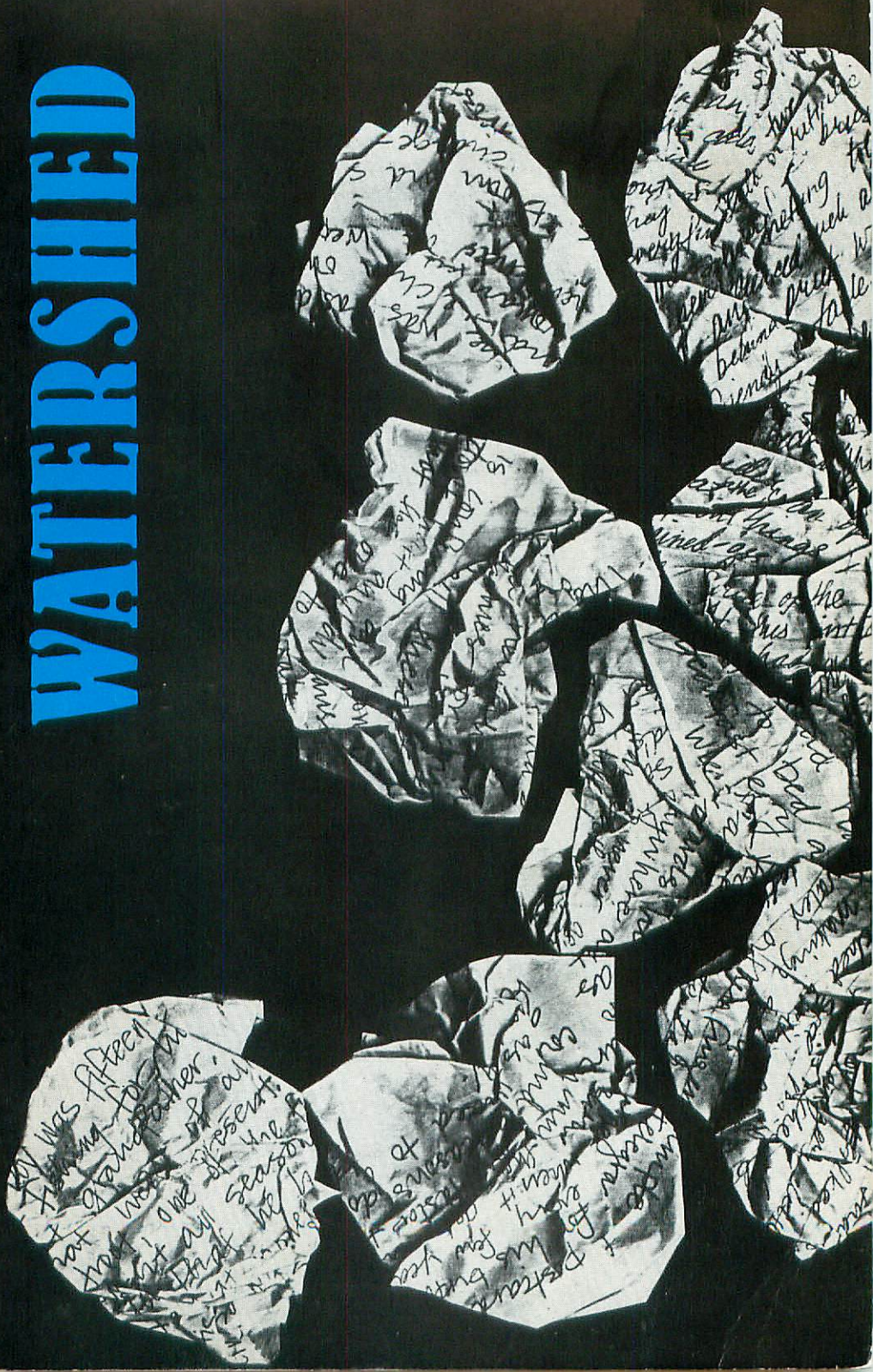


# WATERSHED



# **WATERSHED**

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## **Watershed**

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## Introduction

Eleven editors were responsible for this issue of *Watershed*—eleven very different editors. This publication, although the result of a true community effort, reflects the diversity of the staff.

The pieces selected were not chosen because they conform to a particular theme or a certain style. Rather we chose works on the basis of their ability to meet Emily Dickinson's criterion for effective literature: to "feel physically as if the top of my head were taken off...."

We would like to thank Lois Hicks, Casey Huff, and Patrick Button for their invaluable assistance. To the authors and artists who submitted their work to *Watershed*, thank you for your creativity. And to our advisor Ellen Walker, whose home and pantry we invaded on a regular basis, thank you for your wisdom, guidance, and enthusiasm.

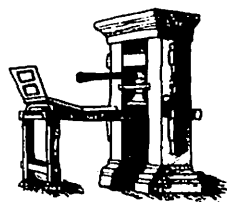
As you read this issue of *Watershed*, we hope you will have to hold onto the tops of your heads.

*The Editors*

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## **She Used to Walk Alone . . .**

Jeff Arnold

She used to walk alone  
Down dirt roads in the dark.  
In absence of pavement and streetlight  
She was unafraid.

