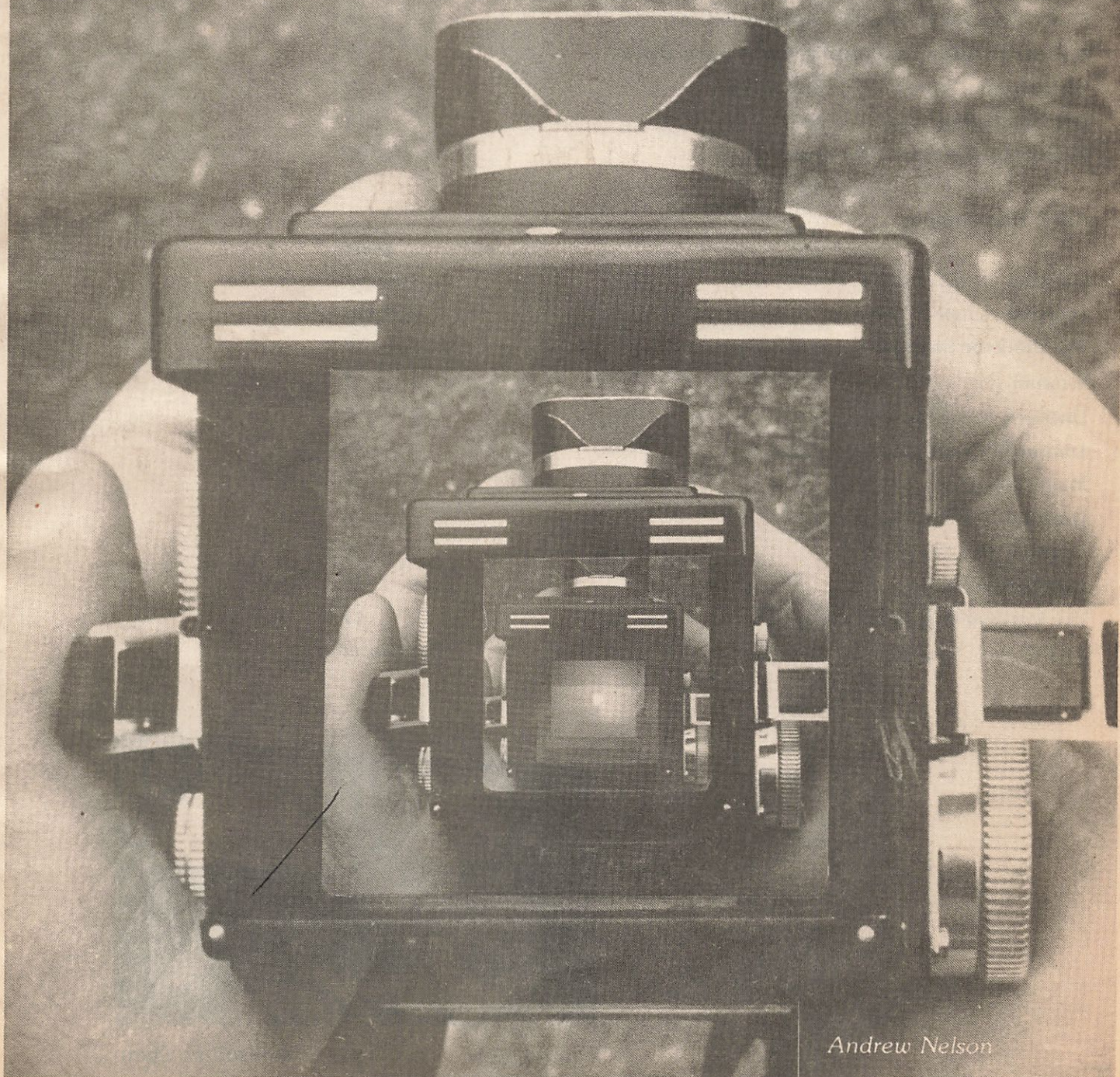


DENALI

Lane Community College

Winter 1986



Andrew Nelson

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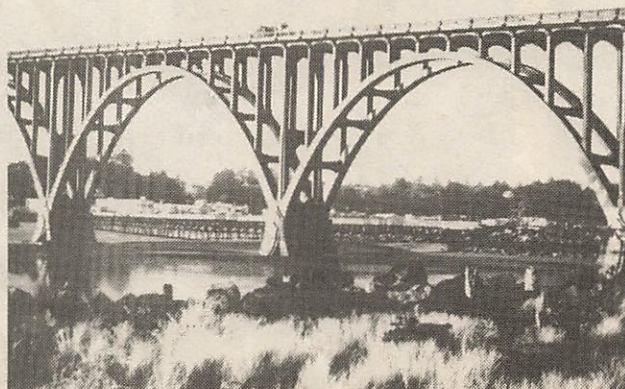
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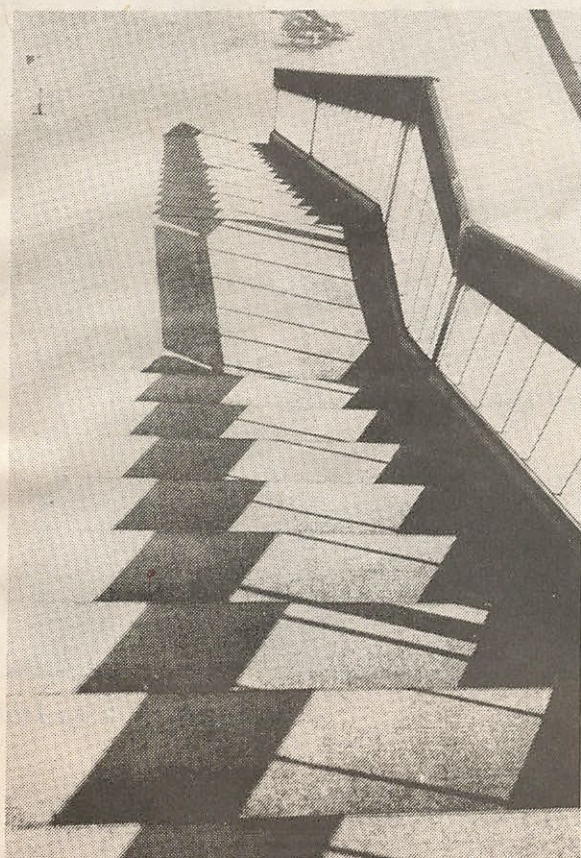
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Photograph

