DOUGHNUTS AND DITTOS
or
What I Did on My Summer Vacation

Connecticut Writing Project
Summer Institute
1982
Introduction

"A renewal experience in academic and professional life" is how one of the twenty participating teachers characterized the inaugural Connecticut Writing Project Summer Institute, held at Storrs from June 28 through July 23, 1982. "The four weeks were intense," another teacher remarked. "The Institute revitalized me as a teacher, as a person, as a writer."

Participants, who were carefully selected on the basis of written applications, interviews, and letters of recommendation, received fellowships and tuition for three University of Connecticut graduate credits in exchange for their labors, and upon completion of the Institute they have been named Teacher/Consultants of the Connecticut Writing Project.

During the Institute, besides consuming prodigious quantities of coffee, pastry, and duplicating supplies, they read widely in the current research on writing, heard lectures, untiringly discussed writing and how to teach it, prepared and presented workshops on aspects of the writing process and effective teaching techniques, and worked continuously on their own writing, consulting frequently with one another in editing groups for criticism and encouragement. The essays, vignettes, and poems collected in this booklet, chosen by their authors with the advice of the other members of their groups, represent but a small sample of the writing they produced during the summer.

It is a basic principle of the Connecticut Writing Project that teachers who themselves write can best help their students to write well. By drafting, discussing, and revising compositions in each of four modes of discourse--personal, objective, analytical, and persuasive--the participants in the Summer Institute developed their understanding of the writing process through first-hand experience. In so doing, they also produced the rich and various and delightfully readable anthology of works in progress that follows. Contributions are sorted neither by subject nor by genre. Instead, the authors appear in company with their most important critics, colleagues, and collaborators--the other members of their writing groups. The groups are designated by the number of the University of Connecticut English department classroom in which they most frequently met. The text of this booklet has been photographically reproduced from the authors' typescripts.

A reader sampling the following pages cannot fail to gain some sense of the insight, energy, and creativity that distinguished this group of twenty truly outstanding Connecticut teachers. Working with them has been for us a memorable and transforming experience.

Karen K. Jambeck
William E. Sheidley
Directors, Connecticut Writing Project

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The Connecticut Writing Project

The Connecticut Writing Project is one of 92 regional affiliates of the National Writing Project and its parent, the University of California Bay Area Writing Project. According to Michael Scriven, evaluator for the Carnegie Corporation, the National Writing Project seems to be "the best large-scale effort to improve composition now in operation in the country."

The Connecticut site was launched by a donation from Mr. Bob Eddy, former publisher of the Hartford Courant, a National Endowment for the Humanities matching grant obtained through the National Writing Project and the University of California, and a supplementary contribution from the Covenant Group of Hartford.

Under the continuing sponsorship of the Department of English and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences of the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut Writing Project offers staff development programs in writing and writing instruction for teachers in all fields. For further information about Inservice Workshops and about future Summer Institutes, contact the project office in the Department of English (U-25), University of Connecticut, Storrs, CT 06268. Phones: 486-2328, 486-3179.

Katherine opened her eyes and looked toward the window. Paint slivers of light glimmered through the slats of the bamboo blind. The papers on the floor beside the bed rustled, and a paw pressed against her arm, tentative at first and then urgent.

"Oh, no!" she groaned. "This is vacation?" A twinge in her right knee reminded her that even coming down the mountain left its mark, after a certain age.

"I'll take her out." Ben dragged himself to a sitting position. "She had me up at three, but it's all right. I asked for it. I guess I'd just forgotten what puppies were like."

As if you ever knew, Katherine muttered, inside her head. Or what babies were like. That was my department. But no; they're all gone, grown up, with babies of their own, and I'm free—or I was, until you decided, after Shenko died, that we couldn't live without a dog. He had to have another Siberian. Aloud she said, "The puppy is a dear, but this is only the beginning, you know. The chewing comes next, and the digging. She'll be impossible to contain unless we make the fence at home higher."

"I'll do it." Ben shot the words out like bullets, grabbed the pup under one arm, and strode out of the room. She could hear him downstairs, slamming doors.

He will, too, Katherine sighed. But in the meantime he'll wake up Meg. She's wakeful, anyway, in her eighth month of pregnancy—and the two little girls—and it's only six a.m.. Jon will wonder why they came for this few days at the lake, his only break before summer session. She buried her head under the pillow and tried to breathe deep breaths. The summer stretched out before her—the month-long intensive workshop she had so wanted, learning from peers in her own field, later on, but right now the full schedule of guests due at the cottage—two of Ben's colleagues on Tuesday, for overnight, and the old friends driving up from the Cape Thursday to spend the weekend—and in between and next week three more of the children, with spouses and offspring—all welcome and long-awaited—
yearned for, actually--but still there to be fed and to contribute to the hubub, especially if it kept on raining every other day.

The door slammed and Katherine peered out from under the pillow. Ben set down the pup's food and water dishes, precariously balanced in one hand. The pup lunged and the water spilled. "Oh God!" he murmured. His side of the bed was only a little damp, but the despair in his voice touched her. She had felt the depth of his grief when the old dog died. He did need an animal. There had never been a year without one in all their marriage. But this was the first summer in a long time she had had so many commitments--her aged parents, one living alone, the other in a nursing home, both depending on her and needing care--Ben's sister, divorced at fifty-eight and about to launch herself in a new career, stopping in often, needing to talk--two pregnant daughters, each counting on the services of grandma when the time came--services happily offered, of course, but this summer complicated by the workshop Katherine had determined to attend.

That was the crux of it--the workshop. That meant leaving Ben alone for the best part of four weeks, while she pursued something important to her. The children had all said, "Bravo, mom. It's your turn. Do it. Dad will be fine. We'll look out for him, by turns. And they would, here at the lake, starting week after next, but after he got home, and started commuting to the city every day.... She turned toward him....

Just then the phone rang. Ben leapt out and raced to the door, taking the steps beyond it two at a time. There was only one phone, of course, downstairs--but it was too early for it to ring. Could Anne be having her baby down in Washington? Oh, no, unless something was wrong! August twenty-ninth, she had said, and this was June. Her parents? She had lived on tenterhooks for so long, after her father's fall from the ladder and her mother's stroke--and things always did seem to happen to them when she was farthest away.

"Kate!" Ben's hoarse whisper came from the bottom of the stairs. "It's your cousin Bill. It's bad news. I'm afraid."

Katherine stifled a cry. She grabbed her robe and got to the phone. Her knees felt numb and the receiver was heavy to lift. "Hello," she said.

"I'm sorry it's so early, Kate. I hated to call you up there at the lake, and I even hated to wake you up, but Beth and I are leaving for London on the eight o'clock plane, and she's been planning the trip for so long...."

"What is it? What's happened?" Katherine interrupted. Bill's voice was urgent, apologetic, but not alarming. Still, he was the bearer of tidings, the one the whole family counted on, who always broke bad news gently.

"It's your Dad. He's had a bad fall. He keeps asking for you. He's okay, they think, but he's pretty badly shaken and bruised. And at his age it's tough...they're going to take some x-rays. I thought you'd want to know...." Bill hesitated, and Katherine sat down in the snowshoe chair beside the desk. Her heart had stopped trying to leap out of her chest. Ben stood beside her, frowning.

"It's my Dad. A fall, but he's okay," she mouthed, answering the question in his eyes. Into the phone she said, "Oh, Bill, you've been up since before dawn taking him to the hospital, on the day you're leaving for England?"

"I'm at the hospital now. One of the neighbors phoned me. She saw the lights on in his house and went over. He wasn't going to tell anybody, but I figured I shouldn't wait around...will you...can you come down?"

"Of course I can. Tell him I'll be there by noon." She watched Ben's shoulders slump, and he shook his head, slowly. She went on. "Bill, thank you. I never can, enough. Now go home and catch that plane!"

She set down the phone and the tears came. Ben's arms were around her. "It's just the relief," she said, and smiled up at him. "It's scary to love so many people so much. I'll come back as soon as I can."

"I know. We'll be fine. Maybe we'll name the puppy while you're gone." And suddenly there she was, beside them, her little head tilted to one side, the white-tipped tail wagging.
THE EFFECTS OF EVALUATION

Laura Cooper

Mary was a high school student with a typical adolescent love of ideas. She indulged that love by writing abstract, overly dramatic verse, and her teacher indulged her by writing such comments as "profound" on her poems. Mary arrived at college convinced that poetry writing was not only her talent—it was her vocation. After she became acquainted with a professor who had gained prestige as a critic, she decided that it was time for her to be initiated into the literary community, so she bestowed a packet of poems upon him.

He returned her poems with an entire single-spaced page of numbered comments. One referred to the image of a chain in a Feminist poem which began with the line "Ah, woman, woman." He suggested that she omit all chains, whips, etc. from her poetry. Mary saw immediately that the image was over-stated, but was embarrassed at the suggestion that it arose from sexual perversity. Another comment suggested elimination of "you" and "we," adding that she should speak for herself. Again, Mary felt strange and wrong. Many other comments, all good criticisms of her work, could have been helpful but Mary threw them away.

Although she did enroll in a Creative Writing course, Mary never felt her work was "real art," having value beyond its worth as undergraduate coursework. She gradually stopped writing until she had not written a poem for two years. Finally she began, tentatively, to write again, and her work gained some local recognition. She still felt that her poems were not really worth much, though, until she had the critic's approval, so she asked him to look at her poems again. He was too busy.

Mary's experience is not unusual: every year people who had been considered good writers in high school are bombarded with sarcasm, F's, and harsh criticism. Most accept their teacher's judgments unquestioningly, and extend those judgments to include their self-definition and self-worth.

When evaluating student work teachers do not disparage failures obviously due to lack of ability or intelligence. They get angry at students whose work reveals a pretentious intelligence, and they feel it is their duty to straighten those students out immediately. The students, however, are often so shocked that they quit whatever activity was judged or even quit college.

At first glance, the teacher who lashes out appears to be the villain. But often the teacher is angry not so much at the student as at the student's former teachers. The teacher who gives a student an exaggerated view of herself also wrongs the student.

Finally, the student who simply gives can also be faulted, although perhaps only indirectly. Many times the halt of the criticized activity is due to the adolescent "I'll hurt myself to make them sorry" type of revenge response. Other times the student gives up too easily, using the criticism as an excuse for laziness and defeatism. But generally, the psychological defense that causes a person to quit is involuntary.

The system which sets up only high status persons as judges of the worth of creative activity is also to blame. As Judson Jerome has commented, "The poem still doesn't seem quite real until it has been 'accepted' by an editor, until it appears in a periodical or book. It is as though the creative act were dependent for its completion not only upon the judgement of others but upon the vicissitudes of the marketplace...Who is to judge? The professor who, this year, happens to be poetry editor of the Plottsville Quarterly? I found the whole scurry of submission (significant word!) and rejection and acceptance a distraction from poetic concerns."

As a culture we value only the most prestigious publications, only the opinions of registered authorities. While many students desperately need to learn to accept criticism, they also need a sense of personal integrity in regard to work which has meaning for them. Jerome expresses this sense when he states "Better poems than many of the published ones are still in my drawer, some of them universally rejected." Part of the reason students are not able to accept criticism is that the authority is understood as an absolute: the teacher is either completely right or totally wrong. Since many students accepting criticism would mean admitting that they are seriously faulted individuals of questionable worth, they protect themselves by ignoring the criticism, as Mary did. Perhaps if the opinions of authorities were regarded more as subjective evaluations than
as absolute truths or falsehoods, we would have a healthier learning environment.


