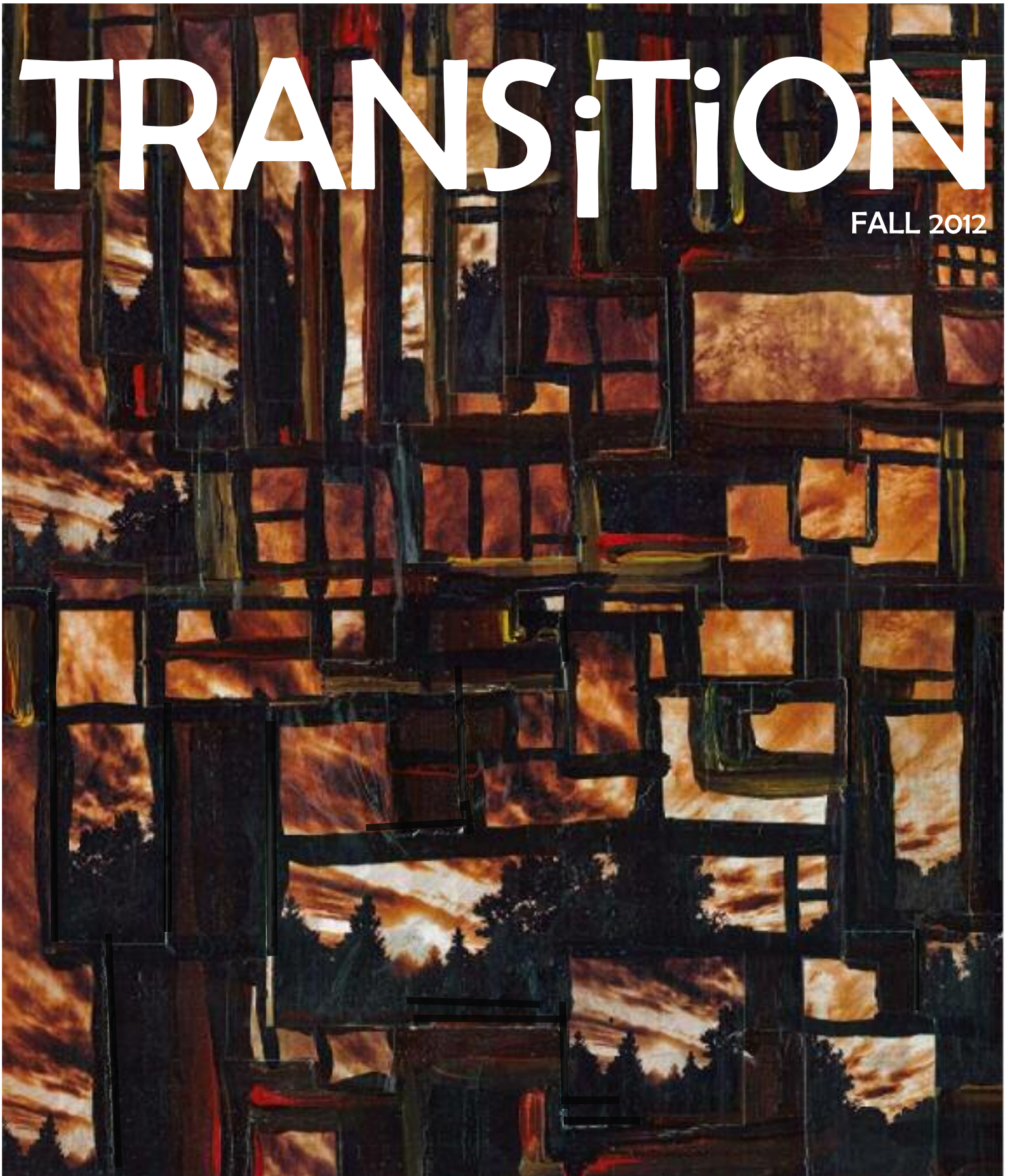


TRANSITION

FALL 2012



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Canadian Mental
Health Association
Saskatchewan
Mental health for all

TRANSITION

PUBLISHER:

David Nelson, Executive Director
Canadian Mental Health Association
(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

EDITOR: Ted Dyck

MANAGING EDITOR: Lynn Hill

Our Mission:

Founded in 1950, The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. is a volunteer-based organization which supports and promotes the rights of persons with mental illness to maximize their full potential; and promotes and enhances the mental health and well-being of all members of the community.

