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*connecticut  
writing project*

teaching assistants training seminar  
1986



The Connecticut Writing Project offers opportunities for growth and professional development to teachers of writing in all disciplines who recognize the worth of using writing as a means of learning any subject matter. A program of the University of Connecticut, Department of English, the Connecticut Writing Project is affiliated with the widely-acclaimed National Writing Project, which now has 138 sites in this country and abroad.

In the Project, experienced classroom teachers are trained as Teacher/Consultants in an intensive Summer Institute where they share their expertise and practice writing themselves. Then, during subsequent school years, they present workshops on composition theory and practical strategies for teaching writing to teachers in participating districts.

The approach has proven effective by generating widespread interest in good writing and by upgrading students' abilities as writers and learners. For further information about the Connecticut Writing Project and its programs, please write or call the director:

William E. Sheidley  
Department of English  
The University of Connecticut  
Storrs, CT 06268  
(203) 486-2328 or 486-2141

VISIONS AND *Re* VISIONS

by

Members of the  
Teaching Assistant Training Seminar  
1986

Edited by Lisa E. Spencer

Connecticut Writing Project  
Storrs, Connecticut  
1986

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## INTRODUCTION

The second Teaching Assistant Training Seminar was held at the University of Connecticut, Storrs, from August 21 - 28, 1986. The fourteen men and women assembled ranged from newly recruited teaching assistants who wanted help gaining their sea legs to experienced writing instructors who sought to expand their expertise. All wanted to acclimate themselves to a new environment and a new writing program. The diversity of their backgrounds made the seminar an exciting place where ideas were presented, argued and assimilated. Even the neophytes in the group discovered that they had experiences in their background which they could bring to bear in the classroom.

During the six days of the Seminar, most mornings were spent discussing recent research, arguing writing issues and listening to workshops on aspects of the writing process and its applications. The afternoons were spent in writing groups of four. Although initially resisted, these turned out to be the most rewarding aspect of the program. Each person discovered that he/she had talent that could be augmented and refined by collaborating with a peer. For most, this was a new and exciting discovery.

The writings collected in this booklet represent the culmination of the work done in those writing groups. I have never been part of a more moving experience than the read-around on the last day of the seminar when these pieces were read aloud to the group. They indicate the quality of the graduate students in the UNCONN English program. I was enriched by working with them, and I thank them for their participation.

The Perfume Incident  
or  
Death of a Friendship

by Patricia A. Johnston

When I think about it now it seems sort of silly that our friendship broke up over something as meaningless as a bottle of perfume. Actually, the "perfume incident" (as I refer to it in memory) was only the symbol of a difference in values, a difference which grew slowly, like a tremor beneath the earth, then exploded in a violent quake which left each of us standing on opposite sides of a gaping fault. Just hearing her name brings back all the hurt and rage I felt then, and the fun times are obscured by a heavy purple cloud of anger. Nancy was my roommate and good friend for two years -- almost.

We met at the beginning of our junior year of college. Since we lived on the same floor of the same dorm, we saw a lot of each other. Our friendship developed mainly through long conversations in which we analyzed everything from family relationships to dorm cuisine. As a family studies major, Nancy was always giving me advice on my personal relationships, and I always listened attentively. I suppose I was so interested in what she had to say that I failed to notice that she was doing all the talking and I was doing all the listening.

We became roommates the following year, and the fall semester went well for both of us. Nancy had gotten engaged, and we spent hours excitedly planning her wedding. Occasionally, our friend Emily stopped by, and the three of us talked and laughed for hours on end. Emily and I loved William Faulkner's work, and we spent a lot of time trying to figure out his characters. I never really noticed at the time that Nancy always left the room whenever the conversation started to turn towards literature. It was brought to my attention months later, however.

Nancy finally let me know one day that she felt Emily and I purposely tried to put her down and make her feel stupid by talking about literature in her presence. She gave me a lecture on values, insisting that I respect hers by not talking about the arts when she was in the room. I was surprised and confused by her accusation, but promised to try since I didn't want to upset her.

One can only walk on eggshells so long before they begin to break, and it seemed the harder I tried, the more she pushed me to change. It got so that I felt guilty about talking on the phone to a classmate about a difficult novel

when Nancy was present. I was relieved when Christmas break came, and I could escape from Nancy and her advice on how to be an unoffensive person. I did a lot of thinking, and it finally dawned on me that Nancy was trying to make me change to protect her own fragile ego. It was so clear, that I became angry with myself for not seeing it sooner and for allowing the manipulation to go on for so long. I vowed things would change.

I returned for spring semester anxiously hoping Nancy would be in a better frame of mind. She wasn't. In fact, she was worse; she began lending her friends my records and appliances without my permission, which she knew would annoy me. Her moods fluctuated as doubts crept into her mind about her coming marriage, and her other future plans seemed tenuous at best. She couldn't seem to decide whether to get married or go to graduate school, and I guess it was her acute indecisiveness that was making her crazy. I felt really sorry for her, so I tried to be patient and supportive, but every day her criticism of me increased to the point that she'd leave the room if I were playing a favorite record. I did not know what to do or what to say; I was really angry, but hurt as well. I had never dealt with such a confusing person before, and I felt like I was losing all control and all perspective. I wondered why I'd ever liked Nancy in the first place, and I knew I wouldn't keep in touch with her after graduation.

Our friendship came to an end over the perfume incident. One night, Nancy's fiancé had come over. My little cousin Kelly was visiting at the time, and we had decided to go to the movies to give Nancy and her fiancé some time alone to talk and, hopefully, make a decision about their forthcoming marriage. When Kelly and I walked into the room to get our jackets, we were greeted by a strong, sweet scent that blanketed the air and was strangely familiar.

"Why do I smell perfume?" I asked.

Nancy laughed and replied, "I used it to deodorize the room." I stared at her in utter disbelief as I felt a tidal wave of rage growing inside me. I knew if I opened my mouth murderous words would come gushing out uncontrollably, so I clenched my teeth, grabbed the two jackets and stormed out.

I sat through the movie restlessly, trying to figure out what would possess Nancy to do such a thing. It seemed so planned out; she knew I would have to get my jacket, but she couldn't have thought I wouldn't notice the scent of my own perfume, a scent she professed to hate. It didn't make sense. Why would she want to sit in a room that smelled of something she didn't like? She wouldn't. She had to have done it purposely, defiantly, as if to say, "I dare you to confront me." Besides, her own perfumes were more within

reach than mine were. There was no doubt; this was definitely an attack. I couldn't take any more. I would confront her.

I decided to be cool, calm and collected because I knew her ever-ready defenses would be up, and I had the feeling she knew I wasn't going to let this one slide. When we got back from the movie, Kelly started getting ready for bed, and I swallowed my anger and said, "Nancy, I'd like to talk to you about what happened earlier tonight."

"O.K." was all she said as she hung up some clothes.

I continued, "You really upset me, Nancy, and I --"

"O.K!" she screamed, and stormed out of the room.

I didn't follow her, and she didn't come back. I didn't see her for three days. In that time I tried to muddle through the confusion; I couldn't figure out what I could have said or done to make her leave like that. Just as I was giving up thinking about it, she came back, and we sat down to talk.

"Patricia, what you said the other night hurt me more than anything else you've ever said or done," she said. Her face was like a slab of granite.

"What did I do? I really have no idea," I replied.

She looked at me incredulously. "You don't know? You scolded me in front of a child. You absolutely humiliated me. Don't you know you never scold an adult in front of a child? It's wrong."

Tears were streaming down her face, and though I didn't quite understand what she'd said, I saw how badly my words had shaken her. I had really hurt her, and I had to take responsibility for that.

"Nancy, I am so sorry. I had no idea that my comments upset you so much. Believe me, it was never, ever my intention to humiliate you. I was upset myself, and I wanted to talk about it right away instead of waiting."

"Well I've been thinking, and I decided I can't live with you anymore." Her face had returned to its stony state. "For months you've been making me feel stupid and inadequate, like you're better than me, like you know more. And now you've done this. I can't believe you would say something like that in front of a child. I thought you were smarter than that, and I really question your potential as a parent."

I sat there silently, my head spinning, completely confused by her words which seemed to come from God knows where. There was no sense in trying to defend myself, and any reply would have been useless since her mind was made up. Besides, I was just so tired of it all. So I let her go.

She moved in with John, and I've never spoken to her again. I've thought about what different directions our lives have taken. I'm now a graduate student, and I heard from a friend that Nancy got married and has a baby now.

The hardest part for me has been reconciling all the hurt and the anger, since I never got a chance to explain myself to her. In retrospect, I see that she used our different values as a focus for her decision making, and I believe that the perfume incident was a last attempt to provoke my anger. It was an act of desperation almost; a reason for her to hate me and move in with John. She didn't want to take responsibility for making that final decision, so she manipulated circumstances to force the decision. I feel as if I experienced the machinery of the mind in a front row seat. I still wear that perfume, though.

Because I Had No Shoes  
by Joan Walter

"JOANIE! ARE YOU HOME?"

He knows -- that was my first thought when Arnie's shout jolted me out of sleep; he has some uncanny, perverse intuition for seeking me out when I'm in my blackest mood, when people and everyday objects take on the distortions of fun house mirrors and events try to conspire against me. On the one day I chose to escape through sleep because even the perfunctory ritual of brushing my teeth seemed impossible, my landlord, like some sort of obscene little troll, would come knocking at my door with the excuse of making some repairs.

"YO! JOAN!"

I quickly reviewed my alternatives. Perhaps I could simply call out, "Listen, Arnie, I'm in a state of despair and I can't get out of bed," and he would quietly leave. No. He'd want to "discuss" it. I could ignore him, yet there was always the horrifying possibility that he would decide to come in anyway on the pretense of checking the thermostat; my roommate and I already had suspicions that he had been in our apartment several times, and a friend had offered the unwelcome theory that if Arnie had visited, he probably just danced around the apartment with our underwear on his head, so we needn't worry -- this was followed by some uneasy laughter. I next ruled out trying to convince him that I had mono or pneumonia or even "women's problems," which will usually guarantee a distance of fifty feet between me and the nearest male; I am a poor liar and admit to being superstitious about faking illness. No, I had to face him.

"I'LL BE RIGHT THERE!" I shouted back.

As I threw on my robe, I recalled with a bitter smile that I had actually encouraged this visit by writing a letter of complaint about our dryer, which first mangled, then melted, and finally just tossed our wet clothes. My dislike of Arnie was so great that I was willing to suffer the inconvenience of trips to the laundromat for nearly a year, while I cleverly managed all other household problems and repairs with friends' help. I was anxious at one point that I would have to contact him about setting the hallway lights for earlier than 8 P.M., but I took the coward's route instead by sneaking into the basement and resetting the timer to 5; over the course of the winter, we had engaged in a humorously silent competition for control.