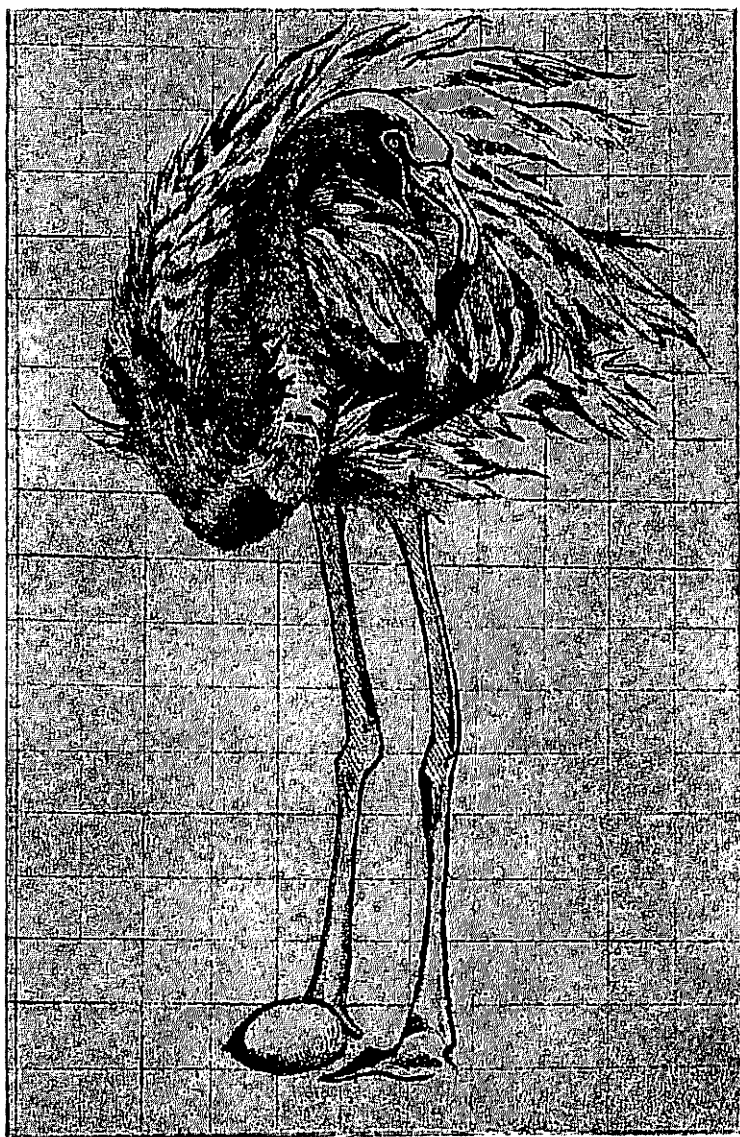
She used to wander  
Through summer evenings, cicada symphonies;  
Nocturnal sounds of animal happenings  
Just beyond her limited vision  
Carried no threat.

She would scale shadowed boulders  
Using only fingertips and feet, eyes half closed,  
feeling her way to the top.  
Then, standing, breathe the breath of personal victory;  
Enough already to last a lifetime.

She used to lie alone  
On her back, in the sand,  
Silent among sagebrush, Indian squaw tea,  
Watching a scattered sky, waiting  
For stars to lose their grip;  
She could always predict  
Where the next one would fall.

She used to walk alone  
Through her midnight world of cactus  
And weather worn canyon  
With wonder,  
With expectation,  
Without fear.





**Bird Bath**

Adele M. Donze

## **Between the Dust and the Sun**

Harley C. Jamieson

On a stateside army base near the end of the Vietnam War, my unit was at the rifle range for requalification. The day was hot, hot enough that sweat ran in dozens of dirty rivulets down our faces and necks beneath our heavy steel helmets, hot enough that the metal parts of our weapons burned our fingers when we touched them. There was no breeze and small puffs of white dust rose gently from the ground when we walked across it. Periodically, the loudspeaker above the range tower blared:

"Ready on the right! Ready on the left!

Ready . . . on the . . . firing . . . line!"

Then, dulled through red rubber earplugs, a burst of pop-cracks tapering off to a sporadic patter, a few scattered shots, and finally silence when the loudspeaker announced, "Cease fire, cease fire!"

While awaiting my turn to shoot, I leaned against the plank wall of the latrine facing the firing line so that my head and shoulders were shaded by the roof's slight overhang. There was no other shelter from the sun, which burned whitely in the yellowish, faded blue sky. I distracted myself from the heat first by watching heat waves dance around the targets out by the 300 meter line, then, almost unaware of doing so, by watching one of the shooting instructors on the firing line.

He was ordinary in appearance, though quite thin and wiry, walking back and forth along his section of the line in the manner of one who performs the same physical motion over and over again—dozens, even hundreds, of times each day. He moved sparingly, with concise economy as he paced a few steps, stopped, adjusted a shooter's stance to the proper position, spoke a word or two, nodded, and moved on. His hands were light and gentle, barely touching when pushing up an elbow or pulling back a shoulder, unlike most instructors who wrenched and shoved their students' bodies into contorted, painful angles. And unlike most of us, who wore steel helmets or standard-issue olive-drab baseball caps, he wore the forward-slanted, flat-top cap of the elite army rangers.

There was a lull in the firing as the platoon ahead of mine moved into position on the line. The instructor I was watching did a brisk about-face and walked easily toward the latrine where I stood. His eyes were hidden behind mirror sunglasses and his head moved not an inch to

one side or the other, yet I felt him glancing sideways, brushing me up and down, then looking ahead again in the briefest instant. The screen door of the latrine squeaked, slammed shut, and banged against the doorframe two or three times. His boots clumped a few steps on the plank floor toward the back of the small shed. Then silence.

I moved from the front to the east side of the latrine, where the shadow from the westward-moving sun had crept along the wall closer to the ground. The stench of chemicals in the pit toilets was much stronger. A few men from my platoon stood in a tight green cluster of fatigue uniforms, helmets, magazine pouches, and weapons near the range tower, engaged in a heated argument. Their voices drifted through the thick, still air in an incoherent babble and I saw one of the squad leaders shaking his index finger in another man's face, who then shook his head rapidly from side to side. I looked away, past the corner of the latrine toward the firing line.

Surprised, I noticed the ranger squatting on his heels in the dust a few feet away from the latrine door. He resembled Vietnamese villagers who often remained this way for hours: talking, cooking, gambling, or repairing small odds and ends. One forearm rested across a knee, the hand attached to it hanging limply, while the other hand traced a pattern of some kind in the dust between his feet with a small twig. He glanced up once or twice, staring out beyond the farthest targets of the rifle range. The sun was intense and his fatigue uniform was a green glow, but he seemed unaffected and indifferent.