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FRIENDS FOR LIFE PROGRAM RECEIVES GENEROUS DONATION

Regina's St. Basil's Branch of the Ukrainian Catholic Womens' League of Canada, held a mother-daughter banquet Oct. 28 with funds raised going to CMHA Saskatchewan's Friends for Life program. Presenting a cheque for \$7,824.18 to Executive Director Dave Nelson are Oksanna Zwarach, Jean Orenchuk, Mary Vogel, Anne Krenosky and Lorraine Senka (missing Deanna Kaminski). Staff and friends of the CMHA and the Friends for Life program sincerely appreciate this generous donation.

Special acknowledgement is given to the Saskatchewan Lotteries, the United Way, and the Saskatchewan Arts Board, for financial support



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Several things happened on the way to this issue

BY TED DYCK

We received a large number of very good submissions in poetry and non-fiction – and relatively few in fiction. What to do? Publish an issue of poetry and non-fiction and call for an issue of fiction-only asap. I'd been thinking of doing an issue commemorating Byrna Barclay, the original and longstanding editor of this magazine and fictionist *extraordinaire*. So send us your halt, your lame, your sick and blind stories for this focused issue coming in 2013. And stay tuned to the CMHA(SK) website for further details.



TED DYCK

This issue also marks several other celebrations.

First, see our E.D.'s succinct note on a very successful CMHA National Conference hosted by Saskatchewan

Division, and read all the keynote addresses online at www.cmhask.com. Institutional renewal may not be every client's idea of an exciting theme, but it is a totally relevant issue to all of us, and by all accounts, the Conference was a roaring train-ride of accomplishments.

Second, the Final Report on the WFYL Project 2011-2012 is in. *Final* is a sober word, and I confess to a spell of the blues when the project ended. But *blue* is also the richest of colours according to William Gass, and the Project was after all a rich experience for many of us. So plans are underway to determine how best to continue this experience, how to grow the six writing for therapy groups extant into a true-blue communality.

Finally, there is as always the *writing*. The backbone of TRANSITION, the basis for the Project, and a path to a fuller life for our contributors. We thank you – for without you we would be as nothing.

Enjoy.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Mental health is on the agenda

DAVID NELSON, RPN, RSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This fall has been incredibly productive and exciting with the following events and projects taking place:

- In October, we had our National CMHA Conference in Regina. This was a very successful conference with persons from across Canada attending. In addition to solid work done to move our National Strategic Plan forward, entertainment included members of some of our Writing For Your Life groups doing readings (see page 3), the Real Anti-Suppressants, from Regina Branch, and the Healing Through Humour group.



DAVE NELSON

- A regeneration of the Mental Health Coalition will help move the mental health agenda in our province.

- We have had a part-time Systems Networking Navigator to help identify and improve the larger and broader community mental health system in the Regina area as part of the Regina Qu'Appelle Mental Wellness Strategy plan.

- We have published a great book by Jayne Whyte called *Pivot Points – A Fragmented History of Mental Health in Saskatchewan*. This is a wonderful grass-roots community-based history of mental health in our Province. It will be reviewed in *TRANSITION* Spring 2013.

- Pending Government approval, we are working with the Ministry of Justice on a new program to provide community support to offenders with mental health and related issues as they integrate back into society. This is a much needed program and we hope it is approved.

In all, a very productive year, and I thank all staff and volunteers who have made it possible.

WRITING FOR YOUR LIFE

Group plans to build on its successes

WFYL (CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS INNOVATIONS)
PROGRAM FINAL REPORT July 15 2012

[This is a summary of the substantive parts of the project's Final Report submitted to the Saskatchewan Arts Board, September 14, 2012. Readers should refer to the project's Mid-Term Report, Transition Spring 2012, for statements from group facilitators as well as a sample of writing done by individuals in these groups. -- Editor]

1. RESEARCH QUESTION

What is the role of writing therapy in the current movement of recovery-oriented mental health services into the communities?

ANSWER:

Writing for therapy plays a significant albeit modest role in moving recovery-oriented mental health services into the communities.

Significant because five of the six writing group established participated directly in public presentations of their work during the project; and writing done by members from each group was published in TRANSITION Spring 2012 [see #2. Documentation]. Modest because the writing groups are small, from a few to a dozen per session, averaging perhaps five persons per group, yielding a direct, continuing benefit to about 30 persons. Indirect benefit numbers could be rather large, given the large community of branches.

