Verbal Equinox

The Weber State University Writing Center Journal Spring 1994

As I collect thoughts and ideas for this column, perspective from the past comes into sharp focus once again. It was Spring quarter, and I was sitting in Glen Wiese's American Literature class. On that first day of the quarter, we received a handout titled "Some Values of Literature." It listed various assets offered us whenever we become immersed in good writing. One thought in particular stayed with me. It said simply, "Literature can rescue feelings and ideas from 'the jaws of time.'"

During the last two years, I have come to believe that mortals have the compelling need to leave behind tangible evidence of their existence. In March, as we watched Lee McKenzie slip away from us, she provided a powerful example of this philosophy. Even in her weakened condition, she carefully wrote down each visitor, what they talked about, and ideas that came to her in her final moments.

Writing. however humble or majestic, is the offering we leave to time. Words may be hastily sprayed in fluorescent form from a paint can on an alley wall. They may be precisely weighed, measured, and meticulously anthologized. Others survive, carefully carved into stone on a distant, wind-swept isle. They may be stick-scrawled for a frail existence in sand on a beach.

However enduring or fleeting, the motivation for our writing remains the same. By separate means, we declare to an unseen audience, "I, like you, have fought and loved, despaired and understood. I have lived."

In The Immense Journey, Loren Eiseley describes writing's immortal spirit:

I have been accused of woolly-mindedness for entertaining even hope for man. I can only respond that in the deep morning shadows of humanity, the inarticulate creature who first hesitantly formed the words for pity and love must have received similar guffaws around the fire. Yet some men listened, for the words survive.

Anne Robbins
Editor

You thought the day would never arrive, but here it is . . . your piece in print. As we introduce the winners of the 1993-94 Writing Center Writing Contest, we congratulate all the entrants. The judges were pleased with the quality of submissions and expressed delight that their task was so difficult. If your piece was not chosen as a winner this year, do not be discouraged. Too many writers still believe that they either "have it," or they don't, that no progress is possible. The Writing Center philosophy, however, asserts that writing can always be encouraged to a higher plane. As every published author knows, writing ability evolves.

The very nature of writing is process. All the parts of the process may fall into place, step by step in an orderly fashion, or the parts may free-fail--a glorious chaos of language and meaning which must be sorted, ordered, and reordered time and again. Time is the crucial word here, and the most aggravating of concepts. Time cannot be forced. Talent cannot be forced. A contest like this reflects invested effort. All writers must, patiently or impatiently, nourish the creative process in increments of time, volume and critiques.

Both analytical and emotional critiques are necessary. As wonderful as first ideas may be, they can always be improved by revision and careful editing and, as painful as this process is, it is the only means to quality writing. This is not to stifle the creative fire, but to blow gently on the flame. The writer must also be privy to a reader's first unchecked emotional response. An audience is invaluable in leading the writing toward clarity and power, the desired result.

Continue writing. Continue to allow the Writing Center to participate in your writing process. The effort is worth the cost.

Sundy Watanabe
Editor

Featured Poets

CRYSTINE LOVELAND RICHES

UNDRESSING FOR NIGHT

In the cold darkness of
the back bedroom, lit only by a night lamp,
I take off my clothes
to undress for the night.
Shirt in closet, undershirt
and jeans in the same drawer,
bra in the one beneath.
So I sleep,
cold and slim to pay
penance for the day's comfort;
an apology - to the earth,
to God - long hair now
off my neck, twisted into
a plait, hard down my back-

all shelter is gone -

I stand open at my bedside,
Embraced, touched at last
by the coldness of winter.

I shiver in the knowing,
within four walls and beneath
someone else's floor;

Yet these I admit I need
against the inches of snow
and the marks below zero
outside

And few go out naked, sowing shock.
Few minds ever see each other naked,
Touch each other
with a lover's tenderness -
Or, as an infant, come out naked,
full-seen by mother,
all simple needs answered, met.

I stand open at my bedside,
going outside when I may

SUNDY WATANABE

I ONLY WANT WHAT'S BEST FOR YOU: COMPETITION #1

Listen, baby.
I'm whispering to you.
See,
I'm on the fringe of your dream
murmuring wishes:

Conjure up a violin concerto
so crisp and clean it can't be faulted.
Like Moses-
strike the rock.
You can do this.
Never mind the sweaty palms,
the acid tips that strip the fingerboard
of color.
Concentrate,
and issue forth
a grand and glorious
virtuoso.

Don't bite your lip while sleeping Sweet:
martyr arms stretched overhead
and fist clenched tight around the bedpost
wiry, witchling hair
spread fierce upon the pillow,
angelic,
fanned on either side of
lid-locked midnight eyes.

Shh.
I press this incantation into your elbow.
Rest your fear on Mother's broom.

Second Place Essay

EDWARD THOMAS

by

Gavin Harper

The one thing I carried away from an otherwise forgettable British Literature class, in my soul, was the poetry of Edward Thomas. I will always remember his work because of the resounding and inherent poetic style he possessed, the strange personal connection I had with his life, and the two contrasting themes that struggled against each other in his poetry. In my mind, Edward Thomas is not simply a World War I poet. As a result of his nature poetry, he became a person in my eyes, instead of a faceless author. D. H. Lawrence called Thomas "a man full of Exuberance, Vitality, Heroic Vigour, and a dark passional quality" (Smith 27). The stories that I am going to relate to you are captured in Jan Marsh's biography entitled Edward Thomas.