Achsah E. Dunn

Marian J. Ashbridge



Photograph

The Vibratile Shadow

Kozue Muramatsu

DENALI

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drop by our office and pick up your submission during our
posted office hours. If you want it returned to you by mail,
please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope with your
submission.

The Denali staff is available for discussion of student submissions any time during their posted office hours. An appointment may be made with one of the staff, but is not necessary. We would encourage all contributors, whether they are printed or not, to drop by and talk to a staff member about their work.

PASSION FRUIT I

Passion
Fruit
Warm
Dripping
Red-purple
Creamy yellow
Ripe
Luscious
Desire
Hungry
Yearning
Consumed
Mmm...
More
Passion
Fruit.

PASSION FRUIT II

Passion
Life's fruit
So ripe it will rot
If not consumed;
Mind and Heart
Hungry,
Yearning with desire.
Life must be felt
And tasted
Like a luscious, ripe passion fruit
Or we would die
Malnourished indeed.

Judy Gilliland



Mixed Media

Woman Karina Hall



Pen and Ink

Untitled Rick Sherman

Masquerade

You'll know me.
My costume
Will be the night
draped around my body
for a negligee
and the stars
will glitter
through my hair
like tears.

Elizabeth LaMarche-Bach

Living Across from the Church

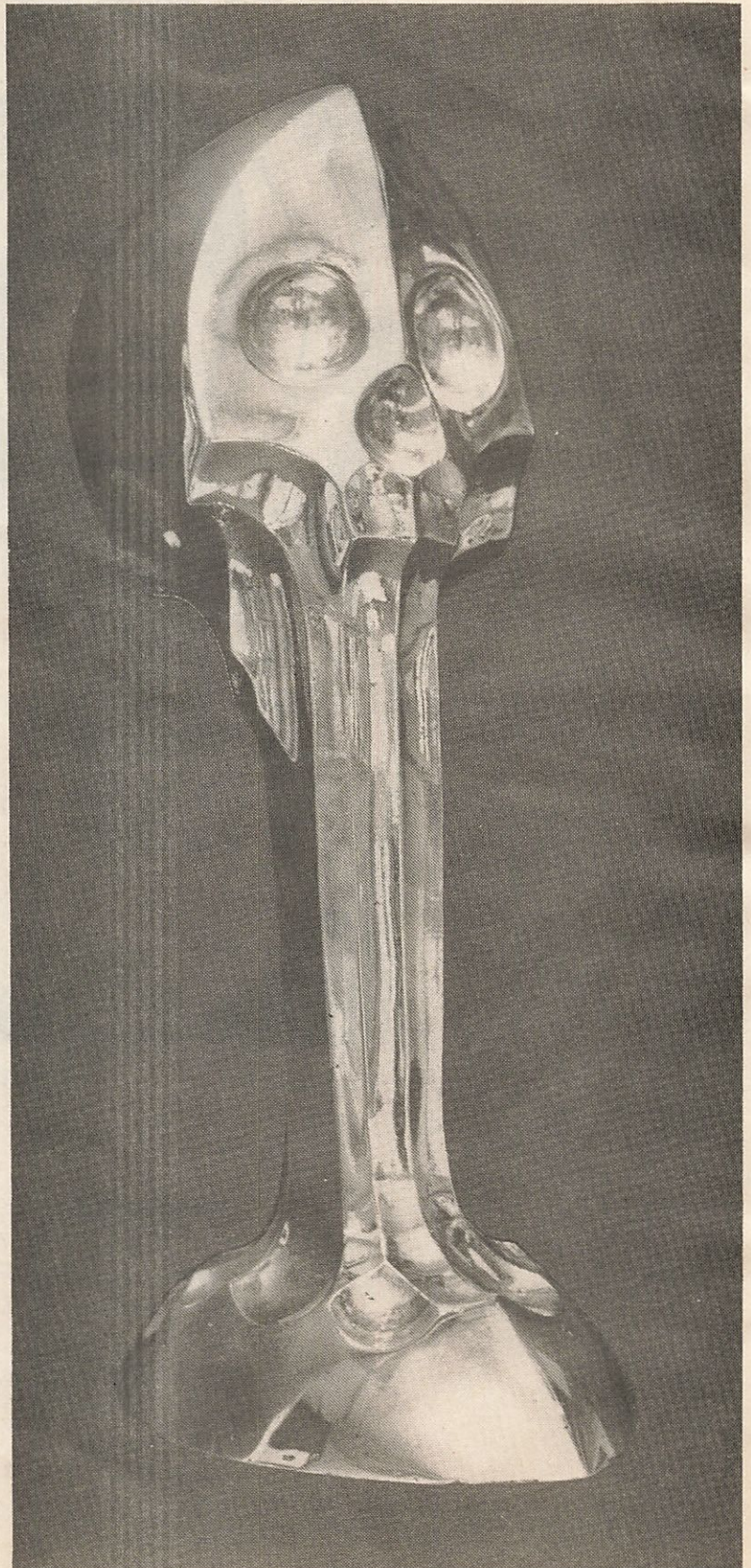
Forming an ocean of whitecaps
White, archaic bonnets.
I see them set out
To tend to children.

