

kiosk

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE OF MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE

2007



kiosk

VOLUME 69

2007

THE LITERARY MAGAZINE
OF MORNINGSIDE COLLEGE

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



The *Kiosk* is a creature of change. Every year it's vastly different from its predecessor, so much so that someone commented it is unrecognizable as a publication with a past. Last year the *Kiosk* changed again, and this metamorphosis was the most progressive yet.

Cliff Thompson and President John Reynders gave us more than color and art—they set a challenge for the *Kiosk's* future.

What Cliff and the team achieved last year was fantastic, but their efforts would be wasted if the changes only last a year. So, the goal this year was continuity. We used Volume 68 as a template and guide for Volume 69 to establish the *Kiosk's* style. Our creature went through a ferocious growth spurt last year and like all adolescents it needs to adjust to a new body. We want to flex the muscles and stretch the limbs for strength and stamina, to be more than an unnamed colt in the field.

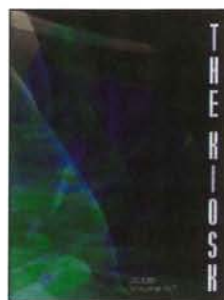
Of course, the magazine cannot grow without being fed a healthy diet. Morningside students, alumni, and faculty have provided a full buffet of artwork and literature. We have fiber, carbohydrates, protein and, yes, dessert!

The *Kiosk* is definitely more than a weekend project. I owe a huge, *huge* thank you to Stacy Pearson for grooming our creature with such meticulous care. Also, thank you to Ash Wood and her art team, and the prose and poetry teams, for many this was a first for contributing to the *Kiosk* by words on and off the page. I

hope my fellow seniors will leave feeling proud and satisfied; I hope those we leave behind feel ambitious and inspired.

Another big thanks goes out to the faculty supervisors: Stephen Coyne, John Kolbo, and Terri McGaffin. They support and guide but allow us the freedom to make the *Kiosk* a student magazine.

The stereotype that artists and writers are measurably insane must be true. Often all those hours slaving away for our passions go unnoticed or unrecognized by others. Here, we come together to form the *Kiosk*, a creature that embodies



the expressions, thoughts, and talents of Morningsiders. Please, look around, read something, and most of all—enjoy!

KIOSKS OF THE PAST
from left to right
2004, 2005, 2006, 2007

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ABOUT OUR JUDGES:

Matt Mason previously judged the *Kiosk's* writing contest in 2005. Mason has traveled the country performing with the Omaha Slam Team. His work has been published in over 100 magazines and anthologies. Mason earned his master's degree in creative writing at the University of California at Davis.

Darren Maurer attended Southeast Community College in Milford, NE, graduating at the top of his class in Graphic Design and Illustration. He has worked as a designer and illustrator since 1986.

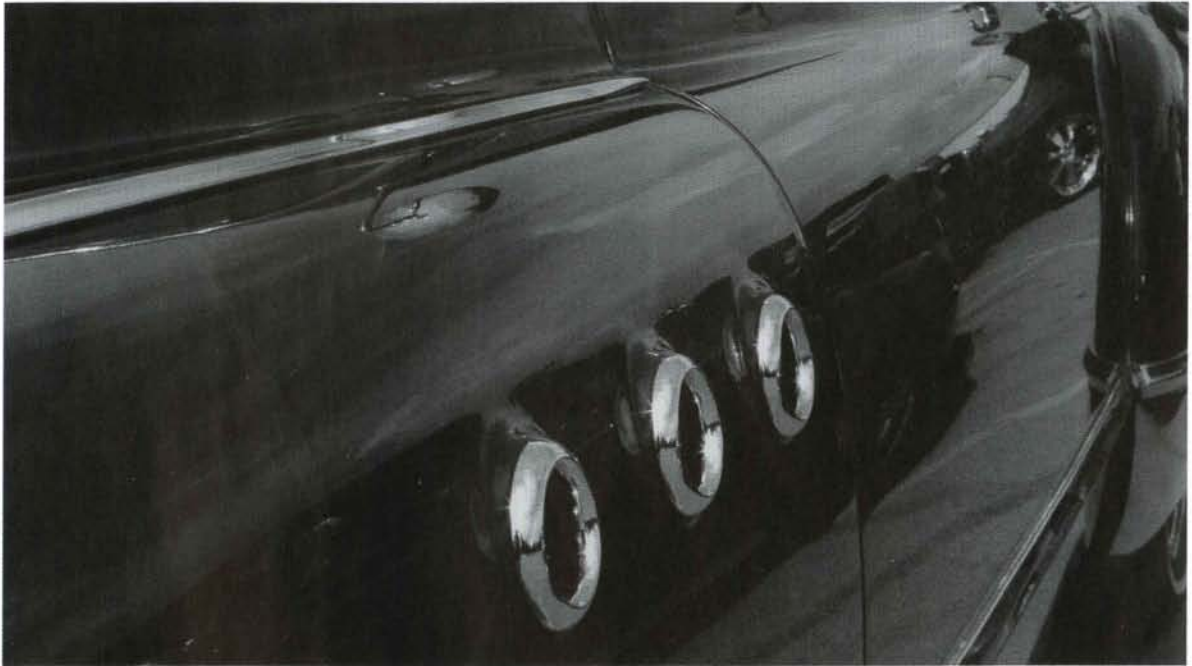
Cathy Palmer received a BFA in Painting from the University of South Dakota in 1995. She lives and works in Sioux City. In 2006, Cathy's paintings were exhibited at the Sioux City Art Center in "Found Pieces."

All entries are considered objectively by the judges with no artist name or special consideration for any piece. Assistant editors are eligible for contest placement but not prize money.

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CLASSIC
by Matthew Ellis
digital photograph

NAKED WRITING

BY VICTORIA REED

Writing should be a naked experience. It should expose our weaknesses and show off our strength. Our writing is what covers us—we encircle ourselves in our words and those words broaden and curve to create a thin layer of skin. It is that coating which makes us who we are to the public eye, and it should be revealed whenever possible.

It's what the outside world sees—what we are judged upon and how we are viewed or stereotyped. Our skin is our emotions, our involvement, our anxiety and fear, the smudges of ink on our hands from writing too quickly; it is the typos, the grammatical errors, and the dangling participle—it's beautiful.

When we write, our skin should be exposed to the world. It should burn with the buzz of excitement and the fear of failure; our skin should generate breezes and stir conversation. Our skin is endlessly powerful and inspiring—it can change the world with ideas, ruin the world with corruption, or create a world of its own through imagination.

Naked, for the majority of people, feels uncomfortable. People think about their love handles protruding, their fat thighs jiggling, or their stretch marks glowing rather than the beauty of their own, natural creation. We feel comfortable being naked when born. As babies we are unaware of criticism. It's the only age where fat rolls are adorable, which makes running naked the most exhilarating task to perform.

But somewhere along the way we hit a ceiling. We grow to find less creative freedom and more public restrictions, becoming terribly afraid of what others think and how the public sees us. *Be bold.* Make an attempt to fight and conquer this fear. Try finding a safe place for your naked writing. *Experiment.* Eat lunch by yourself,

laugh out loud in church, run through the sprinklers with the neighborhood kids, or sit on your family couch naked. Lounge where you choose and try to get comfortable, and, if at first you don't succeed, take your nakedness elsewhere!

Healthy, free experimentation is possibly the most difficult thing to achieve. If you need to experiment, it insinuates your earlier work was boring. The public has seen a hundred pieces like yours and they are not impressed with the imperfections—it is too bulky, too scarred, too cloned. Experiments, however, can be more than a cosmetic implant.

My experiments consist of anything from simply changing the usual chair I sit at in my home café to writing upside-down with a pair of those cheap 3-D goggles on. The creation is inside you waiting to be pulled out—release it somehow. Writing is personal, even if you don't want it to be. It contains bits and pieces of you—your baggage, your calluses, and your fingerprints. This experimentation, even the most subtle, creates a strong butterfly effect on your words. One simple change, even switching something as small as how you tie your shoes in the morning, will change your work. Writing can go from philosophical and eloquent to choppy, angry, and harshly un-poetic within minutes of experiencing something as infinitesimal as a burnt tongue from a scalding latte.

Writing should come in its most natural form. It should be nude and all-revealing—raw and risky. There should be new exposure to the outside air and there should be goosebumps in new, exotic places on its body. Begin with something small, simple. Exposing yourself in your writing is like getting undressed in front of someone—working your way from socks to shirt to underwear until all of your skin is reflecting

THE PERFECT WIFE
by Ash Wood
graphite drawing

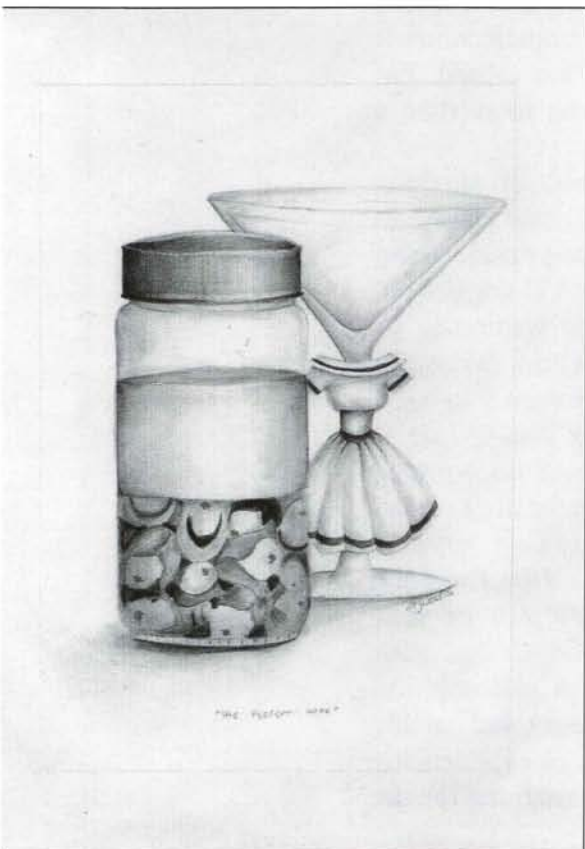
the moonlight. Even the most flamboyant nudist couldn't walk around their bedroom naked at one point in their life! Write in an empty bathtub or in the trunk of your car. Write in your hammock. Write naked on a beach somewhere. Write while lying on a bed of pencils or while you're arguing with you mother on the phone. But today is for your own, natural-feeling writing—as vulnerable and quixotic as you can make it.

