

# DENALI







**Denali** is a student-managed literary arts publication of Lane Community College.

**Denali** welcomes submissions of poetry, photography, graphic arts, essays, character sketches, literary narratives, short fiction, etc. Please enclose a SASE for guidelines.

The **Denali** staff would like to thank Dorothy Wearne, Karen Locke, and the LCC staff and faculty for their immeasurable assistance.

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### HELIOS MAGAZINE

P.O. Box 11554  
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*Helios* is a new quarterly magazine designed to bring poetry to a wider audience.

*Helios* invites submissions of poems, line drawings, and photography. To be returned, materials should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.



**BEFORE THE RAIN**

A cigarette butt lay in the gutter.  
 I've seen it many times before.  
 With each passing day,  
 Turning gray with dust.

Dry, stifling heat,  
 Hard to breathe,  
 No energy.  
 Yearning for the rain.

It's been so long  
 Since I felt the rain.  
 Last coming as a spritz  
 From a spray bottle.

Lying on damp grass  
 Mist building upon my face.  
 Little drops running down my cheeks.  
 Skin tingling with pleasure.

Slowly moist air becomes drenched.  
 The pattering of gentle rain  
 Hopping  
 from leaf to leaf.

The hair on my body  
 Standing at attention,  
 Piercing the drops  
 Like the points of tiny spears.

Wading in streams,  
 Water gushing over shoes,  
 And splashing up pant legs.  
 I smelled the wetness.

As the drops spattered the ground  
 Acrylic insects spread their wings,  
 Fighting to take flight  
 Only to be pulled back to earth.

*Keith Whitehead*



*Bob Walter Untitled*

**HAIKU 4**

A chorus line of  
 trees shivers in the rhythms  
 of a winter wind.

*Wendell Anderson*



## FOUR OCHOCO POEMS

### *I. Fivesome*

the small Ochoco field  
threaded by a creek  
hemmed in by road and hill  
understands haymaking  
hay & more hay

the steller's jay electric  
icy lunges from a fir  
flaunts its blue  
its voice challenging  
lesser birds

the gray rock loses  
its grip on the mountain  
slips into shade or  
confirmed sunk in dirt  
blooms lichen

the sage in June draws  
metal from the soil  
it seems it will never  
tarnish or lose its  
pissy smell

hayfield jay gray rock  
and sage to place myself (in  
my nature) beside nature  
to be party and apart  
to remain and change

### *II. On Creeks*

Two mountains  
in dry land  
together contribute  
a creek

Live creeks  
in Ochoco  
no wider than  
my body lying down

Most creeks  
in Ochoco  
dry out by  
August

Cram Creek  
its throat  
stopped  
by clay

I lie thinking:  
creeks struggle  
to keep speaking  
in dry land

Marks Creek  
by Ochoco  
standards  
a large creek  
swaps sides  
of the road  
lies low  
lets water  
in its arms  
swell to  
a syllable  
spills slow  
over rock  
without its  
slick tension  
broken

Rolling up  
shirtsleeves  
to cool off  
in dry land

Seeing the white  
inside of my arm  
so near to life  
I say *creek*

A frail race  
sensible enough  
not to call attention  
to itself

### *III. Sayings*

what creeks say looping  
across Big Summit Prairie  
snakes alive can be said  
any number of ways

so long as they digress  
long in their grudging flowing

so long as they creep low  
skirting obstacles  
coaxed ahead by a gentle tilt

so long as they let drought  
interrupt and their sayings  
catch in their throats

### *IV. Saltlick*

cattle graze  
upstart grass  
follow down a drainage  
to water

a muddy walk  
catching pools  
shrinking  
as heat insists

just a trickle in August

a drink  
a lick of salt

the ice-block  
summer did not melt  
disappearing  
by labor of smoothing  
tongues

*Erik Muller*



*Rebecca Bradshaw Great Horned Owl*



## Degas' Dancer

Edgar Degas dressed a bronze  
girl dancer in a real gauze  
tutu, painted her shoulders brown  
to blend his three mixed mediums.

