

There were fat cushions everywhere, and surprises around every corner. The kitchen was always warm from baking. On the counter near the stove sat a white pig cookie jar that was always brimming, waiting for eager hands to steal some cookies.

Often, we would ride in her rowboat out into the lake. The water was always clear and smooth as a mirror. Just by leaning over the edge, I could see my reflection. We would often drift into the middle of the lake, and look at clouds, or watch a spider on the bow make its intricate web by spinning and twining, spinning and twining. The spider finished, I would scoop water in my palm and splash the web. The spider would scamper off and leave his laced network glistening in the sun.

I haven't seen Nana very often in the past few years, but, when we do meet, we share several affectionate hugs and kisses. She still looks the same as when I was a child; the dress, the galoshes, the speckled hair, the rosy cheeks. My thoughts of her are filled with love, delight, and warmth. Whenever life's problems make me sad and irritable, I think of her. The softness of my memories smooths all the rough edges of my busy world. And whenever I want to become a child again, I will go to the kitchen and get an apple. I'll take the apple to the nearest rocker and peel it into long, red spirals. Then I will slice and salt each piece, and eat it from the knife.

## Billy's Burden

*by Tammy Graham*

Billy was raised to  
believe in himself and his future.  
With pressing ever onward and  
looking only up, Billy forgot to  
live for the day and to believe in  
the present.

One day, like a hand from  
heaven, the wind slapped Billy's  
face. The stinging brought tears to  
Billy's eyes. The pain of the  
startling trip into reality was harsh.

With each tear shed a new thought  
emerged from within Billy's soul.  
But, with this new knowledge  
came only sadness.

Gone was the security of being blind.

Now is the burden of wasted time.

Billy's burden.