

k  
i  
O  
S  
k





KIOSK

Spring, 1974

Kiosk is published by the students of  
Morningside College, Sioux City, Iowa

Editorial Boards

Art

Debra Gengler  
Madonna Maiers  
Bruce Reid

Literature

Connie Adams  
Gretchen De Wall  
Elizabeth Elbe  
Ginger Riffel  
Kathryn Russell  
Terry Wright

Faculty Sponsors

Frank Breneisen, art  
Carole Oleson, literature

CONTENTS

becky miller	RORY	5
dave lieder	THE NIGHT'S A SODDEN SNOW	10
	RACHEL'S SONG	12
janice jans	from PUPPET SHOW	13
terry a wright	SKETCH	16
	A MOST DEADLY SIN	17
	GOD OF THE HANGED	18
	MOON WALK	19
	KATHLEEN HAS A BABY	21
l. b. anderson		23
mary ann gaspar		24
madonna maiers		25
roger randall		26
marla ulven		27
colin freeman		28
debra gengler		29
bill weins		30
jeffrey lee davis	CANDLE	31
	SAILBOAT	32
	FOR YOU	33
	ODE	34
james zerschling	THE STAR-GAZER	35
l. j. yanney	FOOTSTEPS	38
	EDUCATION	39
dan anderson	THE FROG AFFAIR	40
harry buss	REFLECTIONS ON HAVING AT-	
	TENDED A ROCK CONCERT	42
becky miller	FERNA	44

cover: Bill Weins

RORY

becky miller

Softball is such a bore, I think standing in the middle of the field, being a center-fielder, waiting for balls that are never hit this far. I turn to look at my pony, tied at the end of the field. He lifts his head, whinnies. Some riders are approaching; who is it? A rare, hard-hit ball flies by me. I chase it, scoop it, throw it infield.

The riders are near. It's Rory and a friend of hers. But Rory is not on her own pony; she's on a big beautiful stallion. I can hardly take my eyes off him. I know it's her friend's dad's horse, and Rory's not supposed to be riding it, especially not in town. But boy, it's beautiful.

Another stupid ball rolls by me. I throw it to the second baseman. Safe. Oh well.

Rory's giving rides to some of the other girls on the recreation field. I'd love to be on the big, black beast. Why am I a fielder right now?

Rory and her friend trot over on their horses. "Wanna ride this one?" she teases me, "We're heading out to my place." Rory lives on a farm on the edge of our town. I want to get on, but I notice the field supervisor glaring at me.

"I gotta play ten more minutes, Rory."

"OK, we'll come back shortly. Have your mutt ready."

Ten minutes pass slowly, no more balls hit to me. The supervisor blows the whistle; I put my glove away, run down to my pony. Trotting along, I cut my pony across the field, to the street. Rory and her friend are just coming. Maybe I can ride the stallion when we get to her farm, I think, as my pony plods along.

"Coming along?" Rory asks.

"Yeah," I say. Of course I'm coming. I always have the most best times with Rory. She's three years older than my ten years, and she never wastes time on boring things. I figure that's 'cause she has no mom, and her dad is always busy in the fields, so she does whatever she wants. And she always wants to do fun things.

"Can I ride it when we get there?" I ask.

"First one there gets to ride it first," she announces, taking off at a gallop. The friend takes off on her horse, and they race down the highway. My dumb old pony just plods on; it hardly ever gets out of its trot. Before they get out of sight around the curve, I see that Rory has the lead with the stallion, but the friend is not far behind.

Here I am left on my stupid mutt, as Rory calls it. But we've had a lot of fun times on our ponies, I think. We used to ride and ride, in the fields of her farm. We'd try to get our ponies to jump the rows of stubby stalks in the cornfields. Mine would hardly ever jump, too old was why, Rory said.

Once we were just trotting along in the field--as much as Rory hated to trot, she liked



to canter or gallop, but mine wouldn't very often-- when she gave me a swift rush on the shoulder. I slipped right on over, landing with a corn-stalk in my stomach. When I asked her why she'd done it, she said something crazy-like, that I'd never fallen off and it was time I learn. Well, Rory's like that. She hardly gave me time to get back on my pony, when she took off for the river.

We'd ride the ponies into the river. You have to be quick to jump off when their front legs start to buckle, 'cause the next thing they'll start to roll in the water. They roll in the water and mud and then shake and shake. We'd tie them to a tree and wade in ourselves. We'd sink up to our ankles in the mud. The river was dirty; I wasn't supposed to go in it, my mom said. But I always did. Though I didn't go out as far as Rory did. The current got stronger the farther you went out, and I got scared of getting pulled away. But Rory always went out a good ways. Once she even swam across the whole river. I thought she was in trouble at one point, but she took a big breath, went under, fought the current diagonally, and got out of the worst part. She always knew what to do at times like that.

Then we'd quit wading, and go into the old shabby shed. We found our favorite poles, just poles with lines and hooks was all they were, and the can of worms. We'd catch lots of fish quickly. Just little ones, little suckers. You weren't supposed to eat 'em, but we did. Rory taught me how to clean and cook 'em, back at her house. We ate 'em with butter and salt. I thought they tasted good, though I knew they weren't supposed to; there was supposed to be something wrong with eating suckers.

But then I'd always have to be home for supper. When I'd leave, Rory would just ride on and on, through the fields, laughing. I guess she got her own supper later, when she wanted.

Well, supper was kind of in the way when you're having a good time.

