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CONTENTS

Upper Class Section

Infiltration Course ............................................ Harry White 5
The Ritual .......................................................... Betty Winn Fuller 7
Night Thoughts  a poem ........................................ Maurice Kenney 8
Rosebud ............................................................. Shirley Jo Waltz 9
Saturday Morning ............................................... John R. Foutty 12
The School .......................................................... Kenneth Hopkins 13
Ex Nihilo  a poem ............................................... John R. Foutty 19
October’s Wealth  a poem .................................... Joan Y. Ryan 20
Uncertainty .......................................................... Fred J. Bennett 20

Freshmen Section

The Blueberry Patch ............................................. Dave Powell 25
My Reveries ........................................................ Harriett Marple 26
A Friend in Deed .................................................. A. F. James, Jr. 27
A Journey into the Past ......................................... Betty L. Smelser 29
CONTENTS

“Kiddies” Matinee ..................... Nancy Anne Neale 30
The Steel Tomb .......................... David L. Hodge 30
My Second Home .......................... Barbara A. Irwin 32
Refuge .................................. Glenda Benjamin 33
Stardust ................................ Barbara Dolen 34
A Tall Tale ................................ Phyllis Dunn 35
Tyranny .................................. William Phelps 37
The Cloak Room .......................... Kenneth L. Finehout 38
A Strange Friendship ...................... George F. Klein 39
A Memory of Straubing ..................... Ann Schmidt 41
Justice or Injustice ........................ Carolyn Wilson 42
Growing Up ................................ Sandra Orbison 44
Boys Are for Baseball ..................... Margaret Sauerteig 45
Earth ...................................... Robert Petty 46

MSS is a student edited magazine published twice a year and sponsored by the English Department of Butler University.
Infiltration Course

Harry White

The machine gunner was loading his weapon. The snap of the bolt punctuated the soft rattle of the cartridge belt as it was drawn from the ammo box. The gunner's movements were accurate and swift, automatic. When he grasped the handles, they became an extension of his arms, and the gun a part of him. When he bent forward and lined up his sights, there was no longer a gunner and a gun, but a single weapon, a single machine.

* * *

Private Will Foster sat on the ground, watching a small silhouetted bird wheel against the brass of the hazy sky. His rifle was cradled in his arms and his steel helmet was tilted on his head so he could hear the Captain, who was standing, legs apart and arms folded, before the Company. His voice was sharp and formal in the still afternoon air.

"Down there,"—he motioned to the shallow valley below,—"is the Infiltration Course. To your right is the trench where you men will assemble in ranks, just as you are now. To your left is the machine gun platform. These gunners, during your progress through the course, will be firing about thirty-six inches above your heads."

The Captain paused for the murmur which ran through the Company. He unfolded his arms and clasped his hands behind his back.

He continued, "Those gunners are combat veterans. If there is an accident, it will not be their fault."

Tommy Golway, sitting next to Will, shifted his weight on the sand, pushing his short arms out behind his fat stubby body and fastening his sight rigidly on the olive drab field jacket of the man in the rank ahead.

"Between the trench and the platform," the Captain went on, "you see a number of small pits surrounded by sandbags. Each of those pits contains a harmless charge which will be set off as you pass them."

"Do not—I repeat—DO NOT—under ANY circumstances—stand or even get to your hands and knees between the time you leave the trench and your arrival at the gunners' platform. When you reach it, crawl under it and fall in over there by the range shack."

The Captain looked up at the bird which Will had been watching.

"Okay, Sergeant, let's get 'em going."

The whistle sounded and Will, stiff from sitting in the sand, got to his feet. Golway, he noticed in surprise, made no effort to get up. Will tapped a knuckle on the helmet beneath him.

"C'mon, Tommy. The Sarge'll be on you."

Tommy's eyes blinked. He arose slowly, not speaking, his face pasty and flat.
There was a command and the Company stepped off on its left foot. A hundred men, legs welded on a locomotive drive rod. An unbreaking rhythm, each man carried forward without effort. A hundred men and one Company. A hundred parts and one machine.

They reached the trench and marched in. The Sergeant turned them and they faced the forward wall. They waited.

Will stood in the second row. He looked at Tommy standing at his side and wanted to speak, but, seeing his face, he could think of nothing to say. The blue eyes were wide and his lips were thin and purple. His hand was fumbling at his cheek and the bright red stone in the ring on his finger glowed against the white skin.

“First rank over!” The command roared into the silence. The row of olive clad figures boosted themselves to the log at the rim of the trench and slithered over.

As the brass nailed soles of their boots disappeared, a violent cracking began in the air above. Like a thousand bull whips, Will thought as he looked up and saw nothing. Bullets. Invisible and cracking like bull whips. Far away, he could hear the solid chatter of the machine guns as they fired—and then he tried not to hear as he felt the twisting of his stomach.

“Second rank over!”

Will moved himself forward and up. As he went over, he glanced back. Golway was starting, his face glistening, stark against the black of the timber.

The first charges were set off as they gathered themselves to move forward. A fountain of sand shot up in the air and the concussion struck at them, shifting the sand on which they lay. Dirt and dust sifted into Will’s eyes and mouth as he waited for Tommy to catch up.

“Noisy, huh?” Will shouted, trying to laugh away his own fear, searching for a bond to help himself along. Tommy looked at him, but his eyes were not focused.

Will began to inch along, pulling with his elbows and pushing with his knees in the abrasive sand. Golway followed, squirming along in a deep furrow. They were among the sandbagged pits, now, and the afternoon was filled with sound and dirt. Dust spewed from the pits and hung trembling in the air. The machine gun slugs snapped over their backs as Will flattened himself, shrinking from them.

Move! Move! Get it over with!

There was an explosion behind Will and he ducked his head into the collar of his jacket. As particles rattled down on him, he glimpsed Golway, suddenly animated, rising to his knees and crawling rapidly forward, dragging his rifle by the barrel. Before Will, too stunned to respond, could make a move, Tommy was past him and moving into the curtain of dust ahead.
An impulse to run after him surged in Will's mind, but the turmoil in
the air above restrained him. He lay there, his teeth clenched in
helplessness, knowing what was going to happen.

Golway scrambled on wildly, apparently unseeing, and floundered
into a row of sandbags. At that moment the charge there was set
off. Tommy screamed in a high woman's voice and leaped to his
feet, reeling a bit from the force of the blast.

He took three steps, leaning forward, forward with his arms
before his face, and then there was a breaking, popping sound as a
bullet struck. He stopped, frozen.

Will watched him stand a moment, and then collapse, spreading
on the ground like a half-empty sack of grain.

The roar of sound stopped as if someone had turned a switch. The
dust drifted in the quiet wind and olive drab figures, mouths and
eyes rimmed with dirt, began to get slowly to their feet.

Will started toward the unmoving form, but a whistle blew and
the Sergeant's voice called hoarsely.

"Charlie Company! Fall in here."

Will turned, seeing the Sergeant standing with upraised arm, and
walked off the course, almost thankful for the chance to lose his
crawling emotions in the anonymity of the Company.

As he took his place in the ranks, he saw an ambulance, marked
in red and white, driving off the field. Beyond, Dog Company was
entering the trench, preparing for its indoctrination. Polished boots
flashed in unison.

* * *

The machine gunner was loading his weapon. The snap of the
bolt mixed with the soft rattle of the cartridge belt as it was drawn
from the ammo box. The gunner's movements were accurate and
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forward and lined up his sights, there was no longer a gunner and
a gun, but a single weapon, a single machine.

* * *

The Ritual

Betty Winn Fuller

The heavy doors closed noiselessly behind him. The thick carpet
whispered quietly beneath his feet. For a moment the sickishly
sweet odor of flowers almost overpowered him. As he moved
on into the bouquet-banked room opposite, he was conscious of the
hushed voices, the covert looks—curious, sanctimonious, the faces
composing themselves into uncomfortable masks of sympathy.
Approaching the casket he came upon small groups of people talking quietly, laughing occasionally and then looking guiltily around—suddenly conscious of their whereabouts. The masks were hurriedly composed again as inscrutable eyes measured his grief. It's strange how detached from it all I feel, he thought. It's as if I stood off and watched myself, going through the expected motions, the bizarre ritual required by society. A somber attendant whispered softly to those surrounding the casket and they moved away slowly, reluctantly. The curtains were unobtrusively closed behind him so that the curious watching eyes were shut out.

He forced himself to notice the flowers—the intricately arranged masterpieces of the florist’s art—the stark white cards hanging conspicuously in front—mementos of people who cared or half feared or felt called upon to make a gesture. His hand brushed the moist satiny smoothness of rose petals, fingered the stubby carnations. His eyes surveyed them, row on row of color, vivid, beautiful, meaningless now. He gazed at the little face beneath him, nestled in the silky opulent interior of the casket. The curly hair was perfectly arranged—in itself convincing of death in a four-year-old. The skin no longer had the clear transluence of healthy childhood—it was like the skin of the doll in her arms—real-looking, yes—but not lifelike. The hands were not the dimpled busy fingers of Cathy, but still, lifeless replicas. A waxen image: this phrase went through his mind. He leaned to kiss the cheek—this too was ritual rather than desire. The flesh was not cold as he had expected but not warm either. It was simply death beneath his lips. It’s true, he thought. Now I know, now I am convinced. This then is what the ritual is for—it leaves no doubt—no gay, laughing, elusive shadow to torment the mind. Death must be faced. The ritual forces the mind to face and accept it. It is done. Slowly he turned away.

* * * * * * *

NIGHT THOUGHTS

Maurice F. Kenny

The bird aims for the sky
To dart, and soar, to sing;
The moth seeks out the lamp
To warm its frozen wing;
The night waits on the dawn
If only to sleep . . .
But I, awake, seek what
Beyond my daily keep?
I can not reach the sky.
My wings are clipped, lamp-light
Is dull to me, and dawn,
O dawn is out of sight.
Once upon a time, long, long ago, in a tiny kingdom way across the sea, there lived a very rich king and queen. They owned houses and castles, horses and coaches, gardens and lakes, and lots of gold and silver. Every morning the king would get up at exactly 9:00. His servants would bring his blue robes which he always wore for breakfast, and then he would sit on a blue satin cushion and eat red marmalade on toast with the queen, who always wore pink for breakfast and sat on a pink cushion. At exactly 9:30, the king and queen would go for a walk in the gardens, which were very beautiful, for the king owned the most beautiful flowers in the kingdom. From 10:00 till 12:00 the king and queen listened to complaints and disagreements of their subjects. The king was a very just king, and judged them all fairly. At exactly 12:30, the king and queen ate lunch from beautiful silver platters, and they sat on soft red cushions. At 1:00 the king put on his crown and talked to the wise men of the kingdom. At 3:00, he took a nap. At 6:00 he put on a robe of gold and ate dinner with the queen. In the evenings they either listened to music by the king's own orchestra or they played chess.

However, in all this luxury the king and queen were not happy. They had all that money could buy. They were very kind to their subjects. The king ruled wisely and everyone loved both him and the queen. But one thing was missing. They had no children. And both were very, very lonely. For many years they lived in the same manner, growing more lonely and more unhappy day by day. Quite often the queen would sit in her room and watch children play on the far-away hillside. Or she would ride in her coach and watch the nursemaids as they pushed babies in their carriages. But the rooms of the castle were quite empty. There was no ring of happy laughter in the large echoing halls.