2Jerome, p. 10.

DECISION
Philip T. Freemer

Davy stepped out into a cool gray September morning. His first thoughts were questions. "Why did I apply to Newgate Manor in the first place? Why did I say 'yes' to the offer of an aide's job at the interview? Am I some kind of twenty-two year old savior coming to redeem the retarded residents of Newgate?" Questions - all rhetorical, without answers, moot. He drove on.

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The steady rhythm of the windshield wipers lulled his mind into a numbness he greedily accepted. Better not to think of the day that lay ahead. He could not, however, ignore the queasiness that was gradually becoming more pronounced in his stomach. It hadn't yet registered clearly on his brain for Davy's mind was oatmeal. Images and thoughts appeared only momentarily. Each vision floated up to the surface and then quickly evaporated. There was no order to his thinking. Nor did Davy choose to make any order out of the surreal movie his subconscious was presenting.

Zombie-like he edged the car up to the concrete curbing of the parking lot. His hands mechanically slid from the steering wheel, leaving a glistening film that contradicted the dull wetness of the windshield. Grabbing his jacket, Davy opened the car door to get out. He set his sneakered foot down into a small rivulet that was winding its melancholy way through the parking lot. Davy cursed, closed the door, and just sat. The digital clock on the dash registered 7:26.

Davy's fingers gently massaged his stomach, trying to alleviate the cramped muscles. Deep breathing provided a modicum of comfort, and with a renewed sense of resolve, Davy once again opened the car door. He walked rather dejectedly through the now heavy drizzle to the front portico. The heavy metal door with the word "ENTRANCE" sten-
oiled on it somehow amused him. He pushed through the
doors, took off his jacket, shook it, and tried to focus
his memory on where it was he was to report. His eyes
found the words "Ward A," and unenthusiastically they
followed the directional arrow to the left.

"My name is Davy Peters," he said offhandedly to the
nurse at the desk. The composure in his voice surprised
him.

"Good morning, Davy. I'm Mrs. Fellows. Welcome to
Merton Hall. Depressing out there this morning," she
offered.

"I like rainy days," he countered.

"Well, good. Let's get started. Did they show you
how to take temperatures and record them?" she inquired.

Davy's attention had been drawn to the ward which he
could see through the wire-enmeshed plate glass windows
of the office. As he viewed the residents, many disfigured,
all incapacitated in some way, the cramps in his stomach
became severe. His mind screamed, and he placed his hand
to his mouth as thought to prevent Mrs. Fellows from hearing.

From somewhere outside himself a voice answered "Yes" to
the nurse's questions.

Davy took the thermometer which was offered, and with
clipboard in hand, began his "rounds." His mouth was like
cotton and his throat was so constricted that any attempt
at conversation was out of the question. His methodically
went from person to person, inserting, reading, recording.
His eyes carefully averted any direct contact with the bodies
before them. It was as though Davy were reaching through
a gauze-like film and then quickly retreating to the safety
of his inner consciousness.

Time passed slowly, but finally "coffee break" was announ-
ced. Davy was grateful for the fifteen minutes, even though
the thought of pouring anything down his tightened
throat repulsed him. He shuffled into the tiny office, and
discovered one of the aides meticulously buttering a piece
of toast. The sights, sounds, and smells mingled with those
from the ward made Davy feel dizzy. He nestled himself into
a corner, partly for support and partly for the coolness of
the beige tiles. He carefully folded his arms across his
stomach and tried to look relaxed.

"Want some toast?"

"Uh... No... No thanks..."

"Coffee?"

"Not just now." His voice sounded almost human.

Rather than face more dialogue, Davy sought the quietude
of the men's room. Cold water splashed on his face helped him
to regain a sense of resolve. He stared into the mirror. The
face that stared back at him said what he was thinking. "I'll
leave now, before it gets more embarrassing. After all, what
is the point of this self-flagellation? What am I trying to
prove? And to whom?"

He felt better immediately. A sense of resolve and re-
signation enveloped him with its offer of anonymity and se-
curity. His new-found confidence buoyed his spirits.

As he walked out of the bathroom, reflecting on his self-
inventory, he stumbled over a mop bucket. Before either the
discomfort in his foot or the bruise to his ego had time to
register, he found himself at eye level with a mop handle. It
was held by the nurse in charge who barked out a series of
directions. Robot-like Davy began to work. Everything was
once again a jumble. He had neither the energy nor the desire
to sort it all out. It seemed easier to acquiesce and just do.

The smell of the disinfectant permeated everything. After
an hour's mopping the acrid aroma hung in the air like an o-
minous fog. The tingling the fumes caused in Davy's nostrils
was nothing compared to the taste of nausea in his mouth. His only
defense against what seemed inevitable was to keep his teeth
tightly clenched.

The announcement of "lunch" caught Davy totally unpre-
pared. The implications of that single word set his heart
beating at double time. His body stiffened noticeably and
he was suspended in time; he and that ludicrous mop handle
were one.

Without comprehending anything, Davy managed to wheel
about a half dozen residents into the cafeteria. His stomach
began to turn in synchronization to the wheels of the wheel-
chairs and tables he was pushing. Beads of perspiration
formed on his forehead as he thought of feeding the residents.
"Escape," an inner voice seemed to whisper, but it was quickly
displaced by a more specific directive. "Run, run, run,"
echoed in accompaniment to his heartbeats.

The cooks set out the long silver pans of gray mush.
Davy caught sight of the repulsive mixture and bolted from
the room. His body slammed against the door of the men's room,
bringing him momentarily back to his senses. He knelt on the
rough tiles, leaned over the commode, and began to retch. It
was as if he were emptying himself of all events that had taken
place since he arrived. His chest stopped heaving; a sudden
coolness replaced the wet clammy feeling on his skin. For the
first time that morning he permitted himself to think.

What seemed like hours elapsed until his reverie was
interrupted. "Where's Peters for the feeding?" The lump
of clay on the floor slowly molded itself back into a human
shape, paused momentarily at the mirror to brush aside some
blond hair, and then somewhat shakily pushed through the door.

"I'll be right there," said the voice weakly.
IT'S ONLY A HOUSE
Carol Harding

My whole life that house -- once white, then green, and today a pale yellow -- had been Hardings' house. An always shiny brass nameplate with "J. Harding" in script had identified it for three generations. Then, on January 9, 1981, it became someone else's house. Fraught with conflicting emotions, each seeking expression, I was almost devastated, and hardly even able to think about the reasons for its sale. Two years later, I am still amazed that some of those same feelings are with me even as I felt them that last day. Walking from room to room, from the first floor to the second floor to the attic and down the back stairs to the cellar where once I had found bouncy blond curls of freshly planed wood and where one sunny October Sunday my father had died, I was resentful, sad, nostalgic, anxious, and, in the end, relieved, even a little hopeful. This is it -- the last time I'll do this. I couldn't stop the wish that time would wait for me to sift through these feelings, to answer them somehow.

Over the years this house had been for us so many things, some friendly, some not so. It had been a part of me and surely part of me belonged here. I thought of Mary and Warren in Frost's Death of the Hired Man, defining "home" in terms so separate yet so connected, and I knew now more than ever before what each of them meant.

As I stood later in the dining room where so many had gathered to celebrate family, I was filled with bitterness. Why should we be forced to sell this place -- my solace, my retreat, my center of strength -- to strangers who saw it only as a piece of property, an investment? How will they ever understand what this house means? How could these people know that my grandfather had handcrafted the woodwork? Why should they polish it and then step back to admire its glistening richness? They'd probably paint it white! Why should they care that the walls, so solid that my father swore when he had to drive the nails for pictures to be rehung when my mother redecorated, muted the sobs of a fat fourteen-year-old who had been hurt that day? And, besides, if they did know, how could they treasure all the splendid things about this house? They haven't lived here; I have!

I thought of the day just before Christmas, when the Branfords had stood at the back door. ("We know you're busy with all your last-minute junk, but we want to measure for wallpaper and stuff.") The mother had turned to her little girl and said, "Next Christmas this will be Heather's house." I could have throttled her! How could she, a stranger, have any idea what this house is like at Christmas? Who should she be here for Christmas? This is my house. Christmas is my birthday. And everyone comes here for Christmas! We even have a wreath on the door and lights in the windows just as we always did.

Today I can understand that resentment somewhat, but even now it still rankles. When I ride past the house, I find myself yearning to stop. Why, I can see me going up the steps, ringing the bell, walking through the door, and stepping across the threshold. (That's the one that came loose occasionally.) I can almost hear me asking, "Why are your shades always down in the living room?" My mother always kept them up, except overnight when the temperature was below zero. She felt that she "had the jump on the oilman" if she closed in the warmth in winter. Why did you pull up those yews near the dining room windows? I planted those for my father when he came home from St. Vincent after his second coronary.

Once inside the living room I'd see the mahogany staircase and recall sliding down the banister. Polishing it that way was more fun. I'd run back up again, this time dumping down on my grandfather's brown and peach satin puff. I did those things on Saturday mornings -- those were days "to tip your hat to." They were days for cleaning house and souls. After we had been to confession, my sister and I had our "help your mother-she's-been-doing-all-the-work-around-here" chores to do. As a teenager I had the distinct impression that my parents had, by divine decree, been given the obligation to reinforce at home whatever penance we had earned at church.

In my own haughty attempt to retaliate, I would invariably bring upstairs with vacuum and dustcloths, the record player and Tchaikovsky's violin concerto. As I went from one place to another, I would increase the volume until, at last in the dining room, I was assured that, in the kitchen, my mother was trying hard to ignore me and the music. Of course, I envisioned myself as soloist with the Boston Symphony, no longer a slave in the mundane kingdom of dustcloths.
In the dining room I would see my sister and me playing church, announcing communion time by clanging silver goblets so that they sounded more like cymbals than reverent bells. I would feel once more that terrible remorse I had felt the last time we did that. In my attempt to arouse the pious congregation, I had split a goblet and my mother had cried, saying, "Those were wedding presents. Daddy and I saved them for special events." The goblet had fallen near the same window where in winter on snow days we would jump out into big drifts.

The driveway was lined with snow on January 8, 1981, but not the same kind of snow. Instead it was hard and cruelly crunchy, packed hard by layers of ice. My sister and I sat on the window seats, she in the "little room" where not so long ago the piano was always busy and where the wall-length bookcase my father had built bulged with things now packed in boxes. I was far opposite, again in the dining room. The house was really empty now. The electricity had been shut off, and the afternoon before, telephone service had stopped, just after we had talked with my mother. The oil had been delivered so that the Branfords would be warm tomorrow. Martha and I had asked each other so often, "Have we done the right thing? Could we manage for a little longer?" Maybe a miracle would happen and my mother could leave Knollwood and return to her Saturday mornings -- biscuits, apple pies, macaroni and cheese, beef stew -- and we could be protected again by this house.

