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The Center for the Humanities at Loyola College has funded awards for outstanding writing in the English, Foreign Languages and Literatures, History, Philosophy, and Writing Departments.

Forum is pleased to include in this issue the essays by the winners of the Writing Core Courses Essays Awards, Fall 1987, Franklin Bolster, Mark Lee, Bill Marella, and Brian Myer; and the winner of the 1987-88 Upper-Division Prose Award, Doug Muenzen.

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THE SCRAMBLED EGG SYNDROME

The Scrambled Egg Syndrome (SES), simply put, is the mental and emotional breakdown an individual experiences when a catastrophe scrambles his senses and soul as though they were eggs. The following essay illustrates the Scrambled Eggs Syndrome and the most effective method of recovery from it.

When I was four years old I made a friend named Randy, and our friendship lasted for almost nine years. I honestly cannot recall a time when Randy and I were not friends. When I was thirteen, Randy betrayed our friendship and carved an indelible scar into me; it was in this betrayal that I got my first experience with SES.

Randy's parents were away for the weekend, and he invited me to spend the night at his house. We sat around talking and watching TV until the latest night time hours. I will not go into particulars about what happened; suffice it to say he tried to rape me. During the years we spent growing up together I had occasionally suspected Randy of being homosexual; he was effeminate and rarely showed interest in girls. Randy had always been weak and quiet (I had been known to fight his fights for him), whereas I was big for my age. A fight ensued, of course, and I won easily. I ran home in a breathless state of shock, and when my mother asked why I had come home, I was unable to say anything but that Randy and I had a fight. I left it at that, and so went my scrambling.

For three years I maintained a mournful silence; for three years I was caught in egg-limbo. To the older readers of this essay homosexuality is no doubt commonplace and will provoke a flinch from only the most innocent of souls, but to a thirteen year old the results of an uneducated exposure to homosexuality were devastating. Just as I was getting my first intimations of what the sacred institution of manhood was all about, my supposed best friend flung me into three years of confusion and a crippling fear of masculine sexuality. I had been cast into a three year bout with the

Scrambled Egg Syndrome. How is one to deal with reality and live his life while caught up in SES?

The first period of mending, the period I am about to describe to you, is an assessment of the damage: how badly have you been scrambled? This stage is the foundation on which a recovery is based. For me, this stage ended after the first year and a half or so, but its effects lasted for the duration of my recovery.

Immediately I was suspicious of all things male, including myself. My other male friends became, to me, suspected sexual deviates. Upon meeting another boy my own age I would instantly wonder about his sexual orientation. I met Rich, who quickly became my best friend, when I started tenth grade. He shook my hand and smiled, and I wondered, Did he get any pleasure out of that? I longed to inquire about a possible girlfriend, but the right moment did not come. Later that day I saw him in the hallway kissing an attractive blonde girl on the cheek, and so a friendship was permitted to begin.

When I met Mr. Porter, a business associate my father had invited to dinner, I shook his right hand and looked for a wedding ring on the left. Mr. Porter's left hand was in his pocket. I waited anxiously as we stood talking in the living room for this suspicious stranger to expose his left hand: each time I was sure he couldn't leave it in his pocket a moment longer he disappointed me by doing just that. When we moved into the kitchen I was asked to hand Mr. Porter his drink. He took it with his left hand. Thank God! I thought. There was the ring.

These incidents were hardly isolated; similar incidents occurred quite frequently. I was suspicious of absolutely every man or boy I saw. And God forbid I should meet any male I thought was effeminate! Even the vaguest phallic symbols, such as pencils or (even worse) screws, put a lump in my throat. Public restrooms were a definite no-no. I had become what is known as homophobic.

There was the problem of fearing other males, but what about myself? What had made me attractive to Randy? Was I effeminate? This question haunted me during the next three

years, and for those three years I carefully scrutinized the tone of my voice, each word I spoke, each movement I made, and the way I dressed. (No pinks or light purples or any other pastel colors for me!)

What is a man? Do I have to look like Bruce Willis? Do I have to be as strong as Arnold Schwarzenegger? Did Hemingway have the answer: should I drink a lot and proclaim the virtues of violence? Maybe I should join F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald at one of their three-month-long New Year's Eve parties. Perhaps I should be a womanizer, a chauvinist; that seemed a manly thing to be. All right, if chauvinism is the answer, what goes along with that? I can't show my feelings, I have to be unsympathetic to the problems of others, and I have to pretend the problems I have are a piece of cake to handle., Of course, I'll have to make rude comments about female body parts and derogatory remarks about women drivers. A voice calls to me from deep inside, "If that's what makes a man, smart ass, how do you explain Alan Alda?" Oh boy!

Jack Nicholson's somewhat chauvinistic performance in <u>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</u> simply stunned me. R.P. McMurphy cared about nothing as much as having fun. If McMurphy could make his life a party, why couldn't I? I turned to Jack Nicholson for a role model and made a commitment to myself to become R.P. McMurphy and never stop flying over the cuckoo's nest Randy had forced me to acknowledge. But very quickly I grew tired of pretending my life was a Mardi Gras. It was sheer drudgery', and there was no use in denying it. After I relinquished my short-lived acting career, it seemed I was right back where I'd started, and I wasn't happy to be there, I had assessed the damage to my innards, and my problem was two-fold. First, I was wary of all males and considered them possible homosexuals; second, I was concerned about the well-being of my own masculinity.

The second stage of recovery, which I entered near the end of my fourteenth year, involved settling down and picking the pieces of shell from myself. I was once a whole egg, but now a whisk had been taken to me. My protective white shell had been crushed, and although I was still an egg, I had been

turned upside down and inside out. I would never be the same; I would never be able to recognize my innards as they were before. The things to do was remove the shards of my broken shell and accept the way I'd been scrambled.

I settled back and removed the pieces of my shell on the comforting bed of literature. Kurt Vonnegut opened his novel Slapstick with the following paragraph: "This is the closest I will ever come to writing an autobiography. I have called it "Slapstick" because it is grotesque, situational poetry -- like the film comedies...of long ago. It is about what life feels like to me." This introduced me to a new perspective on life. Could I look at my life and laugh at it? That seemed a heresy of sorts. I was able to laugh at this book, but being able to laugh at the ironies in my own life would take a while longer. The second Vonnegut book I read was Deadeye Dick, the fictional autobiography of Rudy Waltz. Sitting outside one night, playing with his father's hunting gun, Rudy shoots a bullet into the sky. This bullet falls to earth eight blocks away, into a second story window in the Metzger home, hitting an unsuspecting Mrs. Metzger right between the eyes. There is a great deal of irony in Vonnegut's world, as there was in mine. So I went on a Vonnegut sprint; during the next few months I read only his books, and some of them I read twice. Then, looking for a literary change, I read some of Stephen King's books, and this gave me an outlet for my anger. I imagined the terrible things happening in those stories happening to Randy. Kurt Vonnegut showed me a darkly comic outlook on life which I would adopt as my own in time, and Stephen King helped me live out my horrific egg-fantasies of what I would like to do to Randy and everyone else in the world like him.

In English class we read Albert Camus's The Stranger and discussed existentialist philosophy. At this time I became an amateur philosopher, turning my thoughts toward esoteric matters such as the meaning of life and the ambiguity of my God and so on...and still the big question plagued me: What does it mean to be a man?

It was during this stage, at the end of fifteen, that I began writing as a pastime. My stories for the first nine months were in the Stephen King tradition, and I turned them

out at an incredible rate. It has been said that most writers start out imagining themselves as their main characters, but I always made my characters hazy, detestable versions of Randy. I wrote stories of murder, demonic possession, ghosts with vengeance on their minds. Then, slowly I slipped out of this pseudo-King style as this, the second stage, came to a close, and I made attempts at "serious" fiction. I wrote two other short stories which were published in the high school literary magazine in my senior year. In the early stories I had expiated all the macabre fantasies my imagination had to offer. This resurrection from horror and hatred marked my acceptance of my scrambled state, and so the second stage of recovery from SES was closed.

The last stage of recovery, a reconfrontation of the problem, is followed by a euphoric state of accomplishment, of a war well-waged. Knowing that a complete recovery was just around the corner gave me the impetus to get through this, the most frightening and dangerous stage.

My silence was ended. I told my parents; I told my friends. In doing so I relived the experience myself, but this was not enough. What more did I have to do? I had gotten plenty of dates with girls in the recent past, so I had been convinced that there was nothing wrong with me. I was no longer afraid of all things male; Rich and I were members of a tight clique, and in time I realized my suspicions of men were unjustified. There was, however, the residual yet powerful fear of men I knew to be homosexual. This part of my problem was yet to be reconfronted.

My friends and I, near the end of our senior year, developed the weekend habit of going to South Street in Philadelphia. South Street is an amazing place, lined with small shops: delis, clothing stores, book stores, record stores, bars, and a theater (The Theater of the Living Arts) which showed contemporary art films as well as the most popular box office hits. You can see all walks of life there, from beggars on the corners, through punk rockers hanging out at the record stores, to men in sport jackets paying a visit to the preppier bars. This was to be the scene of my complete recovery.

Rich and I went to South Street alone one night, and we parked the car on a side street. We had walked only a block when we came upon a fight over a parking space. Rich and I joined the convening spectators to watch the action, but two policemen rode up on horseback to stop the fight. The crowd dispersed at the policemen's orders, and we headed for the pizza place on the corner to get out of the pre-summer heat. On the way we got to talking with two men walking beside us. They were also getting a pizza, so we joined them. For over an hour the four of us talked about Rich's and my high school experiences, their college experiences, music, movies, books, and somehow we got on the subject of religion. Our two acquaintances (Bob and Joe) were Catholic, as was I. The two of them agreed that the Catholic church was unaccepting of homosexuality; for that reason they had stopped practicing their faith. Rich tapped his foot against my ankle under the table. Bob put his arm around Joe and said, "I guess we're just evil or something," The four of us (yes, even me) laughed together. So they were homosexuals!

But Bob and Joe were funny, interesting, friendly, easy to talk to...and they didn't jump on me! I knew then that homosexuals are not possessed by evil demons, and they don't lurk in dark alleys looking for innocence to defile, children to corrupt. They are people with a sexual preference different from my own, and that should not constitute a threat to a heterosexual man's masculinity.

Thus my problem was inadvertantly reconfronted. I had unknowingly handed the cook the whisk and dared him to whip me once more. Somehow he couldn't do it to me again.

That is how I handled my first affliction with SES. I have since had other cases of SES (such as deaths in the family, breakups with girlfriends, errors in moral judgement) but none quite as unsettling as the first.

My rewards for successfully dealing with SES are priceless. There is an indomitable strength to me now; that period of three years was the most difficult time of my life, and if I got through that I know I can get through anything. Some ancient writer once wrote, "Be patient, my soul, thou hast suffered worse than this." I love that. I think I am a fairly good fiction writer, and this has become my chosen

profession. This experience with SES turned me inward and presented me with the gift of philosophy. Also, I have a new attitude toward life and a renewed sympathy for human beings. John Irving's most famous and best-loved character, T.S. Garp, put it best when he said, "I have nothing but sympathy for how people behave -- and nothing but laughter to console them with." This is the tone of my writing and the hue in which I view my own life: Cheerful acceptance of people and Fate is the name of the game.

Bill Marella

THE FARM

Clouds tumble over the Chesapeake and move inward through the alternating patches of forests and fields, snagging on branches and tripping over stubble. The gray sky slowly envelops the solitary house. Once white, it has steadily turned the color of dried corn shocks. The old sun porch now houses ducks, and otherwise homeless cats seek refuge under the sinking floor.

Although dusk is falling, nothing is still. In the fields, snakes, invisible in the darkness, weave their way through the dead remains of the tobacco, hoping to sneak their way into Elva's hen house to grab a tasty morsel. They rarely get away with it though, and many of their brethren die trying. Leaves scatter across the yard, crumble and mix with the dirt until mini-tornadoes seem to swirl among the crying cats.