Thomas hated cities, which was probably the first shaping force in his writing career. He took journals with him on nature adventures, often writing for hours. Edward Thomas kept a journal almost every day of his life from the day he turned seventeen. This following journal entry about his mother, for example, was written when Thomas was fourteen years old. It shows his talent, even in his youth.Jan Marsh quotes him as saying:

I liked the scent of her fresh warm skin and supposed it unique. Her straight nose and chin made a profile that for years formed my standard. No hair was so beautiful to me as hers was, light golden brown hair, long and rippling. Her singing at fall of night, especially if we were alone together, soothed and fascinated me, as though it had been divine, at once the mightiest and the softest sound in the world. (Marsh 7)

Edward married Helen Noble, his publisher's daughter, in 1899. His wife became a writer after their marriage and kept a journal at the insistence of her husband. She described the idyllic marriage this way in her journal:

My eyes were opened to the beauty of the night. . .The slender moon rising timidly above the trees laid her spell on the earth, and all was silence and darkness and sleep. On me too she laid her spell. I fumed to go to [Edward] and met him coming toward me. "There's a new moon," he said; "You must wish." "There's nothing left to wish for," I said; "We are in the country and it is spring." (Marsh 17)

He was no longer a faceless bundle of words on a page; he was alive and vibrant. His life was a dream, a perfect dream. There's nothing more beautiful, that I can imagine, than living happily with my family in a secluded country cottage in the English countryside. That's where the connection started, I believe.

After a chance meeting with Robert Frost, Thomas began writing poetry. At Frost's directive, he wrote his first poem at the age of 36--rather late in life, but not too late. His nature poems were "snapshots" of feelings or places that Thomas remembered from his journal. He was always concerned with the color green. It was like a safety blanket for him; if the poetry stopped flowing, write about green. In contrast, I grew up in a desert. The land was red, and orange, and yellow, with shades of blue in the north. Thus, green has always been a mystery to me. The beauty, serenity, and comfort that comes from that simple color has always astounded me. I can never describe the feeling fully in words, for the color is elusive. Thomas's snapshots connected forcibly with me when I read his prose.

> *...green has always been a mystery to me. The beauty, serenity, and comfort that comes from a simple color has always astounded me.*

"It is enough to lie on the sward in the shadow of green boughs, to listen to the songs of summer, to drink in the sunlight, the air, the flowers, the sky, the beauty of all. . .I want to be always in the company with the sun and sea and earth and green." (Marsh 32)

The later themes of Edward Thomas's poetry dealt with the first world war. Thomas joined the battle to protect his country (in both senses of the word-- nation and woods). It was the Glorious Cause that propelled him. He was protecting his precious family from the horrors of the German monster. He wrote his most famous poem "Adelstrop," shortly before joining the Artist's Rifles. His war poetry reflects his patriotic attitude and ideals. He was always protective of nature in spite of the horrors that surrounded him. The glory of war, of course, wore off about a year after his enlistment, but that did not hurt his patriotism at all. (Continued on page 12.)

Neil Hollands is a published poet and an English and debate teacher at Hill Crest High School, Salt Lake City, Utah. He offered the following commentary after judging the poetry entries for the Writing Center Contest last fall.

To The Poets. . .

by Neil Hollands

Thank you for the chance to judge these wonderful poems. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I must have been on the tenth reading of some of these before I could finally decide. Weber State apparently has many literary talents. I ended up choosing the winners I did for the following reasons, reasons which perhaps some of the other writers could learn from. First, the winners all dealt with specific situations. Second, those specifics had implications which were universal, speaking to what I would imagine would be many readers. Third, the language and flow of the winning poems were smooth and matched the tone of the ideas. As with any contest, I'm sure these selections are colored by personal biases, but I found the winners excellent in tone, intelligent in theme, and beautiful in style. My winners are not cheerful poems, but all of them contrast a small optimism with their starkness.

Also, let me leave some thoughts to those not receiving awards. Most important, be careful of overwriting! Some fantastic poems were marred for me because the poet tried too much, in the process obscuring both tone and idea. Adjectives are not the poet's best friend-- nouns and verbs are. Figurative language which does not advance the poem is like lace on blue jeans: it's beautiful, but out of place. Don't write about universal themes (love, death) without a very unique, specific situation. Otherwise, your most important feelings may be dismissed as cliché. Some poems are most beautiful at your own close range. Don't mistake your great emotions for great poetry. Finally, be careful of typos and confusing grammar. These can be killers when entering contests or searching for publication.

Thanks again for hours of enjoyment. There were hundreds of good lines and at least a dozen fantastic poems. Good writing and great revising to all!

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To More Powerful Poetry

Advice from Neil Hollands

1. *Be careful of overwriting.*
2. *Adjectives are NOT the poet's best friend.*
3. *Figurative language should advance the poem.*
4. *Connect universal themes to specific situations.*
5. *Don't mistake great emotions for great poetry.*
6. *Check for typos and confusing grammar.*

Second Place Poetry

Charlie Cuthbertson*

VETERAN'S DAY, AFTER THE READING

Dave, 23 years old,
A towering apparition of Foster's Ale k i c k -boots
and premature baldness
Clutches a soiled cardboard container
Sealed shut by the stickiness
of deteriorating duct tape.
Grinning in the twilit phosphorescence
of naked-bulb wattage,
He comes before us, box in outstretched arms.
"I caught a mouse."

