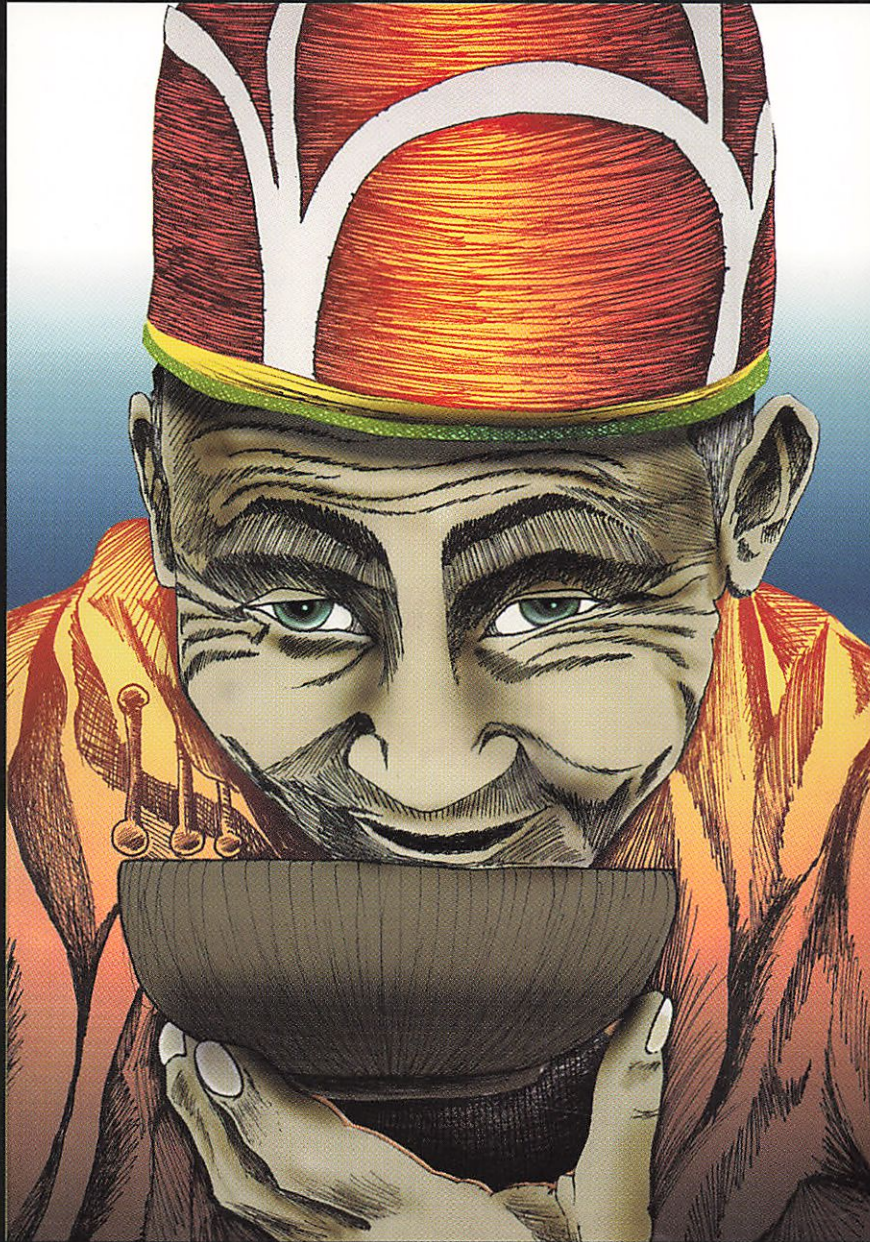


# denali



**Lane Community College**  
Spring 2001



**FRONT COVER:**

*Carson Albares*

Carson is an illustrator, graphic designer and fine artist. His true passion is mask-making. Another example of Carson's work appears in the "Seasons" poster on page 26 of this issue. The cover illustration is titled, "Mongolian Man."



**BACK COVER:**

*Petter Ternström*

Petter is an international student from Sweden at Lane Community College studying graphic design. Petter enjoys illustration, printmaking and photography. Petter's work was featured in the 2001 LCC Juried Student Art Exhibition. The title

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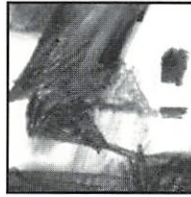


# Denali

Spring 2001

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### Thanks to:

Art Light Studio  
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The Renaissance Room  
and ... the fabulous Clive.

PS — Thanks for the  
herbs from the garden.  
See page 17

J.R. at Head Start  
and Richard Lennox  
for the Newtons.

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# HASTE MAKES WASTE

by Ratina

First it was the potato salad. That was in Fayetteville, Arkansas, on the way to a potluck. Then my favorite green hat, a Tyrolean-Fedora blend that I looked pretty good in: Fort Collins, Colorado. And now, the handset of my cordless phone from the kitchen of my Eugene, Oregon home. What do these three items have in common? They're all items I have left on top of my car, driving blithely away, oblivious until my loss became obvious.

The bowl of potato salad was the quickest to make its presence/absence known. The yellow and green bowl emptied its contents onto the windshield of my car just after I had pulled out of our driveway and started down the hill. My daughter, Katie, squealed as gooey white gobs splatted onto the windshield. Was it a bird? A plane? No, it was the potato salad, which I'd set on top of the car so I could buckle Katie in. The windshield wipers were helpless against the mayonnaise. One chunk of potato stuck to the wiper in front of Katie, smearing starchy residue in an arc across the window. On my side of the car, the wiper was flinging potato cubes at passing motorists. My enamelware bowl skittered down the street. We stopped to fetch the bowl and to pour water down the window. We managed to smear the mess aside enough to see our way to the car wash, where we waited in line with a lot of happy flies.

The next year, I lost the hat. I was chatting with a friend after a vaudeville show. He had

given me a set of juggling balls, which I set on the roof of the car with the hat as we talked. I drove home and did not miss the hat until the next morning when I went out to the car. Three velvet juggling balls, red, lavender, and purple, were wedged in the roof rack of the car. But my dear hat was nowhere in sight.

And now the phone. I was talking on the phone while loading the car with items to take to St. Vinnie's. I finished my call and set the phone on top of the car—just for a moment—before I placed my packages in the back seat.

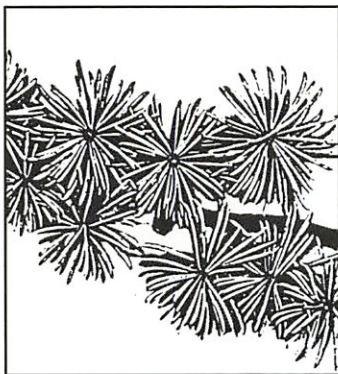
I didn't miss the phone until that evening. My

first thought, in mother-of-the-teenager style, was that it must be in Katie's room. Katie was getting a drink from the fridge. "Oh, Ka-tie." My voice was sweeter than a truckload of honeycomb. "Have you seen the cordless phone?" I was sure that the familiar expression of adolescent guilt would cross her face.

"No, Mom, I just got home." Uh oh. Instantly I remembered setting the phone on top of the car.

What had happened after that? I'd driven downtown.

Dressed in my pajamas, purple gardening clogs, an apron, and winter gloves, I took a flashlight and checked my car's roof rack, my driveway, and the street down to the corner. A bicyclist swerved to avoid me in the dark. As I turned the flashlight on him, I asked, "Have you seen a phone around here anywhere?" He called a hurried "No" over his shoulder and rode away as fast as he could. Shoulders sagging and PJ's bagging, I returned to my house.



Katie met me at the door. Her face, torn between sympathy and amusement, asked. My gloomy face answered.

"Mom! Not the phone! Like the potato salad? And the hat? And that bottle of water a couple of months ago?"

I'd forgotten about the water bottle. How puzzled I was by cars honking at me until the water bottle fell past my side window after staying on for blocks. Now, that's good driving! Furthermore, I recalled arriving in Portland a few months ago, 120 miles from home, and realizing that the directions to my friend Denise's house had also been left on top of the car ... I decided not to remind Katie. "Yes, honey. It's very sad. I should never, ever leave things on top of the car."

She hugged me. "No, Mom, I guess you shouldn't."

Later, I was resting on the couch, muttering under my breath, "I will not leave things on top of the car. I will not leave things on top of the car."

Katie sat beside me and patted my hand. "Don't worry, Mom, I'll take care of you when your memory fails."

"What do you mean, when?" My voice quavered. "Who are you anyway, little girl?"

She winked. "Who am I? I'm the person who lent you a million dollars yesterday. You said you'd pay me back tonight."

"Oh, yes. Now where is my purse? Don't tell me I left that million dollars ..."

**"...dressed in my pajamas, purple gardening clogs,  
an apron, and winter gloves, I took a flashlight and  
checked my car's roof rack, my driveway  
and the street down to the corner."**

Ratina is one of the world's best cooks, an avid gardener — in and out of purple clogs — and a collage devotee. She has won numerous awards for her writing. Ratina prefers to publish under her first name, honoring her role model in writing and life, Colette. "Nothing I write is a solo effort. All the wacky people in my life, past and present, have ensured that I will never run out of material."



## CHERRY CREEK

by Daniel White Lightning

I brought with me the kind of anger that grows silent with time. For two years I had carried it on me like ammunition. Now I was coming back home, feeling like there was no room left in my world for my mother's new-found husband, Eugene. If it had been up to me, he would have disappeared right then and I would be the little man of the house again. Now I was in his corner of the world, though, on his reservation, and I would have to either fall into rhythm or stumble the whole way.