A few yards away, a white-orange butterfly wound a chaotic path among several clumps of sparse brown weeds. Its wings fluttered, a blur of colored movement in a region of utterly drab stillness, drifting zig-zaggedly toward the empty space in front of the ranger, who now stared steadily straight ahead toward the distant dancing heatwaves among the targets on the 300 meter line. The fingers holding the twig tightened slowly and sensuously, bending and bowing it outward until it broke with a dull snap. The pieces fell into the dirt and then the fingers hung limply like those of the other hand.

The butterfly now crossed the empty space before the ranger.

Perhaps I blinked, for I saw no movement, but the ranger was suddenly holding the butterfly before his face by one wing between his thumb and forefinger, while it fluttered up and down with the other wing. The corner of the ranger's mouth bent upward a little, suggesting a sort of kindly wisdom and patience. With a single smooth motion, his other hand dipped into a front pocket of his fatigue shirt and withdrew a stubby wooden match. Then he held the match upright in his fingers, bracing his thumbnail against the match-head.

A second passed and the ranger's face tilted a little, showing the corner of an eye half-closed in a dreamy kind of peacefulness. The match flared abruptly and the butterfly pulled away from the flame, its struggles surprisingly noticeable for so small a creature. For an instant, the flame parted, encircling the butterfly, then caught and enveloped it, absorbing it into one large, perpendicular flame. A few seconds passed. Then, as the flame died out, the ranger released both the match stub and the blackened remains of the butterfly, which separated into several pieces of ash as they fell to the ground. A faint whisper of breeze as they scattered the bits of ash, blending them with the dirt and raising a tiny puff of dust. The corner of the ranger's mouth turned up a little more, revealing one or two teeth as he stared again at the heat waves dancing among the distant targets.

Finally, he rose and walked back to the firing line, for the next group was about ready to begin shooting.

## **Picking Berries**

Berylene Rizor

It happens slowly —

gathering reason from the wild  
vines, reaching  
for the glossy berries  
thumping warm  
into the dented bucket,  
reaching  
'til my back is ripe  
and sticky in the sun.

Finger-painting faded jeans,  
sucking purple thumbs,  
never-minding thorns or bees,

I am a bee:  
plucking bits of sanity,  
taking home the sweetness  
in a battered silver pail.

## **Glenn County Roadside**

S. Mills

Here at the blacktop enormous boar slumbers, hairy, outside  
decrepit wooden rails of the low fence.

Peafowl graze around him getting grasshoppers  
or else they perch on a fencerail, territorial, hens  
and cocks. The partriarch with his vast train reigns aloof  
back in the antique shade. Woodpeckers post-clinging  
sip the good water a faucet leaks. Black and white, a bird  
darts up, a third manifests in acute angle descending flight  
converging then diverging both rising falling then gone.

At last the cat, tortoiseshell, emerges from a shed,  
slow, with easy cat-amble, past, oblivious, to dead center  
of the empty road, to sit, and lick shoulder, and gaze  
upwind, toward something not coming.



**Thai Waterlilies**

Adele M. Donze

## **A New Circle**

Cheryl Cardoza

Another pain engulfs my abdomen. I pant quickly as I was taught in my Lamaze classes. It isn't helping. Squinting my eyes and still panting, I wait for the pain to subside, go away.

The pain evaporates like the tears in the corners of my eyes without ever getting a chance to slide slowly down my pudgy cheeks. It's almost over now and I should be happy, but all I can think about is my mother. When my little sister Susan beat me in the childbirth department, it was then, I suppose, that my mom's circle was completed, and not now. I was never a major concern in my mother's life except when I first disrupted it, bringing her and her young husband out of their dreams and into the real world and real concerns: feeding and clothing a newborn daughter. They weren't ready for the responsibility then, like Susan isn't now.

"Sue, Jessica's crying." She was wailing, her tiny face contorted with hunger.

Susan looked up from painting her toenails bright cherry red, flipped her long blond hair over her shoulder, and said, "Stick a bottle in her mouth, will ya?"

I hesitated. "You're not breast-feeding her?"

"God No! Do you know what that does to your breasts?" She dabbed a little more polish on her big toe. "They get all saggy and wrinkled! So gross!"

Jessica screamed. I picked her up and held her, rubbing her back gently.

"I will never have another kid!" Susan exclaimed, screwing the cap back onto the nail polish bottle and walking carefully to the kitchen for a bottle.

I can only pray to God she does good by her promise, I was thinking.

Again the pain sears my body, and I pant. I pant and pant, but my mind still feels the pain. I think I must have wet my pants, and someone near me says, "Her water broke." And I think that must be a good sign and wonder who is near enough to know my water broke. I squint my eyes.

The ache subsides, my eyes clear once more, and I look for the owner of the mysterious voice. The hospital corridor is bleak and reeks of sterilized sheets, the ones that are too cold and crisp to sleep on. The



air stings the tongue like a wet thermometer. I lick my dry lips and try to take another deep breath. For the last couple of hours all I've seen is this hallway as I pace back and forth, back and forth. My husband, Peter, holds my arm, his eyes tender and pained. His is not the mystery voice, I know it in my soul.

"Michelle, you all right?" he says.

I smile and nod. "I'm happy you're here, Pete. I couldn't get through this without you." I do a double take and try to make my eyes twinkle wistfully. "Anyway, I wouldn't *be* in this mess without you."

"Still got a sense of humor, I see."

His frown mocks me, though I know he's pretending. My eyes continue their search, roaming around the corridor and into the rooms with open doors. My mother comes from the break room; the hot coffee she's holding weaves white wisps of smoke through her blue hair.

"Did my water break that time?"