Interrupted, but prepared for such necessities
as these that pack the comers
of our existence,
We slip on our experienced jackets --
For Fall is dying in the whispery breath
of a young winter.
Marty retains his father's army coat,
Hints of its former lush khaki ness revealed
in chevron outlines.
I molt into my down-vacant coat-carcass,
Riddled like the streets outside
with oddly-placed holes.
Dave waits patiently,
Softly shifting the box and pressing his ear,
Expectantly awaiting a rustle or squeak.
His head is cocked, his eyes absorbent.
"It's still there. I can hear it."

Feeling like resigned attendants,
Marty presses the television knob and we are away,
Stepping off the peeling wooden steps of the porch
Into an atmosphere better suited
for creatures with appended pelts.
Dave knows a place. We uncertainly follow
his long pace
as he tramps across the uplifted squares
of cement that parallel our street,
Box still held firmly in his extended arms.

We walk silently, perhaps subdued
By the ever-grinning slice of moon
which hides its gap-toothed smile
Behind clouds cold, but too vague
for snow.
Among our feet are thousands of
Colored souls, crinkly speckles
of leaves far from their sturdy homes
of branch and trunk.
We approach a cove of garbage pails
at the end of a suburban road
Where the leaves are thick on the earth
Behind the rickety metal bleachers of a school field.
We kneel, each taking a comer of tape
and unwrapping our closeted secret.

Dwarfed by an encompassing assortment
of Dave's food residue, plastic wrappers,
and discarded bandages,
A mouse lifts its nose toward the new air.
We tilt the box, Marty tapping the side
in a gentle rhythm,
And as quick as we notice the movement,
He is gone, burrowing 'neath
a blanket of autumnal waste.

Still kneeling, a car with groaning engine
Captures us in its headlight glare,
And we briefly see a hint of life,
A black-eyed recognition of danger
Before darkness descends again.

"I think it bit me," Dave says.

Third Place Poetry

Les Wade

I MIGHT HAVE SAVED A NIGHTCRAWLER

Early this morning I walked along
the rain-wet road next to my yard.
I saw a nightcrawler stretched long and thin
like a small broken branch with
the leaves pulled off

He'd crawled from soaked green lawn,
swam the trickle in the concrete gutter,
slithered across the sand
thrown from winter sanding trucks,
then spewn by black tires
to pile along the edges
of my road.

The crawler had inched to the asphalt pavement
colored black, almost blue with water reflected,
and found a spot, just damp, and escaped
the rain-soaked sod.

I looked up to the peeking sun and
knew in an hour or two my little friend
would shrivel and dry and bake and break
like a pretzel pulled from a celo-sealed box.

I set my briefcase down and
grabbed the slimy worm who scrunched up
fat and short like a chewed-on stub
of a licorice whip.

He wriggled and squirmed
but I pinned him tight against the road
and felt tiny stones and jagged rocks
grate against my finger tips
and dig under my nails.

I picked him up and held him tight,
as tight as I'd hold a rainbow trout,
when I'd try to remove my worm-baited hook.

I flipped my crawler on my lawn.

I saved him.

I saved him for a summer night
when with my flashlight and
on wet-soaked knees
I'd stretch and pull him from the earth
and drop him in an old peach can with
a dozen or two of his brothers and sisters,
till I transferred them
to my bait canteen.

I saved him.

I leaned over and wiped my slime-gooed fingers on
long wet grass to leave behind
the musty, musky, almost fishy odor
of firm fresh worm.

As I grasped my briefcase handle with
my now-wet hand, I looked ahead
and saw thousands, no millions of
long stretched nightcrawlers
soon to be squished and squashed
by feet or black treads
or dried and parched by morning sun.

I set my briefcase down again,
and dried my fingers with a
McDonald's napkin pulled from
my raincoat jacket.

I returned the soiled napkin to my pocket,
grasped my briefcase and continued on,
my eyes straight ahead as I moved to
and walked in the center of the street.

First Place Poetry

Diane Kulkarni

Sisters Can be the Best of Friends

You're in the same backdoor,
tanned, still lean, your hair braided thick,
holding open the screen for me to walk in.
We hug and you show me my room
and I hear you banging dishes in
the kitchen. Your apartment looks
like home with Mom's hand-painted
desk, the rocking chair she recovered
and the two short chests faced with
mirrors that Dad made before you were
born, the ones we had in the room
we shared and divided down the
middle with string to keep our
stuff apart. I sit at Mom's dropleaf
table with you and we drink black
coffee from her chipped Roundup
Rider's mugs while we sneak looks
at each other trying not to be awed
at the way middle age has settled
on our faces. You look like Aunt
Billie when she was young, I say.
You remark how much I take
after the Girton's and I bet you
mean Grandma. Then our visit
flies by and we hit the rapids.
You shout at me for being so damned
dumb and insensitive, how I never
understood when Jim, drunk and mean,
beat you in front of your babies and then
one day walked out for good while you
juggled three jobs to stay together. And how
I could never appreciate despair, the
kind that swallowed Mom when
Dad died and left us. You are sure
I've had everything I've ever wanted.
But you can't hear me crying, and I
only say it once.
We sit quiet awhile, and all I see is
you in the same backdoor,
tanned, still lean, your hair braided thick,
holding open the screen for me to walk in.

