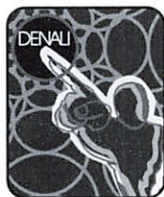


DENALI



LANE COMMUNITY COLLEGE
FALL 2002 / WINTER 2003

DENALI



COVER:

BRIAN SIMARD

Faces in Faces — a visual representation of all artists as one pushing the creative button.

Denali Literary Arts Magazine is a student publication of Lane Community College, published three times a year. Denali accepts submissions from all Lane County residents.

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MICHAEL CLARKE

E =

He had been brilliant with calculations since his earliest memories, but his preoccupation with them set him apart from others. At a time when most children were learning lifelong social skills, he buried himself deep in his equations. His subsequent loneliness became unbearable. As he grew older, he tried to be part of the outside world, but it was impossible. He couldn't fathom the appeal people found in the things with which they cluttered their lives, so opportunities for interaction were rare. When he did finally make the effort, few could overcome their repulsion to what they encountered, beginning with his appearance: layers of clothing, slovenly and soiled, revealing nothing of the man underneath. When he did raise his head, the patches of crusty skin that covered his face, and most of his body (the result, he believed, of his self-loathing), made looking at him even more difficult. Then, when he tried to talk, his specialized vocabulary of numbers had so integrated itself into his thought patterns, he was incomprehensible. And the inevitable lashings of disgust from the public gave him endless opportunities to proclaim his equal contempt for them.

In his isolation, he frequently lapsed into dream states, often while he was working, and always while he slept. His dreams were usually fanciful, including variations of shapes and colors that created harmonic patterns: music. And because he recognized the numeric combinations within the chords, the music talked to him, allowing him to better understand relationships between things, as would a sage or a prophet. Often his dreams would inspire him to take his equations in previously rejected directions. The equations, themselves, were magical, beautiful things, but contempt for so much of what he saw in the world, and in himself, prevented him from understanding the implications of what he created on chalkboards, scraps of paper, and computer screens.

He spent most of his time at the university's astronomy math lab, where he was employed to calculate the movement of galaxies millions of years into the future. But what he thought about most was something he'd been working on for nearly all of his sixty-two years. When he was a very young

child, in one of his dreams, he was introduced to an equation that, once completed, he believed would explain pure energy. Having always assumed that sources of energy were irrelevant to understanding its nature, he accepted the equation simply as a challenging math problem. Years after experiencing the equation in his dreams, he felt confident enough with its basic principles to begin writing it down. Once on paper, the equation took on a life of its own.



He had never worried about the pace of the equation's progress. When concerned about a combination of factors he couldn't resolve, the answer would eventually come, often in a dream. But now, for more than a year, he had been stuck. All his calculations, even those in his dreams, only created broader and more complex parameters to be considered. Then one day he had a breakthrough.

On his way home from work, he couldn't stop thinking about his latest computations, but he was exhausted. He pulled off his seedy overcoat and bulky cardigan underneath, set his wool cap on the bedpost, unsnapped his large suspenders, and let his heavy blue jeans fall to the floor. Clothed still in his thick plaid Pendleton shirt and long underwear, he slipped easily under the blankets and comforter, letting his head settle heavily on the enormous pillow. He felt the frame of his glasses crush against the side of his face. With a single swipe, he grabbed them off and tossed them away. Pulling up the comforter, he fell into a deep sleep, never once losing the ongoing equation in his head.

His dream transformed the equation's various segments into leaves being drawn through the air by a warm breeze, some bursting into harmonics giving the impression of discord, but making perfect sense; others combining to form long limbs of kaleidoscopic vines. He concentrated on the tones and harmonies that appealed most to him. But tonight, for the first time in a dream, he also saw actual numbers, some in broad stroked calligraphy, scrawled on parchment by enormous feathered pens, others as elegant cursive, superimposed over pastel images of breathtaking landscapes.

Usually he welcomed the interactive nature of his dreams, enticing him, challenging him, allowing him to escape and play. But something was different. Each time he tried to surrender, to allow himself to be launched into the circus of clamoring nonsense, to break free from his life of endless numerical labor, the arch rival of his dreams, discipline, would protest, and its opium, satisfaction, would force him to return to the original equation.

Then, quite unexpectedly, as relationships between seemingly unrelated segments began appearing, so did new numbers. Not new combinations, but entirely new numbers. At first he refused to accept them as actual numbers because they were so beautiful, swirling in and out of each other, then combining to become resolutions to what moments before had been only fragments of problems. The idea that there existed numbers he hadn't seen before frightened him. His intellect already set him apart from virtually everyone, now it seemed possible that these new numbers might imprison him beyond anyone's reach. And yet he was fascinated, too. Something about them suggested they held the key to completing most, if not all, of the various strands of his lifelong equation — a thought which also terrified him. Should he ever solve the equation, he would lose his only companion. He would be completely alone. Dwelling on this, he twisted his neck until the pain brought him out of his deep slumber.

Later that morning at the university, waiting for a program he wrote to check his latest figures on the distance between the M13 and Sgr 30 nebulae, he began writing out what had been revealed during the previous night's dream.

Allowing the various strands, with the new numbers, to follow their own progression, the pace of the calculation increased dramatically. He worked through the day and evening without stopping. By early the next morning, as previously unseen combinations revealed themselves and moved the equation ahead, he noticed a glare emanating just to the right of his last notation. At first it distracted him, but as he added each new strand to the central progression, the draw to its conclusion became overwhelming, even as the glare intensified. All the various levels of the formula were collapsing into one, increasingly simple equation. Well before the factoring revealed it, he knew

the final answer would be “zero”, but the closer he came to it, the brighter the light became, until he could barely see what he was writing.

The final three strands were combining. He wrote without seeing his actual marks. Equals. He hesitated, then pressed the pencil to the paper to write the final numeral. As he struggled to close the ellipse, the brilliant, resplendent light consumed his pencil and paper; consumed his hand, his arm. Him.

And all was, finally, at peace.

Polyergus*

Oh, gluttonous Polyergus,
Consume your daily chore.
Bore into your very house,
Blind beyond what you eat,
There must be more,
There must be more.

Devour not only your children's ration,
Consider your neighbor's as well.
The fruit may not be ripened,
The flower not fully bloomed,
Digest with insatiable satisfaction,
The menu is endless, swallow the tail.

But the rotten fig is falling fast,
Decay determines its destiny.
So, Polyergus, bon appetit,
As long as it will last.

*Polyergus—a genus of Amazon ant, capable of devouring entire forests, closely related to the American capitalist.

BREDAN MARSH

Once A Soldier

he remembers himself as a soldier
standing strong on Europe's shore
proudly rides the parade in his medals
clings to his memories of war

he remembers the dead at Anzio
and four years of stench and blood
still feels the cold in his bones at night
still hears the squish of the mud

a tattered flag flies above his house
the lawn and flowers need tending
old vehicles rest where he parked them
the fence and the house need mending

he wanders the yard and neighborhood
waits for his wife with concern
can't remember her destination
can't remember when she'll return

once sprightly steps now shuffle
he follows far behind her
forgets to look both ways for cars
needs rescue from the danger

he captures moth and mantis
sees with wonder and delight
feeds treats to a furry feline
watches a dragonfly take flight

his eyes twinkle with little-boy shyness
with a glint of confusion and fear
he rides the parade in his medals
waves to the people who cheer

Saturday Morning Ritual

Every fourth Saturday morning I cut my hair. It's short and soft, curly when just the right length. I sit on the floor in the spare bedroom with my hair cutting machine. I select the plastic spacers which will determine the length of the cut and attach them to the cutting head, which in turn is attached to a small canister vacuum cleaner. I turn on the vacuum, then turn on the motor to the cutting blades. My hair is sucked up into the plastic spacers, into the blades, and cut with a slight tug. I move the contraption over the top of my head, then change to shorter spacers for the sides and back. I finish and run my fingers through my hair. It feels just right, short and soft.