In the kitchen of the old farmhouse an ember smolders in the midst of the ashes, its fire struggling to animate the frame from parlor to attic. It flickers in and out through the grimy window pane and finally seems to move towards the door to the outside.

Elva emerges, her seventy-five year old flaming hair warming the blustery yard with its presence. Her thick sweater has survived many of these days, and her pants have long lost count of their number of knee patches. Only the tennis shoes are "new!" Her toes and everything else stick through the top of the old ones. She scurries about, her voice cracking and cackling above the din as she feeds the multitude of chickens and ducks she has collected through the years. "Come to dinner, darlings," she croons. "Here's some for you, honey," she whispers to one who's left behind. The two geese, husband and wife, waddle up behind her and demand their fair share as she hurries to shoo them from their pens into their haven, the hen house.

The seemingly endless line of cats get their dinner and crawl under the house while Leonard and Yeldiz jump on the kitchen chairs and paw and whine, as if to say, "Dogs must eat too!" until they get their supper. Elva feeds them and

then herself, lighting up the cigarette she holds between her yellowed fingers. It burns quickly, the gleaming embers clutching and grasping each other, trying to stay together, but soon falling as dry, lifeless ash into the tray beside her. Disgustedly she puts it out. The cigarettes never last long. They just burn away and burn out, and their fire does not warm cold, lonely bones.

The house used to be warm, when the family was there. In her mind she races down the steps and into the yard with her sisters, to make bouquets out of the lilacs until the time for chores and dinner arrives. Bible study with friends follows and then comes bed. It was a good time. It was a time when people were close to each other and to God.

The entire family worked to keep the farm running and in order. She remembers bringing newborn lambs into the kitchen so that they would not be cold or alone, rushing to comfort them with warm milk when their bleating reached a wailing pitch. That had been her favorite job.

But childhood passes quickly, and soon Joe came, and the farm was left behind. Her dusty yard turned to sand, and the cackling chickens became street merchants haggling over their wares. This was a new world -- exciting and exotic. After their marriage Joe joined the Foreign Service and was transferred to Turkey and Iran to work on the roads, helping to improve life for the peoples of the Middle East.

It was nothing like the farm. Elva now had servants to fix her meals on plates of fine china. She wore smooth satin dresses adorned with gold and rubies to the many teas and embassy functions they attended. The days were full of pleasures both unique and enjoyable. When Joe died suddenly on the golf course, her world vanished as though it were a desert mirage.

She came home to the only other world she knew. She came home to Denton, to the same farm where her family had been. But they were not there. Time and work had worn them away. No longer were there servants to take care of her. She had become the servant.

Cats from the surrounding fields flock to her yard, knowing they will be safe and fairly well fed. She must take

care of them, provide them with a family, and herself with children. She knows how lonely it can be without family.

As she steps back into the yard, the sky almost envelops her. There is so much sky here, the land so flat and the people so far apart. There are occasional meetings of the Elks or maybe a trip to town, but conversation is always one-sided chatter with the chickens. At times she wants to disappear into the heavens that hold her family, but she won't go, no matter how loudly they call. She can't leave her new family as her old one has left her. Besides, there is too much to do here, and who will do it if she leaves?

Who will keep the fields from swallowing up the yard and who will keep the attic from sinking into the kitchen? Who would keep her most precious item, the organ? She used to go through the mounds of music and pick out her favorites, or grin with glee as her nieces plunked out their three-finger tunes. Now their fingers run through her jewelry box and the organ barely hums in the damp air. Her television is slowly leaving her too. Though it has no picture, she watches it anyway, the outside noises providing background.

The dogs howl and bay in the moonlight, and the cats cry and moan. The ducks nibble each other to sleep, their rustling mimicking the wind rushing through the lilac bushes. Occasionally a car rumbles down the asphalt road chugging to the steady cadence of the farm until the shriek of chickens disturbs its rhythm.

She rushes through the yard, stumbling over the knobby roots of the maple. The scaly culprit in the hen house will not get away. Elva and the shovel attack and win.

She is so weary of it all: the early waking and rising, the constant battle between hot and cold, dry and damp. The days come and go, following the same pattern. The lilacs bloom, the tobacco dries, the cats litter. Her house still stands and so does she, her hair faintly glowing like the tip of a cigarette that will not go out.

Mary Zajac

YESTERDAY'S CHILD

This summer, I had the unforgettable experience of babysitting my boyfriend's ten year old brother, Chris. To spare him from the monotony of the day, I invited his friend Tony, who is also ten, to join us. They sat around my kitchen table gobbling french bread pizza while I housecleaned, allowing them to entertain themselves. I hummed as I washed dishes and danced as I dusted until their conversation distracted me from my reverie. Between bites of pizza and sips of grape soda, these kids were exchanging their views on nuclear arms, sexually transmitted diseases, and earning their first million. Conversation fled to their favorite children's novel (not the one they read, but the one they watched from a VCR) and the hottest videos of the week performed on MTV. When they talked about their future, there was no mention of becoming a movie star, an astronaut, or a plumber. Instead, Chris spoke of becoming a shrewd lawyer and Tony, an aspiring doctor. "That's where the money is," they both agreed. I stood silent, dustrag motionless in my hand, thinking of my own childhood when things seemed to be just the opposite. I, and the kids I knew, "dared to dream", so to speak.

If MTV had existed in my childhood, it would have been unnoticed by my friends and me. We (the neighborhood girls) were fans of the written word. Weekly, we trooped to the neighborhood library and borrowed as many books as our arms could hold. Then, we went our separate ways to begin reading our way through the pile. I snuggled up in the living room chair, reading the adventures of George and Martha and Curious George until I graduated into the writings of Judy Blume and Paula Danziger. My obsession with reading left little and usually no time for TV. Television entertainment, literally and figuratively, put me to sleep. When I watched TV, I was forced to see the characters and storyline the way the director intended me to, not the way my imagination freely pictured. Books, however, challenged my imagination to paint vivid pictures and impressions of the people and places being described. The meaning of the words and how

my mind translated them kept me absorbed in whatever I was reading. TV did not compare.

When my friends and I dreamed of the future, we set no limitations for ourselves. Christy, my best friend, was going to marry superstar Andy Gibb and be a disco dancer. The Porter sisters longed to form a country band and dazzle crowds everywhere on their world tour. I wanted to be the next Marie Osmond AND a school teacher AND a hair dresser AND a nurse. I practiced singing along with my 45 records at the top of my lungs with a microphone made from an empty paper towel roll. I had my own one-room school house, located in the walk-in closet of my basement, where I taught my stuffed animals and dolls until the chalk dust permeated the room and interfered with my breathing. Then, I placed bandages on my "students," laid each one down to rest, and became Jennifer Fisher, R.N.

If there was nothing or no one to play with, I compensated by inventing my own toys. On nice days, I collected croquet balls from the back yard shed and transported them all around my yard in baby carriages. Magically, the croquet balls became "wallagers," my personal pets. When rainy days confined me to the house, I transformed our double-car garage into a skating rink and an insurance company. I skated in circles to the squelching tunes of my AM transistor radio until my legs and ankles ached and I felt dizzy. Then, I rolled to my desk, complete with a name plate, and assumed the position of an insurance agent. When my hands ached from filling out all the forms for my "clients," I reopened my rink...

When the girls of my block played together, we put all of our imaginations together and came up with exciting things to do. The playhouse in my back yard served as the main headquarters for our exclusive club. We "cooked" mud pies, danced to Blondie tunes, popular then, and wrote original song lyrics inside of its walls.

We kept jolly St. Nick, the ever-generous tooth fairy, and the loveable bunny of Easter in our minds as "gospel truths" until the late age of around ten. Whenever we had any qualms about the reality of their existence, we cast them away immediately in fear of ruining the spirit of the

occasion. At Christmas time, my friends and I gathered in the clubhouse and wrote sweet letters to Santa. We prayed for the Easter bunny to deliver baskets filled with sugary goodies and soft plush toys. The whole aura of the holiday was enhanced by our imaginations.

When my attention raced back to the boys, they were ranting about getting their licenses and the types of car they would drive. It seemed they felt that the excitement of life was in adulthood, not in their precious youth. Unlike that of these children, my youth was magical. I was fully content to be a kid. World affairs and current events were left for the adults to quibble over. Our world was one of Barbie dolls, dreams, stuffed toys, happiness, reading, and pretending. Reality, through the years, came naturally and unforced to us, yesterday's children.

Jennifer Fisher

THE JOKETELLER'S SECRET

Rodney Dangerfield proclaims, "I get no respect!"

Isn't he correct? Comedians, joketellers, punsters, even jesters of old were not blessed with great esteem. The comedian of Ancient Rome was on the social level of a gossiping peasant, sharing the lower rung with the actors and most of the gladiators. Quips John Dennis, "A man who could make so vile a pun would not scruple to pick a pocket." After all, who could respect someone who joyously spends his life twisting his language for a mere chuckle from an audience? Who could respect anyone who makes more money than my professors telling jokes which anybody could say?

True, it seems as though joketellers expel humorous stories from their mouths as easily as breathing, and that it isn't fair that herds of onlookers, including supposedly upright ladies and fellows such as Queens and Presidents, swarm into crowded buildings to watch the more famous ones. Yet somehow, it all makes sense...It makes sense when you know the secret of the joketellers, as I do.

It is fun to compose and tell jokes. I myself have done so for about seven years. In elementary school, jokes were an excellent way of getting the attention that every sixth grader craves. My little gems were cute novelties memorized and recited from a favorite riddle book. ("Why did the chicken cross the road?...). My wonderful classmate Robert, though, could easily memorize entire riddle books, digesting them from our small library. Therefore, I learned to create my own bits of humor, putting pieces of my own experiences and personality into my creations. It was only through a slow process of mastery, attaining conscious control over body, then mind, and finally spirit, that I discovered the power of a joketeller. An aura of energy surrounds the joketeller, an aura which spreads to and electrifies listeners, attracting more and more with each joke. Part of such an aura is created from the skillful use of learned techniques, just as the energy of an expert dancer is somehow transferred into our own bodies.

Relating a joke isn't simply the recitation of a learned story, with a little punchline added at the end. In order to express a joke appropriately, one must learn the skills of body control. Just as Cicero learned various styles of public speaking, it is helpful to study and observe speakers whom we would casually watch on television, such as actors on commercials, and even politicians. John F. Kennedy used various intonations and hand motions to excite the emotions of his audiences. Back in sixth and seventh grade, I learned that using the body effectively could attract, and sometimes hold, the attention of an audience, no matter how bad or unoriginal my joke was (in this case, from Art Moger's Complete Pun Book):

> "Hey! [I point to my target] I've got a great joke for ya [I hold up my hands, which tell them to prepare. My eyes are wide and excited, my eyebrows are raised, and of course, I smile constantly] A dozen swimmers were going to race across the English Channel. [I sweep my arm across an invisible channel; pausing, I look from side to side to try to arouse anticipation] Pointing up to the clock and waving my arm I proclaim, "They started at the stroke of twelve!" [I freeze with a big smile on my face, eagerly awaiting a response] My target hesitates, smiles, and responds, "It wasn't worth all of your energy."

My audience copies many of my movements: when I smile, the audience smiles, when I hesitate, the audience replies. Every facial gesture or twitch can be a signal for the audience to respond to the joketeller -- for example, the comedian who knows just how to use his face to create smiles of happiness, cruel pleasure, artificiality, cunning, fear, or aloofness. The mime of Red Skeleton is exemplary in demonstrating the power of the movements of the body alone to create amusement in an audience. Yet use of the body is only the first step in effectively communicating a joke. The audience only receives visual stimulation -- yet a true joketeller can make the blind laugh, too.

The joketeller must learn to control his voice inflection, especially when delivering puns. After the comedian has attained the attention of the audience with his body, he must make his voice work in unison in order to draw attention to his punchline, or important factors in the joke relating to the punchline.