When we are naked, we are unprotected and vulnerable. We are forced to expose even our most discomfoting parts. Our scars grow to be prevalent and the stories behind them become exciting again. Each freckle twists and turns into earth-shattering constellations, and our wrinkles are capable of crevassing history. Our bodies tell a story. They have been battered and worshipped—burned and soothed. Writing is our main chance to worship them.

Maybe you *should*, in all senses of the word, write naked. Maybe something in you likes the feeling of your skin sticking to that leather desk chair. Perhaps you enjoy the rip of sweaty skin peeling itself off of vinyl benches in a restaurant. Maybe you like the idea of getting caught writing naked—maybe it keeps you on task. But if you never *try* writing naked you will never know if you like it or not. Maybe it will dis-

gust you, make you cringe or feel embarrassed. *That's okay.* Perhaps you will like it and construct a bridge to the nudist writer that is of inside you!

Write naked, write in layers upon layers of winter clothes in July without air conditioning, write while crying or while sleeping, write on the monkey bars, write while sipping a White Russian, write *wherever* and *however* you feel like writing—as long as you are sharing yourself. Give up your perfections to the paper, the pen, and the waste basket. Let your inhibitions go and splatter violently between the lines. Do what you're comfortable with at first, but be constantly building a pathway to new and challenging horizons in your writing.





The place is not your typical
soothsayer's lair but she's
the only psychic in town. Brown
walls with strawberry scented
incense. The table where I sit
seems very old, perhaps dating
back to some Romanian Gypsy.
A marking says
Taiwan-1960
Voodoo dolls thrown haphazardly
over Barbie dolls. The skins
of rattlesnakes, a pair
of red roller-skates.

I sit and wait to have my fortune
told. Perhaps she'll use an egg
yolk, or tarots. "I need this." keeps
swimming through my brain. Tomorrow
I could win the lottery, be a victim
of love's arrow or a casualty
of adultery. The clairvoyant pops out
the kitchen and tells me just
a minute. Her skin looks like melting
caramel, big hoop earrings and b-ball
jersey.

The whole charade starts to
unravel like a sweater. I realize
that I am like an alchemist, a fool
searching for something impossible.

I throw some money on the Taiwanese
table and walk out, not knowing
which way the snow was blowing
or if a hurricane was growing. Perhaps
the fires of hell were glowing.

It did not matter

It will not matter

BLUBBERING BUFFOON

Riding in 2-tons of a rickety dump truck
En route to our lunch hour feast of grease burgers galore
Every single bump wiggles Jimmy's blubber
His jiggling breasts bounce atop his hefty belly
Flesh tremors triggered by the pounding flab

The mercury rises and the AC is cranked
Jimmy's brow glistens from perspiration
An ass-print soaks through his overly stretched blue-jeans
Sweat seeping through his bright red t-shirt
Outline the underside of his enormous man-tits

The radio's volume positioned on earsplitting
Jimmy wishes the speakers could be louder
A Black Crowes tune soars over the air-waves
His lips quiver with anticipation
A random thought about to blurt out

Jimmy stutters his meaningless phrase
"I h-hate the B-Black Crowes!"
I should acknowledge him, or he'll keep repeating
"B-B-Black Crowes, h-h-hate the B-Black C-Crowes!"
His speech impediment worsens as his frustration builds

Jimmy believes this irritating repetition will force a reply
"H-hate the B-B-B-Black C-Crowes!"
I h-hate 'em!"
Poor Jimmy does not understand
He can hear the radio, but the radio cannot hear him

JESSE T. PICK

the stars they seem so shallow
we've built up their importance
but they're fading in the glory lights
making for these boring nights

constant
drinking
partying
screwing
people
an annoying (inexcusable) distraction
what am I going to say about the way *it* is
... about the way it isn't
what do I know that you couldn't tell me

so tell me already
I'm ready

I could swing
and throw my head back
and it's insightful
but it won't take me back

JESSI PLUEGER

PAINTING WITH GHOSTS

BY COLIN O'SULLIVAN

Like most hometowns for most people, Sioux City has a strong hold on me. I am nineteen years old, and I don't have much to call my own. The city's air fuels my blood, and its water cools my desire. So I claim it as my home.

The town stretches from the million-dollar homes north of town, along the Missouri's sandy banks, on south to the abandoned stockyards. The latter is my stomping ground, two stories of rebar and cement. Its pillars, two and a half feet in diameter, support its four feet thick cement floor.

On this cool summer evening, I spend some time drinking beer and transferring

with my hands.

The remnants of an animal are out of place here as any other living being. Not even the homeless travelers camp here. Not a single wall touches the ceiling. The outer walls are four to five feet high, while the ceilings are fifteen feet above. Its inside is broken into hundreds of wooden pens, where hay still lies, awaiting an occupant. These pens have seen the last of their usefulness. The stockyards, once the heart and soul of my city, now deserted, stand defiantly against change.

It is my mortar made mascot, smeared with a tainted history. It sits adjacent to John Morrell, a beef and pork packing plant. The stockyards were ruined by John Morrell and its competitors. The packing plants reward the feed lots and a mindless work force. They deprive the farmers, the butchers and the auctioneers. Cowboy boots and hats are replaced with pinstriped suits and plain, black ties. Families are traded for corporations. The mob, no longer fed by the unions, headed back to Chicago years ago. Sitting on a bridge at the back of the stock yards, I hear the pigs squeal next door, heading into John Morrell's kill floor.

The cement bridge is my favorite spot to paint. It faces the south and west, out of sight of traffic, and jets out the back of the building, roof missing spots and rafters barely hanging on. A great spot to view the city's colorful sunsets. Railroad tracks lie twenty-five feet below. I imagine endless lines of cattle and hogs boarding the rail cars; maybe headed south to Omaha, or are they taking the route north to Minneapolis? I wish the railroad still used these tracks; I would ride the rail to the next town, drink booze with

UNTITLED
by Stacy Pearson
Linocut Reduction Print



my sketches from paper to the worn cement walls of the neglected stockyards. I am a graffiti artist.

I have to scrape off splotches of cow manure with the bottom of the Krylon spray-paint can to make sure the paint will hold. Ageless manure, grass petrified in chaw and straw. All the same it's still cow shit, no matter how old. I avoid touching it

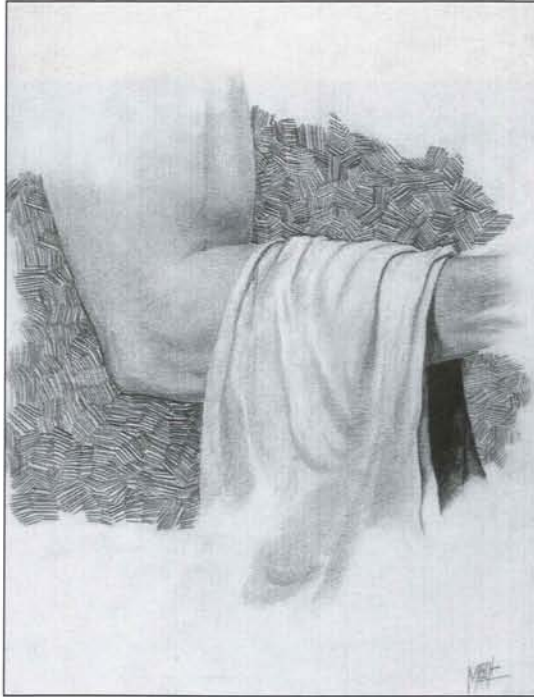
the fellow jumpers, and tell them about a town called Sioux City.

I sit alone, sipping on a bottle of Budweiser. I listen to ghost stories, as told by the crumbling walls, broken and empty pens, and the rows and rows of cement columns supporting this abandoned building. The air is dusty, without wind or hooves around to disturb the dirty floor, adding to its charm.

I break my daydream with a rattle of a spray paint can. I prepare to attack the wall, looking down at my sketch in the notebook. I close my eyes, the image is still there. Every line, swoosh, dot, and arrow looks back at me. I am ready.

I put my name on the wall, making it mine. I chop the wall into a flat white outline. I mark areas where the colors will alternate. I smell the spray paint, the beer, and the lingering musk of years past. The uneven wall gives the painting texture. A dark blue over baby blue and kelly green, then black and gray spell out my name SYN_{one}. The "one" is incased by a bright green arrow, the "SYN" flows in and out of the wall, like a waving flag. I surround the SYN_{one} with a painted black cloud. It is four feet tall and eight feet wide, and takes me thirty minutes to finish. I savor every moment.

I step back from my finished painting. I have performed heart surgery on the dead and forgotten wall; giving it new life with the brilliant colors. The building, however different, again fulfills a need.



UNTITLED

by Mack Maschmeier
graphite drawing

This is not the first wall to be brightened. Not just by me either. The unknown painters tell me their names. "Da' Grouse" has painted a Cat in the Hat smoking a joint, and a penis mutilated by piercing. "Sway" writes his name with a west coast wild style, barely legible.

"Tina" paints herself staring at a night sky. "De'lash" tries his hand at graffiti, showing his inexperience. Here one has time to perfect the art, so I do. Sitting back, looking at the newly claimed wall, I feel proud of what I have done.



KD STATION
by Grant Wittstruck
digital photograph



BEADS
by Kimberly Jessen
digital photograph

IF A BODY CATCH A BODY



My friend, I dreamed last night that you had told
us you were going to go away to die
and there was nothing we could do. So cold—
I thought about the *Catcher in the Rye*;
how you remind me of the book.
I watched my breath linger in the air.
And you weren't sad to die. You had this look—
so strange, content, as if you didn't care.
You did an unexpected thing: You sang
a song, sad "Danny Boy." I cried, I know;
I saw your frozen breath, left to hang
in frosty air, but didn't see you go.