And then one day as the queen walked in the garden, she noticed a beautiful rosebud right on top of a lovely rose bush. Stroking the little bud, she whispered, "How I would love to have a little girl just like this little rosebud!" The old gardener overheard her and came hobbling up. He was very, very old with long white hair and watery blue eyes. In a strange old voice, he cackled so loudly that the queen was afraid. "So, my queen would like a little girl as lovely as a rosebud?" He moved a little closer. "Well, it can be done. If the queen will but pluck the rosebud three inches below the bud and place it in her room in a glass vase, and not let the light of day shine on it for three days, it will be transformed into a beautiful baby girl." Again he cackled and the queen drew back in fear. "But the little
girl must never be allowed to touch a rose or she will be taken away as mysteriously as she was given.” The queen turned quickly and ran into the castle. She didn’t mention this strange conversation to the king for fear he might laugh at her, but she thought and thought and thought about what the old man had said.

Finally one night, the thought of the beautiful little rosebud was especially strong in her mind, and so she wandered out of the castle and into the garden. There in the pale-yellow moonlight, she could see the faint pink cast of the little rose. The beauty of it delighted her. She went a little closer and just a little closer. The petals were so soft and delicate! Just like the skin of a little girl. Quickly the queen broke the stem just three inches below the rose. She hurried back to her room and placed the bud in a small vase and filled it with water and placed it in a dark box which she locked with a golden key. For three days the queen stayed in her room to guard the little box. She told the king and the servants that she was ill and didn’t want to be bothered, but she really wanted to make sure that nothing happened to the little rosebud for three days. On the third evening, she sat eagerly waiting the change, when she heard a tiny little cry. She sprang forth and opened the box, and there lay the most beautiful little baby girl she had ever seen!

The entire castle and kingdom was happy over the arrival of the new baby girl. And the king was completely overjoyed! The queen explained the mystery to him, and he was very happy indeed. She also told him that the little girl must never touch a rose, or they would surely lose her. And so the king sent out a proclamation that every rosebush in the kingdom be destroyed. Everybody, knowing the king to be a wise king, destroyed their rosebushes. That is, everyone except the old gardener. He kept one bush in his own private garden.

The little princess who was quickly named Rosebud, grew and grew and grew. Now merriment and laughter could always be heard in the halls of the castle. The little princess was very, very good and was loved immediately by all the subjects of the kingdom. As she grew into a young girl, she looked more and more like a rose with her pink tinted cheeks and rosy red lips and long black hair that glistened like the water in the dark pond in the garden. The king and queen were very happy. As Rosebud grew up, they hired the best teachers for her that they could find, for they wanted her to grow up to be a wise queen.

Although Rosebud was quite happy, she needed a playmate, and one day when she met the old gardener’s grandson, she decided he would make a simply grand playmate, and so the two became very good friends. Always when Rosebud decided something, she would talk it over with Shawn, whom she considered to be very wise for his age. And she told him that when he grew up, he could be the head wise man of her kingdom. All of this was after she should become
queen, of course. But they played make-believe and had a wonderful time!

Before many years had passed, princes from neighboring kingdoms came to pay their respects and to see the lovely princess they had heard so much about. However, Rosebud was not interested in any of them. She always treated them quite kindly, but would always excuse herself soon and leave the room. All of her suitors were sent away with the answer that the princess Rosebud was too busy with her studies to discuss marriage. The king and queen were extremely proud of their beautiful and wise daughter.

When Shawn grew to be a man, his grandfather decided to send him away into the world to seek his fortune. Shawn put on his best suit of clothes and packed a knapsack with bread and cheese. His grandfather gave him 3 pieces of gold and 7 pieces of silver and sent him on his way. As he passed his grandfather's garden, he happened to see a beautiful flower growing there that he had never before seen anywhere in the kingdom. But somehow the lovely blossom reminded him of his Rosebud. He decided to pick the bloom and give it to her to remember him by while he was gone. He was very much afraid that she might forget her old playmate if he were gone away long, and Shawn did not want this to happen, for he very much loved the little princess. And so he plucked the beautiful flower and wandered toward the castle.

There he found Rosebud sitting in the garden under a beautiful shade tree. The queen smiled on them from her window and thought what a lovely picture they made. But as she watched, she saw Rosebud close her eyes and hold out her hands. She saw the surprise which Shawn held in his hand for the little princess, and to her horror, it was a . . . rose. The air grew dark and heavy, and all was still. Every leaf and flower in the garden stood motionless. The queen gasped and held her breath. He dropped the rose into Rosebud's hands and with a sudden streak of light, the young princess was . . . gone!

Shawn gazed unbelievingly at the spot where Rosebud had been sitting only a short time before. But now she was nowhere to be seen. He called her name over and over again and searched throughout all the garden for her, puzzled at the mystery. Saddened at the loss of his dear little Rosebud, Shawn threw himself on the grass under the comforting shade tree and wept and wept and wept.

The entire kingdom mourned over the loss of the young princess. And Shawn roamed the world for the rest of his life searching for her in vain. The old king in his sorrow sent out a proclamation that all rosebushes from that day forth should bear thorns in order to prevent anyone from plucking their flowers. And so it has been from that day till this.

* * * * *
Saturday Morning

John R. Foutty

I sauntered to the end of the road, kicking the clumps of grass that grew between the cracks in the pavement. At the end of the street the crumbling sidewalk was almost obscured by weeds so thick they seemed to grow from the cement. There was no path from the street to the river, and the tall grass was cool and wet against my legs as I stepped from the last broken slab of the sidewalk. My footprints crushed the grass into a white path behind me and water shivered over the edge of the blades. In the opaque dawn the sun had the hard quality of the dew but none of its brightness, as jagged apertures in the grey clouds filtered the light through in a shifting haze. The clouds became thinner and whiter, breaking up into uneven shapes in the unsteady light. Wet jimpson-weeds struck me with their evil-smelling leaves as I struggled through the thickening underbrush toward the fog-blanketed river. A milkweed broke in my path and juice ran down the shattered stalk like thick white blood oozing from a severed vein.

The mist over the river dissolved reluctantly, lifting its thick vapor to reveal shadowy trees on the banks. As I burst from the underbrush onto the spongy mud bounding the dark, slow-moving water, the pungent odor of the river was sharp and raw. Silence hung over the trees and river. I walked along the shore listening to the squishing sound the moist earth made beneath my shoes, and watching my footprints fill with water.

The sun gave a clear indication of day as it began to send a flood of light through the widening valleys between the clouds. To the west, two gigantic cloud-faces seemed to be arguing, their movement giving them strange mobility. A vulture wheeled slowly in an ever-tightening circle in the distance, and above me sparrows chirped quickly in a staccato frenzy, while the crows cawed bitterly in the treetops. Half-submerged in the water lay a rotting tree-trunk which was marred by malignant fans of flesh-colored fungus. A centipede writhed feverishly in the slimy mica-bright trail of a shell-less snail that hunched sluggishly over the bark.

The simmering sun had put to rout the few remaining clouds, and in the growing warmth the air was heavy with the odor of decaying fish and watercress. A dragonfly darted along the curve of the bank, its wings glinting gold and purple as it skimmed over the water in search of food. The vulture was circling closer now, its long leathery wings beating easily as it neared its prey.
The School
Kenneth Hopkins

There was no doubt but what THE SCHOOL was the biggest thing that had ever happened to Mill Township in general and to Millvale in particular since the day the first pioneer explorer had sauntered across the area from east to west making maps.

Of course, there had been the era of the mill from which both the township and the town had taken their names, but the mill had been only a good-sized barn down on the stream and had subsequently been left to decay with the advent of electrically powered mills in the nearby towns. It probably had not occurred to the townspeople of Millvale to rename the town and township following the demise of the mill. And even if it had, they would have been hard pressed to find a name, since the only thing in Millvale of any stature was THE SCHOOL, and no one had ever heard of a town and township named Schoolvale and School Township.

But for all the oddity, the name would have been quite appropriate, because ever since the middle nineties when THE SCHOOL had flung its red brick walls and its wood-slatted bell tower against the sky from the slight rise on Elm Street, and had dwarfed the surrounding houses and shop buildings, like the Gothic cathedrals which hovered over the little towns of Europe, there had been no serious challenge to its supremacy. Even after electricity had become rampant and had learned to thread its way through red neon tubes which had broken out in a rash all over the front of a big new tavern on Main Street, THE SCHOOL was still generally considered the more widely known landmark. Everything was still so many squares this way or that, and then to the right or left, from THE SCHOOL.

This difference between Millvale and its SCHOOL and the little continental towns and their cathedrals made it clear to everyone that Millvale, for all its seeming ruralness, was the well-adjusted product of a newer and more sanely proportioned order. Here the church had dissipated itself into little, short-spired, chapel-like structures of frame or brick, which looked up modestly from the various street corners of the town, to THE SCHOOL, which had assumed its rightful place against the sky.

The only concrete criticism that could possibly be levelled against this reversal of the old continental order of things might come from those who were aesthetically inspired by Gothic architecture, from which THE SCHOOL was a quite radical departure. But since neither Millvale nor Mill Township numbered among their people any who knew the difference between Gothic and non-Gothic architecture, and since the short passages concerning architecture in the reference books in Millvale’s little library remained unread, this prob-
lem continued to solve itself, and THE SCHOOL'S place as the town's and township's gift to the world's most imposing structures went unquestioned. In place of the Gothic arch and the sweep of the flying buttress, THE SCHOOL offered the arch-eyed stare of round topped windows and the dull red monotony of brick walls.

But THE SCHOOL was big.

Probably, considering its three floors of high-ceilinged rooms, its added wing, and its gymnasium, it stood up well with the continental cathedrals per cubic foot of volume.

The old part of THE SCHOOL, now used for the grades, was a high three stories of red brick, gray-topped by a steep slate roof which was again topped by the slatted and decaying bell tower, which had housed the big bell until it was removed to dedicate a scrap drive in 1943. A flat, two-story wing had been joined onto the north side of the old building in the thirties to become the township high school. The wing extended almost to the street which crossed Elm on the north side of the school block and made no attempt at a compromise between the architecture of the nineties and that of the thirties.

Behind the old part of the building was the small, block-like structure of the central heating plant with its brick chimney which towered even higher than the slatted bell tower. And behind the heating plant and facing the street to the east of Elm was the gymnasium, a red brick rectangle with small windows tucked obscurely under the eaves of a flatly arched roof.

The high, old part of the building stared, arch-eyed and critical, west across Elm and on west across the block of houses and trees between Elm and Main and down into the gully made by Main Street running between Millvale's one block of business buildings. From the west bank of the gully the little stores, the State Bank, and the green-shuttered doctor's office looked meekly back east toward THE SCHOOL.