"Yes," she pipes in. "I'm certain it did. Three children of my own, I should know when the water breaks. Yes, I should know by now. Your sister's water broke too early and they had to induce labor, you know."

"This is not a good time for that story, Mom."

She mutters something apologetic and I quickly accept. I look at the approval on her face and desperately try to tune out her voice, but it eludes the selective hearing veil I worked so hard to perfect as a child. It must be one of those things that goes haywire with all the added hormones from pregnancy.

"You're taking this all very well," she is saying. "I thought...."

I double over with the pain this time. All the faces swim before me and melt together. Dr. Chesterson is there and puts me on the table.

"Everything is perfectly normal," I hear him saying.

"What were you thinking, Mother?" I think to myself, knowing full well I didn't need to ask. Pete is holding my hand. I squeeze it tightly. I pant. It isn't working.

Finally, slower than the other times, the pain subsides. My mother's face hovers over me, the worry lines deep and full of dried-on pink makeup that cracks more with each frown. I look away because I'm thinking about the night Jessica was born. I wasn't there. I had planned to be there, but I lived far away and Jessica was a month early. No one called until it was all over. I telephoned Sue the following afternoon because I didn't want to wake her.

"I'm real tired," she said in response to my question. "Real tired."

"Don't worry. Just get those sit-ups done every morning and you'll look fine for my wedding!"

She groaned. "Nope, no sit-ups for me."

The conversation was stilted, and all I kept thinking was that we were never close. She was talking about Mom and how excited she was to see her first grandchild's birth. I was away at college and wasn't ready to inflict myself on an innocent child. Susan was only nineteen. I kept thinking she was too young.

"Mom said if it was you, the whole hospital would've heard you yelling."

The sting was sudden and I was unprepared. "How would she know?" I blurted. "She's never bothered to get to know me." It was true. I had been away at school for three years and she had never once come to visit, though it was only a couple of hours drive from her house. I kept the phone call short and promised Sue I'd see her over Easter vacation. She promised to lose the weight quickly. She's always been preoccupied with her weight.

I look back at my mother's face and her eyes are far away, but she's moving the sweat-soaked hair out of my eyes, murmuring something sweet.

"You're taking this so well," she says again. "I thought...."

"We know what you thought," I whisper. I get up slowly. "I'm feeling fine," I tell the worried faces. I'm the one having the baby, right? I wonder. I begin pacing again, the back-and-forth motion pacifies the warring factions of my body. Pete puts his arm around my waist and whispers in my ear. I giggle and my mother glares at us. She's always nagged us about being too affectionate, yet here we are, married for five years, together for nine years, and we still giggle, kiss, and hold hands like high school sweethearts. She hates it. She's always hated it.

At our wedding, in that small, crowded reception hall that reeked of champagne and that sickly sweet smell of greasy wedding cake, we sat facing our guests, flanked by our wedding party. Pete poured more champagne into all our glasses for the toasts. His best man, Kevin, uncomfortable in his Yves St. Laurent tux, sat on my left. I'd never seen him in anything but t-shirts and jeans covered with oil from his International Scout.

He was nervous and earlier had poured champagne over the rim of my glass and onto my piece of cake, leaving it in a bubbling puddle of golden liquid.

"I am so sorry, Michelle. Let me get you another piece of...."

"Kevin, Kevin, Kevin, I'm really not very hungry—all the excitement, you know."

"Are you sure? It'd be no problem."

"I'm sure. Just be thankful you didn't pour it on my dress. It has to be dry-cleaned."

Pete was nudging Kevin, anxious to get the toast stuff out of the way. He kissed me lightly on the cheek and sat down. Kevin stood, cleared his throat, and banged on an empty champagne bottle with his car keys. He gave a wonderful toast, wishing us the best and praising our good fortune at finding one another. My mother, only ten feet away, her white corsage already wilted, drooping over her breast, looked disgusted.

"What shit," she said audibly and we all ignored her. Her jealousy of the relationship between me and Pete was common knowledge. Later my father apologized for her, though I think he was apologizing more for her lack of tact than anything else.

This time the pain surges from the bottom of the baby's cocoon to my throat, bringing my lunch of soup and melba toast up with it. I barely miss Mom's shoes. The pain is harsh and tastes bitter. I'm thinking I didn't eat that much soup, but it keeps coming. Pete holds me with one arm, using the other to wipe a cold wet towel over my face. It helps more than the panting, which I'm finding more difficult to do now.

When I unquint my eyes this time, I'm at the opposite end of the hall. There are nurses with mops at the other end. Dr. Chesterson takes my temperature and touches the baby gently. His hands are cold, always cold.

"Everything is perfectly normal," he says. "Won't be long now."

My mother is in her stocking feet, sitting and wiping her shoes. "I threw up when I was in labor with you. Three, four times. Unpleasant, isn't it?"

Her question is not malicious, just off-handedly inconsiderate. I think she really doesn't know me and never really tried until it was too late. Too many other children. My brother Derrick was born sickly, and though we were only a couple of years apart, we never saw much of each other but through barred hospital windows. Because he nearly died so young, Mom has always spoiled him, trying to make up for something that didn't happen.

Sitting in his apartment on his futon couch, Derrick and I would often talk about this, while sipping Grand Marnier or Dom Perignon.

"I have to be careful what I say to her. If I ever even hint that I like something, she buys it for me. She can be so stupid sometimes." He took another drag off his cigarette, then brushed the greying ashes along the side of the crystal ashtray.

"You use that fault to your advantage, Rick. Admit it," I chided.

"Oh Mickey, I'd be a fool not to! Take this VCR for example. I tell her I like to watch videos, she buys me a VCR. Now all I need is a color TV and I'm all set!" The color TV came that Christmas, an 18 inch Zenith with remote control and a space phone.