At least I have been spared
Meeting God on asphalt
As these children do
While nuns hover on the sidelines.

Clustered 'round the young ones
Like pale witches
Stirring the cauldron with a stick
Of rules and guilt and discipline.

Neither sordid bathroom births
Nor the sweaty confines of those hats
Will mar the stillness as they float
Into the church in single file.

Constance L. Savage



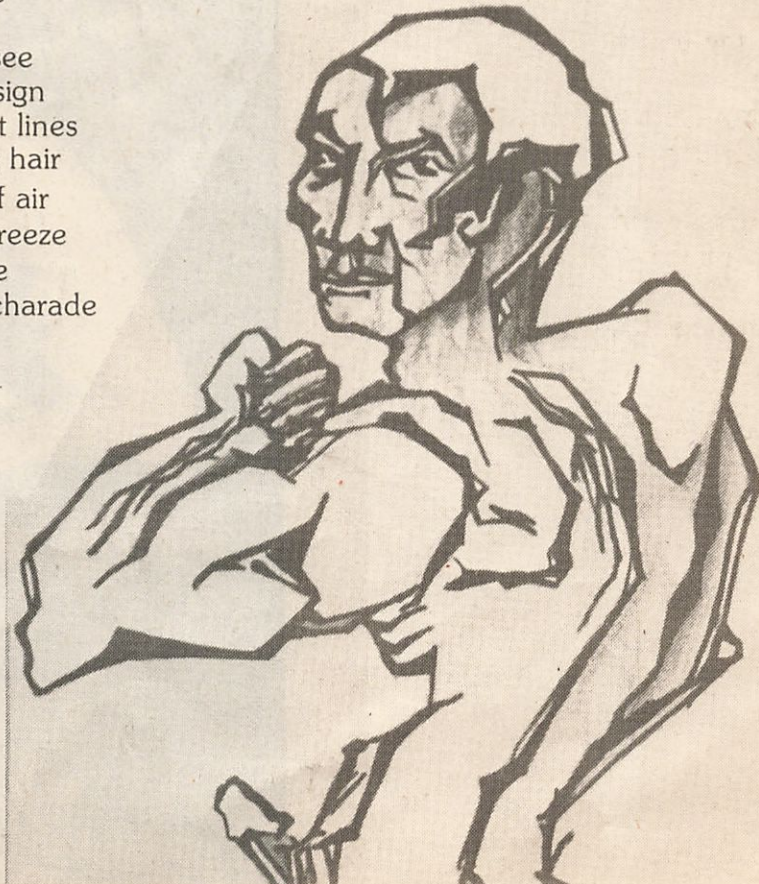
Cast Aluminum

Immortal Confluence Jeff Adams

Laguna Beach

Among the grains of endless sand,
Where the water meets the land,
Tossed about by surf and swell
Lies a lone, forgotten shell.
In a pool so crystal clear,
Like a bright and shining mirror
Reflecting like a pane of glass
The images of those who pass and
Stand and stare admiringly,
At the beauty of the sea.
They come and go, and splash away
Through the sand they run and play,
Tossing frisbees in the air,
Reading books in easy chairs and
Soaking golden rays of sun with
Lotions, creams and sprays upon
Their much exposed and tender skin
In hopes that sunburn won't begin to
Peel away their golden tans or
Interfere with summer's plans
Of modeling seductively
Their bathing suits for all to see
The latest style of French design
With skin-tight fit and low-cut lines
To complement their shining hair
Bleached by sun and wind of air
While blowing freely in the breeze
As they stroll along and tease
With plastic games of some charade
Laguna beach is on parade.

Joshua Hamill



Mixed Media

Man Karina Hall

Sunny Days for My Brother

Today
Is so much like the day when we went fishing
To the little reed-covered pond
In the early spring beauty of March
Life was just beginning again
Remember?
Those long forgotten songs from my radio
Were soon replaced by the serenade of snow birds
I often wonder, did we catch any fish?
I can still feel the soft needle carpet
Under the pines along the bank
And smell the moist perfume of the earth
I miss you and think of you all seasons
But especially in the false spring days
Of winter like today
And like that day when your spirit journeyed on
Leaving nothing, nurturing nothing
But my memories of a sunny winter day.