It was too late, though. This was the last time. The movers and the furniture were already on the Mass Pike heading for Connecticut, and we must be home before them. So the resentment, the sadness, the nostalgia, the anxiety would have to give way to relief, because it's over. We must go -- quickly now. Close the front door; try the knob to be sure it's locked. We don't have keys anymore. Heather and her family will be here tomorrow. We have made the right decision. We have the memories. Next Christmas it will be Heather's house, and one day when she leaves it, she, too, will have a treasury of remembered times here. I hope so. If not, it is, after all, only a house.

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Brendan looks up at me, his eyes saying, "you couldn't turn me down."

"Will you play ball with me, will you, Dad, will you?"

I put down my newspaper, lift myself out of the chaise longue, open the screen door, and go out of the porch on to the lawn. Brendan follows and places himself at the makeshift home plate that I made for him. Brendan, age five, Boston Red Sox cap planted firmly on his head so that his ears stick out at the sides, holds the large red plastic bat at the ready for my first pitch. I grin at the little pot belly that pushes out over the waist of the blue jean shorts, but I also admire the brown back and arms that glint in the sun.

As I grasp the light plastic ball that I am going to pitch toward him, I feel a little ridiculous -- a forty-nine year old man playing ball with a five-year-old boy.

"Fitch, Dad, pitch," Brendan shouts at me. He is a dictator and he makes his own rules. The rules are always in his favor.

I pitch. He swings and connects, sending the ball sailing above my head. I am purposely clumsy and miss the catch (Brendan would not take kindly to an out). I run after the ball as Brendan circles the homemade bases, gleefully laughing as he leaps over home plate.

"Home run, Dad, home run!"

"Boy, Brendie, you really know how to slug that ball," I say as I step up to the pitcher's mound to begin another round of feigned humiliation.

"You know, Dad, God makes it rain."

This statement is not surprising coming from Brendan. He is frequently given to profound commentary on subjects entirely unrelated to the matter at hand.

"That's right, Brendie," I concur, to avoid theological controversy.

Another pitch. This time he misses and tosses the ball back at me. He again swings the bat onto his shoulder and waits for my pitch.
"You know, Dad, you'll be a grandfather and then you'll die."

"Is that right, Brendie?"

"Yup. First you're little, then you grow up, then you're a Daddy, then you're a grandfather, and then you die."

THIS DIPLOMA IS HEREBY AWARDED TO BRENDA ROBERT WALSH IN RECOGNITION OF HIS FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS

DO YOU, BRENDA ROBERT WALSH, TAKE THIS WOMAN TO BE YOUR WEDDED WIFE, TO HAVE AND TO HOLD, FROM THIS DAY FORWARD, FOR BETTER, FOR WORSE, FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL LIVE?

THIS CHILD, SON OF KR. AND KRS. BRENDA WALSH, IS GIVEN IN HOLY BAPTISM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

"BREN, I DON'T THINK WE SHOULD TAKE THE BABY TO THE FUNERAL. YOUR FATHER WOULD UNDERSTAND."

"Dad, why don't you pitch? C'mon, Dad, pitch, Dad."

Brendar looks quizically up at me as I stand over him.

"What's the matter, Dad, why don't you pitch?"

I drop to my knees and fold my arms around him and kiss his cheek. Those marvellous soft eyelashes flutter at me.

"Hey, Dad, why don't you pitch?"

On a brittle February afternoon, bitter winds howled through white pines circling a secluded ice-capped reservoir. Thermometers reading below freezing the last few nights indicated they should take advantage of skating. On the ground, scattered with granite-hard patches of ice, they laced their skates, just she and Alan.

Lately inclement weather and work schedules made it hard for them to spend time together. They welcomed each other's company and the chance to be outside.

At the reservoir, thunderous bassoon sounds echoed from below the ice surface. Void of voices, the gray-white pond appeared ominous. Recent news of winter drownings restrained her from skating too liberally over the ice. Nevertheless, she admired the way Alan immediately raced down the center. Zig-zagging from side to side, he looked so fearless.

Skirting the edge, she tilted her head downward, coaxing the blades upright. Monotonously, she alternated between a careful figure eight and a backward slide for variation.

Frequently, she would lift her head, catch his eye and wave. For a while she watched his distant and swift gliding at the narrow end of the pond, wishing she had no fears.

Two day hikers appeared off the shore at the far end. Walking sticks in hand, they took a short cut, kiddy-corner across the ice toward a trail which continued through the pine trees. Biting wind, wooing its way through her overcoat, reminded her of the raw air. Knowing others were nearby helped her feel less cold.

"Hey! Watch it! Thin ice!"

She spotted Alan. Treading water, he was submerged up to his chin. From the distance, his head looked like a buoy bobbing on rough waves. His arms were grasping frantically.
for a solid edge of ice to lift himself out of this spring water. One of the hikers quickly crawled on the ice toward him, holding the long walking stick in front. She cautiously headed that way wondering how close to get. What would she do? She felt numb with fear.

In a matter of seconds, no one helping, Alan pulled himself out of the cold water. He got to his feet and skated rapidly to the car, the sharp wind penetrating his soaked clothing.

Catching up with him, she could see blood streaming from his nose and lips. Both attempted clumsily to unlace their skates. But it was futile. His skin was swelling red and raw. The laces were taut. They were wasting time.

"I'll take you home," she said. "You need a hot bath."

"Yea. You're right," he said handing her the keys. Carefully she walked him to the car. Opening the door to his '67 Ford, she heard it creak and wondered how long it had been since she had driven a standard.

Her body pumping adrenaline caused her to forget she was wearing skates. Alan's teeth chattered as he slowly worked off his. "Slow down," he said, "I'll be all right." The old car rocked viciously from side to side as she raced down the gravel road away from the secluded reservoir. The 10-minute drive seemed longer.

Once pulled up into his driveway, she felt she couldn't move fast enough. Consciously pacing herself, she managed to see him out of the car and to the side door of the house. There she fumbled desperately with the keys until he pointed out which one to use. Then once inside, she sprinted upstairs to start filling the tub.

His down jacket felt lead heavy as she pulled it off him. Surprised, she saw it kept the upper part of his body dry. With his socks and corduroy pants sticking to him like paint, she had to tug firmly to peel them from his numbing legs.

Aware his steaming-warm bath was ready, he climbed in and now relaxed. But her adrenaline continued to pump fear. Then it was his turn.
At the front of the auditorium, instruments are being tuned. She talks to someone who does not appear to respond. Undaunted, she removes her violin and waits for her turn to be tuned. It never comes. She is just seven and so much shorter than the rest. She returns to her seat wearing a broad, uncharacteristic smile, walking with an exaggerated step. I have seen that smile before.

A broadly grinning child, alone in her backyard, struts around the perimeter hoping someone in this new neighborhood will notice what a happy person she is, someone who will come. I am watching her through the kitchen window, overwhelmed by her loneliness and the futility of her little act. No one comes, and I can do nothing.

Orchestra members are assembling on stage, and she is dwarfed by their number and nearness. I find a sandaled foot and trace it up to the familiar ponytail bouncing into view from behind the row of second violins. She is third violin, third row, and plays in three of the seven pieces. They are boring pieces, not at all like the lively minuets and gavottes she delights in at home. She is pretending to play the first violin solo by bowing the wood side of her violin. The music teacher says her name. Defeated, she brings her violin back to rest position and shrugs. It is a barely perceptible movement, yet the futility of the gesture is reminiscent of another time.

"What do you mean you don't want any of these dresses?" She says nothing more, but I see her tiny shoulders move and hear a short sigh. We are back-to-school shopping, and she looks so little-girl-perfect in a plaid pleated dress with a starched white collar. On the dressing room hook is a delicately hand-smocked creation. She is cranky, but I am enjoying this.

She tries again. "Mommy, I don't like these dresses."

"Nonsense, Sarah. You look great in them. Mommy used to have a plaid dress just like this when she was a little girl. It was her favorite."

"But Mommy," she persists, "they're for me, not you."

My enthusiasm crumbles. She is right.

It is almost 4:30, and Sarah has yet to play. I note her unnatural stillness. It screams to me across the emptiness. I remember the pride I felt earlier when a friend said, "Sarah must be one of the youngest children ever to play in the town-wide orchestra, isn't she?"

I move to the front of the auditorium and interrupt the teacher. "Excuse me, Sarah has an appointment."

She is peering over the second row, bewildered, unsure. When the teacher nods, all her confusion dissipates. She bounds to her case, stashes her instrument and grabs my hand.

Once in the car, she asks, "Where are we going, Mommy?"

"Where would you like to go?"

"McDonald's?"

"O.K. And you don't have to go to orchestra, anymore. O.K.?"

"O.K.!"
A MAN AND HIS GUITAR
Deborah Hall

The man walks into the room and closes the door, glad now for the quiet and privacy. As he turns on the overhead light his expression is rather serious and his body seems tight, perhaps from his training responsibilities at the hospital.

The room that he stands in is a small one and contains only a few objects: a bed, a desk with several books on it, some prints of the sea that hang on three of the four walls, and a bureau. The wall without a print has a window and in front of the window hangs a thriving asparagus plant, its greenery rising high above the window top, then cascading abundantly to the floor.

Propped in one corner of the room is a guitar. The man walks over to pick it up, caressing its long, slender neck and wide body. As he does, the light depicts how handsome he is, even beautiful. His face has a strong browline which blends into high cheekbones, the angles then tapering to a distinct jawline and prominent chin. His dark eyes shaded by long, curving eyelashes are somewhat slanted and match the darkness of his hair. His eyes look tired, not filled with their usual luster.

The man sits down on his bed now, guitar in hand, and begins to play softly. But his ear soon recognizes the discord of the notes and he knows that he must tune his fine instrument. With slightly furrowed brow he works at the sounds that he desires and when he is satisfied he begins to play again.

From silence the room is transformed to a world of folk song. The man's sensitive fingers pluck shyly at first but then he remembers the closed door and before long the sounds of Eric Anderson and James Taylor become full and rich and take on a cadence that is both confident and strong. As he begins to play "Mr. Bojangles," the tension melts, first from his body and then from his face and mind. His expression is one of content and his breathing grows deeper and more relaxed. There is even a soft glow in his once tired-looking eyes.

The young man of thirty-one is all alone now in this world of childlike pleasure. He begins to sing with his
A Northeast Blow
Gloria Meyering

The sun's brilliant reflections off choppy waves cast dark shadows in each curl, painting bold strokes of blues and silver. The day began with strange sensations heralded by the Northeast wind. Storm warnings predicted for late that afternoon discouraged our having breakfast with other boaters who rafted up with us overnight. Without delay, Jack hoisted the mainsail, and we waved to our friends. When the sail reached the pinnacle of the mast, our craft pulled swiftly from the mooring and was maneuvered skillfully through a busy Port Jeff's cove out into the sound.

A small sloop anchored in the mouth of the channel carried only one passenger. "Sailing alone?" Shouted Jack as we slid past.

"Yep, the kids have things to do... my wife's lost interest."

"Well, you've got enough wind for two hands."

These last words were almost out of earshot. The sound raised gently with long rollers swept by the wind. Wisps of clouds formed in circles intermittently blocking out the sun's warmth. Jack concentrated on the bearing while I stepped into the galley for foul weather gear. For a brief second, I thought of the lonely Sunday sailor. Jack could have been that man if I didn't try to overcome my fear of the sea.

