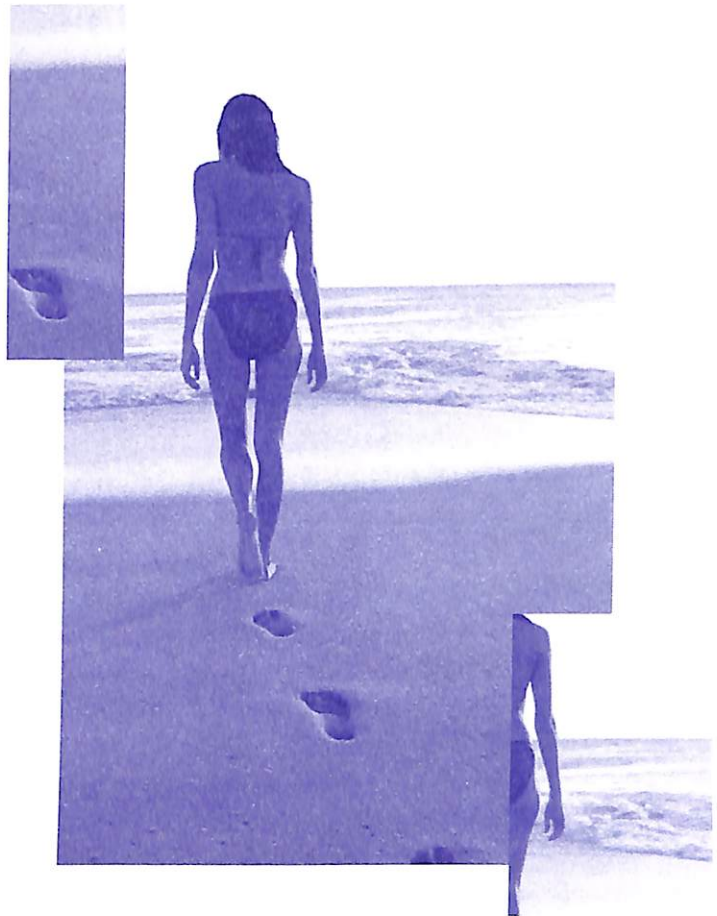
Dusky darkness brought twinkling  
fairies--  
Fireflies who lured us with eerie light  
Into dark woodlands.  
Crafty little creatures,  
They enticed us and then  
Extinguished their night lights.  
Not all escaped.  
Shaking the prisoners  
Within our jars  
They momentarily glowed  
And then expired.

That was yesterday.

Now clock hands create a vortex  
As they swirl around the numerals--  
Our seconds, minutes, hours  
Sucked into a vacuum under glass,  
Slipping away forever.  
Gasping for air, we try to grasp them--  
To capture time.  
It is then that we realize  
Living under glass  
Requires release.

# Under Glass

Sue Ammon



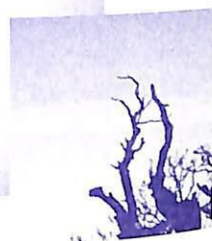
On the way to work it caught me, on the side of the road it was,  
 My mind caught like an insect tangled  
 In a web dripping dew and light in the morning.  
 It was a dying tree standing, wrapped in westaria.  
 And the sunlight crept through the gray  
 And wet, the grass was very green:  
 It was certainly beautiful, and dying to be certain.

How travelers must have  
 driving toward death  
 Been struck by the purple paradox.  
 And how many (if any) thought  
 That it hung like linen  
 On a mummified corpse  
 Dissolving into dust?

The heart that's been broken is beautiful  
 Because once the cosmos quaked for it  
 And in the loss of life there is tragedy  
 Worthy of translation.  
 And so I take my medium  
 And I knit a lyric cloak  
 And wrap westaria round.

And as time's train travels on  
 Twisting toward our destination  
 The westaria blooms, purple profuse  
 And a smell of altar smoke,  
 And the drizzle of dead leaves  
 Adds to the effect.

But when the gray drops  
 to water  
 And the purple petals fall,  
 Will the incense in the air  
 Be sustaining recompense?



# Westaria On A Dying Tree

Chad Nicholson



As our small, rickety bus pulled down the twisted gravel road, I sat on the end of my seat anxiously waiting to see what was around the next bend. I had never been to an immigrant farmer's camp before, and I did not know what to expect. I simply sat and waited for our overly crowded bus to come to a stop. "What would be there? What would the farmers be like?" I wondered. I had no idea that what was on the other side of those bus doors would somehow change my life forever.

# One of Life's Lessons



As I stepped out and began to look around, I realized this was no camp. It was a dump. I wanted to jump back in the bus with the rest of my group and go back to the college dorm room where I was staying in Charleston, South Carolina. Instead, I stood dumfounded and stared at the long, white school-looking building that was broken up to form many one-roomed dwellings. The only thing separating the night air from creeping in was a small screen door. Its holes were mended with whatever was readily at hand such as sticks, tape, or even mud. My train of thought was suddenly interrupted by a loud flapping noise, coming from the roof of the building. The shingles were barely hanging by rusty nails that had once held them securely, but their grip had loosened after years of no care. As the wind blew harder, the shingles pounded even more furiously than before. I stared, mortified, at the old leaky roof and at what I would call home

for the next two days.

Once again, my thoughts were brought to a halt when suddenly I felt someone tightly squeezing my legs. I looked down to see a young Mexican girl squeezing my kneecaps with her pudgy little arms. The girl tried to speak to me; however, I could not understand her because I did not speak or understand Spanish. "Great," I thought. "Here I am in a dump, and I cannot even understand these people." Finally, the child gave up and took me by the finger and led me to a closet-sized house. There was a small stove in the far left corner of the room. Mustard-colored carpet, tattered, torn, and overflowing with dirt, was all there was to protect her feet from the coldness of the concrete floor underneath. There were no beds anywhere; the family simply slept on the floor and shared an old blanket for cover. The girl proceeded to show me the community bathroom, a small piece of tin hung between

## Deardra Carpenter

two trees. The toilet was a large silver cooking pot placed in a hole, which was emptied twice a day by the children. The shower was a garden hose hung from the top of one of the pine trees. I slowly looked around in silence, trying to take in all that was being shown to me. The girl showed me every object in the camp with pride, and I observed every detail with compassion. That afternoon the child took me to the corner of one of these homes where, on the roof, a few toys were nailed. I later learned that some of the Americans in that area did not



cold, concrete floor underneath. There were no beds anywhere; the family simply slept on the floor and shared an old blanket for cover.

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That afternoon the child took me to the corner of one of these homes where, on the roof, a few toys were nailed. I later learned that some of the Americans in that area did not care for the Spanish farmers, so they nailed the children's toys to the roof as a crude and impassionate trick. I began to think of a plan to get the children's toys down; then it hit me. One of the guys who had come to the camp with me was rather strong and tall enough to boost me to the roof. As I climbed on the roof, he tossed up a hammer for me to remove the nails. I began slowly to loosen and toss down the toys one by one. When I got to a small blue, stuffed dog, the girl's eyes widened. I tossed the mangled creature down to the child, and she quickly grabbed it and immediately began hugging and squeezing it tighter than ever. As I looked into her chubby, but dirty, angelic face, I saw a single tear stream down her cheek and turn into mud.

That day God used that little girl to reveal to me how truly blessed I was. She had nothing, and was happy; I had everything, and wanted more. As I watched her, in her faded T-shirt, standing there holding and cuddling her toy dog as if it were gold, I realized that I had so much for which to be thankful. A single tear streamed down my cheek. That small child changed my entire outlook on life, and that one day has changed my life forever.



The florescent lights hum softly in the sterile hospital room where my child sleeps. Everything about this place is sterile, the white bed linens, the pine-scented antiseptic, even the people who inhabit it. The sun is shining bright today, so I pull the shades down over the windows as my little boy sleeps. He looks so small and fragile lying on that big white sterile bed. My little Superman, that's what I call him. The pallor of his face almost matches the stark white sheets that are tucked up under his chin.

I walk across the room and sit in an uncomfortable chair that I have become quite familiar with, maybe too familiar. It tilts to one side as I shift my weight. I close my heavy eyelids and lean my head back. The chair tilts to the other side. I suck in a deep breath and try to remember. Somewhere in the back of my mind he's still there, my little Superman. I see him flying through the house with his red cape bouncing off his back; fists stiff as boards out in front of him.

"It's a bird, it's a plane, it's SUPERMAN!" he yells at the top of his tiny lungs as he fights for justice and keeps the world from peril. His energy is boundless; he fights crime all day humming his Superman theme song. I open my unwilling eyes now to reality. That painful face is there on my innocent child even as

he sleeps. And I am helpless. I try to keep my spirits up when I'm around him, but I know my little Superman can see right through my transparent smile with his X-ray vision. He shifts a little in his sleep as I think about the cancer lurking in his frail body. It's his nemesis, his Lex Luther. Though he's fighting this battle with all he has, he is slowly losing.

A nurse walks in to check his vital signs as I wipe a tear off my cheek. Her name is Lois, and I wonder if maybe it's Lois Lane, but doubt it and return her pleasant smile. She fiddles a little with the tubing in his IV, knowing my smile is not sincere. But she says nothing because she, like this horrible place, must be sterile.

My tired eyes follow the tiny tubing going through my little Superman's veins. Flowing through it is his very own kryptonite. I half expect the liquid to glow bright green. Just like Superman, my little boy is weak for days after he encounters his kryptonite.