I haven't always cut my own hair. I used to go to Eleanor's beauty salon. Every fourth Saturday morning I sauntered into the shop just in time to be welcomed into the chair that was empty and waiting for me. Eleanor wrapped my neck with paper tissue, then carefully arranged the plastic drape around me to deflect the snippets onto the floor. With gentle hands she ran her fingers through my hair, manually measured the length and determined how much needed to be cut off. She always said "What nice hair you have." While she wielded her scissors, I soaked up the gentle touch of her fingers, her focused attention, and her friendly banter.

While Eleanor clipped and snipped, I drifted into memories about my childhood friend and her mother. On Saturday mornings Mrs. Bernard brushed Diane's long blonde hair, then washed it at the kitchen sink. She guided the warm water over Diane's head, then lathered the shampoo into the soaked strands of elegant hair. I watched from the doorway, could almost feel the warmth of the water and the touch of Mrs. Bernard's hands as she gently caressed Diane's hair and head. She took care not to tangle the long tresses. They laughed and spoke softly. Their easy loving intimacy permeated the kitchen like the smell of warm cinnamon rolls. It was like magic. I felt mesmerized, embarrassed, yet couldn't turn away. Mrs. Bernard rinsed

SATURDAY MORNING RITUAL FROM PAGE 6

Diane's hair until it glistened, smooth and sleek. She then wrapped a towel around hair and head, turban style. Diane glowed as she rose from the sink, a beloved princess wearing her crown. My heart ached.

"So, how does it look?" Eleanor asked, bringing me back from my memories. She was finished. The twenty-minute cut always went too quickly for me. I smiled, knowing my hair would grow rapidly. I made another appointment for Saturday morning, four weeks away, so we could repeat this gentle ritual. After many years, Eleanor retired. Unable to find someone to replace her, I bought the hair cutting machine.

Even though I cut my own hair now, it's still a special time, a time of gentleness and warm memories. It's a personal time when I focus on myself and cut my hair to just the right length so it will curl softly around my aging face. Sometimes I think about those Saturday mornings so long ago, about Diane and her mother, about Eleanor. The hum of the vacuum and the tug of the cutting blades remind me of their soft voices and gentle touch.

Tricks of the Trade

In the lunchline at a community college
hands that make the world—
sure and strong—
carry trays and wait for change.

Electricians, plumbers,
carpenters, mechanics
stand shoulder to shoulder
with poets
who are learning the tricks of their trade—
how to construct an unseen world
as startling as the sudden clang
of steel girders rising
into place

Sound
by letter sound
with words that whisper and flash
like the sun bouncing off polished granite
one hundred stories tall,
until
the job is done.

DEREK OLSON

Earl's Magic Rock

Earl's my best friend. He's a raggedy ass son of a bitch. His 'fro been growin' way too long and's turning all orange in the sun. His clothes is too big; the neck-hole on his tee shirt is all chewed, with a dirt ring built up from a week a' sweatin' in the desert conditions without washing. He's thirty years old, but he looks like a big headed, filthy little black boy in hand-me-down clothes.

Earl be bangin' on my door at all hours. Bang! Bang! Bang! Until I answer. One time I was wondering how long he'd be bangin' out there before he'd give up. Sheeit, Earl was out there bangin so hard, for so long, I had to let his poor ass in the door!

Bang! Bang! Bang! "Yo man, it's Earl. Let me in!" Bang! Bang! Bang! "C'mon man, it's Earl. Let me in, playa!" Bang! Bang! Bang!

So I answered, "Earl, do realize what time it is? Boy, it's four A.M. and you're bangin' on my door like some stark mad lunatic! Now what's your goddamn problem?"

"Yo man, you got any cold sodas in here?" Earl asked. I don't know if that was a question 'cause he just walked right in like he owned the place and helped himself to one of my cold sodas. Then, as I was 'bout to kick his sorry ass out, I noticed blood smeared all over my front door, like out of some horror movie!

"Earl, what the fuck!? You were bangin' on my door so damn hard that your damn knuckles is bleeding all over like a stuck pig!"

"That ain't no problem, playa, 'cause when you hear the news Earl got for you, you gonna love me, boy."

Earl's always calling everybody, 'playa.' If you asked him: Why? He'd say, "That's 'cause all of us out here is playas. Vegas is the wickedest, most criminal, most profitable place on Earth and everybody's got a game and they playin' it, playa! Especially Earl!"

He pointed to his head. "Earl's got something everyone out here lacks, and that's intelligence, playa!" That's what would happen if you asked him, but unless you got a few spare hours, don't bother.

Whenever Earl comes over, he acts like he got some exciting news, but I knew by now what the news was gonna be. "Oh yeah? Earl, your news better be good, coming up bangin' on my door at four in the morning, bleedin' everywhere. Trying to wake the dead."

"Like I said," he boomed. "Don't you worry, playa, you rollin' with Earl now!" He was so loud I was stunned. Then he put on some headphones and started juke'n, jive dancing, and singing, "Ohhhh, tastes just like can-day! Ohhhh yeah, tastes just like can-day!" He snapped his fingers and moved his hips side-to-side with a pained look on his face.

I ripped those headphones right off his head. "Earl, you better tell your ol' pal Milton what in the blue hell got you all excited, or your ol' pal ain't gonna be your ol' pal for much longer. Know what I mean, Earl?"

"Yo, silly rabbit. I told you, you rollin' with Er . . ."

"Damnit! Earl, I ain't gonna tell you again! Now . . ."

"Alright, playa, you don't trust Earl now." He seemed sort of hurt. "You gonna be eating them words in a minute, silly rabbit." Earl looked at his right hand suggestively then reached it deep into his pants. I don't mean his pockets. He was just a diggin' right down in his unspeakables. "Check it out," he said, eyes closed and head swaying side-to-side.

I felt sick when I looked at the deep-groaning pleasure grimace on his disgusting face. I quickly diverted my eyes, hoping he was just adjusting or something. After Earl had been struggling with himself for a few minutes, I was almost gonna cry.

"Why do you have hands down your pants like that, Earl? It's upsetting! If that's your damn surprise, you can keep it! Now, I'm tired so you . . ."

"I got your surprise right here, playa!" He found something. It was a big, yellowy crusty-mustard colored rock.

"Check that out, playa! What do you think about your old pal Earl now?" I was speechless. Earl started waving the yellow rock all around up in my face. "Hah! That's what I thought! You're dumfounded." Then he started all his juke'n jiven' business up again, swayin' his hips all around like he was inside a hoola-hoop and singing, "Ohhwowohh yeah, tastes just like can-day! Ohhhhhh yea yaaah tastes just like can-day!"

EARL'S MAGIC ROCK FROM PAGE 10

"Stop it right there, Earl!" Earl's singing stopped, but you couldn't stop that boy from gyrating and snappin' his fingers for nothing. "I cannot believe that a broke ass bum like you can get your hands on a rock that big!"

"Well, look at it, stupid! Earl got it like that, silly rabbit." He clenched the crack rock in his hand and it was nearly the size of a baseball. "Just like can-day, Ohhhhhh Ohhwowohhhh!"

I couldn't believe this shit! "Earl got it like that? Bull-*shit*! 'Cause I know Earl. Earl ain't even got what ya need to get, to have it like that and Earl never will. Now tell me where you got that crack rock, or I'm gonna choke it out of you and stick that rock where the sun never shines. Do you understand, Earl?"

"Chill, playa, I found it, and it's mine. That's all you need to know, sucka." He got up and moved towards the door so I blocked him.

"Where?" I demanded.

"Alright, alright, playa. I'll tell you, but don't go blabbin' off. This is some private information, got it?"

"What the hell do you take me for?"

"You know how Habeeb don't let Earl use the toilet no more, since he accused me of stealing that toilet tissue? The stupid-ass sucka leaves thirty roll of toilet tissue in the damn restroom, then accuses Earl of stealing it."

"But when Earl gotta go, Earl gotta go, playa. So, I was shittin' behind the Seven Eleven dumpster and I noticed a bag of Carl's Junior layin' on the ground. I needed something to wipe down with and I was fixin' on getting me some cheese paper.

"I opened up the bag, and Bang! There it was. And that's all you need to know, baby. Now get out of Earl's hair, before I decide not to share!" I could tell he was getting mad so I decided to let it alone for now.