The few steps back on deck took studied balance and strong hand grips to pull me along. Powerful rollers leaped the bow sending clouds of spray over the cockpit. I reached Jack half blinded by the salt in my eyes and helped him with one sleeve at a time. He needed tight control on the stubborn wheel which now pulled erratically in different directions.

About a half hour out from the port, our boat adjusted to rhythmic bobbing motion, and we rode her like a bucking mustang.

"I don't see any ships," I shouted, "do you?"

"Try the binoculars," he answered almost too calmly.

That seemed sensible. I slipped sideways toward the aft cabin and probed with my fingers through clothing for the #3 mast. Half crouched, I focused on various points trying to find an outline of something out there. Blankets of grays mixed with swirls of white mist blurred the horizon. I strained my eyes to see an image. Perhaps our friends who left only minutes after us would be closing in on our position.

"Nothing, I can't see a thing." I tried to keep the hollowness out of my voice.

"Plenty out there... keep watch!"

Conversation stopped. It was futile to scream above the howls and billowing sails which strained at the mast fittings. I held the jib sheet spilling wind whenever possible. The hull echoed like a drum as the rollers growing in size and strength beat against it. My heart pounded in unison. If possible, I wanted to turn a deaf ear to these frightening sounds. The boat, through monotone groans, recalled this onslaught. Fear crept into my soundest reasoning.

"What can we do, Jack?" I screamed.

"Do my best." His lips were tightly sealed against the spray.

I heard low moans before I realized that they were coming from me.

"Take it easy, will ya?"

"O.K. It was a weak reply. Panic seeped slowly throughout my senses. I wanted to release this grip of fear, yet the storm racing grew louder to my ears. Gradually, a small shaft of light flooded me with warmth as it broke through the mist, and I felt free to pray.

"Oh Lord, why didn't we wait out this storm?"

A series of tumultuous waves swept over us, on after another shifting our direction and keeling our hull almost on its side. I lost the sheet clutched in my hand as I slid into the deck. Jack bent into the force with his back secured against the gunwale, his long legs stretched firmly against the opposite side. We were still safe, not washed overboard. This little victory triggered a smell of relief.

Now, I was angry! I wanted to show some fight.

"You won't get your way, No Way!" I shouted the surrounding fury. For the first time since we were ensnulfed in the storm, Jack laughed, "Go get them, kid!"
He tightened my lost sheet, righted the ship and pulled the wheel back on course. Under his command the small craft groaned by the force of the wind and the pounding waves. In the voluminous noise we almost ignored the sharp, definitive crack of steel breaking under stress. Jack knew we now had serious trouble since the wheel would not respond, only spin loosely.

"Glo, Can you pull down the mainsail?"

"I can't, I can't go up there, I'll wash over!"

"O.K. I'll do it. Start the engine."

Our boat floundered, rolled and pitched as I pulled furiously at the engine cord. Finally it caught, and the whirl of its motor savored a false security. Without a rudder the six horse-powered engine was useless. When I looked up, Jack was kneeling over half the sail while the remainder convulsed over his head.

"Glo, get my pills on the table." He said it slowly.

"Oh no, God, no!"

I threw myself into the cabin, stretched my arms under the table to search for the small container. The cabin culled the chaos of the storm. Supplies, scattered like broken glass fragments, littered the floor. The vital container with Jack's medicine was obscured from touch or view. I crawled crab-like feeling everything for that round, familiar, cylindrical shape. Sobs coursed through the words caught deepiy in my throat.

"I can't find it! I can't! I repeated over and over again in desperation. I heard him whisper, "Look in the sink well, please."

On my knees now, both hands free to rout the myriad of small items that fell into the sink, I tried to control my frantic motions. My eyes, blurred with tears, refused to focus on anything that resembled the tube. "It's O.K., I'm feeling better."

His words lifted me halfway out of the cabin. I asked incredulously, "You're sure?"

"I'm O.K.

Balancing on my toes, I searched his face and knew whatever happened to him had passed away. Perhaps it was a silent sound, but something made me swine around just in time to sight a long, sleek, forty-foot ketch move near. Fortunately, the horn was still locked in its rack. I pulled it forward and save three quick blasts. The alert caption on the ketch heard these reports and waved his hand in recognition.

I'll never forget the words he finally shouted, "Coast Guard is on its way!"

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**MY WIFE WAS NOT A MEMBER OF THE WEAKER SEX**

RALPH J. WADSWORTH

It is a well-known and long-established fact that women are the weaker sex. Sugar and spice, not puppy dogs' tails. Throughout much of the world's history women have been the civilizers, the softeners of man's brutality and force, the guardians of the concept of family. The exceptions to that picture are so exceptional that they make great literature. We are still capable of sitting slack-jawed in horror through a performance of Medea because we find it difficult to accept the idea of a woman capable of child murder. If Jason had killed his children, the play wouldn't have lasted a year, never mind centuries.

It may be helpful, however, to examine these well-known "facts", no matter how long established, to see if perhaps they belong in the same factual category as an earth that is flat, a moon that is basically made of a cream-cheese like substance, or the use of an onion string around the neck to ward off plague.

My wife was born and brought up in Louisiana. She had the magnolia and honey exterior that many Southern women learn to show the world, but the inside was all strength, iron and rock. When my daughter was hit by a car while she was riding her bicycle, I flopped around between indecision and panic. My wife was Gibraltar, calmly making fast and sound decisions. When there was any kind of family illness or crisis or decision, my wife handled things while I diddled around giving a bush league imitation of Hamlet.

Now if women are the weaker sex, is my wife's strength a anomaly, a unique trait that only she had? Or perhaps the truism of female weakness may not be so true.

Looking back now, I can trace my slowly developing but constantly growing awareness that my wife possessed strength equal to or greater than mine, using any and every definition of strength except physical. Strength of purpose or character, the ability to endure, strength of conviction, the capacity to hold us together as a family, firmness or steadfastness of will -- these
abstractions became real to me as I watched the force and power with which my wife effectively met the large and small tests of our life together.

But perhaps I am one of the few lucky ones. Perhaps most women are weaker, dependent on superior male insight or logic or steadfastness or whatever. Perhaps our business, social and cultural traditions that make board rooms almost exclusively masculine are based on sound experience, rather than comfortable but unexamined myths.

Even a casual search through history or literature provides us with evidence suggesting that Medea may be the rule rather than the exception, not in regard to the murder of her children, but in the astonishing strength of purpose she brought to bear.

For example, can anyone really like or admire Romeo? Juliet, however, is another case entirely, and surely Hester is a magnificent contrast to wimpy Dimmesdale. I must also confess to a perhaps unusual liking for Lady Macbeth rather than her husband.

The real world, not just the world of fictional characters, provides us with additional examples. Indira Gandhi, Golda Meir, and Margaret Thatcher are three names that come readily to mind. Even silly and superficial Jacqueline Kennedy left almost the entire western world speechless with admiration for the way she met the tragedy of her husband's assassination.

My experiences with the women in my family, together with a consideration of other women, literary or historical, more and more convince me that being a homemaker may be the best training ground for decisiveness, firmness of purpose, strength. Although a man may have a decision-making job, he is buffered and protected by advisers, a chain of command, consensus, boards, and committees. It's a rare man who doesn't work with these kinds of safety devices. A housewife and mother, on the other hand, makes thousands of decisions every day, decisions necessary for the health, comfort, and safety of her family and she makes them alone. As a society we place more value on the making of money than the maintenance of family, so most housewives apologize for being just a housewife. That job, however, may be the best training ground for strong, decisive human beings.

Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse makes another argument for the power and force of the female. The first half of the book shows a serene, loving, relatively happy family, which the mother singlehandedly holds together. The second half, after the mother's death,
HONEYMOON SEPARATION
Jeannine B. Gorman

As Lynn slid over to the driver's seat, Ken kissed her and said, "Try to stay here, honey, but if you have to move, just go around the block and I'll meet you back here in a few minutes."

Newlyweds, Ken and Lynn had arrived in Virginia late the previous night. They had toured Williamsburg's historic spots that morning and wanted to bicycle around town the next day, so Ken had run into the Inn to reserve two bikes. Lynn was double parked on a narrow, two-way street, hoping he'd hurry.

"Oh no!" Headlights loomed in the rear view mirror. "He'll never be able to go around!" The 18th-century street, better suited to horse and buggy, just didn't allow for three cars abreast.

With a quick, hopeful glance toward the Inn, Lynn slowly inched forward. No sign of Ken! The car behind followed closely as if the two were coupled on a track.

"Please, mister, will you get off my tail!" Lynn nervously advanced up the street, reassuring herself that she'd simply circle the block.

She took the first right and watched for the next street. As she approached it, she couldn't believe her eyes. It was a one-way, but coming toward her instead of leading away. For just a moment she panicked and in that panic missed the next turn. She knew that now she was really in trouble. There was no immediate avenue back to the Inn, and she was getting further and further away from her original spot. The family joke about her lack of sense of direction wasn't funny now. Lynn had the well-earned reputation of having the homing instincts of a blindfolded gooney bird.

She checked her watch. Fifteen minutes had passed. "Surely Ken's reserved the bikes by now and is standing on the corner waiting for me!" Lynn's concern about how worried he must be was the greatest cause of her own nervousness. After all, she knew she was fine!

Traffic was heavy but slowly moving right along. There was no opportunity to stop and ask directions. The butterflies in her stomach fluttered to her throat. Tears brimmed and spilled over. Minutes and miles passed; dusk began to set in. Lynn became aware that she was leaving Williamsburg proper, but in her confusion could do nothing except follow the flow of traffic. She felt as though she were on a treadmill and couldn't get off.

Meanwhile, Ken was pacing -- back and forth -- first in front of the Inn, then along the side. "Why did she have to move?" he kept asking himself. "I was only gone a minute!"

His initial annoyance quickly turned to concern and then to worry. The past 20 minutes felt more like that many hours. Ken considered setting out on foot and even walked up the block to the corner where he knew Lynn would have turned right. But then he reasoned that he should go back and wait where he had left her in case she returned and found he wasn't there.

At about this time Lynn was several miles outside of town. The village streets had gradually become a two-lane highway. The steady pace of the moving traffic had calmed her a bit, and she was watching for the first chance to stop and ask directions or at least turn around and head back.

Lights appeared up ahead, and Lynn could just make out the sign: Colonial Williamsburg Visitors' Center. She and Ken had stopped there to pick up brochures that morning! Driving into the parking lot, she spotted a shuttle bus that carried tourists back and forth between the center and town. The driver was standing outside smoking a cigarette before boarding. Lynn's voice was shaking with relief as she asked him to direct her back to the Inn. "Just follow me, lady, I'll get you right back." Lynn thanked him and got into her car. As he pulled out of the lot, she maneuvered behind him.

The minutes stretched to 45. By now Ken was almost physically sick with worry. He didn't know where to turn. His heart leaped with every glimpse of green rounding the corner and sank with the realization that it wasn't Lynn. Never had he felt so desperate and so alone. Thoughts of calling the police occurred to him, but he repressed them. It was just too ominous, too drastic a move -- one that just might cause his fears to become reality.

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Finally, Ken couldn't stand the waiting any longer. Compelled but reluctant, he went into the Inn and phoned the station. The policeman who arrived several minutes later wasn't much older than Ken, but his calm made him seem years older.