I lean my head back again and drift off before I notice the chair shift back. I have been here too long, but there is nowhere else I want to be. Every second is precious because our time is ticking away. When he goes, so will a part of me. When I awake, the light is dim outside and the fluorescent lights are humming a sad tune. The doctor comes in with his sterile white lab coat. He shakes my hand and then checks on his patient. My little Superman awakens with tears thick in his eyes, but he doesn't cry. He lets out a heavy sigh, as if

Katharine Gambill

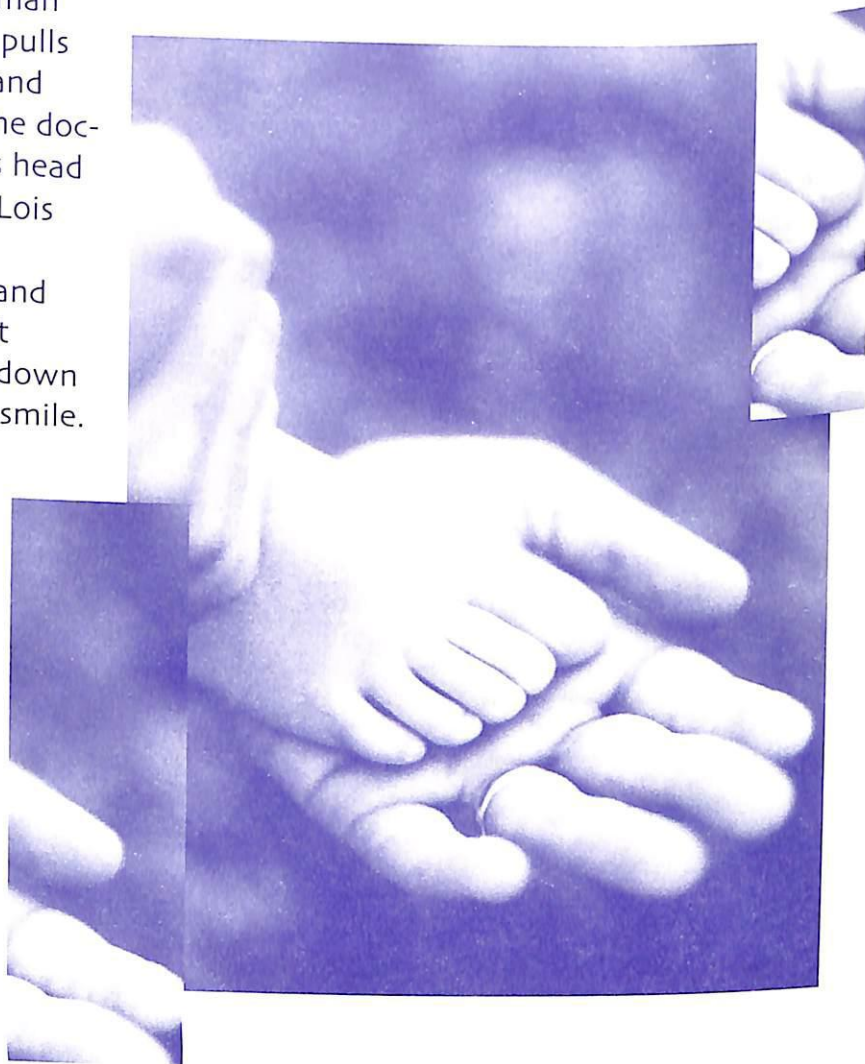
# My Little Superman



his superhero breath could freeze the doctor in his spot, prolonging the inevitable a little longer. The face once overfilled with joy and life is now twisted with pain. I watch as he labors to pull himself into a sitting position. With thin little fingers he pushes back the sheets, making me wonder if they weigh a hundred pounds. Lex Luther and his kryptonite have taken his superhuman strength. My little Superman pulls his tiny knees up to his chest and leans his cheek upon them. The doctor smiles and rubs his hairless head and goes on with his rounds. Lois brings in dinner, but my little Superman looks a little green and turns his head away with great effort. He eases himself back down into bed, giving me a strained smile. I lean over and kiss his forehead wishing I could suck away the pain.

"I love you, Mommy," he whispers in a tiny voice filled with emotion and pain. My heart is breaking into a thousand little pieces.

"I love you, too, my little Superman," I say as I lie down beside him. For a second he seems to be at peace. Our time is fading fast. I hold him close in my arms with tears streaming down my face. He closes his eyes, and I hold on as tight as my heart will let me. I feel him begin to fly away, but still I hold on tight. And I wait.





Mittie shuffled slowly behind the shopping cart along the crowded aisle of the Dirt Cheap store, winding her way carefully between the tables and racks laden with all manner of clothing. Her oaken cane, worn smooth over the years, dangled precariously from the bar near her hands. The rusted wheels of the cart, discarded long ago from a supermarket, scraped over the dusty floor and occasionally skidded over a fallen belt or dangling tie from a chenille robe hastily hung on a hanger. Mittie took all of this in her slow but purposeful stride. She was on a mission.

Wrinkled arthritic hands moved patiently over articles of clothing packed tightly together on steel rods, occasionally bringing a garment closer for inspection. Each garment was appraised for color, fabric, and style.

Mittie knew just what she was looking for, knew it was here somewhere in this jumbled collection of cast-offs and seconds. She was looking for the perfect garment. Suddenly, one particular piece caught her eye. A deep purple suit, of a fine woolen cloth, hung among others of various shades of navy, black, and brown. It was cut simply, trimmed with a black velvet collar and matching buttons. She checked for the size. Yes, it would fit, she was sure. As she caressed the soft fabric, smoothed it with her gnarled fingers, she knew this was the one.

The royal purple reminded her of the cloth draped over the cross in the sanctuary of her church, the royal robe of Christ. It seemed fitting somehow.

"Yes, this is the one," she thought with satisfaction as she pulled it from the rod, carefully folded the suit, and placed it in the cart.

Her worn slip-on house shoes flapped rhythmically on the dusty floor as she made her way to the table of millinery near the back of the store. Piled high upon the table was a myriad of styles and colors of ladies hats. Mittie stood quietly, taking it all in, as she gazed at her choices. Dark brown eyes, clouded and milky with cataracts, searched for a hat. Those eyes were immediately drawn to a red felt hat trimmed with gold ribbon and sequined flowers. She smiled, thinking of her younger days when she would have reached for this one at once, a hat as bright and sassy as she had been. But she knew this frivolous hat was not the one for today. She needed something more serious, more appropriate for the purple suit and the occasion. Finally, after sorting through the pile, she came upon the exact one, just what she needed. It was a black felt cloche with a matching velvet band and ribbon tied in a neat bow in the back. There was a spot on the ribbon near the front, but that could easily be covered with the beautiful black-beaded pin her granddaughter had given her for Christmas. At five dollars, it was surely a bargain. She tried it on in front of the small cracked mirror on the wall near the table, tucking the wiry gray curls that had escaped from her hair net under the hat. Tilting her head this way and that, adjusting it for the fit, she decided

# Mission of Love

Frankie Germany

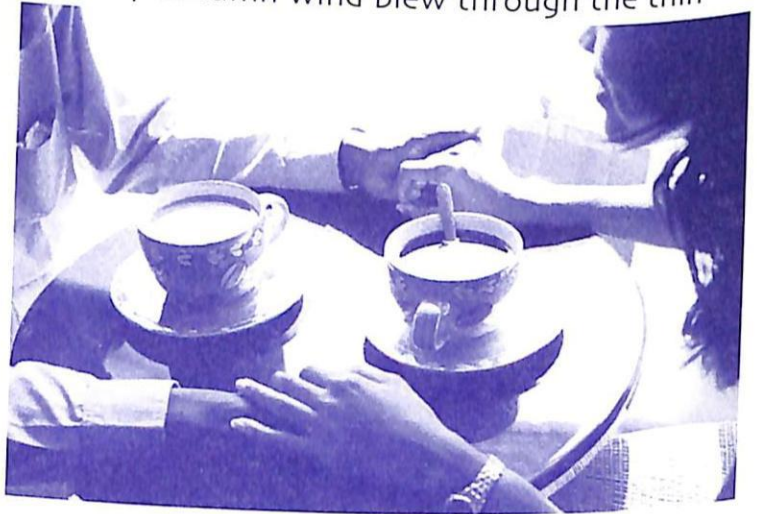


that this was the perfect hat for her. She especially liked the small black net veil attached to the brim that covered her wrinkled brow, giving her a somber look.

She thought about the pearls that she would wear with the little pearl ear-bobs to match--the pearls she had worn on her wedding day so many years ago. Yes, this was what she had been looking for, the perfect hat to go with the perfect suit.

Mittie popped open the clasp of her ancient black handbag and reached inside to find the frayed-edged coin purse. Inside was a small wad of bills, wrapped with a receipt from the Peaceful Rest Funeral Home and carefully tied with a scrap of fabric. Her crooked fingers labored with the untying of the fabric scrap until it finally broke free. She counted her money. Just enough for the suit and hat if she walked home instead of taking the bus. She handed the bored cashier the money, took the few coins in change, and gathered her purchases under her arm. It took her a few moments to arrange her purse and purchases so that she could have a free hand for her cane for the walk home.

After resting for a while on the bench at the bus stop, Mittie began the journey home. The leaves rustled beneath her feet and the sharp autumn wind blew through the thin



sweater she wore. She shivered in the late afternoon chill, her frail body a reed in the wind. As she shuffled slowly down the avenue toward home, a falling maple leaf fluttered down in front of her. She stopped momentarily, admiring the beautiful fall foliage. A group of children rushed past her as she stood, laughing as they passed. One of the boys was carrying a small, flattened squirrel, obviously the victim of a passing car, and was chasing the girls. The girls were squealing as they rushed by. Mittie watched them scamper down the sidewalk before she continued on her way, thinking that they knew so little of death, or of life, for that matter. Their time for understanding would come, as had hers.

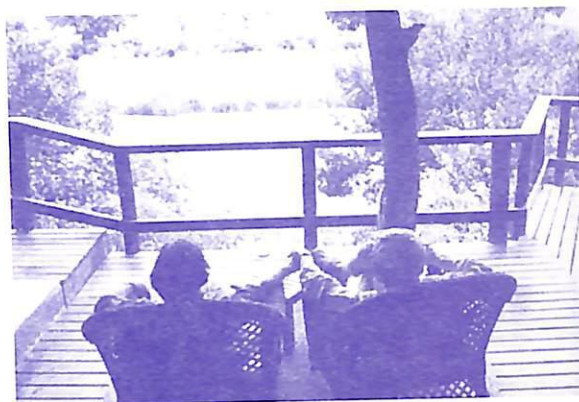
Once during the walk, her heart began to pound, beating a staccato within her breast. "Easy, now," she told herself. "Can't stop now, too much to do." She rested for a moment, leaning against a huge old oak tree, welcoming its strength, until she felt she could continue on her way.

Finally, Mittie reached the row of apartment houses, cluttered sad buildings in the middle of the city. She took the three steps up from the street to her apartment door, aching muscles cramping with each step, her heart alternately fluttering and thundering from the exertion of the walk home from the second-hand store.