Writing is a low-cost and effective method of engaging language-based aspects of recovery. Writing is integral, even necessary, for the expression of recovery within the community. Writing for therapy is therefore well-placed to be a specific part of recovery oriented, community-based mental health service delivery.

Any long-term impact of the project obviously resides primarily in the continuing success and/or failure of the six writing groups established by it. The WFYL Google Group



Writing for your Life members Adam Staite (left), Gloria Morin, Carol Rempel all members of the Moose Jaw Muse (MJM), Barry Styre from the Weyburn group, Darrell Downton of the MJM, and Ian McIntyre, representing the Prince Albert group attended the WFYL presentation at the CMHA National Conference held in Regina October 18 and 18, 2012



(online) will do what it can to contribute to that success.

Specific infrastructural support was absolutely crucial to the success of this project. WFYL received strong support from CMHA Division (e.g., through the Executive Director, publication of Transition, etc.), Branches (e.g. providing venues), and the Saskatchewan Writers' Guild (inadvertent source of facilitators)

2. DOCUMENTATION

Narrative Summary of the Project

From the beginning, the core goal of the project was to maintain and enhance the old groups, and establish new ones. So the first thing was to set up meetings with the "old" groups (at CMHA branches in Swift Current, Moose Jaw, Weyburn) established during the Explorations Grant (2009); and make contact with potential "new" groups (Eastend, Kindersley, Estevan, Yorkton, at branches or otherwise). The old groups were found to be well, but needing some tweaking, with very capable facilitators and very supportive CMHA branches. The potential "new" group hosts were hesitant. That was the beginning (July to September 2011).

To the middle, then (October to December 2011). By Christmas, the old groups had reasserted themselves: for example, the Swift Current group had generated some local PR, the Moose Jaw Muse (MJM) had run its annual fall retreat; the Weyburn group was working through two branch staff changes. All facilitators participated in the First Facilitators' Workshop, which at last began the fulfillment of another internal project goal – to establish a community of writing for therapy groups in southern Saskatchewan. Two groups made some progress toward moving into the community (see the research question) – e.g., Swift Current was interviewed in a local newspaper and

presented at the branch Christmas party; MJM advertised locally for and hosted their annual retreat.

The new groups had shaken themselves out by Christmas time, too. Eastend was established under close mentorship. Estevan was slowly getting started. The Yorkton Mental Health Drop-In Centre was emerging as the site of a "program" rather than a group. And Prince Albert had come into being through contact initiated by a local facilitator and SWG member, with the support of the local CMHA branch. Three new groups seemed to have begun. A WFYL Google Group for Facilitators was established by year's end and was slowly becoming a communications centre.

The Second Term (January to June 2012) continued these trends. The old groups maintained their strengths and made more moves out into the community – by meeting with other regular writing groups (SC); by hosting a Second Facilitators' Workshop (MJM) organized by WFYL; by participating in the special Transition Spring 2012 issue (all groups). Groups old and new participated in April's Poetry Month, albeit privately. The director established an ongoing liaison with the SWG. The new groups came to their various strengths: Yorkton, relatively strong under close mentoring; Eastend, strong, close to project director; and Prince Albert, very strong, under a capable facilitator.

The end, July 15, arrived quietly. The director collected the exit surveys and began writing this report. All groups are looking forward to their participation in the CMHA National Conference (Regina October 18-19) – both in their public reading and in being featured in Transition Spring 2012, part of the delegates' conference package. The WFYL Google Group remains and will continue to be mentored by the director. Funding for the next year is unfortunately not yet in place,

though SWG is considering partial funding (\$2000-3000) of the cost of travel for a mentor.

INTERPRETATION

First, this survey is about as far from scientific as one can get. Secondly, a median average is thus the maximum "accuracy" allowed. Thirdly, the survey was done in June, when all branch activities begin to slow down for the summer. Nevertheless, the survey supports the "significant albeit modest" answer given to the research question in Part 1 of this report.

Exit Questionnaire Comments

Comments, because they are unrepresentative and skewed toward the positive, must, like surveys, be treated with caution and respect.

Exit Questionnaire Summary

DIVISION [response by E.D. See Exit Questionnaire Comments]

QUESTION: The writing group helped move recovery-oriented services into the community.

ANSWER: NONE LITTLE SOME **MUCH** VERY MUCH

BRANCHES [responses by branch director, or programmer, or facilitator]

QUESTION: The writing group helped move recovery-oriented services into the community.