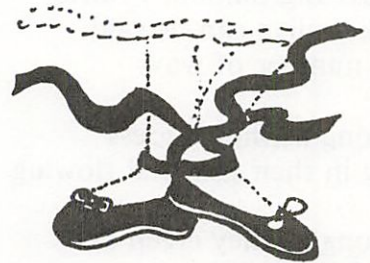
She poses like a stork at rest:  
right foot points right; hands hide behind.  
Her chest is strong but almost flat.  
She's a perfect ten gymnast!

Her face is lifted, but her eyelids,  
shut, enclose the force of childhood,  
a self-possession that precedes  
invasion by the adult world.

In 1881, Degas  
was ridiculed for "Dancer in  
a Skirt," the last sculpture he showed.  
After his death, his friends found

and cast in bronze seventy-three  
dancers and race horses, a set  
of powerful movements that Degas  
danced around to paint his famous oils.

*Peter Jensen*  
1987



## DANCER IN A CAST

You're lying there in bed  
And the dawn just won't come  
You can't fall asleep without help from the sun.  
For the sun brings the wind and the trees to your view  
By feeling their branches you dance as they do.

Now there is darkness, you have no one near.  
You're all by yourself and haunted by fear.  
For the fear comes with dreams, the dreams that re-  
mind you  
That you're laid up and lonely and nothing's to do.

It's you by yourself as it's been all your life.  
You love what you feel and dancing's your wife.  
But your wife she is gone and now left with no one  
You just lie there and dream and pray for the sun.

For the sun brings the wind and the trees to your view  
By feeling their branches you dance as they do.

*Robin Bucklin*

### On This Road

On this road  
 the trees are green  
 but I see black.  
 The gravel is gray,  
 the bordering river  
 is ebony  
 if not invisible.  
 I am apart  
 from the inconsistencies  
 called you.  
 I want  
 not your anger  
 and can survive  
 past nights  
 without your cheek  
 on my chest.  
 I maintain black  
 for the grass  
 and have misplaced  
 my ability to be green.  
 The sky becomes cold  
 in a slap to my face.  
 I am frustrated  
 and you expose no tenderness,  
 no sympathy,  
 no caress  
 holding me into you.  
 No simple kiss.  
 Your tone is bitter  
 and aches my mind  
 like a broken eyelid.  
 It bleeds  
 for my tears  
 and rejoices  
 to the salty taste.  
 Smoking a cigarette,  
 feeling  
 ashamed -  
 acts of a terrible lover -  
 as the partial moon refuses  
 clarity  
 and security,  
 giving only jealousy  
 and blindingness.  
 It hides  
 as do you.  
 I am isolated  
 on this road  
 and cannot find  
 a road sign  
 directing me home.

*James M. Scoville*



### Shantung

I chose this dress in your color  
 In your memory  
 Wear it in your name

I put it on today to read a letter from you

But someone else came in and touched  
 The sleeve  
 Pushed open the neck to kiss  
 Underneath  
 Ran his hand down and down

I was looking over his shoulder  
 At your letter in my lap  
 At your letter and his hand  
 On your dress.

*Ruth Simer*



# Night Train

“What you guys lookin’ at me that way for? He was a punk; he had it comin’ to him an’ y’all know it. We’re partners; we’ve got to stick together.”

As Gin listened to Ramos justify the attack, he knelt by the campfire, poking at the red glowing embers with a stick. Gin didn’t like Ramos, and after what happened this morning his mind was made up.

Ramos was a short man, barely five and a half feet, with a wiry build, long curly brown hair, and full beard. The Vietnam war was his excuse for everything. His bad luck started there; his wife left him because of it; and he tried to stay drunk to forget it.

“I really don’t know why you guys are all bent out of shape. I mean, hell, I was just protectin’ my turf. Anybody knows that I been spare-changin’ that corner goin’ on four months. Nobody cuts another man’s turf unless they got an agreement.”