Mittie eased open the door to the apartment and quietly stepped inside. She could hear the raspy breathing from where he lay on the bed in the next room. She walked slowly to her closet and carefully hung the suit on a hanger. Taking the black beaded pin from her jewelry box, she placed it over the spot on the hat and set it on the shelf above the clothes. The receipt from the funeral home was tucked safely in her purse and put on the shelf also.



He moaned softly. Mittie moved to the side of the bed and looked down at him. His rheumy eyes showed no recognition of her presence, just the vacant stare that had been there for days. She caressed his cheek as if to smooth the wrinkles from the ashy colored skin, thinking of what a fine man he once was, how his skin had shone like polished mahogany when beaded with sweat from the exertion of hard work. How his muscles had rippled beneath the blue work shirt as he labored in the sun. How he must hate being like this, unable to move, to talk, or to care for himself. She straightened the coverlet around him and fluffed his pillow under his gray head. Mittie bowed her head for a moment, then taking her pillow from the other side of the bed, gently covered his face, holding it there for several moments, until the shallow breathing movements ceased.



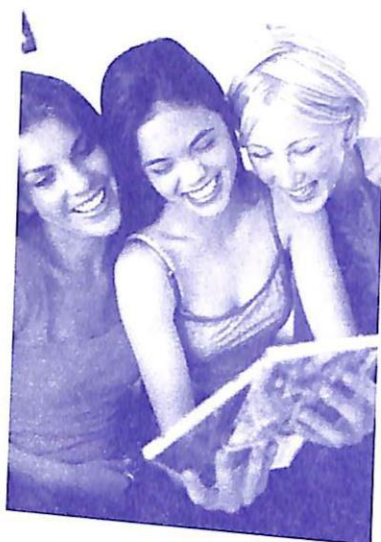
There was no struggle, no movement to suggest it was other than what he wanted. She waited, watching for a few moments, to be sure. Then she kissed him on the cheek, gently closed his eyes, and moved to sit in her threadbare chair by the bed, reaching for her old Bible and holding it closely to her breast. Tears coursed unheeded down her wrinkled cheeks and dripped onto her collar.

Morning light filtered through the drawn blinds as dawn broke. Mittie woke slowly and stretched, stiff and sore from sleeping in the old chair. She made her way to the small kitchen and reached for the telephone on the wall. Dialing the familiar number, she waited as it rang several times. Finally, a sleepy voice said, "Hello?"

"Honey, your Daddy passed in the night. He went peacefully in his sleep. You'd best come on over here."



# Whispers Between Friends



Dorothy Murphy

Come and sit beside me  
on a long slow afternoon  
and speak of things I dearly loved  
and had to leave too soon.

Let your words describe to me  
crabapple's springtime scent  
and the smell of honeysuckle  
growing low upon your face.

Tell me how the blackbirds  
gather in my old oak tree  
and make me hear the catfish  
swimming in his private sea.

Breathe for me the mist of dawn  
before the sun turns red  
and echo sounds of cattle  
rising from their shadow bed.

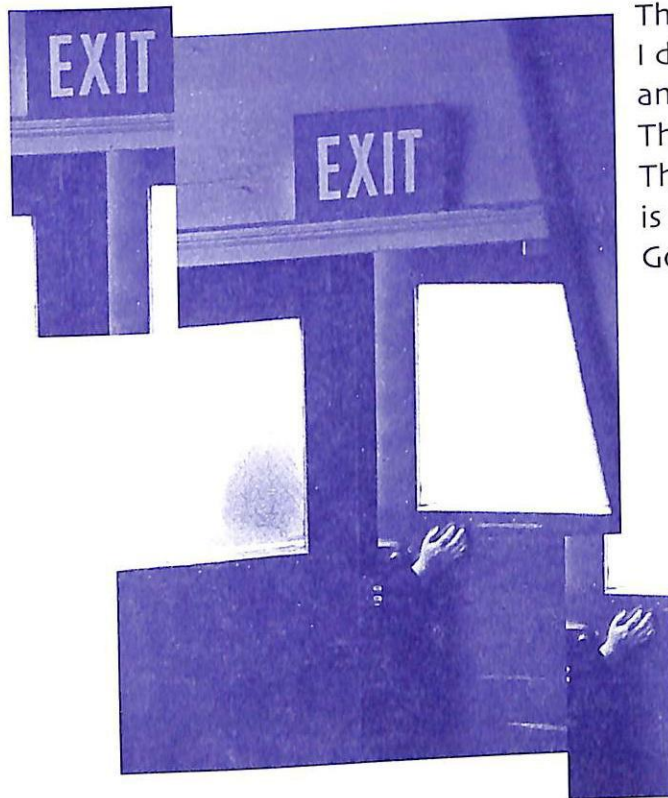
Remind me how the breeze of Spring  
flows like silk against the skin  
and the golden glow of sunset  
brings perfect day to glorious end.

Then whisper low in promise  
that you will not forget:  
We two are friends forever  
beyond the world I've left.



Sky Joiner

*Sad but true, hard but fair,  
I had a good home,  
I should have stayed there.*



This verse long ago, I memorized.  
I didn't understand the meaning,  
and was not quite so wise.  
Those I love are all now gone.  
The home I remember  
is now not home.  
Going back there is just being alone.



# Sammy

Laura Kittrell

Sammy has no last name. He is just Sammy. He has no past or future. He has no family or friends. All I really know about Sammy is that he will always be there. His name will be called every Sunday on the prayer list in church. Sometimes he is at the beginning of the list, sometimes at the end, but he is always there. All anyone seems to know about Sammy is that he had been a member of the church at some point. No one knows what happened to him, but he is someone we could all depend on.

Sammy was a spy for the United States. He was stationed in Turkey. He was caught leaving Ankara and sent to a prison there. He spent five years in the prison with no contact with anyone from home. He finally managed to escape. Since he was very dedicated to his job, he assumed an alias and continued living there as a spy. He is still in Turkey today, only able to contact government officials.

Sammy was a bus driver. He drove the bus everyday from Meridian to Jackson and back. He would go weeks without passengers. Whenever he did have passengers, he would let them ride for half-price because he was so glad to have someone to talk to. After awhile, the few passengers he did have stopped coming. Summer came and went, and there was still no one to ride his bus. One day he drove straight through Jackson, then Mississippi, then the whole United States, and ended up somewhere in Canada. He lives there now and does not worry about his bus.

Sammy was a bird. He found a new home every few months. For awhile, his home was my church. He sat outside the stained glass windows during the sermon, and while the congregation prayed, they could hear him chirp. He took his communion from a tree by the door of the sanctuary. When people gathered in the courtyard to talk after church, he talked with them. He came to the early service and the late service. He attended all functions that were held at the church. After a few months, he left and found a new home at someone else's church.

Sammy was a husband and a father. He had a wife and two daughters. His wife was very pretty, and he claimed his daughters got all of her genes. They all sat together on the third pew each Sunday. Sammy wore his nicest suits and showed off his family. One day his family died in a car wreck. He became depressed and never left his house. The third pew stayed empty.

Sammy was no one special. He came to church each Sunday. He was known among the congregation, but he did not stand out. He was friendly to everyone, and everyone was friendly to him, but he had no close friends in the church. He did not have an exciting or interesting life. One day he just decided he did not want to come to church. He stopped coming, and that was all there was to it.

Sammy was an actor. He was well-known in the community. He performed in many local and high school plays. He was always asked to read the scriptures in church because everyone loved to hear him talk. After he graduated, he moved to Hollywood. At the advice of an agent, he changed his name. He is now very famous.



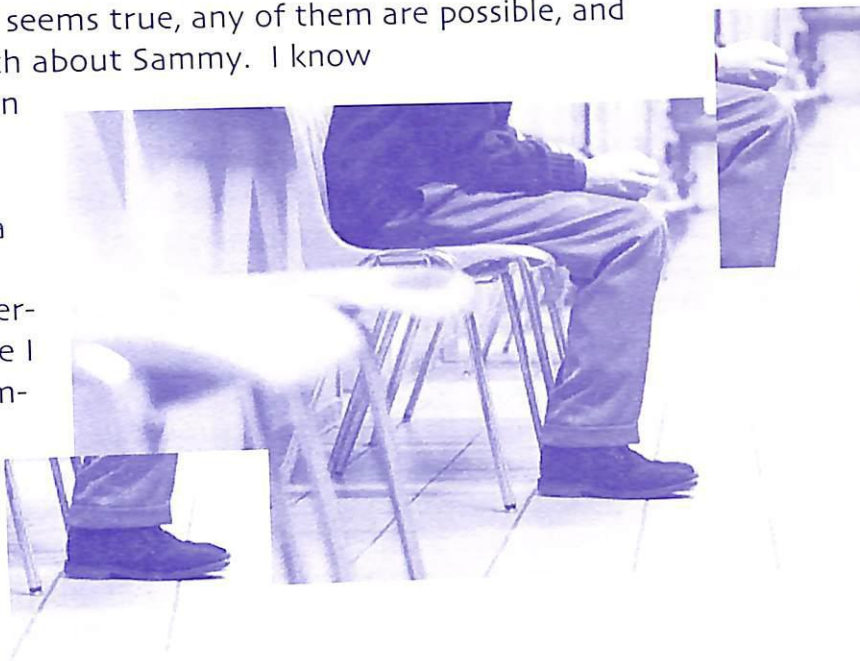
Sammy never existed. He was just a character made up by some children in the church. The children put him on the prayer list, and the church prayed for him. He became such a part of the history of the church that no one wanted to take him off the list. We pray for him today as a symbol of the church's history.

Sammy was insane. He stood in the back of the church by himself. He arrived during the sermon and left during communion. He was afraid of the congregation, and the congregation was afraid of him. He talked to himself, and everyone gave him strange looks. He set fire to his house and was sent to a mental institution in another state.

Sammy was a writer. He wrote many books, and everyone loved them. He wrote for years and was never at a loss for a topic. Eventually, he found himself with a severe case of writer's block. He left town and traveled around the world, looking for inspiration. He is still looking.

Sammy was a drug addict. He started out only doing drugs occasionally, but ended up taking more and more until he became addicted. Eventually, he started selling drugs himself. He had many clients and all the drugs he wanted. He was finally caught by the police and put in jail. He spent a few years in jail, only to end up back in jail for the same reason just a few days after he was released. He is still serving time today.