"Yo, you got any Brillo?"

"Hell yes, playa! Now hit this glass. Just remember, don't swallow the cocaine."

Memo to the Father on a Half-Hour Sitcom, 1962

Sorry it took so long
to get back to you. The
real reason for the twin
beds in your room is
that your wife tends to
lie awake at 1, 2, or
even 3:00 in the morning,
worrying about money, what
she wants to be after you die,
her life up to now, and so on.
Of course, you don't have to
worry about this: that's what
getting up in the morning and
going to the office is for.
And to get up, you need to
sleep first, which is all the
more reason for two beds,
close enough so you feel like
husband and wife, yet with
enough space to keep you
comfortable while she's feeling
vulnerable. The middle of the
the night can be a vulnerable
time, I suppose; at least
that's what the guys down
in the writing room say.
They ought to know stuff like that is
why they aspired to
become writers.

So that's the reason,
but the show's sponsor
wants us to keep
this all quiet.
A wholesome, pro-family stance
apparently plays well
in the Western states,
where rambunctious, mischievous
little tykes
apparently materialize
out of one long kiss
at 8:28
every Tuesday night.

MELANIE CUMMINGS

Gone

To the dark nights that saddened me
I'm bewildered by the sun
Yawning into an endless dawn
It was your name my mind
Caressed so poetically
In the heat of longing

Where have we gone, these sunken ships
Too decayed for repair
Midnight and I lie in bed
Content with thinking of you
Until the sky turns blue again,
And the moon hides beneath you
We rise together, yet I feel so
Far from anyone

My fantasies bloom, everlasting in detail
Here, lies live on
While mine confess
I remember when belonging
Was between us
Now I try at forgetting
After warmth, the cold is
Unbearable to last through

Are you wanting like I?
Waiting for the same touch as I?
The clock has become an empty reminder
Of the time that
Continues to stretch between us

National Traumas

Names never heard of
Silent screams—rooting, rooting
A stranger in authority
Obey sadness

Violence so distant
Creeps closer
A touch of pain
Tears die in the wind

Universal disappointment
To the end, to the end
Suicide bomber
16 dead

LINDSAY STALONE

Summer

Summer's parents drank at dinner and fought behind the bedroom door. Her mother, Cassie, taught English and her father, Robert, was an accountant. Tension presented itself in the home nearly all the time, but they had the decency not to display their hostility in front of Summer, their only child. Cassie clung onto the marriage, refusing divorce.

The separation happened right after Summer graduated from sixth grade. Sounds of sorrow slipped from beneath their bedroom door. Robert left with a suitcase in hand. He did not come back. He did not say goodbye and he did not call on birthdays or Christmas. After that, Summer thought that leaving was what men did.

In August, Summer started menstruating. She thought of her body with mistrust, wondering what it would do next. Pubic and armpit hair seemed to sprout out of nowhere. She knew what it was from, but these things were as unbidden as an earthquake or a downpour. There is no stopping puberty even with the greatest of preparations. Cassie sensed the girl's need for feminine closeness, but could provide little to a teenage girl discovering her independence. Cassie assured her daughter eventual blossom, that breasts would develop to match hips and feet and hands, that the awkwardness would leave as she became a woman. Summer suspected the end of childhood. She wanted to keep playing in the fields at school. These changes seemed permanent. Summer sensed this change coming quickly upon her and she hid from it as best she could. She kept her dolls and stuffed animals. She slept with her baby blanket still.

When the seventh grade began, she did what homework was required. She sat in the back of the class. She was present without participating. With this policy of minimal participation she avoided being a target for bullies or gossips. She temporarily slipped through the ranks of initiation. She successfully became invisible. Summer read late at night in bed. She slipped into books for the companionship she needed. She read Alexander Dumas, Virginia Wolff, Jane Austen, Allen Ginsberg, and Anne Sexton. She spent many after-school hours at the library drowning in the romantic love of literature. She wished for acceptance and companionship, for friends who would

relate insight. Yet she had no friends to share this joy with. She feared talking to classmates, feared the end of childhood, and feared starting some form of torture that would not end. She learned this entirely from literature.

That next summer she spent reading and walking beneath the California sun. Some days her mother took her to the beach to lie in the heat, wander through the waves, and to read poetry to each other. Her mother swam out past the breakers and the surfers with her, where they would kick up their feet, lean back in the water and listen to the sonar of the dolphins. Summer spent allowance money on used CDs and started discovering the way wisdom translated through music. She liked the sixties folk that her mother showed her, but also the punk that exploded out of the seventies into the eighties. The musicians protested violence, social inequality and fascism. They advocated fighting back. Summer started reading eastern philosophy in search of reasons for nonviolence. Public and civil rights issues interested her.

When eighth grade started, Summer attended with a new vigor. What was there to be afraid of? She decided to hide no longer. She participated in classroom discussions and found herself outspoken when it came to social sciences, English and literature. She turned her nose up at the girls in class who leered and snickered. They started a rumor that she was gay. She ignored it. They called her names. She ignored it. Two girls, named Krista and Bonnie, were the worst. They stole from her and harassed her in the subtle ways that young women invent, with whispers and ridicule. She believed that letting them bother her would encourage them and give them power. Her mother encouraged this nonviolent resistance.

On a bright January day, Summer sat in the soccer field reading Kurt Vonnegut. Yelling from the blacktop floated out on the breeze. She lifted her face to the sun. On the black top, Krista and Bonnie were following a girl toward the field. Behind them were three more girls. They were calling out names. "Chicken! Pussy! What's wrong with you? Why are you running away?" The girl kept walking. Summer did not recognize her. Krista rushed forward and shoved the girl from behind. The girl fell on her knees, and then she got up and kept walking. Krista shoved her again. Summer envisioned it getting worse. The girl refused to defend herself. Summer put her book

down next to her backpack, then strode toward the group of girls. Krista did not see Summer's swinging fist arc downward. Krista went to the ground when their flesh connected. Summer marveled at the tightness of her fist. Bonnie rushed in and grabbed Summer by her hair. Yanking, she jerked Summer backwards and the other girls jumped in with their fists. They forced Summer to the ground by hitting her. Kids were running from the blacktop screaming "Fight!" The girl who'd been pushed first was trying to pull the group off Summer. She screamed as they pulled her hair. Summer fought her way back up and went for Krista who was advancing toward her. They exchanged blows. Then the teachers were on top of them all, pulling the girls apart and hauling them to the office. One teacher took Summer and the girl she had defended to the nurse's office. They were put in a dark room with icepacks for their injuries. They were told to be quiet.

"Hey," Summer whispered. "What's your name?"

The other girl looked up at her. "Rachel," she paused. "Thanks for helping me."

Summer told the truth when they were interviewed by the principal and they both received Saturday school for fighting.

Summer and Rachel walked home together in silence. Somewhere out of view of the school Summer took Rachel's hand and they walked the rest of the way like that. Summer watched Rachel out of the corner of her eye.

They lived in the same apartment complex. Summer convinced Rachel to have lunch with her. They sat in the cool, dark apartment eating grilled cheeses and drinking lemonade. They giggled over the fight and congratulated each other over the triumph. Rachel said, "I never fought anyone. Didn't think I could."

"Me either," Summer said. "Do you read?"

"It's all I do."

"Come see my books. My Mom's an English teacher. We have great books if you want to borrow any."

"That would be great!" Rachel said as she picked up a copy of Emily Dickinson.

Emmy Lou

At some unexpected moment, some pivot point, you are taken by surprise. Our moment came the day we placed a gravemarker for my old horse at a friend's farm. Our friend was a veterinarian. We told her how our 17-year-old cat Emmy Lou had been yowling and lapping up water from the bathtub after we showered. We were advised to bring her in for an exam. A few days later, the reason for her strange behavior emerged from blood and urine samples: chronic renal failure. Emmy Lou had kidney disease.