To the south and east and north, THE SCHOOL looked down on the houses of the town, interspersed with an occasional filling station, or a church, or a little grocery store that had strayed from the main business block in search of neighborhood customers. To the south along Main and Elm were the big houses, those of the store owners, the banker, and the owner of the automobile agency. To the east the houses gradually diminished into the little neat cottages geometrically laced up in little paved streets. Two blocks to the north of THE SCHOOL were the railroad tracks, and across the tracks the economic cycle was completed by the little shacks set among the winding half-streets of the north side.

But THE SCHOOL looked down no more critically to the north than to the south.

No one in Millvale or in Mill Township could have lived outside of a state of complete mental incompetence or of extreme infancy.
and have remained unaware of the position of eminence which THE
SCHOOL held over the local scene. THE SCHOOL was the organ
through which the essence of the culture was perpetuated by being
dispensed to one and all of the fledgling generation by means of a
twelve-year (or longer, if necessary) program of contacts with bits
of knowledge, with fellow students, and with a variety of teachers.
And everybody knew it.

However, even though there was universal acceptance of THE
SCHOOL, there was considerable variety in the reactions which
THE SCHOOL caused in different individuals. To the little six-
year-old who was suddenly taken for the first day from the quiet
and simple life of the small farm on the edge of the township, THE
SCHOOL was an ugly, noisy monster, reaching without end in all
directions and upward. From the moment when he had first been
forced from the yellow bus by the rush of the other children, who
were nearly all in higher grades and quite old, and had found himself
standing on the wide sidewalk looking up at the red brick walls which
blotted out the sky, he felt that THE SCHOOL with its glassy eyes
and cold redness did not, for all its size, hold any of the kindness
and warmth of the little farmhouse or of the old wooden barn. This
monster with its screaming hordes swirling frenziedly on all sides
brought a feeling of horror and of panicky loneliness. Even when
the first grade teacher, who looked a little bit like his grandmother,
had taken him in tow and had led him up the steps and through the
big arch of the doorway and through the big dim hall and into the
big first grade room with its little desks and tables, he felt that he
wanted to break away and run outside and try to find his way home
along the miles of country roads that the yellow bus had covered on
the way in. But he knew he would not run away. He knew, from
everything he had heard since he had become old enough to under-
stand, that all the six-year-olds in Mill Township went to THE
SCHOOL, and even though he had not been warned of the awful
loneliness and of the feeling of wanting to escape, he knew that it
was more important that he should be like the other six-year-olds and
stay at THE SCHOOL than that he should run away.

But there were many problems. The teacher seemed to know
ahead of time that everything he would do, no matter how hard he
tried, would be a mistake. But he was soon glad, through loneliness,
that he had her for his teacher, not because she taught him things
that he did not know, but because she was not deeply bothered by
his mistakes. He did not understand the instructions about the
colored pencils and the drawings, and the teacher did not seem able to
see the green and yellow marks on the drawing paper as a picture of
the big corn field just behind the barn lot at home. And just when
he was getting used to the colored pencils and the drawing paper, he
was ordered away from them to a thing called recess, which he did not understand.

At the end of the recess, all of the boys of the first grade were taken back into the dim hall and a man teacher from one of the other rooms came and told them that whenever they had to, during the recesses or the lunch hour, the boys were to go to that little room down the hall because that little room was for boys, and that they were never to go to the little room the other way down the hall, no matter how much closer it might be, because the other little room was for girls. But after he got into the room, he found it was not a little room at all, but was big and high and had so much white porcelain that all he could do was stand in amazement and look at the sparkling porcelain until it was time to go back to the colored pencils and drawing paper. And as soon as he was back in the first grade room he wanted to go back to the porcelain thing again, and he had to squirm and twist through an almost endless session of drawings and picture samples before he got the next desperately needed chance. It became clear quite early that THE SCHOOL, big and great as it was, had a program that did not bother to meet small but strong urgencies.

But from the girl who came from the east side of town to lead the eighth grade in scholastic standing, even though her father was only a clerk in one of the grocery stores and had no connection other than a small-town speaking acquaintance with the school board, there came a quite different reaction. She loved THE SCHOOL. She loved the grades which, now that she was at the top, seemed to have become like children to her through the intimate contact of mastery. THE SCHOOL was rightfully the biggest thing in the community, and she, as the scholastic leader of her class, held the enjoyable position of leading the grades, which, after all, was an important part of THE SCHOOL.

And after the eighth grade she would go into the newer, two-story wing and lead her class through the four years of high school. And after that—but it was too painful to think about the time after high school and about leaving THE SCHOOL forever. She knew she was not pretty and, as a result, she had given up the idea of marriage as far back as the sixth grade and had substituted for it the goal of clinching the highest scholastic standing of whatever class she was in. But it had occurred to her recently that scholastic standing had one serious drawback when compared to marriage. High scholastic standing, in itself a victory, insured promotion from one grade to the next; but promotions, when it became evident that each one was a big step toward the final promotion and the end of scholastic standing, seemed to turn into partial defeats. Marriage, on the other hand, barring an unsuccessful one, seemed to represent an eternity of highly acceptable social standing, terminated only in death, which, if one were not the victim, still insured an acceptable social standing.
Well, maybe she would be lucky enough to go to college, where there would be more classes to lead; and if not, she might try her hand at a career even though the careers in Millvale seemed nonexistent; and if all failed and she was left schoolless and without standing, there were always the onrushing locomotives on the railroad tracks. But she seldom thought about the time after high school. Much of her time was spent studying, and much of it looking lovingly and condescendingly down at the lower grades, and looking eagerly and receptively toward the high school.

THE SCHOOL was fine and great, and her standing was high in THE SCHOOL. And she, knowing that she was not pretty, was in love with THE SCHOOL.

To the boy in the freshman class of the high school whose father owned the automobile agency, THE SCHOOL represented a number of different opportunities. He was as good as any of those creeps working out for the freshman basketball team, and that practically assured him a starting place on next year's high school varsity. He was good enough for the first team right now if only that creep he had for a coach weren't too nearsighted to see his ability.

But what interested him more was the fact that next year he would be old enough to drive legally, and he was sure he could talk his father out of one of his used cars which he could rebuild into a hot rod. And in Millvale the popularity of the high school hot rodder was automatic. Already he knew of two or three guys who could be talked into picking him up an occasional half-pint from the tavern, and next year, when he would have his hot rod, he would not only have the liquor, but he could get some girls to help him drink it.

Considering everything, he was well pleased with things around THE SCHOOL. The outlook was satisfying and held considerable promise. Of course, he was not happy about THE SCHOOL academically, but then, every school had an academic aspect so he had decided to put up with it even though the classes never discussed anything that he did not already know about. And this fact caused him an occasional annoyance, because, already knowing, he felt that he was not obligated to study, and the result was that even though he knew all about the subject under discussion, he rarely had his knowledge organized into any presentable form when exams and questions came his way.

But aside from the classes, THE SCHOOL was a good source of contacts, and if the time between now and next year would just pass a little faster, he would be well satisfied with THE SCHOOL.

The girl, who for the last twelve years had come in from the big, white-buildinged farm two miles south on the north-south road, and who had made average grades, and who had had better than average luck in getting dates with the respectable sons of the respectable store owners, lived every moment of THE SCHOOL. And she was sure
that after graduation, when she would at last be bereft of THE SCHOOL, her social life, no longer being fed by THE SCHOOL, would die, and she would soon after die with it.

Centuries ago, when she was only four and five, she could remember that her social life had been only her parents and an occasional family of relatives who would stop in at the big farm for Sunday dinner. But when she was four and five she had not minded the isolation of the farm because she had had no social life with which to compare it. But she had come to THE SCHOOL, and THE SCHOOL had made her socially, and it was a dirty shame that THE SCHOOL could not go on forever for her and eliminate, with its daily contacts, the chilling possibility of an eternity of social entombment on the farm.

Of course, she could do like some of the girls did and maybe trap herself a husband, but the risk of social ostracism was too great, and anyway she was not sure that the isolation of the farm would be any worse than the isolation of the kitchen or the bedroom.

But THE SCHOOL would go on for months yet, and maybe something could be done. And if not, maybe she could become secretary of the class reunion committee and in that way keep up contact with the people of THE SCHOOL long after THE SCHOOL itself had turned her out.

Ah, graduation day would be a day of mourning, because after graduation THE SCHOOL would turn away from her and become a stranger.

To the members of the school board, THE SCHOOL was a magic word that insured a high community standing year in and year out. Most of the business men who were on the board were referred to in introductions, upon the rare occasions when introductions were needed, as "one of our leading grocers and member of the school board," or "our banker (usually, followed by a joke about embezzlement) and member of the school board." It was a title following the name and a short pause, like the MP in England, and was the signal for the extension of all possible consideration short of actual loss of profit.

To the merchants THE SCHOOL was a source of nickel and dime trade for the greater part of each year, trade from the outlying corners of the township, which might well, except for THE SCHOOL, have gone to the neighboring towns. And so the merchants were quite willing to buy an occasional pair of class play tickets and to set the art class's posters advertising the plays, which everyone knew about anyway, in their display windows along with the shirts and ties or the sweet potatoes and cucumbers.

Rarely a word of criticism, except in obvious jest, was directed toward THE SCHOOL. Of course, there were occasions upon which some of the boys, during fits of claustrophobia, entertained
brief visions of THE SCHOOL being consumed by flames; but these attacks of irrational behavior could usually be explained away by the fact that a new hunting season had just opened or that the fishing was exceptionally good down at the stream. In general, THE SCHOOL was regarded with no more dangerous attitudes than excessive community pride and complete faith in its ability to educate. This pride and this faith were deeply imbedded in the people of Millvale and Mill Township. But this was quite natural because, after all, THE SCHOOL was the biggest thing in town.

§ § § § § §

EX NIHILO

John R. Foutty

The sun is bright but there are those
Who would deny its light,
And turn their backs upon the day,
To walk into the night.

The tavern doors are opened wide,
A solace for their need,
And man can take the cup for bride
To satisfy his greed.

The cup they lift and drink as if
Each drink would be their last,
As if they could forget the fate
Their Maker had forecast.

They laugh and soon forget their fear
Within the dingy hall.
A shadow beckons but they turn
To spurn its luted call.

The golden maidens dance and shout,
Removing all from gloom;
They sway and flirt and twirl about
As music fills the room.

But then at last the tune goes false
And all the laughter fades,
For the dawn has crept upon them
To bare their masquerades.

They stagger out into the dawn
And feebly curse their plight.
They walk into the troubled day
And wait again for night.
OCTOBER'S WEALTH

Joan Y. Ryan

October's wealth blows wild with fun,
The leaves and waters flying on;
Asunder in the midst of warmth
A breeze sweeps dank, yet cool, from some past day of rain.
The wind that bends the bush and tree
Is making fun, for leaves that lift their tops for rain
Bend fuzzy backs to share the sun.

October's wealth is in the sky,
In laden orchards, ripening fields of grain.

White curtains at my windows flutter back into my room
To free my view that I may see
October as I write.

* * * * * *

Uncertainty

Fred J. Bennett

A car slithered around the corner of the highway and onto the narrow dirt road that cut its tortured course through the woods. For a moment, the sharp bark of the engine was everywhere; then the car was gone.