You didn't die, it was just a nightmare
but there's still my breath, clinging to the air

GREG ANDERSON

MOLASSES CANDY

Three inches today
and two from last night.
My neighbor's snow blower
spluttered to life by 5:30 am
and I took God's name,
in vain, by 5:31.

This latest weather
means 15 more minutes
to warm the car,
scrape the windows
(I hate that sound,
the screech of plastic
across frozen glass),
and feel nose hairs freeze.

It wasn't always this way,
snow heralding headaches,
delays, and dreaded
mathematical calculations.

Sparkling white crystals
meant freedom from school,
snow forts and snowmen,
battle strategies for snowball
fights against my brothers.

And then those rare occasions,
when the snow was fresh,
pure, and freezing cold,
snow meant molasses candy.

In a great pot Mom stirred
a boiling concoction
of syrup, sugar, and
dark, thick, molasses.
The warmth of the stove
and fragrant smell filled us
as we wrapped and bundled
for our confectionary expedition.

With our own separated portions
we tromped into the yard looking
for the perfect snowy canvas.

My brothers hurriedly slopped
gobs of the stuff from the pot,
huge hot sap melting white crystals
until it hardened into abstract lumps.

My sister drew out letters
and words, writing from memory
songs she learned in school.

I took the longest,
mine flowing in a thin,
golden stream to trace
delicate lines on
the glittering snow
occasionally marred
by the uncontrollable gob.

I took so long,
watching the sugar
and molasses harden
into amber colored candy,
that the rest in my pot
congealed and was ruined
before it ever reached the snow.

I haven't had molasses
candy for over ten years.
I put my laptop in my bag,
grab my keys and head to work,
leaving my house empty,
to return to it later,
surrounded by snow
that's never known
molasses candy.
And I wonder,
if my life, carefully run,
doesn't leave something
congealed and ruined.

MOON OF GRASS APPEARING
by Skye Slater
pastel drawing



STACY K. BALDUS

FIDO CRACKS THE INFINITE

The night when the dog dreamt
it could talk, it said, "So strange,"
and it sent a spray of dog spit
into the air. "So strange," it said,
but its lips were as unresponsive
as dream legs frozen in fright.
"I could talk like a human,"
the dog tried to say, but it was
just a slur, half growl, garbled
as the notes you scribble at night
when a dream opens some door
and, still half asleep, you try
to record what you saw there.
In the morning, the indecipherable
scrawl marks the trail of some
fading revelation slinking back
into the dark woods of your mind,
where at least you know a bark
or a howl will just about sum it up.

STEPHEN COYNE

ALASKA

BY PHIL LIEDER

I got off work and immediately went back to the apartment to change. I put on an old pair of blue jeans, some wool socks, and an old t-shirt. I grabbed my pack, and hurriedly stuffed my raincoat, a Mag-Lite (you could never be too careful, there were bears afoot), a sandwich and two beers inside of it. As I was walking out of the building I saw Steve pull up in the parking lot. Lazy bastard had to drive *everywhere*. I hung a left and cut across the grassy lot. A man yelled at me just this morning for cutting across the same lot.

"This here's private property!" the mullet-wearing Alaskan shouted.

"Well, then you might want to put up a fence, or at least make a sign," I said.

"Listen here, it's a respect issue."

I had nodded but thought how stupid it was to get mad at someone for cutting a corner through a lot that had no

indication of being private property. Besides, it looked about like everything else in this dump.

With that memory behind me, I crossed the railroad tracks and continued on to the trailhead a mile and a half down the road. The path was old and really quite steep, and it was peculiar that the trail had no switchbacks until you reached the pass. Just straight up the side of the mountain.

I reached the pass in less than twenty minutes, about 700 feet above sea level. I turned around and saw the reason I was spending my summer here, aside from money of course—Passage canal. It wasn't really a canal, that's just what these people had started calling it. The channel was a deep green-blue, the mountains were still snow-capped, and little boats were making their way out to sea. It was so beautiful that I just stood there for a moment, taking in what I could before I had to go back to the apartment and breathe the same air as Steve.

I usually got along with Steve just fine. He was a crotchety old man, and I was an ignorant kid. He was first mate, I, a lowly deckhand. But, for some reason, he was in a particularly grumpy mood that day and had made it pretty shitty for everyone.

"Damn it, Phil! Can't you do anything right?"

"I've got a busy day, Steve. I don't have time to deal with you."

"I don't give a shit!"

This was our conversation. I started his tantrum by placing his wax-coated fish box crooked. Somebody had told me that one of his six ex-wives was getting remarried. How this man ever got six women to even look at him is beyond me. He had yellow, crooked teeth, a face that had become wrinkled leather through years of the sun and a pack of cigarettes a day. At home he always wore a white sleeveless t-shirt



JENNY
by Anne Torkelson
charcoal drawing

EPHEMERAL LEAF
by Stacy K. Baldus
silver gelatin print



that showed off his left bicep which had a lovely homemade tattoo affectionately reading, "PAM."

Alaska appears in many ways—and in many places—to be really quite civilized, but there are still people there who make that conclusion a very hard one to come to. Steve Cavanaugh was one of those. The state motto is "The Last Frontier." Don't let the three, fifteen-story sky-scrapers fool you, this is still the wild. The kind of people who are attracted to the state is

likely a little bit off of their rockers (I do realize that I was attracted to it, but I don't consider myself to be as crazy as some of the lovely people I encountered).

When the strange aspects of the people get to me, I climb up to Portage Pass. The pass had been used for centuries by the native Alutiiq people to access the Prince William Sound. I like to watch the bay and all of the boats steaming through it.

I found a boulder outcropping and sat down to eat my sandwich. A gigantic cruise ship was beginning its docking procedures. It was Tuesday, which meant that the crew from these big ships invaded the only bar still open, at around 2 a.m. My first night in Whittier, Alaska, was one such "cruise ship" night.

I had just finished my "training" in Anchorage and arrived at the building around nine o'clock. My new boss, Kelly, took me to the elevator and showed me to

the apartment that I would be living in for the next three months. Leif answered the door and helped carry my bags to our room which we shared for the first two months of the tourist season. After Kelly left, Leif told me to try and keep it down because "Steve's sleeping, and he gets cranky at night."

"Ah, ok." I didn't know who, or as I would later determine—what—Steve was.

Leif walked over to the refrigerator and pulled out a case of Miller Genuine Draft, Alaska was MGD's best-selling state. "You want a beer?"

"Yeah. I could use one. It's been a stressful day."

"Did you get all trained in, in Anchorage?"

"Yep, three hours worth."

"Sounds like fun." He paused. "Are you twenty-one?"

"No, eighteen."

"You look old for eighteen. You might be able to get in the bar."

"I have a fake." I presented the I.D. to him, and he looked at me, then the picture on the I.D., then back at me.

"That's pretty good, it might work, but only if Beverly is working. If the bitch that looks like she's lived all her life in Alaska is there, it won't. But Beverly will let you in, if you don't act like a dumbass." He handed it back to me. "How'd you get it?"

"Graduation present."

"Nice gift. We're going down to the Anchor in about thirty minutes."

I spent the rest of my time getting acquainted with my new surroundings. In the apartment there was a kitchen, a living room, a bathroom, and three bedrooms. It would have been a pretty spacious place if there weren't four stubborn people living in it.

"You ready?"

"Yeah."

We walked out of the apartment and took the elevator down the nine floors to exit the building, which the locals called "the BTI." It stood for Begich Towers Incorporated, the crowning building in this little village of Whittier, Alaska. In fact it was the only building here that had more than three stories. The BTI had fifteen, which made it first in the line of three buildings in competition for the tallest in the state. Originally named the Hodge Building, it was constructed by the military in 1956. It survived the earthquake of 1964, which registered a 9.2 on the Richter scale, so severe that a town 20 miles to the west was completely destroyed.

The bar, situated on top of a hotel called "The Anchor Inn," was kindly referred to as "the Skanker." I could see why. It was a nasty, dirty dive that offered a place where fishermen, fresh from a run out to the Gulf of Alaska, could spend their paychecks. It smelled of cigarette smoke and beer with a slight hint of body odor.

I got into the bar by averting the gaze of the bartender, there were two of them tonight, the bitch and Beverly. I quickly understood what Leif had meant by the one looking like she has lived in Alaska all her life. She had a scowl on her face and glared at everything she looked at. I doubt she could look any differently towards anything; her eyes were set on "kill." Beverly, on the other hand, was a plump southern woman looking to be around forty. She smiled when she served you and had an uncanny way of remembering names. It was a cruise ship night, which, as I learned, meant the crew from one of the big cruise ships got sloshed and danced to techno music.

I sat down at a booth and Leif introduced me to all of the summer tourism workers who had gathered at the bar.

Many of their names I have forgotten.

We were usually drinking during those times. I was working for a touring company. We made four and six hour trips out into the Prince William Sound. I usually got to cook, clean, shoot the breeze with the passengers (my favorite part), and sit on the bow looking at the amazing scenery while keeping kids from stepping on the railing. I dreaded seeing one of our passengers after I was off of work, because I reverted into someone else during those off hours, as did nearly everyone I worked with. Often we would pile into a van and drive out to the head of the bay, build a bonfire, and drink until our liquor was gone. Then we would determine who was sober enough to drive us back, which was never me. It was those nights when I dreaded seeing a passenger, mostly because I wanted these people to have a good memory of their time here. Seeing one of their crew walking home in a drunken stupor probably wasn't good for building confidence in our ability to successfully run a 97-foot boat.

That first night I was able to get them to order me a few drinks. I eventually seated myself at the bar right in front of the bartender and began ordering drinks for myself. She didn't pay much attention to me, or my age. The place was getting pretty busy but only with Alaskans so far; the ship hadn't finished docking yet. After my third gin and tonic, she looked me in the face and asked, "Can I see some I.D.?"