> "Remember 'this', guys. [Pause] It's better to have a 'short' girl than -not- a TALL." (' = accent, - = pause)

As the comedian controls his body and voice, so does he control the emotions and imaginations of his audience. Rich Little is an excellent model for examining voice inflection in action. He tells the audience what is important to hear and when he wants his face to be especially noticed simply by certain voice intonations and inflections -- there is no need to expressly say, "Watch this." However, seeing motions and hearing words must have some foundation; one must go beyond the senses in order to think creatively, in order to create original thought. One must use one's mind -- one's intellect.

"Joke creation" requires quite a bit of familiarity with not only the English language (or whatever language one chooses to use), but also a familiarity with as great a spectrum of subjects as the gameshow "Jeopardy!" contains. When audiences ask me for a joke, I ask them to choose a subject; I comply, finding as many humorous things to express about the subject as I can.

A classmate has a strange grin on his face. "OK, Mark, let's have one on trees."

I think of all the characteristics and parts of a tree. Hmm...Branches? Yes!

"Uh, I would like to branch off into telling jokes on different subjects but..."

Roots! -- "...I guess I'd better get to the root of the situation."

Meanwhile, my classmate is squirming,

"ARGH! Where do you get these? Stop! Stop!"

"OK, I guess I'd better LEAVE."

One joke "stems" from the other. It is very exciting to extract humor from words and sayings which we carelessly use every day, to form plays on words. (e.g.: the drama of the work of a group of lexicographers could be considered a 'play on words.') The composer of jokes learns not to take for granted the tools of communication which he has slowly gained through careful observance and practice. Yet perhaps the most important element of a true comedian is the one which nurtures all of the others: the spirits, energy, and will to entertain and to share oneself with an audience.

The comedian realizes that he possesses an abundance of thoughts, imagination, and experience which is concentrated into his humor -- the audience is starved for new thoughts and experiences, and thus uses the jokes of the comedian as a concentrate of the energy which it lacks, or lacks the power to develop. Spirit is not only a result of the powers of the joketeller already discussed; it also drives one to discover the energies and abilities within oneself.

Even I, an inexperienced joketeller by professional standards, have experienced that flowing energy which comes from telling jokes and interacting with an audience. During high school, this energy spread to many students, who faithfully asked me what "The Joke of the Day" was, even when I was not in the mood to tell one. I felt that it was my responsibility, in a way, to concentrate shared experiences into the telling of a joke. One cannot just use one's mouth, body, or even one's mind: one must provide the fuel -- the creativity -- for the audience by exerting the energy that comes when one truly loves something and communicates that love through the energy of voice, movement, and emotion.

It is in examining the audience's need for this energy that the revelation of the secret of joketellers may be found. People love to listen to funny stories and jokes, yet fear to speak about their own just-as-humorous experiences. In honor of the bicentennial of the signing of the Constitution, a soap box was set up in Philadelphia in order to let Americans express anything they wished. Remarkably few

people actually got up on the soap box to say anything. The majority of those who did ascend the podium did so merely to have their picture taken: an illusion that the purpose of the soapbox was being fulfilled.

Audiences look to the comedian, the joketeller, to be their imaginations; audiences love to be controlled by him. Indeed, it is the audience which performs for the comedian, The comedian starts out with an audience, a face of clay, and energizes it with words, experiences, and original thought which molds and glazes the imagination-starved audience into a figure the joketeller desires. Listeners see in the comedian their own potential for original thought and imagination, yet are ail too fearful to ascend the soapbox to use and hone their abilities. Instead, they are content to utter a "Why didn't I think of that?," and continue their indifference to their own power to communicate.

Until audiences seek the hidden or suppressed abilities in themselves, the joketellers and comedians can use their patronizing smile; for they know that joketellers are respected very much, to the extent that others look to them to find little parts of themselves which couldn't just make it up to that stage, that soapbox, or to that "What do you think?" question. It was the jester who ended up ruling the entire kingdom in "Claudius and Caligula." The joketeller knows his power. He knows the secret.

Mark Lee

LIFESTYLES OF THE BORED AND BEAUTIFUL

FOR ANNE GREGORY

"Never shall a young man,
Thrown into despair
By those great honey-colored
Ramparts at your ear,
Love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

"But I can get a hair-dye
And set such color there
Brown, or black, or carrot
That young men in despair
May love me for myself alone
And not my yellow hair."

"I heard an old religious man
But yesternight declare
That he had found a text to prove
That only God, my dear,
Could love you for yourself alone
And not your yellow hair."

William Butler Yeats

Psyche, infamous Greek beauty, was probably a blonde. This doesn't bother me because I know that all blondes are not beautiful. What puzzles me is that she probably possessed a deep golden tan. Now this shouldn't make me jealous because I am of East Indian origin and have a brownish tint all year round. The fact that the combination, a blonde with a tan, is unnatural is my point of concern. Perpetual cold weather, such as that of Scandinavia, gives rise to hair, eyes, and skin that have little or no pigmentation. According to Darwin, after thousands of years of living in harsh conditions, the people of these climates naturally pass decreased melanin genes to their offspring. Blonde hair is merely a result of an adaptation;

light hair doesn't produce as much melanin as dark hair. Lightness was all well and good and the world was a happy place. Then they came to the New World and discovered the sun. The sun had a way of scorching their pale faces, they enjoyed the effect, and decided that it was beautiful.

Meanwhile there I sat, a gawky girl of thirteen years, staring into the mirror, ashamed of my dark skin. I longed to be clear and join my friends in the ever so glamorous pastime of sunbathing. However, my mother had reprimanded me a few weeks earlier for allowing my skin to darken a shade in the early summer sun. This further fueled my desire to be ghost-white, trying everything from splashing my face with white milk to sleeping with ice cubes on my skin; needless to say, my attempts were futile and I remained brown. In India, brown is proletarian, white is beautiful. There are dozens of preparations on the market that promise a lighter complexion, the most popular brand being "Fair and Lovely." So I wanted to be fair and lovely and beautiful. The only problem is that after thousands of generations of living in the hot sun, my people have developed an adaptation to the climate, increased production of melanin. This trait engenders people with dark hair, eyes, and skin. Darkness was all well and good until we got a glimpse of white man. Then, for some unknown reason, Indian culture deemed it beautiful to retain the natural raven tresses but to deprive the skin to an unnaturally paler condition.

Amidst our predictable, logical universe, why must beauty be so irrationally complicated? Why must we feel the need to create beauty instead of accepting natural beauty? The desire to cultivate beauty, which often involves the precise perversions of nature, stems from our prolonged boredom.

Beauty is a learned behavior which is dependent on time. Preschool girls have little responsibility and ample spare time. They fight their boredom with morning cartoons, a mid-afternoon nap, and make pretend. Often girls are seen playing dress up, donning Mommy's clothing and jewelry and smearing on Mommy's make-up. I used to babysit for a girl of four who was constantly getting her fingers into her mother's lipstick and nailpolish. I usually caught her, quite literally,

red-handed and scolded her mildly. Nevertheless, she persisted in delving into her mother's toiletries because, as little Ann put it, "That's what makes Mommy pretty and I want to be pretty too." These are the seeds of created beauty.

Later these girls mature to become adolescents who are too old to go out and play and too young to get a job. They have a lot of time on their hands, but have ingenious ways of disguising this and will somehow find a matter of grave importance when the dishes need to be washed. This is only a front. Actually, they have a lot of time. I know because I've been there. A typical American thirteen year old's "quality time" is equally divided between living in the bathroom, talking on the telephone, watching the soap operas, and catching up on beauty sleep. None of these activities are highly stimulating; consequently, the teens suffer from boredom and revert to make-up experimentation. Hours can be spent debating whether Robust Rusting Rose or Passionately Prim Pink will "give" a girl better cheekbones. This make-up madness is not restricted to female friends. A close male friend of mine who has three older sisters remembers their teenage days. He said that when one or more of his sisters got bored, she would tie him down and put make-up on him. All the while, while he was in agony, his sisters were trying to figure out how they themselves could look more beautiful. If not to boredom, then to what can we attribute the cause of masses of young women wasting considerable time in pursuit of the perfect combination of face paint?

The art of face painting is quite arbitrary, an artificial representation of what we view as attractive. I refer to make-up as face paint because, in actuality, it is no different than war paint or watercolor. Various cultures consider different colors on parts of the skin as beautiful. The Naga Indians of the Himalayan Mountains appreciate small red and white dots across the forehead of a woman as beautiful, while our culture may think otherwise. Who is to say that a line drawn at the base of the eyelid is more attractive than a line drawn down the bridge of the nose? American make-up companies respond that they are only aiming for the natural look, natural implying effortless.

In reality, the ritual of face painting is far from being effortless. It takes time. A typical working woman, age 44, mother of one, namely me, says that her only outlet for boredom is gardening. I disagree: I've grown up watching Mother use cosmetics on a daily basis. Her make-up is comparatively light and requires an average of ten minutes to apply. Excluding weekends, holidays, and a two week vacation, when usage may increase or decrease depending on the occasion, my mother spends 50 minutes per week, 3 hours and 20 minutes per month, 37 hours per year applying make-up. Over a 40-year career, she could waste 1480 hours painting her face, and that's not including all the time spent for make-up removal. Realistically, couldn't 1480 hours, a basement figure at best, be spent more constructively than on scribbling a face? Truly, this is the mark of a bored woman. I must inform my mother that indeed she has two outlets for her boredom, gardening and make-up.

Somehow I don't see Psyche as a gardener. She doesn't strike me as a working woman either. She must have had an overabundance of time. She may have spent this time basking in the Mediterranean sun, achieving her golden radiance, or relaxing in a hot mineral spring, priming her perfectly silky skin. Once married to Cupid, her only chore was to be beautiful. Certainly she does not sound like one that should walk among us, and, as the story goes, she was granted immortality.

Meanwhile further east in India, doll-like brides have only to eat, sleep, and please their husbands. Anything remotely resembling work is done by servants in the burning, blackening sun. The long scorching days are idled away as the dolls gossip under the cool, protective shade. They chatter languidly about the newest potions and ointments that promise a more porcelain complexion. Black hair, blonde hair, dark skin, light skin, amidst these possibilities lie only two combinations: an optical illusion of contrast and a life-like portrait of complement. An optical illusion is a fleeting novelty. A life-like portrait is fit to be hung above a fireplace mantel indefinitely.

Reeta Mendhiratta

MY FRIEND MEGAN

There is no recklessness in her attire, only delightful disorder similar to faded and frayed denim. Every detail seems to be effortlessly arranged rather than meticulously planned. On this particular day, she was ensconced in a high-back armchair that was designed to fit her position. A snow white turtleneck was tight around her throat, supporting the pensive chin that was angled toward the center of Principles of Management. Her polished pink finger tips were curled around the top of the page...leaving momentarily to jot a note. How fun it looked! If you could do homework like this, the Deans' list would span the corridor. Silk long johns sheathed her legs and scrunchy socks comforted her toes. Later, in the evening, if she decided that time for leisure could be afforded, the right clothes would fall on -- only to ravish you.

You could find her with a lively crowd at Ireland's Four Provinces (The Four P's) sipping light instead of stout. Her fisherman's sweater is quite in place here, as well as her jolly spirit. Stretch black pants accentuate a pair of fit legs before they fade into the dark background. Dim pink socks outline the separation of shoes and pants, and, if acutely observed, four different shades of pink, present in the socks, turtleneck, nails and lips, represent happiness and light in a hazy pub. Wrapped around her glass are four slender but petite fingers. A closer look reveals a faded "G" on a pinky signet ring -- the only jewelry on her person. Her hands have a particular maternal caring to them despite the slight roughness due to the cold dry air. When she raises her glass, her small lips gracefully part to welcome the lager. They are not painted dark with passion or pursed with pale innocence, but lie mysteriously in-between. When looked into, her smiling green eyes reflect the cheer of life, wide open to see and accept all.