While Ramos gave his speech, Smiley worked at laying out his bedroll. He made sure that everything was just right; got all the pebbles and sticks out of the way; rolled the blanket out and made it nice and smooth. Smiley was the oldest, quietest, and cleanest of the group. He never said much of anything, just smiled anytime he was spoken to, showing his toothless grin.

Ramos paced nervously next to the fire.

“What’s takin’ that idiot so long to get back here? He’s been gone for over an hour; probably took the money an’ got drunk on his own.”

“Not J.C.,” said Gin matter-of-factly.

“Yeah, J.C.’d never run out on us; he’s as loyal as a hound dog,” added Smiley, looking to Gin for approval.

Smiley was right. J.C. was loyal as a hound dog. And what a hound dog; six and a half feet tall and close to two hundred fifty pounds. J.C. had been running with Gin and Smiley almost three years. They had been through a lot together, pulled each out of a few scrapes, and kept each other alive a few times where one might not have made it. Ramos had been with them just a few months. The night he’d met them, Ramos robbed a little mom-and-pop market and stole some wine. A few days later, Ramos came across thirty dollars in food stamps, which he split among them, and they ran the scam on grocery stores. That was good for a three day drunk, and that was all it took for him to be accepted. But in the last few weeks Ramos hadn’t shared much of anything.

A few minutes later, J.C. came rumbling down the path.

Ramos met J.C. at the edge of camp, reached up and pulled a bottle of Night Train out of the bag, twisted the cap, and took a long chug off the bottle, all in one motion.

“’Bout time you got here,” gasped Ramos. “What took so long? Did ya walk to Glenwood for it?”

“Good job, J.C.,” said Gin. “Everything go okay? You got what I told you, didn’t you?”

“You bet, Gin; just like ya said,” replied J.C. obediently.

Gin handed a bottle to Smiley and one to J.C., took one for himself, and then sat the rest next to his backpack. Not much was said for the next few minutes as they each enjoyed the fruits of the day’s labor.

Their campsite was a partly furnished, heavily littered one next to the Willamette River. This was the third night at this spot and it was a good one. The river was ten feet away, and the jogging trail through the park was just up the embankment. Alongside the campfire with its back to the river, was an old blue sofa with its springs sprung and the stuffing all lumped up. Gin and J.C. sat on the sofa, nursing their bottles, trying not to drink their wages too fast. Smiley had gone off into the bushes, bottle in hand, looking for more firewood.

Ramos joined Gin and J.C. next to the sofa and attempted to strike up a conversation.

“I ’spect it’ll rain tonight from the looks of those clouds,” said Ramos.

Gin and J.C. didn’t respond.

“Won’t be long before we’ll all have to head south for the winter. Maybe Arizona or New Mexico. I rode the freights down there two years ago. Don’t take more than a couple days.”

The two men drank in silence, ignoring Ramos’s attempt to include himself.

Just then Smiley came swaggering back into camp dragging a large tree limb in one hand and an empty bottle in the other. Gin handed him a fresh bottle and opened one for himself. Ramos, having downed his own long ago, reached for the last bottle, and Gin pulled it away and handed it to J.C.

“You got all you’re gonna get,” said Gin. “You didn’t earn anymore.”



Ramos's temper flared; he made a move toward Gin and then caught himself.

"What's goin' on here? You all get two, and I get one?"

Ramos started pacing again, muscles tense, hands in his pockets, eyes darting from one man to the next.

"You're holdin' what I did to the punk again' me; that's it, ain't it?"

Ramos glared at Gin, seeking confirmation and getting none.

"DAMN! A guy looks out for his partners, tryin' to protect their interests, and what's he get? Nothin', no thanks, no 'good job, Ramos,' nothin'."

Ramos's pacing quickened and became reckless. He stumbled over Smiley's bedroll and kicked at the campfire.

"Ramos, there's no room in this camp for a man who breaks a bottle over another man's head just for trying to make a living," said Gin. "We're not buying that crap about doing it for us either. We've looked out for each other for over three years and never had to crack someone's skull. What's to say you wouldn't do one of us in some night?"