Ashleigh Brown



Tempera

Untitled Claudia Sch

A Toast To Bring The Morning On

Morning is sunshine is light is day come after the storm which
swept and drenched and catured us.
Life is fresh is spring is not afraid of bombs and guns and figureheads which
speak perversely in the dark.
But life is death a seed is then a sprout a leaf a stalk a branch to
bear forth fruit in season.

Quiet is searching is soul for semblance of sanctuary amidst the
clash of class and conflict.
Lying is greed is blood is rust is tempted fate is twisted lust the
mask of wanton pleasure.

Dead the streets are littered full in sick and wounding squalor.
Abuse is man's prerogative as woman's changing mind is
effort is emotion is a mother's instinct toward her dying child.
Rain is wind is shivered cold is storm to sun to scorching heat
to xxx alike this humankind beneath the sky of heaven
drink we all with dusty throats and veins and dried out bones
a toast to bring the morning on.

Joshua R. Hamill



Pen and Ink

Untitled Rick Sherman

The Vertical Way Kozue Muramatsu

Photograph



Old Man Hurley
by Rosco Wright

In those days, all the world was magic. It was the summer of '36; I was eight-years-old, and my blue eyes were wide with wonder from morning until bedtime.

I sat on the rough, gray boards of our makeshift, roofless porch. Beside me sat Father and my four-year-old brother Steve. At that moment, Steve was upside-down over the edge, his face inches from a gigantic, angry tree beetle. It rasped at him as he giggled.

Father was fussing with dents in his weathered, gray felt hat. He had his largest and best garden hoe leaning against one knee. We three were set to cross the gravel road and go to the field where we'd planted our garden. Father would hoe as Steve and I threw sticks over the bank into the creek. Sometimes we would see small fish or crawdads. It was fun to help Father with the garden, except, sometimes I had to pull weeds.

Just at that moment, I happened to turn, looking across the dip in the land along the dirt trail to where it joined our rutted road, which separated our yard and briar patches from the fern hillside and the trees. I saw a familiar sight. Old Man Hurley was fumbling and, doubtless, frowning; his small greenish-gray eyes intently peering from their station in his cadaverous face. His problem was the singular challenge of the gate's baling-wire latch. The gate itself was an eight foot, homemade monstrosity, as seasoned as our porch and as unfinished.

Father had also noticed. He said, mostly to himself, "Well, that takes care of the garden until tomorrow." He turned, calling into the house; his voice was polite and just

loud enough to be heard. "Julia, we better set another plate for dinner."

Mother's melodious response came from the kitchen, "We've plenty. I made a double batch of cornbread."

Father glanced at me, "Dustin, you and Steve go help Mr. Hurley with the gate."

It was a general's command to attack. Gleeefully shouting, we pelted down the trail to the bottom, level with the swamp which buffered our rustic yard from the county road. I edged by Steve just as he fell flat on his face. Four-year-olds are truly awkward as cub bears. I hurried back to him. Steve's face had begun an elegant job of puckering. We didn't have time for that, so I said, "Hey, Steve, cry later." I quickly grabbed his hand, lifting him to his feet. "Come on, let's hurry and help Old Man Hurley. I can beat you to the gate!"

The last phrase had worked as magic. Steve galloped triumphantly ahead of me, the betrayal by the law of gravity forgotten. I'd early learned it was best to sucker little kids from crying, especially if I didn't have time to stand and listen. I had never let anyone hear me cry--most of the time!

By the time we arrived, Old Man Hurley had the latch undone, so we helped him shove the gate the impossible three feet through the road dust. However, beyond that, there was a hump with rock in it. Only Father could move the gate across that hump. He did it every day when we pastured the cow across Big Creek. Father was a strong man, even if he couldn't work anymore because of his accident.

Steve and I vigorously closed the gate, holding it against the gatepost, while Old Man Hurley lifted the loop over the bent nail. Steve had tried pushin' too hard. I let up a little and that made a Christian of him. After the wire was hooked, our visitor said, "Yes, thank you boys. Yes, you're good boys." He never learned our names.

Steve stared in fascination at the time-ravaged face. We hardly ever saw a truly old person. Yet, at the time, I must confess, I was more taken with the gnarly, highly-polished cane. It was a twisted, ancient beauty the like of which I'd never seen. Steve and I would have gladly used it as a flagpole in our dirt pile. Then, of course, the next time Louie came over the hill to play, he'd have wanted to trade us for it. We wouldn't have traded. It was adult property, and we treated adult property with respect--like honoring it as a flagpole. Adults ran the world and knew everything--except maybe that wasn't true of Louie's father.

Old Man Hurley's pace was slow. Steve and I compensated by running ahead, then racing back. Steve stopped and picked the largest dandelion of the year. He came back, handing it to our guest, who accepted it with small surprise as he stuck the blossom in the pocket of his faded, plaid shirt. "Thank you, Sonny. You're a good boy. Yes." Steve had always been one to come up with something friendly and unexpected. After the presentation, Steve grinned and ran full-speed toward the house.

Steve suddenly stopped. He'd seen something by the trail. "Dussin, pretty snake!" Steve always left the "t" out of my name. Still, I heard loud and clear. It was time to invoke my divine responsibility. I looked. My fears were confirmed.