The few rays of the sun cast pitiful shadows on the bare earth, making it appear more bare through the sparse brown tufts that boasted of a better past. The screech of the blue-jay echoed among the stark trees, stopping the digging of a grey squirrel, already puffed in its winter coat. Here and there the red leaves of the sumac, flashing garishly, seemed to make the wind more biting. The winter birds drew deeper into their nests among the tired green of the fir and the cedar. As the flat grey of evening engulfed the orang drop that was the sun, the quaver of the owl brought silence to the woods. The raccoon curled tighter in its den. The first snow began to fall.

The large flakes fell slowly, carressingly, upon the raw earth, filling the single set of ruts in the mud road. On the little pond, only the lodge of the beaver was free from ice. The owl's hoot was stilled. All the world seemed to slumber. The snow fell more rapidly now, and no sign of man's passing was visible.

In the lee of the cabin, however, could still be seen the irregular pattern of the winter treads, ending at the car itself, now mute under a squat lean-to. Summer furniture still lay about the small veranda, giving an air of desertion to the place. The square panes of the two
windows, yawning empty and black to the frosty night, reflected no light. Then, faintly, a yellow light shone under the door.

The white shirted figure of a man seemed to materialize at one of the windows. He gazed absently at the world of swaying black trees and vague, snowy mounds that lay before him. With a slow shake of the head, he turned back toward the small blaze on the hearth.

Within the cabin the only sound was the gentle snapping of the fire, busily devouring pine faggots. The long tongues of flame leaped high, casting grotesque patterns on the chinked log walls. The hush of night made all activity seem futile.

John Carver leaned the poker against the wall and, resting against the heavy mantel, stood staring down into the crackling flames. The glow reached out, illuminating his dark, lined face with such brilliance as to make it stand alone, disembodied, peering down into his fiery medium. His deep set eyes seemed to watch the elusive figure of a girl that walked their flickering maze. As he watched, some of the lines seemed to relax, and, occasionally, a brief smile would tug at his tightly pressed lips. Turning, Carver pulled up a large, low rocking chair and settled to continue his reverie. His heavy, muscular body appeared to blend into the chair as it began squeaking with each movement.

Funny how a guy could take things so calmly, see everything so clearly . . . and yet all was still confused. Fran was dead. Simple enough to understand, but it was what came after that where the trouble came in. It was what he saw so clearly after that. . . . This it was that confused him. He had tried to hold onto himself, faced their friends, completed the arrangements, until he felt ready to burst. Finally, able to keep under control no longer, he had fled from the city, from people. He had fled from the sickening sweet reality of funeral bouquets to settle with the colder reality of his own mind. Here, amid the snow-smothered forest, he could purify the jumbled; selfish anguish that tore at his brain. Here, where he had had such summers with his wife, John hoped to find his future.

From their first meeting she had been the center of his existence. Now, she would no longer be there, ready to calm his little fears, to help him find that purpose in life that would allow him to push on, take chances. It was Fran who had really added that new wing to the plant, and it would have been fitting for Fran to cut the ribbon at the branch warehouse in Eastwood . . . but she won't be there, ever. Somewhere, somehow, he had to find a rallying place for his suddenly scattered life. It was funny, the way Fran and he had met. Even then, she had played an important part in his life.

He had lain for weeks in Valley Forge Hospital, the break in his leg mending slowly. Then they had given him a wheel chair. In his exuberance at being able to move about the corridors, he had
joined a group of other wheel chair cases in a race along the back
terrace.

The only way you could really get speed was to run the thing
backward. Those wheels really could go. In the third heat he had
been leading the pack around the corner, looked back to give an
added shove, when someone screamed and the chair, John, and the
owner of the scream ended in a heap on the terrazo.

That was the way he had met Fran. The new cast on his leg took
much of the meaning from the order confining him to quarters. He
had been resting comfortably when the captain came in “to see what
the crazy fool really looked like.” She had sailed into the room with
all the confidence of a beautiful woman about to berate a clumsy
moron. And she had left the room a beautiful woman who had
done so. Well, almost that way, except that John wasn’t quite the
moron he had appeared. Captain Elliott (that was Fran) had almost
succeeded, but her piquant little face amid lush brown hair had been
her downfall. John had sallied forth, undaunted by starched uniform
and glittering silver bars. After the captain’s haughty, but prudent
withdrawal, Carver felt as though at last life’s path had wandered
into something worthwhile. He couldn’t catalogue his reactions, but
no longer would he depend upon wheel chair races for diversion. He
had something else, now, he had Fran.

“Yeah, I thought I was all set.” John stirred the logs with his
foot, then slowly primed his pipe. “I’d never felt quite like this be-
fore, but I’d always figure out a way to handle a girl, especially if
she was good looking.” He pulled a twig from the fire and held the
glowing end to his briar, drawing at the flame until the tobacco in the
bowl glowed a shimmering scarlet. “Trouble was, Fran was brainy,
too.”

Fran Elliott had been too intelligent to fall for his woman baiting
maneuvers. She had come back, bending over his bed in the empty
ward to tell him bits of hospital gossip. Smiling gently, talking in
her soft voice, talking, sometimes of things they both knew he had
heard, but talking, nonetheless.

Before the accident, before he’d met Fran, he had always had
that feeling of restlessness. Nothing really mattered, no real im-
portance could be placed on anything. He had talked to others in the
ward and knew that he wasn’t alone. Though all of them wanted to
be home, after that everything seemed of very little value. Just to
get away, that was it. The little Irishman in the corner had put it
quite simply, “I don’t give a damn if I never see anybody again. I
got me a shack in the Odirondacks and I gonna let the cockeyed world
go straight to hell!”

Yet, none of them could give a good reason, not one that would
stand up in court, anyway. Some blamed the war; others admitted
that they didn’t know. John was one of those.
You couldn't explain it to everyone. The only guys who seemed to understand were feeling the same way and they couldn't solve it either. Sometimes, when he was alone, he would look out the window, beyond the clusters of berobed patients, way out over the trees to the squat green mountains. On very clear days, he could catch a flash of light as the sun reflected off silvery railroad cars. "That was the one thing that looked the same." When he had been a boy, everything had a reason, even going to school or mowing the lawn. When he thought of this and listened to the newscasts, he just couldn't quite make them fit together. Everybody running like crazy, but what for? There must be something sensible. Maybe it would be best not to worry—simply start out and let each day follow in the prescribed order. Maybe, but John Carver wasn't buying that, yet.

After all, he had always known the way things should go and he had done something to make them do so. Even the war hadn't bothered his plans to enter his father's business. He hadn't liked the idea of the army, but, after graduating from college, he had enlisted and gone to Officers' Candidate School. He had made it and had led a bunch of boys in the 36th Infantry Division.

"Damndest bunch of guys brought together in history, and wars have always mixed some prize packages," John stopped rocking a moment, let his head slip back against the top of the chair. He smiled wryly. "We really had fun," he murmured, then was rocking once more.

Five years made a lot of difference. On his leave he found that he wasn't a part of home life anymore: life had gone past. The idea of business had gone then, and so had all the other dreams and hopes that he had nurtured so carefully. The war made him a philosopher of gunfire, a cynic, a skeptic, and a pretty confused individual.

Fran and he had gone on walks together, strolling the paths of the hospital garden. He had felt increasingly more free. It had been a truly glorious day when Fran borrowed a friend's car and they had driven along the highway "just looking," as Fran had put it. The little park they had chosen overlooked the bay and smelled of the scrub pines that stood in thick clumps about the meadow. The grass had been soft and cool to his touch. They had stretched out under the shadier tree and lain looking out over the waters, speculating on the kinds of people in the boats that dotted its surface.

As he had lain there, his head pillow{ed, eyes closed, on Fran's shoulder and felt her fingers gently smoothing the tousled brown wisps of hair, he grasped for the first time in years that gentle feeling of lassitude that accompanies complete acceptance. Here, he had thought, here was something for which to work. With the warm fragrance of her body there beside him, the tenderness of her lips, accepting his, all of his fears had gone. The sweetness of her voice soothed him, caressed him, made him whole again. The happy smile
she had raised to him that day tied the ribbon on John Carver, new man.

Later that same evening, at a little roadside restaurant, its candle-lighted terrace overlooking the now deep purple waters of the bay, he had turned to her, almost like a school boy handing in a not-too-good report card, and asked the future-shaping question. The little string ensemble had played soft melodies, and within his trembling brain the Prufrocks had crept to their dens and the rich lyrics of Browning and Shakespeare had emerged, rushing into his thoughts, forming his words, guiding his fumbling tongue. She had accepted with that same quick, happy smile that had been his earlier. It had been a wonderful evening.

"Yeah, it sure was." Carver rocked faster, now, and sucked hard at the dead pipe. Fran had always been there. It was she who soothed his confused thoughts, it was for Fran, the cute little girl on the pedestal that John Carver worked. She had forced him to assume a semblance (appreciably wiser) of his former self. John's electronics firm had succeeded because of the lovely reason that lived at his house. He would come home to the quiet assurance of his wife and never fail to solve his problems. In moments of doubt he would bury his face in her breast and feel, again, the comfort of her hands on his neck and in his hair. He would hear the sweet voice talking to him, leading him as one would a little boy, safely through the forest of his own mind.

His pipe was cold, the fire glowed dully from the remaining cluster of coals, but John didn't notice. "All that's gone. After five years of hell and filth I finally got something that was decent and beautiful and I couldn't keep it. If only she would have stayed home and let me go to the grocery!" He could see the street, the car skidding on the icy pavement, and then a sickening crash. Fran hadn't lasted the night.

"Damn it, Carver, you just can't sit here wishing for the past." John straightened, laid his pipe on the table beside him. Already his old feeling of uncertainty seemed on the brink of return. With an effort, he stood and began feeding fuel into the dying embers.

His haven of rest was gone. There could be no such respite for John Carver again. John paused, one hand groping for a chunk of wood. Maybe, just maybe, he could do it as Fran had always said he could. He could hear that voice now, "Someday, you won't need me for all this; you can do it for yourself." He might be able to do it, alright, but not for himself alone. There was someone who might understand, someday, when he told her about uncertainty, a smiling girl named Fran, and a future. Someday he would tell the story to the tiny baby that was part of Fran, perhaps more than himself. He would work and progress, and one day he would tell his story, and then he would know.
The Blueberry Patch

Dave Powell

While vacationing in Quebec City, my three companions and I were befriended by a gentleman who owned a small hunting lodge not many miles away. Ultimately we accepted an invitation to stay at the lodge for a few days and enjoy Canada “in the rough.” Though it was only fifteen miles from the city, the area was isolated by the absence of neighbors, the lack of modern conveniences, and the rugged, outdoor scenery. Until the arrival of our adventure-seeking party, the entire population of the immediate area consisted of the caretaker, Andre LaForge, his wife, a few chickens, and a sort of cow. The cow was a particularly disreputable-looking creature and frequently gave evidence of having a disposition to match its appearance. One of my friends shrewdly remarked that it should have been a bull. Obviously, however, the caretaker and his wife were quite fond of the beast, for it did furnish them with milk and butter.

Mr. and Mrs. LaForge were very congenial people. Andre served as our guide on several excursions into the vast woods surrounding the lodge, and led us to a hidden lake where the fish seemed downright anxious to cooperate even with a bungling, inexperienced angler like me.