She is the kind of girl Mom wants you to marry: warm, intelligent, faithful, and romantic. You might want to marry her also depending on how much you agree with Mom. Her physical appearance accurately reflects those wonderful

attributes that Mother would love if you brought this gem home for dinner. This, I suppose, explains the uncommon air of confidence and sincerity that embraces her immediate surroundings. This observation cannot, of course, be concluded after one encounter. Such intrinsic subtleties can only be detected by a seasoned friend...which many should like to be. She is a very highly ordered individual. By that I mean each aspect of life has, or has not, priority over another, and to be able to efficiently and consistently structure those priorities is admirable in the least.

I found it strange, but only for a moment, that she would use only half a paper towel if that was all she needed, or turn the water off during the time that her toothbrush was actually in her mouth. These instances may seem petty and insignificant, but if things like that are conducive to the kind of organization that she exercises then I, for one, should start being thrifty with my paper towels.

David Trainer

A CHESAPEAKE AUTUMN

Autumn has not fully arrived around the Chesapeake. It is, however, cautiously stepping forward, like a child, full of wonder at what lies before him, hesitant to touch, yet anxious to possess. The greenery of tranquil summer is slowly succumbing to this mischievous child. Yet, we have trouble recognizing the change.

We played football Sunday, on the lawn in front of my apartment. Football is a fall sport, the usual uniform for us being layers of sweatshirts, a pair of gloves and a scarf, yet we wore shorts, showing off pasty legs no longer tan from days on the beach, and T-shirts. Elbows and knees were exposed, green with grass stains from being tackled roughly, although we were playing touch football. Everyone perspired heavily, more from the hot sun beating down relentlessly, sapping energy, than from exerting effort in the game.

As the days grow longer in Maryland, summer allows the child to tread closer, and he becomes bolder. Autumn, like a kindergartner playing with finger paints, everywhere his fingers can reach, hovers eagerly.

I have not yet had the opportunity to view a full-blown Chesapeake autumn, for it does take its time in announcing its presence. We realize, too gradually, that there is a change taking place. Our noses, so attuned to the smell of freshly cut grass, barbecues, and steamy side walks, are not suddenly overwhelmed by the odors of dry, crushed leaves and bonfires. Instead, there is a slow transition. The summer scents, like the final, memorable notes of a concert pianist, fade away quietly into the distance; then a symphony of autumn smells begins with an opening bar of quarter notes, a cold morning once a week, frosty air, sudden intake of breath, warning me to retrieve my wool sweaters from the trunk and search for a pair of mittens at the first opportunity I have to go home. I will be prepared when it gets cold enough for my fingers to turn blue. I was never so lucky to receive warnings of the impending colder weather when I went to college in upstate New York. Autumn insisted on attacking, like a bully

instead of an amazed child. It always caught me unaware, stuck in an unfamiliar climate, shivering, like a bird who forgot to fly south.

Autumn in upstate New York demands to be noticed right away. It wants to put on an extravagant show. The day my friends and I went apple picking only a few fluffy white clouds floated across the sky, breaking up the expanse of blue. The leaves on trees, still green, were slightly brown at the edges, curling in, anticipating colder weather. It was fairly brisk that Sunday, and I shivered in my jean jacket, despite the bright sun.

The apple picking was a raucous event. The air was heavy with the scent of the apples, some half rotted on the ground, some hanging rather precariously on the trees. We were almost thrown out of the orchard twice for starting apple wars, tossing the softest ones between the trees, trying to catch a friend unawares. I could not resist biting into one or two of the best looking pieces of fruit before I brought them up to be weighed.

Yet, this apple picking weather is all too brief. I can recall walking up the hill to class the fourth week in September. The wind, which I had heard howling against the panes of my bedroom window only two minutes before, was now stinging my face, prompting my ears to tingle, then turn numb. I kept my face down, not caring to look around, intent only on reaching my class, a warm room, oblivious to the weather outside.

It was strangely calm when I left class an hour later. The wind had died down. I did not need to walk with my chin pressed against my chest, an awkward position, silently asking for someone to bump into me. I ambled down the path slowly, examining the changes taking place. I was surprised. Autumn was in full swing. The leaves, a usual riot of mustard yellow, burnt orange, and copper, adorned the trees, like the busy palette of an artist, the bright blobs of paint dominating, yet colors running together at the edges, blurring slightly.

I took a minute to stop and admire the beauty, knowing what would happen soon enough. Three days later, the trees looked like bare skeletons, spindly arms stiff, very stark and

cold. The wind that had lashed at my face for days had pulled the bright colors from the trees. The leaves no longer swayed and danced above me. Instead, they whirled around, sending up little clouds of dust from being withered and crunched under feet. The particles got in my nose, making me sneeze violently. I did not pause on this walk home from class.

I will enjoy a Chesapeake autumn, and will take the time to walk slowly down the path to my apartment. Unlike the one in upstate New York, autumn in Baltimore will be around for a while.

Karen Fay

DESCRIBING A DILEMMA:
THE DETERMINATION OF A TITLE

As I sit down at my desk and begin to write about conformity in the school system, a question comes to mind. It's not a large question, as of yet, or an important one, but it has been bothering the hell out of me: What am I going to title this essay? I suppose I am just bored out of my mind with my current topic, and so little questions like this one easily distract my attention from the essay. I have incubated my thoughts about the idea of conformity to the point where they all seem too ordinary, all too dull, calling me to rethink them and produce a new essay. What shall this new essay be about? How about something risky, something totally non-conformist, something unlike my normal writing style, and something that occupies my immediate attention: How should I title THIS essay?

A good question has many answers; therefore, I wish to exhaust my sources and find the best possible title for this essay. After all, titles are most important since many people today judge a book by its cover and title rather than by its content or author.

I think a title should relate to the paper in some manner, possibly telling what the paper is about or informing the reader of what is to be expected. However, I'm not a writer and should not be taken as law; thus, I'd like to quote Harry Levin's essay entitled "The Title as a Literary Genre," which I believe pretentiously states what I am trying to say: "Most titles are synecdochic, in so far as they must fix upon some part of a larger whole, and many are metonymic; in the Jackobsonian sense, they connote an entity by one of its attributes." This means that, as a generalization, he believes titles are usually broader than the material presented or name a prevailing topic to which the material could be related or of which it is part. Yet, where does this leave me? He merely points out that titles are either specific or broad. So what! That doesn't solve my problem but rather increases it.

I don't even know if I should title this essay at all. I might be conforming to a rule that would diminish the riskiness of this paper, if I were to title it. And I remember that my teacher said this essay should be risky! Of course, I would not be the first to generate the idea of not having a title. There are thousands of paintings entitled "untitled" which makes it extremely difficult for critics to verbalize their opinions or ideas about such paintings. After all, titles distinguish one thing from another in our minds which makes it easy for us to retrieve large quantities of information upon that subject. Likewise, it would take large quantities of particular information to produce a total picture in our minds or even to narrow our thoughts down to retrieve just one work mentioned. Another example of an untitled work can be found in a white Beatles album devoid of print which was used as a revolt against linguistic packaging. For them it worked because the Beatles were well known enough to create an easy mind reference without a title. When people mentioned an untitled Beatles album, it had an immediate recall on people's minds. Still, if all the Beatles albums were without titles, then there would be a problem distinguishing one album from another. I would be quite mistaken, though, if I were to give this essay no title for the sake of non-conformity, since many of the very early writings, too, were devoid of titles. The clay tablets of the Babylonians and Assyrians were simply designated by numbers, and the books of Moses were identified by their first few words in Hebrew. The opening phrase is still the official label for papal bulls and for a great many poems. Somehow I don't feel I should entitle this essay <u>As I Sit</u> either, basically because it is too vague to gain attention of a potential reader, and I don't feel my present audience would care for it.

To gain some more knowledge of titles, I went down to the Walters Art Gallery and looked through all the exhibits. I had never really noticed only titles before. It was intriguing. I could see the history of titles before my eyes. All the old sculptures and paintings from ancient times lacked titles. I assume the people from way back when never had to make reference to them, or perhaps their titles have been lost over the ages. Yet since modern man today must have titles, numbers were designated on each plaque beside the

work or even stamped on the piece itself, giving the same works that had no titles for three thousand years, some kind of title. Many of the later works of the collection merely contained titles that described the picture exactly, such as the sculpture "Muse Finding Head of Orpheus," the painting "Saint George Slaying the Dragon," or the painting "Wildflowers with a View of Dublin Bay from Kingston." These titles were informative and probably gave reference for the people of the time by describing the scene depicted. All the Romantics in the late nineteenth century kept their titles short and to the point, such as the paintings entitled "Ploughing Scene," "Chickens," and "The Shepherdfold, Moonlight." I also noticed that around this same time period, painters created titles to narrow the viewer to a prevailing mood or portion depicted in the painting. A fine example of this is a painting that was in a corner of the gallery: a mother holding her baby, dearly smiling at him and him at her. It was motherly affection shown at its best; thus, the painting was entitled "Maternity." Another painting was a field of red tulips gayly spanning the canvas, this one appropriately named "The Tulip Folly," which expresses the objects painted as well as the emotion they project. As history progressed, titles became more a part of the work of art and less a frivolous separate item. Most modern paintings have titles that explain more of the unknown at a first glance and make one think of how the title corresponds to the piece of art. Without their titles some current works of art would lose some of their meaning. Examples are Picasso's "Guernica," Chagall's "I and the Village," and Mondrian's "Flowering Trees."

There is one way in which artwork titling has remained consistent throughout. Whenever a particular person has been drawn, painted, or sculpted, artists entitle the painting after the person himself -- this is known as portraitization or portrait art. An example of this is the "Mona Lisa" and this form of titling lies not only in the fine arts sector but in written literature as well. Some examples of this include "Oliver Twist," "Nicholas Nickelby," "Richard Cory," Lord Jim, and an essay by Virginia Woolf entitled Ellen Terry.

Since this is an essay, I should describe some major characteristics of the best essay titles. It may sound silly,

but the best essays tend to have the words "of" in the title. Many good writers say instead of "A Pig's Death" "Death of a Pig" as E.B. White did with this title. The later title is easier to say and has more rhythm. Rhythm is another important factor, especially if the title is long. Most titles for essays are not long; however, when they are, they are usually iambic. This rhythm helps the title roll off the tongue and gives pleasure to the ear. Such an example is "Neither Sleet, nor Snow, nor Sabbath: The Sunday Mail Controversy," which Robert Darton cited for reasons other than rhythm in his essay "Publishing: A Survival Strategy for Academic Authors."

I believe Robert Dalton has the right idea in determining titles for academic prose. He believes two principles prevail in the choosing of the right title: alliteration and the colon. This alliteration usually occurs in the main title. It should be short, suggestive, poetic, if possible, and so literary that the readers can form only the foggiest notion of the book's content. Then comes the colon followed by a subtitle telling what the book or paper is about. I like his advice. He titled his own essay with his advice. I'm going to do the same.

Well, I never got around to writing an essay strictly on conformity, although I did manage to share my views about conformity throughout this essay while describing titles. And for my own title, I decided to follow Robert Darton's advice.

Franklin Bolster

THE MYSTERY OF NANCY DREW

I got my first library card when I was in second grade. It was a hot afternoon in the summer of '76 when my mother and I took that first walk to the municipal building on Browning Road. The town library was located in the basement, and it was there that I received my first plastic card, I.D. # BE 3077. I always remembered the numbers of that card because I liked sevens; they were good luck and I had two of them. A new white library card with personal I.D. number was my American Express Gold with which I would tour the world through books -- and without a credit limit.

I don't recall the title of the first faded blue Nancy Drew mystery I pulled from the dusty metal shelves of the one-room library, but my craving for them did not cease until I had finished reading the entire series. I idolized Nancy. She had short blond hair like mine, and a handsome boyfriend named Ned Nickerson. At seventeen, the daughter of prestigious lawyer Carson Drew had made a name for herself as an amateur detective in River Heights. She had two best friends who assisted her with each case, and even drove what was soon to become my dream car, a bright blue roadster.