First Place Essay

Experiencing Satyagraha: Then and Now

by

Sundy Watanabe

The primary mission of Mahatma Gandhi, the Great Soul, was to awaken India to a knowledge of "Right mind," or in other words, truth. He said:

"I claim to be a passionate seeker after truth,. . .In the course of that search the discovery of non-violence came to me. Its spread is my life mission" (Merton 27).

Gandhi defined his experiment of upholding truth through non-violence as *satyagraha.* As a principle, upholding truth sounds like a lofty practice -- maybe something which can only be practiced by great soul. Nothing could be furthere from the truth. *Satyagraha* is a practice accessible to and do-able by anyone.

Ghandhi's self-declared mission was spiritual. His every act was devoted to furthering the knowledge of truth, and, consequently, furthering the work of God. However, the very nature of his spiritual task required him to be involved in the political arena. Spiritual and secular realms may seem to be at opposite ends of civilization's organizational structure. They might even appear contradictory. But as Thomas Merton suggests in his book, Ghandhi on Non-Violence, the public or political realm for Gandhi was not secular, it was sacred. "To be involved in it was to be involved in the sacred *dharma* (spiritual consiousness) of the Indian people" (8). So while Gandhi was known in England and other Western cultures as a politician, he was the most unusual of politicians. He was filled "with love. . .devoted to non-violence, . . .faithfully warning his opponent of what he was going to do before he did it." (Sheean 134). Essentially, surrendering to the demands of *dharma* was surrendering to God and therefore was a sacred act. Hindu philosophy, with its emphasis on "self-realization and union with God appeared to [Gandhi] to be precisely the same thing as the dissolution of the personality in service to humanity" (151).

Nevertheless, his surrendering was not a passive act or attitude. It was selfless action "as defined in the Gita (Hindu scripture), action for

others, for the truth and for God, without regard for its fruits. ..." (Sheean 151). His involvement was crucial. Everything he did or did not do, everything he said or did not say, had meaning and political significance. Though British leaders certainly did not agree with his principles, and even Indian leaders were skeptical, it was hardly possible to disagree with him. Because he truly represented both the spritual and political consciousness of the Indian people, his influence upon the masses was tremendous. Truth is immovable. "Truth never damages a cause that is just" (Merton 33). Out of Gandhi's imploring insistence upon truth evolved the experiment of *satyagraha.*

She dreamed of verbally "cutting them down to size, " scathing them so badly that they would leave her alone forever.

In 1971, a young girl began her own *satyagraha* experiment. She was only fourteen, a quiet -- almost shy -- girl. Her father owned a small ranch which provided enough money for food, clothing, and shelter, but not much more.

A large ranch adjoined the small one and was owned by a man named McCrea. McCrea had twin daughters, almost the same age as the girl. Between the two ranchers existed a small rift, perhaps because of a water dispute, perhaps because of religious difference. Political or religious, the reason doesn't really matter; it was just so. The rift was never explicitly mentioned, but the children of the ranchers felt it, and reacted to it, just the same.

At school, the twin daughters avoided the girl. Or, when avoidance lost its flavor, they smacked quiet insults -- little things about her clothes, little taunts about being goody-goody. What they specifically said doesn't really matter; their insults just hurt. Sometimes she wanted to run away -- to another school, to another town. Sometimes she felt furious because her pride was hurt. She dreamed of verbally "cutting them down to size," scathing them so badly that they would leave her alone forever. She felt a need to defend her worth as an individual. She had no reason to be ashamed. After all, clothes only covered the body and her efforts to live her religion were private. Anger begets increased anger which in turn begets violence. Violent was exactly how she felt and she didn't like the feeling at all. She was convinced that continuing this uneasy turbulence wasn't good, for her or for the twins. Something had to be done. Whether she gained personally or not, something had to be done.

She had no control over the actions or attitudes of the fathers, but she realized that she could do something to control her own situation. And some kind of action was necessary. Cowardice, running from the problem, wouldn't help. Nor would attempts to simply ignore degrading behavior. "One has to speak out and stand up for one's convictions. Inaction...is inexcusable" (Merton 29). So what kind of action would be the right kind? Not revenge. "Human dignity is best preserved not by developing the capacity to deal destruction but by refusing to retaliate" (65). Refusal to participate in the rift --that was the key. The girl resolved that she would keep peace through her actions.

Now, "The essence of true religious teaching is that one should serve and befriend all. It is easy enough to be friendly to one's friends. But to befriend the one who regards himself as your enemy is the quintessence of true religion" (Merton 62). These people weren't even enemies; they were neighbors. The girl therefore determined that not only would she passively keep peace, but she would actively develop a friendship with the twins. For "unless you have nothing but brotherliness for those who despitefully use you, your resolution that you would stand by the principles of non-violence through thick and thin will have no meaning" (65). "Hatred can be overcome only by love" (32). And so the experiment began.

The first step was to make avoidance impossible. The twins must see her, really see her, in order for any change to occur. So the girl determined to encounter them, on purpose, every day. If they were hanging around by the school radiator, she made sure that she passed by and said, "Hi." If they snubbed her attempt to be friendly, she determined that she could handle it. She would try again. She made a point to call them by name: "Hello, Sherrie," or "Hello, Terrie." If they whispered about it behind their hands, fine; she would try again and again until they acknowledged her.

She had to demonstrate her refusal to retaliate. They must feel her wish for friendship and peace.