"Sure," I confidently replied.

I pulled the license that said I was twenty-four out of my wallet and anticipated her examination of it. But the bar was getting busier and busier and she never got back to me so I figured that I was alright.

Then the strobe lights started, and the techno music began to boom through the third floor of the building. I saw a crowd of people come through the door, not dressed

in the normal Alaskan garb of flannel and blue jeans but with sequined tops, silk shirts, tan khakis, and form fitting mini skirts. This was not a typical Alaskan crowd. Immediately the bar was flooded with people trying to put in their drink orders. The owner of the Inn, a Taiwanese man in his mid-fifties named Joe, even got behind the bar to help Beverly and the other bartender deal with the rush of patrons.

I doubt that Joe got any tips from locals because we all knew that he owned nearly every profitable thing in this town and nobody felt like they needed to help him out any more than they already did. He owned a tenth of the apartments in the BTI, the Anchor Inn, its corresponding restaurant and bar, and the little laundry mat underneath it all. I still marvel at his ability to get that far in life, especially when talking with him you realize that he had a lot of trouble speaking English. He was smart putting a laundry mat underneath a bar.

I remember one of my co-workers saying that it was costing him sixty dollars each time he went to do laundry. Why?

"I go up to the Skanker and have a few drinks." Sixty dollars is a lot of money for drinks. Well, he was a drunk; in fact, he was fired for coming to work drunk at 6 a.m.

I thought it interesting how these people from the ship had just spent seven days serving gourmet food to rich American tourists, and now they were getting drunk in the top floor of a dirty hotel with a bunch of Alaskan fishermen.

After I finished my beer and sandwich, I sat on the rock for about thirty minutes, just watching. I didn't have to worry about daylight running out on me, it was always light here.

I decided that it was time for me to go

back to the apartment. I could see the line for the 10:00 tunnel was getting kind of long. People were in a hurry to get out before the tunnel closed.

Whittier was originally built by the military during World War II as a year-round port providing a rail connection to the interior. Passage Canal was one of the few ports in the state that did not freeze over during the long, dark winter months. The problem with putting a port on the Sound was that it was completely surrounded by mountains. The Army Corps of engineers decided to build a tunnel right through that mountain. It was originally a railroad tunnel, but a renovation in 2000 allowed one-way automotive traffic to drive through. Before it opened to traffic, people had their cars loaded onto a rail car. It is the longest highway tunnel in North America, measuring a whopping 2.5 miles. It uses Jet turbines to force air through, mostly because the diesel locomotives always left the sweet smell of diesel exhaust lingering in the air.

The tunnel was probably the worst part of Whittier for me, not because it cost \$12 for a round-trip pass but because of the schedule. It opened at 5:30 a.m. and closed at 11 p.m. The last tunnel into Whittier was at 10:30 p.m. So, if you wanted to go out some night, you either had to be at the tunnel opening by 10:30, or you might as well get a hotel room. It was kind of funny to see tourists who didn't know about the tunnel get stuck in Whittier after missing their last chance to leave. Such individuals were called POW's (Prisoners of Whittier).

There is even a POW T-shirt that you can buy at the local hardware/general store. Larry, the owner, is a long time Whittier resident. I once heard a joke from Larry. "How do you know when you've been in Whittier too long? When you call out your

own name while you're masturbating." Larry also owned the only rental car service in town. He had four cars to choose from.

I cut across the road leading back to the village, and thought I would be law abiding by using the walk. I saw an otter swimming in the water. It poked its head out, looked at me, then rolled around and dove down in the water again.

The beauty of Alaska is undeniable, arguably one of the most beautiful places on the planet. The mountains rise up from the sea at times to an elevation of 10,000 feet, while tidewater glaciers plummet down the steep slopes, calving tons of ice into the water.

But, there is ugliness here, a force that causes people to do strange things, kind of a 'living on the edge' mentality.

The BTI was getting closer. I realized that even though Alaska has an ugly side, the beauty of this place was worth it. I knew I would be back someday; I just didn't want to admit it to anyone.



WINGS II
by Matthew Ellis
digital photograph

A MIRACLE MADE THE EARTH

A miracle made the Earth
And selfishness destroys it.
One plant
One lake
One polar bear
At a time.

Purple mountains' majesty
Blanketed by black clouds.

Amber waves of grain
Upside-downed for the plastic clone homes.
One blue
One tan
One hot pink
For the crazy lady down the block.

Aren't the cold, grey, steel skyscrapers beautiful?
Like the one hundred year old redwood,
Loving arms stretched out to home the homeless.

Aren't our Hummers magnificent?
They seat 7.
Like the hippos playing taxi for the birds on the plain.
One bird
Four birds
Eight birds
To beat the Hummer.

If the bathroom mirror can reflect the world
As lakes reflect the mountains and the sky,
Then let us dig for oil, drive our cars and raise our key chains high.

And if Armani business suits are
as custom fitted as a penguin's feathers.
Then for God's sake, please,
Let us destroy their home together!
One inch
One foot
One mile
Of ice at a time.

When Mother Nature's masterpiece is dead,
When all of nature melts before our eyes,
Our cold hard world of metal, concrete, and strictly brain will thrive.
Without any heart, why survive?

ALTHEA PIETSCH



UNTITLED
by Anne Torkelson
oil painting





BRA
by Grant Wittstruck
digital photograph



SELF PORTRAIT
by Nikki DeVries
mixed media

albino stalks, thin and graceful, pale like ivory skin, untouched by the light of day, delicate and new, like a baby's skin – soft – moist – smooth – stalks of sunflowers, the hated enemy, newly sprung from the clumpy, abrasive soil, lucky to have gotten that far, survived the pecking birds, now rising to greet the sun, the tiny two leaves emerging from the seed, the greeting life – only to be ripped forcefully out by hands stained with soil and the green smears of weeds to have met the same fate before the one now torn, roots pried from their bed, making a ripping sound, like thin fabric being torn in two, the delicate transition from white to green, the graceful beginning of life left to pile on the grass, with its fellows, already wilting from the violent act

pile of weeds reminds me of the crypt of St. Stephens in Vienna – piled corpses, in mass graves from the plague, piled functionally, out of sight, discarded

can't leave them there, mom can see them, don't like to see decaying remains, the evidence of our work

reminded of the picture of the rows of caskets covered in flags, lined in the plane to be transported home. the photographer fired for taking the picture. don't like to see

STACY K. BALDUS

I'm a good dad. I take my kids to movies—
I got Trevor that bike—
On Fridays sometimes, we watch
The Discovery Channel.
I saw them animals—
You know, them really slow ones.
They sit in trees and probably shit fastn they breathe.
All I think is, don't they get bored?
I couldn't sit up there sleeping all day.
And after the Discovery Channel, sometimes, we
sit on the porch,
Listen to the game.
My boy's getting bigger;
Better than his old dad.
I can't do his homework no more.
None of that algebra.
What are these imaginary numbers?
If they aren't real,
Why'r we teaching it?
How about we give him an imaginary A+
For effort?

AUDREY HANTLA

THE HUNTING PARTY

BY GREG ANDERSON

We used logs as makeshift chairs; the fire was our improvised lantern. My Papa sat close to my friend Hank, and I was across from them. The smoke was getting in my eyes, but I didn't feel like moving.

"Hank," said Papa, "you ever had gone huntin' before?"

"Once, sir—with my uncle."

"You kill anything, Hank?"

"No, sir, my uncle wouldn't let me near the gun. I was pretty little."

"That's a shame. Lord knows you ain't little now. Tall as redwood!" Papa gave Hank a slap on the back. The smoke from the fire started making me cough, and I couldn't stop.

"What the hell's wrong with you, boy?" said Papa. I tried to tell him, but I kept coughing. I moved out of the way of the smoke, but I didn't say anything.

"Bobby's never killed anything, either," Papa told Hank. "Lord knows I take him out enough, but the kid just freezes. That's his *problem*, ya know."

I dug into my bag and pulled out the book I had been reading. *Slapstick*, by a guy named Kurt Vonnegut. The only light was from the fire, so I had to scoot real close to it to see the words. It was pretty good so far, but it was the kind of stuff Papa would hate. He only read Hemingway and the newspaper.

"You think we'll get anything tomorrow, sir?" Hank asked

"I got a feeling we'll get a buck," Papa said with a smile on his face.

I tried reading, but their conversation was distracting. Papa started scratching his mustache, which he always did when he was thinking. He then burst out into his deep laugh and slapped his leg.

"What's so funny, sir?"

"Just a joke I was thinkin' about."

"What's the joke?" asked Hank.

"It's too dirty for kids your age," Papa said. "Ah, what the hell. What do you call a gay dinosaur?"

I knew the answer because he had told the joke so many times, but Hank hadn't heard it before.

"I give up," said Hank. "Tell me"

"Mega-sore-ass!" said Papa. This put both of them over the edge. Their laughs were a tuba duet. I was more like a piccolo.

"You wanna beer?" said Papa.

I wasn't sure who he was asking, so I just kept my face in my book.

"Sure," said Hank. They drank beer and I read, and as the fire slowly went out, we went to sleep.

SELF PORTRAIT
by Derek Raquel
mixed media



I wanted the sun to wake me up, but instead it was Papa and Hank. I wasn't sure how long they had been up, but it must have been a while because both of them looked alert. Lord knows I wasn't.

"Get your stuff," Papa said. I was still groggy, but I grabbed my camouflage and put it on. After I was invisible, I put on my orange vest and hat to make myself visible once again.

Papa and Hank were out in front. Their slow steps were almost synchronized, while I brought up the rear. It seemed whenever I would catch up, they would walk faster. I decided not to think about it and elected instead to think about Hank and how I wasn't mad at *him* for getting along so well with my Papa. Hank doesn't have a Papa, so it seems that he's usually looking for one.

I saw a big old buck out of the corner of my eye. I knew Papa couldn't see it because he has bad eyes and a drinking problem, and I knew Hank couldn't see it because he's a bit of a dope. I raised my gun and had the buck in my scope. Papa and Hank realized what was going on. My finger was on the trigger. I started pulling it back, but I couldn't follow through.