We came home with Emmy, sadness, and an array of medical supplies. There was a 1000-liter bag of electrolyte fluids to be given subcutaneously, or under the skin; tubing apparatus, a baggie of 18-gauge needles, three kinds of Chinese herbal pills that looked like BB shot, and notes written in my shaky hand. The regime ahead of us would grow to include lysine, potassium citrate, hormone injections, appetite stimulants, painkillers, and antibiotics, all with increasing frequency.

Giving the fluids required us to warm the bag, suspend it from the shower curtain rod to get a gravity flow, lift a fold of skin, and insert the needle until 160 cc's dripped in. We made the beginner's mistakes: we pushed the needle out the other side of the skin fold and squirted fluids into the air; we stabbed ourselves; we placed the needle above the elbows and filled Emmy's legs. But we got it down to a five-minute routine. Emmy purred for the treatments and if we were late she would sit by the bathtub until we responded.

Emmy had been healthy since the days of her kittenhood with John. She kept her long black hair glossy and groomed, talked to us, warmed our laps, caught pine siskins before we could stop her, and slept a cat's sleep. She chased off feline rivals and avoided the street.

When she got sick, I immersed myself in information from the vet and the Internet. I joined an e-mail support group. I found supplies online at considerable savings. I clung to stories of CRF cats who lived as many as three or four years with treatment.

One afternoon when Emmy seemed well, I let her outside and watched her catch and eat a finch. Good for you, I thought.

We never found out if it was the finch that caused the blood infection. It began with a bare patch of skin behind the shoulder blades. The patch spread and swelled. Ointments produced no effect. A biopsy was inconclusive. One day the patch suddenly split and spewed infection. We rushed Emmy to the clinic and surgery was done. The patch was very deep. Our hearts rent at her shaved back.

When we brought her home she had no strength to sit up. For the next few days we laid her on alternate sides to relieve pressure and held her upright for food and water from a syringe. I slept on the floor beside her.

On Thanksgiving Friday, she sat up partway and drank water free-choice from a small bowl held to her lips. We were elated. The following day we went out do errands. When we returned two hours later, Emmy was in distress. She whispered meows and reached out first with one front leg, then the other. She could not hold up her head.

We carried her to the sofa. We fumbled through the medications, prepared a painkiller injection, gave it. Emmy pawed the air. I called the vet but within moments, Emmy cried out, arched her back, and sank down. She was gone.

We sat with her all that night. The next day we laid her on a red velvet blanket I had hemmed and placed her in a wooden box John had crafted. We buried her in our backyard. We still keep fresh cut flowers on her grave.

We could no more replace Emmy Lou than if she had been a child but our lives were rudderless, drifting. We began to look at homeless cats only to retreat with longing and guilt. Eventually we accepted that we would never feel ready to move on. One day we simply went to a shelter and adopted a kitten. Maia is shy, a long-haired silver gray, and a joy.

I have wondered when forever begins and ends. I don't know. I am just glad for the moment at hand with Emmy beating in our hearts, and Maia playing in our laps.

Advise and Consent

"Ain't love grand."

My comment wasn't a question. It was all I could think to say.

Just now, Brad McBride comes to where I'm simmering a crock of my Nogales chili at the Ace Wrap Sports Bar, here in this high desert Oregon town. Brad sounded like Tara Lipinski winning the Olympic skating, all excited and squeaky-voiced. "Coach, I'm getting married and you're invited to the wedding. It's in April."

I'm flabbergasted. Brad is nineteen. Getting married? Only seven years ago I was coaching him in Pop Warner football. Redmond Raptors. We won district two years in a row.

When I coach, I'm fair, but exacting. Damn kids nowadays need structure. They're either milk-fed blubber-butts who puke after thirty yards of wind sprints, or skinny smart-asses who think that because they can rack up a kazillion points on a football video game, they ought to be the starting quarterback. You'd think I'd scare 'em off, but every July I'm always surprised to see all those earnest white faces looking up at me.

Brad's dad has asthma and ain't too athletic. When Brad was twelve, he needed a mentor and he picked me. He played good for the team.

I duck out back of the galley to bring in some split yellow pine for the range. Tryin' to think of what to say, what to tell him.

Years ago, I was a hot infield prospect in the Red Sox's farm system. Then I blew out my ACL chasing down a bunt. Surgery was useless back then. It took time—and half the North American continent—for me to heal. Now, I own a piece of the Ace Wrap, so I pass for a solid citizen. I can still bench press a bunch.

Twice, I took Brad and his kid sister (she's redheaded like the rest of her family) over the Cascades to see the Eugene Emeralds play some baseball. Once, Brad got carsick on the mountain and threw up on my dashboard, but it was no big deal.

Now he's telling me he's getting married in six weeks. This is the same kid who quit high school football just three years ago, wimping out because his buddies convinced him that Coach Bulldog Kerr was "unsympathetic".

Unsympathetic, my ass. Bulldog told Brad to quit sloughing off his assignments and to start cutting the mustard.

Brad told me about it after he'd already blown off the team. His dad would have liked him to go back, but you know how stubborn a sixteen year-old can be. Brad and I stayed friends. I went to his high school graduation along with his parents and sister.

What am I supposed to say about Brad's news of getting married? "Brad, have you lost your bleepin' mind?" or, "The chances of you kids surviving five years of marriage is about the same as riding a Brahma for eight seconds at the Sisters rodeo."

You can see I like all sports. All sports except golf (let Greg Norman carry his own damn bag) and synchronized swimming. The nose clips makes them women's faces look like splitting mauls.

Brad works construction and goes to community college at night. Getting his basics so he can transfer to Oregon State. Obviously, he's growing up. He's got a lot on his mind.

Brad's going with a nice girl. He brought her around for me to meet. Maybe Cheri won't put out unless she gets a wedding band. That's hard to believe these days.

I chop up some rattlesnake and toss it in the pot. I worry about these kids. I married young.

If only I'd known how to talk to Sanika. Guys will spend days teaching you to hit a slider, but nobody told me how to listen when my sugar wanted to share something. Nobody.

I was never mean. I was just self-centered and competitive, even with her.

Marriage is like playing both offense and defense against the Raiders. Inside them black jerseys are really Rent Payments, Car Expenses, Your Boss, Her Boss, Picking Up Your Stuff—you know. Sometimes it seems like your

partner is using a different playbook. And, if you get winded you can't signal the sideline for a substitute.

I could say: "Brad, listen. Marriage ain't easy. Marriage is staying cool while Cheri goes berserk when your Momma tells her how to keep house. It's not yelling at your wife because a rebuilt transmission for your '86 Civic costs more than your take-home check. A husband's gotta understand when his Baby drops on an old Ray Charles CD and wants to make slow, sloppy love. Never mind that you only planned a quickie so you could study all night for a statistics final."

I don't say any of that to Brad. The shadows in the galley and the steam off the chili can't hide Brad's grin and how he waits for my blessing.

I smile back at him. I toss the kid a Gatorade.

I say, "Ain't love grand."

DOROTHY BELL

The Hypertension Years

Will there be time for history to record
"The Hypertension Years"?
Or will we be too busy dodging the bullet . . .
Balancing on the wire
Between survival and ruin?

We live today
On what we can borrow;
Sacrifice the environment,
Squander time and cash,
Then look for someone to blame.

The media controls the people's angst.
We are spoon-fed on the hour.
The jackals joust and jostle,
To be the first to report
Their own demise.

It's a sucker's bet
How will it end?
Is it to be insane Hussein
Who pushes the final button?
Or do we perish by a poison of our own making?

A few will self-destruct
Without raising a hand.
The list is frightening you will allow:
West Nile Virus . . . mosquito . . . friend or foe?
Lime Disease . . . ticks.
Anthrax.
Smallpox.
Rape.
Abduction.

Fire.
Flood.
Earthquake.
Hurricane.
Volcanic eruption.
Cell phone towers.
Acid rain.
Global warming.
Killer bees.
Stock market crash.
Road-rage.
Kids with guns.
My weird neighbor.

"The Hypertension Years",
There will be no one left to recall.
Have we searched and searched,
To succumb...
Victims of our own downfall?

Are we no better than
Lemmings to the sea
And take death as a way out?
Was it TV?
Left in ignorance could we
Have avoided the whole damn mess?