My pony is so slow, I think, as it keeps up its steady trot, rounding the second curve. Soon I should be able to see the two horses down the straight part of the highway. Com' on old mutt, let me see that beautiful, black horse.

Now I do see a horse. Just one horse alone, in the ditch to the right of the road. I urge my pony into a faster trot to completely round the curve. Then I see. Ahead on the highway, the black stallion, spilled on the concrete. And the jack-knifed, overturned semi. I trot, slowly, closer. The corn from the semi is spread all over the road. The friend is standing there and screaming "My horse, my beautiful horse, oh my horse." But I look at Rory--half buried under the corn, half under the stallion, crushed and bloody, her head bent funny to one side.

They cover her up, till there is enough help to pull her out. They take her in the ambulance. People keep coming and going; someone takes the screaming friend away. The truck driver sits, holding his head, saying that he should have done something. Someone said he'd seen the stallion shy right in front of the truck; there wasn't nothing the driver could've done. Someone beside me said they all speed down the highway, though, even where it cuts through town. The driver didn't hear that, I guess.

The beautiful, black stallion is terrible looking. Blood all over and one leg is all wrong. The leg is bent at the joint, 'cepting for the bone which sticks straight on through.

Most of the town is gathered now, looking. Some are crying. Someone came back and said she was already dead when she got to the hospital. I guess she was dead the whole time I was looking at her. They start shoveling the corn off the highway; there is a traffic problem now, and they haul the semi away. The rendering truck comes. They strip the saddle off.

Can't get the bit out of the locked jaw. They put a crow bar in its mouth and pry. It makes a ripping sound and blood spurts. I get sick. Someone gives me the reins of my pony and tells me to go home.

I lead the mutt home. When I get home, mom tells me that the old mayor just died. I'm still thinking about Rory--mom hadn't heard about that. I dream about Rory that night.

It's a hard week on the townspeople. They carry on and on about the deaths. They say "God rest his soul" about the old mayor, and "shame, such a shame," about Rory.

I knew the old mayor; he was a friend of grandad's. I'd talked to him several times. But I don't remember him laughing. He just always sat downtown in his starched shirt and suit, not saying much to anybody. I don't know that he'd ever ridden ponies when he was younger, and at his older age, of course, he was too stiff to get on one. He probably wouldn't have eaten a sucker if you fixed him one, though he was pretty skinny. He just sat there in his starchy shirt, which partly covered his thin neck.

I go to see Rory at the Home. The people are some crying and blowing their noses. But when I look in the casket, there calmly lies Rory, her hands crossed on her chest, with her ever still smile on her lips.

"God rest her soul," I say.

# The Night's a Sudden Snow

- David Lieder

Intro: D Dmaj7 F#m Dmaj7 F

Moderate Baroque  $\times$  Emf

The night's a sudden snow

GmF Em F D

painting in November on a pictured cal-endar

D<sup>VI</sup> Em

of just the same whose colors long for an

"FINE

G D A Dmaj F Bm

other To paint them on this lonesome day.

Em A D Dmaj

The co-lors still rip-ple from its pas-sing

D.S. al Fine

Em A D Dmaj F Bm Dmaj

Blending to mix an-oth-er shade.

2. Two lives burn upon a paper  
 In the corner of my oil-stained room  
 When a song drifts in from the doorway  
 And shees through my pastel gloom.
3. The night has finally resolved into morning  
 But the pictured calendar remains the same  
 The song replaces my feelings  
 Perhaps I'll paint another day.

RACHEL'S SONG

dave lieder

I watched a spider thread a web  
Across my window satin grey  
And she hides behind its crossings  
Waiting for some thoughtless prey.

An unsuspecting child  
Walking in the night  
Tries to find whats right

But all she finds is gossamer  
Dangling as a broken thread

I saw liquid eyes and shattered minds  
Before a weeping Buddha pray  
Behind whose back a shouldered cross  
Glistens in satin grey.

from PUPPET SHOW

janice jans

The play takes place in a bar. At this point in the play, each of the characters presents a short monologue. As they do so, a puppet, bearing their likeness appears inside a jukebox. The puppet's action depicts aspects of the character's personality or emotional make-up. The last five speeches are presented in this cutting.  
Eds.

Working Girl:

I'm not accustomed to speaking out this way against anyone or anything, so forgive me if I seem a bit nervous. My problems seem so insignificant compared to the hardships the rest of you have faced. I really feel guilty about mentioning them at all; however, from the looks on your faces I can see that you won't allow me to remain silent.

The hardships "They" have caused me are like all the others mentioned here tonight in that they're unforgivable, cruel, and most of all--unfair and without justification.

However, I differ from the rest of you because I've learned to accept them. Yes, I've learned to sit back and take what they hand me. It's easier that way. To them I'm just a Wall Flower. Someone they can shove around. "Here's this job nobody wants to do" or "Here's this task that wasn't finished." Do it, and you'll get a nice pat on the head if you're lucky. But I'll take that measly reward. I probably don't really deserve anything more.

Bar Maid:

I've worked many jobs in my life-time and not a one of them is worth mentioning, including this one. No offense, Bartender. So I've seen a lot of what "They" can do to help-less people like us.

I always wanted to BE something, to be SOMEONE, but I couldn't rise above "Their" stringent requirements. You see, I never finished "Their" school of education. A drop-out in "Their" school, is a drop-out in life. Plain and Simple!

If you want to be something, you have to be willing to work for it, to plan ahead. But I don't have time for that. Why can't I just have what I want without going thru all that worthless, time-consuming School of Learning?