"Get 'em, Bobby!" Papa whispered. "He don't even know you're there."

It was an easy shot. I've hit practice targets smaller and farther away than this buck. I pulled the trigger, but the shot went up into the trees, and the buck ran off.

"What the hell is wrong with you?"

"He tried, sir," said Hank

"Like hell he tried," said Papa. "He's just soft for the things, that's all." I wasn't sure if I should be hurt by the comment because it was the truth.

"C'mon, maybe we can catch up to him," said Papa.

"That's not a very good hunting strategy," I told him, but I don't think he was listening much.

We pushed ahead, and Hank and Papa were farther away from me than they were before. Or maybe I was going slower; I don't know.

The three of us walked those woods for three hours and not a word was uttered. Not a single word. I couldn't see his eyes, but I knew Papa would be squinting and Hank would be trying his best to see something. Hank was an earnest looker; he just wasn't any good at it.

I saw the buck again. He was down by the creek, getting a drink. He didn't seem to see us or hear us. I raised my gun and had him in my scope again. He had six points on his antlers. Such a shame, I thought to myself.

Papa and Hank raised their guns, too. They must have thought I would screw it up again, but they didn't shoot. They must have wanted me to try. I closed my eyes and pulled the trigger. I didn't hit the buck; instead I hit Papa, right in the arm. Hank looked at me with wide eyes, and his jaw dropped.

I lowered my gun, looked at Hank and said, "Shit, I missed."



Dear Mrs. Howard,
Remember
my model, that won
the 3rd grade diorama contest?
Remember
the miniature wooden cabin
with tiny barrels of oats
and rice, and spices, with tiny
tightly rolled reams
of fabric, and coils of rope,
with a little desk, and a little stool
And a tiny bear skin pelt hanging
on the tiny nail?
My father built it,
placing rough boards at angles,
Drilling edges together with rough hands,
the screws in his mouth, murmuring,
"here we go. There."

AUDREY HANTLA

EATING FAIRIES

She ate a fairy today,
she tells me as
she runs at my knees
on slightly pudgy legs.

Disengaged she twirls
a mess of lank little girl hair.
Her vision a product
of whirling, myopic eyes,
she firmly declares,
“They taste like tomato soup.”

She’s wrong. She must be,
because fairies don’t exist
and my day was long,
work dreary, people cynical,
and politics prevalent in
a Godless world.

Still she spins,
smile full of crooked teeth,
speech reflecting a slight lisp
as she tells me of eating fairies.

So I ask her questions about her day,
forget my own, admire her pictures,
and decide that tonight
we will have tomato soup.

STACY K. BALDUS

It was considerably cool for June. Wearing a rag-wool sweater with sleeves stretched past her thin wrists and pallid hands, she lit the barren oven to heat the kitchen. The coffee in her cup had grown muddy and cold, so she set it down without taking a sip. June brewed the fresh pot so she would have something warm in her hands, but no matter how tightly she held the cup, the warmth managed to escape.

Four hours and three days...that's how short it had been. Four hours and three days since the baby came and June hadn't held the magic to convince it to stay.

Leaning against the sink, June stared at the Amana refrigerator given to her as a wedding gift from her parents. It wasn't exactly the refrigerator she was concerned with as much as the rainbow letters magnetically affixed to the door. Manny, her husband, who considered himself the world's worst speller, bought them for the baby the morning he learned they were expecting.

"No child of mine is gonna grow up to be a dullard," Manny joked, as he spelled out D-U-L-E-R-D on the fridge. June laughed and Manny tickled her until she thought she would wet herself. June recalled laughing not because he purposely misspelled the word, but because she was certain he thought he had spelled it correctly.

That was a good day, she told herself.

With little potency and motivation, June abandoned the sink and walked to the eggshell refrigerator. "Dulerd" long erased, the magnets were massed together in a jumble as if to keep each other warm.

Finger-pointed, June reached up and found a blue "J" and slid it down through the other letters. She remembered scolding Manny for sliding letters, how it would scrape the refrigerator. No longer caring about the Amana's finish, June found a green "U" and

slid it with heated force alongside the "J," purposely leaving an angry gouge in the door. A yellow "E" caught her eye next, and she dragged it down. But when she looked back up to find the "N," it was missing.

She scanned the colored mess, scanned again, and still found nothing. *Had there ever been an "N"?* She could not recall. It was such a sweet, simple gift that she never bothered to look when Manny spilled them out of the plastic bag onto the kitchen table. All she could bring herself to do was get lost in the color and the smoothness of the letter "B"...both capital and lowercase.

Love letters, she'd dreamed.

She stared at the obvious space between the letters.

J-U- -E.

June's eyes turned warm and an apple-sized tear rolled down her cheek. *How perfect,* she thought, feeling empty inside and touching the space between the letters.

Nauseated, June dumped the lifeless coffee into the sink and watched it swirl clockwise down the drain. Now vanished, there was no proof that the coffee ever existed.

How lucky, June considered, *to be so small and disappear so easily.*

She closed her eyes as visions of Alice jumping down the rabbit-hole amused her mind. *I would give anything to be Alice,* she thought. *She wasn't afraid of the falling. She would know how to handle this.*

June rinsed her cup under cold water and crossed back to the refrigerator. Opening the door and bracing it against her hip, she poured herself a cup of milk. She could not remember the last time she had eaten, and her belly needed something.

Four hours and three days, she repeated in her head, *since Skeeter turned back.* "Skeeter" was the name she and Manny settled on before THE name. They couldn't keep referring to the baby as "baby" or "it,"

and they were both firm believers in seeing the child first before choosing a name. After some thought and gibberish-talk from Manny directed toward her nearly flat stomach, they decided on "Skeeter."

"Skeeter," she whispered, but only breath came out. No sound at all and for the third time in as many days, June felt insufficient. Doubting if there ever was a woman inside her, June's knees buckled and she folded down to the linoleum as if she was suddenly in prayer.

Sorrow wracked her body. Since her fight with Manny, June had lost her voice. *Not really lost*, she corrected, *misplaced*. It wasn't from screaming, the argument hadn't lasted long enough, but it was as if she had been muted...turned down.

He meant well. She had to remember he meant well. But June knew what paved the road to hell, for she had spent the last three days, belly down, crawling across it. Since Manny pulled her aside and spoke with her—no, at her—she had been trying to convince herself he meant well.

"You have me worried, June," he told her, both hands on her shoulders and his eyes staring into hers. Tucking her ginger hair behind her left ear, he continued. "You haven't been able to put this behind you." With delicate sincerity, he asked, "How can I make it easier?"

June stood numb in her absolute loss and in his chosen words. Her eyes welled, and then overflowed. All she could do was lower her head as tears raced down her cheek and dotted the worn red carpet. Manny put his finger under her chin and lightly lifted it. He pressed his clumsy thumb against her face, wiping away a tear. His eyes glassed over and for a second she saw the boy he used to be.

"Remember our first date...back in college?"

She smiled faintly, nodding her head.

"It went so badly," he chuckled. Together their foreheads met, his eyelashes kissing her softly. "I thought for sure you would never want to see me again. I showed up late. The dinner was horrible. You never even said 'good night' to me." He pulled her closer, and they breathed in time. "But for some reason I went home and the first thing I did was call you and ask for a second date."

"No," June awakened to calmly correct him with a small shake of her head. "No, you didn't. You asked for a do-over."

"Exactly!" he nearly shouted. "Those were my exact words. I can't believe you remembered. I asked for a 'do-over.'" His breathing was quick and heavy as he rushed to offer his words. "And I'll never know what possessed you to say 'yes,' but God was I happy when you did." Then his pace slowed and he found a steady rhythm to speak softly, as if the only one in the room.

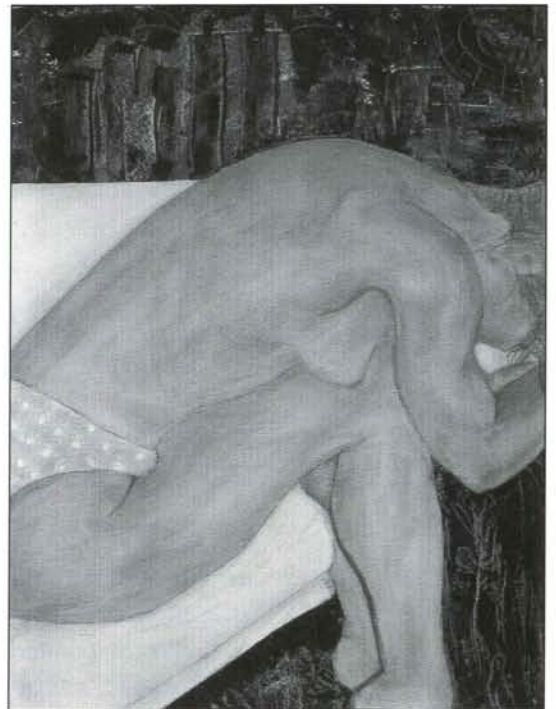
"I was so stupid brave then. I would have killed dragons for you."

His confession broke her heart.

"Believe me, June, I grieved, too." His tense stole her breath. "But we can't let this swallow us. You said yourself when you got pregnant that you weren't even sure you wanted this."

"When God wants to punish you..."

CITY GIRL
by Valerie Flanagan
mixed media



JANIS JOPLIN
by Brenda Lussier
graphite drawing



The fragile words broke from June's mouth, barely audible.

"We can try again. We can call a 'do-over.' Can't we? It worked once for us. Can't we just forget this and start over from—"

"No!" she screamed, reeling back like

a singed cat to slap him hard on the face. "How could you...how could anyone...call 'do-overs' on something like this? What if we can't make another baby—and if we can it won't be this baby. You made me want this baby, and I can't forgive you for that." Her hand flew up a second time to strike her husband hard across the cheek. Her nail, catching his skin, left a slight tear.

June's voice disappeared and so did Manny. He turned and walked out the door and took what little ground she had with him.