I pace, looking from Pete to my mother. Pete is walking with me, and Mom sits at the end of the hall, wiping and wiping her shoes. The pains are stronger now and closer together, and the panting still isn't helping. I pace and the doctor watches me. I pace and my mother watches me like she's looking at someone she doesn't know and I think: it's about time, Mom.

I was fourteen when my mother first tried to get to know me, although by then I had gotten on well without her far too long. As far as I was concerned, it was a bit late to start a mother-daughter relationship. And it was the same year my period started. I remember coming home from school, my pants bloodied, my heart pounding from a mixture of fear and excitement. I immediately searched for my mother.

She pointed solemnly to the bathroom. "You'll find what you need in there." She never again spoke another word about it. Of course, when Susie was eleven, Mom sat her down and told her all she could. She guided her "baby" through those difficult teen years, standing lifeguard over the pool of her adolescence after watching me drown, tossing only an uninflated life jacket my way. I suppose she learned from her mistakes.

Her coldness that day stemmed from her firm belief that we were mortal enemies, all because of that stupid hayride nine months earlier. It was one of those mother-daughter things for church. I went because she asked me. I went because her best friend was going and I didn't want her to feel left out. At first, it was great for us girls, our moms clustered together like blackbirds on a telephone pole while we chased the boys we wanted to escort us to the square dance that evening. I followed Marshall Vincenti all morning and afternoon. He had shiny black hair, vibrant blue eyes, and he was tall. At sundown, we all loaded into the wagon. Sheepishly, I sat across from Marshall in the stiff yellow hay. My mother plopped herself smack-dab between us.

"Mom, can't you sit with the other mothers?" I attempted to say politely, but the words came out through my teeth.

"Ashamed of me, eh?" She plowed to the back of the wagon with the other ladies, but it was too late. Elizabeth Shapham had slid next to Marshall and was playing with his hair. I had a miserable night.

I pace and my mother still watches me. I look at Pete and we stop

pacing. I look at my mother and she is still wiping her shoes absent-mindedly, her pale eyes focused inward now. I think it must be close and notice I am holding my breath and so is Pete. We exhale at the same time and slowly let new air into our lungs.

The next pain is fierce. The baby kicks violently and I squint my eyes. Sweat pours down my face and my body and I think I'll never wear this nightie again. It must stink. The tears in the corners of my eyes don't evaporate this time. Instead they roll down my cheeks and the doctor says I'm ready. We go to the delivery room and I push, and squeeze Pete's hand, and pant. I don't say a word. I don't cry or scream. I just push, squeeze, and pant. Pete wipes my face with the cool damp towel and I thank him with a feeble attempt at a smile. My mother sits quietly, watching. I push, squeeze, and pant, not watching anyone but my mother. She looks away. I push, squeeze, and pant, and everything in the room goes dark.

"Push a little harder, Michelle." Dr. Chesterson's voice pierces my darkness and I push and pant harder than I thought I could.

The shadow returns. This time a tiny unfamiliar cry lifts the veil from my face. Pete is smiling.

"It's a girl," he says. "A girl."

## **Little Girl Blue**

Anastasia Tarmann

Little girl safe  
elevated beyond contour. Come out of hibernation.  
Little girl blue, your fingers are cold—  
wet with dew-drowsy  
lullaby.  
Watch, he breaks water  
with his experienced tight fist.  
Listen, she recalls the innocence,  
an ancient treasure she pulls out of her hope.  
Toss a rock of your own and know the ripples  
will smooth your furrowed  
child's brow . . .

Come down, little girl, and I will hold you.



**Waiting to Dance**

Paul M. Russell

## Night Lights

Katherine Hubbard

Winter's frosty hand  
pushed back bent grass;  
her cold fingertips  
sounded stones—  
tapping timberline chimes  
on rocks with  
summer's postscripts filled.

Far down went Winter's arm,  
down ground deep  
holding dirt ransom:  
probing, sifting tiny seeds  
to melt into fiery spots.

Then her leaf-fluttered hand  
expanded  
    stretched from soil  
    to shoot  
brushed up slick branches,  
past dark scaffolds—  
to toss new nightlights  
into the December sky.



## **Christian Science Reading Room**

Todd Richardson

Imagine, if you can, our hands losing  
our baseball cards—including Lou Brock  
and the 1970 Brooks Robinson my brother wouldn't trade me—  
our dropping jaws dribbling  
Bazooka Double Grape Bubble Gum,  
our noses flaming breath on the glass  
of Mr. Mordecai's candy store, as he moves the taffy  
and lemon sticks and licorice and entire stock  
out, to make way for  
the Christian Science Reading Room.

## Where's the Enemy?

Jim Johnston

Nothing was clear. Vivid were his war-movie memories, but the real battlefield brought little focus and less living color. The world was a hazy gray, splashed crimson around the edges. Was it dusk or dawn? He had forgotten. Hot, sticky, confused, he lay on the hard ground.

Shells and bullets hissed and cracked, but the sounds were muffled, like soft, warm raindrops tapping on his ears. His ears felt thick, dull—as if stuffed with cotton. But he had no cotton, only a numb feeling. He hoped the numbness wasn't a sign of permanent damage. Twitching his head, he tried to clear his ears, but couldn't. He loosened his grip on his carbine and rose slowly from the ground.

His weapon on the ground, he stood in the lifeless grass, shaking. He tried to focus on something, but nothing would remain still. Flickers of objects appeared, then disappeared, faster and faster until the scene in front of his eyes began spinning. Or was it him, turning round and round? Round and round and into the earth. Hardened and sharpened and pointed, and into the earth. The only escape. To cut through everything. A dream of nothing.

Then something refused to disappear, and the spinning stopped. A tank approached.