Lets blame Henry Ford . . .
Or Edison.
Horses and buggies were good enough.
We should have been happy with candle-power.
We could share the book.

Let's cuss the cold little man
Who discovered fire . . .
And his brother who
Fashioned the wheel.

Lets blame them for setting us on the road
To "The Hypertension Years"
With satellites,
Instant messaging,
And fast food full of empty calories?

When we're gone
Who will be left to read?
The earth, bereft
Of our careless presence,
Will go back to bugs and seeds.

I think the time is now
Nothing left to borrow.
Corporations tumble like Roman Towers.
All the little peons can draw
No more water from the well.

Does history come to a halt
In seventeen years,
Or seven
With an asteroid collision?
Or sooner . . . within the hour,
As an ignorant mad-man
Screams and assumes the all mighty power?

"The Hypertension years".
Every day a new fear:
Head-on collision,
No brakes,

No air bag.
Do we live to see tomorrow's front page?
Will the history books have time to record
Our hysteria and strange discord?

Make your peace
Little man, Say I.
Marvel at the sun in the sky.
Count the stars
And gaze at the moon.
Smell the flowers.
Feel the wind in your hair.
Bend your knees . . .
And kiss your ass good bye.

HAROLD ROGGE

foggy moments thrashing upstream

♦
♦ a gray-hair with his daughter and grandson are drumming and chanting in the sun on the north verge of the center building ♦ the few spoken words of stolen generations shattered or crudely reinforced by a dark and huge military transport helicopter flying low overhead ♦ staccato crump and thump of constant multiple thunderclaps smashing at several beats per second ♦ ultra-bass rumble shaking the building like an earthquake ♦

♦
♦ a careening bus sweeps the long curve downhill towards campus ♦ tendrils and swaths of fog fill the valleys between hills in the distance and creep up the gradient between classes ♦ down in the rift arts and athletics encased in the mist while math and english above reside gleaming in the clear air ♦ pure reason and muddy emotion vie for balance in a thousand minds ♦

♦
♦ climbing frosty thirtieth a conversation among passengers enclosed by darkness outside the windows ♦ overheard fragments of enthusiastic multidisciplinary workshop on the reconciliation of chaos and calculus ♦

♦
♦ waiting for departure downtown with crude gits peering and leering at every objectified babe walking through the transit station ♦ a gray-hair in purple sweater and hat asks them to please cease the various vulgar monosyllabic insights ♦ denials and banter and a little nervous laughter but then a tall imposing pressured-speech stalking up the aisle to loom over her ♦ sudden emergence of rage and threat paralyzingly surreal for the duration as the loud boys continue obstinately muttering in the back ♦

♦
♦ brittle pre-dawn walking the path along the river where steam rises from the water as it flows ♦ curling and coalescing procession of mist wraiths float and veer and pace the current through channels and eddies ♦ down-

stream islands and footbridge obstacles where wisps pile up to create a fog-jam that overruns the banks ♦ an interesting challenge for some rationalist to describe fluid dynamic equations from the chaotic patterns of this entwined liquid and vapor ♦

♦

♦ late afternoon sunshine from the other direction warms the palettes of three artists sitting on a grassy bank overlooking the river with their contrasting mediums in paint or pencil or pastel ♦ a striking range of apparent ages among them nevertheless enhances a comfortable similarity perhaps as generations of a family from grrrl to crone ♦

♦

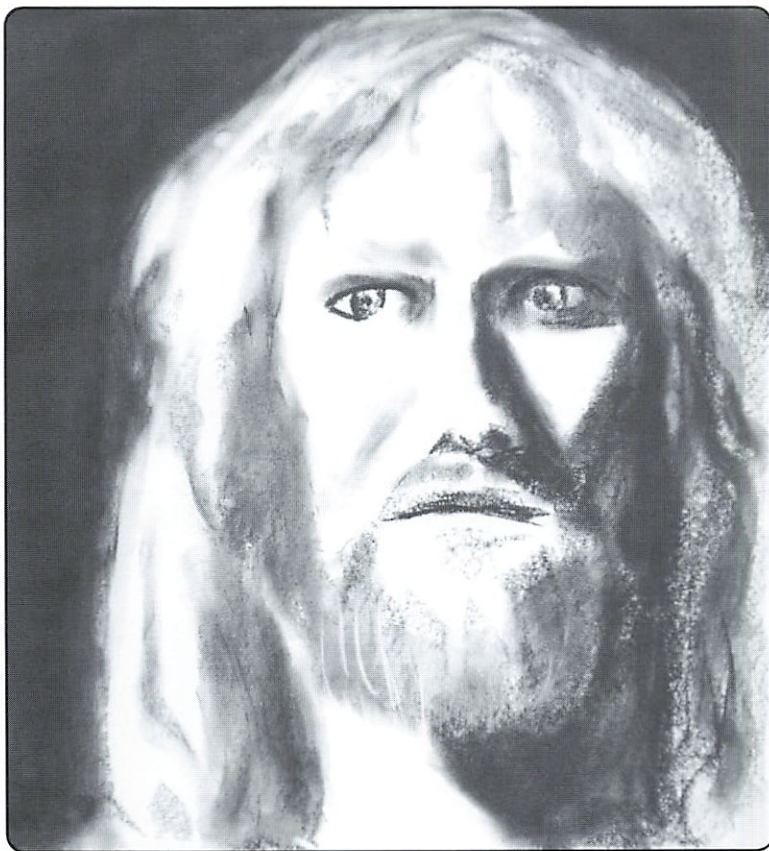
♦ on the neighborhood streets stars glister over air cold and still and sparkling with remnants of misty rain and sharp scents from firs and cedars ♦ inside a dark and parked car with fogged windows from interior condensation someone taps out rhythm and riffs on a bongo ♦ a moment later the car starts and pulls away headlights crossing paths in shadows as the soft insistent beats continue and fade ♦