A fat, black water snake with yellow and red stripes was turned, facing Steve and making threatening lunges.

"Steve!" I grabbed his arm. "Come away! That one will bite!"

By then Old Man Hurley had caught up with us. He advised, "Just leave him alone, boys, he'll go away. He won't hurt nothing."

Steve could hardly resist a sassy snake.

I contrived a counter offer. "Steve, come on. I'll let you play with my rainbow top."

Steve didn't look up, but, with a little help from me, he stepped back. The rainbow top had been more than an average bribe.

We walked on, and, hoping to change the subject, I volunteered to our guest, "Mom's cooking a big dinner. You're invited." Dinner had been our usual noon meal, and supper the evening meal. I embellished my story with, "Father's waiting on the porch for you to tell him some more war stories."

Those were the days before lawyers told everyone to never volunteer information; those were the days when people could have fun.

Old Man Hurley jabbed his cane into a mole hill--then on to the solid trail. "Yes, that's nice, boys, but your folks sure didn't need to go to all that trouble for me."

By then we were moving up the slope, and the going was slower for older people. I ran ahead, climbed the low, pole fence around Mother's flower garden, and ran full speed between two rows of gladioluses. They brushed my face, but hardly any fell. Shortly I was on the porch sitting by Father just as Old Man Hurley arrived, saying, "Hello, Joe, how are you and Julia and the kids this fine summer day?"

"Good as the Lord allows, John. Sit and rest your weary bones."

"Yes. Yes, fine thanks. I can't stay long." He seated himself on the edge of the porch. "Yes, I thought I'd better come over and see if you folks were all right."

That exchange had meant he was staying for dinner. That pleased me; I loved strange and fascinating stories.

By then Steve was on the porch, gaining mastery of my rainbow top. It was a device, flat as a coffee can lid, with three geared wheels on its top.

Each small wheel was painted equally red, yellow, and blue, and, as the top spun, rainbow circles of color moved from the center. It was a great toy, and rated above the two-by-four block I used to bulldoze our dirt pile. Of course, our main toys had always been small streams of water pouring from the hillsides and down the draws, vine maples to climb and ride to the ground, swamps to splash in, and the abandoned logging roads stretching through the small hills.

We used the logging road to go over the ridge to see Louie, except when he was in a mood, telling us how poor we were and how rich his dad was. We came right home when he started that. My father was the smartest man in the valley; I was certain. Everyone came to our house to ask him questions. He didn't need to be rich. Louie's father was a mill hand who ran a few dairy cows. Anybody could do that! Besides, Louie's dad had once asked Father how to

cure a sick cow and my father knew the answer.

Old Man Hurley removed his ancient, flat, stained straw hat, ran a hand over his balding head, and observed, "Yes, the sun sure feels good, Joe. Can't stand it for long without a hat, though, not since they put that silver plate in my skull. The war, you know. Yes, they did that to me then."

Father nodded politely; he'd heard the story before.

Old Man Hurley settled down, skeletal fingers over the head of his cane. Small gray eyes flecked with green and tan peered. They seemed to be seeing another time and place.

Steve lay on the porch, toying with the rainbow top. He possessed a short interest span for stories by grownups. Not me. I was older and more mature. I liked the stories.

I had been certain it would be war stories from Old Man Hurley, and pioneer stories from Father, or, sometimes, spellbinding ghost stories from either of them. Father was thirty-four years older than Mother. His father had owned the first general store near McMinville, Oregon. Even my grandfather, Mother's father, was younger than my father. That was fine with me. It was as if I had a grandfather, and a father and a grandfather in one.

My father didn't offer guests coffee, beer, tea, or tobacco. Such things, for religious reasons, were off the family list. That worked fine. Most people were more than happy for a dipper of water from our galvanized bucket, which we filled from our hillside spring.

Old Man Hurley touched the top of his head. "Yes, that silver plate they put in bothers me a lot on real hot, or real cold days. Today's just fine. Yes, just fine."

Father nodded. "Glad of that, John. I guess you were lucky to come out of that one alive."

Delight surged through me. Father had pressed the button. It was the gambit to start the stories rolling. At that time, I thought it awfully generous of Father to give up several hours work in the garden so we could hear stories. That was before I'd heard of aches and pains.

Old Man Hurley stated, "Yes, it was in the trenches. The war, you know." Now his small eyes really were looking into a far world. "Yes, it was dark and rainy, you know. We were out of food. It wasn't far back to the commissary. My best friend, real nice young guy, Bill Betzer, said he'd go get us something to eat. Bill was coming back when I saw him against a shell burst. He let out a yell. I knew right away he was lying there hurt bad. I climbed from the trench. A few shells were bursting. They never hit me. I got this thing in my head later. Yes, got it the last day I was in combat. I found Bill out there moaning. He'd got a piece of shell in his knee. I stopped the bleeding. Used my shirt. I dragged him back to the trench about the time the shelling stopped. In the morning we took Bill to the medical station. Bill Beltzer swore I'd saved his life, and he'd look after me and mine forever. Yes, I could have used that help a couple of times. But poor Bill died. Went back to see him twice.

"The second time Bill wasn't there. He'd died of blood poisoning. Terrible thing, war. Yes, terrible."

Father nodded sober agreement.