The dryer, however, forced an encounter: as its last act, it would whine and shudder and occasionally groan like some great, wounded beast in an extended death scene of exactly thirty-two minutes. Since there is always someone who will ignore an "Out of Order" sign, I knew I was beaten and resigned myself to writing Arnie; I don't know why I assumed I could shame him into slinking in undetected to fix it.

I padded into the kitchen and opened the door.

"What is it Arnie?" He looked unusually tired.

"You can't be writing these letters. They upset me. I just got out of the Institute, and my psychiatrist said I can't be getting these letters."

"You showed it to your psychiatrist?"

"No, but he did say I can't get emotional. If you have something to say, say it nicely."

I deliberated whether to forge ahead and risk upsetting him -- and perhaps prolong his stay -- or to retreat into my smile and nod routine. He decided for me.

"Joan, you can't be rude to me. I've never given you reason. I've always done what you asked, and I thought we had an understanding."

The truth was he had never done anything. I couldn't let this opportunity pass.

"Arnie, when have I asked you to make repairs around here or mow the lawn or even shovel the walks? You told me when you showed me the apartment that we had a working dryer. First, it ripped my clothes, then it melted my underwear. Now it's keeping me awake at night; it's right below my bedroom and I can hear its agonized death screams at least three nights a week. Please shoot it and buy a new one!"

His eyebrows shot up into an exaggerated expression of surprise.

"Oh, people do laundry at night? I didn't know that."

Pleading ignorance was one of Arnie's favorite tactics. I noticed the irony in the fact that he clearly didn't care whether I knew he was lying: he only wanted to draw me farther and farther away from the subject until I found myself spluttering over an entirely different matter.

"When do you think we do the laundry? You know everyone works during the day!"

"That's right. By the way, Joan, I stopped by the other day to replace the hall lights and noticed that the hot water in your bathtub is running again. You have to make sure you turn that off. Are you left-handed? Maybe that's why you have trouble turning it off. This bad habit is too expensive for me -- I'm not made out of money, you know."

Arnie's second strategy: the best defense is a good offense. But his reference to changing the bulbs only reminded me how enraged I was the time he had tried to save money by replacing the hallway lights with those flame-shaped, 15 watt Christmas bulbs. I was disgusted with his laziness, his sloppy repairs, his stinginess and his paranoia. I could feel my color rising. I was ready for him this time.

"So, Arnie, you 'noticed' the hot water was dripping. You were in our apartment again without permission. Just how often do you come in here, anyway?"

I had him, and I knew it. Yet, something in his face ruined my small victory: he was struggling. I observed him with that strange mixture of fascination and repulsion, of pity and horror that I feel for wounded animals and accident victims. I had to move on before he noticed the change.

"OK Arnie, so what about the dryer?"

He seemed relieved. "I'm going to look at it now. You know I strive for good relationships with my tenants, and I always try to make them happy. That's why I came today, Joan. To make you happy. Sure, I had other things to do -- my wife is sick, she has a tumor on her ovary and my son is hyperactive, he can't do any schoolwork -- but you're such a good tenant, and I was so hurt when I got your note."

I had anticipated that eliciting guilt would be the final tactic, but I didn't know which was more maddening: his shameless performance, or the tiny pangs of conscience I was beginning to feel despite my anger. I could only repeat, "So, what about the dryer, Arnie?"

"I'll look at it today. Would you mind if I came in for some conversation? I need to talk to someone and you're a good listener --"

"No Arnie, I have to get dressed."

"It's just that I'm upset because I thought the Institute would help. I thought I wanted to leave my family because my daughter hates me and my son can't concentrate and my wife won't even let me sleep in the same bed. I could have sold this building and bought a sail-boat and gone to Hawaii, then fallen in love with a much younger woman who didn't



want a family. Aren't you getting too old to have kids, Joan? Well, we went to Europe for a vacation -- my wife is a travel agent -- and do you know, I was so depressed there that we had to come home. Did you know that some women in Europe don't shave and men find that sexy? Anyway, since then I've been sitting around the house, crying, and Andrea couldn't take it. I think I threw something once, and we decided I need help. So I went into the Institute for a couple of weeks, and I found out I didn't have to run away. I still could if I wanted to -- I'm sure of that. Now my kids still don't like me, and I found out yesterday that my wife has changed the locks. She says she doesn't know me anymore. After eighteen years of marriage. Can you see what I mean? Your problems might be different, but I think you understand what it's like to be so depressed that you can't even get out of bed in the morning because you can't face the day, and you just want to sleep, to be unconscious --"

I startled us both with a sudden, involuntary step backwards.

"No, I don't know what you mean, and I really don't have time for this, Arnie."

"Well, maybe you could do me a big favor after you get dressed and run your errands, and talk to me while I work on the dryer? Just for a little while?"

"I have things to do."

"Please Joan, I'm afraid to be alone."

I will never forget how quiet that moment was. I think now that Arnie startled even himself with the unmistakable sincerity of his plea; it just hung in the air between us, a white flag of fear and loneliness and despair.

"I just can't, Arnie." I shut the door before he could reply.

I heard his weight shift, a deep sigh, and then a feeble "Have a nice day," before he started down the cellar stairs. I knew exactly what would happen: he'd make a lot of clatter pulling the dryer apart to impress me with how hard he was working, then he'd slam it back together because he was too cheap or lazy to fix it. If I complained again, he'd argue that the dryer technically "works" because the drum is turning and tell me I should move if I don't like it. Or he'd suggest again that I could use my blow dryer on my clothes if I couldn't wait for them to line dry, and think he was being helpful. Or maybe he'd tell me that corny story about the deaf girl he loved but couldn't marry because his mother forbade him.

I wasn't sure how much time had passed, but I knew that I wasn't too late. Opening the cellar door, I called out, "Hey Arnie, could you use some help down there?"

Local history  
by Joseph Carroll

It was on a stagnant Sunday afternoon in October that I slipped out of my house to finally do a history assignment. The week before, my seventh grade class finished a section on Rhode Island during the Revolutionary War, and we had to go out into our neighborhoods and dig up some local history. I decided to visit a local historical cemetery, take down a few names and dates and write a page or two on what I found.

I could've done it Saturday but waited until Sunday when there was nothing better to do. I never did like Sunday afternoons. They always seem so solemn, as if the week was finally on its death bed, threatening a final agonizing gasp. This particular dark and cloudy afternoon seemed especially somber. Most of the leaves had fallen to the ground, and with my every step, they filled the crisp air with the sounds of snapping and crunching.

I made my way through the granite quarries and the woods and finally stepped out from the trees and onto the gray-blue pavement of George Waterman Road. I walked up the hill and along a retaining wall and soon spotted the old cemetery and the iron door of the crypt. It was permanently swung open as its hinges had rusted it into place. I had heard stories of the crypt -- of bones and coffins, and didn't believe any of them; yet, something deep inside assured me that a step across that threshold would spark those rusty hinges to life and sweep the door shut behind me. The absolute blackness of the entrance way thoroughly chilled me; yet, as I passed, I just had to glance into the cold emptiness to thrill at the heady rush of fear which tingled my neck and leadened my feet.

I quickly distanced myself from the opening and then jumped onto the wall and walked among the trees and gravestones. The cemetery was in a terrible state of neglect. Many of the stones were leaning or smashed or lay covered beneath a thick layer of brown leaves and weeds. The dead grass was overgrown and bleached a jaundiced yellow. I knelt in the coarse leaves and took down some names and dates off a small pale slab.

The cemetery was large, and I moved deeper towards its rear which had long since lost the battle with the surrounding woods. Trees and scrub brush had spilled over the low iron rail fence and had blanketed many of the old plots.

I took down a few more names, and was almost on my way home again, when I heard a rustling of leaves, and smelled the heavy smoke of a cigarette. I looked quickly to my right, and through the branches of a bush I saw a man standing near a slate gray tombstone. He was dressed in a long overcoat and held a cigarette up to his stubbled face. His eyes were fixed on me. Is this a ghost? My heart raced. No, I reasoned, this was a real man.

I stepped from behind the bush and looked directly at him. After all, adults didn't frighten me; they just made me uncomfortable. "Hi" I said and nodded.

He nodded in return; yet, his face betrayed an anxiousness. He stared at me for a moment and then nervously blurted, "You're not going to tell them. Are you?" He picked up a pint of brandy and took a quick swallow. "You see, I'm not supposed to be drinking. They'll take me away again."

I backed up slowly -- amazed that this man felt threatened by me. "I, I won't say anything," I reassured him.

"Thanks" he mumbled and then slowly eased himself against a fallen tree, and sat on one of the many twisted limbs. His whole body rocked ever so slightly, and I knew he was drunk. He took another swallow of brandy and held the bottle toward me. "Want some?"

"No, no thanks. I don't drink."

"Good for you. You're better off." He put down the bottle and reached for a six pack of beer that was hidden beneath a pile of leaves. Two empty cans lay crushed at his feet among a dozen cigarette butts.

"What are you doing here?" he said at last.

"I'm doing a project for school. Oh, well, you see, I have to get the names off some of the gravestones around here."

"Oh, really." His interest seemed genuine. "Have you tried the big cemetery on the hill further up the road? I go there quite a lot." He took a slow drag on a cigarette, then squashed the butt under his foot. "I like cemeteries. Lots of people, but no one to bother you. Well, not usually."

"Do you want me to leave you alone?" I asked. "Because I'll go if you want."

"You do what you have to do," he said.

I bent down and mindlessly scribbled the name and date of some woman who died in 1829.

"Where will you go after here?"

"Well," he said. "I don't go nowhere. I just stay here until tomorrow and, then I have to go back, or they'll come and get me."

"You mean, they can take you away for having drink?" The frightening image of two dark faceless men dragging him away disturbed me, and I felt the swelling urge to run.

He paused for a moment and then tried to explain. "I've done some stupid things, you know. I've never hurt anybody but myself. Well, at least that's what my brother used to tell me."

We both fell silent and, for the first time in my life, I looked carefully at a face that had been dulled by alcohol and bewildered by a twisted past. And I wanted to leave.

The sky was getting darker, and I knew by now my mom was getting supper ready.

"It's getting late," I said at last. "I got to go now."

He looked at me and made a waving gesture. As I stepped away, I thought of my own home and bedroom. "Where do you sleep?" I asked.

He threw another empty can to the ground. "I sleep in the little room in the wall. You know. Over there. It has the iron door."