It wasn't long before my mother grew tired of my constant nagging about taking me to the library, and so she allowed my big brother and me to ride our bikes there. As spring warmed into summer, side-by-side we pedalled up the hill on Chester Avenue, across Brasington, and past the Catholic church on the corner. Walt and I always took the shortcut through the apartment complex because it led us directly to the gravel parking lot and we didn't have to take the long way round. You had to be extremely cautious when riding over this treacherous area because broken glass was mixed in with the rocks, and riding over the sharp edges might pop a tire.

That summer I was reading between three and five books every two-week loan period, and when you're seven years old and trying to balance that many books on your bike, you tend to crash a lot. After one too many scuffed knees

and bandaged elbows, my parents bought me side bicycle baskets. From then on, I tried only to borrow an even number of books so that my bike didn't lean too much on one side. I may not have been riding Nancy's blue roadster, but my three-speed Schwinn was doing the job just fine.

Reading Nancy's mysteries convinced me that there must be clues to some mystery here in my own house. Shortly after I read the Clue in the Chimney, I began searching our own hall closet with a flashlight. Fingers crossed that I did not come face-to-face with an intruder, I dreamed of discovering a secret panel or finding a tattered treasure map. Perhaps that is why I jumped when my father sneaked up behind me and asked, "Have you found anything, Nancy?"

"Not yet, Dad," I answered, "but I'll let you know if I come across anything suspicious." Sometimes I liked to pretend that my father was actually Carson Drew. As he sat sleeping in his plush green recliner dressed in dungarees and a plaid work shirt, I envisioned him propped behind a cherry-wood desk, with stacks of official documents scattered before him. His suit jacket would be hanging neatly over the arm of one of the chairs, and he would be hard at work on a very important case.

The Mystery of the 99 Steps turned out to be even more of an adventure for me -- the seven year old apprentice to Nancy Drew. The eight-step staircase in our own cellar was hollow underneath, and the passage was dark and mysterious. Maybe someday I would be brave enough a detective to wiggle my tiny frame through the narrow opening under the last step, and discover a hidden door that would lead to a secret laboratory! But for now I just meddled around the staircase perimeters with a magnifying glass, hoping to uncover a hidden compartment or two.

When my sister Beth was able to read, I took her to the library for her first Nancy Drew. She left me speechless when she walked right past the shelf where I carefully chose my selections each week, and headed towards the bookcase that housed the Hardy Boys Mysteries that my brother read.

"You're not going to read a boy's book, are you?" I scowled. My little sis lifted up a Bobbsey Twins Mystery and gazed at the cover.

When the Nancy Drew/Hardy Boys Mystery Series appeared on television, I was disappointed that Pamela Sue Martin didn't look anything like the Nancy Drew that Carolyn Keene's words and Russel H. Tandy's illustrations had created in my mind. While Parker Stevenson was looking for clues as Frank Hardy and Shaun Cassidy was making his debut into every teenager's heart as Toe, I was biking back to the library. Rather than wait until 7 pm Thursday night to see this generic sleuth at work, I stood in the quiet library studying book titles, cover and first-page illustrations deciding which mysteries Nancy and I would solve next. At seven years old I was no literary critic, but as I sat reading on my back porch late into the evening, and my light source slowly diminished into the west, I decided that Carolyn Keene was the greatest author that ever lived.

It took me about two summers to read the entire collection of Nancy Drews that was available at the Bellmawr Free Library. Week after week I appeared, emptying my bag of finished books on the desk, then seeking out new puzzles to solve or clues to uncover. After Nancy, I attempted to read the Dana Girls Mysteries but found that they stirred up the memory of my kid-sister's rejection of my hero in favor of the Bobbsey Twins. I began playing detective myself, and searched the shelves for new authors and another mystery series to read. With Nancy I had solved the Mystery at Lilac Inn, been frightened by the Ghost of Blackwood Hall, and had my share of bad luck with the peacock feathers in the Hidden Window Mystery. The librarian suggested that I try reading Trixie Belden, but she wasn't as clever as Nancy either. Finally I settled on Agatha Christie, but as she and I traveled to the Orient and to the Caribbean, I found that I was always searching for Nancy Drew.

Kathi Klaus

THE IMMORTAL BEQUEST

The woods are lovely, dark and deep
But I have promises to keep
And miles to go before I sleep
And miles to go before I sleep

Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" was my uncle's favorite poem. He realized the importance of taking life one day at a time, of always taking time out from his business to savor moments spent with his children and with his friends. He was never in a hurry, and could often be seen strolling along Main Street, stopping to talk to anyone he met, or simply poking around in his flower garden, one of his prize possessions. Two years ago, my uncle was diagnosed as having a brain tumor, and was given only a few short months to live. He was resolved, however, to hold on until his only daughter's wedding. No one thought he could possibly make it, but his courage and determination paid off. A year later he was there at the wedding, not able to speak or stand, but only to watch the ceremony while tears streamed down his face. Almost exactly a month later, my uncle died. At his funeral, his life-long best friend gave a moving recitation of Frost's poem. But even more meaningful to his family and friends is the inscription on his gravestone: "And miles to go before I sleep..." In these words we remember him as I am sure he would want to be remembered.

Epitaphs have always served as both comfort for the living and a sort of living monument to the dead, but the way in which epitaphs have evolved shows society's changing attitudes toward death. Before the twentieth century, death was accepted as a phase of life, and epitaphs showed a desire to embrace an immortality that these people were so certain would be theirs. It is only in the twentieth century that we have begun to deny and to fear death, as modern epitaphs show. Hopefully, though, as people learn to get the most out of their lives, this satisfaction and joy will be reflected in their epitaphs.

Life was much more difficult in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Making a living and providing for one's family usually meant hard physical labor, whether it involved hurling bales of straw, or risking one's life in a factory, at the mercy of hungry machines. Because of this, death was often viewed as an eternal rest from earthly trials, tribulations and worries. One early nineteenth century epitaph which I found in a mainly rural community, provides evidence that death was welcomed after a righteous and hard-working life:

> "Blessed are the Dead which die in the Lord
> from Henceforth; yea, Saith the Spirit, that
> they may rest from their labours, and their
> works do follow them."

The epitaphs prior to the twentieth century often carried themes of immortality, suggesting the important role of strong religious faith in the lives of the people. Religion was much more important then and often unified a family. They often justified difficult lives by having faith that they would someday reap the benefits of their labors on earth. As I walked through an eighteenth century graveyard, I encountered many epitaphs similar to the following, with carvings barely legible beneath the ivy-covered crumbling gravestones:

> "Lead me into the glory of your world,
> Lord, and raise me up again."

Not only could these people picture death as an actual ascension from the troubled, unsteady life on earth, but death was often portrayed as the entering into the light, especially in the ancient Greek and Roman epitaphs, only available to us through myth. Many Greek epitaphs portray a general dislike for the harsh life they led, and their desire for better things to come. They almost seemed to revel in the idea of a quick death, like Sophocles, who wrote:

> "Not to be born is best of all; next best, by
> far, to look on the light and return with speed
> to the place whence one came."

To get to the "eternal light" of immortality, many people believed they would have to be purified -- that they couldn't enter into paradise with mortal failings still tainting their conscience. Richard Lassiter, in Themes in Greek and Latin Epitaphs, recounts the story of young Calocaerus, whose soul "hastened along the divine way, and left the caves of bitter life to go aloft in purity." The belief that one deserved death to purge oneself of the evils of life held true up until modern times, as evident on this eighteenth century gravestone which reads:

> "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and Jesus washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

Not only did this epitaph espouse the purification theme, but it is also tied in with Christianity and reconciliation.

Unfortunately, epitaphs today seldom have strong ties to themes of immortality and the afterlife. Perhaps it is because religion is not as integral a part of our lives as it was prior to the twentieth century. If modern epitaphs do have religious themes, they are no longer confident appeals to God. Instead, they seem to be a final plea for salvation, such as "Save his sinful soul" or "God have mercy on a sinner."

Epitaphs are no longer the warm, individualized, often amusing inscriptions that formerly existed. Rare in occurrence are the personalized, oddly-shaped monuments showing that the deceased lived to be 79 years, 8 months, and 14 days old, that he was born in England, raised in Florida and died in Virginia of pneumonia. Today, the inscriptions are no longer unique. At best, the epitaphs may read "Rest in Peace" or "Grant O Lord Eternal Rest." Now, there are highly commercial cemeteries, containing perfectly formed rows of frozen, white, identically square grave markers. Even our modern definition of epitaphs, that they "usually consist only of the name, dates of birth and death, and perhaps a few words of commemoration" (according to the World Book Encyclopedia) has been reduced to brief and impersonal terms.

Epitaphs, if they do exist, have become extremely pessimistic. They no longer offer a great deal of hope for a better life, which reveals our rejection of concrete faith in personal salvation. It is precisely for this reason that cemeteries have ceased to be joyful places -- because epitaphs which capture the essence of life, the human spirit, have essentially disappeared. This unnatural dread of cemeteries stem from the unnatural dread of death today. In the time before industrialization and modernization, life was much shorter, and much more severe. Death was an accepted fact of life, when families were closer and several generations lived under one roof. Unfortunately, Western culture relies on death denial, as explained by Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Kubler-Ross shows us that death is a phenomenon so far removed from our everyday lives that we refuse to accept it as a natural stage of living. For this reason, the rarely occurring epitaph of today is likely to mourn and lament.

Hopefully, if people are not comfortable with accepting death as a stage of life, then they will be able to enhance and enrich the time they are able to spend on earth. Instead of living in dread of death, they will funnel these feelings into living a quality life, experiencing all that life has to offer, as my uncle tried to do. He did not lead a pessimistic life; in fact, just the opposite is true. His courage and determination were the direct cause of his final joyful experience on earth -- the wedding of his daughter. My uncle's epitaph reflects his determination to make the most of his life and the joy which he experienced, instead of mourning the fact which faces us all.

Maura Fisher

FADED BLUE COLLARS

The ink on my high school diploma was still wet when I reported to a trucking company just south of the city line; it was to be my first day on a new job. The late afternoon sun was blocked out by the immense steel trailers that lined the wall of the compound. The pavement was cracked and tire-worn and the incredible weight of those massive trucks had carved parallel valleys which I carefully crossed as I guided my car slowly toward the entrance. An eight-foot fence surrounded the area; grasses, flowers, and shrubs grew on one side -- sand, stone, and steel on the other. Before I could shut off my car, a cloud of dust transformed its virgin whiteness into a depressing shade of dappled gray. I learned that this place was called a "terminal," a name that conjured images of drudgery and dead-end jobs in my mind. I had not even tasted my new job, yet I wanted to leave all the same -- a feeling which conflicted with my desire to learn more about this productive wasteland. Most of all, I wanted to know if the conditions around the terminal reflected the attitude of the workers within or the attitude that the surrounding society holds toward the truckers. I quickly learned that the latter was true as the American consumer, myself included, usually fails to give proper credit to the trucking industry — the lifeline of the economy.

I entered the terminal by way of the loading dock where I was to work, and my senses were once again infiltrated by discouraging surroundings. Boxes, boxes, and still more boxes were littered about the dock floor. The industrial-strength dumpster was overflowing with broken pallets and damaged goods. The stench of dust, propane, and wet cardboard hung in the muggy summer heat like an early-morning smog, nauseating anyone who was not used to it. My ears throbbed to the droning of forklifts, the crashing of steel plates, and the thundering beat that roared from a nearby boombox -- the Stones' "Satisfaction." Although the environment within was almost as discouraging as the outside, I couldn't help but note a sense of contentment and productivity. The same litter I saw before became a necessary residue of hard work -- much

like the cluttered desk of a busy writer. The sounds became an orchestra in celebration of the spirit of American labor. The very essence of the dock seemed to emit an aura of productivity and self-worth -- the same ideals our forefathers valued only a generation ago, when blue-collar workers were held high in society's eyes. I often wonder why today's hard-working men and women have lost the appreciation of consumers and why this productive atmosphere to which I was now exposed does not emanate from the terminal walls.