He fumbled for a grenade. Finding one, he stuffed a swollen index finger into its smooth ring. He hesitated. He tried to recall how to hold a live grenade, and his thoughts slipped and fell backwards. The filmstrip flickered and the Lieutenant gave her lecture on grenades, but he didn't hear it. Then she asked questions, so many questions. And the cheerleaders on both sides lifted their legs so naturally that he didn't know which way to run, and he dropped the ball. While quietly ignored by the quarterback, he continued to be battered by faceless bodies. And the second-grade teacher and her yardstick made their way toward him, and his eyes began to sting. His eyebrows softened with sweat, he pulled the pin and tossed the grenade. It missed the tank.

But it was noticed, as was he. The constant whisper of bullets became a faint scream. He picked up his carbine and began shooting. The tank was almost on top of him; not only was it close, it was familiar. He wiped his sweaty face with a sweaty shoulder. The tank looked like one that his side used.

If the tank didn't belong to the enemy, why was it coming from the direction in which he was shooting? And if it was his tank, why was he

shooting in that direction? His eyes burned. The tank moved off to his right, but he continued to be shot at, so he continued shooting. Who was he shooting at? He realized he hadn't seen one living-breathing-dying enemy soldier.

A shell showered him with dirt. His skin tingled and he knew he should hug the ground, but he wanted to run. He wanted to run, but he didn't know which way to go.

Thud. He felt a numbness in his thigh; the sensation was both warm and cool. The top of his pant leg was slightly tattered, and the frayed area became darker. He had been shot, yet he stood, walked, ran. Sideways.

Away from the tall dead grass and nearer the remains of a suburb, he recognized a woman and three men. They were soldiers from his company, the first he had identified as such since the shooting began. They stopped walking and faced him on the pitted road. No one noticed his wound; at least no one acknowledged it. He thought about limping or doing something to draw attention to it, but wondered what purpose that would serve.

"Where's the enemy?" he said.

"I don't know. We're bein' shot up from all sides of—"

"Probably by our own people."

"We're pulling back to town."

"Probably to be shot at by our own people."

"Where's the enemy?"

He hadn't looked for wounds on any of their bodies. He tugged at his shirt, attempting to cover his.

He walked several paces behind the other four. From behind, he couldn't tell which one was the woman. Seeing the shell of an apartment complex ahead, he wondered if it mattered.

A clanking, squeaking noise rattled the silence. He and the others turned to see a tank and troops push through the red-fringed haze. He broke from the others and ran for cover in the ruins of a carport.

He crawled under a tipped-over station wagon. He hugged the pavement, his gun under his belly, muscles tensed. He shut his eyes and attempted to disappear, to become one with the earth: the only escape. Then images of tough, dirty faces began to flicker behind his eyelids. Teeth gritted, eyes squinted, hair neatly out of place—for a moment he saw himself. Maybe he could reappear like that, a stronger man. He dreamed of being either a war-movie hero or invisible. He didn't want to be who he was: a man, confused and frightened, not sure

if he was warm or cold. Not sure if it was almost night or almost day. Not sure why he was hiding from the heavy black boots that looked so much like his own. He thought how he could be on the side of the soldiers wearing those boots. If so, couldn't he crawl out and tell them who he was? No, he didn't like who he was. He didn't want to be who he was. He wanted to be strong. Or invisible.

He watched the tread of the tank break and scatter earth while its wheels went round and round like movie reels. When the movies had come to an end, only the voices remained. He recognized the voices but didn't acknowledge them. They belonged to soldiers who could have known about the grenade.

"I don't trust anyone anymore," said the woman.

The two men nodded.

He had met up with them—no one mentioned the third man—just beyond the wreckage of the carport. He sat with them in the little unfinished addition of some larger building. He didn't know the building, only the room. Unfinished, unpainted, it smelled fresh, damp and new.

"I haven't seen anyone from our company," said one man.

"I know we're being shot by our own people," said the other.

"Where's the enemy?"

"The tank—"

"It was ours—"

"Not so sure."

"I don't trust anybody anymore," said the woman.

"Tanks! And they're comin' this way!"

"Troopers, too!"

"Could be ours—"

"From all sides—"

"Load up your guns—"

"Do they see us—"

"Sit down!"

He sat, as did the others, back to back, each facing a different unfinished wall. He scattered several clips on the floor, found the fullest and slid it into his carbine. Through the wooden slats he could see the tanks and troops advance. Sitting silently, he wondered against whose back he was leaning. Was it the woman, or one of the men? Did it matter?

There were other questions. What was he waiting for? What did he and the others with their small arms hope to do against tanks and a

couple hundred soldiers? What if they were on the same side? Couldn't he step out into the crimson-gray haze to tell them who he and the others were? No. He didn't like who he was and he didn't know the others. He waited for the enemy.

When he could almost make out the uniforms of the approaching soldiers, the shooting began. He shouldered his carbine, but couldn't fix the sights on anything. He pulled the trigger anyway. He was reaching for another clip when he felt a thud in his shoulder. It knocked him down. Sideways. Into a lap.

He looked up into the woman's blood-stained face. He realized he couldn't have been leaning against her back. She was on his side. But it didn't matter.

## **Ode to Odium**

Helen U. Delafield-Mtz

Oh, paragon of platitudes,  
    With condescending attitudes  
And ostentatious prudery  
    (Disguising just plain rude-ery)  
Whose claim to perspicacity  
    Has roots in mere audacity;  
Cacophony dins on the ear.  
    Why can't you cant away from here?



**Winter Warrior**

Paul M. Russell

## **There Were Too Many Smoke Filled Rooms**

Jeff Arnold

There were too many smoke  
filled rooms,  
Too many one-night cheap hotels, coming to life  
one more time in a strange bed  
With someone I didn't know,  
Bodies reeking stale  
Scents of weak perfume, bad wine, the crust  
Of last night's lines,  
Trying to remember  
What I saw in those hazy eyes,  
Telling myself this  
Is the last time to sow the seeds  
Of bad memories.