The last scenario seems to be the most popular and most likely story I have heard about Sammy. Although this story seems true, any of them are possible, and they only add confusion to the truth about Sammy. I know nothing about Sammy, and yet I can rely on him above anything. He is the one thing I can always depend on. Sammy will be there without a last name, past, present, or future. Above anything, Sammy is not a person, he is just a name. He is a name I trust more than my own and a comfort to everyone who hears it.





# Fort Of Pine

Scott Montgomery

When my friends and I were younger, we never noticed we didn't have the Internet or cable TV. The toys we had were numerous and mute. We didn't care; we had plenty of energy to enable our plastic armies. However, we learned a lot from inventing our own world outside. A child's imagination can scrape up entertainment from the dirt.

I spent most of my childhood days at Mrs. Brenda's on Garrigues Road. Mrs. Brenda had two sons, Brandon, who is a year older than I, and Tyler who is four years younger than I. We spent most of our time outside. Soon we had mapped out the whole property. The only thing on the premises

that had entertainment value was something we created. We turned propane tanks into horses and hedges into a jungle. Painstakingly, raw sand was molded into a stately castle fortified with twigs.

Like all boys, we had the need to be taller, and climbing a tree was the quickest way to do that. The lower the branches of a tree, the more susceptible it was. The chestnut and the apple tree were the first to be conquered. When every branch had been memorized, the enthusiasm to climb had dwindled.

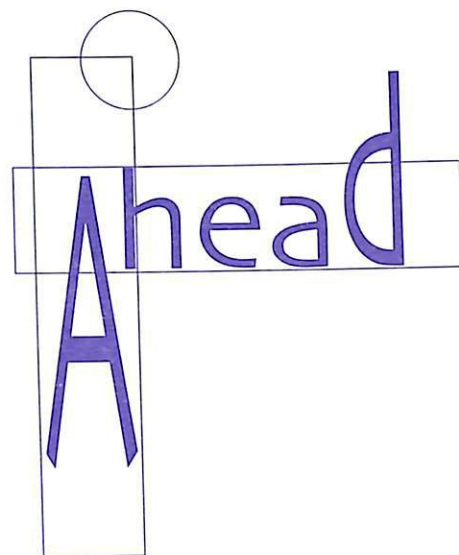
Then, the pine grove in the back of the yard soon began to idly stare at us. Each branch was so high, at least compared to the other trees. Each pine tree was different with its own features and thickness. The area around each tree was shaded by its needles. Every branch out of our reach taunted us and had to be stopped. Triumphantly, we would dangle upside down and mock every conifer. Besides crumbled bark, our hands and feet left no visible evidence of our ascendance into these giants.

Something was needed to guard us from the passage of time; the fort was the answer. The pine-straw fort was the first thing we had ever made that lasted overnight. It started out as a chore to rake up the straw, but when the chore was finished, the ground was naked. Yes, we had a pile of straw higher than our hips. We constructed a square about four feet by four feet. The first time we made the fort meagerly in case it needed to be cleaned up upon the arrival of an adult.

Soon the fort walls were thicker than our arms were long. The enthusiasm to make something that would last pushed us to scour the grove for more pine straw. More rooms were added with their own characteristics. The main room had a pile of twigs for a homey fire. The kitchen had a sink and a single pan. When I would lie down in the fortress, I didn't see the ground, but only the prickly ends of pine branches and the cool autumn sky. Flat on my back the fort seemed its fullest, but I had little time to enjoy it because its walls were constantly pulled down by the gravity we are all subjected to. Gradually, we grew tired of constantly refreshing the life of our creation. Without our help the winds put every needle back into its place.

The fort was the guardian of our youth. Just as the fort disappeared out of the world, so did the children we were. As time passed, we stopped adding memories to our fort; however, as we live today, we can never stop adding memories to our lives. Every lesson we learn is an addition to our wall's fortification.





## Laura King

Through my hair a soft breeze flows:  
Around my ankles the lush grasses dance.  
I watch the sun  
As it slowly crawls over the horizon.

I glance over the landscape behind me,  
Steeped deep in shadows,  
At all my life has held thus far.

I stare at the darkness before me,  
As the slow illumination begins,  
Searching for what else my future will hold.

I see mountains and valleys ahead,  
Steeper and less friendly  
Than the rolling hills I have already covered.

I know that going backwards is impossible,  
Aside from in the mind's eye.  
My body can only go farther ahead.

And though I pause for a moment's reflection,  
I know that I cannot yet rest—  
Not until I have conquered all of my mountains

And emerged from my last valley,  
Will I at last reach my destination  
Where I may take my rest, forever.



The other day there was a big photograph on the front page of the *Mashburn Monument*, our local newspaper in Mashburn County, Mississippi. There, amongst the lower limbs of the courthouse Magnolia tree, perched like two drunken owls stuffed in polyester pants, were Betty Carol Stephens and Jean Louise Everly. Both women were trying their best to look mean and defiant while holding on to the trunk of the tree and trying hard not to fall out of the tree. The two women, neither known for their tree-climbing ability, were protesting the county supervisors' decision to cut the Magnolia tree down and would not let the county work crew start sawing.

# Magnolia Of An Idea

Frank Thompson

One of the supervisors, Cecil Breadwater, was quoted in the paper saying they wanted to cut the tree down and replace it with sod and a few bushes which would not interfere with growing the grass on the courthouse lawn.

"The ground under the Magnolia wouldn't

grow squat," Supervisor Breadwater said in the article. "The tree blocks any sun that would help grass grow. All that's under the tree now is a bunch of roots catching cigarette butts, paper, and the leaves and seed pods from the tree, and years of bird poop. It's a mess."

The county work crew had arrived at the courthouse early Wednesday morning and started setting up saw horses blocking off parking spaces by the tree.

"What you doing?" Betty Carol Stephens asked. Betty was on her way to her beauty shop located across from the courthouse.

"Gonna cut down this here tree."

"What? Who told you to do that?"

"Mister Breadwater said we was to cut it."

"We'll see about that," Betty Carol said, running into the courthouse with her cell phone in hand. Betty Carol called the local radio station and with the tone usually reserved for reporting tornadoes, bad car wrecks and fires, she demanded to be put on the air to let people know about this disaster. "They are going to cut it down if you don't get down there now!"

As Betty Carol started raising the alarm, employees from the courthouse hurried out to see what was happening. Word of the soon-to-begin deed spread like fertilized kudzu after a spring rain.

Women and retired men drove in from all over the county to save the tree that they now cared for, even though yesterday they probably couldn't have told you it was there. Eighty-seven-year-old Widow Stapleton was at the courthouse buying her car tag when it all happened. She hobbled out of the courthouse and shook her cane at the work crew fussing, "And how dare you cut that tree! My late husband Harold helped plant that







Raking Magnolia leaves is also a challenge. The leaves are dry and brittle. They do not bend or in any way give in. The leaf has a pointed end that becomes sharper as they dry. This little point has a tendency to stick into the grass and dirt as the leaf is pushed with a rake and tries defiantly to hold its ground.

Adding to the difficulty are the Magnolia tree roots. Some roots of the Magnolia find their way above ground and stretch out across the yard. This results in a network of trenches into which the leaves lodge themselves. Trying to fit the rake between two roots to remove the leaves results in nothing more than the leaves moving between the next two roots.

The blossoms of a Magnolia are themselves revered. No self-respecting Southern lady, who considers herself even in the smallest degree an artist, would never paint anything but a Magnolia blossom as the subject of her first work of art. If the truth be told, there are bad paintings of Magnolias spread throughout the South. Some are hanging on relatives' walls with many more hidden in attics, garages and behind couches. Others are pawned off on unsuspecting tourists as highly priced local folk art.

There's not much you can do with the blossom when you get down to it. It's best left on the tree. The white of the Magnolia blossom is delicate and with simple human touch, turns brown and dies.

The Magnolia tree reaches full bloom in late May and on into June. This is when the sun is beginning to reach its stride and the Southern afternoons are hot and humid. The sun seems to mischievously enjoy baking the Magnolia blossoms to such a level that the very perfume so many people have romanticized about becomes a strong stench rivaled only by rotten fruit piled in the trash bin behind the Piggly Wiggly.

After the blossoms, come the seedpods. These three to four inch hard cones are covered with pineapple-type points and bright red, corn-shaped seeds that have the potential of producing another "cherished" tree. The pods also fall from the tree and serve no other purpose than to provoke a cuss word or two when stepped on by a man's bare foot as he retrieves the morning paper from the yard or to provide painful ammunition used by boys to do battle against each other or against some unsuspecting target, usually the neighbor's dog.

"That's a Magnolia of an idea." When you analyze what Mr. Walt actually said, you realize what he meant. It was an idea that conjures up visions of romance and beauty. But as the new wears off, it becomes an idea that involves a great deal of mess that'll take considerable work and will result in radiant white blooms that stink to high heaven when exposed to the heat of evaluation and scrutiny and will turn brown and die soon after it is touched by human hands. The end product will turn out to be a pile of hard pointed cones and dried leaves that have no purpose and are a royal pain to clean up. In other words, Mr. Walt did not think much of Ida Mae's ideas.

Most of those civic-minded people who ranted and raved the other day over the idea of cutting the Magnolia tree on the grounds of the courthouse probably never had a Magnolia in their yard. They never spent a Saturday raking leaves and seedpods. They never had to smell the odor of a tree full of sickening sweet Magnolia blooms on a hot sunny afternoon.

When I look at that picture on the front page of the newspaper of Betty Carol and Jean Louise holding onto the trunk of the courthouse tree, all I can think of is--saving the tree at the courthouse--what a Magnolia of an idea.

# Day & Again Day

Dorothy Murphy

Comes morning with its pain  
that paints the body sore,  
leaving sleep that should have knit  
but only raveled more.

Long before darkness flees,  
Inquisition starts. \*  
My aging frame, a rack,  
where hot flame licks and darts.

To move is agony,  
to stay is more,  
so I climb the Matterhorn  
just to reach the floor.

Instinct guides arthritic feet:  
blind need no sight.  
In the bottle is a pill  
to change the game of night.