Can't "They" take a look at the REAL ME?

Soldier:

The War ruined me, my life. And who do you suppose created that war.....YES!

I gave to them my life and what do they offer me in return? A job when I come home. Well. I'm home. Here I am!!

But tell me gentlemen--what job requires my skills? I am trained, as you well know, to be a .....Killer! Have you an opening in my line of work? No, you say?

How can that be? How can you do this to me? I've worked hard these past years to complete my education and my records can verify that.

WHAT? You want me to be a used car salesman? (Spits on the floor). YOU CAN GO TO HELL!!!

Bartender (Very drunk by now):

I, like most other men, have a dream of someday being rich. The man you now see before



you is the same man, financially, you will one day see laid to rest. And the reason for this is that they've created a mountain of sand for me to climb. The faster I try to go, the more the sand shifts and slips under my feet, making my progress hard and my conquest impossible.

The mountain of sand I refer to is the other small bars owned by "Them." I try to surpass "Them" by making improvements in my own little place here but they always manage to outdo me and steal away my few customers. When this happens, I turn to the bottle. They accuse me of drinking up my profits rather than not being able to cope with "Their" competition.

(Shouting). YES I DRINK---THEY DRIVE ME TO IT!!!

Actress:

"All the world's a stage. And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances; And one man in his time plays many parts."

So said by Shakespeare and so agreed upon by yours truly. For who should know more about acting than me, the Actress.

But I'm not the only actor in this room. No indeed, dear friends! I'm only one in a cast of nine; supported by a still larger cast of thousands and directed by a renowned personage referred to as "THEY."

Don't you see? This is their stage and we're whatever they make us. They pull the strings and we dance a tune, their tune. And do you know why? Because no one's ever DARED to cut the strings before. We're afraid to take responsibility for our own actions. It's much easier to blame them for our mistakes.

But I for one, am tired of being someone else's PUPPET. Who is this Someone Else? Who are They?

SKETCH

terry a wright

i really  
dont force myself to  
think of you  
as often as it seems

its just  
that since youve decided  
to go  
ive become very lecherous  
and wear  
my hands in a muff  
so  
i know where they are

A MOST DEADLY SIN

terry a wright

upon the sacred heart  
as between a gap in teeth  
the darkness lies

above  
the goat mouthed demons  
fall be  
fore saint christophers staff  
venial and pathetic the struggle fades  
without the light

below  
a bloody furnace  
bled from sulphur water  
and july decadence

here the child  
of colored glass broods upon the mothers lap  
magdalen  
the bread woman  
dusts a pew post with her black apron

a lightning flash  
in the childs eyes reveals

a moth  
sealed white into wax

and the priest  
who has not moved his hand

GOD OF THE HANGED

terry a wright

Odin himself was the...God of the Hanged, and men and animals were hanged up in honor from the sacred trees of the holy groves at Upsola.

A. Alvarez  
The Savage God

god of the hanged  
i wear a stake in my heart

cut out beating  
by my own hand now re  
moved from

the sacrificial artist  
who has kicked in the trees

each branch matures  
once a martyrs half buried staff  
then a switch

to bruise off face to face  
weltering with the legal arms and demand it  
or kill

it kill it  
the open gallery display of death

encased like gems  
by the wise men who guard the door

god of the hearse  
plus bad shocks  
my body is going to get hers

she flops  
her problematic face to my side  
as if  
imploing me to ask directions

MOON WALK ( MIDDLE OF JULY)

terry a wright

sharon crossed each of  
her legs  
after i had witnessed their uncoiling  
like a dynamite fuse  
across the surface of the moon

it is fitting  
that geology is black and white  
the vertical hold is confused

but beyond the window  
near the jam at twilight  
an automobile  
horn cuts like a blind lumberjack  
into the trunk of a  
rotting pane

randy is shaking his dice in the drive  
being odd man out  
he laces his cinderella slippers

he reads an e.k.g.  
he peeks beneath the widows robe  
this is called education

her hair was crayola yellow under  
60 watt  
is this what is meant by observing  
a heavenly body

the question was academic  
all evening

the park  
something about the park  
where the grass  
folds like a clean sheet

(i will not remember that one)

where are you sharon  
telling plato jokes  
wearing your long longer longest  
blue dress torn  
from the flaps of paper dolls  
mystery dates  
painted cleavage

now i see the paper doll men come  
and go

and randy  
your glasses are snake eyes  
a streetlamp falls across your back

i am the silent pedestal  
and you have gained no weight

but i  
shall find a new profession  
have gin for breakfast  
and eventually corrupt your daughters

KATHLEEN HAS A BABY

terry a wright

and i thought a diet might help

but no right  
in the middle of all that cagey philosophy  
and "god its  
three in the morning again  
you know im so  
miserable got to pop  
like a mannequins button down on the carpet  
plugging the high intensity

well forget it  
ugh...i guess merely stall

the pressures that slink  
like a gunfighters dawn through cracks  
of a silver curtain  
like a flat dog plastered to jims radials  
its only a dog" kind of talk