Among the various paraphernalia we had stacked into the station wagon before leaving home were two rifles. One morning we saw a bear eating blueberries in a patch behind the lodge, and Andre said we could take a shot at it if we got a good opportunity.

Before we were to start home, we were returning from a farewell visit to Quebec City late on a pitch black Canadian night. Walking toward the back door, we suddenly saw two wildly flashing eyes in the vicinity of the blueberry patch. I immediately decided it was the bear, and one of the fellows hurried back to the car for a rifle. By the time he returned, the eyes had vanished, but before we went in I fired once where the cowardly bear had been.

It was Mrs. LaForge who awoke us at 4:30 a.m. with shrieks of Canadian French, intermingled with bits of broken English. From the words vaguely similar to cow, butter, milk, and dead, we managed to grasp the fact that something was amiss concerning the cow. Andre was more coherent though certainly not his pleasant self. Those flashing eyes in the blueberry patch the night before had belonged to that miserable cow, and now it was dead.

That afternoon, after much bargaining, we said goodbye to the lodge and Mr. and Mrs. LaForge, leaving with them forty dollars, a fine 22 automatic rifle, and a good pair of binoculars.
We often stop on a busy street corner to let the traffic pass but fail to notice the people around us on the sidewalk. Or again we stop, for no reason at all, in front of a flower shop and gaze aimlessly into space without seeing anything. In these moments we do not seem to notice the busy life around us, for we are lost in idle reveries. A million thoughts run through our subconscious minds as we dream a million dreams. In a few seconds we relive some episode of the past or create entirely new worlds filled with excitement, happiness, love. We dream about things that have happened long ago and can not be resurrected to become reality again. But it is good to dream, even if we know that the dream will never come true.

I often find my thoughts wandering thousands of miles across the ocean to a small, northern country that I used to call home. Then I see again the small, winding road with tall, slender birch trees growing on both sides. Hidden behind the trees stands the two-story house in which I spent my childhood. I often relive the Saturday nights when the house was fragrant with the smell of freshly baked bread and cake. I relive the Sunday mornings when the church bells were ringing and people were walking leisurely down the street. There I also see the brick schoolhouse where I spent some of my happiest days. I still remember reading stories about America and the other faraway countries. Names like New York and Boston ran through my mind, but they were only names or places on a map. They did not make much sense; yet there was music in these names. In those days, not only was I searching for the music of the names of places, I also hoped to discover some day the reality behind the music. How well I remember the last night at home and the long walk I took as nightingales sang and a light mist descended from ripening rye fields. It had been a beautiful night, but a sad one too. For I felt the real sorrow of many farewells without realizing then that life is composed of a series of farewells.

Now that my thoughts often wander to my old home country, pictures continue to come and go. I wonder why I see all things there in a warm and sunny glow. I wonder why the brightness persists in my dreams about my childhood and my home, even though in reality things were not so sunny there, either. For like the life I live today, the life of my past was filled with both happiness and sorrow, light and shadow as on a summer day. Perhaps this glamor is a trick of dreams—a trick of my reveries.
A Friend in Deed

A.F. James, Jr.

Today, like all previous days, promised to be the same as we bounced along a Korean road in our jeep. Stifling heat, swirling clouds of powder-fine dust from the primitive Korean roads, and oppressive humidity kept the ever-present stench of death cloaked around us until breathing became a revolting effort. The smell of death walked with us, rode with us, and threatened to contaminate our food at every bite. Our stomachs cringed, and our lungs protested vigorously at the repeated onslaughts of these foes to health and well-being. We hacked repeatedly until our throats were raw, and our speech sounded like the protests of a flock of crows chased from a cornfield. We felt miserable, and the bouncing contortions of our jeep added to our miseries as we continued northward on our mission.

As we jolted onward over the gutted, dusty Korean road, the countryside appeared forbidding and strange. Even our army jeep looked strange. The top had been taken off and the windshield lay flat on the hood. A 32-calibre machine gun had its tripod bolted to the hood with wing bolts, to facilitate quick removal. A BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) had been laid across the back seat for instant use. A box of hand grenades had been placed on the floor of the jeep, open and the contents ready to use. But we appeared even more strange. Although we were dressed in the usual GI garb, the resemblance to men, beyond that point, was difficult to perceive. Our faces were black with grime, and only an occasional streak, where the sweat had washed a slash of dirt away, revealed that somewhere under those exteriors of filth were once-white faces of men. The silence of the foursome was broken only occasionally—the effort of talking was too difficult, and each of us seemed lost in his own quiet thoughts.

Suddenly, as we careened around a sharp curve, our eyes and thoughts were focused upon a barbed wire roadblock. A dust-swirling stop, a hurried conversation with two Korean soldiers who were guarding the roadblock, and we were on our way northward again with the barbed wire entanglement and friendly forces falling quickly behind. We were on our own now; we were the first troops to cross the 38th Parallel on the east side of the Korean peninsula. From here onward, we proceeded slowly and cautiously—slowly because we must record road data, bridge data, and other necessary bits of information; cautiously because we knew not what might be in store for our small, four-man reconnaissance team. As we drove and recorded, and stopped and checked our position, we became more
confident that this trip would, like all the others, be uneventful and routine. Ahead of us, a one-mile stretch of road disappeared into a small village.

As we entered this village, it appeared to be no different from the usual Korean town. The houses had standard mud walls and grass-thatched roofs. The dirt streets were gutted by the wheels of heavy ox-carts. Here and there, large pools of stagnant, foul-smelling water provided perfect sanctuary for the malaria-bearing mosquitoes. However, there was one thing which seemed strange and out of order—the absence of Koreans going about their daily chores. Strange it seemed, because a war could not prevent most Koreans from continuing their eternal struggle to wrest a livelihood out of their rice fields and small shops. The conspicuous absence of Koreans caused us to stop just inside the village limits and dismount from the jeep. We backed our jeep against a thatched hut, in order to protect it as much as possible, and turned our machine gun to cover the road leading through the village. Then three of us went ahead to reconnoiter the houses and terrain ahead. The silence was deafening. Suddenly a North Korean male came running from behind a hut farther up the street, yelling and waving his arms as he ran. We stopped and waited while the figure, dressed in a white toga, continued to run toward us. Still we waited as he came running as fast as his feeble old legs would carry him. His garment, having become unfastened because of his unusually long steps, swirled behind him and threatened to trip him as he ran. His stringy white beard fluttered, and his yelling made it bob up and down in unison with his running. When he was only fifteen or twenty yards away, a shot rang out. The old Korean stumbled, recovered himself, stumbled again, and fell headlong on his face. From up the street, several soldiers came running, shouting and firing their rifles as they ran. Our BAR gunner permitted the soldiers to come a little closer. Quickly he took aim from his position on the ground and fired a long burst. Half the group of soldiers spun around and fell to the ground, and the remaining few scattered to find sanctuary behind some of the mud huts. The beneficent old Korean lay where he had fallen; his snow-white toga was now splattered with blood and dust. His once white beard still fluttered like a small banner of victory—but he was dead. He had given his life to warn four men of an impending ambush, and, in turn, he had been ambushed by his own people.

Our mission completed by this incident, we went back to our vehicle, amid a few hurried shots from our would-be ambushers, and began the trip back to our own forces. Few words were said aloud, but I'm sure each of us said a prayer for the humble old Korean who had given his life in order to protect ours.
A Journey Into the Past

Betty L. Smelser

A few years ago, while visiting in South Carolina, I was privileged to see Windemere, the ante-bellum home of a locally prominent but otherwise unknown South Carolinian family. Since I possessed an active interest in Civil War history, the prospects of viewing an original, unrestored Southern home filled me with delight. When at last the big day arrived, I, armed with a miniature Confederate flag, set out on my journey into the past.

The house lay several miles east of the main road and was approached by a rough dirt path of uncertain origin. Tall pine trees lined the path on both sides, forming an arch of dense, green gloominess discernible even to me. The poignant scent of honeysuckle, roses, and various wild flowers filled the air with almost nauseating intensity. My heart throbbed with each step; my mind raced on and on, wondering what to expect. Then I saw it. Windemere. From a distance the mansion was a masterpiece of mid-nineteenth century Georgian architecture complete with stately white columns, typical boxy main section, and two end wings attached on either side of the main part. Here and there a rabbit jumped playfully in the brush, and birds sang happily in their tree-top homes. The whole scene was, in a glance, serenity personified.

However, the superficiality of my first impression became evident as I drew closer. Then I saw the scars which years of war and poverty had inflicted on that once gracious manor. The elements had replaced the puritan whiteness of its outer walls with the filth and decay of time. The numerous windows which had seemed so beautiful from a distance were huge, black eyes, staring sightlessly into the darkness. Cautiously, I approached the door but could go no further. For some strange reason I was absolutely unable to open that door. However, in order not to say I was afraid, I mustered all of my nearly lost courage and peered into one of the glassless windows. As I gazed at the cold, barren room before me, I could almost hear the music, the laughter, the tinkle of crystal and china which once echoed through the halls. I imagined long-tressed girls in hoop skirts and handsome frock-coated lads dancing together to the rousing tune of the Virginia Reel. Suddenly my reverie was broken by the shrill hoot of an owl nearby, and I felt the presence of tiny unseen creatures in the brush around me. I noticed that night was closing in around me; so I turned my back on Windemere and days gone by and hurried to the safety and security of the twentieth century.
"Kiddies" Matinees

Nancy Anne Neale

From the time I was nine until I was about eleven, the Saturday matinee at our neighborhood motion picture theater was the highlight of every week for me. The theater was always jammed with dozens of my contemporaries who had also come to see the special “kiddies” show, which always included at least one western. The western was definitely our favorite type of show, and each of us had his favorite cowboy star. We really kept the projectionist on his toes. Whenever the show was started the least bit late or was interrupted in the middle, we always indicated our disapproval by stamping our feet on the floor as hard as we could. All of us seemed to be of the opinion that yelling, screaming, cheering, and booping added to our enjoyment of the picture; and many felt that being dressed in western clothes helped even more. Yelling back and forth to all our friends and eating pop corn and candy made the afternoon complete.

It had been seven years since I had attended a “kiddies” matinee when, on my brother’s sixth birthday last June, I took him and his friends to one. Two westerns were shown, but somehow they weren’t nearly as wonderful as the ones we had watched. The dialogue was trite, the plot was not nearly as exciting, and the hero wasn’t as handsome. Furthermore, I was distracted by hundreds of little demons who were milling up and down the aisles or squeezing in and out of our row the whole time. A whole posse of little cowboys was sitting in the row behind us and all through the picture they took turns poking cap pistols in my back, sticking candy in my hair, and putting their feet on the back of the seat in which I was sitting. The worst part, though, was the noise; it was absolute bedlam. The screaming and yelling were much louder than when I used to frequent the matinees, and the stamping of feet was unbearable.

There was no doubt about it; something had changed. Was it the show or could it possibly have been I?