Ramos was already packing up his bedroll, preparing to leave. The three men watched in silence as he stomped out of camp down the trail next to the river. Angry and frustrated, Ramos walked and thought of ways to get revenge. As he headed up the embankment and crossed the park, thoughts of revenge turned to thoughts of getting some more to drink. Spare-changing was tough at night. Food stamps wouldn't be out until the beginning of the month, and the stab-lab wouldn't open until seven a.m. Over and over again, it was always the same. A different town, a different bunch of guys, but always the same. You get enough money any way you can; try and stay drunk for as long as you can; save a little wine to wake up on; and never, never take your boots off when you go to sleep.

The night air was cold even for September, and Ramos hadn't prepared for the change. He wore no hat, owned no gloves, and the unlined denim jacket he wore was two sizes too big. The cold wind flowed easily up the sleeves of his jacket and the legs of his pants as he sulkily make his way to the nearest store.

Two blocks from the grocery store Ramos hid his bedroll in the bushes between a furniture store and insurance office. His determination to steal the wine made him an easy target, but for some reason he walked in and out of the store unnoticed. Ramos ran the two blocks back to his bedroll, propped himself against the furniture store and began to drink the first bottle as fast as he could. The excitement of the theft wore off and was replaced by anger and resentment as he started the second fifth.

"I'm gettin' the hell out of this town and do myself a big favor. I don't need nobody rationing my wine and tellin' me what not to do," said Ramos out loud to himself. "Arizona is only a freight train away, and there ain't no sense in spendin' another night here."

Ramos worked himself up to a stand from his squat next to the wall. He was much drunker than he realized and staggered heavily when he stepped out to the sidewalk with his bedroll on his shoulder and bottle in hand.

The switching yard was just a few blocks away, and Ramos managed to get there with much difficulty. He entered the yard by way of a hole in the fence and sat waiting by the tracks for his ride to arrive.

Just after midnight a freighter began rumbling through the switch yard, heading out of town. Ramos grabbed his wine and bedroll and began carefully crossing the rows of tracks. The rain finally came, breaking the blackness of night, and making the rails glisten below. His vision blurred from the wine, and he panicked as the train gradually picked up speed; he hurried, started to run, and finally got next to the moving train. Standing there gasping, he tried to collect his thoughts, stay alert, and form a plan, when suddenly he saw an open boxcar. He ran alongside the train, trying to equal the speed, his vision blurring from the rain and wine. His head pounded with adrenaline as the open boxcar approached. In one swift motion, he swung his bedroll into the boxcar and reached for the door jam.

The wine bottle shattered under the wheels of the train.

*Rick George*



**BENEATH THE FOREST**

Freeman crosses the cobwebby  
 unseen world of mycelia  
 and, seeking the points of eruption  
 the slow magical lifting  
 and parting of duff,  
 gathers fruiting bodies  
 to his basket.

Later his clutch of students  
 assemble around a tailgate.  
 He lifts the genitalia  
 from our boxes, bags,  
 and outstretched hands,  
 sniffing, nibbling, caressing  
 with the assurance of a lover  
 long accustomed to their lurid colors,  
 their smells of cornhusks  
 seafood, and dirty socks,  
 their skins of kid leather,  
 down, and glistening slime.

The strange litany of names  
 passes between us:  
 Clitocybe odora, and Amanita vaginata,  
 Phallus impudicus.  
 The gelatinosa, edulis, lactarius  
 we understand  
 mingle with the abstruse  
 atramentarius or  
 praeclaresquamosus  
 over our stumbling tongues.

Twisting stems, peeling skins,  
 bruising, scratching, snapping,  
 Freeman reveals their character  
 and hands back,  
 with their broken bodies,  
 the spores of mycological knowledge:  
 bites your tongue!  
 edible but not incredible,  
 was gathered for quinine,  
 choice and where did you find this?

The elegant amanitas  
 and drab conocybe  
 hold death,  
 unseen but certain,  
 within their ripening flesh.  
 They are said  
 to be delicious.