hey im rattled

hell i  
told you i was lame

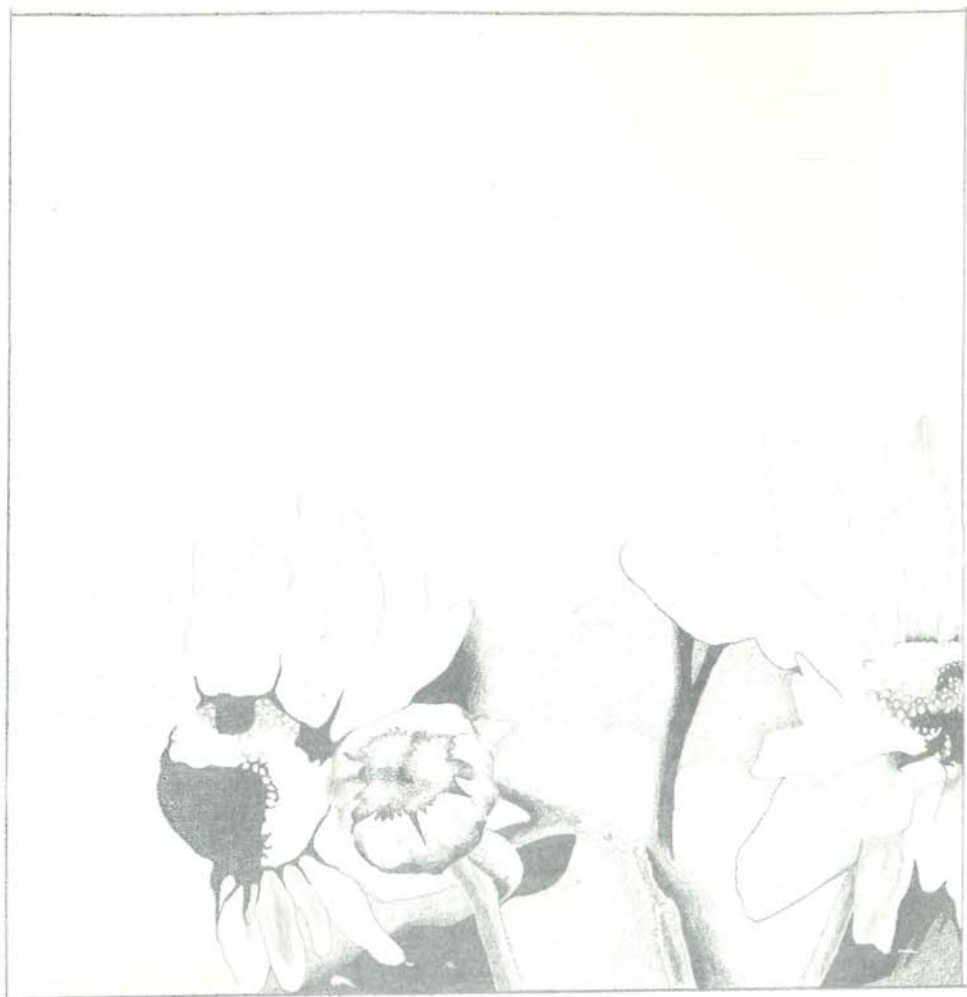
bop  
hello expense  
kathy theres a sheep in the crib  
and me  
without a bad check  
or blankets

be  
sides its precious  
this sometime-in-the-future gift  
upcoming (da da) leader

but my friends the whole things just  
a bit fishy and  
all i really want to know is