Mother came onto the porch, swiped a quick comb

through Steve's hair and glanced at mine. She cautioned me not to bother Father and Mr. Hurley while they were talking, but to sit nicely and listen. Mother had long, dark hair in a bun on the back of her head. Most of the neighbor ladies had shorter, curled hair. Adults, to me, were fascinating; no two of them looked alike.

Old Man Hurley was saying, "Yes, poor Bill Beltzer was a fine young man--a kid, I guess; or he wouldn't have been dumb enough to go out and get shot. But that's what war is all about, killing off the best young men."

Father gravely nodded and observed, "Well, John, the Good Lord never wanted us to bear arms against our neighbors, but sometimes it's a mighty hard choice."

"Yes, yes, it is, Joe. I wouldn't have been there myself; I was too old, but I was career military and I was there due to a mix-up of papers in Washington, so they just kept me. That's big government for you."

The world adults lived in seemed to have been awfully dangerous, but to have taken a remarkable turn for the better once we kids were born.

Suddenly, things on the porch took a turn for the worse. Father and Old Man Hurley had started talking about gardening and the care of tools. Steve lost his momentary obsession with my top. He had a short interest span and couldn't stick with anything nearly as long as I could. I figured the problem was his being awfully young.

Almost as if it were telepathy, Steve and I made a beeline for the charcoaled, still massive snag that had long ago fallen on the edge of the swamp. Giant ridges of root and shoulders on the burned burl of the tree reared, curved, and formed bowls. These made command bridges for pirate ships or space ships. We were with the times. When we went to Singletree's, Mrs. Singletree read us the funnies, including "Flash Gordon." Consequently, this time the massive log was a spaceship and Steve was a friendly Monkey man. I was Flash Gordon, as we went screaming through the skies of the planet Mongo to defeat Ming the Merciless, and to rescue Dale Arden and Dr. Zarkov from a fate worse than death.

Time was the disadvantage. Before we'd finished our five-minute-war, Mother called, "Dustin, Steve. Dinner's ready. Come and wash. There's water in the pan."

"Okay," I shouted, "as soon as we ice-ray Ming one more time."

In spite of Flash Gordon, there existed no indoor plumbing at our house, except a primitive wooden kitchen sink. We didn't know any better, so we didn't care; besides, Flash Gordon never had anything as wonderful as hot cornbread and beans, let alone wild berry jam.

Steve and I scrambled. We actually beat Father and Old Man Hurley into the house--maybe they hung back to avoid the crowd.

In those days, religion intruded on nutrition. We had to sit quietly, heads bowed, but our eyes could scout as Father said grace. I kept one eye on Steve and the cornbread. This time, I had it made. There was a good corner piece in front of Steve, crusty, steaming, and golden, but, luckily, just out of his sight on my side was a larger, thinner, crustier piece. I

couldn't help smiling.

Was Steve ever surprised when he saw my haul! Fortunately, before he could formulate any plan to defeat me, Mother said, "Here, Steve, let me help you with that." She buttered and jammed his bread, after breaking it in half. Steve made a face but accepted his lot. Father asked, "Dustin, you think you'll need any help with yours?"

Old Man Hurley laughed weakly and made a remark about kids being kids.

He ate slowly. He studied his bread with his small eyes, then methodically bit as if he had to plan the operation bite-by-bite. He was very thin and pale. Sometimes, looking at him scared me. This had been true since I'd heard our neighbor, Mr. Singletree, say to Father, "By God, Joe, I think Old Man Hurley's gonna drop dead on us one of these days!"

Father had slowly nodded, not saying anything, not even letting his expression show what he thought of Mr. Singletree's language. When I grew up I wanted to get as old as Father, but never as ancient as Old Man Hurley.

After the beans, potatoes, and cornbread, we had blackberry pie, and, if we liked, milk on it. Steve and I always liked milk on it. We could stir it and make wonderful purple colors. Mother didn't think much of that.

After dinner, we remained at the table for more "That-reminds-me" stories. Father promised Mother he'd help with the dishes.

I picked up my rainbow top, but Steve moved in on me. I let him have it because I wanted to hear the stories. There were two pioneer stories, one war story, and a ghost story. All were new and fascinating.

At last Father made an offer, a familiar one that climaxed Old Man Hurley's visit. "Julia, maybe we could get John to sample some of the things we canned."

Our guest protested. "Oh, no, no, don't go to that bother for me!"

Father countered, "We have plenty, John, and we'd like to see what you think of it. It's special. We hope you like it too."

The surrender was quick after the ritual protest. "Well, yes, yes, I guess I could let you know how it tastes. That would be all right. Yes, thanks very much, Joe and Julia."

Anything from our house had always been presented as a gift, a sample, or a test, without any overtones of charity.

The first jar was mixed wild berry jam. Steve and I had helped pick the berries. Of course, a lot of our berries never arrived at the kitchen; at least, not in the berry bucket. Father proudly brought out a jar of homemade sauerkraut. After that came the beans and a jar of peaches.

The gifts were, as usual, a bit more than Old Man Hurley could carry.

I grinned. I knew the next chapter. Father looked out the door. "Well, Dustin, it's early. You and Steve can help Mr. Hurley carry his stuff home."

Steve voiced his usual bid, an extra guarantee that he would be allowed to join the caravan. It was his piercing cry of, "Me! Me! Me!"