I left him then, and very quickly made my way through the darkening graveyard, and jumped off the wall. I stopped by the open crypt and peered once more into his room. It looked even blacker in the dim evening light, and I ran all the way home, sure that its emptiness had been let loose in the world and was now creeping after me.

Snowball

or

Red Riding Hood Revisited

by Nicola Seed

I first met Chris on the gangway of the Calais boat. He must have seen me staggering under the weight of my grandmother's Christmas presents, and after taking them, led my grandmother and I to a quiet window-framed table on the upper deck. In the next few hours, we distracted ourselves from the turbulence of the December crossing by talking -- he was an artist/schoolteacher bound for Strasbourg, while I was escorting my grandmother to Christmas in Rome to see my mother.

I didn't think I'd see him again, but he appeared at the door of our train compartment several hours later, some time after I had begun wondering how I'd wile away the hours until nighttime and was staring out the window, my grandmother comfortably immersed in a thick romantic novel. Did I want to go for a drink if I hadn't anything better to do? My grandmother looked up from her novel only to ask for an orange juice and to express her approval of the drink invitation, as she liked his blue eyes, or so she said afterwards.

Chris and I began the long lurch down the seemingly endless corridors towards the bar, tripping over an entire regiment of sleeping soldiers, joking about how much harder the trip would be after a couple of vodkas and lime. We seemed to have slipped into that comfortable familiarity without any of the usual barriers and wondered if journeys were a kind of social no man's land where you could meet people out of the normal inhibiting contexts. For whatever reason, we soon became as oblivious of the time as of the darkening landscapes we were passing through and must have spent several hours in the train corridor being thrown violently towards each other and apart again by the rattling of the train. I leant my elbow against the open window and watched the wind ruffling his dark hair, feeling the warmth inside me as the alcohol hit. Someone nearby in the corridor had a cassette playing "Baker Street" by Gerry Rafferty. I can't hear that song now without remembering the sensation of an icy December wind mixed with enforced closeness and vodka.

A ticket collector broke the spell, and I left to get my ticket, only to find with growing incredulity that at the end of the compartment was . . . nothing but the night. I felt heart-stopping paralysis slowly spreading through me, and, in a terrified distortion of my school French, asked

the conductor where the rest of the train (and my grandmother) were. "On their way to Rome," he answered, "We're going to Strasbourg." Chris gave me a stunned look, and I felt acutely conscious that I had no coat, no money, and no ticket. The conductor took pity on me, and not only did he not throw me off the train, but he told me that the Rome train would be passing through Strasbourg two hours later than this part, at 4 A.M. the following morning.

At 4:10 A.M. I found myself standing in a stereotypically beautiful Christmas snow scene at Strasbourg, though some of the effect was lost on me at the time. Chris had a 4:30 A.M. appointment with his girlfriend, and had left me his phone number in case I needed it, and his address in case I wanted to write. (Two years later I happened to be driving through Cambridge, stopped at his house which was open, walked in and saw his paintings and the same old tweed jacket, but no Chris, though that's another story.) At 4:15 that December morning, I was feeling very cold and frightened, having found out that the Rome train was not going to stop but simply slow down as it passed through the French/German border station. I looked at my high heeled shoes and wondered. I also wondered guiltily about my grandmother and began remembering the other journeys to Rome as a child in which my grandmother had done a far better job of protecting me.

When my parents got divorced in 1967 and my Mother decided, on a romantic whim, to follow her Italian boyfriend to Rome with her three little girls, my grandmother sold her English home, and followed us out there in order to look after us in that perhaps uncivilized, or at least un-English country. I remember nights when Antonio would wake us up at midnight, even though we were only 7, 5, and 3, and take us out for drinks in moonlit lively Italian piazzas, something which is hard to appreciate when you're 7. My grandmother, a firm believer in the sanctity of children's bedtimes, would stand at our doorway, a five-foot tall sentinel, forbidding him to enter with her glare. At other times, when he was drunk and had argued with our mother, he used to take a perverse pleasure in waking us up and hitting us. I remember Grandma standing between us, half his size, twice his age, standing firm even though she couldn't speak his language, until he slunk away, turning maudlin.

As I stood with the snow falling on me, I wondered if Grandmother was asleep or awake and worrying about me. I remembered the stories she had told me about Grandad's gambling, about the time he gambled away her wedding ring. I thought of the afternoon I discovered the picture of her lined up in a solemn Victorian pose with her eight older brothers and sisters, Grandma with white ribbons in her curly brown hair, smiling irrepressibly at the end of the

line. The expression on her face in that old yellowing black and white photo felt so vivid to me, and I remembered how she still smiles like that; whenever I visit her I'll find the postman, a neighbor, or a friend drinking tea with her in fits of laughter, no matter how much consolation they needed when they went in to see her. Her words, "Ducky, there are more fish in the sea -- he made you unhappy and so he wasn't right for you," consoled me after what seemed like an end-of-the-world break up in my teens. I thought of her sense of humor and of how she laughed in retelling how her husband had called himself Patrick O'Hara when they were courting and how she only found out that his real name was Thomas Snowball on their wedding day. He had thought she'd laugh at him, but instead she laughed with him. Ever since, she's been known as Snowball, even though her real name is a Victorian mouthful -- Edith Florence Elsie Snowball.

As the snow melted in trickles down my shoulders, and seemed to settle in permanently on my head, turning me prematurely white, I waited for the train and wondered some more. I don't know how, but in a state of shock, I managed to jump on the train barefooted, carrying my shoes in one hand. I don't know how, but after what felt like hours of shakily stumbling down corridors, opening doors, peering into the blackness, I finally staggered into our compartment, saw Grandmother was asleep, and, icy, numb, and shaken to the verge of near stupor, climbed up the ladder into my bunk. I awoke when it was light, I don't know when, full of sneezes and guilt, and heard my grandmother say, "What happened to my orange juice, Ducky? I fell asleep" before you got back, but I was sure you were all right."

## It Doesn't Have To Be Expensive

by Anita Sherman

Aunt Edna was expecting me in about an hour, and the Salvation Army store was on the way. This wasn't any old Salvation Army store; this was the best one in Connecticut -- the one that accepted Mastercard -- the Saks of Salvation Army stores. I certainly never expected to enjoy this stop, but I would do it for my husband. He would appreciate the thought.

My husband would prefer to do all his shopping at Salvation Army stores. He thinks it's the right thing to do for a couple of reasons. First, he can save a lot of money. My husband is committed to living frugally. Waste of any kind is upsetting to him. This is probably because he spent three years in Malawi, Africa, and has seen how little is really necessary. His second reason is that the money from Salvation Army stores supports programs for rehabilitating alcoholics.

So I decided to stop and buy something to let him know I was thinking of him and that I was willing to accept (reluctantly) some of his crazy ideas.

I headed straight for the books. After all, it's okay to buy books from the Salvation Army. After finding a book that he might like, I still had 55 minutes before I was expected at Aunt Edna's. It would be alright to look through the men's clothes. Everyone would know that I was shopping for someone else. Besides, no one knew me here.

I sorted through the rack of tan Dickies. My husband had once given me a dissertation on the quality of Dickies work pants. Pierre Cardin they weren't, but they seemed socially acceptable.

As I sorted through the tan Dickies (and facsimiles), I realized that shopping at the Salvation Army was quite a challenge. How would I ever find his size -- there were no tags! After turning several pairs inside out to find sizes, I found a pair of 30 x 31 tan Dickies, and they looked like they had never been worn before. I was pleased with this find. Then I looked at the price tag. This made the find especially exciting, since today was a green tag day, and the pants had a green tag. (Every day a color is chosen, and all of the items with that color tag are half price.) My husband would be thrilled. I actually found a pair of tan Dickies in the right size, in excellent condition, and the tag was the right color! My husband wouldn't be happier if he won the lottery. I was imagining just how excited he

would be and how much he would appreciate my effort.

Then I remembered how unpleasant our last trip to a Salvation Army store had been. It was in Bridgeport, a pretty unpleasant place to begin with. The store looked dirty and depressing. The people in it looked the same. I could imagine all of them picking through garbage cans for their dinners. What was I doing in this place? I could afford to shop at normal stores. I didn't have to mix with these people. Neither did my husband. What was he trying to prove by bringing me there?

After we left the store that day, he could see how upset I was. He explained how important it was for him to do the right thing. This particular shopping trip had been to buy clothes to send to Malawi. He knew the families he would be helping. He knew how happy they would be to get these clothes. He was disappointed because he wanted me to enjoy the day. He was having fun trying to find good clothes to send -- why couldn't I?

I was too uncomfortable, I responded. Wasn't it enough that I went with him? Did I have to enjoy it, too? How could I make myself enjoy it if I just didn't enjoy it?

It's all a matter of attitude, he said. If I wanted to enjoy it, I could enjoy it. What would I rather be doing? Are there specified activities for having fun? Could I only have fun if I was doing something that was supposed to be fun?

I can't be happy when I'm not comfortable, I argued. We talked a long time that night about how so many things made me feel uncomfortable. My husband tried hard to convince me that I could change that and that my life would be much happier because I wouldn't be uncomfortable so much of the time. I knew he was right, but how could I simply change my attitude?

As I remembered this conversation, I was walking around the Salvation Army store. I was a little startled when I found myself going through the racks of women's clothes. I was even more startled to find myself walking toward a dress at the end of the rack. I liked it. It was my size; it was in perfect condition; it cost \$3.50. I had been looking for something just like it. There was absolutely no reason not to buy this dress, except, of course, that it was pretty tacky to buy clothes at Salvation Army. It was one thing to buy something for my husband there, but to actually buy a dress to wear to work was quite another matter. What would my mother say? Only desperate failures, losers, would shop for their clothes at a Salvation Army store. Was I a failure? Was my husband a failure?

Again, I thought of my husband. I picked up the dress and draped it across my arm with the Dickies. I would try it on -- maybe it wouldn't fit. Then I saw another dress that I liked. Somebody with pretty good taste has just cleaned out her closet, I thought. Well, if I'm going to all the bother of trying one dress on, I may as well try another. Maybe one would fit. If only my husband could see me now. I was just as determined to find something here as I was at the G. Fox sales.

I looked at the clock. An hour had passed; Aunt Edna would be waiting for me. I didn't want to leave. What other bargains might be waiting for me? I tried the dresses on; they both fit. I bought them.

Although I don't do all my shopping at Salvation Army stores, I now can go and enjoy the challenge of trying to find something I can use. It makes me feel good to know that I am not only saving some money, but also working a little harder to help reduce the great amount of waste that we so easily accept in middle-class America. Besides, it really can be fun.