Seven hours and still no word. Indian-style on the kitchen floor with her back against the breakfast island, June could feel her eyelids becoming heavy and her chin hitting her chest. She railed against sleep, thinking she did not deserve the rest, but as hard as she fought, she stilled into exhaustion.

Into the dark she swirled. Twisted turns through tunnels until her body became weightless. She did not stop or land, but rather slowed and floated in the

ether of her dream. Her newfound buoyancy made her giggle, and as she did the letters G-I-G-G-L-E dribbled from her lips and ribboned into space.

What a strange and wonderful place.

"Buoyancy!" June shouted to see if it would happen again. She always thought it a peculiar word, and the letters B-U-O-Y-A-N-C-Y hopped one by one off her tongue and bounced away on cherry clouds. She snapped her teeth to catch the last "Y" and gaped as it burst into gold dust.

Metallic colors churned around her, and for a moment she believed she came to rest in the arms of the Aurora Borealis. Swept up, she could taste the painted lights, and they were icing on her tongue. Something animated off in the distance caught her attention. She could hear her eyes squint as the shape came into focus.

I'm going brilliantly mad, she mused as the object floated toward her.

An astronaut, with fins and gills and wearing bronzed shoes, drifted lazily up to June. Without a word he offered her a cup and saucer. Confused, she watched him reach for a nearby cloud and mold it into a crimson teapot.

"Don't mind if I do," curtsied June, holding her cup up to be filled. Sand poured from the kettle, but when it reached her cup it turned to sweetened chamomile. The astronaut saluted June imperially. He then rolled over onto his back and with one push of his feet, launched himself into the stratosphere of her reverie. June watched until he became a tiny speck that disappeared.

What a delightful young boy. I must remember to tell Manny.

A pregnant pause, then—"Manny!"

June watched for the letters to resurface. M-A- -Y in dappled hues arched from her mouth.

I suspected as much, she thought and took a sip of tea.

"Hello, June."

The voice startled June, causing her to spill her tea. The warm liquid ran over her breasts and down her lap. The cup fell from her grasp, hit the pink cloud she was resting upon, and broke into dozens of drunken butterflies. Flummoxed as to who would speak her name, she raised her head. Off to her right, one breath away was a crinolined ballerina wrapped in iridescent plastic.

"Oh, please, forgive me," said June. "I wasn't expecting you."

"Of course, you weren't," said the ballerina in a velvet whisper. "I have arrived early."

"Could you tell me where I am?" June pleaded. "This place is new, and I'm not sure I belong."

"There is no name for this place, my motherland," said the ballerina. Her plastic shell crackled as she attempted motion. "But trust me, you are welcome here."

"Do I know you?" June asked. The young face looked so recognizable but she could not place it. In the background of their gathering, pineapple trees rooted in-flight swayed in the breeze. June swore she heard them rustling *hush, hush*.

"Milk spilled is still spilled milk," said the ballerina.

"I'm sorry. I...I don't understand."

"Milk spilled is still spilled milk," the dancer repeated, "and there are more apple seeds."

"Apple seeds? Forgive me, but you're not making any sense."

The ballerina pulled June close until their bosoms met. After kissing her tenderly on the lips, the young girl leaned to June's ear and breathed, "We forgive you." Leaning back, the ballerina lifted her right hand

and with her first two fingers softly pulled June's eyelids down...and the Northern Lights were gone.

June's eyes shot open wide.

She blinked frantically as the light illuminated her momentary darkness. Quickly regaining her posture, she looked about the kitchen and waited for her mind to catch up. As it did, June noticed how chill she was. Feeling her sweater and the front of her jeans, she realized she was wet from something. The cup once holding her milk rested in a white puddle on the floor in front of her.

I must have forgotten to set it down. She set it upright and empty, then suspiciously studied it. The bottom had chipped in the fall. June could see that. *It doesn't feel right throwing it away. It can still be used.* Then the visions rattled her mind, leading her to wonder if the miscarriage, the fight, and the short nap had all been but a dream.

Awakened, June now found something in what she had lost. She rose to her feet, grabbed a towel to soak up the milk and crossed back to the refrigerator. The magnets in front of her seemed altered as well. Flexible. Letting the wet towel drop to the floor, she reached up and guided her hand to a letter. As if turning back the hands of a clock, she rotated the letter onto its side. June slid the pink "Z" down to join the others.

J-U-N-E.

There I am.

It had become late afternoon, and June's tender mourning was still there. Mea culpas and magnets did not magically steal it away in the night, but finally there was a bottom to her grief. She felt bottom and for the first time in days there was ground beneath her.

Where there's ground, she decided, one can jump.

Leaving only her four letters on the refrigerator to remind her, June removed the others. She bagged them away for the next time she would need them.

She marched to the phone, lifted the receiver, and dialed Manny's cell. June heard it ring twice before it was picked up. In a soft but steady voice, she said, "Come home."

A WINTER'S WORK
by Wyeth Lynch
black and white photograph





SCRIBBLZ JUNIOR ARTIST KIT
by Stacy Pearson
package design



SELF AWARE
by Philip Andrews
mixed media

I watch my little brother hammer keys
with great gusto; his only audience
is me and the dog, but we're both enthralled
by the way he weaves some forties show tunes
with sweet gospel beats. My foot starts tapping.

His beat's a little shaky, not so steady,
but damn, this tune is busy and breathing
Alive, alive—it dances, weaves and jives
and mixes with the TV too, an opus
of discord mixing in my ear. Powerful
hands, stretching out like taffy to tackle
all the keys, and never missing one.

His hands, those big pale hands hold a secret:
A tumor, benign, but cause for alarm.
First doc wanted to take the whole hand.
Second doc said, no, let's try some shots.
That's what we did, injections once a week.
The blue-green growth gradually grew less,
though it's still there, lurking, waiting to stretch
up his arm and into his body.

Such a pity it would be to make
my brother a one-handed piano man.
I'm trying not to think about it, listening
to the heat of sweet old gospel beats.

GREG ANDERSON

HEIGHTENED ALERT

I do not want to alarm you,
But I cannot remember
The day I was born.
Blood relatives speak clearly of it.
A date was even provided
But I believe it is all hearsay
Perhaps a terrific theory at best.

Symptoms are present to
Elevate the alert to orange
When my daily forgetfulness sets in
Especially when I'm bathing
Strenuously staring at the shampoo
Unable to recall
If I've washed my hair.

Maximize the risk to red when
I learn something new
Similar to a situation
When I learned to hold my liquor
But soon after
On the very same night
I forgot how to walk.

My mind
Terrorized by forgetfulness,
Commands a courageous
Anti-amnesia security defense,
Wiretapping my memories
In an attempt
To achieve green.

JESSE T. PICK

LETTERS FROM THE CHINESE RENAISSANCE

BY RYAN BARNES

Editor's Note: Ryan Barnes spent the equivalent of a fall semester teaching English in Kunming, China. His adventures would fill a book, but he's giving Kiosk readers the pleasure of reading a few excerpts from his e-mails to friends.

November 21, 2006

I've been here long enough that life is starting to eek out some sort of pattern. So I'll try to elaborate the best I can on daily life in my home, Bailong Village.

1. Midnight.

Chinese people typically go to bed early and get up early. After 11:00 or so, the bustling street that runs past my house is dead. Maybe you can see one or two people going home and a guy selling barbecue under a red lamp, lit by a car battery under his grill. By now the bars are closed, the street vendors are packing up, and most people are asleep.

Up and down my street there are about twenty hotels with flickering neon signs; many students live here illegally instead of the dorms. Bailong Village isn't really a tourist destination. On the main road connecting us and downtown Kunming, I hear the big blue construction trucks blaring their horns up and down the street twenty-four hours a day.

The mosquitoes are a nuisance all year round.

2. Morning.

I usually wake up between 5:30 and 6:00. I go to the kitchen, turn on the propane-fueled hot water heater, and hop into the shower.

Chinese bathrooms of the middle-class lifestyle typically have a sink, a Western-style toilet, and a very, very small bathtub.

There is no curtain, so water sprays everywhere. Apparently, you can buy a shower curtain and rod (very rare items) at one of the Wal-Marts downtown, but I don't go to Wal-Mart, not even in China. The sink has two faucets, but no hot water. On top of most of the apartment buildings giant solar panels heat tanks of water. Most people get their hot shower water this way and don't have water heaters.

One superior form of Chinese engineering is the thermos. You will see these thermoses everywhere. The thermos is huge, holding about two liters of water, and keeping it hot for *days*. I boil a kettle of water a few times a week so I can enjoy a cup of Nescafé instant coffee or a glass of water in the morning. Coffee and chocolate are very hard to find here, especially those of decent quality. There are a few coffee shops downtown, but they're expensive. Also, you can't drink the tap water, so the water must be boiled or bottled.

Each morning at about 6:30, I hear a person dribbling a basketball down to the apartment complex's court. At about 7:30, young children start swarming the preschool next door to my apartment. Around 8:00, senior citizens congregate on the basketball court to practice tai chi, tai chi with fake swords, tai chi with folding fans, traditional dancing, balancing a tennis ball on a racket, basketball—anything.

I put on my jacket and usually have breakfast in the open market. A bowl of freshly made rice or wheat noodles, mint, cilantro, pickled vegetables, and chili pepper set me back 2.5 yuan, about 30¢. Alternately for breakfast, I'll buy a piece of pocket bread stuffed with grilled tofu and other mixed vegetables and spices for a yuan, about 12.5¢. It is unbelievably delicious. The owners make everything from scratch and cook it up on the back of their

bicycles. You'd be surprised at how much goes on and comes off of bikes here.

I see people brushing their teeth and women washing their hair in the street. Cleaning ladies are sweeping all the garbage and other debris up.

There are a lot of stray dogs, but all of them are very small. Owning a dog is forbidden in Kunming, but it hasn't stopped anyone. At the open market, you can get dogmeat noodles, or so I am told.

3. Afternoon

I usually eat lunch with my students or with my Vietnamese classmates from my Chinese class. It is very rare to eat alone in China. Chinese students often complain about the quality of cafeteria food—I assume this is the case of students everywhere—and I assure you that Chinese cafeteria food is much better than the cafeteria food I ate in the U.S. and England.