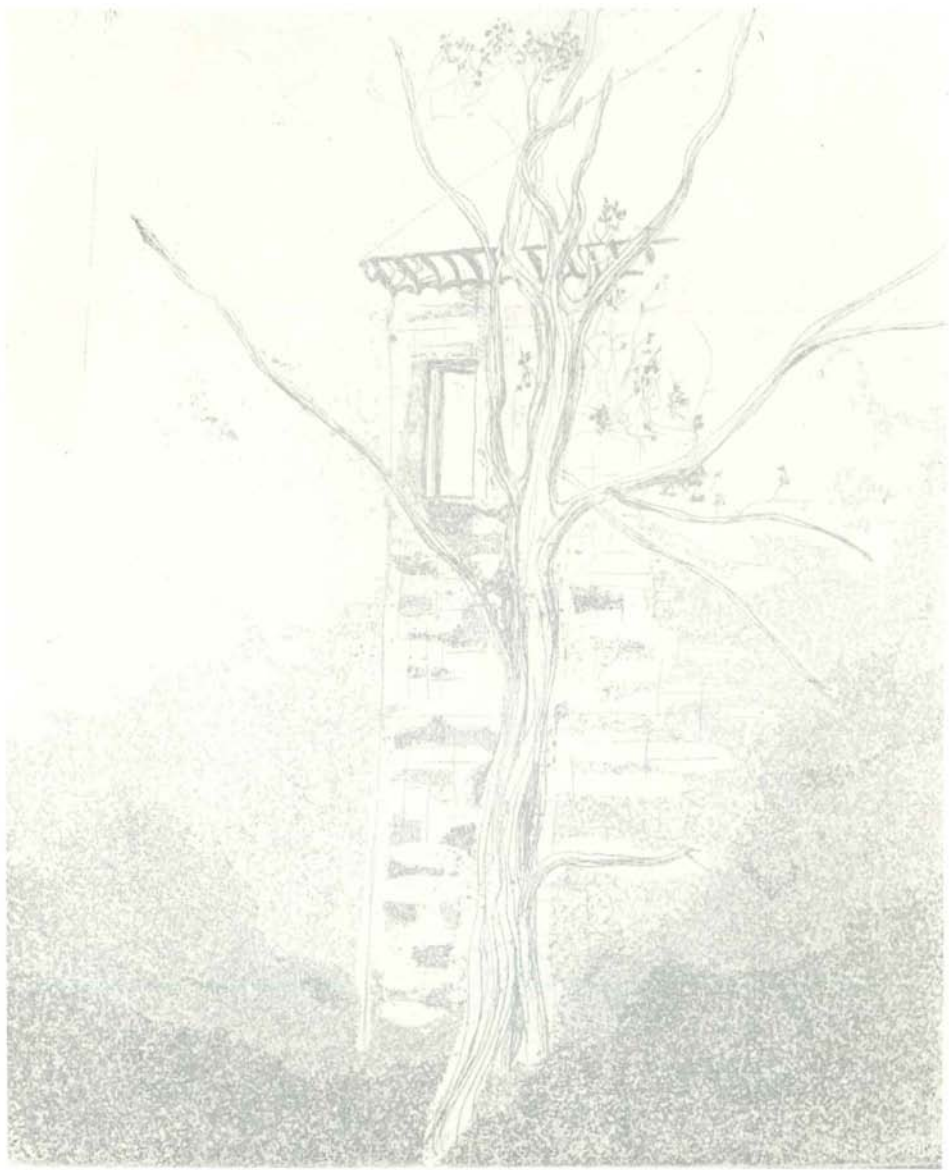
whose overcoat is on my hook





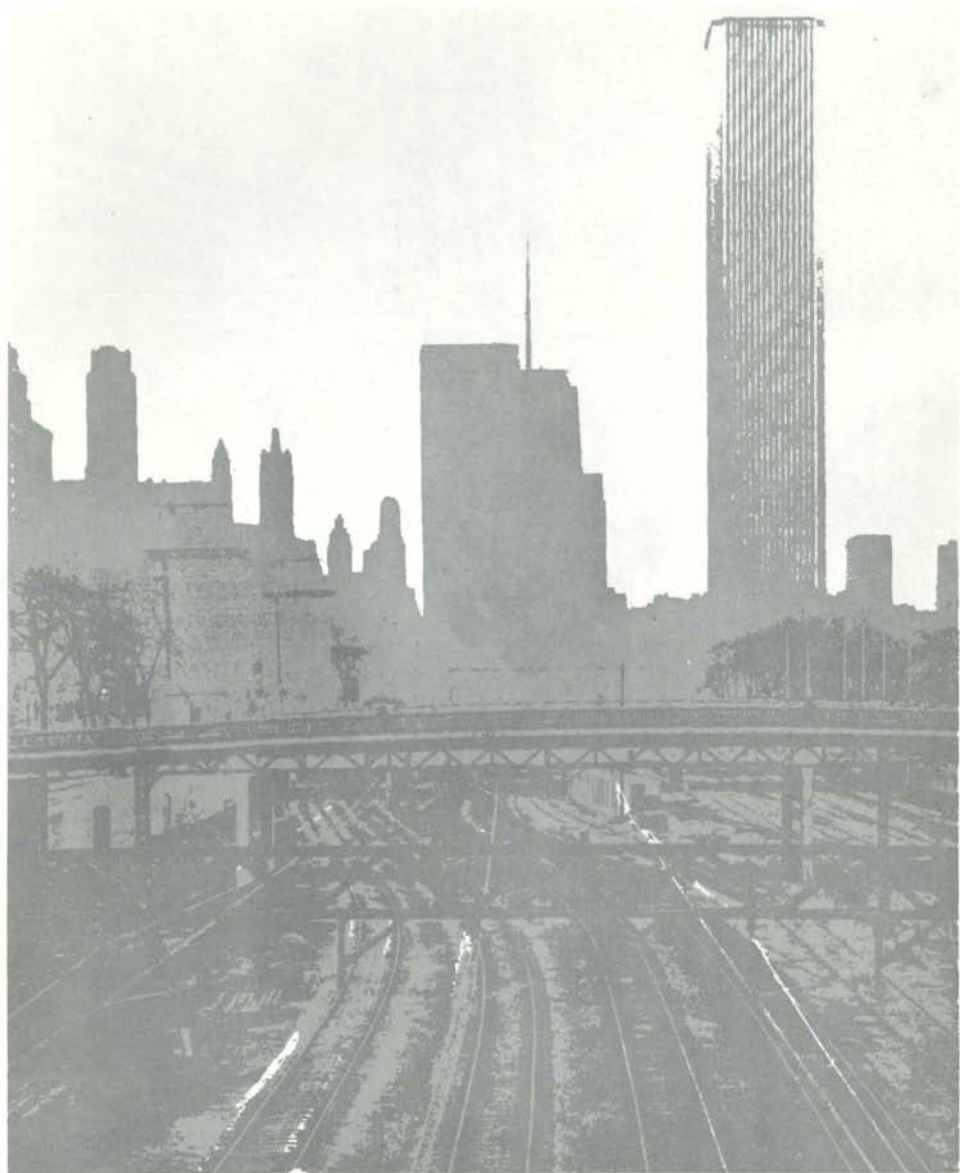
L. B. ANDERSON

"UNTITLED"



MARY ANN GASPAR

"CHARLES CITY"