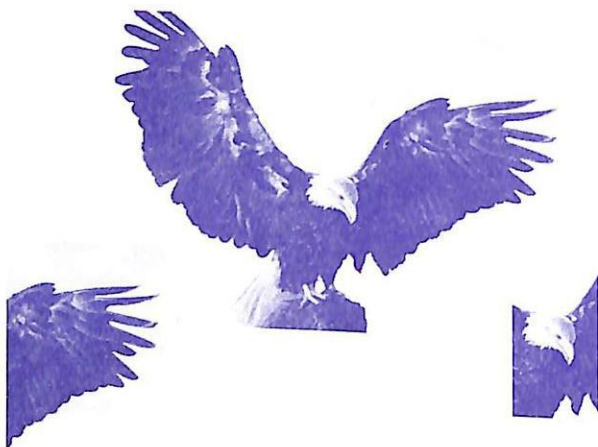
Though moving slow, I start  
the day ahead of me.  
There are things I have to do  
and places I must be.





# The Gift

Deborah Swann



When you raise an eagle  
He's so tiny and helpless at first.  
Day after day you care for him,  
Becoming attached to him.  
Soon he's stretching his wings.  
He snaps when you feed him.  
He scratches you, not meaning to,  
But still, it bleeds.  
And you notice that each day  
He watches the sky longingly.  
You know that's where he belongs,  
Not with you.

At last the day comes  
When you give him what he wants best  
And you fear most.  
Because he is strong enough  
Because you love him better  
than you love yourself,  
You release him to seek the high places.  
You watch as he opens mighty wings  
That you helped grow strong,  
And leaps into the sky.  
You feel earthbound as he catches a thermal  
And soars.  
But then you remember.  
You have raised an eagle.

People very rarely know the depth of my imagination and creativity; these characteristics exist in the innermost part of the human soul and reflect a great deal of a person's personality. There are many times when I am able to use my imagination to advance myself in the physical world. If people did not use these characteristics, the world would not have as many technological advancements that it has today. I try to exercise my imagination whenever possible. This makes everything much more personal and exciting.

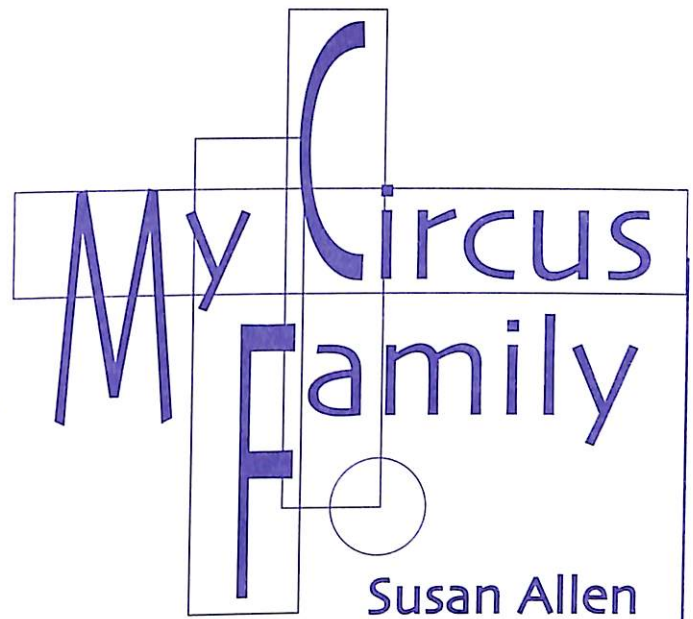
I like to consider myself somewhat adventurous. I think I get my imagination and creativity from having been around many different and extraordinary people. These

people are the closest thing I have to a family. Some people call them freaks, but they are far from that. They are circus people: extreme actors bringing a twist of fun to a normal person's everyday life. These people make children and adults smile.

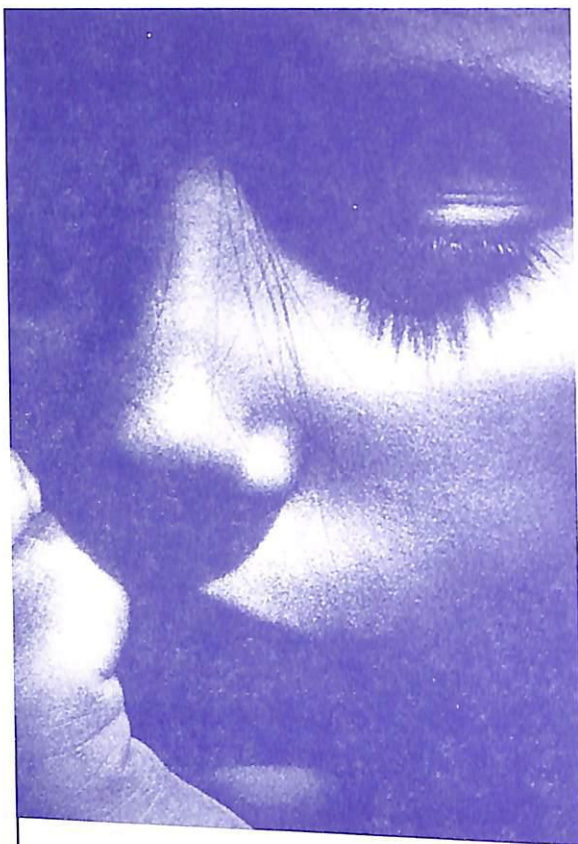
The circus is not the most ordinary place to raise a child, but it was my home until my sixth grade year. I have no idea who my original parents are. They left me at the circus in a basket with a note telling my name and birth date. Henry, the clown, found me while he was cleaning up after a performance. Henry and Matilda, the bearded lady, took me in and gave me a home. They adopted me eventually. They are the best parents a girl could ever want. They have taken wonderful care of me. I'm surprised they never turned me out into the streets as much trouble as I caused them.

Friends, on the other hand, were very difficult to make. I was home schooled and was always moving around. The children I did meet thought I was weird, or I was only passing through their towns for a brief stay. My best friend was a monkey named Bailey. We ran around together all the time. He showed me the ropes of the circus. He was an extremely smart monkey who had been taught sign language. That was our form of communication. All of the animals were friendly except for Midnight, the tiger. He didn't like anyone. I quickly learned to stay away from him after he attacked me, and I had to get ten stitches in my leg. I have a scar to prove it, too.

My best human friend was Cassandra. She was an awesome trapeze artist. She taught me how to ride the elephants and how to do tricks on the horses. I participated in a few of the shows as I got older. During one of the performances, Cassandra was doing a double back-flip with a full-twist when one of the wires broke. Her partner missed her fingertips by inches. The whole crowd watched as Cassandra's circus career came to an end. She didn't die, but she never would go back up after that. She never really was quite the same. It was very disheartening to see her lose her spirit like that. After that, Matilda decided that it was time for me to have a normal life with a stable home and a good







education. She didn't want to see me get hurt and lose my spirit like Cassandra did. That is how I ended up here in Philadelphia, Mississippi. I am currently living with her brother, George. He is really cool, but I really miss my circus days. I especially miss Matilda and Henry. I do love being able to know that I have a physical address now, and I have made many wonderful friends. It was a change for the best as I see it. Growing up as a circus child has really influenced my personality. I think most of my friends can see that. I have been so privileged to have been able to see so much of our beautiful country. I have also met many fantastic people. They have all had some kind of influence in molding me into the unique individual that I am today.

Imagination and creativity have really had a large role in my life. I use those characteristics to make reality a bit more thrilling. My life would not be as much fun without my imagination to add something to it. Imagination and creativity are very boring without one another. Imagination

without creativity is like a zebra without its stripes. I would not have been able to make up such a great story about growing up in a circus without these characteristics.

Goose bumps ran along Chad's arm and down his pale back at the mention of it: Shadow Cavems. For six generations before him, Chad Holliway's family had been cowards. Not just run-of-the-mill cowards, but the kind you can smell; the fear rising off their skin like heavy dew on a shallow lake's surface. Chad was no different. The slow and cautious wait, the inability to make eye contact, and the nervous disposition—they were all his signature moves.

His father, like his father's father, left Chad with his mother to face a bleak and terrifying childhood with only one parent. Despite his talent at chess, throwing horseshoes, and being able to hold his breath for three minutes, he wasn't the most popular guy. His only friend had moved to Mississippi three or four years ago, and Chad often wondered what a skinny, friendless sixteen-year-old coward like himself could do in a town like Gatlinburg.

One night after the Halloween dance that Gatlinburg High holds every year, a group of boys decided to drop by Chad's house. Terrified by the prospect of dancing, Chad had immersed himself in household chores. He was so involved in dusting that he barely heard the tapping at the window in the vacant guest bedroom. He eased his way down the silent hall in search of this disturbance's source. His shaky hand opened the maroon door of the bedroom, and his wide eyes stared at the three shadows projected on the matching blinds. Was it Chad's imagination, or was it someone whispering his name?

"H-H-Hello?" Chad hated himself for being so scared, and he wanted to be different ... he felt like it was possible., but...

"Chad," the voice whispered softly.

"Bernie, is that you? This isn't funny. You and the twins just leave me alone, okay? Just leave!"

Bernie and his two five-foot cohorts, Mick and Mack, were the closest thing to friends Chad knew. He was the butt of their jokes and the sucker in their pranks, but they spoke to him; how could he ignore them?

Just as Chad was reaching for the beige, backlit Venetian blinds, a hand from outside the window thrust in and grabbed his wrist. The icy grip pulled Chad out of the open window and onto the dew-sprinkled lawn.

"Sucker! Every time you fall for it! Never fails!" Bernie roared at the sight. Chad stood next to his small, two-bedroom house and stared down at a far off place.

"We knew you wouldn't show at the dance, so we paid you a house call--you should've known we would come by."

The twins always seemed a little remorseful for how Bernie treated Chad, but never quite sorry enough to help him out.

# Prologue to a Life

John Boudier



Mick whispered to Mack and Mack whispered to Bernie, and Bernie grinned. His mouth was a storm drain: iron clad with bars. His dark-set eyes and scowl seemed to suck him into that rusty black smile. The thought of being swallowed gave Chad more goose bumps.

"Are you ready to head out?" Mick asked.

"We have all the supplies: flashlight, blankets, plenty of beer.

Are you in?" Mack added.

"W-What are you talking about?" Chad stuttered.

"The four of us are heading down to Shadow Caverns to have a few laughs and a few beers. The moon is full tonight, and you know the rule: you are obliged to attend."

Bernie seemed delighted at the idea of Chad coming along for the trip.

"I can't, you guys!" Chad fidgeted and looked down, "It's Halloween and past ten, and I just ... I just can't!"

"Listen. The twins and I know your mom is out of town and your dad's long gone, so you really can't say no, can you?"