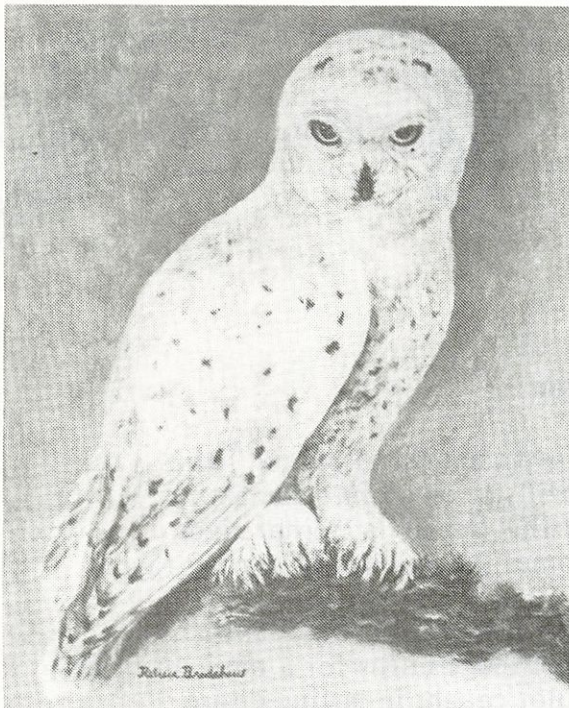
*John Hicks*

**Life in the City**

The hard, concrete curb,  
 A pillow of technicolor cheer.  
 Open pores reeking cold evaporation.  
 Matted hair, Clotted blood.  
 Teethchatteringsleep.

*Keith Whitehead*





*Rebecca Bradshaw* Snowy Owl

### INVOCATION

There is power in the mud below my feet.  
There is strength in the dirt.

We can stand on the ground and sing the power of the earth  
We can dance her beauty, our feet, staccato drumbeat  
to the rhythm of the world, of ourselves.

Heartbeat, feet beat, drumbeat,  
The earth sings.

Dig in the mud.  
Know the life in the dirt. Know that it is yours.  
Know your power. Know her power. Know that she is in you.  
Dance upon the earth, Sing upon the earth  
Love upon the earth, Know the earth.

Dig in the mud.  
Smell the, taste the, feel the, Know the power in the soil.  
Feel it Laughing      She is Laughing  
She is Laughing      She is Alive  
She is Alive      She is Alive

Saugerties, New York  
April 9, 1985

*Daniel I. King*

### I thought it was the moon I saw

I thought it was the moon I saw,  
White and round against the sky,  
Lending softness to the street,  
Slick the blackness,  
Bathed in sheen.

I thought that it was you I loved,  
Your perfectness,  
Your beauty eyes;  
Coldly brimming,  
Sweet and judging,  
Shy and beaten,  
Needing me.

The blinking street lamp  
Casting brightness,  
Proudly beaming from the pole  
Subdued the dark  
On my way home.  
The cold wet street and I  
Alone  
Believed  
It was the moon.

*Mariah Stewart*



### Ulysses and his Blind Man

I spoke  
to the blind man,  
the wild-eyed  
blind man,

Led by  
a sovereign beast  
named "Ulysses."  
He spoke  
of the weather,  
but God only knows  
the tale he tells.

Led by  
a noble beast;  
drug through the  
bitter years,  
like a country  
through war.  
And still,  
He clinches the reins  
so tight.

I saw  
him on his  
Way,  
on his slow  
and putrid  
Way.  
Off to some  
morbid destination.

Groping on -  
I could not  
help to see  
a people in his  
wild eye,  
as he made  
his sickly  
Way -  
Groping on  
to find a place  
to feed his  
hungry, savage  
Dog.

I spoke  
to the blind man,  
the wild-eyed  
blind man.

*Bob W. Ingram*



### sight

When the mist of eternal light  
Begins to blend into the haze  
Of this our life's eternal night  
Comes the anguish of glaring rays.