It took weeks before they grudgingly returned her hello; *satyagrah* can be a terribly slow process. The girl

It took weeks before they grudgingly returned her hello: satyagraha can be a terribly slow process. The girl had gotten used to no reply. . .

had gotten used to no reply, and so the first time the twins actually spoke to her, she was quite startled. But afterward, she felt a spark of hope. They were making progress. When the girl's friends commented sarcastically, "Well! Finally, they stoop to say hello," the girl defended the twins. She was aware that it takes time for change to occur; it also takes allowance or permission. It begins when concern for the self dies and individual ego is replaced by collective community. And it is not truly peacemaking," if you remain silent or passive spectators while your enemy is being done to death. You must protect (them) even at the cost of your own (pride)" (Merton 58).

A few weeks later the twins were actually saying hello first -- a small miracle. Then they were smiling at the girl. Soon, they were actually trying to go out of their way to be nice to her. One day, the girl heard them defending her and she knew that the rift -- and its subsequent malice-- was vanishing. "If we remain non-violent, hatred will die as everything does, from disuse" (Merton 45).

The girl's awareness of Gandhi at the time was only a recognition of his name. She knew relatively nothing about *ahimsa* (non-violence) as a personal creed, though for Gandhi it was just that: an unshakable vow. She knew even less about *satyagraha* as a political and social action. She wasn't familiar with Gandhi's comment that humanity was at a crossroads and must choose between "the law of the jungle and the law of humanity" (58). Though she knew nothing of these principles intellectually, she came to know their validity. She recognized the validity of Gandhi's principles of non-violence because the spiritual law of love includes ordinary individuals who can participate in its practice. It requires faith. "Successful *satyagraha* is inconceivable without that faith. God may be called by any other name so long as it connotes the living Law of Life...." But with that faith, anyone, anywhere, can follow the path of *satyagraha*.

Works Cited

Merton, Thomas. Gandhi on Non-Violence. New York: New Direction, 1965.

Writing Center Writing Contest 1993 Winners:

Poetry: Judged by Neil Hollands (In the judge's order, out of 54 entries)

1st:	Diane Kulkarnie
2nd:	Charlie Cuthbertson
3rd:	Les Wade

Essay: Judged by Joseph Walker, Columnist for Davis County *Clipper*, Published essayist, former TV critic for *Deseret News*. (In the judge 's order, out of 30 entries)

1st:	Sundy Watanabe
2nd:	Gavin Harper
3rd:	Les Wade

Short Story: Judged by Sally Biship-Shigley, Professor of English, Weber State University. (In the judge's order, out of 18 entries)

1st:	Dan Choate
2nd:	Brent Anderson
3rd:	Patrick Murphy

Verbal Equinox Retinue

Anne Robbins	*Editor*
Sundy Watanabe	*Editor*
Linda Larsen	*Layout*

Contributing Writers
Linda Larsen
Joe! Passey
Crystine Riches
Sundy Watanabe

First Place Fiction

A FRIENDLY SHADOW

(Written for a Young Adult Audience)

by

Dan C. Choate

It was very dark and James was sure that his long-awaited signal would soon come. He kept one eye on her window, as the other surveyed the streets and shadows for anything out of the ordinary. James was young, but he still knew all the hate-te1ms adults used for the kids on his block.

Finally it came -- one, two, three flashes of her bedroom light. The house was asleep. Quietly, James raised himself up, hugging the darkened side of the house. He moved to the front comer where he could look up and down the street. Lights were on in a few of the homes but, for the most part, the line of darkened windows and motionless structures gave a peaceful feeling to the night.

James had his route memorized. Fraziers' had seven large evergreens that bordered the north side of their property line and extended to within ten feet of the street. From there, he could watch the street without being seen. Once there, James had to run forty or fifty feet across the street into Hampton's yard, where they had a hedge that was trimmed low but still afforded the necessary protection. Terri's dad had built a great cedar fence that hid him during the last part of his nightly journey. He climbed the fence to the lower branches of a giant elm and from there it was an easy climb to the large branch, which hung over the roof of her home.

The warm air felt cleaner at night, and seemed to wrap the two of them in a blanket. The lights hung in the low-lying clouds like an aura surrounding some deified being, and to the far south, the refinery looked like a swarm of fireflies.

Like a tight-rope walker, James walked across the top of the house and eased himself down the steep angle of the roof, until he came to the window which protruded like a tiny house. One, two, three light taps on the window. It opened slowly and quietly, just as it had other nights, and just as before, Terri's smile warmed every fiber of his body.

She moved out onto the roof and held tightly to his hand. Together they climbed to the top, where they sat and watched the lights of the city. The warm air felt cleaner at night, and seemed to wrap the two of them in a blanket. The lights hung in the low-lying clouds like an aura surrounding some deified being, and to the far south, the refinery looked like a swarm of fireflies. Darkness seemed to hide all the negativism and hatred that filled the streets by day. They were alone and together, and that was enough.

Terri's five-year-old sister knew of their meetings but thought it "neat" that James would go to all the trouble of climbing the old elm tree just to talk with Terri. There were times she had also wanted to come out and look at the lights, but Terri refused to let her.

Time seemed to quicken while on the roof, and now it was time for James to go. Together they slid back down the roof and Terri slipped into the open window. There was a moment, just before she let go of his hand, when she held on a little tighter. This moment of increased attention replaced the kiss he longed to give her.