## Today They Got Old Joseph

by John Dinan

Today they got Old Joseph. Because of the rain, I was slow to find him. I didn't want to get wet, so I looked in all the easy places first. He was not in any one of them.

He was sitting on a wall, the old gray one near where the church used to be. I looked there last because it is right out in the open. On good days the sun does not go off that wall until late.

Old Joseph sat facing the hedge, with his back to the fields. I saw him and I said, "Old Joseph, why are you sitting in the rain?"

He did not answer, and it took a long time for me to understand. First I poked him with a stick. When he did not move, I touched him with my finger. He was cold, and my finger did not sink in.

"Old Joseph," I said. "You are all hard and gray. You are turning into part of the wall. If you stay like this, they will take away your house in the country."

"Get up now, and come with me."

I was mad at Old Joseph for turning into stone, or I would not have mentioned his house in the country. The house has been in his family a long time. It is all he has, and he is afraid that they are going to take it away from him.

Old Joseph does not live in the house. He lives in the city, in one of those apartments that the city owns. The house in the country is old, and Joseph is too old to live in it. It does not have heat, or water, or lights, or anything any more.

Last year the doctors told Old Joseph he would die if he stayed in the house. They gave him medicine to take and made him move to the city, but they did not take his house away.

Old Joseph still visits the house in the country, though. It is not very far from the city, only ten miles.

I have been to the house with Old Joseph. I find a car and take him to it. He gives directions and we always go the same way. When we get three point two miles up the road, I stop, and Old Joseph gets out and tells me when to come back.

But I have never seen Old Joseph's house in the country. It sits back from the road, and the trees hide it. I cannot see it from the car. Old Joseph has told me all about it, though.

Sometimes in the summer, Old Joseph stays overnight in the house. That way he has lots of time to find out what they have done to it. When I come to bring him back to the city, he tells me what has changed.

Old Joseph talks slow. When I meet him on the street, and I listen to all he has to say, I stand there a long time. Most times, though, I get tired of standing, and I don't want to listen, so I talk fast to him and walk away while he's confused.

But I always tell Old Joseph that I will see him soon. And when I take him to the country, I say the same thing. He knows I will come.

Sometimes it is not always when he wants it. I can't always find a car. Sometimes I am late, but I always go back for him. Old Joseph knows, and he waits.

He sits with his back against a tree and watches the road. Then he gets in the car and tells me what they did to his house. He talks slow.

Once he told me they had taken a pin from the house. It was bent, and Old Joseph was saving it to straighten out someday, when he had time.

"But, Old Joseph," I said. "Why would they take the pin?"

"They have more time than I," Old Joseph said. "They'll straighten it out right away."

Old Joseph was angry when he said that. He always gets angry when they do something to him. He says that since he moved to the city they do more to him. He tells me what they do.

Sometimes, though, he doesn't say anything, but he smiles. Then I know that they have been leaving him alone, and that he does not want to spoil his luck by talking about it.

Sometimes two whole days will go by before I see Old Joseph. And then, sometimes I see him every day for a week. This week I saw him for four days in a row, sitting by the river, on the side where all the train ties and twisted tracks are.

On the first day, he told me things had been happening.

"Old Joseph," I said. "What have they done to you?"

Old Joseph told me that the night before he had gone to bed with yellow shorts on, and when he woke up, they were gone. He couldn't understand how that could happen. He looked all over for them. He looked in the bed. He shook the covers out and looked all over.

Old Joseph said that he shook the covers out seven times and looked all over, but he couldn't find the yellow shorts. He said that he felt himself all over and looked at his face in the mirror, and still could not believe that it was happening to him. He said he thought about it for a long time, then he put on his green shorts and went back to bed for a while.

When I saw him on the second day, I said, "Old Joseph, how are you today?"

Old Joseph said he was not well. They had been changing things again.

"Old Joseph," I said. "What have they done to you?"

He said that when he got up that morning, his yellow shorts were in the bed with him. He said he asked himself how that could be.

"How can that be?" I asked Old Joseph.

Old Joseph said that they were doing it on purpose. They were trying to confuse him. He was angry because they were trying to scare him.

"But I do not scare easily," Old Joseph said, and he shook his fist at the sky.

I liked that. I like to watch Old Joseph shake his fist at the sky. His big belly bounces up and down, and his little feet jump all around. I like that.

On the third day, I saw Old Joseph walking back and forth with a stick in his hand.

"Old Joseph," I said. "How are you today?"

"I am afraid," he said.

"Old Joseph," I said. "What have they done to you, now?"

Old Joseph said that he had been reading an ad on the back of a magazine before he had gone to sleep. It was a

cigarette ad, and he was interested in something in the ad. He wanted to read more about it, but he was tired, so he put the magazine down right by his bed. That way he'd be able to find it as soon as he woke up, and he could finish reading the ad.

Old Joseph does that. He reads slow, so it takes him a long time. He holds whatever he reads right up to his nose, and his nose touches right against whatever he's reading.

I tried to read like Old Joseph once, but I couldn't. It takes a long time to learn to read like that.

Old Joseph told me that the ad was different. It was a cigarette ad, but it was not the same one that he had been reading the night before. They had changed it. He said that they can do that. They can change things.

Old Joseph said that he was afraid that they would change him next. He said that he was scared.

"But, Old Joseph," I said. "You do not scare easy." And I shook my fist at the sky.

Old Joseph said that he was still scared that they'd change him, and no one would know.

"But, Old Joseph," I said. "I will know. You have told me, and if they change you, I will know."

The next day I saw Old Joseph, and before he could say anything, I said, "Old Joseph, I am scared."

Old Joseph said, "What have they done to you?"

I told him I was afraid they would change me. I said that I was scared they would change him, and then they would change me because he had told me about how scared he was that they would change him.

"Old Joseph," I said. "I do not scare easy, but I am scared now."

Old Joseph cried when I told him how scared I was. Old Joseph cries slow. It takes a long time for the tears to come out of his eyes, but they are worth it. They are great big tears. Almost as big as Old Joseph's eyes. And you can see little rainbows in them.

Once a bunch of Old Joseph's tears fell into a tin can, but when I looked at them later on, the rainbows were all gone.

"You must tell someone else," Old Joseph said. "Then if they change you, there will be someone who will know."

Today I was going to tell Old Joseph that I still had not found anyone to tell. Because of the rain, I was slow to find him. When I saw him, I said, "Old Joseph, why are you sitting in the rain?"

He did not answer, and it took a long time for me to understand. Today they got Old Joseph. Tomorrow, they'll get me.



A Quiet Epiphany  
by Mary Fanning Sederquest

I used to be painfully shy. Those who haven't ever been truly shy probably can't understand what it's like -- as a student, you dread book reports because they mean you'll have to speak in front of the class; you won't go to summer camp because you'd have to meet new people; you don't take piano lessons because you don't want to perform in a recital. You live in fear, in a world of sweaty palms, hyperventilation and hives.

Most people outgrow shyness, but there are probably few who recall the exact moment when they did. In fact, for most, overcoming shyness doesn't occur overnight. Yet I remember vividly the exact moment when I realized how I could overcome my own shyness.

I had just graduated from UConn and was working at Travelers Insurance. One of my co-workers was a young woman named Annie. I always thought Annie had the wrong job. Tall, pencil-slim, with auburn hair, green eyes and a flawless complexion, Annie was so attractive, I thought she belonged on the cover of *Vogue*, or at the very least *Mademoiselle*. Annie exuded confidence. Where I was shy and ill at ease, Annie was brash, and sure of herself, seemingly filled with bored contempt for everything she saw. Life amused Annie; it scared the hell out of me. I didn't admire Annie, but I did envy her insouciance and elan, her confidence, her ability to look so contemptuously at life.

It's odd now to think of Annie and realize she was instrumental in changing my life, but that's what happened. She certainly never knew it, for it didn't happen with a crash of cymbals or the blare of trumpets. Instead, it was a quiet epiphany, a chance encounter.

I had gone on some errand and was on my way back to my desk, walking down the long, deserted corridor that led to my department. I don't remember what I was thinking about, don't remember what I wore. It was an unremarkable day in a nondescript corridor on the eighth floor of the Main North building of Travelers Insurance Company. I was approaching the department door when I saw Annie coming toward me. I smiled and said, "Hi, Annie." But she didn't respond, did not even acknowledge me or my greeting. She simply sailed right past me, no expression on her face, no smile, nothing. It was as if I didn't exist.

I remember feeling hurt, and at first, I was baffled. There seemed no explanation for her behavior. I remember

faltering. Perhaps my face burned with embarrassment. Maybe my forehead wrinkled into frown lines. How could someone walk right by me and ignore my greeting? And then, in the next moment, I saw myself as if illuminated in a spotlight. I remembered walking by other people, averting my eyes so I wouldn't have to speak, not out of coldness, dislike, or discourtesy, but out of shyness and fear of rejection.

And so I tried to understand Annie. I said to myself: Maybe Annie is also shy. For all her confident facade, perhaps she harbors the same fears I do; she might just cover them up better. Or maybe Annie isn't shy at all; perhaps she's totally insensitive. Or maybe she just had a lot on her mind, was absorbed in solving a problem.

But in the end, Annie's motivation didn't matter. All that mattered was that I saw how my actions might affect others. When I walked by someone I knew and looked the other way, wasn't it possible that I was hurting them as much as Annie had just hurt me? Worried about how I might appear, I hadn't thought of how my behavior might affect others. I realized that my shyness was really just the result of self-absorption, a single-minded fixation on myself.

In that instant, I learned to change my focus. I saw that the secret of overcoming shyness was to stop concentrating on myself and begin thinking about others. My concern changed from "How can I endure meeting new people?" to "How can I put the other person at ease?"

To this day, I remember Annie, and that long, isolated corridor that led not only to my department, but to an entirely new world.

## The Piano Player Held Hydrogen Peroxide

by Carolyn Fortuna

I've never been able to follow the example of those mellow Down Easterners who subscribe to the theory, if you can't get it done today, there's always tomorrow. I admit it -- I've led my life in a constant rush, always pacing myself one step ahead of where I could realistically be, always scheduling more than I'm able to accomplish so that I'll never be bored.

Part of this way of thinking includes working full-time while in school, so that I stay ahead of debt. In addition, when the semester ends in May, there's no tour of Europe or Club Med vacation for me. Instead, I rush off Memorial Day weekend to spend the summer managing a bar in a high volume restaurant on Cape Cod. Sure, it's fun. I meet so many people, too many in fact; my mind becomes jumbled with names and neighborhoods and family ties.