Gene picked me up that summer in his hybrid pieced-together truck and drove me back into Cherry Creek under the cool cover of night. I had nothing to say to him, nothing to share with him. I fumed as my attention orbited around his heavy presence. He pushed his pickup farther and deeper into the country. The city lights disappeared one-by-one, the stars replacing their glow. Swallowing hard, I compressed my anger and fear into silent implosions. Gene finally broke the silence as we pulled into Cherry Creek, telling me about his well-trained mares and frisky colts. I wondered if he thought I could be broken, like so many of his obedient horses.

My mother showed me my room, swiftly spreading the sheets and blankets across my bed. She's always in motion, like a little storm, out-pacing her own children. My father had long ago left her alone to teach

the five of us. We were like a flexible army unit: self-contained, yet always dependent upon another. We had come up strong together under her unwavering commitment to us kids, but now it seemed things had changed. To me, mom was a ghost in two places at once, never in full presence. Gene had stolen pieces of her while I was gone. He kept those pieces, saved them along with the broke-down cars rusting in the yard.

I had been living in the city for the past two years. The traffic patterns and electric hum still buzzed between my ears. The angry poisons I had saved for Gene seemed to lose their toxic quality in a place like Cherry Creek. Cherry Creek was a place of simple things: old people waking up early before the sun, relatives helping relatives get by, fresh laughter for the same old stories. I somehow had become numb to the simple things. I felt out of place in my own family. My brothers and sisters had to try hard to get me laughing; even the dogs didn't recognize my scent and growled when I approached. I wanted to remember how to laugh until it hurt. I wished the dogs would again follow me to hell and back.

Gene put me to work every day. Pulling me away from the Nintendo, he would tease me about being lazy and soft. I would come home with mosquito bites and

“ I wondered if he thought  
**I could be *broken*,**  
like so many of his obedient horses.”

dark tan lines. I never liked his projects. He would dream about transforming piles of nuts and bolts into a running engine, scraps of plywood into furniture, leftover food into stir-fry dishes. It happened like this: he would offer something of his — a ride to town, a burger, something like that. If I took his offer, then I owed him a day's work. If I turned it down, he would blow up and pout for a couple of days. It was hardly a fair trade, but it was the only way he knew. Most times I wouldn't catch on until I had already slipped over to his bad side. I had to be alert; most of his emotions came in whispered gestures.

Gene's presence has been a double-edged wedge, splitting me away from my mother but also teaching me subtly,

with silent lessons and hard work. One time, Gene brought me to the graveyard. There were five different graveyards in Cherry Creek with seven different rivaling churches placed like fortresses among them. Cherry Creek was well colonized. The graveyard Gene took me to must have been the oldest. Pale grave-markers stood proud, resisting time, with the heavy names of relatives who had lived in the old ways. The surrounding prairie grass was scorched to ashy stubs by the controlled-burn fires. Gene led me to a grave that said "Gall" on it. He told me Gall fought the whites along side Crazy Horse and that they were like brothers. Then he was quiet, and I let my imagination remember the rest.

Daniel grew up in North and South Dakota and graduated from a Native American Prep school in New Mexico. When not playing basketball, he likes to read and write poetry and short stories.



## LET'S GO DRINK POETRY

by Poeta Ebrío

*In memory of my best friends: Junior — bohemian, psychologist, humanist and friend; Odin — bohemian, lawyer, Mister Money and friend; and Pepe — bohemian, businessman, Mister Sex and friend; who were born cut by the same scissors; who were born under the sign that exalts bohemia and friendship, under the sign that hates lies and the coldness of people, the sign that detests hypocrisy and avarice; who were born knowing that we will be friends still after our death; who were born for sharing our lives in misfortune as well as in happiness, in misery as in riches; who were born — not by geography but by heart — in the same small town that saw us grow up, that saw us inebriated, that saw us playing soccer, that saw us be neat, honest and spendthrifts at the same time.*

*We are, in other words, like Alejandro Dumas says: All for one and one for all. Salud! Por mis amigos.*

Can you imagine drinking poetry the whole night long?

Can you imagine drinking words that make people happy?

Can you imagine how it would be to get drunk on a beautiful book that has wonderful verses? And each verse is like a prescription pill that cures your depression.

Can you imagine that each page is a different drink that makes drunk your brain and your heart? The most expensive drink will be the most loved word.

Can you imagine if the only thing that you would be able to drink was poetry?

Can you imagine how powerful a verse is when it can save unfortunate lives?

Can you imagine that drinking a glass of poetry can calm your thirst?

Can you imagine drinking a six-pack of poetry?

Can you imagine naming a drink "Poetry?" How would this taste? What kinds of alcohol would you choose? Scene in a bar: "Hi, can I have two double 'poetries,' please?"

Can you imagine waking up with a hangover due to having drunk too many verses?

Can you imagine drinking the fresh air of poetry?

Can you imagine drinking 12-year-old black label poetry?

Can you imagine that instead of taking tranquilizers, you will start drinking poetry?

Can you imagine that for one instant of your life you can read a poem? Tell me, will this hurt you? It probably will make you and your loved one happy.



To my friends, wherever you are — heaven, hell, earth, sky, grave, war, in an incomprehensible state, lost in a math class, learning chemistry that looks like a foreign language worse than English, Aramaic or Egyptian hieroglyphics, underground, making love with love, protesting against a corrupt government, begging for a cigarette, lost like a priest in a discotheque or a fried egg in a lasagna, waiting for a bus, drinking and fucking, writing stupid things due to our thought's bohemia — I will meet you in hell, drinking with God, let's go drink poetry.

**The Spanish version of  
“Let's Go Drink Poetry”  
appears on pages 12 and 13  
of this issue of Denali.**

Poeta Ebrio is a human being who has learned to write, to read and to see people's hearts thanks to his friends. He was born in the country of the Empire of the Incas. You have not heard the last of him. You can meet him through his words, which come from his soul. Salud!

# VAMOS A BEBER POESÍA

by Poeta Ebrío

*En memoria de mis mejores amigos: Junior — bohemio, psicólogo, humanista y amigo; Odin — bohemio, abogado, Don Dinero y amigo; y Pepe — bohemio, hombre de negocios, Señor Sexo y amigo; quienes nacimos cortados por la misma tijera; quienes nacimos bajo el signo que exalta la bohemia y la amistad, bajo el signo que odia la mentira y la frialdad de las personas, el signo que detesta la hipocresía y la avaricia; quienes nacimos sabiendo que nosotros vamos a ser amigos aún después de nuestra muerte; quienes nacimos para compartir nuestras vidas tanto en la desgracia como en la felicidad, en la miseria como en la riqueza; quienes nacimos — no geográficamente pero por corazón — en el mismo pueblo que nos vió crecer, que nos vió ebrios, que nos vió jugar al fútbol, que nos vió pulcros, honestos y derrochadores al mismo tiempo.*

*Nosotros somos, en otras palabras, como Alejandro Dumas dice: Todos para uno y uno para todos. ¡Salud! por mis amigos.*

¿Puedes imaginarte bebiendo poesía toda la noche?

¿Puedes imaginarte bebiendo palabras que hacen feliz a las personas?

¿Puedes imaginarte como sería embriagarse de un hermoso libro que contiene maravillosos versos? Y cada verso es como una pastilla médica que cura tu depresión.

¿Puedes imaginarte que cada página es un trago diferente que embriaga tu cerebro y tu corazón? El trago mas caro sería la palabra mas amada.

¿Puedes imaginarte si la única cosa que pudieras beber fuera poesía?

¿Puedes imaginarte que tan poderoso un verso es cuando este puede salvar vidas desafortunadas?

¿Puedes imaginarte que bebiendo una copa de poesía puede calmar tu sed?

¿Puedes imaginarte bebiendo un six-pack de poesía?

¿Puedes imaginarte nombrando un trago "poesía"? ¿Cómo sabría esto? ¿Qué clases de licores escogerías? Escena en un bar: "Hola, podría darme dos dobles de 'poesía,' por favor?"

¿Puedes imaginarte despertándose con una resaca debido a que hayas tomado muchos versos?

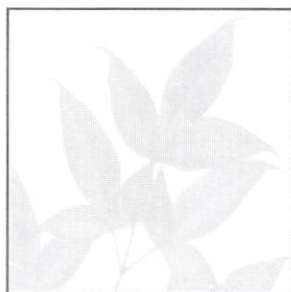
¿Puedes imaginarte bebiendo el aire fresco de la poesía?

¿Puedes imaginarte bebiendo un 12 años de etiqueta negra de poesía?

¿Puedes imaginarte que en vez de tomar tranquilizadores vas a empezar a beber poesía?

¿Puedes imaginarte que por un instante de tu vida pudieras leer un poema? Dime, ¿esto te herirá? Pobremente hará feliz a tí y a tus seres queridos.

A mis amigos, donde quiera que se encuentren — en el cielo, en el infierno, en la tierra, en la tumba, en la guerra, en un estado incomprensible, perdido en una clase de matemáticas, aprendiendo química que parece como una lengua extranjera peor que Inglés, Arameo o un Jeroglífico Egipcio, bajo la tierra, haciendo el amor con amor, protestando contra un gobierno corrupto, rogando por un cigarro, perdido como un cura en discoteca o un huevo frito en lasagna, esperando el autobús, bebiendo y culeando, escribiendo cosas estúpidas debido a la bohemia de nuestro pensamiento — les encontraré en el infierno bebiendo con Dios, vamos a beber poesía.



Poeta Ebrio es un ser humano quien aprendió a escribir, a leer y a ver el corazón de las personas gracias a sus amigos. Él nació en el país del Imperio de los Incas. Tú no has de escuchado lo último de él. Tú puedes conerlo a través de sus palabras, las cuales vienen desde su alma. ¡Salud!