Terri's parents had talked several times to her about James. They were not at all happy with the thought of their daughter seeing a boy from the poorer side of town. "He's trouble," they said. "A boy like that will never amount to anything. He'll only get you into trouble." (Continued on page 13.)

Second Place Fiction

FEAR

by

Patrick Murphy

Paul had been in the bathroom for over an hour now. His legs were starting to hurt, but he didn't want to lie down for fear of contamination. Fear of dirt, or mysophobia, was only one of many fears he harbored. Phobias such as parasites (parasitophobia), disease (pathophobia), bacteria (bacillophobia), and personal body odor (bromidrosiphobia), were just some of the situations to which Paul displayed extreme aversion. It came down to this: if there was any chance that it could have gen 1s on it, DON'T TOUCH IT! Things that were porous, public or were somehow generalized to associate with dirt or germs were all on this List.

Paul was lucky to have a job where he could stay at home and process work from his personal computer and then fax it to various places. Computer skills kept him safe from going out, safe from exposing himself to all the bacteria that floated through the air and came to rest on various objects. Needless to say, Paul had no friends, but this did not bother him. With people come germs. With germs come disease.

She spent a good ten minutes talking about the invisible monsters that can live on a little boy's hands -- how they can crawl around the skin and into the mouth, where they gestate and reproduce.

His mother kept the house moderately sanitary, but still it wasn't quite enough to his liking. Ironically, it was his mother who first introduced him to the wonderful world of microorganisms. One of his earliest memories was when he was about four. He had just come from the bathroom to the dinner table when his mother asked him if he had washed his hands.

"No, Mom," was the reply.

She then spent a good ten minutes talking about the invisible monsters that can live on a little boy's hands -- how they can crawl around the skin and into the mouth, where they gestate and reproduce. In tears, Paul rushed to the bathroom and scrubbed his hands. Twenty minutes and half a bar of soap later, he emerged from the bathroom to eat a now-cold meal, left in desolation on the kitchen table. This was how he remembered it.

Now he was thirty-five and lived alone; he had been this way for some time. This is the way he liked it. He moved away from his old house, because it was full of unseen things, and built a smaller one in the country. The air was cleaner there. The interior was white and smelled noxiously of bleach. There were no pictures and no little knick-knacks to collect grey dust. Carpets were out of the question. The floors were all hardwood. The couches were plastic. There was a table and one chair located in the dining room. The kitchen cupboards housed one complete set of dishes that was immediately washed after each use.

Above all other things, Paul did not like to touch door knobs.

His entire washroom was turned into a shrine of cleanliness. There was, of course, the washer and dryer, but also bottles and bottles of various soaps and disinfectants. Sometimes Paul would wash something several times with different cleaning agents Gust to make sure).

The thing that might strike a person as the most peculiar, not that anyone ever had a remote chance of even entering his house, was the Dixie cup dispensers located next to all the doors. These cups had an intricate function. Above all other things, Paul did not like to touch door knobs. He would take a cup from the dispenser, place it over the knob, open the door, pass through, close the door, and throw the infected cup into a strategically placed trashcan. Each doorway had two cup dispensers and two trash cans, one on each side.

Hands were the carrier of germs, and he washed them several times an hour. As an example: when Paul woke up, he (Continued on page 12.)

(*Thomas*- continued from page 3.)
He merely blamed everything on mismanagement and disorganization among the other allies. England could not possibly have been at fault.

Ishould have expected it, but I'm afraid Ilet my guard down while reading his biography. Thomas was shot and killed directly before the battle of Arras,

I like Edward Thomas' poetry because I became personally involved with Thomas himself. I watch his poetry progress from Vournal entries to actual poems. I lfeel the love for his wife and family. I mourn his death. But there is somethng more, something else. Something strange. .

France on April9, 1917. The battle began four days later without Thomas. He was killed in a target shooting accident, by a stray shell. It was friendly fire-- not a very fitting death for a true English patriot.

I like Edward Thomas's poetry because I became personally involved with Thomas himself I watch his poetry progress from journal entries to actual poems. I feel the love for his wife and family. I mourn his death. But there is something more, something else. Something strange...

His poetry was ideal. It was well-written and poetic. He deserves more than to be titled only as a WWI poet. That's not even his best work. His best work was completed alone in the country with a pencil and journal. I am ashamed that the literary canon would relegate this man, my friend, to a small corner in the work of the World War I poets. Thomas is more than that. He is the man who wrought nature into words.

That he should be remembered as a common WWI poet is a travesty. He is a man in harmony with nature and life, above anything else. And even more than that, he was an artist. Remember.

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(*Fear* Continued from page 11.)
would go directly to the bathroom and wash his hands for no less than fifteen minutes. He then brushed his teeth, took a shower, and spent a minimum of another ten minutes again washing his hands.

Surgical gloves were used by the hundreds. They were his saviors. He used them for everything, especially when he went out in to public. Each glove represented a particular step in a process. Paul would put on a glove to complete a step, then throw the glove away before putting on another glove for the next step. Most activities were categorized by how many gloves were used to perform the act: taking the trash out was a three-glove job, getting the mail was a two-glove job and going to the restroom in a public building was a six-glove job.

Unfortunately, one day he had miscounted five gloves for a six-glove public bathroom job. The ever-so-important final glove was missing -- the one that opened the door to leave. Without it, he was trapped. If someone came in, he could block the door open with his foot and escape. Unknown to Paul, the building had been cleared at the end of the work day, and the janitorial crew was not to come in, because of the big, three-day weekend.