ANSWER: NONE LITTLE SOME MUCH VERY MUCH TOTAL

NUMBER: 0 0 2 3 1 6

MEDIAN: MUCH

INDIVIDUAL WRITERS

QUESTION: The degree of growth I experienced in Public Presentation through the group was:

ANSWER: NONE LITTLE SOME MUCH VERY MUCH TOTAL

NUMBER: 0 1 6 8 0 15

MEDIAN: MUCH

*“One of the best WFYL years so far. . . .
I can’t believe all the things
we did together . . .”*

COMMENTS FROM DIVISION:

This program has proven to be very popular and effective in assisting persons in their recovery journey.

We have been very pleased to help facilitate this “hands on,” effective support for those we serve.

COMMENTS FROM GROUP LEADERS

(one from each group, randomly ordered):

1. . . . One consumer found herself understanding exercises without realizing what she was doing. Another participant has been published in Transition again. The sense of accomplishment is overwhelming for these writers.

2. . . . writing for therapy brings out into the open the voices of those who suffer long-term mental illness . . . next spring [we] will be launching a collection of [our group's] writing with a gala public event . . . a real celebration of writing for your life.

3. One of the best WFYL years so far. . . . I can't believe all the things we did together . . . especially the [facilitators'] workshop with Reinekke.

4. It [working with the project] helped me as a facilitator to become more comfortable about using writing therapy in my

support groups.

5. I felt . . . that we were helping our community just by being there month after month, helping to open minds. . . . I grew my leadership skills . . . As a group we moved from writing only at meetings using guided exercises to writing at home and bringing our work to the group. . . .

6. The confidence it gives you when you share your writing in public and it is accepted and applauded. . . . Thank you for opening this opportunity to us.

COMMENTS FROM INDIVIDUAL WRITERS

(from the set of all writers' responses):

1. . . . this group has met a need that no other group can . . .

2. I appreciate what the group has done for me – now I'm a writer for life!

3. It inspired me to write by improving my self-esteem while giving me insight.

4. I find most beneficial how the ideas are practically unlimited for writing.

5. [The best thing is] learning to be creative in free-writing exercise themes.

6. I am inspired by the writers in our group and I feel safe.



Art by Donna Mae Johnson



3. INNOVATIONS PROGRAM GOALS

Key: 1 = not at all 5 = beyond our expectations

Access

The residency provided innovative opportunities and access to arts and culture in the community.

(Please circle) 1 2 3 4 **5**

Artist's Practice

The residency met the artist's need for time and space to develop his/her own artistic practice.

(Please circle) 1 2 3 4 **5**

Development of the Arts

The residency encouraged the development of future artists and arts groups in the province.

(Please circle) 1 2 3 4 **5**

Partnerships

The partnerships that developed over the course of this residency will have a lasting impact in the community.

(Please circle) 1 2 3 4 **5**

4. ARTIST'S REPORT

Residency's impact on artist's practice:

My career has for some time been moving toward writing for therapy. My recovery from severe clinical depression in the mid-90's included the usual steps – psychiatric and drug therapy; self-chosen outing; involvement in mental health advocacy. I began a systematic study of depression. When the opportunity arose, I became the editor of a mental-health magazine, Transition (CMHA[SK]), and organized a group for writers with mental health problems during a residency at the Festival of Words [Moose Jaw]. This opened up an area of writing too thoughtlessly slighted by ordinary writers, I learned, and I began to study writing for therapy as I worked with this group.

This WFYL residency is therefore a natural extension of my development as writer – it helped me learn in the trenches what writing for therapy could be and what it sometimes failed to become; it gave me the opportunity to experience first-hand the humility and joy of seeing people write themselves into better health; it directly fed my other, more ordinary writing and editing (poetry, prose, criticism). For example, one sequence of poems, several essays and short stories – written during the residency – directly reflect my changed attitude. I have guest-edited a special issue on mental health for another magazine during this time; and in public readings and conference presentations I regularly incorporate mental health issues.

Community high-points:

Here I note two high-points, one for the community of the writers' audiences; another for the community of the writers themselves.