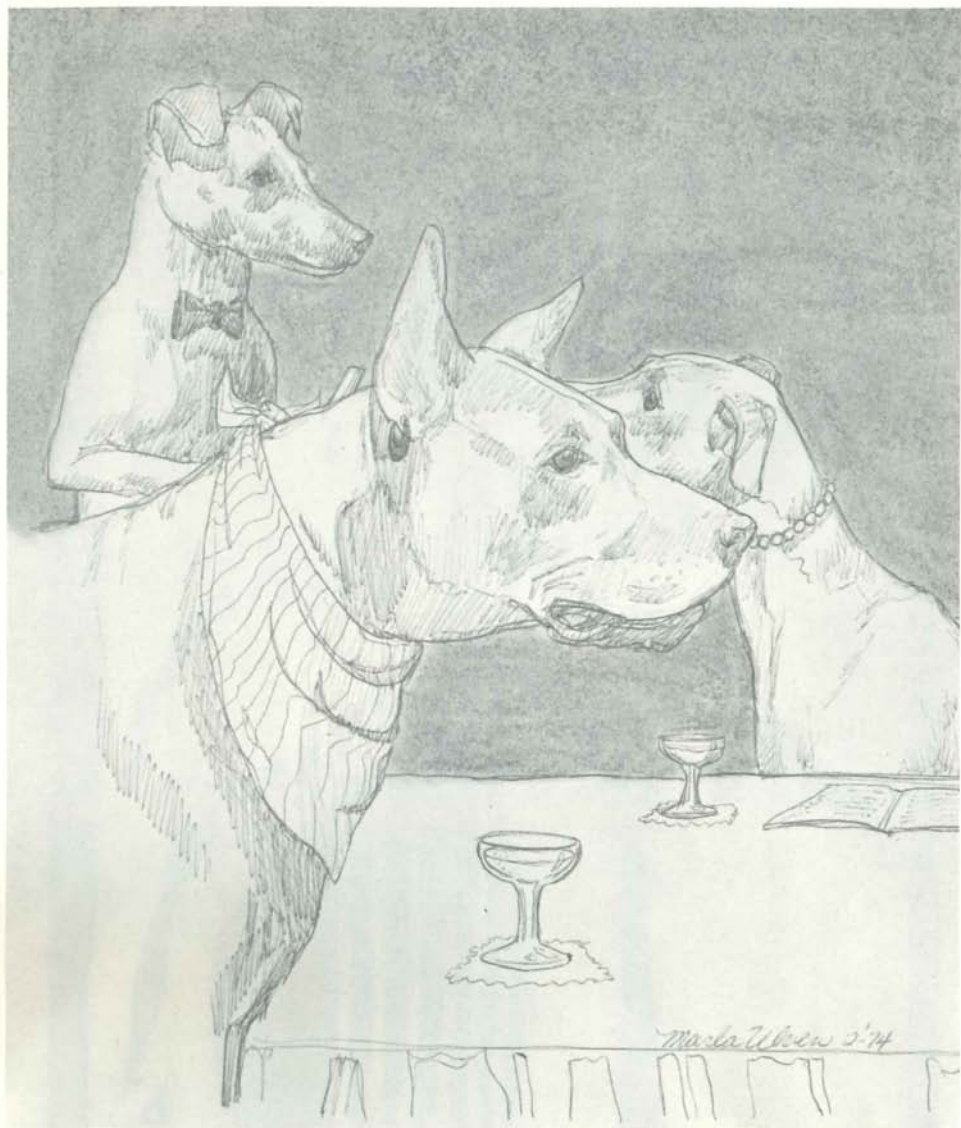
MADONNA MAIERS

"OLD AND NEW"



ROGER RANDALL

"LOWER 4TH"



MARLA ULVEN

"LORD DANE/LADY GRAY"



COLIN FREEMAN

"UNTITLED"



DEBRA GENGLER

"INDIAN ON HORSEBACK"



BILL WEINS

"TREES"



CANDLE

jeffrey lee davis

Tongues of wind are tasting the pines  
At the edge of town  
they make a yawning sound

A candle burning on my table  
shivers while it burns  
I'll turn  
And look at you, the flame

Venetian blinds are beheading  
The moon  
I'll be there soon  
With all of me

SAILBOAT

jeffrey lee davis

Something's gone wrong

Again.

Ribbons on my lampshade

Hide

My eyes

...and

Pictures on the mirror

Make me remember...

Toddler,

Be a clay modeler

Fashion a face so fine,

No, not mine

I happen to have a snapshot...

FOR YOU

jeffrey lee davis

You were a child

a dew-hung leaf-bud

in some magical wood,

adorned by spiderweb necklaces,

frost-diamonds clinging,

moon rays glittering in the gems...

Came the sun, who melted the jewels

and you raised your head to look out

upon the glen,

A young princess in her sun-crown.

and when you smiled...

ODE

jeffrey lee davis

Just as Merlin the magician

died

when the time was chosen;

And Houdini died,

for want of three seconds

air

on top of the British tea,

in Boston harbor;

...so must many wizards pass.

## THE STAR-GAZER

james zerschling

### Part I.

Upon the throne of humanity sat the Star-gazer. The Star-gazer who for eons had watched quietly and earnestly. The Star-gazer whose thoughts transgressed into time and histories, thereof.

The Star-gazer who spoke to those who would never be able to listen.

The Star-gazer who constantly observed the pitiful actions of mankind. The actions which almost constantly lead man to dead-ends. Actions in which man stagnated his mind, his thoughts, and finally his life. Actions which forced man to believe that his being was not his own determined existence. Actions which clouded and distorted the minds of humanity. Actions which lead to a fate worse than the death of life, which humanity feared. The fate that led to the death of thought...

The Star-gazer's eyes knifed into the heavens and spoke softly in a whisper; a whisper that told of a soul possessed of patience and pain...

"Sometimes my heart cries out for dreams...  
Dreams and fantasies...

Oh my soul, realisms come and go; Realisms  
And symbolisms which pass before me  
In endless procession.

I sit quietly and perceive all that which  
is a part of me. All that which is  
my heart, my soul, my mind.