# GRANDPA K

by Ratina

By the time we had driven twenty-five miles together, he had told Salle and me to call him Grandpa K. He must have seen, beneath our grime from two days on the road, the nice-girl suburban polish. And he must have liked dogs, for Salle and I each had one. No sane young woman went hitchhiking cross-country without her dog.

Salle and I were on our way back to our parents' homes outside Minneapolis after escaping the Midwestern winter in the Arizona desert. Grandpa K, at seventy-two, was driving solo back to his farm in New York from California. His journey was against the wishes of his son and daughter-in-law, he told us proudly. I could picture his farm-wizened face, eyes gleaming, as he told his disapproving family tales of the hitchhikers he'd picked up for company along the way.

My Aunt Elaine had shaken a disapproving finger at me before I set off for Arizona. "Someday, girl, they're gonna find you in the ditch!" But I was the kind of teenager, even at nineteen, whom some adults wanted to adopt, to take under their wings. I believe that the adults who came into my life during my teens and liked me and saw good in me may have saved my life. Whenever this kind of attention came my way, I greedily lapped it up. As I sat in the front seat next to Grandpa K, I could see he was one of these grownups, and I pulled out my best manners and people-pleasing ways.

We stopped for dinner at a roadside diner, and Salle and I paid the bill while Grandpa K was in the restroom. When he returned, he protested, but his feelings of pleasure peeked out. I imagined him tucking the event into his wallet to pull out later and show to his skeptical family. "See? They were nice girls — paid for my dinner. One of them's been writing to me."

That was me, of course. I was always looking for substitute parents, grandparents — a sense of belonging. Grandpa K had said as he'd handed me his address, "Come and visit me on the farm, if you ever get out that way."

I'd said I would, and on my next trip to Canada, I took three days out to visit him. Grandpa K lived near the BeechNut plant in upstate New York. I still remember his address, if not his full name, nor the town he lived in. Grandpa K, 189 Eaker Road. I got a ride from the highway to Grandpa's door from one of his fellow farmers.

Grandpa K's son, Brett, was there. Brett, his thirteen-year-old son, Matt, and Brett's second wife, Hortense, came up to the farm on weekends to help out. When I stuck out a hand for Brett to shake, his eyebrows seemed to be trying to escape from his face. He gave me the tips of his fingers, eyes fixed on the trees above my head as he mumbled a hello. Brett was obviously one of the relatives voting "nay" on Grandpa K's cross-country

adventures, especially when the adventures involved picking up hitchhiking hippie chicks and inviting them to visit.

Hortense was a little kinder. Grandpa K announced that I would be pitching in and helping him on the farm, "just like the rest of the family." Brett glowered as Hortense led me to the tomato patch, where she taught me to squash unwanted bugs onto the leaves of the plants.

"It's messy, but it keeps the other bugs away for some reason." Hortense popped an extra large insect between her thumb and forefinger. Bug juice ran down her wrist.

I envisioned myself reacting to a forest with humans splattered on the trees. The theory made a lot of sense. "That would work on me." I smiled at

**"Someday,  
girl,  
they're gonna  
find you  
in the  
DITCH!"**

Hortense, but she was too loyal to her husband to be amused by me. I asked her what she did for a living.

"I work in a pharmaceutical factory. We make all kinds of over-the-counter products. Douche." The last word fell between us like a squashed bug. We both knew that hippie chicks did not approve of douche.

"That sounds interesting." Chartreuse bug guts spurted out from beneath my thumb. My number one rule of hitchhiking etiquette was: never criticize one's host.

Hortense and Brett made some efforts to be polite, even to educate this city girl. Hortense told me the difference between a meadow and a field, although now, twenty-two years later, I'm not sure that I remember. We watched her stepson, Matt, bring hay bales into the barn. He walked easily, a bale in each hand. I tried to help, but couldn't lift one more than an inch off the ground. Hortense's laugh broke the tension for only a short while.

That afternoon, a storm descended. The glorious summer thunderstorms that had terrified me as a child now delighted me. We all gathered on the porch to watch sullen clouds darken the green slopes.

Brett thumped to and fro in a wooden rocker. His hands, gripping the arms, were strung with tendons taught as guitar wires. "Get up on the porch, Matt." Matt climbed reluctantly to the porch and sat, head down, on an old kitchen chair.

Grandpa K spoke to me as if Brett were not present. "Lost his first son to lightning. It came out of a clear blue sky one day, when the boy was out in the field. Killed him. Three months later, his first wife died of cancer. He hates storms." Brett rocked on, his jaw thrust forward as if he hadn't heard us. Matt picked chips of paint off his chair.

Hortense paced back and forth with exaggerated nonchalance in front of the porch. She lifted her plump hands and face to the sky, letting the rain soak her hair, bathe her face. "It's just a storm,

Brett. It's not gonna get me." Brett stared stonily past her at nothing, rocking faster and harder. A storm lives inside Brett all the time, growling thunder and crackling lightning.

That evening Matt shared his egg gathering duty with me. As we emerged from the henhouse, my dog unexpectedly snapped at him. Brett saw; the storm plunged back down. "You tie up that dog right now! I'll shoot her if she goes near my son again." Brett stalked away as I scrambled to tie up my dog. "Ain't nothing going to happen to *this* son."

Dinner was so tense I longed for another thunderstorm to distract us. Grandpa K and I did the dishes. After making sure my dog was fed and securely tied, I went to bed early.

At four a.m. I crept down to the kitchen. My backpack was packed and ready to go. All I needed was the first glimmer of dawn so I could make my way back to the road. I tried to keep my sobs quiet as I sat at the weathered table, but Grandpa K heard me and got up. Through my tears I told him that I thought I should leave. He nodded reluctantly. "I guess that would be best. Let me fix you some breakfast, and I'll take you to the highway." After I ate my scrambled eggs and toast, he showed me the proper way to clean a cast-iron pan. No soap, and dry it on the stove so it won't rust. Then he drove my dog and me to the freeway exit by the BeechNut plant.

I never saw Grandpa K again. After my first child was born, I sent Grandpa pictures of her. He sent me a card with a ten-dollar bill, worn but clean. Gradually I stopped writing.

I wonder sometimes if he is still alive. Probably, if I wrote to 189 Eaker Road, Brett and Hortense would not reply.

Grandpa K is one of the adults who looked at me and saw goodness. I don't know if feeling cared for kept me from taking harsher risks with my life than I did, or if I'm still around because of sheer luck. But they never did find me in the ditch.



## EXIT PURRING

by Elizabeth Engstrom

My worst fear was that the vet would try to talk me out of it. I would be standing there, mentally steeled, emotionally raw, and the voice of authority would say, "There are another five good years in this cat. We'll start her on a treatment of two shots a day . . ."

Born and bred in the tropics, Chooch, my elderly cat, was having a terrible time adjusting to the cold rain of another Oregon winter. X-rays last year showed a calcification of her spine. She could no longer bathe herself; I did that weekly. I brushed her daily. She slept in the corner of my warm waterbed and restricted her movements to my house and small backyard. For five years, my neighbors never even knew I had a cat.

As her fifteenth autumn began to turn cold, her discomfort increased. She lived behind the couch. She hissed at the dog, who had been her pal for the last six years. The expression on her face grew to be a mix of ever-increasing terror and fury. Occasionally, her old bones would seize up and she'd be unable to move.

It was time.

I called around, so afraid of someone trying to second-guess my decision that I wanted to find a pill or shot I could admin-

ister at home. None to be found. Even my sister, a veterinarian in Canada, assured me that any vet would respect my decision. "Only you can decide when," she told me. I didn't believe her.

I put it off another week. And another.

And then I couldn't put it off any longer. Every day I felt as though I was betraying my feline friend's trust. Finally I called and talked to the receptionist at the veterinarian clinic where Chooch had been a patient for years, and she informed me of the euthanasia procedure. I made an appointment for three days hence.

A permanent lump lodged in my throat as I changed my mind a million times until the time came.

The night before, my dog caught a mouse sneaking through the kitchen in search of warmth. She gave it to Chooch, who munched it right down.

The morning of our final trip to the vet, I gave my kitty lots of treats and a big pile of catnip, which she ate and wallowed in happily and then yowled and yelled because she couldn't get up.

It was indeed time.

I put her in the carrier and took her to the clinic, my throat tight, my chest filled with emotion. I paid in advance, my steps care-



fully choreographed in my mind. The receptionist showed us into an examination room. I spread out a towel I had brought and let Chooch out of her cage.

We had a good, long, ten-minute cuddle, and then the doctor came in. Chooch greeted her as an old friend; I viewed her as a foe.

"So." She held up my cat's fat medical history. "It's time for Chooch."

"Yep."

"I agree," she said, and I started to cry. She gave Chooch a shot and left the two of us alone.

Chooch purred, and I held her as she slowly relaxed and got sleepier. Her eyes closed and she kept on purring: ever fainter, fainter still, until she breathed a little sigh and her spirit fled.

I wrapped her up in the towel and brought her home. A friend and his dog were sitting on my front porch, waiting. "Thought you might need a friend," he said. I started to cry all over again.

"Hug first," I said, and we each shed a few tears for friends gone by.

We buried Chooch under the prune tree in the back yard, placed a Chooch-colored rock over her grave and planted freesia bulbs around the rock. Then he and I took our dogs for a brisk, life-affirming walk.

My final impression of Chooch's death will never leave me. Chooch purred. I can only hope that when my nine lives are up, I will have a friend loving and compassionate enough to help me to exit purring.



**" Every day I felt  
as though  
I was betraying  
my feline friend's  
trust "**

Elizabeth Engstrom is the author of seven books and over a hundred published short stories, articles and essays. She teaches fiction writing classes at LCC. Her web address is: [www.ElizabethEngstrom.com](http://www.ElizabethEngstrom.com)

## BACKROADS — BLACK CAT

by Bill Sweet

In the spring of 1948, our fragile world, still recovering from war and unable to accept peace, went mad. While young men flew and rode and walked across and up a peninsula across the Pacific, other only slightly different young men moved down to meet them.