Most people have a two or three hour siesta after lunch. I usually come home after lunch and check my email. I am constantly reminded it's important to take a nap, so I try to do that, but it's very strange for me to sleep during the daytime.

I head back up the hill for my afternoon class and have supper with my students around 5:00.

In the late afternoon, the street fills up with fruit vendors selling apples, oranges, pomegranates, pomelos, durians, etc. off the back of bicycles. Also there are a few larger horse-drawn carts selling watermelons. There are many people selling snacks from their stalls. This chaos is set in the middle of the street, with all the vehicles, bicycles, pedestrians, and the shepherd boys bringing their flocks home from a day at the pasture. Each day it's a sight to behold and a chance to pinch myself and remind me that I'm in China. Wow.

4. Evening

After supper, I usually return home again. This is one thing I like about China: not so many cars, so people are always out walking around.

Around dusk, all the barbecue people set up their red canopies and knee-high tables and ankle high stools for a night of serious grilling. Next to my apartment complex there is a restaurant of some repute. People go there for birthdays, celebrations, and occasionally weddings. It is a rowdy restaurant. Public vomiting is not really frowned upon here like it is in the U.S., and more often than not, you must watch your step in front of this restaurant. My colleague and friend Marietta said, "It must say something about the food here."

At the entrance of my compound, a guy on a motorcycle brings a daily big barrel of milk and people line up with their pots to fill up. Milk is popular here but scarce. It usually comes from Inner Mongolia. I say, if you want to make money in China, sell milk. I've often been given a packet of milk as a treat. Although I'm not a big fan of milk, I must be polite as it's relatively expensive. It is a person of status who is a milk drinker.

The center of everything in the evenings is the basketball court. The activity lasts from about 8 to 11. There are kids running around with toy battle axes, games of soft-volleyball with serious officials and whistles and cheers and flipping scores, old men standing around smoking and shooting hoops (simultaneously).

October 8, 2006

Last week was China's October National Holiday, commemorating the fifty-seventh birthday of the People's Republic of China.

To celebrate, I went with some students to climb Xi Chan, the western mountains of Kunming. We ascended through some forests, past the tomb of Nie Er (the composer of China's national anthem), past ancient Taoist and Buddhist temples, past a 600-year-old ginkgo tree planted by a Ming Dynasty emperor, and finally took a break in a small village toward the top.

Up in these mountains, farmers will invite travelers to their small courtyards for home-cooked meals. We ate vegetables, tofu, rice with potatoes, cabbage, pumpkin, pickled garlic and ginger, watermelon and fresh apples...all for 7 yuan each, less than \$1. If we finished a certain plate, they would bring more of it until we were full.

One student brought his guitar and we took turns playing some American and Chinese rock songs, much to the delight of the local teenagers.

After the lunch, we climbed through "Little Stone Forest," an outcropping of bizarre karst topography. Apparently in China, or at least here in Yunnan, when you reach a significant peak in your climb, you must shout and scream until others on different significant peaks shout and scream back. Also, as always, if you see a foreigner you must shout, "Hallooooo!" A Chinese girl once told me that the reason China is so loud is because, being such a mountainous country, people had to shout across the valleys to communicate with each other.

The "Real" China Hard Seat

The next day, I got on a train to Guiyang, capital of neighboring Guizhou Province. I was feeling adventurous and taking the advice of a friend, opted for a "hard seat," third-class on the 12-hour night train. When I showed my ticket to the conductors, no one could believe I would travel this way.

"Don't you want a sleeper?" they asked me in Chinese.

When I stepped onto the car, I was met with many confused stares. This is how "real" China travels. People were friendly, offering me sundry fruits and sweets. After all, it is October Holiday.

Soon a guard came by and asked to see my ticket. He read it, checked my seat, checked the ticket again. He shook his head and walked away. A few minutes later, another guard came by and asked me to move to the dining car, saying it was more comfortable. So I went to the dining car. That's my hard seat experience, all 45 minutes of it.

In the dining car, I met two young Chinese women, one who works for Hainan Airlines and the other who is a doctor. We talked about Chinese literature, and I learned some expressions in local Kunming dialect, which is very different from the standard Mandarin taught in schools.

I soon fell asleep at my table and woke up to the Dr. Seuss-like landscape of Guizhou Province and the rail staff goofing around in the dining car.

Guiyang

Guiyang is different from Kunming. There are hardly any foreigners, not nearly as many cars and bicycles on the road, and the girls have paler skin. The city is famous for bathhouses and mahjong (Chinese dominoes).

I met my Chinese friend Jennie at the station (I was invited to stay at her family's house), and we later met up with more people from the extended family and drove out to the countryside.

On the other side of the mountain from Guiyang, we arrived at a small village of about 100 people. We were met with a large spread of food in a room that looked

like a garage. There was a gas can full of baijiu, the infamous Chinese firewater, but I passed on that. Save it to fuel the cars.

This town was interesting, because the farmers are erecting houses on their lands, only no one lives in them. Guiyang is expanding so rapidly that soon it will encroach on this village. Instead of the developers or the government buying the cheap farmland, they will have to pay for the living units as well.

However, the town is poor. Poorer than anything I've ever seen. This is how many people in China live: in a small one-room house, a pig in the next room, a rooster out front, electricity but no indoor plumbing. There are outhouses around and a cesspool directly behind the house, which drains into the fields as fertilizer. I was careful where I stepped.

Jennie and I went climbing around the neighboring mountains and stumbled into an old cemetery where people were lighting off fireworks at their ancestors' tomb. Each tomb had a small stone table where the family could eat a meal after the ceremony. Life (and death) in China revolves around eating.

After our return to the village, we went to a building which served as a sort of community center. A throng of elementary-aged girls surrounded me. I was the first foreigner to ever visit this village. Even visits from the city folk are rare.

We were invited to a banquet downstairs to celebrate the completion of the second floor (only the previous week) and the visit of the guests (us). I couldn't believe the food! It was a full banquet, four-star restaurant quality, lots of fresh vegetables, meats, and seafood.

Where did all this come from? One city person in our party politely suggested that we go easy on the meat and seafood,

because "the fresh vegetables are what we come out to the countryside for." In truth, the village people were waiting for us to eat first and would have the leftovers later. This is hospitality.

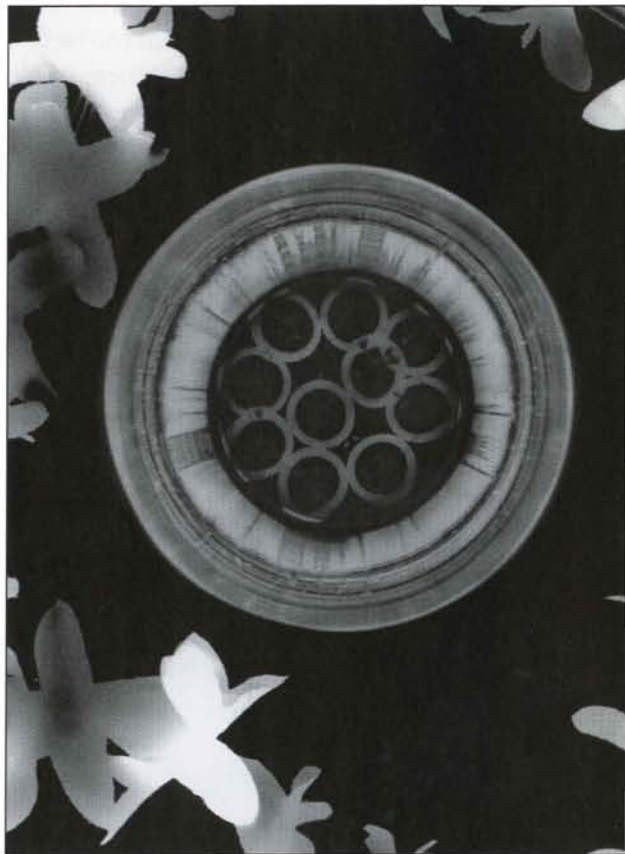
I left full, happy, a local celebrity, and with many new friends from this mysterious village in the Guizhou mountains.

November 14, 2006

Chairman Mao [a teacher at the college renown for his prodigious drinking abilities] called on Saturday morning to let me know there was a busload of Vietnamese students outside my gate. I hopped in and we all headed to the zoo, up in the mountains northeast of Kunming. Oftentimes in China, I feel like I'm an animal in a zoo and people are watching me. This wild animal park was a pleasant diversion from all that—people had *real* animals to look at rather than random foreigners.

When it came time to leave the park, the large group had split into two. I was part of the first group and waited about an hour for the second group to come. In the meantime, I bought a boiled ear of corn and enjoyed some corn on the cob like I was home in Iowa.

One distressed-looking Chinese woman came up to me. "Excuse me, do you



PHOTOGRAM
by Dan Widrowicz
black and white photograph



“speak English?”

Of course.

“Well, I’m trying to get back to the Sakura Hotel, and I’m afraid I missed the last taxi. I’m from Hong Kong and don’t speak Mandarin too well. Can you help me?”

A Chinese woman asked *me* to help her with Chinese. Here is the counterexample to those who think that “Chinese” is just one language. In Hong Kong they speak Cantonese, which is completely different

from Mandarin (although Kunming has its own dialect, it is still more or less Mandarin). The written language is basically the same, but Hong Kong uses traditional Chinese characters, while Mainland China uses simplified characters. So even a short note may be very difficult to understand and many people here are only semi-literate.

I mustered up my best Chinese and asked one man how she could take

the bus back.

“Mei you,” he shot back: “Don’t have” or “no” or “I don’t know what to say to this foreigner.”

She tried her best in Mandarin. Her tones sounded very natural but her flow was stop and start, just like mine. Eventually, we got her a taxi and she was very grateful. She said if I’m ever in Hong Kong

and need help, I can call her.

All in all, very strange.