Oh my mind, I sit amongst the thoughts  
decayed in the essence of Beings greater  
than myself.

Oh my heart, which is cold and warm;  
hidden and open; of loneliness and pain...  
The thoughts of humanity bloom again and  
again, only to wither and to die.  
Oh my body, the one finite that has re-  
mained the same since the beginning of man;  
Is there no hope? Are there only dreams?  
Is it that mankind is only perceived in  
illusions? Where is life?

Am I always to remain the Star-gazer of  
humanity...Must I always remain silent...  
Oh my soul, who has known so long...Is  
it that I remain humanity and stagnant?  
Why have I no end, while humanity has...  
ended...Am I so ignorant and poor not to  
notice what I've seen? Has it always been  
there? Have I since determined my own  
destiny?

I do sit here in the trials and tribulations  
of humanity. A humanity which prays to  
gods. Gods, if they existed, would not  
involve themselves positively or nega-  
tively...in the cesspool known as humanity.  
Oh my heart which has bled until it was  
bloodless and could bleed no more. Where  
are the secrets? Are they forever buried  
with life of humanity? Must I be chained  
to the afterthoughts of humanity? History?  
Or myself which has existed. An existence  
caused by my own actions. An existence  
which represents all my experience. It  
seems I have much left to learn...much left  
to experience...before I choose my final  
path to a goal I know is mine. Mine is  
my destiny to reach my goal.

Oh my soul this throne is cold and lacking  
in all sensitivity.

Oh ancestors why is thy life so absent?

Is it too that you forever star-gaze from  
my eyes, perceiving from that which I wit-  
ness and observe...

Oh universe, hear my thoughts of a prayer...  
A prayer...  
Oh universe which is my Being, gently accept my emotion...."

And the Star-gazer returned his eyes to the heavens in silence. And only the throne could be heard breathing. And the throne whispered

"Oh my soul, sometimes my heart cries out for dreams..."

## FOOTSTEPS

l. j. yanney

I am home now,  
living in my footsteps,  
counting stairs  
as the minister down the street counts silver;  
skipping stones  
as the bartender skips gold into cash boxes.  
Bailey, the bartender, lives off sin.  
Rev. Hobson lives there, too.  
I am home now,  
living in my footsteps.



EDUCATION

l. j. yanney

A week  
Each day  
Empty corridors           echoing  
Heart thumping round each corner  
    You might be there

Night comes  
The cool dry breeze of autumn blows  
Across balcony stones of red and brown  
And speaks of summer's dying  
    And summer is dying

Your window yawns dark and bored at my despair  
Your life is full  
No time  
No place  
No word  
    For me  
I cry  
    For you

## THE FROG AFFAIR

A Truly Thrilling Peter Immobile Shortened-  
Story.

dan anderson

### Chapter One

"Frogs!" he cried, and then he bolted out the door. There arose such a clatter, we ran to the window to see what was the matter. From our vantage point, we watched in awe as the Canadian-born French agent who was counter-spying for the Chinese fell merrily to the ground. Meanwhile, Peter Immobile, crack tree-surgeon for the C.I.A., landed in Bolivia with a briefcase handcuffed to his leg. The suspense was growing.

### Chapter Two

(Later that same millenium) Back in New York, the corpse of Pierre Porsche arrived to meet a crowd of cheerful Irish women who had arrived by bus only a few minutes before. Unknown to them, however, Alec Rolls and John Royce had already left for the missile complex in Honduras to try to find the answer to the Frog.

### Chapter Three

The intrigue the Frogs had produced was spreading quickly. Captain Kork aboard the Federation Steamship Centerpiece, flashed an immediate stare of urgency at Mr. Spook, the orange peeler, and receiving no answer, he screamed, "Gorfs!" and ran into a space-time frog drive. Spook dispatched a lifeboat in

the direction of Bermuda with a message warning Peter Immobile, who had returned, that the controlled fusion of matter and anti-matter had failed, due to the frog.

#### Chapter Four

Immobile spoke to Rolls and Royce in a nervous Egyptian code language, "I have the answer to the Frog! Now we know why he cried out back in Chapter One!" And then having learned the answer, the three left, smiling.

#### Epilogue

Frogs, as any educated reader would immediately recognize, is an infection of the dura mater, produced by insane visions of grandeur. The solution obviously lay in the extract that Immobile had taken from the Austrian Naval Officer he had contacted while he was in Italy the summer previous to Chapter One. Porsche was dead; this was why his corpse arrived in New York. Kork was never found.

REFLECTIONS ON HAVING ATTENDED A ROCK CONCERT  
AND AFTER GETTING HOME REALIZING THE REASON  
WHY THE BAND LEADER MADE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE

harry buss

The art form called Rock has numerous facets.  
Parts have nothing to say though others are  
assets  
To the preservation of democracy, free thought,  
apple pie;  
Because they have artists with real thinking  
minds.  
But somewhere on the road we have picked up  
a stranger  
Who masquerades as a good soul but is nothing  
but danger.  
He performs before thousands, an electric  
Wizard of Oz  
His amplified mind spelling out his great cause,  
While blue-jeaned individuals follow in hoards  
And express their mass feelings by stomping  
on boards.  
The fans of this man are an odd sort of group,  
They come from all places, the library, the  
loop.  
They have their own ideas, their ways of  
believing,  
Some are Republicans and others hate thieving.  
But it seems, I believe, there is one thing  
they share,  
They are being misled by the charlatan's  
dare--  
The dare that he makes everytime he performs.  
He says, "Follow me, throw off leaden norms.  
Get loosened up well and you'll finally see,  
That much of the world reeks of hypocrisy."  
But under his mind he clandestinely whispers  
In a tone not destined for the ears of his  
listeners,



FERNA

becky miller

"Oh, Miss Haggley, there they is again," Elizabeth says, pointing to the yellowed panties lying on the grey tiled floor of the washroom.