This movement caught and held our Oregon-bound attention since any travel more than twenty miles was considered far. Yet, Mom drawn by her mother's death had just made such a trip to Tennessee.

After we met her train upon her safe return, she started to fold into herself all the pain she could not express. Of course, she, too, went mad.

Mom's madness, though, was more immense than that distant fear called war but less definable than my closer resulting sadness. Sometimes it filled the whole house and spilled out the windows so even the neighbors could know. However, on the day when "something finally had to be done," the rooms flowed with the hushed urgency.

She and I alone. "Indians!" she'd urge me out of the line of sight of a window. Her whisper was roughed into shape by her fear. "Indians! There!" and "There!" and "There!"

Finally, Dad came home and wondered what had happened as he looked at the totem carved by scissors into the radio cabinet's wooden top.

"Indians," I said.

"Where'd they go? I'll kill those sonsabitches!"

I explained the fun Mom and I had, then two doctors came, found Mom's world uncomfortable, "possibly dangerous," and she had to be "put away."

For the next five years, she went in and out of the state hospital. They would tame her demons. She would come home gentle as a doe, but the fear of "them" would start over again. Two things would calm her: me and going for a ride.

You see, she was my doe. I was her fawn. No matter what terror raged in her, when I snuggled

close, she would find calm. Her fingers would toy with my hair and stroke my cheek.

I was twelve. She could trust me.

But I hated waking up to her yelling directly below me in the predawn mornings. I hated that stranger my mother would become. I hated walking down the stairs and crawling into my parents' bed between them to calm her. I hated her fear that compounded in this predawn day. But I loved her. She was my solace, too. She saved me from the cougars that prowled my landscape at times.

And it was August. Unusually hot. Very dry. The woods were tinder, so the cutting crews shifted to a hoot owl shift to use what little humidity there was in the early morning hours. Dad would leave the house at 3:30 am. His day would be done at 10 am. To go to the woods tired could get a man killed. Dad would go to their room to try to sleep, but Mom's restlessness grew throughout the day.

By noon, she would nudge him. "Ray, aren't you going to work today?"

"I went to work this morning. It's too dry to work now"

"Oh."

An hour later, "Ray, can we go for a ride? It's such a pretty day."

"For Christ's sake woman! I'm trying to sleep." Dad would sometimes yell, but it was usually followed by, "I'm sorry, Betty. I'm just really tired"

Sometimes I would try to distract her. "Mom, the doe had bunnies. You want to see?" Sometimes she would go with me, but then she'd grow agitated.

"We've got to get back to the house. They're going to try to kill your dad."

"Dad's okay. He's at the house sleeping."

"You don't know. They drive black cars. You never know when they're going to come. They get really mad when it's hot. They want to kill your dad. You can't see the black cars at night."



“Copeland Lumber Yard’s **BLACK CAT** arched its back on the side of a Halloween orange “Sales and Service” building ... *She knew that cat well. She had seen it the first time she went to “the hospital.” She saw it on each subsequent trip.*”

I held Mom’s hand as we walked back to the house.

And on it went throughout the days, Mom trying to ward off what she knew the setting sun would bring: terror.

Mom’s panic deepened as the night closed in on her. She needed Dad to protect her from “them” in that fear-filled dark. Mom needed comfort. Dad needed quiet. Neither could help the other, so Dad came to me.

“Billy, your mom needs to go back to the state hospital. She’s keeping me up day and night.”

I was sad, but I could understand. Missing sleep and cutting down trees was not a good combination.

“I don’t want to fight with her, Billy. You could tell her you want to go for a ride. We could take the backroads. She wouldn’t know . . .”

I walked off. I knew what he wanted me to do. Mom trusted me. She would not suspect that I could betray her. Dad knew what he was asking. He wanted me to lie to Mom to make his life easier. It would be easy to trick her. She never took anything to the ward. They allowed very little in, and they kept much of what she had left last time for when she would come back.

Well, I loved Dad, too, and he had asked, and Mom was sick, and . . .

“Mom, want to go for a drive?”

My doe smiled and stroked my hair.

We got in the car and drove towards Cheshire — but the cat we would eventually see would not be smiling. We went west away from the hospital up to High Pass Road then north to Belle Fountain Ferry. Mom laughed when we drove up on the ferry. “Remember, Ray, when we rode this ferry before Billy was born?”

Dad chuckled. “Yep, we got a bonus package out of that one.” He reached over and roughed up my hair. His hand went past me, and he cupped Mom’s

cheek in his rough palm. “I’ve always loved you, Betty. From the first time I saw you on Willamette Street to seeing you climb out the window when we eloped.”

Mom toyed with the back of his hand. “Sometimes I get so scared, Ray.”

“I know, Honey. I know.” He stroked her hair and cheek. “I’ll take care of you. I’ll make sure you’re somewhere safe.”

A small look of worry showed in her eyes, then she relaxed as we returned to our drive through the quiet dark green forest.

Our “ride” took us through the back roads and the woods, but we nudged steadily towards Salem. A mile south of our capitol city, we joined Highway 99. On our right, Copeland Lumber Yard’s black cat arched its back on the side of a Halloween orange “sale’s and service” building.

Mom turned to me. She no longer had doe’s eyes. They belonged to a much more wary creature. She knew that cat well. She had seen it the first time she went to “the hospital.” She saw it on each subsequent trip. Now, here it was again on the ride I had asked her on. She didn’t say a thing, but I clearly heard, “You, too, Billy? You too?” I had become one of the distrusted. I no longer was her fawn. I was a buck, a scrawny one, but a buck with sharp, dangerous antlers, nonetheless.

We drove on to the hospital and checked Mom in at the “mental” ward. She cooperated.

She placed her hand on my shoulder and squeezed. The hand told me she wouldn’t be coming home for a long time. She did not stroke my hair. She turned and walked down the hallway. The dull green linoleum rattled under her feet.

“I’m sorry you had to do that, Billy.” Dad and I walked through the parking lot.

“I had . . .” I knew what to say. I had to do that? It was *you*, Dad. It was *you*. But, what good could that do now? I stayed in my silence. It was at least

continued on page 20



## BACKROADS — BLACK CAT

safe there.

Dad didn't try to ease the moment any more as we drove. He stared straight ahead until we came to a store. When he came back out, he had three quarts of Heidelberg beer for himself and a Babe Ruth and Nesbitt orange for me.

We took the main road back.

By the time we got to Albany, quart one was gone. When we reached Junction City, Dad threw empty quart two in the back seat. We had been up since five, and I was beginning to yawn. "Tired, kid?"

"A little."

"It's been a rough day."

As we turned on to Highway 36, a lady wearing a tight red dress stood by the side of the road. Dad stopped.

"Where ya going?"

"Florence."

"So are we." Dad smiled.

No we aren't, I thought as the shiny red lady climbed into the back seat.

We're nearly home. "We're going . . ." then I dropped back into that safe silence.

At the Cheshire Market, Dad stopped again. He came out with a half case of Olympia and a Hires root beer and a bag of peanuts for me.

Dad said since I was getting tired, I should get in the back seat, and the lady would ride up front with him.

Dad offered the lady a beer. She accepted.

I feel asleep somewhere near Triangle Lake. "Damnedest thing," Dad would usually say, "don't look like no triangle to me," but this time I was very tired, and I wanted somewhere safe to go to be away from Dad and this bright red woman, so I drifted off to sleep. The last thing I heard were soft voices murmuring. "Do you . . ." "Sometimes . . ."

In my dream, I was in a boat. The waves were coming on hard and rocking us back and forth. The skipper was grunting out orders I couldn't quite understand. Gradually, the dream faded, but the rocking and grunts continued and became clearer. A pair of legs jutted up and bumped the headliner of the car. Outside, I could make out what looked like sand dunes. *Florence, I guess*, I thought.

Suddenly, the rocking became much more intense. Two distinctly different grunts hammered the air, one higher, one lower. I squeezed my eyes closed and pretended deep sleep. The rocking shuddered to a stop. Cloth rustled, buttons snapped, zippers closed.

The car's engine ground to life, and we bumped our way out of the dunes back to Highway 101. We turned right, crossed the bridge and drove to the north of Florence where we found a house.

A man came out and yelled, "God, I'm glad you're home, honey." We drove off.

"Billy, you awake?"

I continued to pretend sleep.

Dad opened another beer and spoke to the car, "I'm a little drunk, old girl," he said, "but that's okay. All I have to do is hook your wheel over the yellow line, so I can't run off the road."

Somewhere around Cushman, a black Ford coupe drove out behind us. A red spotlight flooded our back window.

"Oh shit," Dad said and pulled to a stop.

The cop walked up to our car and Dad hurriedly lit a Camel.

"How's it going, Ray?"

"Okay. A little tired." Dad exhaled a cloud of smoke to cover his beer breath.

"You were drifting a bit back there."

"I know. Think there's something wrong with the steering."

## BACKROADS — BLACK CAT

"Maybe." Then the cop said to me, "Son, get up here with your dad and keep him awake."

"Okay," I said. I really didn't want to be in that seat where they had done "it," but the cop wasn't offering any options.

"Ray, there's a place this side of Mapleton that can fix your steering problem. I'd say an hour and three cups of coffee ought to do it. And, Ray, I'm going to park across the street. I don't want to take you in with the kid here."

I had apple pie and a bottomless cup of hot chocolate since the cook took a liking to me.

"Dad," I blew on my hot chocolate, "some things are not right, you know."