This may be due to the fact that the dockworkers pretty much keep to themselves. Their work-hardened faces greeted me coldly at first as if I were an intruder, the new kid on the block. I could tell by the sizes of their bulging arms that they were not strangers to hard work as I was. I looked at my own puny arms and quietly hoped I would be assigned to the forklift -- I wasn't. The work was harder than any that I had ever done, and was made even harder by my attempts to fit in with my colleagues. I tried to walk like they did, learn their lingo, and get involved in their conversations, but most of all, I never let them see me struggling with a heavy piece of freight that I knew full well they could hoist with a single arm. Never before had I felt so out of place -- so green -- but I quickly learned that working hard was the only way to win their acceptance. Perhaps dock work is a rite of passage, where scrawny boys are tempered into powerful men by grueling labor.

The city drivers, the ones who touch society daily, have a much different persona from the dockworkers. They all come to work just before dawn with a 7-Eleven coffee in one hand, a smoldering Marlboro in the other, always quick with a good-natured insult, an opinion on current events, of a blow-by-blow description of their nightlife. They know the roads of the city like their wives' faces and can tell you how to get from point A to B by way of C at a moment's notice. They spend eight, ten, and sometimes twelve hours a day travelling the roads of the city, stopping at any local business with a delivery to be made, but only the dispatcher knows where a driver will stop next. The city driver is a mouse in a maze who follows a piece of cheese through a labyrinth until the omnipotent overseer decides to lead him out. The maze is everchanging, but the daily routine is not as the drivers once

again converge on the terminal at sundown with a trailer full of goods which they'll back into the dock with the greatest of skill. Then, with slumping shoulders, bloodshot eyes, and a weary head sagging against their faded blue collars, they'll go home for a long night's sleep, only to get up and do it all over again for the weekly paycheck which seems to be their only source of motivation and appreciation. Occasionally, I've been assigned to accompany a driver for a day or two, and I often wonder if he would be a little more lively at day's end if only a single customer would say "thank you." I still wonder.

The routine at a trucking terminal is terribly monotonous. The same dockworkers and the same city drivers go through their respective routines every single day. The only interruptions are the comings and goings of the line drivers. These are the real truckers, the men who drive their twenty-ton rigs across the country at all hours of the day. They spend weeks at a time on the road, far removed from family, friends, and hometowns, skipping from terminal to terminal, living on the interstates. We never see much of the "liners"; they pull into the terminal, sleep at a local motel while the dockmen unload and reload their trailers, then head off for the next terminal. Most liners, like the dock workers and the city drivers, have certain characteristics all their own: they wear cowboy boots and faded Levi's held up by. huge leather belts with silver saucer-sized buckles, they talk with a drawl and a lingo all of their own as if to exclude all non-truckers from their conversations, and they all miss their wives and children. The liners are perhaps the most elusive members of society's workforce. To find them, you would have to travel the nation's interstates in the wee hours of the morning or wait for them at desolate, remote terminals. Sometimes, it seems to me that the occasional truck stops along the highways are their only contacts with society. So maybe it's not entirely our fault that they are rarely shown any appreciation, but these hard workers deserve it nonetheless.

Working on the docks during the dog days of summer is a virtual hell; why anyone would endure such suffering to earn a living is beyond me. The structure of the dock reminds one of a concentration facility. The summer sun beats upon the tin roof unmercifully and, when all the trailors are at the dock, there is no ventilation. I can only hear the cool breezes

rustling through the trees outside. Temperatures out on the docks are usually fifteen degrees above that of the open air, but the trailers are worse still. The trailers are ovens on wheels: they are made entirely of metal and have not even the slightest of airholes. On a hundred-degree day, the mercury in a trailer can push one hundred thirty-five. Unfortunately, most of the heavy lifting, straining, and sweating is done in the trailers. Those who can bear the torture suffer; those whose cannot either find new jobs or pass out from dehydration.

It is this suffering that makes me stop now and then and think about the very existence of such a place as this. Why do we need drivers to sweat in unair-conditioned trucks, scurrying among businesses on the crowded city streets? Why do we need dockmen to melt in a tin oven chucking cardboard into sweltering forty-foot bread boxes? Why don't we all just leave the suffering behind us and get comfortable jobs in some suburban mall? I had only to look at the freight in my own hands to answer these questions. On any given day, I may have loaded enough medical supplies to stock a hospital for a month, or enough food to feed a thousand hungry souls their dinner, or a few tons of clothes which could someday fill the racks of many mall shops. I suddenly felt that all of us who labored at the terminal were important after all, but for some reason this was a realization that we had to discover on our own for people take us for granted -- much like a beast of burden that is often scolded but rarely praised.

I could not, however, truly justify the existence of the trucking industry until I stopped to imagine a society without it. Without the interstate truckers, businesses would not be able to operate outside their own metropolitan area, and whole cities might be forced to become self-sufficient for all their needs. Perhaps national unity itself would slowly fade away as the economy became centered around each individual city. What if there were no city drivers? The only businesses which would be able to survive would be those that can ship their goods themselves. What, then, would become of shopping malls and supermarkets and what would families do without them? The trucking industry is the very lifeline of society, without which, economic and national unity might

very well be impossible. So why is it that we fail to give proper credit and thanks where both are due?

Perhaps this is because of our country's negative attitude toward truck drivers. After all, very few young people today want to become involved with this industry (you cannot afford a BMW on a trucker's salary). Today's generation wants nothing less than to be professional. Blue collar laborers are viewed as something of a failure today, but they were held in high esteem just a few decades ago. We regard them with almost open hostility when those tremendous rigs slow traffic and bottle up intersections -- as if getting to our destination is more important than the trucker getting to his. People today even look down upon the kind of people truckers are: the stereotypes of a waitress-chasing, tobacco-chewing, redneck trucker run rampant. Although life without the truckers would not be nearly so easy, we seem to find it all too easy to criticize and make fun of them.

I'm still working at the same depressing terminal just south of the city line. The liners still roll in at all hours of the night with their trailers full of another city's economy. The city drivers still work themselves ragged from sunrise to sunset keeping local businesses alive. And the dockmen are still hustling on the bustling dock, keeping the goods moving. The business is still one that is unappreciated, unheralded, consisting of heroes unsung, but now I see something deeper when I look into the tired eyes of a driver. I see a sense of civic responsibility, a feeling of satisfaction in knowing that society may not be able to survive without them.

Is this their only reward? Maybe it is. But, more importantly, should it be?

Brian Myer

DEATH OF A PIG

This past Christmas, I gave my two young cousins their first pets. The family gathered around to watch as each child impatiently ripped off the wrapping paper to reveal a small glass bowl. Each contained a beta, a colorful tropical fish with long fins that wave gracefully when it swims. My cousins spent the remainder of the day becoming acquainted with their fish. They tapped on the sides of the bowls and held them in the sunlight to watch the fishes' pink and blue colors sparkle. By the end of the day, they had fed the fish at least six times and christened them Sam and Andy. I was glad that the children were so excited about their new companions. I am sure my aunt felt differently, though, while driving home to Pennsylvania that night. As per her children's request, she drove slowly with the car light on so that they could look at their fish and be sure none of the water spilled out of the bowls.

I believe that one of the most important relationships in a child's life is with a pet. I have owned at least twenty different pets -- everything from hermit crabs to dogs -- and have had a special alliance with each one. This friendship between child and pet begins when the pet is named and given its own identity. It is no longer just a puppy or bird, but is now "Fluffy" or "Mickey." I remember pondering for hours on the perfect name for each pet, with the result being a child original like "Herman" for a hermit crab or "Goldy" for a goldfish.

Children identify their pets with human beings. As a child, I believed that my pets should possess the same moral values that I did. When I was in fifth grade, I talked my mother into buying me two guinea pigs, one male and one female. I spent days setting up their home. I lined their cardboard box with newspapers covered by a bed of wood chips, attached a water bottle to the inside of the box, and made sure they had more than enough guinea pig pellets and treats. If all went well, I thought, they would live contentedly in the box and in two months would have their first litter. Then the horrifying thought struck me -- Mr. and

Mrs. Piggy were going to have children and they weren't married!

I was frantic. I had learned in my religion classes that it was wrong for people to live together and have children out of wedlock. I knew that if my guinea pigs didn't get married, they would surely go to hell. My mother told me that animals were exempt from this rule; they didn't need to get married. I insisted that my guinea pigs would never "live in sin." My mother convinced me not to call our pastor, so instead, my friend Charles, an altar boy, performed the ceremony. On the day of the wedding, I transformed my living room into a make-shift church complete with a cross and prayer book. My friends brought gifts of celery and carrots wrapped in aluminum foil. When the ceremony began, they assembled on both the bride's and groom's sides and hummed "Here Comes the Bride." I marched Ms. Piggy, complete with a Barbie doll's wedding veil, to join Mr. Piggy, who sported Ken's top hat. After the ceremony, the Piggy duo was off to their cardboard box to live an untainted life of procreation.

Soon after the wedding, I brought the book Guinea Pigs for Beginners. I was determined to learn the expert's way to correctly raise my pigs. In the introduction, the author, Mervin F. Roberts, said that everyone knows "if a guinea pig is held up by its tail, its eyes will roll out." I immediately panicked and swore never to even touch my guinea pigs' tails. Then, Mr. Roberts said that guinea pigs don't have tails. As a child, I found this extremely upsetting and not at all funny. He writes that a guinea pig looks like "an eggplant with feet, never sheds, and is basically a stupid animal." I thought this man obviously had no idea what he was talking about. My guinea pigs looked nothing like eggplants, they shed constantly, and they were, on the contrary, quite intelligent. Every time I passed the box, they whistled a noise like "weep, weep," which I considered a greeting. I believed this feat was something a "stupid" guinea pig would never accomplish. Mr. Roberts also said that only in rare cases could a guinea pig be taught to stand on its hind legs. After my pigs had been insulted this third time, I decided that I would prove Mr. Roberts wrong.

The job was tedious. I sat on the kitchen floor for hours, lifting Mrs. Piggy up and rubbing lettuce on her nose so she would understand that I wanted her to stand and retrieve it. Each time she sniffed eagerly at the lettuce, I released my hold, only to watch her come crashing down to the floor. Just as I was about to give up, she stood on her own and snatched the lettuce from my fingers. This success was only the beginning, for she soon learned to hop on her hind legs and to whistle when I opened the refrigerator. I was sure she had learned where the lettuce was kept.

After a few years, Mrs. Piggy had raised many litters. For four weeks after the birth of each litter, I helped feed the babies with a small eyedropper. I considered myself a capable nurse, and Mrs. Piggy didn't object. A wave of relief passed over her face each time I approached, eyedropper in hand. She knew that for the next hour, she could safely rest without being nudged onto her side by four or five small noses, or hearing the high-pitched squeals of hunger. Although I cared for the babies soon after they were born, I had never seen the births. According to Mr. Roberts, Mrs. Piggy would "probably cut the cord and eat the snack before you are notified." He said she wouldn't need my help. I had no intention of playing mid-wife, but I was certain I could catch a glimpse of the next speedy delivery.

One morning, I sneaked into the basement armed with an eyedropper. Mrs. Piggy was cleaning off a newborn. As the wet bundle struggled to open its eyes, his mother began to give birth again. I soon left for school, curious as to how many babies would greet me that afternoon. After school, I rushed eagerly home and rushed down to see the happy family. Instead, I saw Mrs. Piggy huddled in a corner with blood on her nose. One baby lay dead, an umbilical cord wrapped like a noose around its neck. The runt of the litter lay caked with blood; it was too weak to live and was killed by the parents. The last baby was sprawled on the floor. It escaped life by leaping through the bars of its cage and plunging to its death like a Kamikaze. My day started with the miracle of birth and ended with the cold reality of death.