He thought about retrieving a used glove from the trash, but it had been contaminated, so that was ruled out. Toilet paper was considered, but he never touched it when he was at home; he took a shower immediately after each defecation. Toilet paper had too many pores where germs could hide.

He then thought about putting his hand on the inside of his plastic coat and using it as a makeshift protector. He was about to grab the handle, when he thought about all the other men who might have used the bathroom. He thought of all those hands touching

their foreign, germ-ridden genitalia. He then imagined those unwashed hands touching the handle, caressing it, as they pulled the door open. When he visualized all those penis germs crawling freely about his coat, he shrieked and jumped back in horror. If the door just swung outward he could kick it open with his shoe, but it carne to the inside, as do all public doors.

"Damn the fire codes. Damn public safety." he thought.

No. He would just have to wait until someone carne in. Then he would be free.

Epilogue

Excerpt from The Oregonian,
Wednesday, September 8, 1993:

MAN FOUND DEAD
IN PUBLIC BATHROOM
OFFICIALS REMAIN PUZZLED

EUGENE, OR. (AP) Tuesday morning the body of Paul Diez was found lying next to the door of a bathroom in the Public Health Building. He was rushed to St. Mark's Holy Cross Hos-pital where he was pro-nounced dead of dehydra-tion.

"We still have this matter under inves-tigation," Medical Examiner Robert Griffin said. "He had a supply of water from the faucets and the door wasn't stuck. If he had wanted to, he could have walked right out."

(Shadow- Continued from page 10.)

Terri couldn't believe that James would ever do anything that would hurt her, so she continued to see him atop the roof

One night, after she'd had a confrontation with her parents, James noticed the tears in her eyes. They talked a long time about the way her parents felt, and about their relationship. It was the first time they talked about how they felt, and the first time they kissed. James walked home that evening filled with confusion. He wanted to be respectful of Terri's parents, but he couldn't give up seeing her. The kiss sealed their feelings for each other.

Fall filled the cold and crisp air. The sun was down but still filled the western sky with burning reds and oranges. Above that, a lavender hue blended into the blue-black night sky. The new moon, corning up in the east, cradled the first evening star. James closed his eyes and made a wish -- it was a wish he had echoed for the past several months.

A cloud of smoke was beginning to fill the sky, as James turned the corner onto Lakeview Street... He began to run. Fear gripped his chest and his heart raced.

Smoke was beginning to fill the sky, as James turned the comer onto Lakeview Street. "Someone must be burning leaves," he thought. A neighbor ran past him, and halfway down the block, James saw Terri's house ablaze. He began to run. Fear gripped his chest and his heart raced. What if-- he had to find Terri.

He ran into the middle of the crowd, pushing, shoving, twisting himself around the neighbors that stood listening to the tragic cry of Terri's mother.

"My baby. My baby!"

James looked at the house. The windows of the main floor were filled with flames and smoke rose out of the side windows of the home. In the bedroom window, the window that had so often framed Terri's face, he saw Emily's frightened face.

"Look!" screamed a bystander, as James realized who it was looking back at him. "There. In the upstairs window!"

"EMILY!" a voice rang out. It was Terri. James didn't have to look. He knew the voice, and felt the horror.

"The firemen! Where are the firemen?" one neighbor screamed.

"They've been called and are on their way," another shouted.

James continued to stare at the face in the window. He could see her lips calling out to her parents, the sound blocked by the glass. *There's no time!* He broke through the line of spectators and ran as hard as he could. *Once more!* He burst across the street and along the fence to the giant old elm. Before he knew it, he had topped the fence and was climbing the familiar branches. Light clouds of smoke began sifting into the tree. Adrenalin fed his muscles, and habit guided his every step. James crossed the big overhanging branch and dropped onto the crest of the roof and then fell to his hands an knees, so he could move faster, as he traversed the black shingles. He could feel the stickiness of the melting asphalt.

Adrenalin fed his muscles, and habit guided his every step.

His heart raced as he thought of falling through into whatever hell lay beneath him. *Focus! Emily is only a few feet away. We'll both make it out.* He reached the window and struggled to push it open. "Stand back!" he yelled. "Move away from the window!"

Holding tight to the eaves, James kicked as hard as he could. She screamed as small pieces of glass lodged in her arms and face. The room began to fill with smoke. "Come with me," he yelled, "Do just as I do."

Quickly, Emily moved to the roof holding tight to him. "I'm afraid. Hold me, James. Please, I'm afraid!"

As they reached the top of the roof, he stopped and held her, wiping the tears away from her cheeks. "Are you ok?" he asked. The calmness of his voice surprised him.

"I want my mom and dad," Emily whined.

"Let's go find them." James replied in a confident tone. "But first we'll have to have a little adventure. Can you hold on around my neck? I'll give you a piggy-back-ride." He knelt and Emily cautiously climbed onto his back. "Close your eyes if you're scared."

"I'm okay." Emily replied.

The roof was getting hotter and James could feel it giving way. His hands were burning and stung from the tiny rocks and hot asphalt.

Just as he climbed onto the branch, he heard a sucking sound and then a loud pop. For just a moment, James stared at the fire, mesmerized by the force of the flames.

"Are you hurt?" Emily asked, "Why are we stopping here?"