"Elizabeth, go get Mr. Barser immediately. And hurry."

Miss Haggley wrapped up the panties in a brown paper towel and laid it on the shelf. Miss Haggley strode to the window; she strained her eyes, scanning the playground of children; she reached for a ledge and leaned against the window.

"I'm goin' to get Principal Barser cause Ferna is rapin' the boys again. . . I'm goin' to get Principal Barser cause Ferna. . ." Elizabeth told each child she met in the hall on the way to the office.

"Mr. Barser, Ferna is rapin' the boys again and ya better come quick."

"Nonsense, Elizabeth. Now exactly what is the problem?"

"Ferna is raping the boys again and you better come quick. Miss Haggley said."

"Now Elizabeth, you don't mean that Miss Haggley said exactly that!"

"Yes, sir. . .no sir. . .I mean yes, uh. . . well, sir, she said to get you immediately. And hurry."

"Ah-ha," Mr. Barser said. "Miss Haggley wished to see me and Ferna is not chasing the boys again." Mr. Barser knocks the calendar off his desk as he flurries out of his office. Elizabeth, hands on hips, following behind him, imitates his stiff, elongated, hurried strides.

"Miss Haggley, this has definitely and positively got to. . .to. . ." the principal starts as he enters the classroom.

Thad and Stanley are huddling in the corner, out of breath, sweating. Miss Haggley is standing, faintly, between the boys and Ferna, who is standing there with only a yellowed-white blouse on. Darren is sitting on the window ledge, his arms folded, looking down.

"Twice around the field chasing us, and. . ." Thad blurts out, starting to cry.

"Mr. Niemore," the principal addresses him, "I am capable of handling this inquiry. Miss Haggley, take Ferna to the bathroom." Miss

Haggley sheepishly herds Ferna into the wash-room. "And, ah, clean her up...decently. Thad and Stanley, come with me. I will see you in a moment, Darren. You may wait where you are." Darren continues staring at his feet, arms folded.

\*\*\*\*\*

"And she done it again," Elizabeth informs her jump rope group.

"My mom says that they oughtn't let a 14 year old in the 4th grade class," another adds.

"And Darren don't like havin' his older sister in the same class," another pipes.

"No, he don't like it, but he don't not like it neither," Judy adds, puzzled.

"He helps her--he gets B's and she gets F's," the first one says.

"Sure--she's not nor-mal," Judy says, correctly emphasizing the inflection picked up from her mother.

"But she shouldn't chase the boys."

"And she wears those funny skirts."

"But she's not nor-mal."

"If I were Darren, I'd wish her dead."

"Darren, Darren, whadoya wish," (skip, skip)  
"do ya wish Ferna dead like a fish?" (skip, skip, clap, clap, double skip, slap). "Darren, Darren, whadoya wish..."

\*\*\*\*\*



"Now Ferna, tell me why you insist on chasing the boys like that?" Mr. Barser says, sternly eyeing Ferna.

Ferna stands by his desk, twisting her long, plaid skirt with her hands. The zipper is broken; a safety pin secures the opening. The plaid skirt comes just above her ankles. Her yellowed white socks are mud-splattered as is her one brown shoe and her one black shoe. She is big-boned; her fingers long, her hands big.

"Ferna, sit down, please."

Ferna sits, her longish red hair covers her face; only her big grin peers out at Mr. Barser.

"Ferna, don't you like it here with us?" (Pause.)  
"Ferna, (more sternly) do you not like it here with us?" (Longer pause.) I'm afraid, Ferna, I cannot let you go until you tell me why you do it."

"I don't know, Principal Barser, I just does it." She continued smiling at him.

"That's all for now, Ferna."

\*\*\*\*\*

"And Darren, I want you to tell your mother and father that we expect that this won't happen again."

"Yes, Miss Haggley," Darren murmurs, writhing in his chair, staring down at his shoes, one of which has a hole in the sole.

Darren pokes out to the playground. "Darren, Darren, whadoya wish," (skip, skip) "Do ya wish Ferna dead like a fish" (skip, skip, clap,

clap, double skip, slap).

\*\*\*\*\*

"Darren, where's Ferna today?"

"She stepped in a hole in the creek."

"A deep one?"

"Uh huh."

"She a'right?"

"My dad say so."

"Oh."

\*\*\*\*\*

"Now, Darren, where is Ferna? This is the second day in a row she's missed."

"She stepped in a hole in the creek, Miss Haggley."

"A deep one?" Miss Haggley eyes Darren.

"Yes, Miss Haggley."

"Did she catch cold? Is she a'right?"

"I don't know, Miss Haggley."

"You don't know if she's all right?"

"Well, Miss Haggley, she step in the hole and then I seen her going down the river real fast, and I run and told Pa, and he say 'it just like her to sneak away down the river like that.'"

Miss Haggley's eyes widen. "Elizabeth, go get Mr. Barser immediately.

\*\*\*\*\*

"Guess he don' feel like coming back to school yet."

"I wouldn't come back at all."

"Think of findin' her...at midnight...in the dark...all wet...and...crummy."

"She wasn't nor-mal."