I wasn't surprised that Mr. Roberts didn't address the death of a guinea pig; he didn't know a great deal about live

guinea pigs. But I wanted someone to explain death's suddenness to me. I never realized that my pets' lives were so much shorter than mine. As children perceive themselves to be immortal, they also see their pets as immortal. My friends offered their condolences, one made a sympathy card, and one donated his yard for a pet cemetery. After burying the animals, we put wooden crosses in the dirt to mark the graves. We laid flowers on the freshly turned dirt and offered prayers. Somehow, our lives continued.

Last week, my aunt called to say that my cousin's fish, Andy, had died. My cousin cried a little, but my aunt said he was getting along quite well. I thought of my cousin standing over the porcelain bowl, about to see Andy swirl into the depths of the next world, as I had once looked down at my fallen guinea pigs. I wondered if he longed for the emptiness to disappear and thought his life would never be the same, or if he said a small prayer. Perhaps he simply closed the lid and flushed.

Michele Wojciechowski

THE DINGHY

The child sat slumped over the damp gunwale, gazing into the agitated water that thrashed by the sides of the dinghy trailing behind the fifty-foot Catalina. The wind forced his thin, white-blond hair into his eyes and plastered the ivory strands to his head like a tight hat. The miniature gales did not bother him except for an occasional gust that would pepper his face with cold, wet ocean spray and make him wince. He wondered at the disappearance of the rope that connected the monster sailboat to the small dinghy. The line was visible for only a few feet beyond its connection to the larger vessel and reappeared only a few feet in front of their craft. He jammed his arm into the water where it was pinned by the current. He extended his tiny fist several inches below surface and marvelled at the fact that he could still see the fingers writhing despite the murky blackness of the water.

Strong hands under his arms lifted him from the side of the boat and set him on a seat agonizingly far from the entertainment of the water. The ocean hurt his eyes, and he blinked in agitation. He had a warm, dry feeling on his nose and cheeks and on the top of head. When he twitched his nose to blink, the skin on this cheeks felt tight and achy, a feeling he recognized from winters when his wet snowpants would rub his legs until they were raw. He raked his hot face with his hands but no one noticed. He lay down on the small seat, his only relief the sea-breeze that glided around his small form. It had a smell that he recognized only as the ocean.

It soothed him to look' at the man in the bow. He knew the man only as "Pops" though he could recognize him anywhere by his round form and by the scraping of his raspy voice. When he sat in the old man's lap, he thought that his faded, blue shirt smelled rather like the old tent that his family kept in the cellar. The boy had no memory of Pops' head without the sandy, white hat covering it...The child had always had a mild obsession with hats. Even the bearded and robed being he thought of as God was somehow incomplete without a battered Yankee cap on its head.

Every year Pops would place a miniature duplicate of the sailor hat onto the child's head and say, "Jonah, mee boy, weel make a sailor of ya yet." Every year he managed to lose the hat within hours of its presentation. He enjoyed listening to the old man's accent more than he liked getting the hats though he always felt at least some remorse for the loss. That morning he had continued his streak by letting the wind shift on his cap slightly so that it would scratch his itchy, sunburned scalp. With a sudden shock that he recognized from the time he let go of his balloon in a parking lot, he felt the cap wrench from his head and hurl itself seaward. The circle of fabric had started to sink even before he could muster tears. Now, bare-headed, he still surveyed the horizon in hope of a resurrection.

He crept to the side of the boat and leaned his head over, conscious of the fact that no one was paying attention. He could feel his soft, white knees grinding the sand against the cold aluminum of the boat floor. Something green caught his eye on the water's surface too far in the protection of the sun to be identified. He began to pull water towards the boat, making a slapping sound as he tried to create a current that would draw the mysterious object toward him as it had worked with soap in the bathtub. Hundreds of green clumps now hovered on the water just to his left. They were lumps of sickly green growths that looked alarmingly like spinach. More definitive leaves hung out at the sides sheltering small bulbs that were round and smooth like rubber. He drew a mound of the seaweed into the boat, feeling water run down his shirt turning it a deathly shade of grey. He squeezed the balls at the tips of the leaves to no avail. Placing one in his mouth, he bit down hard and felt a pop sound inside his head. A puff of stale air made him spit the sphere out in a grimace of revulsion. He watched the broken pod spiral off in a bodyguard of his own saliva. It was then that he saw the ripple.

The disturbance skimmed at first in the direction of the boat and now was moving closer at short intervals. The ripple seemed to pause only a few feet from the front of the boat. The child leaned out over the front as a fish of unfathomable proportion surfaced, a long black rocket that sat half-submerged in the path of the unwary dinghy. He sat back and

watched the rendezvous the same way he had watched his mother back into a mailbox. The boy watched the dinghy mindlessly approach the ebony monolith until it was so close he could no longer see it over the bow of the miniature ship.

He was expecting some consequences from the encounter though nothing resembling the deafening roar that the boat made as it reared out of the water, hurling its occupants skyward. The boy could only see sky as his frail form twisted through the air as if he had been jumping on the bed and missed. He felt an abrupt slap on his entire back and a cold, steady flow of water seeped into the protective shell of his overalls.

He opened his eyes into a world of green and blue. Noises like chaotic fountains echoed in his tiny ear drums as he saw his own legs hanging stupidly beneath him and the light ripples of the surface far above him. He floated as if suspended in space for what seemed minutes as his relaxed form drifted downward. He felt no desire for air. His mind was totally preoccupied with the coming of the blackness of the depths that loomed forebodingly beneath him. An even darker shadow passed over his unclosed eyes as the blurred shape of the dinosaur thwarted the straining lances of light, his only connections to the fleeing surface. He lay in the presence of the beast, dwarfed like a native cowering below a volcano god.

The slow-motion world became a frenzy as something clamped around his middle and hauled him upward. His hair shrouded his eyes and his mouth filled with water as salty as the liquid he had been made to drink when he had lost his two front teeth. His head exploded through the surface in a shower of vapor and it was there that he was held by the vise-like grip. Sputtering and coughing, he scanned the horizon for the hulking sailboat in vain.

Bluish-gray now rather than black, the fish glided towards him like a ghost in the water. He could feel the grip of his human captor go taut as the beast passed them at arms' length, basking in its own glory as it slipped by them soundlessly. The child placed his hand on the giant's back and was surprised to find that it was coarse and grainy like the sandpaper in the attic. He felt the body taper down into an

enormous sweeping tail that gently slapped his hand away. Both man and boy bobbed like lures in the wake of the beast's passing. In a final salute, the fish poked its gargantuan head from the safety of the ocean and smiled at the child, a neat row of clean, white teeth contrasting fiercely with the curves of the flowing body. For an instant, the boy thought he could see himself in the empty black eye of the being that seemed to look nowhere but see all. Before he could be sure, the face slipped beneath the waves and was gone.

The child was suddenly aware of being lifted from the water into the strangling arms protruding from the monstrous sailboat. He looked about wildly but found comfort only in the sight of the distant overturned dinghy. It was only then that he began to cry, and not because of the tugs and kisses of the weeping crowd, and not because his salty wet clothes were sticking to his sunburn, but because the fish was gone.

PJ Ottenritter

POSTAGE

Last year I included four W-2 statements with my income tax return. I've counted and, including internships and not including babysitting, my present employment at Rentertaiment Video is job number twelve. That's an average of two jobs a year since I turned sixteen.

Recent events have made me think about job number five. That would be the position right after I worked as a side dish person at Evelyn's Seafood Restaurant and right before I spent the summer in Florida answering the Room Service phone at The Boca Raton Hotel and Club. Number five was my job working at the Brielle N.J. branch of the United States Post Office.

"You must know somebody to get that job," people always tell me. Yes, it is true. My next door neighbor, Mel, was the Post Office supervisor and the connection that helped me win a position as a "Casual Carrier." I was "Casual" because I didn't have to take the civil service test and wasn't entitled to the $9.35 starting wage of those who had. I was "Carrier" because I did the identical work as those who had taken the civil service test.

After four days of watching training films with titles like "Express Mail Here Today, There Tomorrow," "Mailman's Not So Best Friend," and "Backing Up Safety," I spent my first day standing in front of a mail case sorting third class mail into cubbyholes. The second day Mel rubbed his chubby hands together, left the cigar in his mouth and said, "You're going on the road." He handed me a map drawn on a napkin and rolled an overloaded bin of bundled mail down the ramp to my awaiting jeep with the steering wheel on the wrong side. He arranged the seven trays of mail inside the truck and gave me his only bit of advice, "Just follow the mail. Where it goes, you go and hurry up."

I'd seen the 60 Minutes segment about how easily mail trucks tip over so I drove a careful 35 MPH toward my first destination until I realized I'd forgotten my mailbag.

"What are you doing here?" Mel snarled when I walked back into the office.

"I forgot my mailbag."

"Get going so you're not delivering after dark."

The jeep, I soon figured out, was rarely used in delivering the mail as much as it was for sorting it. Most of the deliveries are made by parking the jeep, walking up one side of the street and back down the other so that the carrier finishes where he parked. In the heat that made the tar melt into car tires, I was walking those letters about seven miles a day.

I delivered the final letter to the Gerraity's of 4 Algonquin trail at 5:30 that first day. In the interim, I managed to lose a registered letter, deliver Camay soap samples without their address cards and fail to locate about 10 percent of the mailboxes on the route. Some people take great pride in hiding their postal receptacles under the front steps, inside the screened-in back porch and on maple trees in the middle of the yard.

Whether I was delivering welfare checks on one side of town or stock dividends on the other, there were always dogs trained to kill mail carriers. Their masters usually tied their chains to their mailboxes so I'd be sure to give them one of the Milkbone Dog biscuits that I kept next to my mace. Mrs. Olefinger was no match for her seven foot German Shepherd "King." When I walked wearily up the driveway that August afternoon, I decided to be nice and hand the mail right to her since she was outside already. King thought it would be better if I stayed on the street. He took a little nip out of my thigh to make his point much clearer.

In the two summers and one Christmas vacation of this employment, I delivered thousands of pieces of mail. I was getting pretty good at carrying that thirty-five pound sack over my shoulder in the 95 degree heat. One of the regulars told me to slow down. I was making them look bad by cutting their average times in half.

When the Post Office announced last week that the cost of a first class stamp was going up to a quarter, my fellow

citizens wept at such a meteoric increase. "Twenty-five cents!" I heard a women in line for the bank say. "Why, I remember when it was three cents. It's a sin."

With the applications at the Wharton School of Business swelling, the service industries are dying. The guy who used to pump your gas, wash your windows and check your oil is standing in the air conditioned booth waiting for your credit card after you self-serve. Doctors don't make housecalls, grocery stores rarely deliver, and long distance phone service is outrageous. For one quarter you can send a letter from Maine to Hawaii. I hardly call that a sin.

Betty Tully

MOSES RASCOE, BLUES MAN

Few men have been able to capture the spirit and warmth of the blues, a musical genre perhaps older than any form of music today, its roots dating back centuries to pre-civilized Africa. The blues became known to the world when African slaves were brought to America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their low status and harsh treatment as slaves naturally gave rise to a brand of music which could allow them to vent their feelings, and this music, which echoes the songs of their African forefathers, is today known as the blues.

Moses Lee Rascoe is a seventy-one year old bluesman from York, Pennsylvania. His style of the blues is country blues, as opposed to the more commercially popular city blues, that of B.B. King and Albert Collins. Country blues are denoted by non-amplified instruments, often simply a man and his guitar, as is the case with Moses. The lyrical themes inherent in most country blues tunes deal with such adversities as broken relationships, hard times, and, in the music of Robert Johnson, trying to escape the horrific powers of Satan.

Most of the bluesmen around today have adhered to the city blues, since this genre allows for more hard-driving music using amplified instruments. Popular thought might say that the country blues are dead, since their themes are outdated and the few dedicated men who play them are themselves relics of a forgotten era.