The Steel Tomb

David L. Hodge

It was 3:30 a.m. on a Friday late in October when I was awakened by a companion. I arose quickly from my canvas bed and hurried out onto the deck of the huge troop ship. It was a cold, windy morning, and touching the steel ship was like touching an iceberg. We went down into the dining hall, where we had a breakfast
of steak and eggs. This may seem an odd menu for breakfast, but it is a custom for the Marines to make available a good breakfast to the men who may never eat again.

After breakfast we checked our equipment and started lowering it into the small boats at the side of the ship. The small boats rolled and tossed like logs in a turbulent river. It was a difficult task climbing down the rope nets to get into the small boats in the semi-darkness of the dawn. When the required number of men were in the boat, we moved away from the giant troop ship. Some of the men looked back to see where they had slept (or had not slept) the night before. You could see on some of their faces that they felt they would never sleep again.

The small boat moved toward a ship that was built differently from the troop ship. One end of the ship was open, and it looked as though the water was going to rush in. As we neared this odd ship we recognized it as the garage for the steel tombs. The armored amphibious landing craft were known to the men who were to ride in them as the steel tombs. After transferring from the small boats to the larger ship, we assembled at our respective vehicles. These armored vehicles resemble tanks except that they are capable of moving on water as well as land. Their primary object is to insure that the men do not get wet while making a landing, and they afford more protection than the open boat.

We climbed into the monster and got situated as well as possible. If you could see one of these craft, you would note that they were not made for comfort with twenty men in them. As we started to move toward the water, two steel doors were closed over the top; for an instant panic gripped each man. When the craft plunged into the water, every man held his breath, praying it would not sink. When the craft was finally afloat in the water, the tension among the men lessened, but only temporarily.

After circling for about an hour we started for the shore. Shells were falling occasionally, but the men in the landing craft knew they were going to fall more frequently. The closer we got to shore the more we felt that we were the only craft in the water and that all the enemy guns were aimed at us. The driver had a small slot through which he could view the shore. The machine gunner was starting to fire at objects on the shore. We knew we were getting close to the shore because we could hear the bullets of rifles and fragments of shells hit the craft. The bullets and shell fragments hitting the craft sounded like a giant popcorn machine.

It was October, but the men in the steel tomb were wet with sweat. Besides the individual tension on each man, we had to cope with the heat of the two Cadillac engines that powered the craft. Also each man was praying that an enemy shell would not find its way to our craft. If a shell were to make a direct hit, there would
be no hope for anyone in the craft.

Suddenly there was a lurch that sent everyone off balance. The motors strained, and the driver shifted into another gear. We all knew we were in shallow water and that it would be only a matter of minutes until we would be in the middle of the battle. As we bumped along, we could see that the water no longer splashed over the driver's slot. The craft, with motors racing suddenly, was propelled forward. This continued for about fifteen seconds. Then the craft came to a halt and the roaring motors died. There was almost a silence except for an occasional shell blast and the report of rifles.

The men inside the craft knew they had cheated the steel tombs, but in the back of our minds we knew that immediately beyond us was the threat of another tomb; maybe we would not escape it.

* * * *

My Second Home
Barbara A. Irwin

The brisk autumnal breeze has already begun pulling and tearing the once white paint, now scaling and peeling off the narrow weatherboards of this small farmhouse. Its gray wooden steps are beginning to sag noticeably in the middle. The roof shows the effects of the breeze, roguishly tugging at some loose shingles. The long, narrow window panes with their black scaling trim creak and pop as the shutters bang from an occasional gusty sweep of wind.

However, if one should enter this house, the cold, austere atmosphere would quickly change to one of warmth and congeniality. Here in the living room he would see a fireplace, bright from glowing coals, a well-worn divan heaped up with multi-colored pillows, a large over-stuffed chair, a small table or rack here and there, a giant black wicker rocking chair sitting in front of the fireplace, and crocheted doilies over all the furniture. Proceeding into the spacious kitchen he would see a heavy round table, with its bright colored cloth on top, located directly in the center of the kitchen. And in the far corner would be the gas stove on which a pot of coffee would be sitting any hour of the day or night. The hours spent drinking coffee at the table in this kitchen are among my favorites.

Yes, this is my favorite haunt, this rustic home of my great aunt and uncle. Within its walls are the warmth and comfort that everyone desires for his own home. Its high ceilings and creaking floors are not distasteful to me, but instead they bring to me that "homey" feeling that is so necessary to make any house a place of comfort. And so in this manner, I have come to feel that my great aunt and uncle's house is a real home; my home. It offers shelter, peace, and quiet. It is what every house should be—a home.
Refuge
Glenda Benjamin

As soon as the lights are dimmed and the last minute tuning of the violins is finished, I shall begin my walk down the long, cathedral-like hall to the bleak, massive stage of Carnegie Hall. I, a nobody, am making my debut as a concert clarinetist. My constant practicing and work have reached a climax. There is my cue.

The echo of the click-click of my footsteps on the hard, cold floor reminds me of the perpetual tick-tack of a clock. It is setting the mood and tempo for me to glance back at those difficult and seemingly endless years—the years that have just been a preamble to these glorious but fleeting moments. The whole thing seems so vague. But wait, it is all coming back to me now. The hands of that clock are spinning back, back like a whirling top, and are bringing those buried, forgotten years back to life.

As I take this quick glance at these swiftly passing years, I see myself as a small child of six. On that birthday my parents took me to the circus. There I saw a vendor selling tiny tin horns. I begged my parents to buy one for me. They did, and I was the happiest and most contented person in the world.

To the vendor this was just another ordinary sale, but it was more than that to me; it was the turning point of my life. From then on, all I ever talked or dreamed about was the cheap tin clarinet of mine. But when I was twelve years old, my parents surprised me with a real clarinet and arranged for me to take private lessons on it. Years, long years of hard, tedious practicing followed, as I had definitely decided to make this instrument not only my career, but also my life’s work.

After being graduated from high school, I made fifteen concert tours, and it was only last week that I was notified to come to Carnegie Hall for an interview. The letter stated that I had possibilities. Following my arrival I was requested to play a few selections, after which the professors informed me that they would like me to perform next Friday evening at nine o’clock. All I had ever hoped, prayed, slaved, and dreamed for came alive in these few, almost unbelievable words.

It is this very Friday evening now. This dream of mine that had once been a tiny, flickering flame was now a roaring fire... fire, fire, fire! Stop! Stop! I can’t stand it any longer!

“Doctor, Doctor Gordon, come quickly.”

“What is the trouble, nurse?”

“Miss Lewis is having another attack.”

“Poor woman, she cannot erase that horrible experience from her mind. You remember, don’t you? She was at the height of her career, ten years ago to be exact, I believe. Let me see; yes, it was
on the evening she was to make her debut at Carnegie Hall. As she was driving there, some fool crashed into her car. It sprang almost at once into flames, and by the time help arrived her hands could not be saved. Poor soul, she keeps thinking she is making that debut."

* * * * * *

**Star Dust**

Barbara Dolen

"Oh, what a beautiful morning," I cheerfully whistled as I popped out of bed on Monday, eager to set the world on fire. I usually think of Mondays in that typical blue way, but this Monday was bound to be different. Why? Because my horoscope for today had predicted: "One of those wonderful days. Think of anything you want—the chances are you can have it for the asking." Of course I don't believe in fortune telling, the stars, and all that; but I decided to see just how much those little glittering things could change my day.

"Anything I wanted" kept running through my mind as I walked out to the car. "O K, I'd like not to have to go to school today," I thought as I turned the ignition. The motor gave a spurt, died, and there I was without a car, or a way to school—my wish to a tee. However, I felt under the circumstances it might be more healthy if I procured a ride. I managed to get to class only twelve and one-half minutes late.

Arriving at my third hour class, I absent-mindedly made the comment to my friend: "Boy, how this hour drags! If only he wouldn't lecture." And he didn't. The professor announced after the gong had tolled that since the last of the week was being occupied by Teachers Convention, the mid-semester test scheduled for Thursday would have to be given today. He was really very generous though, and said he would curve the grades, since the students might not be prepared so early in the week. Sure enough, with the curve I made a 94, or was it a 49?

Lunch time finally rolled around, and how I longed for at least one glance at our tasty lunch. Just to be obliging, I'm sure, the actives decided that today was the day for Penny Pledge to help the cook in the kitchen. For one solid hour I got to do nothing but look at food.

Realizing that today was "one of my wonderful days" and everything I asked for would be provided, I decided after the above incidents to postpone further indicating of my desires. Above all I vowed never to look at my horoscope again; but that night when quite by accident I ran across it, I was startled to see—"Keep to your normal routine and don't be too experimental. Not your day for putting innovations into practice." The stars—bah!
A Tall Tale
Phyllis Dunn

It all started many years ago. My father was a tall man, a very tall man. I remember reading with pride the inscription beside his picture in his college yearbook: “Dunny is long in stature and in mind as well.” Though his intelligence could not be measured in inches, my father’s stature measured six feet, three inches, and I thought he was the tallest man in the world. Then I grew, and I grew, and I grew; and suddenly I realized that the height which was so admirable in a man like my father was a distinct disadvantage in a girl like me. To this day I am unable to see any advantage in the extra seven inches which prevented my being a petite five-feet-two. Extra height, as far as I’m concerned, is a desirable characteristic only in men and the Empire State Building.

Whenever my shorter friends—straining from the tips of their three-inch heels to look into my eyes—remind me of the so-called advantages of my height, I can only reply that they speak from inexperience. This questionable distinction has been the frustration of my life from earliest childhood. I’m sure that much of the screaming I did as a baby in the hospital nursery was not a reaction to what the nurses termed “temporary discomfort” but merely my vocal protest at being tagged one of the longest babies ever born in the Chicago Lying-In Hospital.

All through my childhood my friends looked up to me, which wasn’t too much of a disadvantage until I reached the age when I discovered that all of the interesting people in the world weren’t girls. Because of the difference in the growth rate of boys and girls, however, most of these interesting people were still much shorter than I. There was one boy, the gangling, stringbean type himself, whose height automatically made him my first beau. He was the only boy in the class that I didn’t look down on! But my romantic inclinations were squelched by this thirteen-year-old model of male glamour on the day of our graduation from grade school. Such an occasion called for a new dress, and mine was my first attempt at sophistication. Oh, my mother warned me that the long, flowing lines of its white fabric were much too old for me and would make me look taller. But as a thirteen-year-old siren I thought Mother had a lot to learn, and I insisted on that particular dress and a pair of sophisticated high-heeled shoes to go with it. The effect must have been towering! When I successfully maneuvered to a place on the platform beside my romantic giant, he leaned toward me with an embarrassed whisper, “Gee! That dress makes you look six feet tall!” And he thought it was a compliment! I hated him. It wasn’t long after that incident that I shocked my father with the desperate announcement that if I grew another inch I’d kill myself. He wasn’t
too upset, evidently, because he somehow managed to conceal his laughter in a sudden coughing fit, and he didn't even seem too surprised when I was still alive after growing another four or five inches.

My first humiliation didn't compare with the agony I experienced after I began taking men seriously. The only consolation I had was my sister's plight; she was even taller than I. We had another similar disfigurement, too, in our big feet. Whenever we reluctantly discarded our old shoes for a new pair—always a size larger—my father tried to ease the blow with some witty remark, "Oh well, girls, you'll have to go a long way to catch up with my size 14's." His humor failed to impress us. We thought our feet would never stop growing, and we made desperate efforts to hide them by curling our toes under in unbelievable contortions while twisting our legs around the legs of the chairs we sat on. We had another clothes problem, too.