Like a wondrous ball of fire  
Knowledge burns for a moment bright  
If not caught in lasting desire  
It's soon lost to the phantom night.

The very things we seek as right  
Become bubbles of temporal worth  
Bursting...rainbows in frenzied flight  
Nothing of value on this earth.

The more we see and feel the blight  
Of man's progress across the stage  
The more we are snared in the trite  
Expanses of life's shallow page.

Let us scream for sensuous sight  
In the moment we find pleasure  
And thereby reach god's promised height  
Orgasm . . . an earth-bound treasure.

Only those things that can be felt  
Or tasted or heard or seen or smelt  
Will be exhausted on the stage  
To give true meaning to the page.  
To life's blank page will come the light  
To give us sight...give us sight...sight.

*Latta 1967*





*Andrew Nelson*



*Howard Corbett*



### Queen Crocus

Snow crocus blossoms lavender,  
deep royal purple, gold, and white,  
who rule the flowery calendar  
in February by beauty's right,  
grant color to the dark and light  
of winter dreams, decreeing life's  
eternal round renewed aright -  
reborn again in winter's strifes.  
In the mid-winter night's darkness  
Queen Crocus reigns with bright promise.

*M. Clark Wilde*

### Galileo Thinks of Swings

When brilliant people are distracted,  
they may notice something odd.  
Galileo was in a cathedral  
in Sixteen Hundred looking for God.

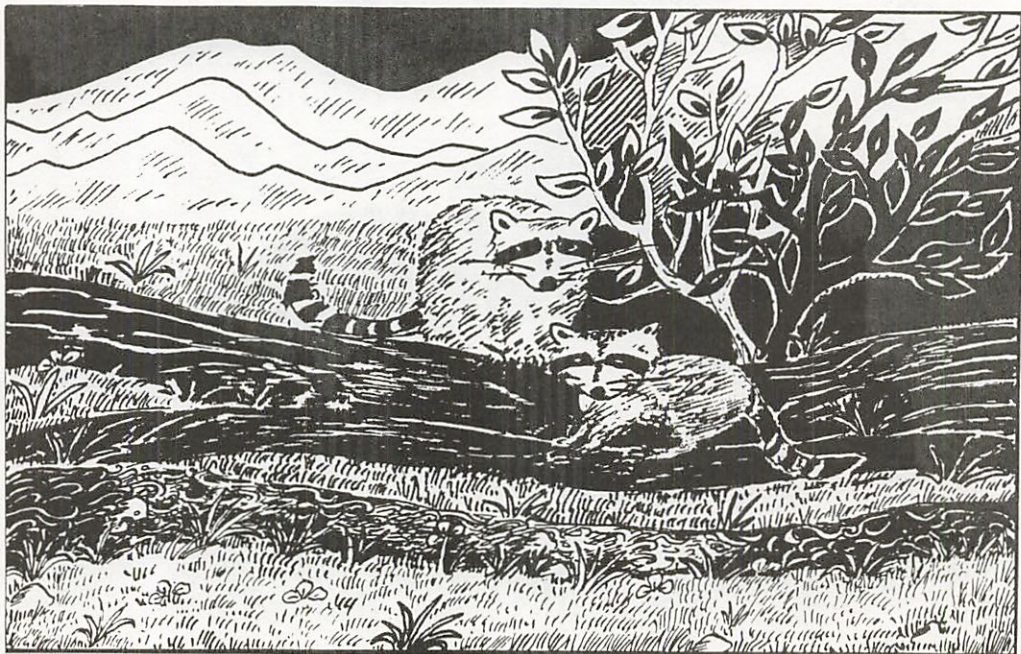
Instead, he saw a hanging lamp  
swinging back and forth.  
He wasn't hypnotized. He wondered  
that each swing going north

equaled each swing coming south  
whatever size the total arc.  
Priests accused him of daydreaming  
like a schoolboy on a lark.