Such is not the case with Moses Rascoe. He is not stuck in the forties. Rather, his deft interpretation of the country blues remains timeless; his finger-picking style and smooth, deep voice couple to bring a forgotten form of music into the eighties.

York is a tiny, blue-collar town, although the affluent seem to be moving in at a steady pace due to many growing businesses. It is a damp day in York; the rain falls slightly, almost unnoticeably, until my windshield becomes glazed over with wetness. I think perhaps I have made a wrong turn

somewhere, but I drive on anyway. After some trial and error turns, I finally find the street, West College Avenue. The street sign is old and slight bent, and somehow seems to fit the neighborhood. I pull up to Moses' house, a light blue rowhouse with a small sign hung on the front door: "BELL DOES NOT WORK. PLEASE KNOCK LOUDLY." But before I can knock, the door flies open, and in the doorway stands the impressive figure of Moses Rascoe. Obviously, he must have heard me clamoring up the front steps with my video camera, tape recorder, and various other gadgets. He smiles broadly and smacks his hands together. "Hey, how you doin'?! Come on in here!" He snatches the camera bag off my shoulder and spins himself around, heading for the living room. He beckons for me to follow him, and I stumble into the small house, nearly knocking over a glass table. Moses has been laughing excitedly the whole time.

This was certainly a better welcome than I had anticipated, for when we talked on the phone the previous week, he seemed aloof.

"Hello, I'd like to speak with Moses Rascoe."

"Speaking."

"My name is Doug Muenzen. I got your number from your agent, and since you're going to be playing at Loyola in the fall, I was wondering if I could interview you sometime soon."

"Uh-huh."

"So, how does next Saturday sound?"

"O.K."

"Good. By the way, I listened to your album, and I think it sounds great."

"Uh-huh."

Moses jumps into an immense easy chair and whips out a pack of Marlboros. "You can have a seat right there on the couch, if you like." I sit down on a small, plush sofa which sports a rather peculiar floral design. But before I can begin the interview, Moses is again up on his feet, proudly showing off his Yamaha acoustic guitar. "See, this is the one I been

usin' for about ten years now. You know, the older they get, the richer they sound. Danged if this thing ain't seasoned. Wait here, I'll be right back." Moses bounds upstairs and leaves me to observe the room's furnishings. Next to me is one of the largest fishtanks I have ever seen, although it is home to few fish. The walls are filled with framed photographs, mostly of Moses with a guitar, and on the table there are several ashtrays, teeming with cigarette butts.

Moses is back downstairs now, this time clutching a different guitar. "This here's my Martin. It's a fine piece of work. See, it's got the pickups built right in there." He holds the guitar in the light and points a long finger inside. "I've got about fifteen guitars upstairs. 'Course, they're not all playable. I mean, I could make 'em playable if I wanted."

Moses rests the guitars on stands and lowers himself once again into the easy chair, sighing heavily as he does so. He removes his glasses and rubs his eyes. "Oh, I wish it would stop raining," he says, fitting the glasses back over his ears. My first impression of him is that he seems to be very sprightly for his age. He is also much taller than I had expected--well over six feet, quite slender, with a head of hair that, if combed a certain way, would make him look like Don King. "So!" he beams, sucking out the last bit of tobacco from a cigarette, "what do you wanna know?"

Moses Lee Rascoe began life in 1917 in Windsor, North Carolina, where at an early age he showed an interest in music. His father was a money collector in town, which usually meant that he spent a great deal of time with the owners of the local bars and joints on the black side of town. These bars regularly employed country blues guitarists to sing and play, and Moses' father would often allow Moses to accompany him in his daily routine. "My daddy would tell me: 'You can come along as long as you don't bother no one. Just stay by my side and be quiet, and you can listen to the men play their music' " At the time, Moses was a wide-eyed eight-year old, fascinated by what he saw and eager to learn the blues. "I don't know what it was. I didn't know that what they was playin' was blues, I just knew that it made me shake inside; and I told myself if I ever get old enough, I'm gonna get me a guitar and learn to play."

At thirteen years of age, Moses purchased his first guitar, mail order from Montgomery Ward, paying them by means of installments after assuring them that he was eighteen years old. The guitar arrived, and Moses eagerly started banging out chords he had seen played by the guitarists in the bars. For him, the reason for learning the blues did not involve money or fame. The blues offered him a chance to, among other things, express his feelings about growing up black in early 1930's. The blues also provided Moses with a tremendous sense of enjoyment: playing his guitar offered release.

The blues did not sit well at home, however. Moses' mother, a firmly religious women, forbade the blues, allowing Moses to practice only gospel tunes. "My mama didn't allow no blues in that house. If she heard me start to ring up something that sounded like blues, she'd fire her shoe at me. She could pitch a shoe like some of these young fellas can pitch a baseball...and it didn't curve, neither. Now, if she went into town or somethin', then it was O.K., because my daddy didn't care if I played 'em. I'd start playin' and then I'd see his foot start tappin'. Then I knew I had him."

Moses left home at age fifteen, partly because of his disenchantment with life at home, but mostly because he felt as though he was reaching manhood, and figured he should explore beyond his native hometown. With guitar in hand, he headed South, in search of the blues and a new life.

The telephone rings loudly, and Moses looks at it with a frown. He takes a final drag from his cigarette, the burning ash so close to his lips that I am sure he will burn himself. He dunks the butt in the ashtray and pushes himself up out of the chair with great difficulty. "Excuse me. I don't know who this could be." Moses snatches up the receiver and brings it to his ear. A few moments pass and a look of confusion crosses his face. "Who? What? You're lookin' for someone? WHO you lookin' for? John Wilson. Hmm. Well, I got a newspaper man here but his name ain't John Wilson. O.K." Moses hangs up the phone and immediately begins peering around the room. "Now where did I leave those cigarettes?" I politely look around the room, but moments later Moses is back in his chair lighting up again. "You want a smoke?" he

asks, flapping the burning match in order to extinguish it. "No thanks," I say, "I don't smoke." He takes a long drag. "I don't worry much about these things. The only thing I gotta worry about is my fingers stiffening up." He extends his hand in front of him, as if to make sure his fingers have not become deformed within the past few minutes. His hands are large and meaty, and their rough exterior suggests a life of hard work. He pulls his hand back and again hoists himself out of the chair, this time grabbing for his Yamaha. "You finger pick?" he asks, sliding picks over his thumb and forefinger. "No, I use a straight pick." He looks at me with a smirk, apparently in disapproval. "Well, you know you really should try finger picks. I mean, if you want to play my songs, you gonna have to use 'em. Ain't no way around it." He puts the guitar back down. "I know what's gonna happen. We gonna sit here talkin' shop, and you ain't gonna get your story."

It was a dangerous move for a black youth to hitchhike south in the early thirties, since racism was higher there than anywhere else in the country. Fortunately, Moses was able to obtain a ride from a long distance truck driver, who provided him with safe passage to Georgia. But Moses soon found that Georgian law officials weren't partial to vagrants, and he was arrested several times. In order to line their own pockets, the troopers would usually force him to hand over his money, explaining to him that this would be his fine. Thus, Moses soon learned to keep only two dollars in his pocket, while carrying the rest in the heel of his shoe. "In that day, blacks caught pure-D hell. If you looked like you was poor or didn't have nothin', they treated you like a bum."

The one thing Moses was able to do in Georgia was play his guitar, which he did usually not for money, but for drinks, supporting himself by means of odd jobs. Since this was the time of Prohibition, he regularly played in speakeasies, and while he never received money, he was usually awarded enough drinks to make him pass out. In fact, it was during a drunken binge that Moses was finally thrown into prison. Upon stumbling out of a speakeasy one night, he became engaged in an argument with another musician, and before long, the two began exchanging blows with one another. In a matter of minutes, they found themselves being yanked by

their shirt collars by two policemen, who worked them over themselves before tossing them into the paddy wagon. Moses was convicted of street fighting and vagrancy, and would spend the next nine months on a chain gang.

Moses removes his glasses and looks soulfully into his hands. His eyes have become red and watery, and he brings a finger to his lip. The silence is long and uncomfortable, made almost monotonous by the patterned bubbling of the fishtank. He heaves a heavy sigh and once again rises from the chair. He scratches his long face and ambles over to the telephone. "Excuse me. I forgot I have to call Harry." Harriet Kuriokas, his agent, speaks with him at least twice a day. Moses is her favorite client: she travels with him to all his gigs, and her answering machine plays Moses' version of Jimmy Reed's "Bright Lights, Big City."

"Hi ya, Harry!" Moses booms, grinning from ear to ear. "Yeah, he's here now. We're havin' a great time." I close my notebook and adjust my position on the couch. It is not as -comfortable as I had previously thought. Moses turns in my direction with a pensive look on his face. "Are you kidding?" he says, tapping his thumb on one of the few clean ashtrays. "Well, I'll talk about it with you later." He hangs up the phone, rubs his elbow, and sits down. He rests both arms on the sides of the chair, flicking the tip of his tongue over the space once occupied by his front teeth, and stares blankly at the floor. I figure he has just gone to a great length to avoid the subject of life on a chain gang, so I choose not to press it further. "That was Harry," Moses grumbles. "Seems I got a little problem."

"What sort of problem?" I ask.

"Taxes. IRS, whatever. I made myself $29,000 between April and December, and they tryin’ to tell me I made $43,000. I knew somethin' like this might happen, that's why I ain't spent none of the money yet." He chews his lip, searching for what he will say next. "I mean, I'd like to. I'd probably use the money to do somethin' with my home." He raises his arm and points to several areas of cracked wall. "See that over there?" He points to the frame of a door, which looks as if it is falling apart. "That just won't do. Gotta fix that." He surveys the entire room with a smirk.

"There's lotsa things I gotta fix." He shakes his head and looks at me with a smile. "So, anythin' else you wanna know?"

Moses started driving a truck for Allied Van Lines in 1948. The job took him all over the country, and when he finally retired in 1983, he had travelled throughout the continental United States, visiting cities in every state, with the exception of Washington and Montana. He took his guitar with him everywhere he went, keeping his fingers nimble so they wouldn't tighten. "Man once told me 'Moses, whatever you do, don't let your fingers stiffen up.'" Moses played in literally hundreds of bars and juke joints over the course of those thirty-five years, rarely, if ever, playing for money. "I got pretty messed up those first five years with Allied." Having heard this, I expect to hear him talk about alcohol, women, and the law, but his reasons for being "messed up" were far less exciting. "Yeah, I had problems with the damn taxes."

Moses made his first album in 1987 at the age of seventy. Sixty years of guitar playing finally paid off, but Moses claims he is unaffected by the recent popularity. "You know, it's just playin'. I just like to play. Record album don't make no difference." But if the album failed to make a difference in his life, then certainly touring the country did. During the past year, Moses has played blues festivals in cities such as Chicago and New Orleans. In fact, it was in New Orleans that he played with the likes of B.B. King and James Brown, he alone receiving a standing ovation. But he says his greatest thrill came this past summer during the Newport Jazz Festival in Rhode Island.

"You know, Koko Taylor was there that day, and let me tell you, that women is <u>good</u>. So I went to her dressing room, but she wouldn't talk to me, she couldn't be bothered. So when I got on stage, I was playin' for Koko. I knew if I played good enough she'd come out. After a few minutes, sure enough, there's Koko comin' out and takin' a front row seat. She stayed there the whole time I was on. Now she's good, but I'm good, too."

Moses is currently making a deal with Flying Fish Records to cut a new album, this time using some of his own

songs as well as some of his traditional favorites. "Yeah, I'll make the album, just as long as nobody tries to cheat me. You know, there's always someone out to cheat you," He lights up his last cigarette. "Maybe I'll call this one 'Moses Rascoe, Bluesman.'" He takes a long drag from the cigarette and picks up his guitar.

Doug Muenzen

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