For years we had looked forward with anticipation to our first formal dance and a long, floor-sweeping formal dress. Unhappily we discovered that on us the formals didn't sweep the floor. In fact, they didn't even do a good job of dusting. Moreover we were forced to wear flat-heeled shoes to take off the inches, and anyone can see the lack of glamour in a froth of lace and net supported by size 10 "gunboats."

Sometimes when it seemed as though all the tall men had taken off for remote parts, my sister and I accepted blind dates. Other girls took blind dates on one condition: Does he have a car? For us the question was an entirely different one: Is he tall? My father observed that we didn't care whether the man in question was a criminal or a millionaire, just so he was tall. On these occasions we lived in a state of dread until the night of the date, with only the usually unreliable testimony of the person who had arranged the date to assure us that our partners would be of considerable height. We learned to avoid any arrangements made by a very short friend since her estimate of height was often made in relation to her own measurements, which obviously could be disastrous for us. At times like this we either sat the evening out, or resorted to a slouching posture resembling the lines of a question mark.

I remember one of my sister's blind dates. All during the day she had tormented herself with the question, "Will he be tall enough?" When the evening arrived and we finally caught a glimpse of her date, my sister turned around and ran out of the room, calling frantically, "I'm not going; I'm not going! He has a mustache!" Of course I knew that it wasn't the mustache; even on tip-toe he wouldn't have reached her ears.

One way or another I either slouched or sat through my dating days. Somehow height doesn't seem so important any more. I finally forgave my gradeschool beau, too, and we're looking around for some tall boys for our two daughters.
Tyranny

William Phelps

TYRANNY is something which we in America think of as existing only in a foreign land. When we speak of a tyrant, we nearly always think of Benito Mussolini, or Adolf Hitler, of Nikolai Lenin, of Joseph Stalin, or of some other person who has dictatorially driven a nation of people. Then later, we think of that tyranny as inevitably leading to the mental destruction of some, the physical destruction of much, and the death of many. Tyranny also exists in this country, but since what tyranny there is in this country is on a much smaller scale, and since the major manifestation of such autocracy has been either in Europe or Asia, the connotation of the word quite naturally leads us to pursue a study of the subject with that particular kind of tyranny in mind.

What is the nature of a man who desires to be an autocrat? He is a man of vision, for he must visualize his goal; he is a man of intelligence, for he must intelligently pursue a course of action in order to raise himself from one position to another; he is a man of insight, for he must be able to know the innermost thoughts of the people of the nation which he aspires to lead; he is a man of persuasion, for in the early days of his journey he must gain support only through persuasion; he is a man of deception, for deception of the people in relation to his ultimate goal is essential to the use of his persuasion; he is a man of brutality, for there are those along his path who can be dealt with only through the use of brutality; he is a man of malevolence, for history should show him the final outcome of the execution of a desire such as his; he is a man of all these attributes and many more, but these are a few of the qualities necessary for his success.

Give a man who possesses all of these a group of people who are weak and dissatisfied, and the embryo of the tyranny is conceived. Let him persuade one weak person to follow and support him, or one strong person to help him, and the tyranny is born. It develops through infancy, childhood, adolescence, and youth by the addition of more and more of the weak who have a desire to be strong; and finally it reaches manhood when the band of people is strong enough to overpower those of the country who have heretofore failed to participate in the nefarious scheme.

What, then, leads to the downfall of the tyrant? The lust for power eventually causes him to attempt to broaden his field of operations. When this happens, he begins to tread on people who have had a chance to compare the lives of the oppressed with their own lives. These people find that their lives are far superior to the one which would befall them if they were forced to join the oppressed.
Therefore the struggle begins, and those who are opposing the tyranny realize that their fight is one of survival; and to defeat the man who is fighting such a fight has, to this date in history, been an impossibility. As long as there are free men to compare their lives with those of a people who are subjected to such a life of despotism, I feel certain that tyranny on such a grandiose scale can not exist for too long.

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The Cloak Room

Kenneth L. Finehout

The cloak room was cold on this early Monday morning. I stood near the door waiting for the other students to hang their coats and enter their classroom. The last person to arrive was Joanne. She was short, dark, and the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. Joanne was the girl I wanted for my wife, and today I was going to propose to her.

The clock at the end of the hall seemed to be running fast this morning, and I knew that in a few minutes the tardy bell would ring. My proposal would have to be short and direct if we were to reach our classes on time.

As I walked toward her, there was a smile on her lips as if she knew what I was going to say. For a moment I stood still, looking at the sunlight glowing in the dark brown hair that hung down over her shoulders. She was beautiful! There was so much I wanted to say to her, and yet there was only time for a few words. I became afraid. The tardy bell rang, and before I could speak, she had gone through the door to her classroom.

Day after day I tried to speak to her, but each day became just another disappointment. Soon the semester would be over, and maybe I would never see her again.

On the last day of school before summer vacation, I knew I must ask her to marry me. Once again I waited in the cloak room. As she came through the door, I became tense and nervous. Today was my last chance. Resting my hand on her shoulder to steady myself, I opened my mouth to speak. But before I could say a word, the door swung open. As we stood there, stunned by the sudden intrusion, our first grade teacher said, “Children, class is about to begin.”
An experience I shall never forget came about at an insignificant spot on the German and Soviet Zone of the Austrian border, commonly called "The Iron Curtain" or "The Easternmost Outpost of Democracy."

During a four-year tour of Europe with the United States Army, my unit was assigned the mission of border patrol—a routine duty, twenty-four hours a day, of patrol and observation of "The Iron Curtain" and surveillance of Russian troop activity. It was during a patrol that I met Ivan, a Russian officer of rank equivalent to mine. The Russians had previously ignored us, although at times their officers were fairly congenial to American officers in saluting and in passing small talk back and forth. But Ivan, a new replacement, was strictly a nonconformer.

The first day that I met Ivan I casually greeted him in the German language, sensing he would understand me. Ivan, standing on his side of the border at poker-rod attention, said nothing but glared, expressing deep hatred. This action on his part was rather rude, and I quickly vowed to make him change his nasty habit. Although Ivan had been saturated with the Communist doctrine of extreme hatred for "Capitalists" and their representatives, I was determined to break this hard shell and find a streak of hidden humanity that I was sure Ivan still possessed. I later conceded that this vow was to be a complicated task.

For many days I made frequent trips to Ivan's location, trying to find a possible solution for my task. My first attempts at friendship were futile. I offered him cigarettes, candy, and food but received nothing but refusals in the form of blank stares. I finally gave up this method of changing his attitude and turned in search of other possibilities.

The men in my unit, sensing my situation, began making comments about Ivan's actions and habits in their daily observation reports. It was my responsibility to secure all reports for items requiring immediate action and then forward them to higher headquarters. I also had the opportunity to study Ivan without being so obvious. Report after report contained almost all of his actions in very descriptive form only to reveal him as a staunch military puppet of the Communist regime. He was there for one purpose: to command the fanatical and mechanical soldiers under him with an iron hand until they were to be unleashed upon the free world. Although the reports...
were discouraging, I discovered from a slight hint in one that Ivan had acquired and become quite fond of a small puppy. This discovery was to be the key to success. I decided that I should entice the pup over to our side, revealing to Ivan how kind an American could be to animals or humans.

Selecting a choice piece of meat from our mess I proceeded directly to Ivan’s location. Upon arrival I found Ivan near the crossing point and playing with his pup. I threw a small piece of meat across the dividing stream, hoping the pup was hungry enough to eat it. My idea began to work. The pup ate it and was waiting for more. I tossed the remaining portion at my feet, and the pup, without hesitation, plunged into the stream and was immediately on my side gulping the meat down. The Russian sentries near by were astonished to see me feed such a large piece of meat to a mere dog, for their rations were very meager. My generosity was hard for them to understand, and, as I had hoped, they began to realize that we were not the type of people they had been led to believe we were. Their rigid training was broken.

I continued to return each day with a meal for the pup. Russians and the pup were waiting each day to see what tasty morsel the pup would receive. One day as I was feeding the little mongrel I suddenly glanced at Ivan and caught him smiling. Being caught off guard, Ivan suddenly blushed like a child caught with his hand in a cookie jar.

Ivan and I became strange friends from that momentous day on. Each time I visited the area we would each stand on our own sides of the demarcation and exchange a few words about the weather or something unimportant and very often take turns tormenting and playing with the pup. The pup, having a grand time, could not possibly have realized, as he ran back and forth between slavery and freedom, that he played a great part in world diplomacy. He had very possibly accomplished what diplomats have been trying to for the whole universe.

A year has passed since I left Europe, and I have often recalled Ivan and his pup, feeling that I accomplished the task I had set out to do. Now, I often wish that I had made my task a little more difficult by trying to entice Ivan to default and surrender himself to the United States for political asylum. Someday we may meet again under other circumstances, should Russia decide that the time is ripe for further aggression and murder. However, from my experience with Ivan I learned that no one is without the basic human feelings of kindness and friendliness. No matter how hard they may attempt to mask them they will eventually come forth.

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As I glance backward at the many and varied events of the past eighteen years, the memories of far-off places and of glorious moments come crowding into my mind. The recollection of a faraway place is the most significant of all in my vast sea of memories. This place of which I speak is a very small town called Straubing. Why a town would be given such a name is something I do not know. Straubing, located on the beautiful blue Danube River, is in Bavaria, which is a state of Germany. It is quite a colorful town and is one in which a person immediately feels at home.

This serene, quaint little town is one with which a person falls in love at first sight. The streets are extremely narrow and dark, but still they have an air of neatness and of untold beauty. The main street of Straubing, unlike the others, is very wide, bright, and gay. Situated in the center of the town and also in the center of the main street is the town's fabulous clock tower. It is a massive brick structure which lends to the town a quiet dignity. This gigantic tower can be seen from a long distance away, and the sight of it is very precious to a native of the town after a long journey. In the lower section of the tower are small shops. On the north and south sides of the clock tower are monuments built in honor of two Holy Saints. Both of these monuments are very handsome and are held sacred by the people. There are small trees and shrubs surrounding them; and all of this together forms an island in the roadway. The island is split by another street which crosses the main street at the tower; however, the tower acts as a bridge and brings the two sections together as one. The street passes through the bridge—like arch made by the huge clock tower. When a person looks westward down this tiny street, a fountain in a small pool encompassed by beautiful flowers and comely trees is what the eyes will see. The people of Straubing are proud of this bewitching sight.

Winding its way through Straubing en route to the Danube River is a tiny sparkling stream. The trees which stand straight and tall on the banks of this little stream seem to be embracing it with tenderness and affection. The water gives life to the trees, and they in turn protect the crystal clear water from the deadly rays of the sun. This little stream also provides water for the birds and for the many little animals that live in the trees. It brightens the atmosphere of the parks; and in the quiet solitude of evening the water plays cheerful little tunes as it trickles over the small rocks and tumbles into the tiny crevices to form miniature falls. God took this
and many other beautiful sight and molded this little town. These sights give to a citizen of Straubing the same feeling of hope and happiness as the Eiffel Tower gives to a Frenchman and as the Statue of Liberty gives to an American.