"I know," Dad toyed with his spoon in the coffee cup, "but you've got to believe; I love your mother. I can't and never will stop loving her. That wasn't about love. When you get to be a man, Billy, you'll understand."

"I think I did a man's job today, Dad. I don't want you to call me Billy anymore. I want to be Bill. Okay?"

"Okay, Bill."

We drove back through the predawn twilight around the curves of Route F past Walton and turned left at Elmira. Dad's hands were steady on the wheel. There was no swerving and no talk. I didn't even bother to pretend to sleep.

As we passed the Smith sisters' house, I could see Goddard's General Store, a light in the distance on the right at Franklin.

We passed the two churches and stopped in the turnout in front of our house. Dad's steps were steady as I watched his back as he walked to the house.

Tuffy loped out to greet me, and he and I went to bed. Tuffy was a great dog. He trusted me. I stroked his head and ears. "I'll never let you down, boy," I whispered. "It will be all right; you'll see."

I didn't cry. I snuggled deep into his fur, and around dawn, I went to sleep.

I got up around noon. That August day seemed even hotter and more oppressive. I didn't bother putting on a shirt when I went downstairs. The radio was playing. Some guy was saying, "Good Morning Mr. and Mrs. North America and all the ships at sea. This is Fulton Lewis with the news. President Truman fired General MacArthur today." It was too early for Bobby Benson and the B Bar B Riders, the Green Hornet, or the Lone Ranger and much too early for the Inner Sanctum, so I went outside.

Dad was sitting on the chopping block slicing an apple. "Good morning, Bill." He placed a slice in his mouth but did not offer me the usual piece.

I nodded. Men nod, you know.

Bill Sweet is a native Oregonian. This is an excerpt from a book-length manuscript of creative non-fiction entitled *Foxfire and Stars*.

## END OF AN ERA

by Gail Stevenson

I walked past the old hippie house  
as I do most mornings.

**Familiar river rock borders**

**surrounded uneven beds**

of freshly blooming perennials.



The house still nestled  
between the same trees.

**The burgundy** fringed  
curtain was,

as always,  
pulled back at an interesting angle  
not even trying to match the others.

**But something was different.**

A thumping sound grew **louder**  
as I approached.

Then I heard **angry male voices.**      **L O U D   R A P.**

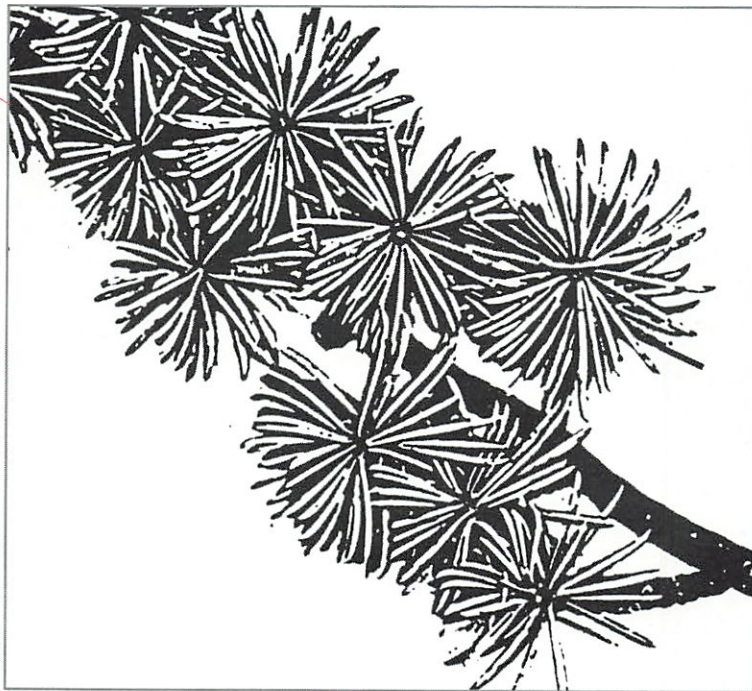
Suddenly the look of the place changed.

The enchanted irregularity of the old house shifted to  
an **old, unkempt, run-down** look.

The music of the future **crashed into my memories.**



# ART



*& poetry*

*Spring 2001*

**23**

## Josh Harris



To Edward Weston

"When taking this photograph, I was struck by the similarity to the photos of Edward Weston. I named this piece after Weston for his contributions to the art of photography."

— Josh Harris

## Susan Nine

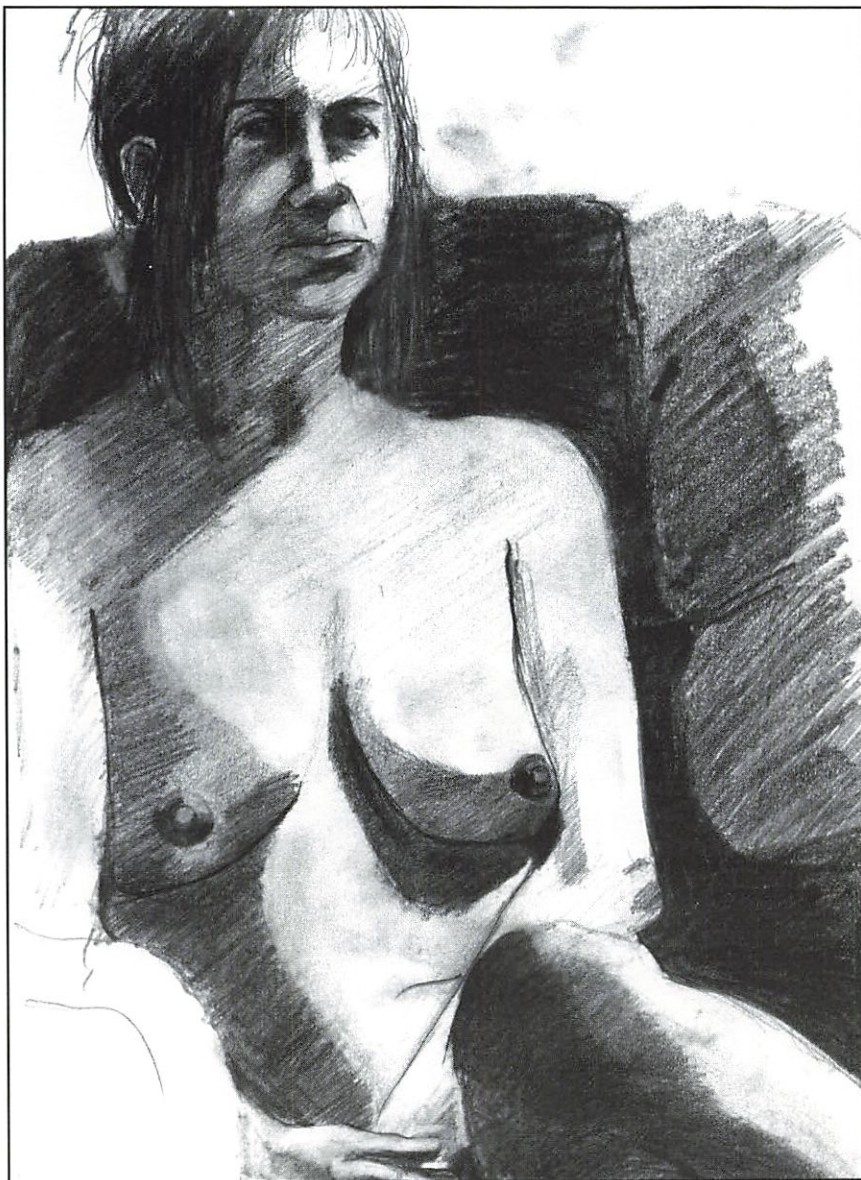


POPPY

Susan is a second-year Graphic Design student. She enjoys all aspects of fine art. Three of Susan's works appear in this issue. This painting appeared in the 2001 LCC Juried Student Art Exhibition.



## Angie Delaplain



*Cathy*

This study focused on proportion and composition. Angie is a Graphic Design student with an interest in illustration. She enjoys working with a variety of mediums including computer generated illustration.