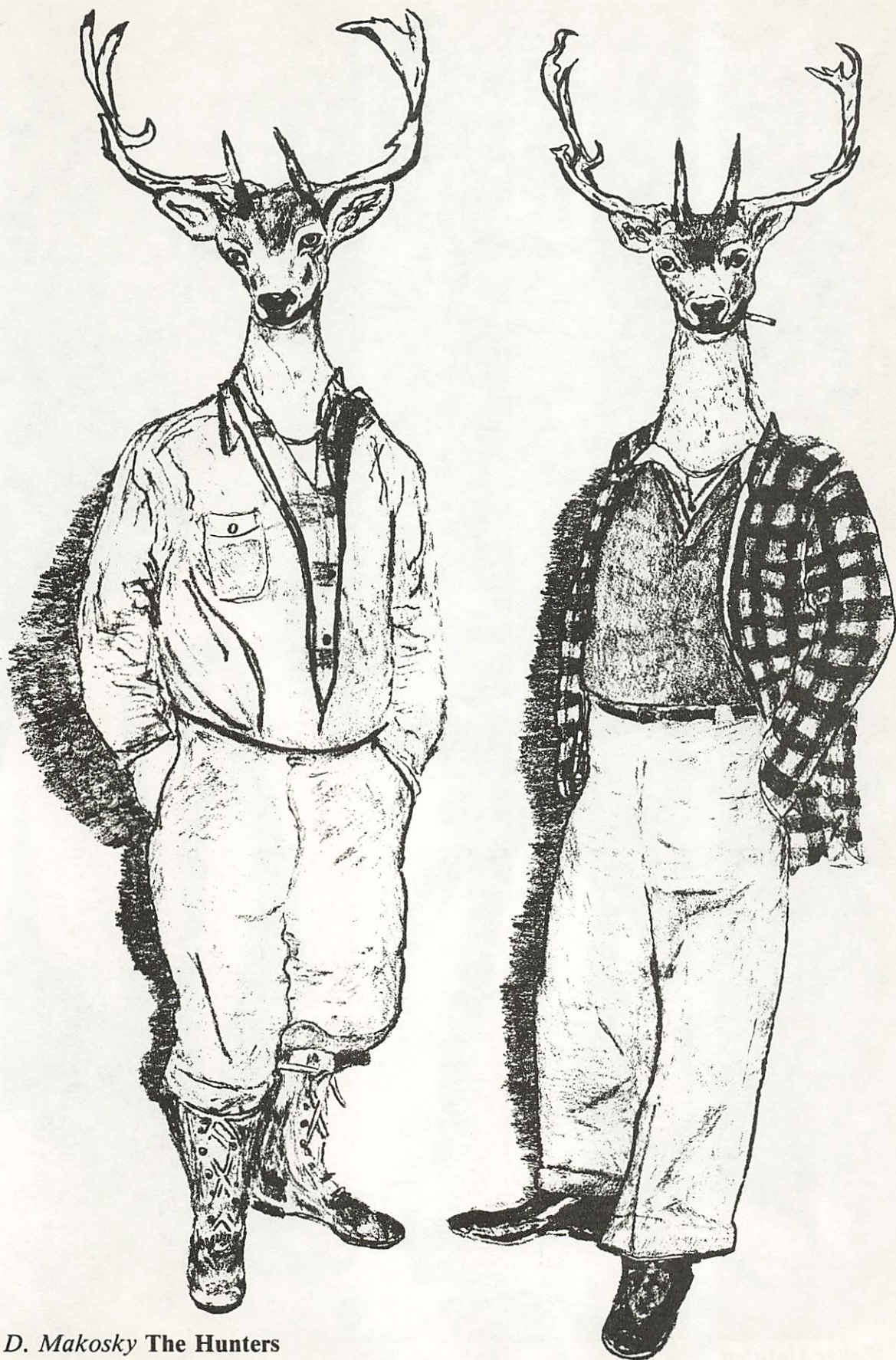
His face lit up like Rembrandt's gold  
surrounded by brown dark.  
Bishops demanded to share his vision,  
so he revealed a clock

that would use a pendulum's set swings  
to regulate time's beating wings.