Bernie twisted Chad's fragile arm behind his back and asked again. "You coming?"

"Yeah," Chad replied with little or no argument.

He felt resentment at the mention of his father. His dad had abandoned the family before Chad's seventh birthday. Somehow Chad felt different from the generations of yellow-bellied cowards that came before him. Unfortunately, Bernie was in control for now, and the evening was full of danger and mystery.

Gatlinburg was alive with celebration. Jack-o-lanterns burned brightly behind shop windows as clusters of snickering trick-or-treaters moved down Main Street. Chad felt like a dog on a leash that tried to get away but was pulled by the neck back on track. The twins seemed a little nervous about going out into the forest to the caverns at night, but the prospect of beer kept them right next to Bernie.

There were two college students having a "picnic" outside the entrance to the caverns, and Chad wanted to shout cries of help. Instead, he lowered his head and followed the other three boys helplessly.

Just inside Shadow Caverns, a heaviness fell on the boys and a wet cold air filled their lungs. Chad felt like he had just been sucked down that black storm drain.

"Nice in here," Bernie stated matter-of-factly.

"It's amazing!" the twins agreed together.

"We should go home, you guys! Anywhere but here... Please?"

No matter how strongly Chad pleaded, Bernie's iron will could never be broken.

"If you wanna bail out on your only friends, you can, but don't come back cryin'!" Bernie warned.

Chad's silence was an answer in itself. Yes, he would stay. Yes, he would be laughed





at. The answer was yes, and Chad hated himself for it.

After being tripped twice, abandoned once, lied to, and laughed at for half an hour, Chad was ready to leave. He had been ready to leave since the moment they arrived, but Mick and Mack had each had a six-pack, which worried Chad. Bernie drank three or four beers and seemed pretty buzzed himself.

The deeper the caverns went, the deeper the fear bored into Chad's guts. That complete blackness found only in caves invaded every one of Chad's organs with knife-sharp ease. The cool air turned chilly, then cold. Chad saw what seemed to be a pattern between the temperature drop and how intoxicated his "friends" became.

So the journey ended on a group of rocks similar to Stonehenge. Each boy had his own stool made of slimy rock to rest upon. In the middle of this circle, a deep whirlpool seemed to end in a dark cloud of octopus ink. Chad felt strangely similar to the whirlpool: a dead-end with nothing to look forward to.

Time passed and the group grew still. None of Bernie's insults made sense, and besides the giggling, Mick and Mack may well have been unconscious. Still, the ominous whirlpool seemed to mock Chad. The swirling ice-cold water mesmerized him into a trance, which could've lasted for hours if Bernie hadn't slipped and fell in the water.

Chad's first response was to yell for help like a first-grader who fell on the playground. No reply. The twins were of no use either. Mick was asleep in a puddle of drool, and Mack snored softly. They were both unaware of the frozen enemy that had sucked their leader underwater.

The next minute proved to be the longest minute of Chad's life. He watched Bernie slip deeper and deeper under the surface and thought about what had to be done. Chad's family history provided no proof of chivalry or bravery, but his instinct pushed him over the edge and he dove in after Bernie, waterproof flashlight in hand.

The icy water felt like it was literally tearing Chad's skin off as he rushed to rescue of his tormentor. Two minutes passed. Each second was an eternity until he saw Bernie on his side on the bottom. Chad gripped his weak arms around Bernie and pushed off the bottom as hard as he could. Colors flashed behind Chad's eyes when he realized they were still under after three minutes.

The two boys burst above water and gasped for air in barely enough time. Chad felt somewhat relieved when he saw the college students with flashlights coming to help him. More than relief, shock filled him. The cold shock of the water and the shock of how he had rescued Bernie. But most shocking of all: he had escaped the storm drain.

In one swift act Chad had changed his fate of perpetual cowardice and silenced all the sneering rusted grins of the world that would pass judgment on him. The town would say the word *hero*. Maybe Chad didn't agree with that or maybe his fragile insecurity didn't allow him to believe it. What mattered most to him was that he was different—different from his dad, stronger than drunken bullies, and wise enough to understand it all. He would always be skinny. He changed because he gained that little something—that blur in the corner of a person's eye that is so easily overlooked.

"Faith in myself." Chad's smile transformed his demeanor. A change was in store for Chad, and he embraced it.



# November

Deborah Swann

November rides in on a tall gray steed—  
Cold wind blowing his shadowy cloak.

He steals the color off the trees  
And leaves them stark and bare.

He paints the skies low and dark  
And sends an icy rain.

The grass bends low before his breath  
And biting frost rides with him.

His coming sends the wild geese home  
And the fierce bear to his den.

October's colors soon fade from mind  
In November's bitter wind.

No promise he makes of blossoms to come  
Or colors red and gold.

But winter's forward guard is he—  
Magnificent and bold.

Iron grey days and long dark nights  
And the low, ever-singing wind.

Thoughts turn to home and memories warm  
When November comes riding in.



# Crimes Of the Pen

Tami Phillips

It's funny how  
writing a poem  
is like  
committing a crime

Sometimes spontaneous  
yet other times requiring perfect planning  
with an alibi always necessary  
in case there are flaws

If you screw up once  
and dare get caught  
you're subject to strict judgement  
and definite criticism from your peers

Once the damage is done  
your fate is in jeopardy  
and you're never quite sure  
if you've done a good thing  
or just taken your passion a bit too far



# Sing Me to Glory

Cathy Webb

*She lived unknown, and few could know  
When Lucy ceased to be;  
But she is in her grave, and, oh,  
The difference to me!*

These lines by William Wordsworth are, of course, written about a woman, but each time I read them, I think about "Uncle Dick," known to the world outside of Whynot, Mississippi, as Stennis Ponds. Uncle Dick was not my uncle, nor my husband's uncle, but he and his wife, Aunt Margie, and daughter Carol were family in every sense of the word. My husband, a born and bred "Whynotian," grew up living about a quarter of a mile from Uncle Dick and his family. As a small boy, he spent as much time at their house as he did his own. He tells of Aunt Margie sitting on the banks of a pond all day long while he and Carol and Carol's cousins, Mike and Tanya, splashed and "fished." He speaks of standing in the kitchen, his eyes barely reaching the counter, while Aunt Margie made little balls of dough for him to fish

with. Aunt Margie, Uncle Dick and Carol became family to him, and he became the son they never had.

Uncle Dick had a language of his own. He made up nicknames for just about everyone, and one had to know these names in order to know whom he was talking about. For instance, if he told me that he had just seen "Mother" and "Darlin'" at the store, I knew he was talking about a man in the community who never referred to his wife in any way other than "Mother" and about another man in the community who always "armed up his wife at church like the little darlin' was gonna run off."

He called my husband "Woods," me "Scoots," our daughter "Butterbean," and our son "Tootley." He made up words with the ease and imagery of a poet, and although Uncle Dick loved to give folks nicknames, I never heard him say an unkind word about anyone. It just wasn't in him. If anyone were criticizing the worst drunkard, wife beater and thief in the county, Uncle Dick would find something good to say such as, "Well, he sure can build a straight fence."

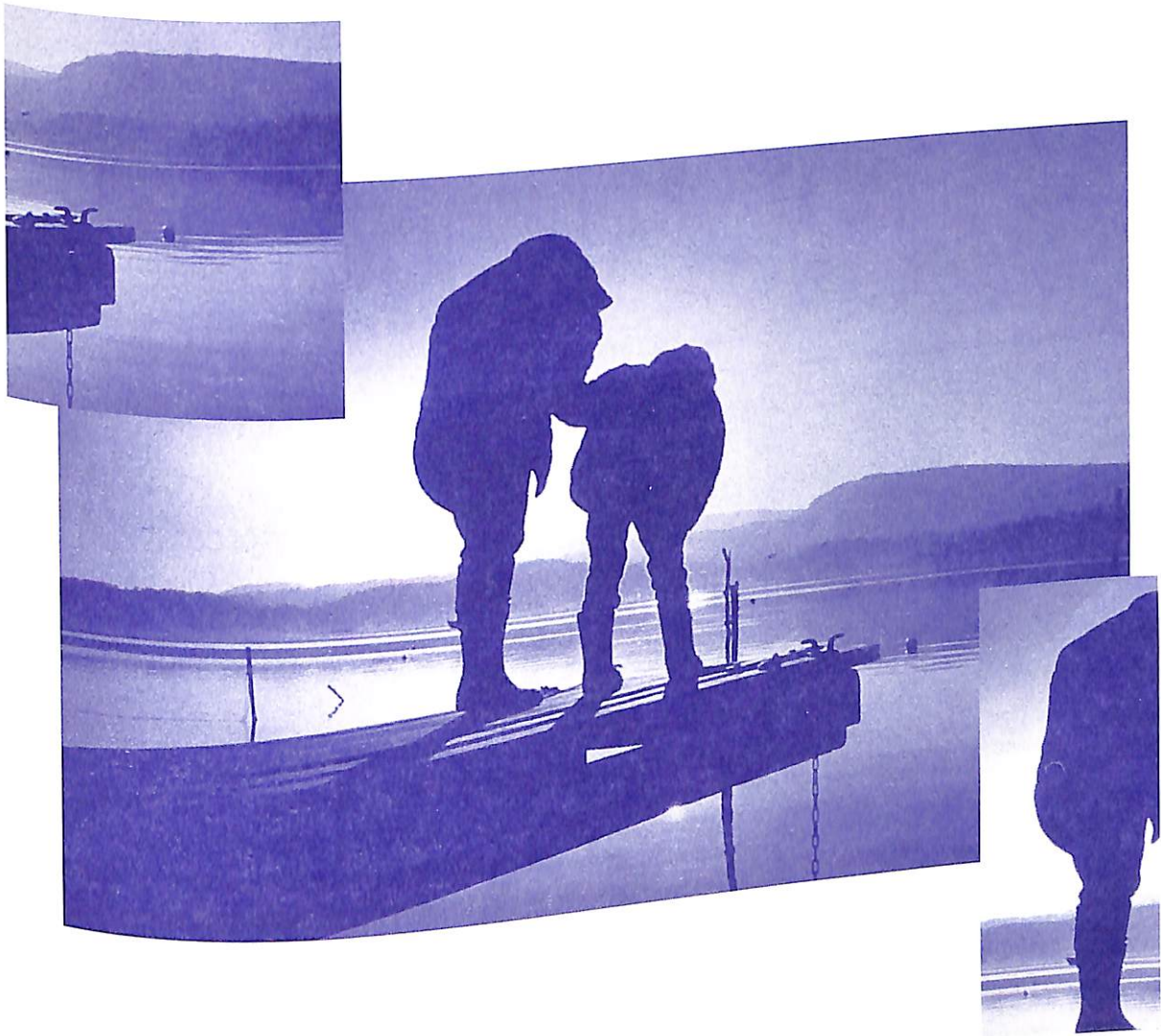
Uncle Dick had the secret to a happy marriage. He told me once that on the day he and Aunt Margie got married he informed her that he didn't like to fuss and fight, so they weren't going to fuss and fight. "And we never have," he stated, "I just always do whatever she wants." He was possibly the most agreeable and easy-going person I have ever met. Nothing seemed to bother him, and he always had a smile. In fact, part of the last day of his life was spent sitting on a wheelbarrow, happily conversing with my husband and son as he watched them dig a tomato bed for him and Aunt Margie. In the eyes of the world, Uncle Dick lived a simple and uneventful life. But, he relished every minute of it and brought joy to those around him.