"We'll find her, mister. No one's ever been kid-napped in Williamsburg," he replied reassuringly when Ken dared to voice his worst suspicions.

Questions were asked and descriptions furnished. The officer radioed the information.

"Do you have a picture, sir?" Ken just shook his head. For some strange reason, he felt that producing Lynn's picture would be admitting that the worst really was possible. The officer must have understood because he didn't press further. The two men got into the cruiser, Ken in the front passenger seat.

"Okay, tell me again what you said as you got out of the car."

As Ken was calling the police, engine and caboose were proceeding toward town. Lynn was plagued by the thought of Ken's anxiety. Almost an hour had passed since they had kissed goodbye.

The bus turned right and stopped to let passengers off. After a couple of blocks it turned left and stopped again. This time someone embarked. Lynn soon realized that she was on a milk train instead of an express. She became more and more edgy with each moment's delay. She glanced at her watch every two minutes. Her annoyance grew, and she wanted to pull out and pass but dared not. Her fear of losing her way checked her impulse to overtake her guide.

Finally, after what seemed like an eternity, they approached an intersection. The bus driver made stabbing motions with his left forefinger as he crossed through. Lynn recognized the street up ahead as the one from which she had so confidently emerged in the daylight well over an hour ago. Within a few seconds after turning left, she spied a police car advancing slowly toward her. At the very same moment, her brand-new but long-lost husband jumped from the cruiser and ran toward her. She rolled down the car window and the officer asked simply, "Are you Mrs. Daniels?" Before she could answer, two strong arms reached in through the open window. "This is my wife. Thank God you're all right," repeated Ken over and over again.

The policeman smiled and waved them on. They did bicycle the next day, but Ken took no chances. When he went to pick up their wheels, he chose a tandem.

I am certain that the architect of my school was clair-voyant. In any straight-forward school building you should be able to walk in the front door and see the office. It should be right in front of you telling you that here is the seat of authority. The architect of my building erected a brick wall in front of the front door.

When you walk into my school you are faced with two options. You can either go right, or you can go left. Unless, of course, you have to go to the bathroom. In that case you go behind the brick wall, where the lavatory is. If you choose to go left, you will encounter a long hall and more brick wall. If you choose right, you will encounter a long hall and a glass wall. In the center of the glass wall there is a door. Nothing tells you what is behind the door, but I will. It's the office.

I think that one reason I feel that the office is associated with deviousness, is it's out-of-the-mainstream-of-activity- ness. I don't want the office in my school to be hiding. I want it to be out their marching, leading the parade. I guess it has something to do with my expectations about what a school office should be.

I think the school office should have two main functions. It should provide leadership, and it should provide services. To some degree, I suppose, my office does this. It tells me when to teach classes, when to plan for classes, and when to eat lunch. It does this because all schedules emanate from the office. It provides services because whenever a student, who has been told he may only purchase lunch tickets on Friday, forgets to buy them, the office sells him lunch tickets on Monday. Here again though, it seems there is a conflict between the office and my expectations. In my own, apparently selfish way, I feel that leadership should be in the areas of educational instruction, and that service should somehow include getting dittos out sooner than three days after the lesson has been taught.

There is another area of conflict that I have with the office. I have previously suggested that the office should provide leadership and services. This indicates that I view the office as an adjunct to the primary purpose of instruction. I find that once again I have an erroneous view of the role a school office plays. My school office composes notices. These
notices are of two kinds. There are notices that are passed out which remain in school. There are also notices that are passed out to go home to the student's parents. These notices have two things in common. They are all distributed to the students, by the teachers, and they all have errors.

Last February 10th I passed out seven different notices to my various students as they paraded out of my room. Three of these forms were to go home to parents. There was not one form with three different notices on it, there were three forms with one notice on each. Two of the three forms had been passed out two days previously, but there had been erroneous information on them. Two of the forms were to be filled out by the students, but due to the method of distribution (me chasing a class down the hall) more copies wound up on the hall floor than in the student's hands. The remaining notices, of which I only had ten copies for thirty students, remained on my desk. I haven't attempted to calculate the time spent in passing out, or waiting for notices, mainly because I've been too busy passing them out or waiting for them. Incidentally, on February 10th, not one of the notices said "Happy Birthday, Don."

There are many areas of conflict between my enemy the office and me. Some are of such magnitude that few of you would take me seriously. Some are more trivial than I have mentioned here. I think that the situation can best be summed up in an incident involving the inter-com. As you may, at this point, suspect, communication is not one of the strengths of my school. This fact is enhanced by a faulty inter-com system. (The cheapest money can buy, as we are all aware of the budget battles the building committee had.) At present, the prime fault of our system is that it cuts in and out and makes everyone sound like a poor imitation of Foster Brooks.

One afternoon, minutes before the buses were to arrive, and following the daily notices, the strident voice of the secretary in charge of the office came over the inter-com, "Any who trouble with or her inter__, and can't hear__, please call__office."

I realize that ideological conflict with the office is not going to be resolved. There are going to be more than necessary notices going home with errors, to be corrected on subsequent notices. I am continually going to be told at teacher's meetings that I should make every effort to cooperate with the office "because they, of course, have a tremendous amount of work to do that you are not even aware of." The staff is going to continue to push for new procedures that can help alleviate some of the problems which exist between the office and staff. The new procedures will be taken under advisement by the administration. They will be accepted as sound by the administration, and the office will continue to operate in their "but-we-never-
A VICTIM OF FEAR
Beverly W. Harris

It was one AM and Barbara found herself alone in the middle of Rome. Only minutes before, the bustle of the crowds at the evening performance of Aida at the Baths of Caracalla had flowed around her and she, with the exhilaration of the performance still enveloping her, floated along with them. Groups of people broke off from the main crowd, and then, suddenly, the last of them seemed to evaporate completely.

Barbara stepped up to the bus stop and surveyed the wide boulevard in both directions. The oleander leaves fluttered in the light breeze. She noticed that they formed haloes around the street lamps. Why were there no other passengers for the bus back to her hotel?

A car pulled up to the curb about thirty feet from where she stood. Barbara noticed with disdain that it was not the green and black cab her guide-book had said were the only legal kind. All others were scalpers, wildcats, who bilked "rich" Americans. She was glad of the warning.

After a moment, the door of the car opened and a short, thick-set man emerged. He lit a cigarette and stepped out of the shadow which obscured the car almost completely.

"Machina?" he offered.

Barbara took a backward step and hugged her purse under her arm. The man advanced to within ten feet of her. She could see clearly now the leathery skin, the crinkles around his eyes, his plaid sport shirt open to the belt buckle.

"Machina?" he repeated. "Taxi?"

Barbara maintained a stiffened poise. "No thank you," she responded.

"You American, eh? You gonna need a taxi, you know," he went on. "All da buses stop at midnight. No buses...no taxis. Not at dis hour." He briefly consulted his watch. "A quarter a two."

Barbara looked at her own wrist. It was actually 1:35. A sinking feeling came over her. She was more tired than she thought.


Barbara listened detachedly. The lights going by, and the drone of the motor were taking their toll; her head nodded. Even the strange hotel bed would feel good tonight.
All at once Barbara felt her head jerk up. Had she dozed off? In the blue glare of a passing street light she tried to make out the time on her watch. 3:15 AM.

Three fifteen! A pang of fear prickled through her. It had taken the crowded, stuffy bus only fifteen minutes to take her from the Casa della Conti to the Baths, even stopping for passengers along the way. Why was it taking so long to get back? She moved to the edge of the seat.

"Where are we?"

"Not far now, Miss," said the driver.

Indignation began to replace the fear Barbara had felt. "Where are we?" she demanded. The edge in her voice cut the driver.

"Very near, very near," he hedged.

"Near what?" Barbara heard the pitch of her voice rising. The car stopped.

"Here you are. Now you're home."

Barbara peered out of the car window. Was it the lights? Was it her imagination? Nothing looked right.

"This is not my hotel," she said.

"This is where you ask to go," countered the driver. "This is da Hotel Contini."

"I didn't say that," Barbara cried. "I said 'Conti', Casa della Conti. Don't you know where that is? You don't, do you..."

I know Rome, all da streets, all da hotels, but you tell me Contini..."

Barbara was outraged. "Why would I tell you...never mind. Take me to the Casa della Conti." She enunciated the final word as if she were speaking to a child or someone hard of hearing.

The car jerked forward. They rode in grim silence for a while. Barbara's purse hung on her shoulder like a leaden weight.

"And you're not getting a cent more than the 600 lira!" she snapped. It cut the silence like a knife. The car screeched to an abrupt halt.

"Here's da hotel," said the driver, curtly.

"There's your money," Barbara dropped it onto the front seat.

"I don't want da money," he said, scooping up the coins and handing them back.

"Keep it," insisted Barbara. But, in spite of herself, when the coins fell, her hand was there catching them. She opened the door and was barely out before the car roared away down the darkened street and wheeled noisily around a corner. Tears of relief sprang to her eyes. She wiped them on her sleeve, and looked around.

She froze. Where was the Casa della Conti? This was just an ordinary street corner like all the other corners in suburban Rome. Narrow cobbled streets, pastel stucco facades, shuttered windows all impossibly alike. Barbara squinted at a small street marker high on the wall of the corner house. The shifting shadows of the leaves blotted out the letters. Via something or other. It didn't really matter, she reflected bitterly. Her map was back in her hotel room. She had decided not to carry anything extraneous in her already bulging purse. The bus would take her and return her. There was no necessity for a map.

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"Here's da hotel," said the driver, curtly.

"There's your money," Barbara dropped it onto the front seat.

"I don't want da money," he said, scooping up the coins and handing them back.

"Keep it," insisted Barbara. But, in spite of herself, when the coins fell, her hand was there catching them. She opened the door and was barely out before the car roared away down the darkened street and wheeled noisily around a corner. Tears of relief sprang to her eyes. She wiped them on her sleeve, and looked around.

She froze. Where was the Casa della Conti? This was just an ordinary street corner like all the other corners in suburban Rome. Narrow cobbled streets, pastel stucco facades, shuttered windows all impossibly alike. Barbara squinted at a small street marker high on the wall of the corner house. The shifting shadows of the leaves blotted out the letters. Via something or other. It didn't really matter, she reflected bitterly. Her map was back in her hotel room. She had decided not to carry anything extraneous in her already bulging purse. The bus would take her and return her. There was no necessity for a map.

The street was utterly deserted. Barbara released a deep breath, half sob, half sigh. She made a conscious effort to stand straighter, taller. Maybe it would help her to think more clearly. God, she was tired. Barbara peered out of the car window. Was it the lights? Was it her imagination? Nothing looked right.

"This is not my hotel," she said.

"This is where you ask to go," countered the driver. "This is da Hotel Contini."

"I didn't say that," Barbara cried. "I said 'Conti', Casa della Conti. Don't you know where that is? You don't, do you..."

I know Rome, all da streets, all da hotels, but you tell me Contini..."

Barbara was outraged. "Why would I tell you...never mind. Take me to the Casa della Conti." She enunciated the final word as if she were speaking to a child or someone hard of hearing.

The car jerked forward. They rode in grim silence for a while. Barbara's purse hung on her shoulder like a leaden weight.