Carson Albares  
Lila Adams

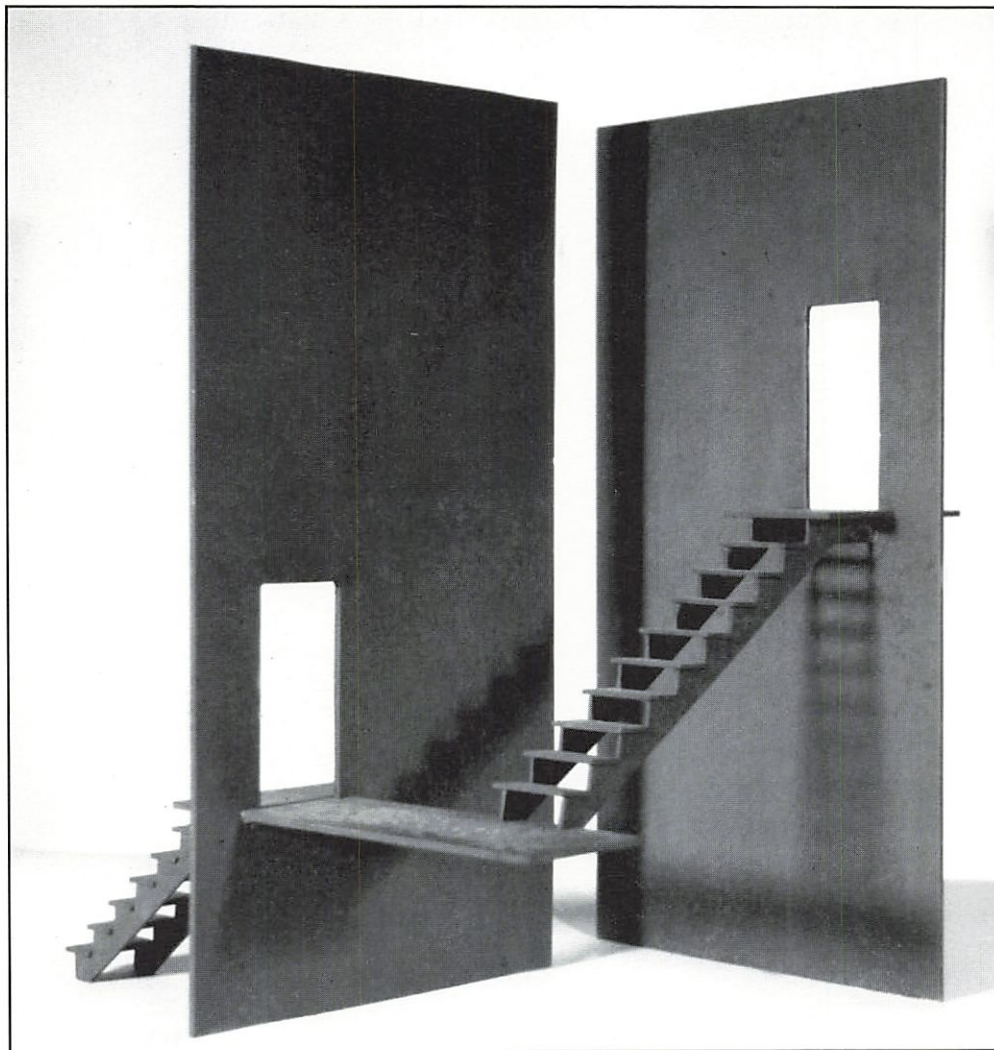
Priscilla Anderson  
Ryan Clark



*Seasons Poster*

This poster was a team project from the Graphic Design 1 class. Each section of the poster had to work as a single design element on its own, as well as work together as a whole. Each artist used different media to accomplish this goal.

## Charlie Bigelow



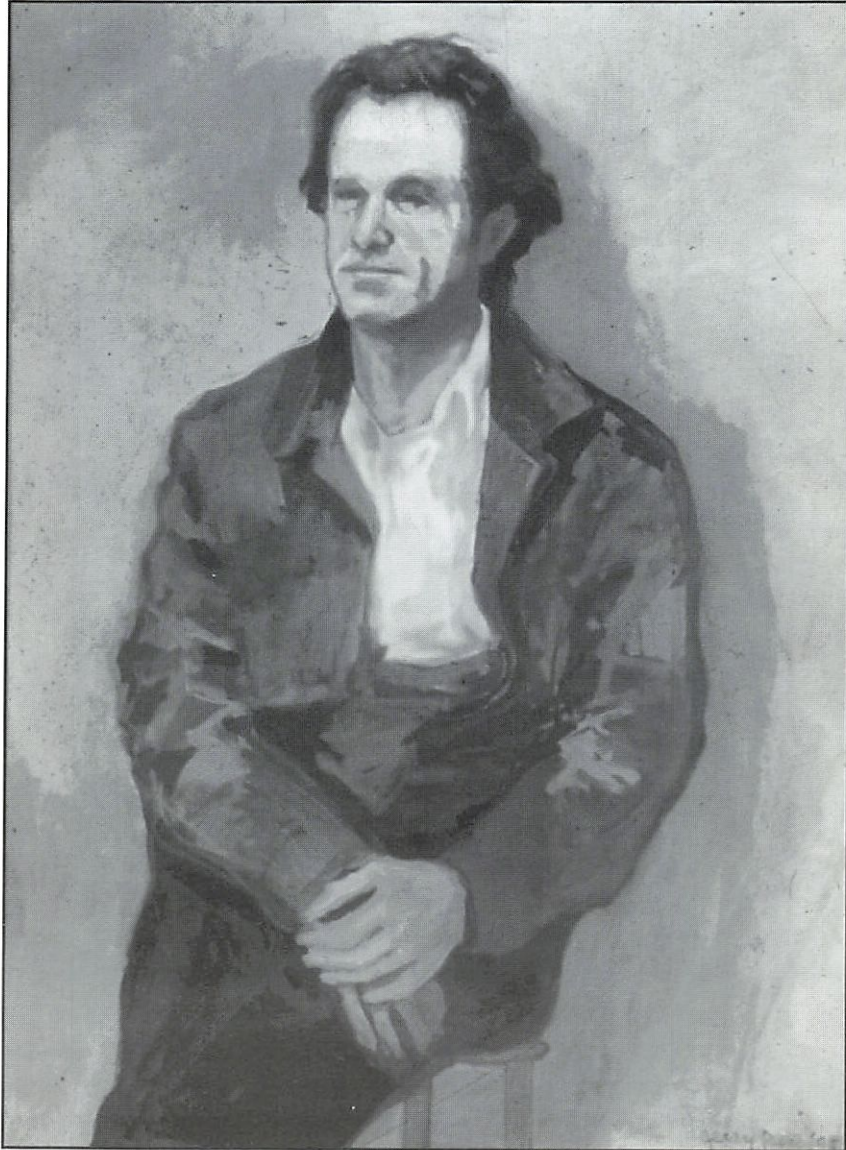
*The Next Step*

"My interest is in developing architectural sculpture that draws the viewer to imagine and physically move around and through each piece while provoking emotions, thoughts, and dialog."

— Charlie Bigelow



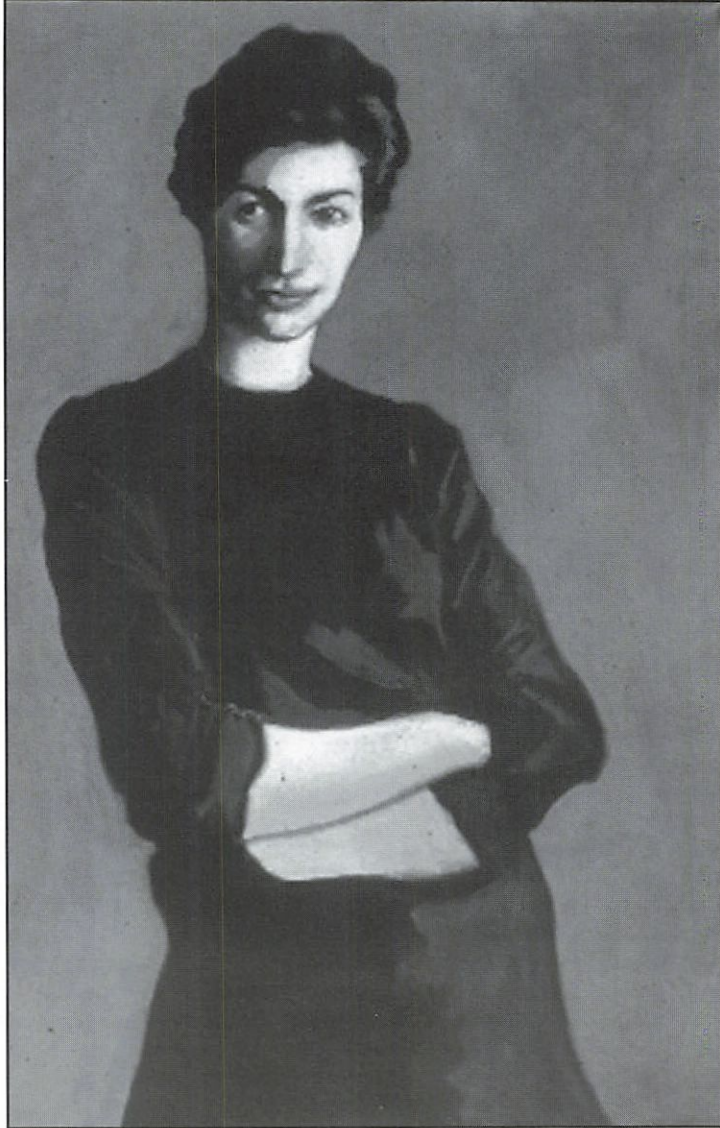
## Jerry Ross



Portrait of Bobby Devine

Bob is a well-known painter in Eugene and has been a friend of Jerry's for many years. He is currently working on a commission for the new Library. Six years ago, he sat for this portrait. The painting is now in Italy and is owned by Polly Piva, of Scascoli.