Happy Birthday

I told my students and some other people I would be having my birthday party at the Lao Chang Ji Jiu Ba (The Old Record Player Bar). I told them it would begin at 9:30. Due to some traffic jams and other nonsense, we didn’t get back to Bailong Village until 10:00.

No problem, I thought. No one comes to a party at the beginning, right? But in Chinese culture, if a party begins at 9:30, people start showing up at 9:00. Some people were worried I had forgotten about them and wasn’t going to show.

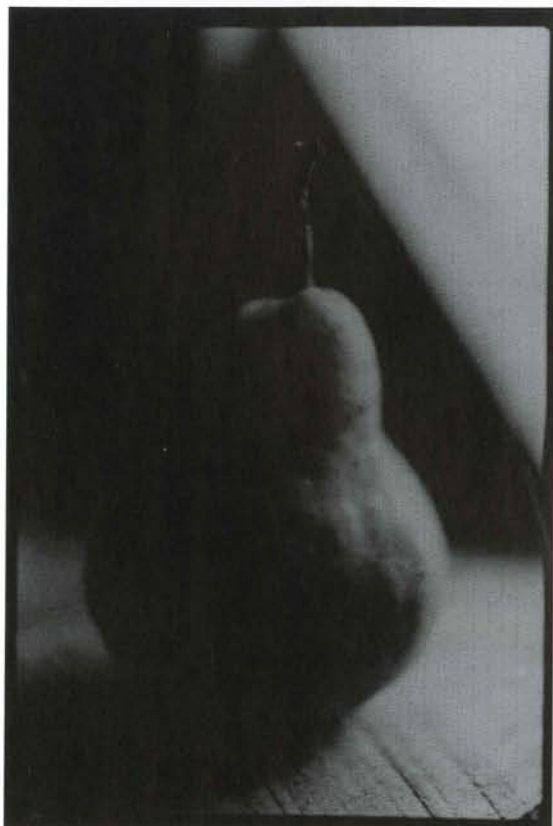
The mood quickly changed as soon as I entered the door (actually as I was coming down the street). I was showered with balloons, gifts, a bouquet of two-dozen red roses, an enormous cake, and tons of cheers. I was overwhelmed. I’ve never had a birthday like this.

I started to become a little emotional, tears welling up in my eyes, my voice crackling a little until—POP! POP! POP!

Koby, one of my mischievous students, held a candle to the balloons nearest my face and I was met with an explosion. Pieces of melted balloon were all over my head, my eyebrows were singed, my sideburns toasted. Happily, Koby got it too. He disappeared after that but reappeared later with his head shaved.

We carved up the cake and the festivities truly began. In China, a cake is a big, big deal. I cannot overstate it. It is not only admired and eaten, but also smeared all over the birthday boy’s face (students’ too, can’t forget that). At midnight, a completely unassociated patron came down from upstairs and started breakdancing.

All in all, it was a great celebration. I



FEMINE No.1

by Stacy K. Baldus
silver gelatin print

had my hair plucked out, lit on fire, and cake thrown in my face.

November 29, 2006

On a fine Sunday, I ventured down to Cuihu Park, Kunming's answer to New York's Central Park or London's Hyde Park. Cuihu's got to be one of the best parks in the world. The name means Green Lake and dates back to the Ming Dynasty. It's right downtown Kunming, a breath of fresh air amid the drab concrete buildings and honking cars. It's got Hanzhou-style arched bridges criss-crossing four small, willow-lined lakes, brightly colored pavilions, vendors selling food, and traditional Chinese musicians. Beautiful Siberian seagulls spend the winter here.

I was asked to pose for four or five photos with Chinese strangers, but, really, when are the Chinese strangers? I saw an old minority woman in traditional clothes and bound feet. She hobbled along. I heard some amazing music and listened for an hour or so.

During this time, I read some Jack Kerouac: "Food is always better eaten in doleful little pinchfuls off the ends of chopsticks, no gobbling, the reason why Darwin's law of survival applies best to China: if you don't know how to handle a chopstick and stick it in that family pot with the best of 'em, you'll starve. I ended up flubbing it all up my forefinger anyhow." I can't remember the last time I used a fork or knife.

I've been here three months now. I've had three colds. Each cold was treated quite effectively with Chinese medicine and a trip to the mountains and fresh air. Last weekend my cold took me to Xi Shan (The Western Hills) with one of my classes.

"Hills" is an understatement. We found

a "bread bus," a 17-seater that would drive us up, up, up into the hills. It started out pleasantly, students taking turns singing folk songs, but soon it became apparent that this driver was extremely aggressive—his right hand permanently pressing the horn, cigarette dangling from his mouth, occasionally driving the bus into the bicycle lanes when traffic was too congested, and ignoring red lights. We zigzagged into the mountains, whizzing past 500-year-old Buddhist and Taoist temples, dodging dogs and pedestrians, horses and cars.

Soon some students became car sick. By the time we reached the top, each side of the bus had a girl hanging out the window, vomiting, gasping for fresh air and escape from nausea.

We stayed at a hotel in the mountains that served us a home-cooked meal in the courtyard. After the hike and supper, we persuaded the hotel owners to get a bonfire going in their courtyard. So they took out a big old wok, filled it with wood, and we had a warm fire going in no time. There was some fire dancing, a game of "hot potato," but instead of a potato, it was played with a chopstick.

And we played some truth-or-dare. This was nothing like American truth-or-dare. I think the most risqué moment was when a male student had to carry a female student around the circle on his back. In front of everyone! Or when a girl had to call her boyfriend in Inner Mongolia and tell him that she loved him. In front of everyone! There is an innocence and freshness here that we have somehow lost in America.

On Karaoke

Chinese people love to sing. You always hear it on the street. It is a rare day when I am not asked to sing a song. And once you are asked to sing, there is no escape. The

only excuse that suffices is sudden death.

From what I have heard coming from the KTV (karaoke) rooms, most Chinese people are tone-deaf.

On Fast Food

Going to KFC or McDonald's is a big deal in China. It's essentially the same as the U.S., a couple items are different on the menu (it's hard to tell though, as the menu is in Chinese), but it's pretty much like being in the U.S. I suppose that's why people like it. To me, it just seems a perfect representation of the mediocrity in American society that Ginsberg was "Howl"ing about. It seems to go against the grain of Chinese culture—here eating is a great, perhaps the greatest, social event. Most people object to the idea of "fast food." A good meal will take hours and be well worth it. But this allure and mystique of America is a strong draw.

I guess it's my job here to try to show them the other great things that the U.S. has to offer other than car culture, crass consumerism, big-box retail, lowest-common denominator pop music, etc.

December 22, 2006

Friday night I met a former teacher of this school, an Australian who sold his house and is hanging out in Dali, writing a book. We went to the Camel Bar (expat hangout) and had a Western meal with four Americans, three Chinese, and an Australian.

Of course, the inevitable question came up: "Why did you come to China?"

Some people here, many people I know, "just bailed." Usually the people are in their fifties, single, or recently divorced, and sick of life in the U.S. Coming to Chi-

na is a chance to start over. Some people are searching for something, and China is often a pretty exotic place...if you're bored here, it's your own fault.

Other people are secretly missionaries.

Why did I come to China? Well, right now is a great moment in history, and this is my chance to be a part of it.

What is happening in China has never happened before—at times the entire country seems like a giant construction site. Development is occurring on an insanely fast scale. In the four months I've been in my neighborhood, I have seen buildings—entire apartment complexes—go up. People are working from before dawn to well after dusk. In many ways, this is a renaissance that will probably dwarf the Italian Renaissance, but no one knows what will happen. China isn't just emerging, it's re-emerging.

Remember, this is a great civilization—one of the oldest in the world—and the people are very aware of their history. It is commonly believed that almost all significant inventions were created in the Western world. However, this is not true. The Chinese are people who invented or discovered magnets, movable type, paper, gunpowder, compasses, wheelbarrows, row planting, parachutes, paper currency, and toilet paper. There is great optimism here, an optimism usually associated with Americans.

This development is very interesting because it's not happening in neat squares. It's growing organically. Take my block for example. I see third-world poverty, open sewers, horse-drawn carts...but on the end of my block, fifty meters away, there is a Land Rover and Jaguar dealership. I have been in the nicest restaurants of my life maybe ten minutes away. Downtown, I have even seen a Maserati dealership. And Kunming is not considered a "developed" city by any stretch of the imagination.

There is a great and growing disparity between the extremely rich and the extremely poor, something causing great tension in society, something that the government is trying hard to alleviate by developing the western and rural regions. However, this is a difficult task. There are 1.3 billion people here. The U.S., the third most populous country, has nine cities with a population over one million; China has a hundred. Kunming, at 3.5 million, is a medium-sized Chinese city. Have you heard of Chendu or Tianjin or Congqing? They are each larger than New York.

But I digress. I have always been interested in China. When I was twenty, I made it my goal to learn Mandarin. Now that goal is coming true. So, in short, I was curious and came to check it out, and I'm glad I did. Soon China will be the world's number one tourist destination. Please, come check it out before everyone else does.

The food is great, by the way.

SCRAPBOOKS ETC.
by Brianna Blake
advertising media kit





**A COLD DAY ON
THE BERING SEA**
by Matthew Ellis
digital photograph



UNTITLED
by Valerie Flanagan
linocut reduction print



PEACOCK
by Katie Clopp
acrylic painting

TWO A.M. AND FADING

It's late (or early)
and my soda bottle is half empty
(or half full)...

Thinking:

The washer is filling
and I need an introduction
and like clothes in the machine
words should be churning in my mind
Incorporate the soap, get the process going
And after rinsing, and writing the body
both jobs are more complete than not
Then spin, and finish; make a final statement...
finally.

Then:

the quietness of reality
at this late early morning hour
as the machines quit their work
makes me think again:

At least the clothes are washed.

ALLISON AVERILL, 1979

CONTRIBUTORS NOTES

WRITING

Greg Anderson is from Sioux City, IA, and this is his first year contributing to the *Kiosk*.

Allison Averill returns to the *Kiosk* with her poem "Two AM and Fading."

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ART

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