"And you're not getting a cent more than the 600 lira!" she snapped. It cut the silence like a knife. The car screeched to an abrupt halt.

"Here's da hotel," said the driver, curtly.

"There's your money," Barbara dropped it onto the front seat.
It would put off muggers. Oh, God. She hadn't thought of that. She began to examine the upcoming shadows. Was that someone at the next corner? Hope and dread mingled. But it was just a shadow.

Barbara stopped under a street lamp. This was ridiculous. She peered at her watch. Ten of four. Where had the time gone? Suddenly she saw a hotel. Not hers, but at least one of the type she was seeking.

The glass door was locked but through it she could see a night clerk, seated at a counter, head tilted back and propped against his hand. The whole weight of his head and torso were slumped against the wall. His mouth was open, but his eyes were closed.

Barbara knocked, decorously at first, then harder until she felt the glass wobble under the blows. She stopped and searched vainly for a bell or a button. She removed her shoe and rapped its heel on the glass. The clerk slumbered on.

"The hell with him," she stormed. "If there's one hotel, there must be more." She strode on. "If this were New York there would be cars, phone booths, all-night gas stations and restaurants."

In her anger, had she chosen the wrong direction? Barbara looked around her. The neighborhood looked disconcertingly like the one where she had first disembarked. Except that it was not. There was something decidedly different here. It was darker. The buildings, tightly packed against each other, loomed over the narrow street. A street light winked in the distance. She advanced tentatively towards it, but it seemed to recede before her. Just ahead, a shutter caught her eye. Even in the blackness she could see its disrepair. It hung crookedly on its hinge. Here and there a slat was missing, like the teeth on a dirty and discarded comb. One slat hung slightly askew, and through its triangular gap, Barbara imagined an eye, following her every move.

In the blind logic reserved for such moments, Barbara believed she could outrun him. But not down that narrow and ominous canyon into which she had been proceeding. She must get past him. She must get back to the sleeping night clerk, the ephemeral Italian in the nightshirt, back, even to the recalcitrant cabby.

Her dodge, calculated to be quick and dexterous, seemed ponderous and thick. She ran blindly, quickly, at first. Her heart was pounding. Her legs were like rubber. Her hip joints ached. The purse dragged at her shoulder.

Was he gaining on her? Was he even following? She didn't care. To run was to escape the night, the street, the whole experience.

Her legs could not go on. Great heaving sobs of exhaustion wracked her chest. Barbara slumped against the gateway to a courtyard. The gate was open. Why not go in. Get cornered. Give up. Her hand fell on the carefully lettered sign on the gate. It read, Casa della Conti.
SUNDAY MORNING
Sherrill M. Jamo

"I can't do it," my Aunt Lilian said.

Her face had a translucent, greyish tone, her eyes reflected nothing she looked at, but seemed filled with a vacantness. A moment of silence hung empty, suspended between us, as she waited for me to fill it with a reply.

"I can't either," I thought, but I said, "OK, I'll take care of it. Just be a few minutes."

Her hand gently pressed my arm, which was heavily sweatered against the vicious wind of the February day, a wind that seemed to invade even this sturdy, old house built for protection against the Berkshire winters.

"Just leave the coins in the dish," she whispered. "Your father used to play a little game with them when Gail's children came to visit and yesterday I could hear him running them through his fingers into the plate. I know it's a silly thing, but I'd like to have them."

The carpet leading upstairs was a burgundy and royal blue oriental that I remembered being there even when I was just a child, spending my summer vacations running with my cousins. We used to run everywhere, through the woods, to get home quickly in response to my aunt's ringing of the cowbell hanging off the kitchen porch, up these stairs to see who of the three would reach the top first. Today, I was in no hurry to reach the top of the stairs.

His room was on the left at the head of the stairs, just next to the bathroom. It had been his room when he first got out of the service after the war, and it became his room again when I drove him up into the Berkshires before Thanksgiving.

"Just for the holidays," he said.

The bed in the room was a lovely, old iron bed that had once been my cousin Bruce's. On Sunday mornings, very early, Gail and I would sneak into that bed with Bruce, and the three of us would giggle under the covers until Uncle Lawrence would tromp down the hallway and warn us all with a swat to separate and be quiet until a later hour. The bed now lay empty, the covers thrown back and rumpled, an impression still hollowed in the pillow.

A pile of blankets and quilts sat deflated on the floor. During this past week, even this great pile could not seem to make him warm. His shoes rested by the side of the bed, evenly lined up, heels to the bed, filled with puddles of empty socks.

On the bedside table, his set of false teeth grinned at me through a water glass, reminding me of the Cheshire Cat in Alice in Wonderland, mocking and unattached. I placed the suitcase, which he borrowed from my sister, on the bed, and began to place these items into the empty spaces. A picture of his wife, my mother, when she was sixteen, a box of candy with only three filled paper cups left, The Shadow of the Winter Palace by Crankshaw, a get well card from his grandson, still unopened.

"Just leave the coins in the dish," she whispered. "Your father used to play a little game with them when Gail's children came to visit and yesterday I could hear him running them through his fingers into the plate. I know it's a silly thing, but I'd like to have them."

That done, I turned to the dresser, avoiding eye contact with my image in the mirror, which now became another presence, watching my actions. His electric razor, dusted with fine beard hairs, a comb holding onto one strand of silver hair, an open bottle of after shave giving off a familiar fragrance. Yellowed and brittle, HONORABLE DISCHARGE FROM THE U.S. ARMY next to a Medicaid card. Hanging off the top of the mirror was a Pendleton shirt, given for Christmas, a full size smaller -- still too big, now sagging against the mirror edge. In the very center rested a wedding ring being looked at by a pair of eyeglasses. I packed them all, and the few clothes in the dresser, leaving behind the coins and the saucer.

Letting out a long sigh which left me as empty as the room behind me, I closed the door. The suitcase was light and no problem to carry.
BEFORE YOU CRITICIZE STUDENT WRITING...

Margaret Withey

Colleges have to take the untaught high school products and teach them to write. They say. Here sits a copy of an alumni quarterly from a prestigious Eastern liberal arts college. The writing is trite, redundant, and boring. High school teachers may not have taught the writers of the alumni quarterly to write well, but neither have the college professors. Nor have the writers learned since graduation from college. Before the adult critics of secondary school writing programs ask again, "Why can't these kids write a decent English sentence?" they should take a critical look at the writing of their own peers.

A generalization as half-true as that Johnny can't write is that John the college graduate can't write either. Of course the spelling and syntax in the alumni quarterly are correct, but the writing is turgid and dull. It is poor writing correctly punctuated. The sometimes-punchy prose of the eighteen year old secondary school senior has become the ponderous prose of the bachelor of arts, or master of arts, or PhD. The alumni quarterly is written by college graduates for college graduates who are presumed to be critical readers as well as competent writers. Yet the vapid content is a waste of time for both writer and reader.

The lead article in the quarterly introduces to the alumni the new president of the college, a man who "brings to the position an unusual combination of talent and experience." He has "played a key role." Corporations "have called upon his talents," and occasionally "he doffs his executive's attire in favor of..." The second article tells the alumni that the new chief was chosen from a "gratifyingly rich pool of applicants boasting a broad range of credentials." The new president deserves better than this -- at least a measure of individuality. The person chosen to head a prestigious college is a person to write home about. That's the function of alumni quarters to write home to "alumni, parents, faculty, staff and friends." For starters in revising, the writer of these articles could scratch "brings to the position," "no stranger to," "key role," "doffs his executive's attire," "rich pool of applicants," and "boasting." Better still, the writer could start over and this time say something.

The audience of this alumni quarterly is an impressive lot. One page of class notes chosen at random contains items about two company vice presidents, an executive vice president, two owners of businesses, a headmaster, a college director of development, two professors, a head of a large government agency, three rectors, a recipient of an Air Force medal for distinguished service, a first place marathon runner, a Johns Hopkins physician, the head of distribution for a large conglomerate, a congressman, and a senator. Writers for this audience should say something important and say it well. If neither the writers nor the audience knows the difference, the liberal arts community is in far worse shape than the secondary schools.

The most prolix writing in the quarterly was accomplished not by the editor and correspondents but by the search committee for locating a new president. According to the statement of qualifications, "the president should combine fiscal prudence with fruitful programmatic imagination." What is "fruitful programmatic imagination," and how is it determined? The president should be able to speak and write "with fidelity and ease." Good writers agree that good writing is not done with ease. The source of the problem may lie in that misconception. Among the qualifications for the presidency were "ability to listen to the many voiced interests that are to be heard in a small liberal arts college." More and more the verbiage obscures. Referring to a college budget in the millions the guidelines call for a president who "must be comfortable with numbers of this order of magnitude." Readers, on the other hand, should be uncomfortable with "numbers of this order of magnitude."

The report on commencement told of "proud parents" who "gathered to share in the achievements of the class...." The presentation of the class gift was one "highlight of the day." And the president was said to be "at the helm of the College." Writing of this order of magnitude is facile and insulting.

In fairness to college-educated adults and to alumni quarters everywhere, it must be admitted that one issue of one magazine is an insignificant sample. The one sample, however, raises questions about the competency to pass judgment of those college-degreed critics of the secondary schools who accept the bad writing of their peers but ask, "Why don't they teach grammar any more?" or complain, "When I was in school...." Secondary school teachers are still fighting both sentence fragments and bombastic prose, as they were a generation ago. A percentage of each generation will eventually write well; one hundred percent will remember the successes, overlook the failures, and stand ready to criticize the next generation of fledgling writers and those who try to teach them.
SUMMER REFLECTION
Margaret J. Carbonneau

For the third time in as many hours, my husband and I were driving towards the village to meet the bus arriving from New York. The concrete road wound its sweltering way along the contours of the lake, parting its softly lapping shores from the embrace of the forested rocky slopes. The onrush of the car cut the mid-June air and its sultry wake fanned the perspiration on our faces. An arrogant sun summoned warmed scents of pine, wild rose, and loamy earth forth into the air. With the growing heat the morning's antiphonal chorus of katie-dids and bull frogs had ceased, yielding its celebration of the quickening of summer to the languid droning music of the bees. The lake's surface throbbed a primordial dance, sensuous and lurid in rhythms of grey and white, as if it would entice the steaming granite peaks to plumb the cool mysteries of its depths. But the heat that lulled the world to lazy ease kindled the anguish and rage within me as we entered the village.

The village was a furnace, a limekiln purging the impurities from life. We waited at the bus stop. The relentless sun seared my skin and I felt the blood pulsating wildly in the veins beneath, frenzied to escape those torrid regions for the fear chilled chambers of my heart. My lungs labored with the air, resilient with heat and humidity. Time melted into eternity. Finally, the bus crawled into the village and panted to a stop.

The sun's glare on the windows denied us an interior view. We waited more slowly melting minutes hoping, Oh God, hoping grandpa was on this bus.