Father sternly looked at him. Steve quieted fast. Father

said, "Sure, Steve, you can go. That's what I said. Now, will you be good and mind Mr. Hurley and Dustin?"

Steve's eyes danced, his face radiant as he promised Father, "I'll be good! I'll be really good!"

Mother knotted a dishtowel, tied a jar of jam in it, hung it around Steve's neck and over his shoulder. He looked proud. She did the same for me only there was more stuff. Then she made a pack for our guest.

We managed the stubborn gate and crossed the gravel county road and the plank above Big Creek. We walked across the meadow and navigated the rocks and planks through the narrow swamp along the railroad siding.

One track was full of cars, loaded three high with fir logs. We ducked under the logs and onto the abandoned railroad, stretching into the side valley where Old Man Hurley lived. There were no rails on the abandoned road, only wooden ties, rocks, weeds, and grass. The old railroad began in a cathedral of young alder trees, growing straight from the shallow swamp.

We had well over a mile to go on this railroad. It was a splendid walk with no trains possible. I had nightmares about trains.

There were blackberry vines, twice as high as Father's head, salmonberries, and also red thimbleberries growing on bushes with big, soft green leaves. We ate well on that journey.

We were most of the way to our destination when we made a special stop on the old railroad bridge. It was the one place the railroad crossed the now smaller, but still healthy creek. We were cautioned, "Boys, don't stand too close to that bank; the water's deep and the bank's steep!"

Steve pointed excitedly to the deep pool where the stream cut a steep curve just after the bridge, and where, on our side, the water hugged a gravel and dirt slope. Steve shouted, "Fish, Dussin, fish!"

"I see them, Steve. They're pretty big."

Further along the railroad there was an old slide on the hillside above us. In the tumbled dirt, the bear weed had leaves bigger than elephant ears. We were immediately warned, "There's bear, deer, and cougar in these hills. Yes, we better hurry, boys, so you can get home to your folks."

Of course, it would have been rude to hurry as fast as Steve and I could have alone, but, to be honest, in both our minds was the desire to be on our way back so we could play along the creek as we made our way home.

The roadbed shot through a stand of tall flowering currant, and the valley opened into a grassy flatness and a field of white daisies. Near us reared the biggest, gnarliest, whitest spruce snag I could ever imagine. Its fire-shortened limbs twisted in agony toward the sky. It must have been the same age as Old Man Hurley. It, too, looked a little ragged. In the meadow of daisies nearby crouched Old Man Hurley's sway-backed cabin.

He again urged, "Yes, boys, it's later than your daddy thought. Last night I heard a cougar on the ridge. You boys be sure to hurry home."

We reached his cabin. Tired, he sat on the plank serving

as his doorstep, saying, "Yes, just unload the stuff here, boys. I'll take it in as soon as I catch my breath."

We emptied the slings. Mother had tied Steve's too tight, but we worked out the jam jar without untying it. Old Man Hurley handed us all three of the makeshift shoulder packs, urging, "Now, run these home to your folks and tell them again, thank you. Yes, you're good boys. Thank you, too."

As we walked out of the field of flowers, I said, "Steve, look at the top of that snag shake. Someday it's going to fall."

We hurried to the old railroad bridge. Then it happened. We heard a terrible crash and the ground shook. We were startled, but intent on machine-gunning the water with small pebbles. Steve kept laughing and moving closer to the bank of loose dirt and rocks, and I kept yelling at him to move back.

With a terrified cry of "Dussin!", Steve went sliding down the bank. He stopped inches from the water. I lay down, trying to reach his hand, but I couldn't. Steve was white-faced, looking to me as his only hope. I knew I had to save him. Not thinking, I turned and slowly slid beside him. I too stopped short of the water, but my feet were slowly sinking. I imagined I could kick little ledges in the loose bank and we would climb to the top. Sadly, the upper portion of the bank was harder than I had expected. It was vertical to the right and the left. We were trapped between the bank and the water.

Steve was starting to cry and my feet were touching water. It was a mile to Samuel's house. I began shouting for help. There was no answering call and my throat was getting sore. It was late. I was starting to panic.

Then, from above, a voice called, "You kids in trouble?"

On the railroad stood a young man wearing torn Army fatigues. He'd hurt his knee. It was muddy and a little bloody. To me, the world had again turned fair.

I stared at him, too choked to answer.

He smiled a faint smile then, limping closer, and lying on his stomach, he reached down, directing, "Wrap that cloth under your brother's arms and hand me the loop."

I did so. Steve caught his breath, almost falling into the water. That scared me too. The young man lifted Steve, but he told Steve to dig at the gravel and try helping himself. But he was smiling and Steve wasn't really that heavy. Then he grabbed my hand, holding it so tightly it hurt as he helped me up the bank. It was the most wonderful thing that had ever happened to me, but I didn't cry. I was supposed to take care of Steve, not blubber, and I hadn't done too well at my job.

I managed to thank the young man and ask him if he had hurt his knee. Steve was staring in awe at our rescuer.

"Sure did, Sonny. I was on my way to see old John Hurley. Haven't seen the codger for years!" He brushed dirt from both of us, asking me, "Say, young man, did you know Old Man Hurley was once a kid a lot like you?"

I nodded. It was obviously true, but hard to imagine. The young man frowned at the hillside, then urged, "You boys really better hurry home."