There were too many laughing faces,  
Yellow grins thrust forward  
Through the smoke,  
Opiates for hard times, baggy eyes,  
Cheap beer and bad jokes,  
For wandering midnight black back alleys  
Digging deep in every dumpster  
For moral support,  
Trying hard to keep it together,  
Trying hard to say  
I'm all right.



**Life with No Toes**  
**or**  
**Where Would the Toe-jam Go?**

Janice L. Frase

Who knows  
why those  
feet have toes;  
what I do know's  
I like my toes;  
without toes  
I would be hopping.

I would lose  
the joy of ooze  
when mud flows  
between my toes,  
and my poor nose  
would suffer blows  
from always toppling.

I could not dance  
on twinkle-toes  
or proudly prance  
or stand on tiptoes,  
nor could I advance  
swiftly if I chose,  
it would be hard stopping.

Nor could I choose  
shoes with toes.  
Do they make shoes  
with toeless toes?  
And what of panty hose?  
Tuck 'em under I suppose.  
It would be hard shopping.

To toe the line  
with not one toe;  
never mind the other nine,  
but toe the line with zero!  
I'd feel simply asinine,  
just a silly so-and-so,  
needing constant propping.

So, I need every single toe  
to go smoothly to and fro;  
but cruel fads do come and go,  
bound feet, boobs and hips, oh!  
don't forget chastity belts! No  
way I'd allow, not one toe  
to undergo, toe-lopping!

## **Dreaming Of Slow Rivers**

Darren Marshall

I dreamed again of slow rivers  
with huge trout rising  
to any fly I float over.  
Today when I am on the river  
it will be the joining of the real  
and the imaginary, when things  
cross like that they are always  
stronger. When we were together  
it was like we were floating  
in the river. The only thing between  
us and the current was a small boat.  
I believed that I believed  
it would always be that way.  
In the end there is no boat,  
only the slowly rising river  
where the dead do not drown.

## **Passports and Divorcees, 1987**

Cheryl Cardoza

Your "wife" died four years ago  
with the finalization of the papers  
the final lap  
(or so I thought)  
while crossing that finish line  
my arms upraised  
as I broke through the red tape  
stretched across the track

I want to give you back your name  
but they won't let me  
those paper pushers  
plastic mannequins repeating  
prerecorded messages  
telling me I must remain your wife  
dangling off the end of your name  
like the second earring in the same ear  
a mere accent for the diamond stud  
from the first piercing

## **Possum Poem**

Berylene Rizor

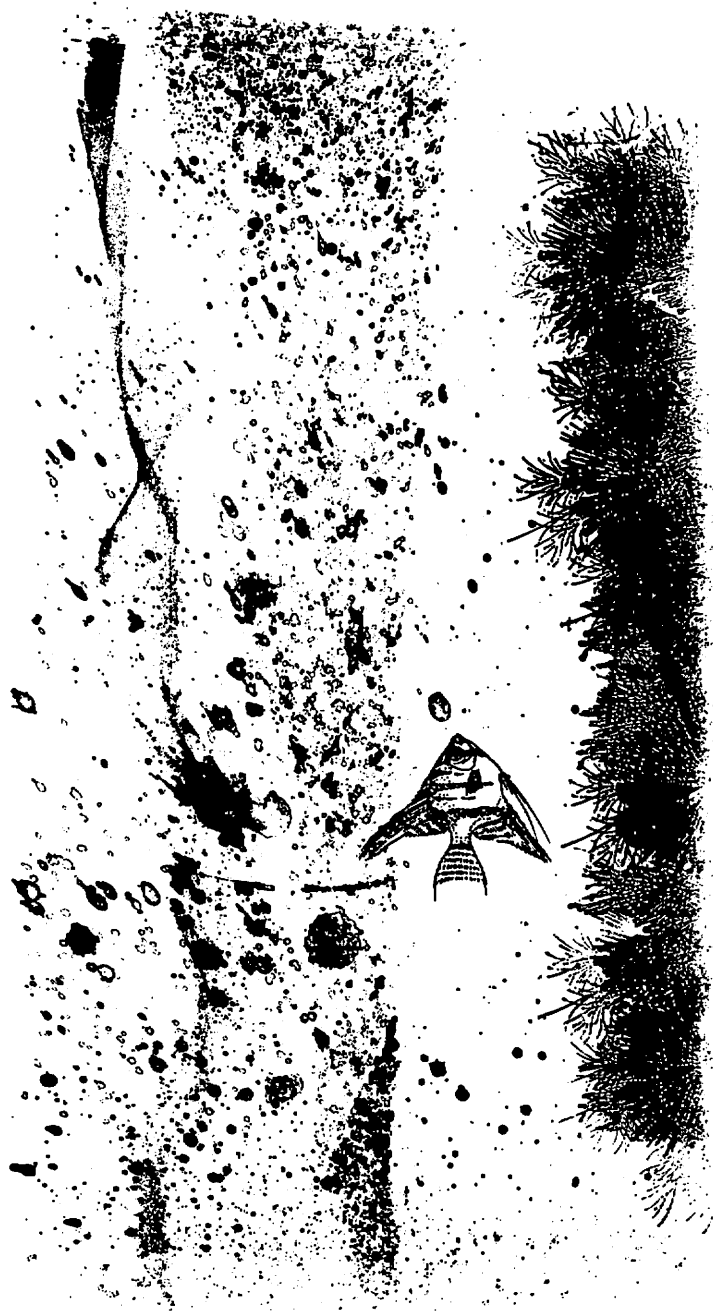
Watch—

she'll come from over there,  
behind the garage,      stop,  
then lumber along beneath the laurel,  
her fine snout aimed in one direction,

her eyes squint down against the rude  
gray light,  
her body saying, "possum, possum"  
as she rocks across the yard  
and slips through the hole  
in the northwest corner of the fence.

Going home.

Every morning I watch her  
from this tiny upstairs window,  
and every afternoon  
I'm careful not to mend the gap  
in the peeling wooden fence.