Grandpa was old and sick, much more sick than old, but too sick, too old, to be journeying alone, to confront this oppressive day. Congestive heart failure was filling his lungs with fluids, drowning him slowly in the waters of his own body. The medications that restored a normal rhythm to his heart - a heart enlarged by the demands it could no longer meet, that quieted the anginal pains, and that drained the lake forming in his lungs, were also eroding his kidneys. He could barely walk; the huge faltering energizer of his body strained to fuel his muscles with oxygen-depleted blood, and he wheezed and gasped from the exertion of a twenty paced journey. Unbidden, unwelcomed, memories of those terrifying times intruded when, even in repose, his body could not extract enough oxygen from the natural air and the vital gas had to be forced, undiluted, into his lungs, pressured into them through plastic tubes inserted in his nostrils. The doctors shook their heads in detached incredulosity, unable to explain how this congestively failing heart yet beat, how these flooded lungs yet breathed, how this sick, old man yet lived. But I knew. The diagnostic technology of medicine had no means to probe the miracle of his will. He was a stubborn old Irishman, this grandfather of mine, too stubborn to yield to a failing heart and ruined lungs, too strong-willed to die. Stubborn defiance himself was riding a New York bus that hell-hot muggy day.

The bus door gasped open. Two unwashed young men with wild beards and long unkempt pony tails emerged, claimed their army-surplus duffle bags, and sauntered off in the direction of the nearest tavern. Finally, finally, grandpa stumbled out. My worst fears subsided; he was here; he was alive. But as I saw him stagger a few dazed, directionless steps, and heard his rasping, convulsive attempts to breathe, my anger smoldered. By what reason, by what right had grandma commanded this dying man hither? By what insane course of judgment had he obeyed and come?

There was a phone conversation the night before, an unbelievable conversation between this man and his wife. The sudden vexation in my grandmother's voice had penetrated my serene enrapture in Chaucer and brought my attention to her words. I listened with shocked disbelief as she reproached him for indifference and demanded that he come to the cottage - as he had for more than two-score of summer weekends - to tend to its repairs. The man was dying and she expected him to come to clean the trap under the kitchen sink and paint the outside trim. When the receiver was nuzzled back in its cradle I accousted my grand-mother with my own demands for sympathetic understanding and common sense. But by some unfathomable twisting of reason and warping of reality she adamantly defended her position, insisting, "He shouldn't sit around all day doing nothing; I'm 76 too and I don't sit around." It was as futile as arguing with summer that it should not be hot. I could only hope grandpa would exercise better judgment.

He didn't. He was dying, yet he came. He had absconded from my mother's house early in the morning while she still slept, a truant little boy outwitting his guardian. He took a local bus to the Port Authority and from there another to Greenwood Lake. And now, at last, he had arrived in the steaming, sweating village.

He was wearing a jacket. Good God, it was a 95 degree June day with 90 percent humidity, and grandpa was wearing a jacket. But grandpa always felt cold now. I shivered too to consider the reason why. That damned jacket bespoke the unspeakable. The absurd garment hung too large on him, like a plum skin shrouded on a grape. He had shrunk, withered into himself. His shoulders slumped forward and in, as if to shelter that vulnerable heart and defenseless lungs. Deep folds framed
his mouth and his face was a bloodless, chalky grey-white hue. His knees began to buckle and he would have collapsed on the asphalt road, sticky in the sun, had not my husband caught him up.

Grandpa looked up at us, recognition lighting slowly in his eyes. "Paul! Peggy! Oh, you shouldn't have come; I would have taken a taxi." A taxi! Dear God! The taxi stand was a half-mile walk away. He would have needed the chariot of the gods and God himself to get him there - perhaps. Perhaps not. For as I looked into his pale blue eyes, I glimpsed again that interminable will glowing behind the haze. The reprimands I had instinctively formulated died on my tongue. We helped him, ever so discreetly, to the car.

A cooling breeze was rising off the lake as we returned to the cottage, and I was grateful. Grandpa was breathing more easily and normally. He mentioned that the bus ride was uncomfortable - how characteristically he understated all his sufferings. But for the most part he was silent, concentrating all his energies to the task of living, collecting himself into his will. I gazed out on the lake, taking in its rhythms, trying to understand the order of things. My grandmother was coping with grandpa's dying in the only way she knew how, by shutting out the reality of it. Cleaning out a trap, like all the other routine tasks she so unreasonably demanded of him, was tangible proof for her against that painful, unacceptable reality. Grandpa understood that, and he willed himself to give her the illusion of life. He was so stubborn - wonderfully, majestically stubborn.

Grandpa did clean the trap, and he supervised the painting my husband and I did.

He died the following summer.

I still go to the lake, with my husband and my children, to the cottage grandpa built when my mother was a young girl, the cottage that has been my summer home since infancy. There, in mid-June, the sun still blazes fiercely and still calls the smells and sounds of nature into the humid air. The lake still dances. It is all constant in its rhythms of change. Only the anguish and rage of that one summer have gone, for they never properly belonged to the circumstances of that bus trip, but to the fact of grandpa's dying. Like grandma, I was coping in my own way. Now, at the lake, in mid-June, when the katie-dids sing, grandpa is still very much alive for me, still much too stubborn to fade from memory.

Carol Drescher

"By an unfaltering trust, approach thy grave like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him, and lies down to pleasant dreams."

William Cullen Bryant

There were about twenty-six students in my American Lit I class and only ten or twelve minutes remained in the class, but I sat at my desk quietly sobbing and unable to continue the lesson. I had made a reference to real life in order for the students to understand literature. Expanding their horizons, exploring an idea with them, I found myself trapped by a tidal wave of personal grief that would not let me remain an objective lecturer for the end of this lesson.

My class had been studying, a bit reluctantly, the American romantic movement and were rereading "Thanatopsis" by William Cullen Bryant. They had been assigned the poem and study questions for homework. A few had done their homework, but most were finding this poem irrelevant and boring, as well as difficult, because of the nineteenth century style, so archaic to their TV oriented world. We explicated the poem together, line by line, with a liberal dose of interference and interpretation from me, when we came to the last few lines in which Bryant refers to wrapping oneself comfortably upon a couch and lying down to rest as an appropriate preparation for death, I queried the students: "How does Bryant feel about death? What is he saying? How does one die?" At fifteen and sixteen, with the span of a lifetime blossoming before them, most of my students couldn't identify with Bryant's view. After all, they were not preparing to die.

I said, "You know, this past summer I had a very real experience in which I recalled this poem and spoke words to my father quite similar to some of these lines. I knew he was dying. In fact, my mother and I had been called to his bedside by the
doctor in the hospital to face this realization. As he lay flat upon the white, antiseptic linens of the hospital bed with a heart-lung machine efficiently purring to keep him alive, I felt I had to say something final to him to make smooth the passage. I knew he was dying and naturally I was emotionally distraught. But I wanted to say something to him and for him, something that would somehow reassure him, not something for me. I bent over quietly and kissed his forehead. His eyes were closed and the last trace of color had already drained from his face. 'It's okay, Dad,' I said, 'you go to sleep now. You have a nice, long quiet rest.'

As I spoke these words with subtle control and reserve in my voice, only a handful of students toward the front of the room were still seriously attentive. One of them said, "Hey, listen! She's saying something interesting. What did ya say, Mrs. Drescher?" Another said, "Why don't you guys shut up and listen."

At that point I began to repeat the entire anecdote. "You know, this past summer when my father died I was searching for something to say to him. How could I make this passage easier..." Suddenly my mind was flooded with every vivid detail of those last moments and the words I had searched for. The intensive care unit of St. John's Hospital was right before me. My father's strong, bruised hands anchored to the bedrails by white ropes of gauze to keep him from rebellious rising during the last week of his semi-consciousness, burst into my mental view. So did his slightly brushed and greying eyebrows, his four wrinkles, firmly embedded in a brow of seventy-five years, the lightly greying brown hair, the eyelids which fluttered in reaction to my stumbling, parting words. I remembered the semi-alert, barely audible murmur he gave me in an attempted response. I imagined it had been a consent. Did he know it was time to sleep peacefully?

But I couldn't repeat the rest of this experience for them. It had lost all objectivity. I was reliving that last moment, my parting with a

father, and the contact I had maintained with an audience of twenty-six teenagers was tumultuously shattered by my overwhelming personal pain. "Thanatopsis" be damned! I had lost a father just three short months ago and my heart was shredded by the grief. My hands covered my face. I began to cry and could not stop. "Excuse me," I said, "I can't repeat this for you. It's too close to me."

I moved away from the center of the room and grabbed several tissues to absorb the flow of tears. Then I sat down at my desk, partially obscured from their view by a pile of books, and began to collect myself as the shuddering heaves of my shoulders subsided. The class was very quiet. Only a few muffled conversations in hushed whispers could be heard from the back of the room. "Oh boy," I thought, "I've really done it this time. I'll have to explain myself to them in the morning."

I'm not sure how the class reacted to that experience. For some it may have been unusual or upsetting. Maybe it will be one of those English classes from which they can only remember one piece of literature they've read, Bryant's poem. But for me it was an awakening. I had dropped that mask of objectivity quite unexpectedly. But I had grown. Sharing my vulnerability meant acknowledging my grief but also captured the essence of poetry for both student and teacher -- its supreme ability to move the human heart.
THE CAREER GAME

Trudy M. Mitchell

Today, with two hundred high school students, I played the "Career Game." Contrary to what Mother predicted, my survey indicates that I am most happy out-of-doors wielding tools and operating a backhoe, that a religious ecstasy awaits my next opportunity for hefting the Toro out of the drainage ditch.

While I may concede there are few relationships to rival that of a woman and her chain saw, I do find it hard to reconcile "a person who enjoys physical activity and likes the out of doors" with the child who prepared for Girl Scout campouts by withdrawing forty-three books from the library.

There is obviously a discrepancy between the person I was and the person I have become. The person I was spent agonizing hours decapitating cats in College Biology. I spent entire days calculating why, if two trains raced toward the same station in Oklahoma City at two and three hundred miles per hour respectively, then why were there two trains left at all, indeed, why was Oklahoma City still on the map? I was a bitter disappointment to my father, the engineer, who built bridges and did calculus in his leisure time.

The person I was regarded chemistry as an advanced form of cooking—a pinch of this, a handful of that, three "glugs" of acid to glue the whole thing together. The aroma of my concoctions perforated steel and blinded anyone within a radius of six feet. Only one experiment was worthy of note. It went "snap" in the bottom of the test tube and resembled human tissue. At the end of two weeks, it died taking with it my only opportunity for recognition in the field of science. I went back to pithing frogs.

I suppose if I were to mark a milestone along the way between the person I was and the person I have become, it would be somewhere close to the time I discovered the Phillipshead screwdriver. The knowledge of the Phillipshead screwdriver is comparable to knowledge of the semi-colon—using it separates the masterful from the mundane, the dexterous from those of us who thought vacuum cleaners were repaired by elves in the night.

The inevitable question is where will all this lead? Granted, the signs are ominous. My overalls are in tatters while the Alexandrian Quartet sits unopened on the shelf. I can no longer recall Byron's exact phrasing as he disdained the world and left in a huff for Europe. Only random facts remain. Was it Shelley who faked a murder attempt for additional press? Somebody traveled with a trained bear, the rest has receded into obscurity.

One eventually must question the validity of computer assessment. There are the intangibles to consider. Necessity, for instance, dictates my choice in tools. The chainsaw has replaced the sewing machine. Life dictates expansion. Who is to say that I may not yet solve the family of numerical equations that lie in the fictional vicinity of Oklahoma City? Facts about Byron are retrievable. We remember what is pertinent, applicable. I refuse to believe that I will not once again thrill to the detail of transformational grammar, the symmetry of Bacon, the conclusion of "The Seafarer." The signs are ominous, however. Is it possible to transfer these passions to another line of work?