## Jerry Ross

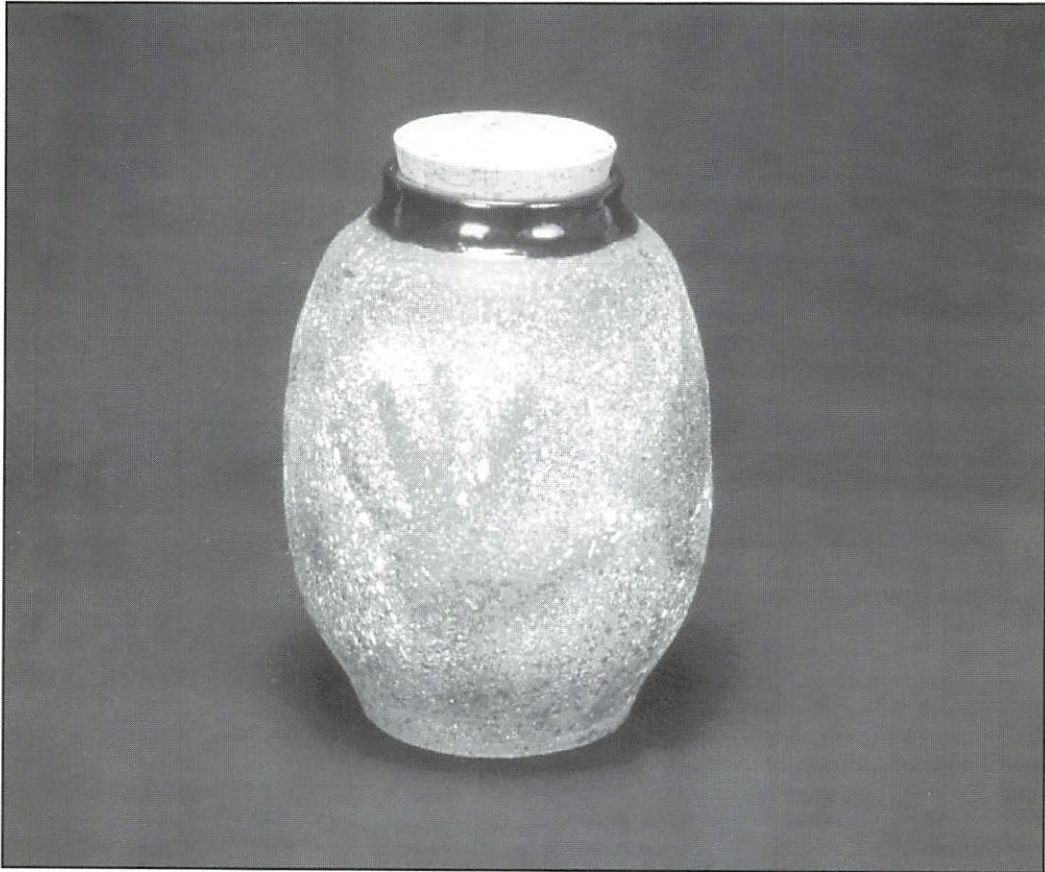


*La Mamma*

"Last year my wife stayed in Rome for a time and roomed with Irene Grazioli, a well-known Italian actress. One day she took a snapshot of a photo of the actress' mother. This served as my inspiration for *La Mamma of Irene Grazioli*."

— Jerry Ross

Josh Wishart



*untitled stoneware*

"The clay that I used to make this pot took thousands of years to form in the Earth. I just helped to finish it."

— Josh Wishart



## Jerry Ross

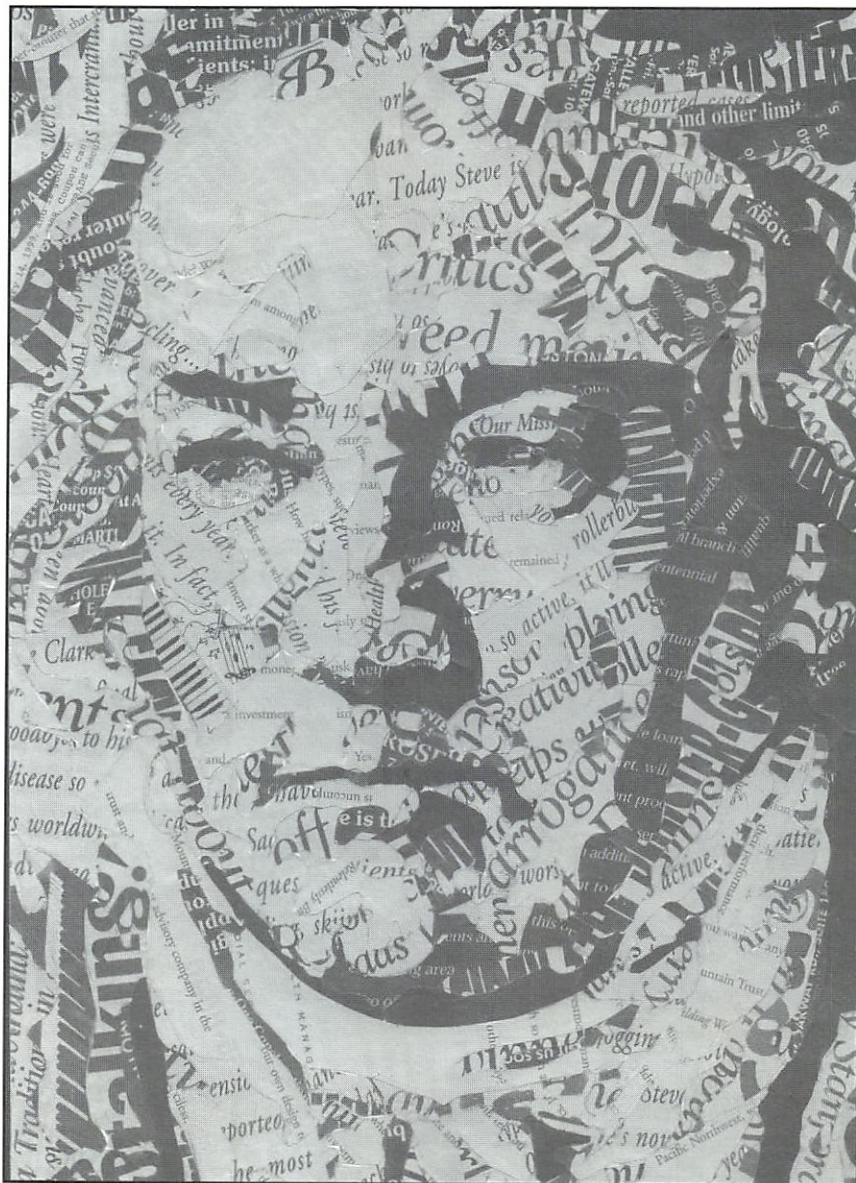


*Venice Scene*

"My wife and I have been to Venice maybe three times in the last ten years. This is a city you don't mind being lost in. Everywhere you turn there is profound, mysterious beauty. The colors are wonderful, even in bad weather. There are shades of red, green, and blue that you do not find elsewhere."

— Jerry Ross

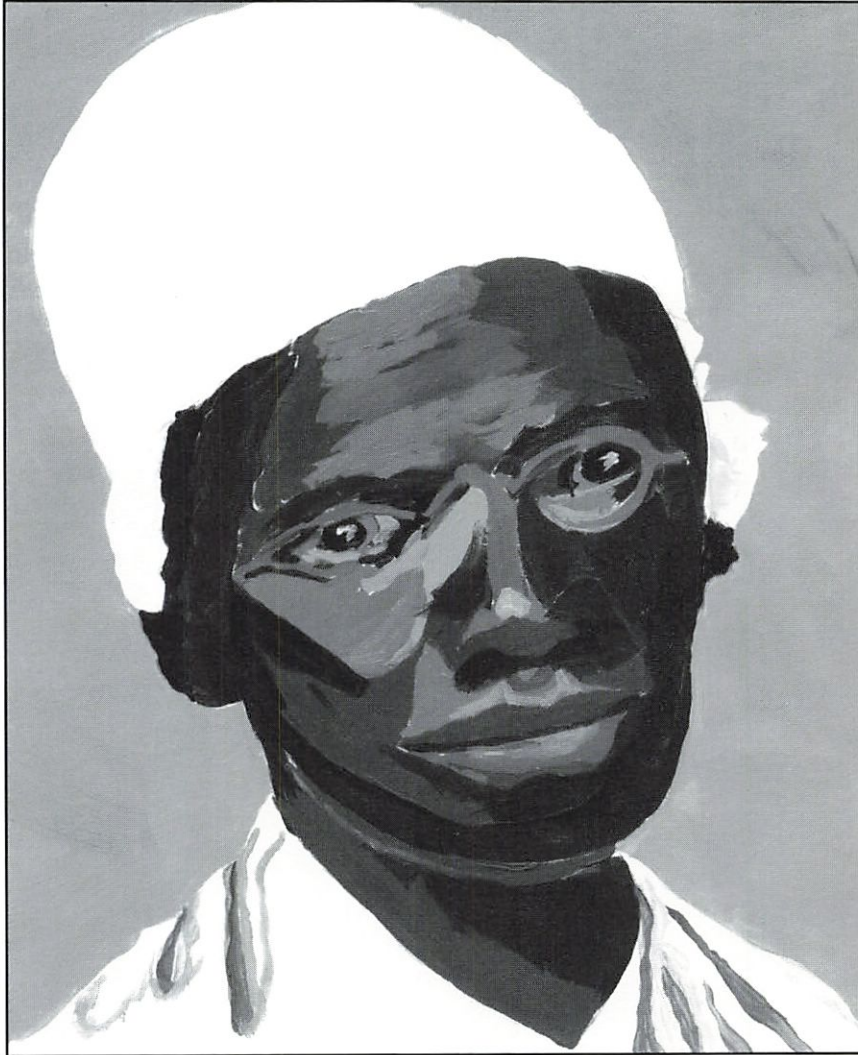
## Angie Delaplain



*Beethoven: Deafening Silence*

Angie completed this newspaper collage in Typography I. It took over 70 hours to complete and is one of Angie's favorite portfolio pieces.