Then again, I've been in the same spotlight behind that same bar for five summers now. I go to parties, I go to the beach, I hobnob with people who glow from deep, bronzed tans. We're creatively snobbish, spontaneous, and eager to lead the lives of beautiful people -- at least for the three months of good summer weather New England offers us.

The hectic pace -- beach during the day, serving four or five hundred tourists each night, only one day off a week -- does take its toll on me. I begin to realize I'm serving people who are on vacation without allowing myself the same leisure. I'm a female working in a male profession, and the work is physically exerting and quite exhausting, especially when the nights turn into weeks. All this in order to pursue a career switch into the professional world!

Inevitably, my pace had to catch up with me, and it did. An August catastrophe jolted me, giving me a lot to contemplate. Typically, when something unexpected occurs to which I have no immediate solution, I become an immobile existentialist. I allow the world to move around and past me, and I deal quietly within myself until answers begin to take shape.

My summer revelation came when I was tending bar on a humid Wednesday night to my usual horde of impatient tourists. The blenders were churning; some of the frustrated waiters were near tears. In my role as working manager, I direct the staff as well as perform my own duties. I was focused, comforting, hurried, and friendly at the same time. The hours crept by, the cash register sang. The evening was

one more blurry whirl of loud music and brassy beach attire.

As the last dinner rush began to dissipate, the 18-year-old, almost-anorexic hostess motioned me to the phone.

"Hello?" I yelled into the receiver, overcompensating for the noise.

"Hi. It's me." It was Jim, my 38-year-old boyfriend, my best friend.

"How ya doin'?" I asked mechanically, pouring drinks at the service bar while I talked.

"Not too good," he answered. My pace slowed. "Not to worry you, but I had an accident ..."

He had been on the way to the restaurant, all showered and spiffed up and ready for a night of eating and partying. His full-grown male Doberman, Rocky, however, decided he needed more attention. As Jim headed for the car, Rocky jumped up on the white picket fence that surrounded his spacious enclosure and, in doing so, entangled his paw between two slats. Lacking the calm or rationality of a human, the dog pulled his paw forward and became even more trapped.

Rocky began to scream eerily, Jim narrated across the phone wires, saying all that could be seen were Rocky's thrashing paws and his bared incisors. Instead of offering a towel to use as a muzzle, as Jim asked, the family members present whisked the children and each other into the house, out of potential harm's way. Reacting in one swift motion, Jim reached down and pulled the dog's paw vertically up and out of the gate. Confused and distraught, Rocky clenched down on Jim's wrist with those four incisors. Having freed his dog, Jim then had to free himself.

"You've got to go to a doctor," I interrupted over the phone, bringing all drink making to a halt. "I'll get off work and come right over." No amount of contrived excuses on Jim's part could change my mind. One of my proteges replaced me behind the bar, and off I sped into the traffic-filled night.

By the time I arrived in West Dennis center, neighbors and friends had gathered around. Jim sipped bourbon to offset the pain while others offered free medical advice. The piano player held hydrogen peroxide; the chambermaid, cotton swabs. Jim's brother kept checking the time, smelling aromas drift in from the kitchen. A democratic vote had been taken -- it had been decided they could do no more. I wrenched Jim away from the advice-giving onlookers and

headed back into the headlights.

Unfortunately, both Medical Centers were closed; it was after eight o'clock. The Yarmouth Police Department offered no help from their staff or the local EMTs. The sergeant, in fact, never removed his feet from atop his desk. Our next stop, by default, was the Cape Cod Hospital. I tried to retain a facade of calm while we inched in bumper-to-bumper traffic toward Hyannis.

The triage desk was swamped with other accident victims, since this was the only medical facility open on Cape Cod. One hour of waiting turned into three; Jim began to pace, reciting exactly how much longer he would wait and then THAT WOULD BE IT. I was forced to assume a motherly role: we had a responsibility to find out if the four punctures, now oozing black clotted blood, were serious, didn't we? What was more important, health or partying? Had we come all this way just to turn around and head home? I tried not to lecture, though inside my heart was racing.

Finally, as my logic thinned, "Broderick, number seventy two, dogbite" was called. I sneaked in behind him, and again we waited. Eventually, the doctor arrived, looking harried and bleary and overwhelmed by his workload. Summing up the situation at a glance, without thought to X-rays or advice about follow-up medical attention, the doctor prescribed a tetanus shot and penicillin. Jim was relieved; I was pacified. I had been correctly protective.

So that was that. The bandages were in place; the partying could resume.

The next day, however, Jim was so quiet, not at all his usual joke-telling self. When he picked me up from work, all he wanted to do was go home -- no cocktails, no visiting, nothing. I became suspicious of his motives and of the quality of medical care he had received. Silently, sleeplessly, we tossed and turned.

"Should I call an ambulance?" I questioned about three a.m.

"I'm not going in any ambulance," he stubbornly replied. We awaited the arrival of the morning.

What a horrible day it was that followed. The doctor hooked Jim up to an I.V. at his office, saying a tooth had penetrated a wrist bone and the marrow infection was spreading. Jim's temperature was 106. Blood poisoning and surgery were serious possibilities. Arrangements were already made to transfer Jim to Lahey Clinic in Boston.

My stomach tore at me as we separated. I was forced to remain behind in Dennis because of my management responsibilities while Jim was rushed off-Cape. That night I paced back and forth behind the bar, trying to be cheery to strangers. But I kept thinking, didn't people die of blood poisoning? The reality of the situation was beginning to settle in, and I was quite shaky. Why had this happened? Why did Jim have to be in the hospital when just days before we were floating on a cloud of summer surreality? The situation was so ironic: to be bit by one's own dog while trying to help the animal. Rocky is a big old dumb farm dog, fat and good-natured and very well-cared-for. And I had insisted that every medical precaution be considered as soon as the accident had occurred. We had no reason to feel that neglect could be figured in.

Why then had this happened? I vacillated between austere outward calm and inner shaking throughout the remainder of the night. Word from the hospital was that Jim had been admitted, that his condition was serious, and that he felt lousy. He was very, very ill.

Through phone calls to him ("Bring me Pail Mails," he said) and a visit the next day, I offered my support. The prognosis was a hospital stay of one to three weeks.

Two days later, Jim began to vomit from the four IVs of antibiotics that were dripping into his system all day and night. Wasn't it bad enough, I thought, that he was so ill. Now, to top it all off, he can't eat. Is there no justice? An anti-nausea drug was prescribed.

The next day, though, he exhibited every sign of heart seizure, as paralysis began creeping up his arm and across his chest. The Cardio-Vascular emergency team was summoned to his room when he passed out. A female doctor assumed the role of team leader and, thank God, correctly diagnosed his condition as an allergic reaction to the anti-nausea drug. One more drug counteracted it. Jim called me that night to assure me that, although he was "burnt out", he was okay.

I felt relieved on the one hand, frustrated and alone on the other. If only I could assume some of his pain, I felt as I hung up. If only I could suggest some miracle cure. If, if, if...

The long weekend turned into a long week. I began a set of new routines as I returned to studies at UConn, commuting to the Cape on the weekend. I oriented myself to a new frantic pace, new energy-packed days. And, after nine days of IV injections, Jim was released from Lahey.

In retrospect, I cannot help but turn my focus to the illness as a whole, and the feelings of frustration I

experienced. I'm someone who directs my energy positively, and so I generally determine the course my life will take. But, in this case, I was powerless against the events that took place around me. I was forced into existentialism this time. And, as a restaurant manager, I am, by necessity, a professional. Yet when I needed to rely on the doctors at Cape Cod Hospital to supply an equivalent amount of professionalism, I was sadly disappointed. The doctors at Lahey had to cure what others in their own profession could not recognize. These after-effects of inner debate take time to heal.

What's Bette Midler Really Like?

by Jackie McCurry

Fame may be "no plant that grows on mortal soil," but if Milton were living in late twentieth century America, he'd have to acknowledge its effect as a rampantly growing (if invisible) weed which thrives in a mass culture. Fame changes everything.

I made my living as an actress. I had a friend named Bette Midler. However, several incidents, along with five years of answering inane questions, convinced me that I had chosen the wrong career.

Plumbers at cocktail parties are seldom asked to do a little something, like patch a sink. Why then should an actor at the same party be requested to do a little something, a few lines, a short routine. Though performing came naturally to me ("Loves to mimic others" is my mother's first entry in my baby book.), after the first year I supported myself as an actress, my philosophy became, "if you want me to entertain you, go to the theatre."

I'd been in Los Angeles only three weeks when I was cast in the title role of *The Good Woman of Setzuan*. Time stopped for two hours each night while I lived in Brecht's world. Shen Te is the good woman who finds she must disguise herself as her evil male cousin Shui Ta in order to succeed in the world. Every night when I entered as Shui Ta, I noticed a couple of people check their programs to see if an actor was listed for the part, and I knew my work was successful. After a rave review in *Variety*, I was sure I'd picked the right career.

One year later and thirty-five hundred miles from Hollywood, I began to change my mind. I was doing summer stock with a rep company in Portland, Maine, playing Ellen Manville in Murray Schisgal's comedy *Luv*. After a performance at Rangeley Lake, Jeff, a fellow actor, knocked on my hotel room door. Someone from the audience wanted to speak to me. Jeff said it was somebody I'd known in high school; would I meet him at the bar? I froze, my stomach turning to cold oatmeal made with too much water. "No, I'm not going down." After Jeff left, I thought, would it hurt you to go downstairs for five minutes? Aren't you curious about who it is?

The answer to the second question was no. It's just too damn hard to explain myself to people outside the business. Imagine you are an actor. Since it's nearly impossible to learn movement and concentrate on relationships when you are

tied to the book, you learn your lines as soon as possible. They become second nature after a couple of weeks, and then the real work begins. The next month is spent moving into the play. You go over each scene again and again, exploring the way you would feel if you were the person in this situation. The set becomes your home; the costumes, your clothing; the cast, your family. If you work hard enough, you bring literature to life. Then someone from the audience comes backstage after the opening night performance and his only comment is, "How do you remember all those lines?"

As Ellen Manville, I was outspoken, outgoing, melodramatic, funny. It was my job to be that friendly, entertaining person. Now work was over, and as Jackie McCurry, all I wanted was to be left alone. After I took a shower, there was a knock on the door. I was sure it was the mystery guest, so I ignored the first knock, and the second. After a one minute eternity, he walked down the hall, and I was safe.

Towards the end of summer, strangers began to stop me in the street. I was famous in Portland, Maine. I should've been flattered; instead, I felt annoyed and welcomed my return to California and blessed anonymity.