* * * * * *

Justice or Injustice

Carolyn Wilson

From Stephen Crane's "The Open Boat," I gather that the author considers individuals to be pawns which are moved about by a merciless and arbitrary power. This theory of determinism implies that there is little man can do to control his destiny. However, such a belief violates the ideals which I hold essential. The system of free enterprise is based upon man's will to work and could not endure long if men thought their labors might not be justly rewarded because of some arbitrary mechanism's whims. Distinction between right and wrong could be discarded because the cruel power might, according to its fancy, turn upon the right and protect the wrong. The personal sense of ethics belonging to man would become distorted and dulled, for we cease to struggle against the odds of life when we cease to believe that justice lies at the end of the fight. With this impersonal power that has man's destiny tightly in its grasp, there can be no real justice. A curious creature, man will beat his head against a stone wall of obstacles and failures and of human-dealt injustices if he believes that his labors will be rewarded when the final count is taken. We mortals will take these wrongs from our equals, but when we come to expect them from the top force of the universe, we have lost everything.

In the light of what has been said, one might ask what I do think men should believe about this question. In answer I can only state my views on the subject. Mr. Crane intimated an insignificance of man in the universe, but I cannot agree with him. Many is a noble creation worthy of being dealt with in a thoughtful manner. Man was given a brain with more capacity than any other known form. He was given the important power of distinction to guide him, and a conscience to keep him on a high moral level. At the very center of his being was created a soul that is the glory of the race, that is the power man fighting for his ideals, that is the real person. Why and by whom are we given these cherished treasures which have enabled us to rise from the skin-wearing, cave-dwelling beast; to bear great, profound mortals who are worthy of their endowment; to discover the secrets locked so securely in and around our planet? My answer
is that this “arbitrary, unjust” power has given us all we have, but
not with the intention of destroying us, the fruit of his toil. I think
he has set us upon the earth for universal good with the intention of
being perfectly truthful and just in his treatment of us.

It is quite apparent that Mr. Crane’s mechanical power and my
God can not both exist as rulers of man. They are too opposite.
Therefore, he who believes in one can not believe in the other. One
is the object of the pessimist, the cynic, and the rationalizer. The
pessimist likes to believe in that which is dark and depressing because
he is afraid to believe in good. The cynic believes man is essentially
bad and thinks some cruel power should deal with him. The rational-
izer attempts to explain his mistakes and free himself from the
responsibility of them. What is a better way than to transfer the
blame by saying,” I failed because the great power was against me.”?
These are the believers in an arbitrary, cruel governor, the negative
thinkers. On the other hand, those who believe in my God are the
positive thinkers, those who have hope, those who love their fellow
men, those who admit their weaknesses as well as their strength.
Only a small number are the kind God pictured when He made man,
and none of them are perfect. They explain the young person’s
death, the failure after a courageous struggle, and the savage out-
bursts of the elements by calling them seeming injustices. I am one
who thinks that although in our grief for a lost loved one we cry
out to God and ask “why,” the answer is vaguely known. We have
the largest scope of comprehension on this little sphere of life, but
our understanding is to God’s as an ant’s size is to an elephant’s.
I firmly believe that no so-called disaster is an injustice. God has
His reasons, and the reasons, though not understood by us, are just.

Which are the valuable citizens, the leaders and the “salt of the
earth”? Are they the negative thinkers or the positive thinkers?

Today when the question of nations and their citizens is so im-
portant, this question is vital. Those who have an incentive to work
because they think that justice instead of reckless cruelty is in their
Divinity, will actively aid a community, a nation, or a world. Bring-
ing the discussion to a smaller area, I cite the example of certain
nations which are ruled by despotic individuals who crush or raise
their people at will, and seemingly without reason. Those people,
who constantly live in fear of a knock on the door, are not keen and
alert. They are not courageous, deep thinking, or noble. They are
either afraid or sensually and spiritually dulled. I can see a definite
parallel between such behavior and the behavior that can be caused
by a deterministic point of view. The civilization which is to survive
will be made up of the leaders and citizens who work toward goals
and sincerely believe that God’s sense of justice allows each in-
dividual a good deal to say about what his future holds.
Mature people are organized, thoughtful, and punctual. My mother, teachers, and friends have lectured to me on “The Mature Person.” I know what maturity means, but I can’t seem to do what it entails. Believe me, college has not simplified this problem.

Physical education—the problem entailed therein are formidable to me. This type of course requires someone who is agile, and whose body co-ordinates with ease. Unfortunately, I am not this type. My co-ordination is slightly lacking. Swimming is the sport I selected for the first semester. For some reason, I never seem to have time to dress completely. I try to keep in mind that punctuality is a sign of maturity. Thus, when I am punctual, I fall up the stairs in my size-nine wooden clogs, hoping that all is well. Usually my hopes and prayers are in vain. My swimming suit, which is very loose, is practically falling off by the time I have reached the pool. I have forgotten to pin the straps. If I had been prompt in buying a suit at the beginning of the semester, I would not have this difficulty. As usual, I had to take a suit that had been worn by many bathers—most of them larger than I. If I could swim, the suit wouldn’t be so noticeably large. My parents tried to make me a champion swimmer at one time. After five years of lessons and no outward improvement, they accepted the grim facts with resignation. I am again resuming my training—not to be a champion swimmer, mind you—just to pass the course. When I am swimming, my head looks like the head of a frightened turtle. For some reason, it is heavier than the rest of my body and insists on staying under the water. My feet are my other problem. They are also heavy, but they are not as weighty as my head. Consequently, when I try to kick under the water, I kick on the surface. This action splashes all of the dry people who are not participating in my merry game.

At the beginning of the semester, each student purchases a lock and a locker. The main idea in purchasing a lock, is to learn your combination. You may then make use of the locker into which you have locked your clothes. I do not believe in operating in this fashion. The matron keeps small tickets with lockers and their respective combinations written on them. This is a preventive measure for foggy people like me. In order to obtain this ticket, one must pay ten cents. I paid ten cents for my ticket one morning and thought I would show people how frugal and intelligent I was. Instead of giving this ticket back to the matron before swimming class, I put it in my purse. In that way I could save ten cents, if I happened to forget my locker combination at the end of class. I
returned that fateful morning from swimming class to find my purse, clothes, and locker combination locked in a locker that couldn't be opened without the knowledge of the combination. This wasn't in my head, for I worked the lock for fifteen minutes trying to recall it. I asked the matron what I could do. She said I would have to wait until a locksmith came to saw off the lock. After many long minutes of searching, she found our class cards, which as yet had not been alphabetized. There were about one-hundred of them together, and mine was sixth from the bottom. After hunting for five minutes, the perturbed matron finally located my class card. Fortunately, my combination was written on the back of the blank.

I inconvenience so many people when I am thoughtless, forgetful, and immature. I cannot blame my friends, teachers, parents, or school for my ridiculous plights. There is only one person whom I can involve in this "vicious circle"—myself.

* * * * *

Boys Are for Baseball
Margaret Sauerteig

From the age of five until twelve there was nothing in the whole world that I wanted more than to be a boy.

I lived, breathed, and loved everything a boy could do. I was forever tagging behind my brother and playing with his gang whenever I could. I liked it best when they played at the baseball lot; because they'd let me play if they were undermanned.

In my twelfth year I still preferred hikes to parties and baseball to books. I suppose I would have retained my longing if it hadn't been for Tom.

Tom was a tall, gangly boy with black hair and dark eyes, and captain of the school safety boys. He was the best batter on the school baseball team too. He always had the highest batting average. Even after the new boy came, Tom still was "best batter."

He ask me if I would like to go to a wienie roast his church was having. I was thrilled, for Tom was the most popular boy in school and he had actually asked me for a date, a word very unfamiliar to me. The girls that I knew all had had dates and I knew that this would really impress them.

My mother had given me permission to go and I was to be picked up at seven o'clock. Of all things, Eileen, the girl I walked to school with, had decided that she was going to the "roast" with us. Imagine, Eileen was actually going to be along on my first date!

That night I wore my new jeans. Mother put lip coloring on my lips and powder on my nose. I felt just awful and I got hot and my hands were sticky.
Finally the doorbell rang and mother answered it. I tried to assume an air of nonchalance, but I got mixed up when I introduced Tom to my parents and Eileen giggled and laughed at me.

The three of us left my house and Tom and I didn’t exchange words for quite a while.

When we finally arrived at the park, we couldn’t lose Eileen. The three of us did everything together that night. It was perfectly terrible.

It came time to leave with Eileen on one side of Tom and me on the other.

As we approached the door, I told Tom that I had had a nice time and ran into the house. From the window I could see Eileen and Tom walking on up the street until they turned the corner.

* * * * * *

EARTH

Robert Petty

I

Out of the tongueless mouth of space,
Deep from the voiceless throat of time,
There where the naked ethers climb:
Spiritless to swiftening pace,
Passionless to dread embrace,
Game creation’s pantomime—
Flaming breath, yet void of rhyme,
Cooled before a watching face.

Cooled to basalt ocean basins,
Cooled to granite’s twisted land,
Came the darkened rain for days, in
Torrents, till the rivers ran;
Then from out the misted heavens,
A shadow past—life began.

II

Out of the vapors came a being,
An element to earth unknown,
Moved in waters, covered stone,
Crept from darkness without seeing,
Toward the sunlight, growing, seeding,
Until the granite hills were sown,
With innate gropings not their own,
Living, dying and succeeding.
Until the trembling waters stirred,
Potential of some distant might,
As evolving cells matured,
Unicell to trilobite,
And in sediment sepulchre,
Laid their vestige day and night.

III
Winds eroded, rivers sculptured
On a vast and virgin land,
Ravished granite into sand,
Shaped with cutting force unheard,
Until the bed-rock lay obscured
Under regolith's deep mantle, and
As the higher plants began
Sending thirsty rootlets earthward—
From the dank and misted marshes,
Through the fern and Equisetum,
Stumbling, bellowing and harsh as
Their devouring instincts led them,
Amphibian to Tyrannosaurus
Spread the fringe of their freedom.

IV
Yet, slowly in tectonic years,
The reptiles forfeited their might,
Wandered dying in the night.
And in every hemisphere,
In the swamps, amid the gloom,
Beneath the sun and sentinel stars,
Theriodonts and dinosaurs
Fell into their sodden tombs.
The conifer, the flowering plant,
Old eras closed and now began—
Marsupial, lemur, elephant,
The age of mammals ruled the land;
Then, out of pagan germinant,
Evolved the pageantry of man.
V

Amid the screaming and the flight,
Slow turning from the will to cry,
Man asked the primal question, “Why?”
Lit his fires to mock the night,
Scratched in caves each new delight,
Wandered through the shadowed years,
Plagued by doubt, cursed by fears,
Toward a cross, yet out of sight.

Closer now, the watching face,
Heard his voice, “What is to be?”
And the stars in echoed space,
Heard the voice, and turned to see
If it came from mortal clay,
Or eternal dust, as they...