**A Stamp Fish in a Litho World**

Adele M. Donze

## **The Hair Cut**

Berylene Rizor

There must have been a huge chrome step  
and soft red leather,

shaving mugs, bay rum on shelves  
along the mirrored wall,

your small face shining out  
above the crisp white cloth.

Magazines and brilliantine.

Sit up, head straight,  
hold still.  
How many barbers have there been?

Village barber, air force barber,  
Willy's after work.

Less and less to take off the top.  
The side part lower each year.

The salty, scratchy beard that chafed  
my cheek.

And now there's me, at the kitchen stool,  
quick scissors, careful around the ears.

Not too much off the top...  
Sit up, head straight, hold still.

And when you obey, I can see,  
for just a moment,  
a small boy

in a gleaming leather chair.

## **Of Emptiness**

Betsy McNeil

To bury someone  
is expensive work.  
Undressing them  
for the first time, at last.

I lived twenty years  
in his house.  
He was someone  
I should know well.

He wanted to be an undertaker,  
or a nurseryman like his father.  
He turned instead to groceries,  
business, my mother.

I stand here,  
to the side of emptiness.  
This is the longest  
breath  
I have ever taken.



## **Sister Woodruff**

Todd Richardson

In time to pause  
arises explanation.  
Her walk would not have been  
devotional without  
a giving up.  
Through orchid beds  
and her even pace  
she thinks of how he may  
be whispering alone  
asking to have back  
what her god does not allow.  
The safety of the cloister grounds  
so soothes, her stare  
rarely veers toward  
the white petals or the walls,  
set stone on either side  
strewn with concord grapevines.  
She is pleased to hold  
her head tilted slightly downward  
and doesn't hesitate  
too much to walk beyond  
the narrow walls and beds.

If, while she continues  
into the wildflowers and brambles  
with her clothing open  
with her skin borne  
to foxtails and thorns:  
if the tenant gardener  
or his son should see her  
she will of course admit  
astonishment, and duck  
and promise not to return  
for at least a week.

## **Love and History**

Betsy McNeil

While potatoes make green shoots  
in a box in the kitchen,  
I think about love and history.  
Balance the two like opposite ends  
of a burning coal.

Black, I think, should be light, warmth.  
Insides of things, of people, are dark.  
White should be something else—  
emptiness, cold, winter.

The white man thinks he owns  
an extra layer of God,  
like plastic wrap.

But we are all of the dark.  
Blackness inside us  
furious to get out.  
To warm the cold,  
this desolate brightness.

## **Migration**

Robert Lundergan

The grey whale moves north  
from Magdalena Bay,  
and the salmon run  
upstream to spawn.  
These are things beyond question.  
It is just the way they are.

Last summer,  
we had a bag lady  
living in Chico.  
She would sit in the sun  
with her hat and blue raincoat  
and bum money for coffee and cigarettes.  
She disappeared in October,  
and I wondered if she died,  
until last week  
I saw her waiting for a bus.

The swallows were back in Capistrano.

## Contributors' Notes

**Jeff Arnold** is "practicing poetry, running out of money, waiting for winter, looking for the 'real me.' "

**Cheryl Cardoza** is a senior at CSUC majoring in English and French. She plans to get a Ph.D. in Comparative Literature.

**Helen U. Delafield Martinez** is "well over 39," semi-retired, a part-time poet and writer with a book in draft form. "I want my kids to know how 'aging' *really* is—and thus have something to look forward to."

**Adele M. Donze** is the lighter side of a twin set—for now. She may be a descendent of some bird family because she is drawn to anything that sparkles or shines—especially rhinestones.

**Janice L. Frase** lives in Weaverville.

**Katherine Hubbard** is a graduate student at CSU Chico, working for a special MA in ESL. Her poems have previously appeared in *The Yuba Review*, and she has received awards for her work.

**Harley Jamieson** is a graduate student in English at Chico State and lives in Chico.

**Jim Johnston** is currently doing graduate work at CSUC in English. His interests are music, old movies, old novels, running, and dreaming.

**Robert Lundergan** is a recently married graduate student. He has been published in *Watershed*, *Tributaries*, and *Genetic Drift*, and though he likes to think of himself as a writer, he "always finds something else to do."

**Darren Marshall** lives in Chico.

**Betsy McNeil** has "been writing since quite young—love poems, you know, poems about parents and death, that sort of thing. Writing is cathartic—art is like that—and beautiful too."

**S. Mills** has lived in Chico for over ten years. She proofreads freelance.  
"My given name is 'Shirley' but I'm trying to repress that memory."

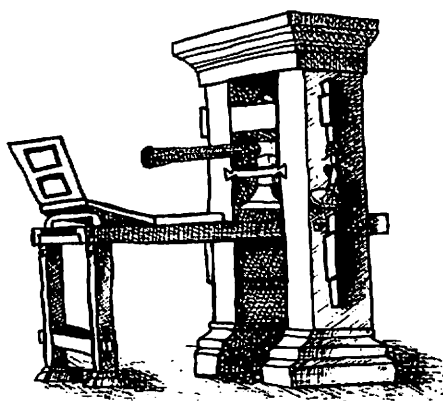
**Todd Richardson**, when not teaching, coaches football, prepares for graduate school, and tries to improve as a poet. He has had two poems published; "the one I am not ashamed of, "Note," appeared in *Peaceful Action*, a local newsletter."

**Berylene Rizer** is majoring in English at Chico State, raising five children, and planning to become a teacher. She has been published in several regional publications, including *The Suisun Valley Review*, *The Suttertown News*, and *The Yuba Review*.

**Paul M. Russell** is of Scandinavian heritage but an American Indian at heart; yet he often lacks the necessary tracking skills to find his bike. He is one-third of the lithography stoners known as Triptych.

**Anastasia L. Tarmann** is "in the early stages of blooming late . . ."

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