"I'm okay, Emily. I was just thinking about the times Terri and I sat here talking." James smiled. "Come on, let's get you to your Mom."

People had been yelling ever since he started running across the street but he hadn't heard them. Now, as he and Emily were corning down the tree, their voices filled the air. James went down first, while Emily, half in his arms, followed his every move. Finally his foot reached the fence, and he helped Emily into the arms of the waiting fireman.

A second fireman rushed James to a waiting paramedic. He put a small plastic mask over James' mouth and told 'him to lie still. Neighbors surrounded the ambulance to see the boy-hero.

While he lay on the gurney, his mind blocked out the commotion and sounds of curious onlookers, and he reflected on the nights that he and Terri had spent on the roof He wondered where they would meet now? Just as they closed the big back door of the ambulance, Terri's blackened face peered in and smiled.

Through the small window, James saw the first star of the night. His eyes fixed on it, and he whispered his wish one more time. Aloud.

A Lesson for the Writer in Each of Us

by
Linda Larsen

When I came back to school last September, everyone in the English department seemed to be mourning the loss of someone close, very close. They were commiserating on the loss of the poet and writer, William Stafford. Each had their own anecdote or favorite Stafford work. Each agreed that personal growth, by way of his contributions, was their common bond.

The name didn't spark the slightest glimmer of remembrance in me. Too embarrassed to admit my ignorance, amid the sea of misty reminiscences that flooded the entire Social Science building, I resolved to find out who he was, and to paddle around until I could find a life preserver in the literary ocean-- something to help shore up what I thought was a fairly well-rigged intellect, but one which was poorly outfitted in Stafford circles. Meanwhile, I continued my facade of nods and agreements on the genius I didn't recognize and the man I had never met.

As I read the list of his published works, I came upon a familiar title, *Writing the Australian Crawl.* I knew that book! In fact, it's a worn favorite that I refer to often. The work stands out so strongly in my mind, that somehow the author's name had been lost. It has always been just "my writer's book."

Stafford looked at the act of writing as a happy journey, one that can bring new gifts to both the author and the reader. Whether jotting down an interesting detail, writing out an outline, or just sitting down and putting pen to paper, each can be a step toward being a writer. This act of "becoming" is on on-going theme in both his work and his life, and he shared his subtle enthusiasm with all who came in contact with him.

At the Portland Poetry Festival, conducted in his honor last year, a fellow writer, Robert A Clapp, called *him* "William Stafford, enabler," and Ursula LeGuin referred to him as "William, the willing giver."

One teacher asked him what would make a good lesson plan. His answer reflected both his views on writing and on life. He said, "Oh -- think of something you said. Now think of what you wish you 'd said. Or think of something you did, and think of what you wish you 'd done." He helped us listen to the lessons of life, and then, if we choose to, write about them. It may sound like an easy path. Perhaps it is.

Once when he was reciting his work to a group in Texas, a woman spoke out from the audience and said, "Your poems are so simple. I could write my own."

He paused before tilting his head and saying, "Yes, but-- you don't." This sounds like he was attacking the woman, or that he was being defensive of his work, but he followed that comment by gently suggesting, "You could write your-- own?"

It took a moment for the audience to understand, but, with that single sentence, he gave her encouragement to write, and urged an understanding of what the written word is. It is not something you can "own." Writing is a lesson in humility, in sharing, and in life. What we do is not ours to "own."

Nothing we have, nothing we experience, nothing we do is a product of ourselves alone. We owe countless other factors to any success we have.

Any experience others have, as a result of what we've done, any benefit they derive, any profit they take away from it, is paid for by the sharing of what they brought to the encounter.

Each ordinary setting, ordinary event, ordinary person, can share with us extraordinary meaning - IF we chose to let them. The things that influenced his life are the same things surrounding me and you: cupboards and button drawers, autumn rain and mountain roads, Post Toasties and the woman next door.

To truly experience, not just to understand, but to be in touch with everyday existence-- that's what he wanted us to have. His legacy is his example of how life should be lived. Each day a connection. Each meeting a convergence. Each reading a union between two minds -- if only for a moment.

Now, when someone mentions William Stafford, I not only know the work, but I feel I know the man. It was an effortless learning, taken the way you might walk through each uneventful scene of life. And then sometimes, you stop. Something wonderful happens. The mundane season of life is interrupted by the quiet beauty of a rose. It calls to us, to pause, reflect on living, and reaffirm life. That's what his work does in an unassuming way.

He was as ordinary as blue jeans, and as unique as a snowflake.

His is a voice that has urged and will urge many to see what is not obvious. To listen to things that are not loud. To become what you don't yet recognize.

Last night I read him again.

And as I read --saw the word breathing on the page-- heard the silence of the moment, and felt the consciousness of my own being-- he was there, quietly lending his extraordinary voice to ordinary things.

I Begin Anew

for ***Lee McKenzie***

And like a jeweled huntn1ing bird
spangled with the vibrant colors
of o n1y life's experiences, I hover
now above a final vortex of bloom,
fragrant and inviting -- and in n1y
own time ***I*** *will enter it*
and know--
know that it is a part of me --
know that in my passing there
I *will find endless flight*
and nectars sweeter than ***I***
have ever known.
And because ***I*** *chose to love this life,*
the words of my mind
that my heart has spoken
will blossom forever before me
and after me
in the memory gardens of those
who loved me.

Joel Passey