During the next few years, my friendship with Bette Midler gave me the opportunity to discover how completely fame obliterates normal life.

One Saturday morning, we were in the bedding department of Bullocks Westwood, taking advantage of the annual white sale. Customers were sparse; we seemed to be the only ones in the department. Suddenly a piercing scream interrupted the muzak version of Dylan's "Blowin' In the Wind," and we were accosted by two blue-haired, heavily made-up ladies. "Are you really Bette Midler? What a shock to see you here! Have you been ill?" Bette smiled, signed autographs, and we raced to her car as if we were wanted for armed robbery. "Why did she ask you if you'd been ill?" "People always say things like that when I'm in street clothes and wearing no make-up -- not the Divine Miss M they expected."

We drove to Hollywood to eat lunch at Musso and Frank's, grazing ground for famous people. It was Bette's favorite restaurant; no one ever bothered her there. Our waiter, a blond in skintight pants, led us to a large booth in the front room. He must have been new; Bette had never seen him before. Delivering our onion soup, he introduced himself as Eric from New York. He was really a costume designer.

Ten minutes later our bleu-cheeseburgers arrived -- along with a dozen of Eric's costume renderings. (He obviously kept them in the kitchen for just such opportunities.)

Midway through the main course, a female voice screeched, "Look, it's Bette Midler," and my companion signed autographs for two teenage girls. "We loved you in The Rose. When's your next movie coming out?"

By the time we left Musso and Frank's, Bette had met four more strangers and answered a dozen nearly identical questions. I had decided I would not want to trade places with her.

Now that I'm a literature student, I know I'm safe from fame. I can stay in hotels, eat in restaurants, go shopping, and walk city streets -- in peace. And the only question people ever ask me these days is, "What's Bette Midler really like?"

## Dreamstones

by Sean Lause

I never wanted to be a teacher. My fear was that though I had some idea who I was, I was utterly uncertain what I might become if ever granted power over the minds and lives of others. If someone had handed me a free glance into a crystal ball, I would have emitted a shriek and slammed the glass shattering into the wall.

But I became a teacher anyway, and because of this, I became aware of the power of fate and the fragile air of identity. Like a design on a balloon someone was blowing up, I saw myself expanded in hot air and then one day, when I least expected it, the balloon went boom.

Teachers were never my heroes. Old, scraggly, unwise wizards and witches with faces like closed fists; I envied their magic but dreamed of escape, somewhere. And somewhere far away, down a dimly-lit road, a wind caressed dust with gently ribboning breaths.

My hero as a child was the Scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*. No professor he -- always falling apart and stuffing himself back together while loping to keep in step, masterful in his stupidity, crowfully gentle, in love with innocence; he was perfectly imperfect and trusting. Boneless in vulnerability, he could quote Pythagoras to the fortune teller and win a diploma, though he had no idea what he was saying. Prepared for all fates but windy flame, he alone could survive the shifts and gusts of my days (and there is never night in Oz). Light was all important. In light you can see objects for what they are. No lions, tigers, or bears woven in shadow. I was sinfully innocent.

In later years, I learned the importance of being Wizard, teacher and thunderer, lord of all those who blunderhoppitosee in search of some missing anatomy. In a world where goodness warbles in idiot Billie Burke cliches, and evil melts in bathroom curses, all that is needed, I felt, is the appearance of omnipotence and a high castle of dreams. So long as you had a balloon to whisk you away like an unanswered question when the wind kicked up, you could be a damn fool balloonman and get away with it, so long as your hand was quicker than the needing eyes of Munchkin mentalities, so long, so long.

I never really longed to be a witch or a wizard, what a world, wind and smoke curtains. But I learned early-on in life the value of fear. When I was in third grade my teacher, Mrs. Kullinger, would creep once a day to the classroom window, search the sky with lurking glances of

doom, her skinny, interlocking fingers forming tight prisons of flesh; then she would point suddenly at a spot over the gradual horizon and say: "Here comes the enemy!" and we would all have to cover our heads, dive beneath our desks and hike our butts up behind us. For some reason, those four fateful words never failed to give me an erection, some vaguely felt but never quite understood or articulated life-death mystery link, a circle of orgasmic explosion as I felt myself reach out in front and my underwear widen behind in a radiation-proof shield, and I prayed to the Great Sky Wizard behind the slyly grinning curtain clouds to save me, save me, hail Mary full of space, let these revolting Munchkins get blown to Kansas and back, shameless, but just save my shameless, pitiful, cowering, all-important, all-encompassing ass.

I survived that holocaust, and countless others, and I went to a castle with many ivory towers and got my scarecrow degree with my strawman arguments, and now aspired to be a wizard, a balloon dream man, a saint of scattered clouds. Perhaps, like the wizard, I could actually help someone with my lies. I was, after all, no genius. I did not want to hurt, merely to be worshipped. I became an English teacher.

A teacher. My God, I was innocent in my sinfulness. I didn't know who I was, had no idea that an identity could be made of straw.

Instead of providing kind guidance, I found myself revelling in my new-found power, no more all-fouring on floors. A true fraud, I dared omnipotence, casting fates before me to the pink-tinged, quivering-cheeked faces of fresh men and women. How true the cliché: those who can't do, teach, and those who can't teach, teach freshman composition.

Having survived the enemy's best assaults with my rear intact, I felt ready for anatomically incomplete creatures everywhere, especially scarecrows, and I dreamed of making boys dive for cover (Wasn't that preparing them for lions, tigers, and bears?) while sending young Dorothy's home for summer, swirling in crystal ball smiles. But even that dangling slipper of goodness fell to my sudden obsession with the black arts of mind-meddling.

Soon my voice in the over-arching halls thundered in bellow-howl of smoking fate: "LEAVE THIS PLACE! AND DON'T RETURN UNTIL YOU BRING ME PERFECT PARALLELISM!" How I owned them, had them quivering under desks, nosing warily through dictionaries and thumbing thesauruses, cartoon sweat beads popping off their slanted Munchkin heads. As they slaved over exams riddled with impossible incantations and formulae known only to me, I danced and clapped my hands in evil Margaret Hamilton delight at the hour glass seconds

slithering away their precious hope and the last remnants of my purity.

I alone held the power of color and depth and used it to deceive -- golden roads that seemed to merge with sunbeams but abruptly dead-ended in backdrops of flat reality. "YOU KNOW NOTHING!" I hag-shrieked, "ABSOLUTELY NOTHING! YOU CAN'T ESCAPE! YAH-EE-EE-EHHH!" I had gone the full orgasmic circle; I had exploded and become a woman, the worst woman, the wicked witch of the West. I had left Mrs. Hurlinger puny in my wake.

On finals day of my first semester, I cackled as I clutched their finals in my crow-foot grasp, finals in more ways than one, my monkeys; I had commanded my hairy troops to line up down the long 7th floor hallway of Meyer Hall, where I wielded my magic mischief. Each approached my crystal ball in quiver-shake-quiver. "See! See!" I cleared the mist to unveil their pathetic fates. "Fall! Fall!" I called. "Surrender Dorothy! Burn, Scarecrow! Die! Die! Yah-eh-eh-yeh!"

So busy was I with my tortures that I paid no attention to the sirens calling outside, wailing monkey warnings, something wicked winging darkly downwards.

My students screeched and tugged and pointed and danced in ding-dong expectation, but I paid them no mind, too busy chortling over the ruby red marks scarred across their dismal henchmen hunches.

But then, glancing up, I noticed some memory unstrung, touching a half-heard melody. I tilted my head sideways to try and catch the notes, but they scattered like frightened bats, and outside, the black tangled howl thrust them in handfuls into sudden night.

Snatching my broom, I pushed past the fearful minion monkey eyes and dashed into the next room and, striding to the window, searched the sky with lurking glances of doom.

Tornado! A black witch hat strung upside-down from the sky, a thousand times my height. Eeeeahh!

I was suddenly helpless, de-broomed, ding-dong dead; visions of Dorothy fluttered, filtered like an old movie starting, shifted, a swirling dance of memory, pedaling noisily madly, twisting projections shadowy onto the screen and then the reel caught and the movie unrolled da-da-de-deh-deh-de, da-da-de-deh-deh-de. Kansas swirled in window-frame, swirling chiaroscuro madly pedaling oh no not that, wheels within wheels and around and around and Mrs. Hurlinger pedaled passed me turning now to oh no don't look and the face, the nose like a twisting

blade the howlaugh I'll get you my pretty and your little dog too! Oh God what a BIRCH I had become.

I ducked down from the window vision, and instinctively grabbing crotch, headed for the nearest desk, then pulled back. My God, I'd recovered my sex! Now I was the wizard, again devoid of thunder, and out there was my power, if only, if only. I must protect, protect.

I ran back and saw that my minions were no longer monkeys, but stood on the steps like planes of evolution, and had become students of varying degrees of cherub. Oh no! Did they all come from black & white farms in the Midwest where they raised dust and had fences that joined nothing to nowhere?

I could hear the funnel coming closer. Some wizard in my ancient past had warned to listen for the sound of flocks of blackbirds or a train coming. Christ, he was a worse liar than I was, ain't no train coming but ten thousand witches having their hair yanked out at once. The students were passing by me, daring to touch my suit and begging "Can you please just tell me how I did on the final?" and I screamed back, "This is as final as it gets! Flee! Flee! The fiend of nature descends!"

But I had no power -- pay no attention to that man behind the curtain, he only works here -- and I looked back and up and, oh here comes the enemy, closer, closer, howling down, a swishtail wolf gonna huff gonna puff gonna billowww and I had a vision of my house coming down from on high like a thumb from the sky, they'd find me there, my feet stuck out like clown tongues, and I prepared to desperately drop my sandbags but it was no use, I ain't over no rainbow, but just an old fortune teller caught with a bad bulb, forced to face the horrendous truth, that I was not the scarecrow or the wizard or the wicked witch at all after all, but that damn lion with his big scared tail poked up in the wind like a broken umbrella, and in all my miserable awe, all I wanted to do was dive under a tree and boo-hoo-haww-haww-haww hummingous tears of protect-me-hide-me-save-me oh-oh-oh.

Down we scampered, into the cowering basement, down and down, but it was no use: I was getting smaller, smaller with each step, melting, melting, and who was I this time but a monkey myself, monkey with a soul, I could not save them in a world of painted skies where the very ones you trust most are themselves only a dream held tight in memory.

And then, just as I was ready to die -- I -- plopped -- oh -- down. Over, back, safe, the sky technicolor blue, where do dreams go so fast? I rubbed my eyes and blinked. My students had saved themselves. What a wretched realization. The world goes on without you.