## Susan Nine

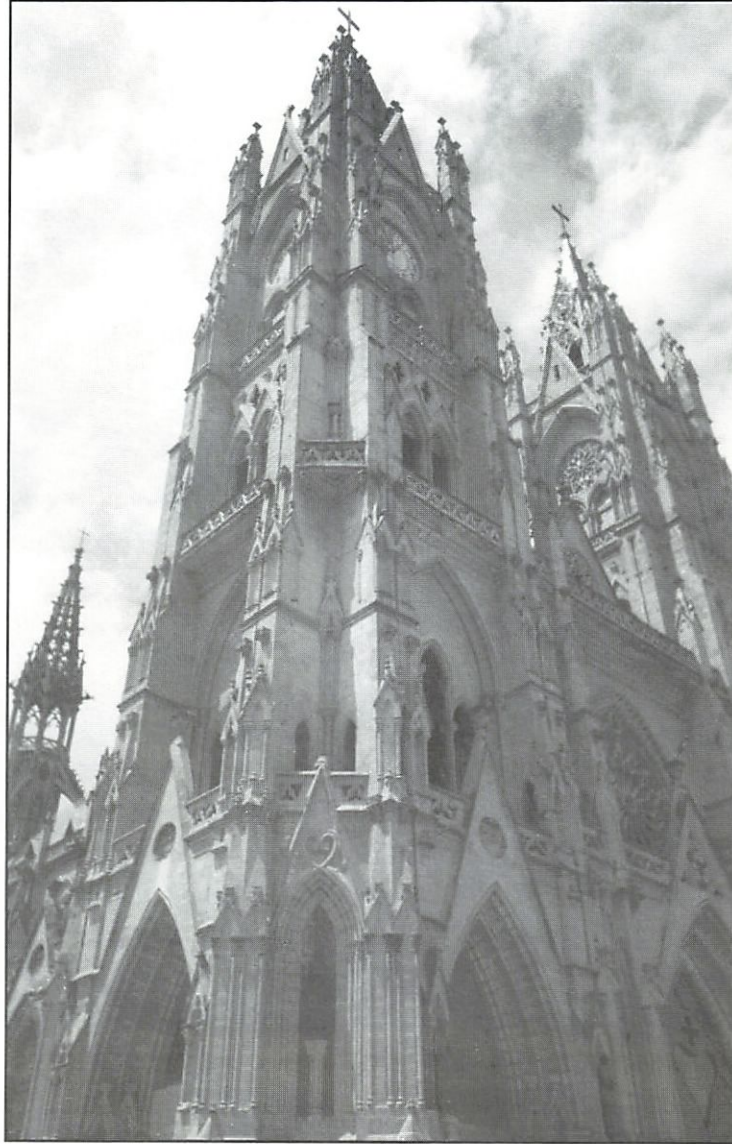


*Sojourner Truth*

Sojourner Truth is Susan's favorite women's advocate. After hearing her speak at a women's conference, Susan painted this portrait in her honor.



Kira Davis



Bascíllica

Kira took this photo during the Summer of 2000 in Quito, Ecuador where she was studying Spanish and travelling. This building, Bascilica, took 180 years to build, and a climb to the top takes you 150 meters high.

Spring 2001

**Susan Nine**



*Woman with Hair*

## September 13

by Sharon Partridge

[reference: The Solitary Reaper by William Wordsworth]

Her hat was blown south around her shoulders  
and still her scythe blended with the grain  
and the arm and the movement she gave it freely.

I imagined blue eyes and sweat  
that trickled down the fair scrunch of a nose  
positioned solid over a wide  
and plentiful thick red mouth.

Were she not The Reaper's daughter  
I would have stopped my car.

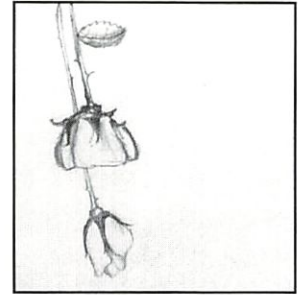


## RAREFIED TEXT

Jennifer Gusset

### Poems arrive

at my threshold  
delivered by waves of sun  
when vast azure sky  
is devoid of cloud.



On inclement days,  
they can't find me

at all.

### Rain clouds

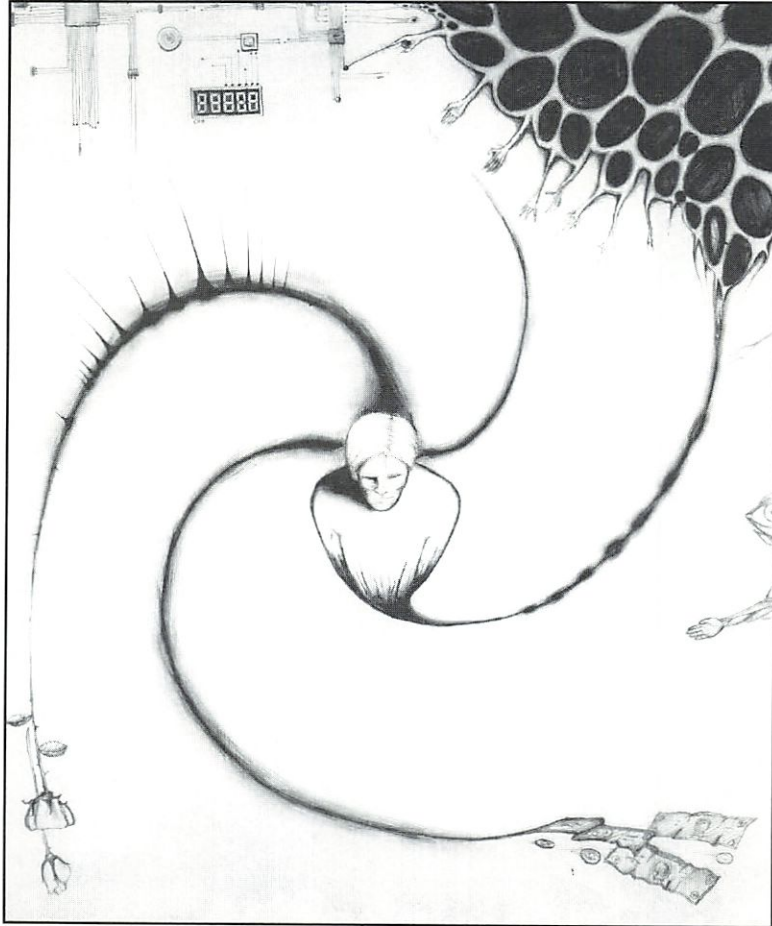
b u r s t  
forth,  
words  
Tumble  
in a jumble.

If they knock,  
no one is home  
to greet them, nourish and feed them,  
to tuck them in  
the way they most prefer.

poor  
little  
lost  
latchkey  
words.

Longtime homemaker/mom/advocate/volunteer/activist/nurse/letter-to-the-editor-writer, currently freeing her creative side, launching a new career, previously published in Comic News and Register-Guard bundlecaps. Jennifer also sings in the Laughing Spirit Chorus.

## Jesse Nine



Life.09

"Who knows when this work will be finished ... current version: 2.02. Several exciting features have been planned for the next point release."

— Jesse Nine

## Serena Swenson



*In Focus*

"My grandmother was an artist; she taught me to draw when I was a child. I never pursued art, instead becoming a teacher. Later, I became disabled and went through the Transitions to Success program at LCC. Career tests suggested I should consider fine art. This graphite drawing is my first drawing from Beginning Drawing. I was amazed at the result."

— Serena



# Genesis

by Brett Jackman

Remembering our friend ...  
Aug. 8 1975 - Jan. 12, 2001

Eyes burrowing, furrowing  
brows like crevices.  
Teeth grinding,

Cutting thee Face:  
Wrinkles,  
not born of laughter.  
Squint, to make the blank page write.  
It's 3 am, a wordless night.  
Shhh ... go below.  
Listen

a story should never be told.

Thee Cutting Face,  
where poets, writers and artists come in the night to mine their forbidden ores,  
hauling away, blind,  
their treasures in nets,  
wheelbarrows of jangled nerves.  
Sculptors steal some sparks there too,  
mathmeticians,  
chefs and whores,  
Alchemists while away the hours,  
minutes,  
aeons,  
(herein lie the metals of transmutation)  
and musicians masturbate in the crevices.

Thee Cutting Face ... perennial place  
of transmission,  
of sickness and symptom,  
of death throe-rapture,  
of threatening interface ...

And there,  
a warm black hole, neuro-naetal home  
where dark, Forgotten Ones dwell.  
They are fed, every day:  
drugs and emotion and tears and beer and little interior  
whisperings  
that give impulse to kill  
with feline cruelty.

Their sex, their hate, they procreate:  
some giggle, others cry  
- they all aim at one prerogative —  
(please, don't let them find)

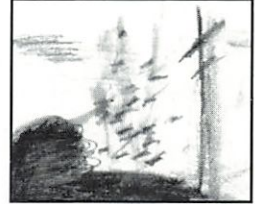
a Nest  
to incubate the virus

Burst transmissions  
blaze out in a flurry of numbed fingers, splatter ink, scrawl and decadent  
desecration of paper.

They all can hear you now, each and every one of them.  
You all will be infected.

Smear it all [infection starts here] together,  
the ore and the puke and the goo.

Staple it —  
tell them it's art;  
tell them, like,  
they'll, like,  
identify.



# submission form

## **Thank you for considering submitting your work to Denali.**

Completion of this form does not guarantee publication. All works are submitted to an Editorial Board, which chooses works for a variety of reasons including style, statement, voice, creativity and originality. Pieces chosen by the Editorial Board will be published and the journal will acquire one-time rights. After publication, all rights revert to the author or artist.

Denali Literary Arts Journal considers all original submissions of art and writing regardless of medium, style or subject matter. We do not censor except for literary and artistic merit, and we do not restrict authors and artists to theme-based issues.

### **Our guidelines are as follows:**

- Submissions should be typed using a 12 point Times Roman, or Helvetica font and be submitted on a MAC compatible disc.
- Print only your phone number on the work(s) so that they can be judged anonymously. Your name should only appear on this form.
- Plagiarism will not be tolerated.
- High contrast art and black and white photography work best for our black and white format. Art in color will be considered. If accepted, negatives or slides need to be submitted for scanning.

All accepted authors/artists will be contacted by phone or letter regarding acceptance of work for publication. Please call the Denali office at 541.747.4501 ext. 2897 with questions or concerns.

Fill out the form below and turn it in with your submission to the Denali mailbox at Student Activities on the second floor of the Center Building or the Denali office in Industrial Technology 213.

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Poppy — Susan Níne

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# denali



Spring 2001