I managed to thank him again.

"You're welcome, kids. Be seeing you." He turned, whistling an old Army song as he limped rapidly toward his destination. We were on the steep east side of the hill. The shadows were getting deeper. As we walked we watched the bushes.

Steve ventured timidly, "There be bears, Dussin?"

Suddenly, in my mind, I again heard the crash of the snag and a different kind of fear possessed me. "Steve! We've got to go back! Old Man Hurley might be hurt!"

We swiftly ran across the ties, rocks and the weeds.

I didn't see the young man who'd helped us. He must have hurried too.

We came out of the high brush patch and there was the mighty snag, fallen, broken, destroyed in the field of daisies and across Old Man Hurley's cabin. Its red insides were exposed, sending the musty smell of rotten wood to our nostrils.

The sight was a shock. We stood petrified with awe, startled when a voice asked, "You kids all right?"

It was the young man who'd saved us. He was limping as he walked in our direction through the chunks of rotten wood and the daisies. Beside him walked another young man with a white bandage on his head. There was a wilted dandelion hanging from his shirt pocket.

I asked, "Is Old Man Hurley all right?"

The young man with the injured knee nodded, saying, "Sure, kids!" He glanced at his friend who agreed, "Yes, boys, don't worry. Yes, Old Man Hurley is just fine."

I was relieved because I saw that his cabin was completely smashed.

The man who'd pulled us up the bank asked his friend, "Getting kind of late. Do you suppose we could walk the boys home?"

"Yes. Yes, we have plenty of time."

The four of us walked along the tracks, talking about bears, wild berries, my pet chicken, and how Steve liked snakes and beetles. We hardly heard any sound in the dark woods. I glanced back and saw something like a big dog standing on the old railroad, but it turned back into the woods. I knew a cougar when I saw one, but I didn't say anything. Bill looked at me and smiled. He'd seen it too. It was good to have company.

I proudly told the two young men about my rainbow top and what fun it was, next to building dams and wading in the swamp. Bill said to his friend, "It sure is a nice time for kids."

The one with the bandaged head agreed. "Yes. Yes, I guess it is."

By the time we had walked to the place where the old railroad connected to the new one, it was getting a little dark.

We were again walking through the grove of alder trees. The man with the hurt knee and his friend stopped and looked at us. I knew then they weren't going to walk us all the way home. That was all right, maybe they were strangers and didn't want to be seen by grownups. The one

with the hurt knee said to us, "Dustin, Steve, you're about home. I think this is as far as we can take you."

His friend agreed, "Yes, that's right, Bill. Boys, you better hurry on home, now."

As Steve and I watched in awe, the two young men glowed with light, growing larger as they grinned, waved to us and gently faded from sight. The memory pleasantly haunts me to this day.

Steve was wide-eyed with astonishment, as was I. He let his hands fly as he exclaimed, "Whoo, Dussin! Whoo!"

"Whoo is right, Steve! They sure saved us! Come on, let's get home, and don't tell anyone anything, Okay?"

"Okay, Dussin. They be ghosts?"

"They be ghosts, Steve."

"They be nice?"

"They be nice."

"I won't tell."

Mother was at the door watching for us; Father was behind her, a lit lantern in his hand. I quickly explained, "Father, the snag fell! Something is wrong with Old...I mean, Mr. Hurley."

Steve volunteered, "He be all right."

After a hug, Father said, "We'll see about Mr. Hurley. You boys all right, besides dirty? I shouldn't have sent you out so late."

I defended, "Mr. Hurley was slow. We had to stay with him."

Steve was watching everyone, eyes open, bursting to say something, save for the damper of a quick glance from me.

Father asked, "Julia, can you feed the kids? I guess I'd better walk to George Singletree's and get him to drive us to John's place."

As we ate beans and cornbread, Mother kept watching us to reassure herself that we were unharmed. My inner vision was seeing a long railroad, no rails, just ties with rocks and weeds. All about stood the straight, young alder trees. The old railroad shot down the center as if it were the aisle of a church. Standing on this railroad were two wounded, young men, glowing and growing in size, and finally vanishing--yet they had smiled and waved, informally, and they had talked to us, lifted us up a bank.

Steve was finished eating and was engrossed in my rainbow top. Perhaps, in his world of snakes, fish, and rainbow tops, ghosts were only one more thing.

Walking across the room to him, I promised, "Steve, you can have the rainbow top. It's yours to keep."

His face was as the sunrise. "Mine?"

"Yes, Steve, it's all yours!"

"Thank you. You be good, too!" Then he added clearly, "Dustin."

It was a little early for a kid as big as me; still, I went right to bed. It was a good place to think about things you couldn't talk about.



Pen and Ink

ART Claudia Schouten

CONTEST

Spring term, *Denali* will award prizes for short fiction and poetry. All submissions (including Fall and Winter term's submissions) will be considered for the contest. Only student works are eligible. An art and photography contest is under consideration. For further details, inquire at the *Denali* office, 479F Center Building.

looking for dinosaurs (for Sean)

plastic cowboys and Indians in
ridiculous reds and greens
olive guns and khaki tanks
a lone zoo captured in vinyl
painted tin motorized apes from Korea
space aliens stapled on a cosmic-cardboard
background

but no dinosaurs

Regan Lee