In the final tally of the "Career Game" I think the numbers lied. The scales were most obviously tipped in the direction of change. Under the category "enjoys helping and teaching others," the four votes to the affirmative were a reassuring sight. It was the explanation for the twenty-one "no's" that bothers me.

EXORCISM

You want to kill a poet?

A cross won't do it
nor will the stake in the heart,
garlic or water sprung
from the hand
of that elderly man
in Rome.

I'll tell you the secret
of killing a poet.

You leave her alone
with her thoughts
for two weeks
at the end of which
you'll find her
prone
in her own manias
poems running like phospherent blood
across the floor.

Trudy M. Mitchell
EPIPHANY

I

In the novel, it is here
the heroine makes her brash decision.
She sits one earthen morning
on a porch step steamed in rose
and bougainvillia sipping tea.
By afternoon, she has thrown off
all the shackles of subtlety
and is packing for a quick trip
west.

This is the epiphany.

Her skin peels off like a blistered sheath
and she emerges wielding purpose
like a six gun posse
in open fire.

II

You tell me the cats would love
the Coast,
that Phineas, especially,
hasthat hungry look that craves
the San Francisco
art of being.

I know your struggle.

Which part of the dream to leave behind?
You try to tie the knot
of a thousand mile string
across three thousand miles.
It is your sense of order
that is at stake.
The library in your mind
is severely incomplete
with one piece left behind,
a first edition, let us say,
that breathes.

Trudy M. Mitchell

LET'S TALK

BY

Bob Namnoum

Walk into most classrooms across the nation, from kindergarten through completion of a PhD and you will find professional educators busy at the task of educating their students. They will earnestly be working at imparting TRUTH in their various domains. Some of their students may even be learning something and not all of them will be the ones with the A average.

Now pause for a moment and attend a class instructed by Don Murray at the University of New Hampshire, Roger Garrison at Springfield College or one of a growing number of educators involved in a totally different style of teaching. Horrors! Where are they? They are not tucked behind the traditional pedagogical blanket of the podium. In fact they are not standing in front of the class. Where can they be? They are busily at work discussing with each student the writing that is in progress. How can they feel justified "ignoring" the rest of the class and what are they doing anyway?

They are part of a style of teaching known as conference-centered classrooms which are gaining attention throughout the country as a structured way to improve students’ writing ability. It has been successfully evaluated as a means to teach students to write and think clearly.

What was wrong with the old way? First, the teacher never knew what the student’s problems were until the product was turned in. Then the teacher flooded the paper in a river of red ink, trying to convince the student, parent, colleagues, and God himself that not only had the paper been red (sic) but the teacher fulfilled his role by making the scholarly notations of AWK, FRAG, and WHAT? in the margins. What really happened was the placing of more distance in the learning. Another result of this pouring forth of more "teaching" to the student was usually a slam dunk into the circular floor hoop on the way out of class. The only thing the student would learn would be the grade, if he could remember that.

The logic behind this type of teaching is that’s the way it has traditionally been instructed. The class was filled with 25 individuals that were properly “funneled” through any given paper, were graded and then brought to the next funnel. No means were incorporated to isolate and follow up on errors until the next paper was handed in. This, too, probably contained the exact errors that were made in the previous assignment.

We are cognizant of another pedagogical fear in tradition—if no one else is doing it but the young rebel down the hall then how can one risk it. The teacher of today no longer has the
security to take risks, when the key word in many school systems is accountability. Because so few schools recognize the educational values of one-to-one conferencing, the few teachers that brave the new field have not gotten the luxury of "facts" and large doses of data to support them to prove this system works best. They only have the awareness that each time one of his students begins to work on a writing assignment, the teacher will be involved from the selecting of the topic to the completion of the paper. If you think traditional lecture methods are sound, then why is it at parties that long-winded people put everyone to sleep or empty the room?

Tradition abounds in the curriculum and nowhere in the curriculum guide does it give time for conferencing. To accomplish the goals of the guide, writing must be a foundation to the curriculum. To write is to think. Therefore, to discover if the curriculum is being successfully followed, the teacher needs to have the students write for proof of learning. The way conferencing helps is, in the pre-writing conferencing the teacher is better able to discover the errors of facts or thinking the student may have and can correct them before the writing begins.

But if the teacher is conferencing what is the rest of the class doing? They are probably writing or working on their ideas if the proper tone is set. Because you are in the room the authority is not diminished. Each student will be working on the same assignment, most likely with more enthusiasm, knowing full well that in a day or so it will be his turn and he needs to bring something to discuss. Yes, it will be, for you, an individualized instruction method but you will become more satisfied when you help realize the student's intellectual awareness.

The key to conference-centered classrooms is positive reinforcement. The student-teacher dialogue will create a concept of self-evaluation for the student. Together you will discover the strengths and weaknesses to his writing. He also will be aware of your writing priorities and can work towards achieving the goals you clearly establish while conferencing.

The work will be demanding and the teacher will find himself exhausted but the efforts will be rewarded by improved writing skills of the student. Interestingly the results of a Los Angeles Community College study showed not only did the students in conference-centered classes have greater gains in writing than students taught in traditional styles, but the morale was higher among teachers and students. Not only was learning taking place, but people were feeling good about it. Today, while we are under siege from all sides, this factor of morale may be more important than any ideal we memorized from a pedagogue of the past.

To be a second generation Irish-American, a Catholic and a teenager in the early 1960's almost necessitated an interest in the principles that made the Church work. To be that same Irish-American, still a Catholic and an adult in the early 1980's brings about that same concern with the workings of the institutional Church. The twenty years have brought about dynamic changes, but one principle has remained static. The Church has essentially the same view of women that it did twenty years ago. This entrenchment, this unwillingness to rethink, shortchanges everyone.

As a teenager in the early 1960's, I was wholeheartedly involved in the activities of the local parochial school and followed the advice every March, Vocation Month, to question the possibility of becoming a nun. At the same time though, I wondered why the Daily Missal generally described saints in terms of being virgins or martyrs, with virgins definitely predominating. At the time I wasn't quite sure what it was NOT to be a virgin, but I had the strong feeling that there was more to life than seeing it those exclusive terms. I wondered why there wasn't a St. Margaret, charitable woman, or a St. Felicitas, woman of courage, or St. Cecilia, spreader of joy. I also wondered why it mattered if Jesus' mother were a virgin or not. Couldn't it be said with equal fervor: Mary, acceptor of challenge; Mary, willing participant in divine plan; Mary, loyal mother of seemingly wayward son?

In those years, the highlight of the spring was the May Procession. The entire school enthusiastically participated, the community attended in droves and the main street of the affluent Boston suburb was blocked off from traffic. The star of the day was the May Queen who was the senior girl voted by her peers to be the saintliest. She had a crown-bearer who was runner up in saintliness and six other attendants who were voted to be in that appropriate range of sanctity. The May Queen would be attired in a complete wedding outfit: gown, veil, train and bouquet and would walk down the main street into the church and down to the altar - where no groom waited. I never quite understood the metaphor. Has it that the purity, the chastity of the bride in white, was so valued that the symbol was excerpted from the context of the wedding and made to be an entity in itself instead of an element in a marriage ceremony?

Now, twenty years later, our society is more complex one. People would not regard the symbolism of a May Procession or a catalogue of saints without comment. As a society we have undergone introspection due to the violent deaths of national leaders,
the involvement in Vietnam, the Watergate investigation and the rise of consciousness regarding blacks, women and third world countries. Whatever simple, unquestioning allegiance to a nation or church once existed no longer does. People are not apt to look to any institution for easy answers, and they are sure to reject an institution which does not even recognize the questions that are being asked. The Catholic Church may have lost its impact already and certainly will in the future if it does not address the issue of women and their role in the Church. Catholics no longer carry thick black missals to church and May Processions no longer exist in that Boston suburb, yet the underlying philosophy and the prevailing attitude towards women remain unchanged in 1982.

In 1982 - since Vatican II - the liturgical celebration has changed dramatically from that of twenty years ago but not in areas that affect the role of women in that liturgy. The vernacular has replaced Latin, the massive granite altars have been turned around now to face the people, guitars sometimes accompany the hymns in place of the organ, but the congregation still prays in unison "For us men and for our salvation" and young girls are still restricted from serving on the altar. Most importantly, although many Protestant and Jewish congregations now have women as celebrants and preachers, the Catholic Church still has only male celebrants, celibate male celebrants. Women attend theological seminaries, pursue the same studies as men because they feel called to ministry, but then are denied ordination because of their sex.

Two recent events serve as signs of the times. The laicization process, which existed since Vatican II and which allowed priests to stop functioning as priests, to marry and still remain within the Church, has now been virtually stopped. Therefore, Catholic priests do not have the previously sanctioned way to leave the priesthood and still stay within the Church. Meanwhile, married Episcopal priests who left their church in protest over its ordination of women are welcomed into the Catholic Church and are being reordained and now serve as married Catholic priests. A hierarchy seems to exist: best is to have an intimate relationship with a woman, next best is to have that intimate relationship but not to respect women as equals and last place goes to the bulk of all church congregations who are either women or those who live with women.

Equally limiting to the restrictions against women priests is the restriction against married men becoming priests. To say that a person who is given the talents and inclination to serve as a minister must also be a person committed to celibacy is to narrow the range considerably. To say that the category, the pool of resources must be broadened is not to deny the spirit of dedication of celibate people. That lifestyle is laudatory and carries potential for energetic creativity. It is in being mandatory that it loses its impact and is indicative of the attitude towards women which prevails in the Church.

This attitude seems to be behind a recent Vatican decision about a petition from the bishops of Indonesia. Indonesia is experiencing a serious lack of priests and has asked Rome to be allowed to ordain married men; otherwise, the people must go without worship or sacraments for long periods. The same Vatican which admitted married Episcopal priests refused the request of the bishops of Indonesia. It seems that the greater good was liturgical bankruptcy for the Indonesians rather than to allow men who are intimate with women to fill that ministerial need.

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From without the Church, this accounting can be seen as interesting and noteworthy, but how does one view it from within as a woman, as a Catholic, and as a critic? First, it seems one needs to define what the Church is. Is the Church the Pope who says that marriage is good but celibacy is better? Is the Church the group of European Catholic theologians who compiled the Dutch catechism several years ago in which sexuality was seen as an element of all persons and intent and charity seen as the ultimate gauge of conduct? Is the Church the Catholic women in Hartford who regularly and defiantly hold Eucharistic celebrations with one of them as celebrant? If one can belong to a group and not feel the need for uniformity of thought within that group, then "Church" can be an individual definition. The institution is not monolithic. A woman, a critic, can stay within the institution by drawing her own circle and saying that within that circle is the Church for her.

The larger issue of the formal, hierarchical Church dealing with the issue of human sexuality and the status of women, however, remains. Grave injustices are allowed when the institutional Church treats women as second-rate persons. An institution which speaks about justice to the world will not be listened to unless it has the strength to question its own history and practices. Only then can the Church be an example of moral leadership and a positive force in this society.
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