♦

KATIE CUNDIFF



ANNE STARKE



GARY CHARCOAL

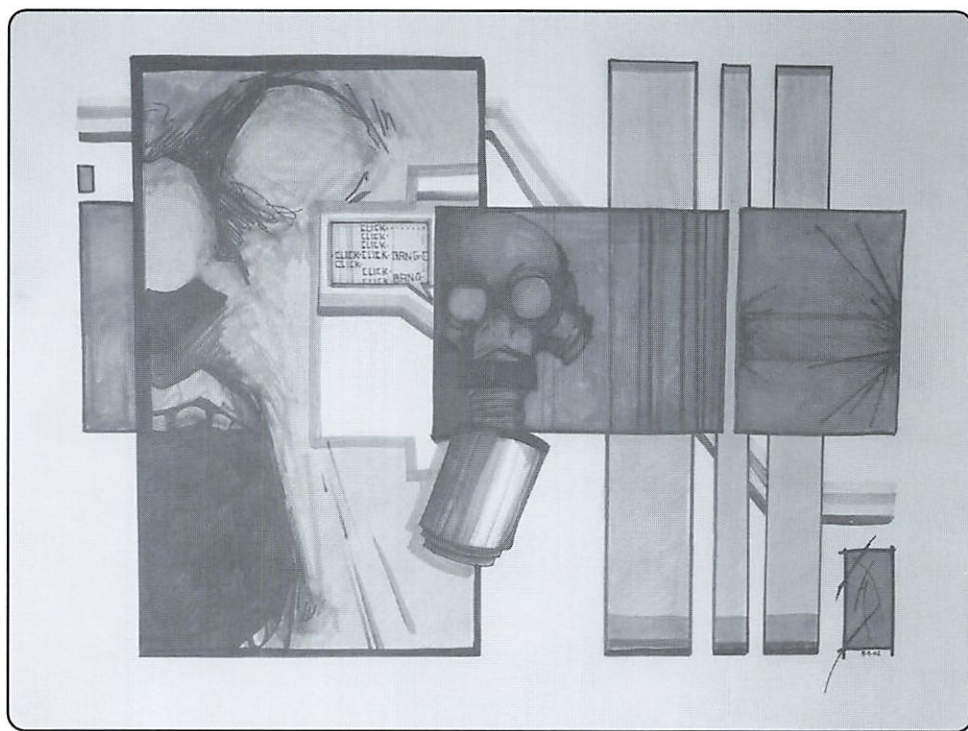
DANIEL DONOVAN

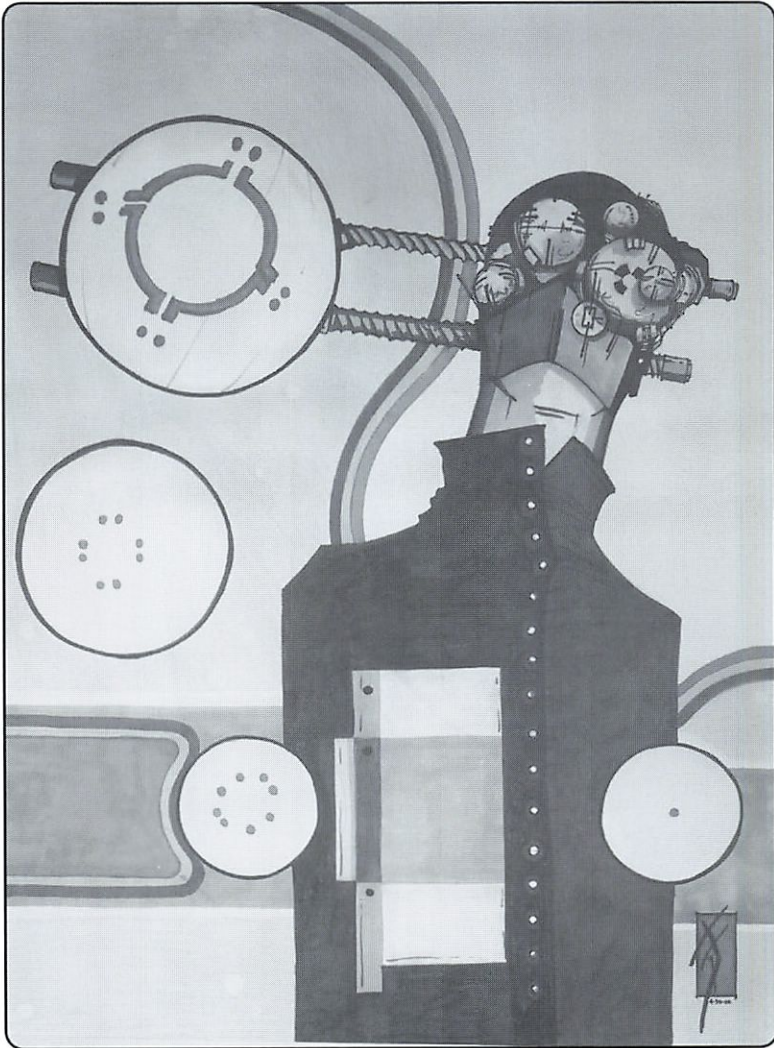


ISOLATION OIL ON CANVAS

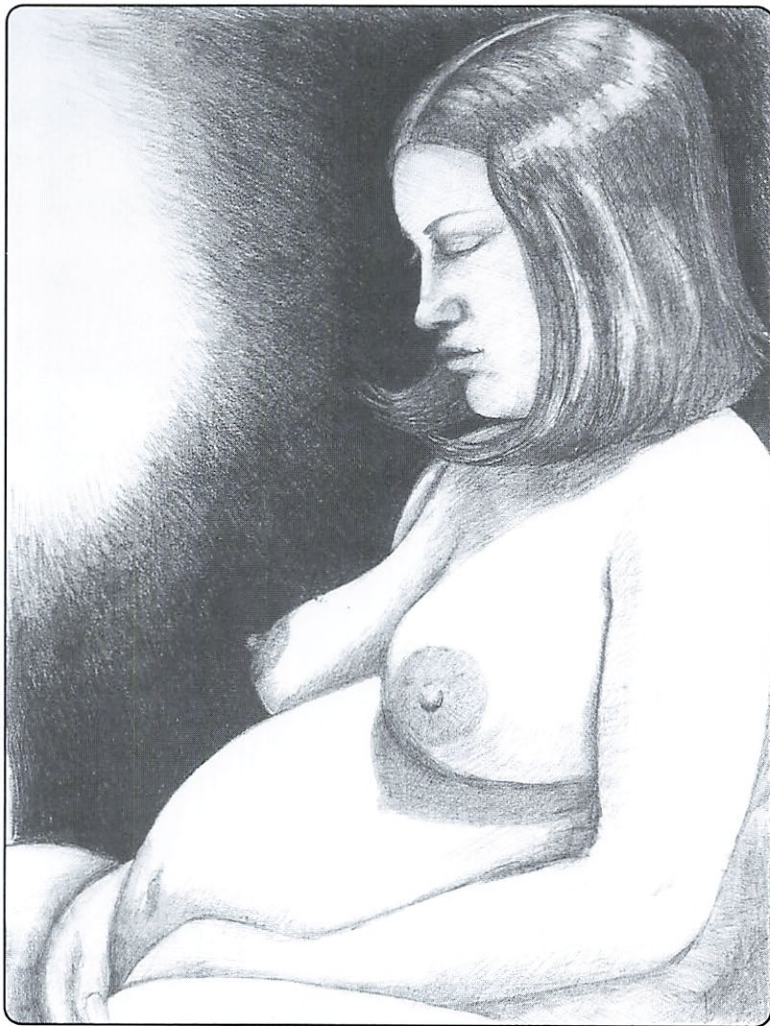


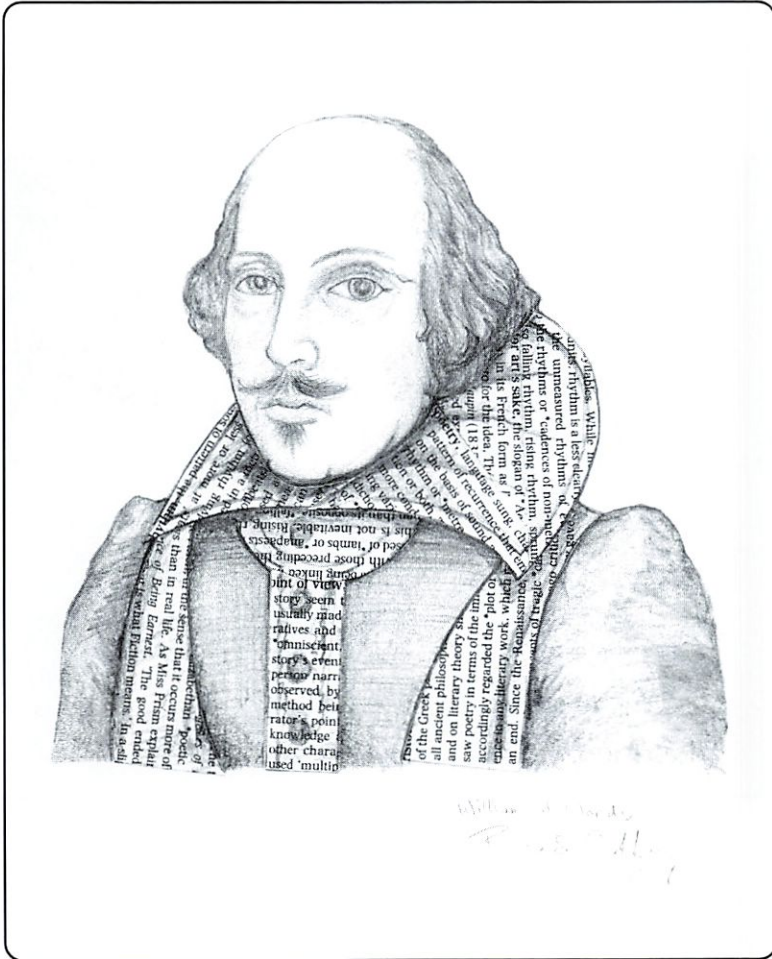
JOHNATHAN HALL





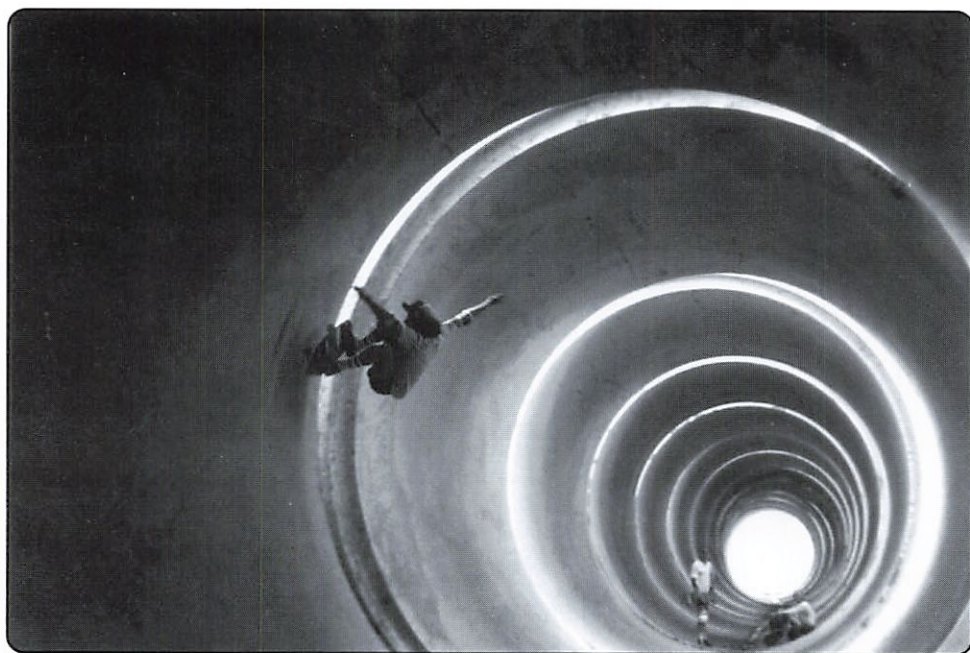
BRAD COFFEY



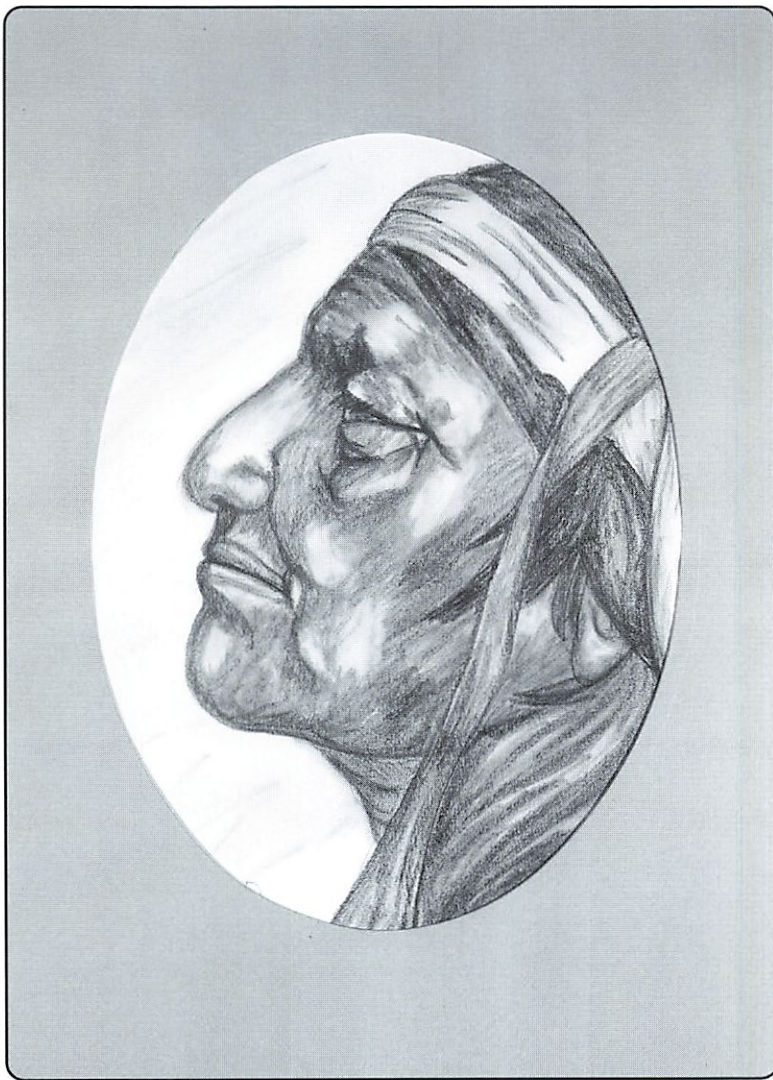


William Shakespeare
1564-1616

FRANK LEEDS



TONY ALVA AT NUKELAND NIKON F-2, 29MM
NIKOR LENS, TRI-X 400, AGFA 5 X 7 PAPER



TWO MOON, CHIEF OF THE CHEYENNE GRAPHITE

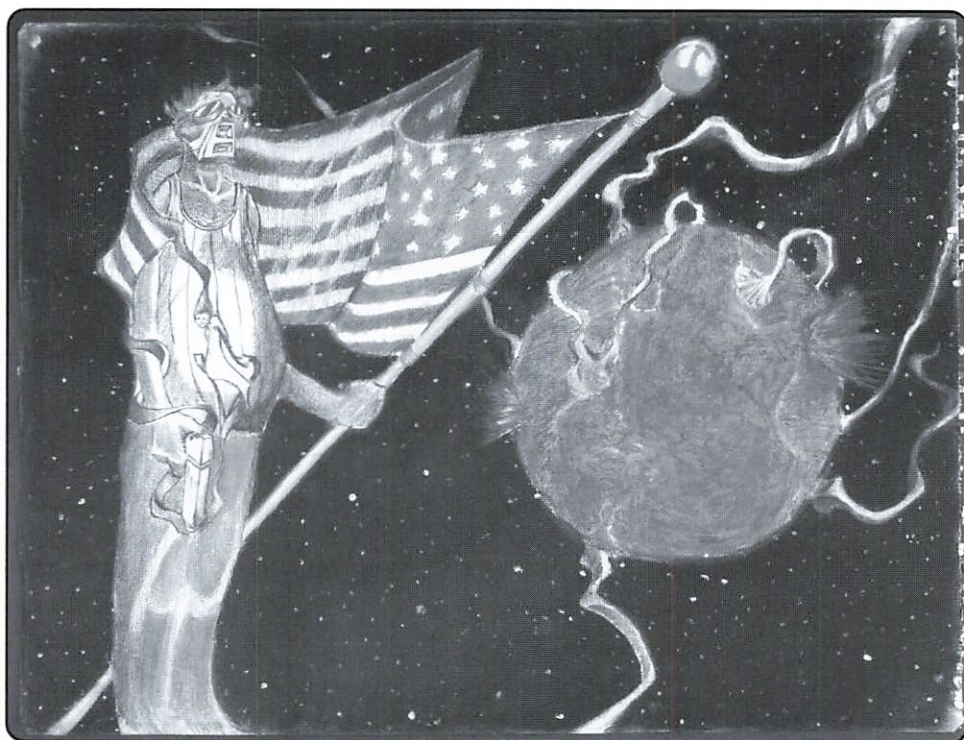
JERRY ROSS

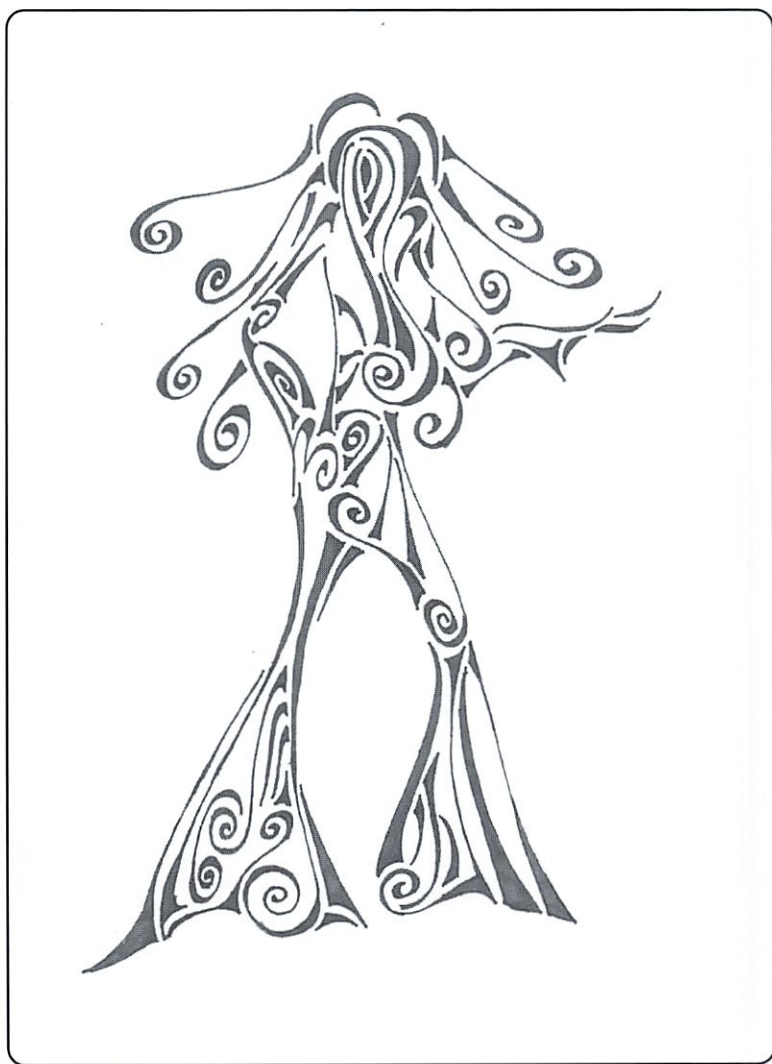




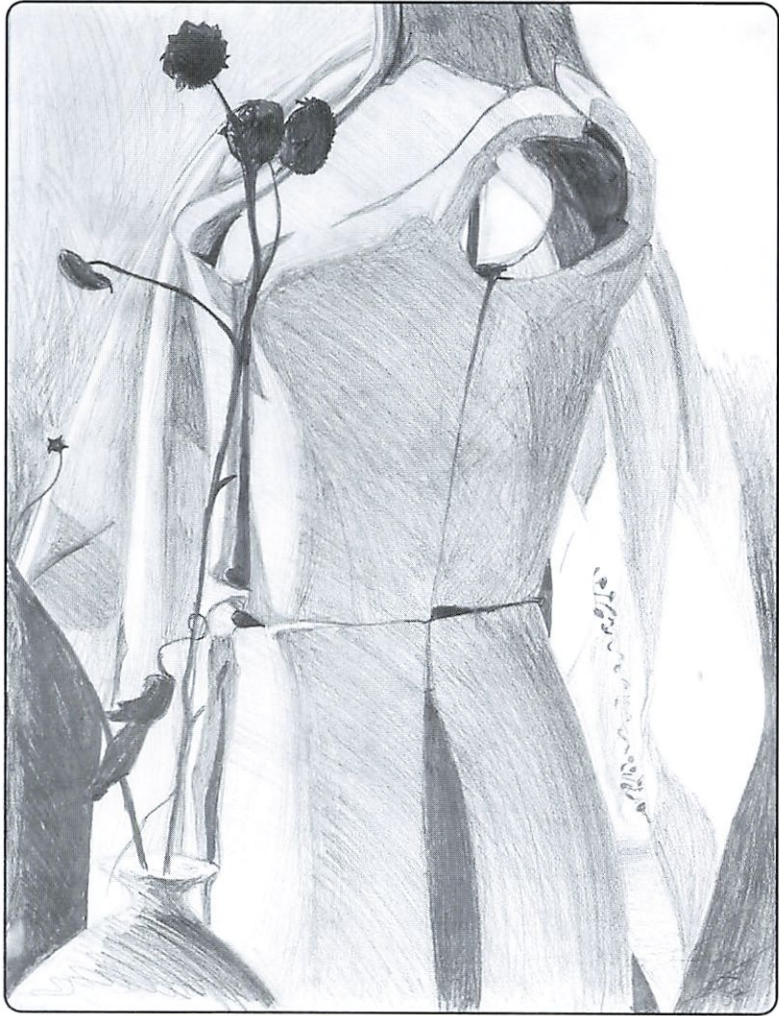
PORTRAIT OF CORLE LA FORCE OIL ON CANVAS

HANIF MICHAEL PANNI





RAYCHEL SPRINGER





TAX SHELTER? NIKON BODY, 28-105MM D -
ASPHERICAL SIGMA F2.8 LENS, VELVIA 50

BRADY LANE



CONTRIBUTORS

Joan Aschim

Dorothy Bell

Kris Bluth

Tina M. Calhoun

Michael Clarke

Brad Coffey

Katie Cundiff

Melanie Cummings attended Lane Community College in 2001-2002. She currently resides in Massachusetts and plans on returning to Lane next year. Her inspirations include current events and relationships. Melanie's dream is to travel the world.

Daniel Donovan is in his fourth year at Lane Community College studying studio art. He finds he is most comfortable communicating through art. Dan tries to touch on emotions that transcend time and cultural differences.