And so now, bereft of pride and powers, I am wary of all windows and never cross a campus without a quick glance or two over my shoulder at the horizon. I carry my deceptions no longer like pistols at my sides but like stones in my pockets, dreamstones, careful reminders when the wind kicks up, or easy victims when the water rises in buckets that kill like Dorothy.

#### Miss Grand Canyon

by Ellen Corey

Hiking the Grand Canyon was a grueling test of mental and physical strength and endurance. My friend Nancy and I were ignorant of the hike's intensive demands when we arrived at the village on the south rim of the Canyon one Tuesday evening. The ranger stations were closed so we got advice about which trails to follow from a bartender and a campground attendant who had each hiked the south rim. We decided to start the trip in the morning.

At 6:00 a.m. Wednesday, we were awakened by the sound of mules walking past the car, heading to the trail to bring supplies down. As the sun rose, we ate fruit and granola and dressed in shorts, tee shirts, heavy socks, and hiking boots. Nancy and I each carried a small backpack and two quarts of water. After taking a self-timed picture with the vast Canyon behind us, we started down Kaibab trail. The landscape continuously changed as we descended. The earth at the rim of the Canyon reflected much of Arizona's landscape: dry, gray, and covered with small tufts of grass. We descended to the level of clay as the sun rose higher, changing the look of the earth from rich dark red to dusty brown. As we walked past the signs warning us not to overestimate our hiking ability, our boots kicked up dust which covered the backs of our legs.

Kaibab trail cuts a path into the wall of the Canyon, where the waters of the Ice Age chiseled through the rock. We were able to look straight down from the trail into the chasm to see our path cut through the wall and over flatter green land. At each point, a few miles were visible in every direction -- up, down, and to the sides, but never was the whole Canyon, or even the north rim, eighteen miles away, visible. The vastness could only be felt.

We hiked the six miles to the Colorado River at the bottom of the Canyon in three hours, arriving just as the day was becoming hot. At the park-run Phantom Lodge, we took off our boots and examined our blisters. We spent the afternoon relaxing in the creek in the shade, speaking with other hikers, writing postcards, and fueling our bodies with sandwiches and lemonade. The temperature was 110, and the air was dead still. We were anxious to start the long hike up, but an adamant ranger convinced us to wait until the day cooled off. She also tried to convince us to stay overnight, but we wanted to get the hike done in one day, instead of having to wake up and put our boots on sore feet early next morning. We took the ranger's advice, though, and sat in the creek in our clothes for an hour before we started up.



When our body temperatures were sufficiently lowered, we set off, dripping, at 4:30 p.m. for the Bright Angel, a nine-mile but less steep trail that began a mile and a half from the lodge. We walked in the hot, heavy, still air, through heat-absorbent sand and black rock, until we came to the creek at the bottom of Bright Angel. We again drenched our bodies and heads and then began our ascent. The sun was low in the sky and cast strange light ten miles down in the Canyon. A deer and the rich green vegetation surrounding it stood in sharp outline against the purple mountains of the Canyon walls.

We climbed five miles in three hours and got to the midway plateau of Indian River Campground at 7:30 p.m. We rested, refilled our water containers, and spoke with the ranger who said the remaining 4.5 miles would take four more hours of hiking. Looking up emphasized his assertion. Nancy was convinced there was an exit at some point below the impossible far away summit of those mountains. We were tired, our feet had formed new blisters, and darkness would soon be closing in. I didn't allow myself to concentrate on the ranger's words. It didn't matter how long a hike was left because we were determined to reach the top.

For a mile and a half we trudged on, up the rambling paths, each immersed in our own world of thought. At the point where we were three miles from the trail head, we switched from physical energy to mental energy, because our unconditioned bodies were too tired to go on. Steep and narrow switchbacks cut a path straight up three miles to the top. Dusk fell, and all outlines blurred. I walked in front as I had all day, but now I became the pace setter and morale coach as well as the leader. I slowed the pace and took small but steady steps musically in rhythm with my swinging water jug. Nancy followed with her hands on her thighs, using her arms and back to push her legs for each step. We stopped every few minutes for a sip of water and for Nancy to hold my hand and say, "Oh my God. I'm gonna die." "Nancy, we are going to get to the top of the Canyon. Don't think about it -- just go for it and when we get up there we'll look back on these last three miles and say they were excellent." Though Nancy was tired, she too held on to the motivating fact that we had no choice but to go on. When asked by a fellow hiker who perceived her fatigue, "Are you going to make it?" she replied, "I'm not going to sleep down here."

By 10 p.m., it was pitch dark. The black was complete. More stars than I had ever seen filled the sky. Nothing else was visible. We were two specks in the universe, and nobody knew where we were. But, small as the Canyon made us feel, it also filled us with the knowledge that we could overcome the huge, almost abstract being. The hike became a mission. What started as a fun challenge turned into a difficult job,

and then became a soul-exhausting quest.

A man with whom we had spoken at the halfway point caught up to us and said his eighteen year old relative had fallen down unconscious on the trail. We lent the man our flashlight and waited while he called the ranger on the emergency phone. Just as Nancy's weakness had helped me assume more confidence as our leader, the boy's break-down helped Nancy find yet more hidden strength to continue. We combined our mental reserves and began our final mile and a half with our single small flashlight. I held it in the hand opposite to the water jug and shone it alternately on the uneven ground between our feet, and on the ground ahead to see where the trail switched back. We stopped every one or two minutes to drink water. I began letting some of my fatigue show by making noise: breathing hard and grunting and sighing after each sip. Nancy would hug the water jug to her chest, take a sip, then repeat, "Oh my God." "Ready to go?" "Yeah."

Where the trail was wide enough, we walked side by side. I shone the light ahead of us. During those moments when we combined all we had within ourselves, we truly became soul sisters, cosmically and infinitely part of each other. We discussed telling our friends about hiking the Canyon, and how they would never know what it was really like.

We sat on the rocks lining the outside of the trail, aware that falling backwards would mean plunging into the abyss. As we were resting, a ranger on her way down to help the fallen boy told us we had only a half mile left. Since all day we had sung to each other, "Here she comes, Miss Grand Canyon," we decided we were now truly on our final promenade of beauty. During that final half hour, we felt the still air of the chasm change to the cooler and breezy air of the desert. The end was almost tangible. We no longer talked about the hike. Our brains were numb to the pain of our bodies. We stumbled more and hung onto each other for support, but we were laughing. Our tiredness turned to calm. Our collective will led us single-mindedly to our goal. With only a few switchbacks left, we heard cars and saw electric lights. Civilization was at hand. At 11:30 p.m., we reached the top and fell, filthy and exhausted, into each other's arms.

It wasn't until the next day after we had showered, slept, attended to our screaming feet, and were sitting in the shade, able to move our sore bodies only in slow motion, that we could spend a few hours discussing the hike. Nancy had dreamed of it all night, but I had been able to let it go. We realized that neither of us could know the full extent of what that hike was to the other. We both agreed that we could not have done it had we known what it was going to entail. We did do it, though. We amazed ourselves, and know we will never do it again.

## A Change in Perspective

by Kathleen Healey

I had just graduated from college and was embarking upon my first job as a nursery school teacher. I had been motivated to become a teacher of young children by a desire to do something worthwhile with my life, to help humanity and change the world in some way. I was soon to find out that there was a great difference between my ideals and reality. The world cannot be changed by one person alone, regardless of how great his desire is to do so. At times situations are beyond our control, and we can do nothing to make a difference, especially when others resist our efforts to facilitate a positive change.

I was hired at an expensive early learning center which boasted a philosophy geared towards providing enjoyable, optimal learning experiences for the child. As I listened to the director describe the center's emphasis on giving each child as much love and attention as possible, I became very enthusiastic. Here was my opportunity to put into motion my desire to help humanity. With my strong background in psychology and a wide range of courses on programs for young children behind me, I was eager to provide my students with the best environment in which they could learn and grow.

Soon after I began to work, my enthusiasm waned as I noticed that many things were occurring at the center which were less than optimal for the welfare of the children. I found myself in charge of twelve three-year-olds in a tiny room, even though state law prohibits a ratio of more than eight three-year-olds for every adult. Some of the children were wandering around the room aimlessly while several were in a corner fighting over a truck. There were a few puzzles with pieces missing on a table, and some papers and crayons on the floor. Hoping that if I found some toys for the children to play with, I could direct their attention in a positive way, I searched through several cupboards in the room. My search yielded only two plastic pans which were half-filled with Lego toys, barely enough for one child to build a structure with. I inquired where I could find more toys, for there had to be something else for the children to play with. I was told, however, that the only toys for my age group were those that I found in my room. Later in the morning, I tried to find snacks for the children before I took them outside to play. The search for snacks was fruitless, and I was told that none were ever provided for the children.

I began to question the ethics and motives of my employers. Parents were paying \$75.00 a week to keep their

children in this center, and yet they were not getting quality care. As a teacher who was earning \$4.00 an hour, I knew that the money was not being spent on the staff. The real concern of this day care center, then, seemed to be making money rather than creating a secure and happy environment for the children.

During my first month of work, I learned how impossible it was for me to be the kind of teacher I wanted to be. I was unable to give any of the children the individualized attention they needed and deserved. If one of them were having a problem completing an activity or learning to count, I could not give him/her one-on-one attention. My class was too large, and I spent all of my time trying to control it. In the afternoons when the children were taken outdoors for free play, I was often left alone with fifteen of them who ranged in ages from two to six, while my fellow teachers took long breaks.

I could have left the job, since I did not agree with many of the practices that were going on. Yet I saw the situation as one that was my responsibility to change. I felt I had to try to improve the conditions for the children. I thought that if someone spoke up and discussed making changes with the director and owner, eventually situations would improve. I voiced my concerns about the size of my class and the classes of the other teachers, which were also overcrowded. I mentioned the fact that I was often left alone on the playground to manage a large number of children, and that I had no toys and supplies for my students. I also tried to address other situations which did not seem to be in the best interest of the children. My concerns, however, fell on deaf ears. My suggestions were ignored, and often I was placated with assurances that certain situations would improve. At one point, the entire staff was told that a new teacher would be hired so that the size of our classes would decrease, yet in the eight months that I worked there, this was never done. When I was finally given some new toys for my students, they were designed for a six-year-old rather than a child of three.

It seemed as if all of my efforts to create a better situation at my job led nowhere. My fellow teachers were apathetic, and I gained no support from them to get things done. Over time I became more and more frustrated because my efforts were futile. Eventually frustration gave way to guilt because of my inability to facilitate the changes which I felt were my responsibility to bring about. Rather than helping humanity, I felt as if I were a part of the machine which was draining it.