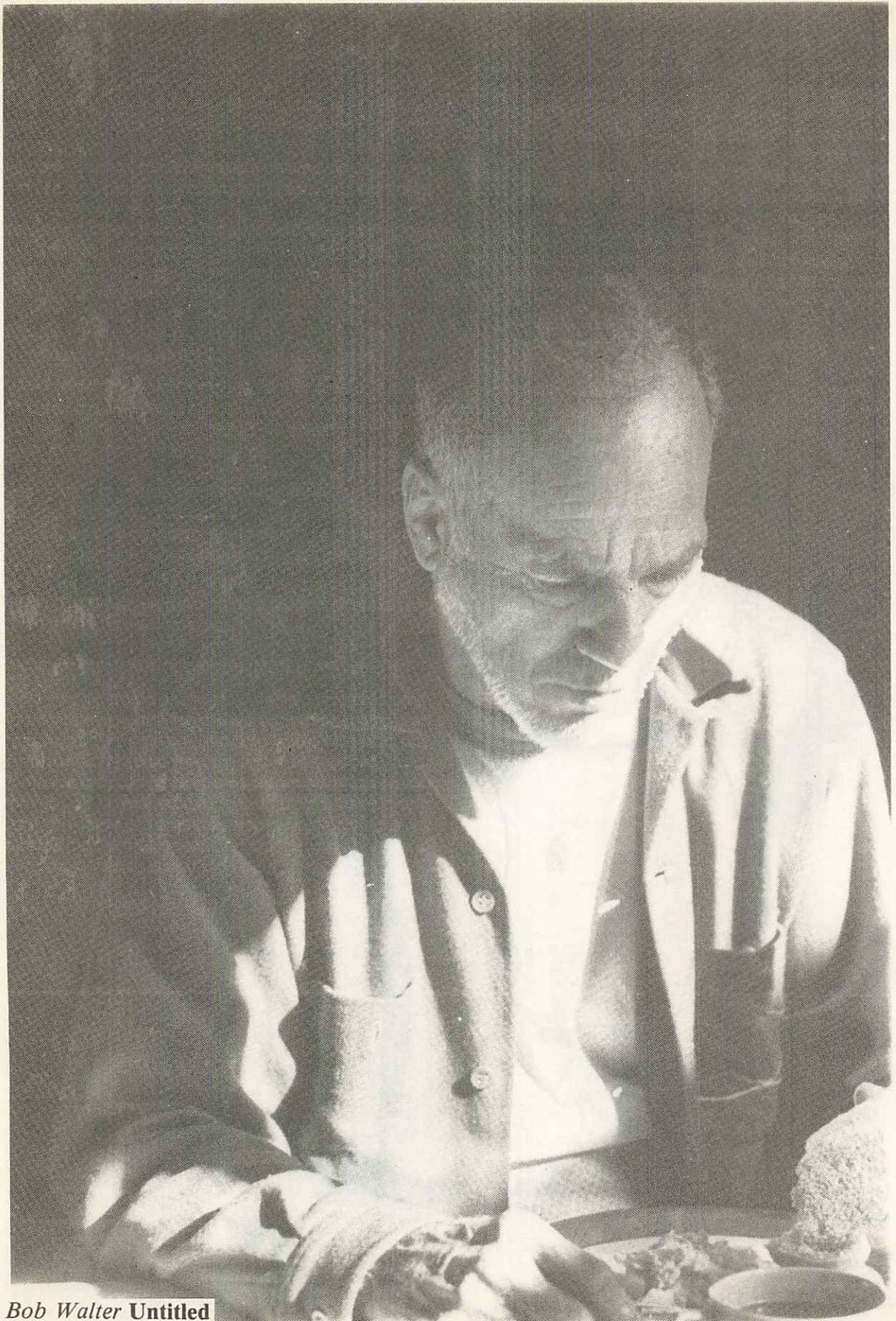
*Peter Jensen, 1987*











*Bob Walter* **Untitled**