Johnathan Hall "Like a lot of artists out there I've been drawing for as long as I can remember. I was influenced early on with comics. This gave me an eye for structure, dynamics and storytelling which are elements that I try to use in one way or another . . . I draw from many influences including Chris Cunningham, Katsuhiro Otomo, and Jean-Pierre Jeunet." Johnathan is currently in his first year of the Graphic Design program at LCC.

Wes Hoskins

Brady Lane is a first year graphic design student at LCC. He likes to compose his shots from interesting angles primarily getting down beneath the subject. He wanted to get eye to eye with Pugsly to show the dog's prospective.

Tim Lanham

Frank Leeds has been playing with cameras since grade school. He tends to gravitate towards action shots, but has recently found an interest in nature photography.

Bredan Marsh is a former Lane Community College student that now practices accounting. She graduated from the University of Oregon in 1986 with a degree in Psychology. She considers "Once a Soldier" to be a retrospective piece, and wrote the poem in honor of a friend.

CONTRIBUTORS

Derek Olson

Hanif Michael Panni

"Deplore missiles and insults,
Bull-pen coach coaxing ideals to the public, -
I feel sort of disgusted when asked about the
subject, -
Enough tough talk shit, George W's not to be trusted, -
Bad decisions fucking generations over and over-
While decision makers grow older, more
antimulticultural, and colder, -