As the years passed, Aunt Margie was taken into the darkness called Alzheimers. Uncle Dick grieved for his "Maude." Often he would stop by my house and tell me that Maude had lost him that day. I knew that she didn't know who he was that morning and that his heart was breaking. She became increasingly restless, and he would often take her for rides in his maroon Datsun truck. Uncle Dick drove slowly and turned slowly, too slowly for the car that came over the hill on that April day in 1993. Uncle Dick was killed instantly. A light went out of our lives.

I sang at his funeral because he wanted me to. He used to tell me, "Scoots, I want you to sing me to Glory." As I sang, looking down at the coffin that contained his skinny, eighty-six-year-old frame, I knew he could hear me and that Glory was certainly going to be a more interesting place. In fact, I would not be at all surprised if he has given a nickname to St. Peter.

I am so glad that I was privileged to know this good man, and I am so glad that my children knew him. I am thankful that he loved and accepted me, "that girl from the Delta" just because I was his beloved "Woods" wife. I know that I am blessed to have known him; I know that the world is less for his passing; and I know that his passing made a great difference to me.



# Years Ago

Clyde Jimison



Back then were the simple things  
Cheap things, good times  
A little boy playin' in a big red dirt yard  
Goin' to school carryin' an ol' wrinkled lunch sack.  
Worked in a cotton field, the older ones pulled the corn  
And fed the cattle on a cool winter day  
From an ol' wooden trailer hitched to a lazy tractor.  
Watched movin' pictures on Saturday believin' they were real –  
A time when that jolly man in the red suit  
would slide down the ol' rock chimney  
Leavin' something to wake up for.  
Walked down the grassy shoulders on the black road  
to Sunday school to read  
And, paid my dues, said my grace,  
trekked back home  
climbed over my uncle's wheelless cars  
on a sunny afternoon.  
Imagin' I was one of my favorit heroes  
Equipped with a stick as a weapon  
And usin' my primitive wits in a Hollywood charade.  
That was some time ago–  
Seemed like only days ago–  
So long, yet, like yesterday.



"You lied! You have been lying to me for eight years? No way! This cannot be true." These were the words flying from my mouth as I shouted angrily at my mother. "It's a conspiracy!" I thought to myself. My fists were tightly squeezed, and I wanted to stamp my feet. I could not help but be heartbroken and frustrated. My parents probably did not mean to hurt me, but they had. Being such a strong believer, it was very difficult for me, as a third grader, to grasp the idea that Santa Claus was not actually sitting at the North Pole making toys.

I thought I would believe in Santa forever. Nearly four months before Christmas, my parents would sing me the "You better watch out. You better not cry. Santa Claus is coming to town" song. I think they used it to bribe me into acting right. The book *The Polar Express* was read to me every Christmas Eve. The story was about believing in Santa Claus, and every year it made my faith stronger. It got me in the Santa spirit. My brother, David, sister, Eliza and I would leave "cookies and milk" for Santa to enjoy. Every year he would clean the plate. The night seemed extremely long, considering I would be so excited about what Santa would bring me. My parents were so good at doing his job. How could I not believe? The dolls and toys, all I had wished for, would be spread downstairs picture perfect, awaiting my wide, anxious, light brown eyes. David had even told me that he had seen Santa downstairs one year. The lies! The lies! These reasons all contributed to my being a one hundred percent Santa believer.

This percentage began to drop as person after person argued with me about the reality of Santa Claus. On vacation, in Gulf Shores, with the DeWeeses and my family, I was peacefully building a sand castle with the "home-schooled girls" next door when they let me know that their parents had told them there was no Santa. I was such an innocent young girl at this time, and this news got me wondering because I thought that surely their parents would not lie. Then I reasoned it out, figuring I did not know their parents, and mine had told me for years about Santa. Throughout school, classmates would always bring the anti-Santa discussion up around the time when teachers would ask, "What is Santa Claus bringing you?" The teachers were in on it, too. I would be quick to tell the kids who doubted Santa that Santa would not be coming to see them, and that they would have switches and ashes waiting for them on Christmas morning! But these occurrences did make me begin to question my belief.

I was young and clever, too. I had grown to trust no one on the subject of Santa. I had to find out for myself whether or not there was a Santa Claus. My plan was to write Santa Claus two letters. One letter I would give to my mother to give to Santa as usual, and the other letter I would hide away in a place where no one but Santa could find it. The catch was that on the wish list I hid, I included something extra, a little brown puppy. I also explained to Santa my intentions of sending two letters. As I had planned, I neatly

# The Sad Truth

Sarah Lauderdale



wrote each letter and gave one to my mom, and the other I hid in a corner under a basket. By the dust that I observed around the basket, I was sure no one would find my letter.

Christmas Eve I was extra nervous: It was not only Christmas the next day, but it was also the day I would know the truth. Christmas morning eventually arrived. I was extremely disappointed and surprised to find everything but the little brown puppy I'd secretly wished for. My worst expectation had become a reality. A few days after Christmas I decided to



confront my mother. She confirmed it. She tried to explain the reason she'd let me believe in Santa and how it had brought me so much joy so many years. Those many reasons were not important to me. "So I guess there is no Easter Bunny or Tooth Fairy either!" I threw at my mother in a rage. I felt betrayed, heartbroken. I broke down. Sadness came over me, and the truth made me want to cry.

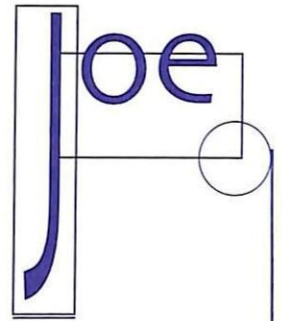
Christmas was never the same for me. The cookies and milk and the other parts that were pretend still went on because Eliza was five years younger than I. We couldn't spoil it for her. Still, I wish that I did not know that Santa is just a figment of the imagination because I really thought he was real. It hurt to know he wasn't.

I guess there's a time for everyone to know the truth about Santa. This was my epiphany which I wish I'd never experienced. I was so sure of his reality and so let down to know that I was wrong. Today my family still goes along with the whole Santa Claus charade for the sake of tradi-

tion, I suppose. When I was young, Christmas was all about what Santa Claus would bring. Over the years as I have grown older, I have transferred the faith I had in Santa Claus to God. Now I focus on Christmas' true meaning: a celebration of Jesus' Birthday. Now I realize it has all worked out for the best. Santa still remains a part of my Christmas, deep in my heart.



## Dustin Turner

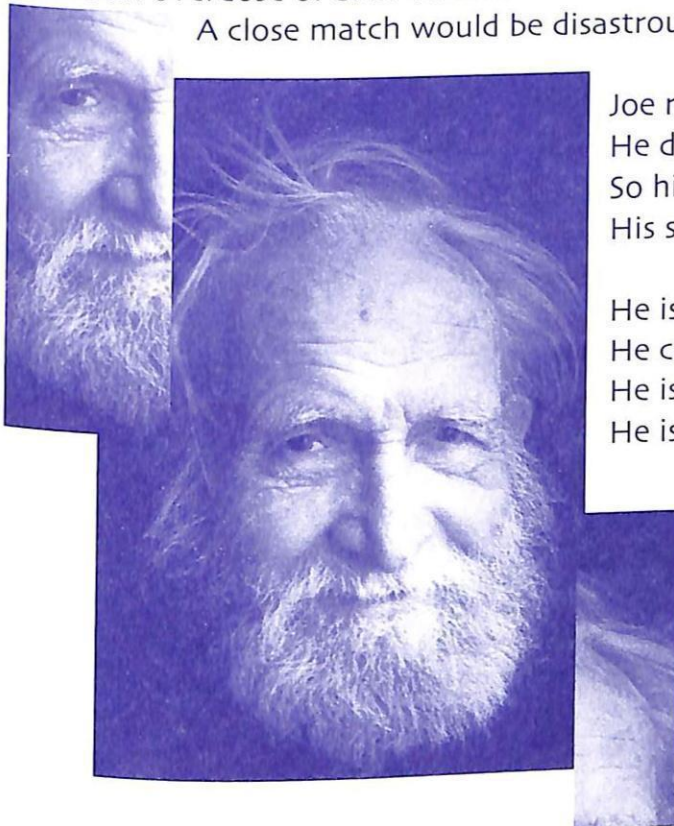


Joe's attire consists of a big red fish-net cap  
Barely resting on his bald head,  
A long-sleeve button-up shirt that has every color in the rainbow,  
And pants—the ugliest puke green corduroys that have ever been made.  
Around his neck hangs purple Mardi Gras beads that fall to his belt.

He finishes his shirt with a 700 Club pin.  
He wears black leather shoes he swiped from a clown—  
Unless he decides to wear his house shoes out,  
And wears socks if he is feeling lucky.

Joe has the typical old-person smell  
Except the punch from his whiskey,  
And an overdose of after shave.

A close match would be disastrous.



Joe refuses to wear his hearing aids.  
He does not need them.  
So his voice thunders through a room.  
His singing in church is a true blessing.

He is without a doubt interesting.  
He can be annoying and stubborn.  
He is the best one I know.  
He is my grandfather, Joe.