By the time I left my job, however, I had begun to realize that it was not my responsibility to change the world. One person cannot do that on his own, nor should he

have to. In retrospect, I can see that although I could not change a system over which I had no control, I was able to do something positive for my students in minor ways. It is no longer important to me that I make a big difference in the world, but that I try to do my part in any way that I humanely and realistically can.

## Lost In The White Mountains

by Howard Giskin

I nervously rummaged through my icy gear, throwing my backpack to the rear of the tent. My breath floated upwards and condensed, forming a frosty film on the ceiling of the tent. "Gregg, I can't find the compass." My heart skipped several beats.

"Don't worry about it. We'll find it in the morning," he replied. "How could I have lost that thing?" Wild thoughts raced through my mind. "Is this really happening? We'll never make it out of here without a compass." Deciding that it was futile to continue the search in the dark, I slipped into my two sleeping bags, which had by now absorbed so much moisture as to be only partially useful, and thought about how the trip had begun.

Gregg and I had for some time been planning to make a winter ascent of Mt. Washington, the tallest peak in the east. Both of us had considerable experience winter mountaineering, and planned the attempt for January, during the semester break. We met a number of times to discuss how much and what gear we would need. We decided on ice axes, snow shoes, crampons (spikes attached to boots which keep the climber from slipping on icy areas), assorted other warm gear, food, fuel, maps, and a tent. In addition, we would need warm sleeping bags, as temperatures in the White Mountains in winter regularly plummet to 25 and 35 below zero.

The trip began early in the day, without the slightest hint of misfortune. After a warm cup of coffee and a danish, we set out. Day one was glorious, and everything went as planned. The sky's sunlit blue contrasted splendidly with the dark green pine, whose limbs hung low under several feet of snow. Our breath froze instantly, giving our beards a hoary appearance. With each step, the snow squeaked, as often happens when the thermometer dips below zero. Progress was slow, due to the 60-pound packs and the steep grade. Nevertheless, our spirits were excellent that first day, the crisp mountain air and ever-present scent of pine refreshing us at each step. We would not ascend Washington immediately, but first cross two smaller peaks. We hoped to reach the summit of Washington on the third day.

Mt. Washington is known for the fickleness and severity of its weather. It has claimed the lives of many luckless climbers over the years, both experienced and inexperienced. We were aware of these facts, yet did not think ourselves foolhardy. We spent our first night by the side of a shut-up lodge. The next day, our hike progressed smoothly. Our

second night, we set up a camp in a col at about five-thousand feet. Tired but happy with the day's accomplishment, we cooked dinner and slipped into our bags.

I awoke the following morning to an odd sensation of pressure on my chest. The roof of the tent had sagged, heavily laden with snow, and now pressed down upon us.

"Gregg, what the heck is this?"

"I guess it snowed a bit," he answered.

"Yeah, about two feet," I replied. "Still snowin', and real windy, too." The weather had suddenly taken a turn for the worse, as it often does in the Whites. We quickly decided that the wisest course would be to turn back. The mountain would be there for another attempt. We ate breakfast as best we could, packed, and headed back the way we came. The wind blew us over when we tried to stand upright. Visibility was close to zero, a white out in mountaineering terms. We veered to the left and skirted the ridge instead of going directly over it, avoiding the direct force of the wind. Leaving the trail, however, proved to be a bad decision. The wind was no longer a problem, but the depth of the snow was. We were forced to don our snow shoes. Struggling to maintain a level course along the ridge, we followed what we thought was a line parallel to the trail. On more than one occasion, I fell through a hole in the snow formed by the top of a small pine, leaving only my arms and head exposed. After an exhausting effort to regain the trail, we began to face the fact that we were lost.

That evening, in an effort to determine our location, we consulted the map. Unfortunately, it was of only limited use, and we were merely able to ascertain our general position. We went to sleep with an uneasy feeling. By the fourth day, our spirits began to flag, although we did our best to cheer each other up. The temperature hovered around ten below zero as we painfully climbed, sometimes only advancing ten or fifteen feet before having to stop and catch our breath. The snow was too deep on the slopes to move easily, even with snowshoes. Despite the frigid air, I sweated profusely beneath numerous layers of clothing. Our map told us that if we could make it over the ridge, we should be able to locate the lodge we had camped at the first night. That evening we set up camp on such a steep grade that we had to shovel out a platform for the tent. By this time, food and fuel were running short. I found in my pocket a piece of lint-ridden frozen cheese, which we boiled in Tang to make edible.

I wondered whether this meal would be one of my last, whether I would again hear the voices of close friends, or sleep in my own bed. My head spun. "Is it my fate to die

like this? This can't be happening -- not to me." I thought how incomplete my life would be if I were to die, of how many things I had yet to do. "It's all a mistake. No, I can't die. Not like this anyway." All these things went through my mind as I drank cup after cup of water to quench my seemingly endless thirst. As the real possibility of death loomed closer, I moved more and more into myself, and this was scary. Gregg and I had relied upon one another for support and encouragement, but this became increasingly difficult. We could no longer easily hide our fear, especially when I announced that I could not locate the compass. We went to sleep, and in the morning, we resumed searching for it.

"Oh, here it is in the pocket where the cheese was," I blurted out. Somewhat relieved, I asked, "How many more days of food and fuel do we have?"

"Two at the most. Look," he said, attempting to be cheerful, "If we get out of here, I'll buy you a beer."

"I hope I can take you up on it," I answered. Our sleeping bags had not kept us warm. I had slept poorly, and was now feeling both tired and discouraged. My energy and spirits were waning. I did not know how much longer I could keep pushing myself.

That morning we gathered together our gear and again resumed the tedious climb. Neither of us bothered to speak more than was absolutely necessary. "Was this the beginning of the end?" I thought to myself. Each step hurt. After an hour of climbing, we finally neared the crest of the ridge. "Let's rest," I panted. I threw down my pack, made an about face, and saw it. "There's the lodge," I screamed. We both let out howls of joy, and embraced one another. After a short rest, we made a bee-line for the lodge. In about four hours, we were in town.

"How about that beer, Gregg?"

"Sure enough," he laughed.

## The Process of Change by Paula Stakenas

How does a person go about making a decision to move herself and her family halfway across the country to complete a Ph.D. towards which she has already completed 24 class hours? I suppose the process is not unlike that used to make any life-altering decision. You gather facts and information, weigh the pros and cons, make the decision, and then accept the consequences of your action. I am currently in the final stage of this process and am finding it the most difficult stage to endure with serenity.

For me the process began in 1984. I had been home full-time with my son since his birth in 1981 while teaching part-time in the Adult and Continuing Education Division at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha, Nebraska. I was ready for a change, full of frustration at watching my husband move forward in his Ph.D. program and upward in his career. I had put off beginning a Ph.D. program because I had always wanted my Ph.D. to be in children's literature, and the University of Nebraska, the only Ph.D.-granting institution within 150 miles, had no such program. But in 1984, as I watched my husband growing more and more comfortable, I reluctantly decided that, if I wanted a Ph.D., I would have to adjust to getting it in Lincoln, Nebraska.

I was accepted into a Ph.D. program in theatre, which seemed a possible alternative if I couldn't pursue my first love. But fall semester, when I received my first schedule book, the only courses which appealed to me were Adolescent Literature and History of Children's Literature. I tried to generate some enthusiasm for the theatre courses offered, but decided to follow my heart and enroll in the literature courses. By the end of the first week, I knew that I could never pursue theatre; children's literature was my field. I earned A+ in both courses, enrolled in two more literature courses the following semester, and began looking at options for a degree in English with a specialization in children's literature at the University of Nebraska. My professors were very encouraging, but were unable to supervise a dissertation.

During the summer of 1985, I wrestled with my choices. Should I stay in the area and make do with an approximation of the program I longed for and deal with my personal frustration, or should I find a program more suited to my educational and professional needs and deal with the inevitable family disruption? A course in Criticism of Children's Literature helped me define my forte and refine my career and educational path, and through counseling, I

learned to accept responsibility for my own future, independent of my husband's choices. I began a national search for a Ph.D. program in children's literature.

When I had narrowed the field to two universities, I applied to both programs, waited interminably for the results of my applications for admission and financial assistance, and accepted the invitation from the University of Connecticut. My dream seemed to be coming true. I had been accepted into the Program for the Study of Children's Literature in the Humanities, the only program of its kind, and I would be able to continue teaching while I studied. I couldn't have asked for anything more.

A seed of doubt began to grow, however, when I received my packet of Ph.D. material from the English Department which informed me of the course offerings and expectations in terms of comprehensive examinations. Nowhere could I find any mention of children's literature or the program to which I had been accepted. Was I contemplating moving myself and my family 1400 miles to study and take exams in Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, all of which I was perfectly capable of doing at the University of Nebraska? I love to read and I love to study. At the College of St. Mary I was the faculty generalist, best known for my interest in and ability to teach everything, but I was making this move for a very special reason -- to get a Ph.D. in Children's Literature.

I was fortunate to be able to meet Francelia Butler from the University of Connecticut at the Children's Literature Association Conference in Kansas City. Our conversations, although necessarily brief, were reassuring and encouraging. She did not minimize the fact that I would have to blaze a new trail, but she felt certain that I would find allies. I came home from Kansas City with my fears temporarily allayed and prepared to move.

And here I am. The decision has been made, but the most difficult part of the decision-making process continues to be a part of my daily life and will be for a long time as I come to terms with what I have chosen. I worry about what's to become of me here at UConn. Will I be able to chart a new course and make it easier for others with similar interests to pursue graduate degrees in Children's Literature, or will I become buried by the related work necessary to complete the comprehensive exams and resign myself to manipulating the system and getting out as quickly as I can? On my positive days I feel strongly that my commitment to my work will carry me through, but there are other days -- days when I hear my husband's despair at having to leave a job and colleagues he loves to take a position he is uncertain about or remain in Omaha without his family, days when I watch my son grieve for his father who has always been an integral part of his daily life and prepare to start kindergarten in

a new and frightening environment, days when I attempt to embrace single parenting with all of its concomitant exhaustion and depression while confronting my own homesickness for the "friends of my right hand" who have been my support system for so many years -- and on these days I am not so positive. I take heart in seeing myself as a risk-taker, but I feel guilty about forcing my family to become risk-takers along with me. My emotions move along a sliding scale from desperation to euphoria, and I am longing for them to come to rest somewhere in my normal range of guarded optimism. Then I will know that this decision-making process has been completed, and I will be ready for the next process to begin.