Less sober, drunk off the power to eliminate
opposition,
So in these hours of critical world events, we should
all stop and listen."

Harold Rogge "This time is for Sarah-who suggested distillation. The world for Lucy-who makes everything possible."

Jerry Ross is currently an instructor at Lane Community College. He has won numerous awards: The 2000 Mayor's Choice award for the Mayor's Art Show of Eugene, and the juror's award at the 31st annual Willamette Valley Juried show in Corvallis. "Corle la Force" was exhibited in the 2002 Salon des Refuses and was voted one of the most popular pieces in that show. "Silvia" was exhibited at his first one-man show at the Jacobs Gallery in Eugene and then again in Rome, at the Italy Galleria d' Arte La Borgognona, Via del Corso, Rome (June-July, 2002).

Sarah Ross is this year's editor of The Torch, LCC's student run newspaper. Her writing has benefited greatly under the able tutorship of Pete Peterson. She took her first poetry class winter term and wants to grow-up to be just like Bill Sweet. She thinks LCC is the bee's knees.

Raychel Springer

Lindsay Stalone is originally from San Diego and moved to Eugene one year ago. She is currently pursuing a transfer degree with interest in English. Lindsay's influences include Andre Dubuse, a short story author. "Everything is Interconnected."

Anne Starke hopes you enjoyed the magazine.

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