# One that Slipped through His Hands

Zachary Hodges

She walks into the busy room  
And all time halts.  
As she sits down,  
One graceful flow of beauty,  
Her presence unlocks my heart  
Like dynamite on a vault.  
The air around me is now  
Filled with her sweet smell,  
And I notice something  
That I hadn't before...

That my heart is pulsing, my mind is spinning--a feeling I've never felt.  
I am so very lucky just to have this moment next to her.  
I feel that for this I am not worthy.

Nonetheless, I am close to her--I see no other.  
Her dark hair: rich, flowing--it brushes my shoulder.  
All my blood rushes like Niagara to my heart.  
My hands and feet get colder and colder.

She turns and I watch as she smiles my way,  
And as I gaze at the squint of her eye and the twitch of her mouth,  
I thank God for this most wonderful day.

Startled, I reply with a foolish grin.  
She notices my blushing and gives a chuckle,  
And with that sound, I'm in a place I've never been.  
This must be a mistake I see.

Did one of God's angels slip through His hands?  
Is it possible? Can it be?

There is a glow about her now, lighting my soul.  
She is extraordinary in body and spirit.  
There is so much I love about her, my heart is whole.  
I know! I must be in Heaven, near to my God.

For it really is His angel before me,  
And these are grounds on which I've never trod.  
But wait--I look down and notice all around,  
Above and below, it is we alone lifted high.

Nowhere in my sight is ground.  
My angel, to whom I owe all happiness,  
Draws me close through clouds and sky.  
I can almost feel her touch filling my emptiness.

Then I open my eyes and look on the floor.  
There are my feet. I'm alone once again.  
Then she appears; she walks through the door.  
My heavy heart is lifted somewhat from its gloom.  
We merely exchange hellos as she is seated.  
But perhaps she loves me too, and I'll be with my angel again one day soon.



America's heart has momentarily stopped beating.  
Hate has crossed the border and caused the end of innocent lives—  
Innocence, taken away by a handful of terrorists.

A second passes and all life is changed.  
Within minutes an entire nation  
Is brought to a stifling halt,  
In a single day Freedom was stolen.

Wives going home to empty houses,  
No husbands to cook for  
No children to kiss good-night,  
Just loneliness and memories  
To keep their aching hearts company.

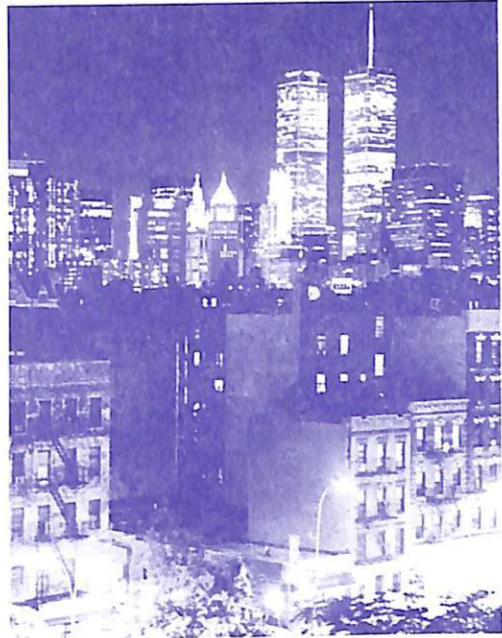
Children are left without parents,  
No one to tuck them in  
And look for monsters underneath their beds.  
They are left with only questions.

Husbands, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers,  
Everyone was affected,  
Victims of a terrible act,  
An act not against one person, but against a nation.

As America walks through the rubble,  
It gains a little more strength,  
Strength to pick up the pieces and move on.

Although thousands are dead,  
And thousands are missing,  
Yet thousands are helping.

America was wounded  
But not killed!



Deardra Carpenter

September 11

# 2002 Literary Review Contest Winners

## High School Division

### Short Story

1st Place-"Sammy"  
Laura Kittrell  
(Meridian High School)

2nd Place-"Wrinkles"  
Katie Snowden  
(Meridian High School)

3rd Place-"The Fifth Ace"  
Pascha Brown  
(Meridian High School)

H.M. "Ninja Stars"  
Demetric Cole  
(Louisville High School)

H.M. "The Virtual Enchantment"  
David Schwanebeck  
(Louisville High School)

H.M.-"A Bad Idea"  
Mandy Eakes  
(Philadelphia High School)

H.M.-"Fort of Pine"  
Scott Montgomery  
(Louisville High School)

### Poetry

1st Place- "Dear Pale Mexican"  
Elizabeth Halbrook  
(Meridian High School)

2nd Place-"His Hands"  
Miriam Webb  
(Philadelphia High School)

3rd Place-"The Ghetto"  
Makilya Goldsby  
(West Lauderdale High School)

H.M.-"I Miss You"  
Susan Allen  
(Philadelphia High School)

H.M.-"Ahead"  
Laura King  
(Meridian High School)

H.M.-"The One That Slipped  
Through His Hands"  
Zachary Hodges  
(Meridian High School)

### Essay

1st Place-"My Circus Family"  
by Susan Allen (Philadelphia High  
School)

2nd Place-"An Angel in Disguise"  
Ashley Brown  
(Philadelphia High School)

3rd Place-"One of Life's Lessons"  
Deardra Carpenter  
(Louisville High School)



## Poetry

1st Place-"Under Glass"  
Sue Ammon

2nd Place-"The Gift"  
Deborah Swann

3rd Place-"Wings"  
Amanda Smith

H.M.-"Today's Gift"  
Jill Carlberg

H.M.-"Day and Day Again"  
Dorothy Murphy

## Short Story

1st Place-"Prologue to a Life"  
John Boudier

2nd Place-"Vickey Rose Green"  
Frank Thompson

3rd Place-"Haven"  
Deborah Swann

H.M.-"Mama's Chair"  
Dorothy Murphy

# MCC & Community Division

## Essay

1st-"My Little Superman"  
Katharine Gambill

2nd-"Sing Me to Glory"  
Cathy Webb

3rd-"The Simplicity of Grandmother's House"  
Tami Phillips

# Judges

MCC/ Community Division.....Frankie Germany & Linda Farmer

High School Division.....Richelle Putnam

### Special thanks to:

Monetary awards were provided by  
the Meridian Community College Foundation.

# Contributors

- Connie Agent**--A 2001 graduate of MCC's Graphic Communications Program, Connie designed the REVIEW'S cover. She now works at Cooke Communications and Design.
- Sue Ammon**--Last year's guest community poet, Sue is a retired English teacher from Meridian High School. Her writing focuses on poems that capture events and people who have influenced her life in meaningful ways.
- John Boudier**--A sophomore at MCC who plans to transfer to Mississippi State University and double major in English and math, John is a member of Phi Theta Kappa and received the Lt. Burgoyne Scholarship. He enjoys writing fiction--especially short stories.
- Deandra Carpenter**--As a student at Louisville High School, Deandra enjoys using her talents as a creative writer, church choir member and mission worker.
- Katharine Gambill**--After attending MCC in the Spring of 2002, Katharine has transferred to University of Southern Mississippi where she is majoring in English. Katherine won first place in the REVIEW essay contest and placed in the Mississippi Community College Creative Writing state literary contest.
- Frankie Germany**--The REVIEW'S guest community writer, Frankie teaches English at Neshoba Central Middle School. She has published essays in MISSISSIPPI MAGAZINE, WOMAN'S DAY and CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL.
- Zachary Hodges**--A senior at Meridian High School, he expresses himself through creative writing and art.
- Clyde Jimison**--Capturing boyhood days and special events are the focus of Clyde's poetry. Clyde graduated from East Kemper High School and has been writing poetry for 15 years.
- Sky Joiner**--A registered dietitian, Sky works at Jeff Anderson Regional Medical Center. She has recently been honored by being given the Mississippi 2002 Dietitian of the Year Award.
- Laura King**--At Meridian High School, Laura was awarded the Maude Smith English Award her senior year. She is majoring in micro-biology at MSU.
- Laura Kittrell**--A junior at Meridian High School, Laura plans to attend New York University. During her sophomore year, she was listed in *Who's Who Among High School Students*.
- Sarah Lauderdale**--During her senior year at Philadelphia High School, Sarah won top prestigious academic honors including the Chemistry Award. She is her first year of college, majoring in nursing.
- Scott Montgomery**--A senior at Louisville High School, Scott enjoys expressing himself through introspective creative writing and art.
- Dorothy Murphy**--The author of a book of poetry and four unpublished novels, Dorothy is obviously a prolific writer. She is a cashier at Winn-Dixie.
- Chad Nicholson**--A graduate of Lamar High School, and a former MCC student, Chad now attends the University of Mississippi and is majoring in English. His favorite poet, William Butler Yeats, is reflected in his poetry.
- Maria Orozova**--After studying the Graphic Communication Program at MCC, Maria is attending four-year university, where she is pursuing a BFA with emphasis in graphic design. As the graphic design and layout editor of the REVIEW, Maria spent her summer creating the layout and design for this year's publication.
- Tami Phillips**--After attending MCC, Tami received a bachelor of arts degree from MSU last summer. She plans to pursue a master's degree in English and teach and/or write professionally.
- Deborah Swann**--Enjoying creating all types of writing, from poetry to business writing, Deborah is a social worker at Aldersgate Retirement Community.
- Frank Thompson**--Helping his community grow is Frank's top priority. He is employed by the East Mississippi Business Development Corporation. Frank has been an active member of the MCC Writers' Club. He attended USM where he received a master's degree in economic development.
- Cathy Webb**--The chair of MCC's Student Success Department, Cathy's hobbies include music and writing. She holds degrees from Delta State University and the University of West Alabama.



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# Literary Review 2002

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In the country, close by a beautiful villa, built in the 18th century, you have no doubt seen it. The house is a garden and is exceedingly pretty with a lawn enclosed by a neat fence. To it, at the edge of a dike, the most beautifully green Daisy, which the sun is as refreshing as on all the flowers in the garden, is stronger from hour to hour. It appeared quite in bloom in the dazzlingly white little high grass, no one would have thought it was only a poor despised flower. It is thoroughly happy, for it looks its little face towards the sun without any opposition. It listens to the lark as he sings its melodious song. The poor little Daisy has a high festive day, though it is a commonplace Monday. It is in school, and whilst they are deep in study, the little green stalk, could not be so happy, however, which the tender heart is much stronger than is the bird. The bird noticed this.