1. Audiences are always bewildered, first, then astonished, and finally moved by what these writers can do. Naturally, staff, relatives, and friends are initially stunned that the "mentally ill" persons they knew are prepared to go public, especial-

ly as they themselves, the audiences, are often immobilized by the stigma they so fear. When these "mentals" get up and read their works, one can see the astonishment on the faces of their audiences – how were they to know that, rather than being ill, "Johnny" was actually gifted? Astonishment gives way to emotion as the fervor and meaning of "Jane's" writing works its power on those who thought they knew her but were mistaken.

2. Through the community of writing groups and workshops, the writers learn that what they are feeling is both important and expressible. Important because it is their very own version of the human condition that afflicts all, but is kept hidden by most. And expressible in a supportive environment that encourages sharing and respects the author's words. The emerging writer's first question of her/his writing support community is usually But did I get it across to you? This innocent question is a writerly question about how s/he has expressed what. And my experience is that when the writer's attention moves from what [experience and the pain] to how [the expression of both], that's when the healing begins to happen.

How to succeed as an artist and a community:

If you know your art and your community, you'll succeed; otherwise, not.

5. STATEMENT OF EARNINGS

Canadian Mental Health Association
(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.
Writing for Your Life
July 2011 to July 2012



Revenue:

Saskatchewan Arts Board	\$35,000.00
Fee.	46.00
CMHA Sask. Div.	2,3810.00
Total Revenue	\$37,427.00

Expenditures:

Travel Out of Town	\$7139.00
Courier Expense	25.00
Project Expense	30,000.00
Sundry	263.00
Total Expenditures	\$37,427.00
Net Surplus (deficit)	\$0.00



The gift

BY CATHY BENDLE

It arrived when I was somewhere between eight and 14, and was put to work immediately. Despite this, I do not remember how it arrived, have few inklings as to what it looks or sounds like, and even fewer as to how to turn it on and off. Neither I nor my family had any idea it even existed until a few years ago, and even those closest to me cannot tell you how often I used it, or when. Yet The Gift has been an integral part of my life for over 40 years. To this day I rely on it, although not in the way that I did even five or six years ago. Many aspects of The Gift are in pretty poor shape, and cannot stand sustained use anymore. Still, it has been one of the most valuable things to ever enter my life. I daresay I could not have survived without it.

A few years back I was going through some tough times and found a skilled therapist to help me understand the problem. I have to admit that I was somewhat taken aback when he diagnosed me with PTSD-related Dissociative Tendencies. Being the academic type, I immediately sought definitions. PTSD -- I knew that one. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is the reaction a person has to very bad incidents. In soldiers, it used to be called Shell Shock, and it is all over the media right now because of returning warriors. The concept of dissociation, however, took a little longer to grasp. Basically, it is a coping mechanism for PTSD—a way of detaching the mind from an emotion, or even from the body itself. People who dissociate can feel like they are in a dream, or outside of their body watching something happen, or even become so detached that they “become” a different person. Dissociation at its strongest is *The Three Faces of Eve* and *Sybil*.

So this guy thought I had a tendency to disconnect when confronted by a bad event or memory? Bull. I had never forgotten, downplayed or denied what I went through. Instead, being fairly intelligent and well-read, I actually tended to analyze situations and my responses to them. For example, I felt a tiny bit teary when I had to describe the locations and situations of my abuse, but I was still able to clearly describe them to the authorities because I could step back and analyze the situation. I knew they needed all the facts to prove what happened to me, so I had to give them those facts. Bawling would have just drawn out the process. As for being “gappy” during some—ok, several—therapy sessions? I’m middle-aged and have a busy life. Maybe I’m even ADD. It’s normal for anyone to have distracted moments. I was willing to accept that I may have a mild version of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but I would have known if I dissociated. After all, I notice and analyze behavior. It’s what I do . . .

But time and therapy worked their magic and I stopped justifying my behavior. I learned the difference between accepting what had happened, and separating myself from it. I learned that dissociation is something that everyone uses to respond to everything from boredom to torture, and that the level of the dissociation is what is important. I began to under-

stand that daydreaming about a better job while toiling at your desk, fantasizing about that hunk that just went by, “soldiering up” under horrible conditions, or being calm during accidents or disasters, are all aspects of the concept of dissociation. And I found out that I did dissociate, a lot. Sometimes I could recognize it, such as when I was very intellectual about bad things. Usually, though, I didn’t know it happened. That is the way of The Gift.

Eventually, with careful guidance, I started to recognize, then resist, moments of dissociation. Sometimes I would sense that I was withdrawing, and could carefully inch myself back into the situation. I learned that if I become mute, I am likely not “thinking,” but actually using The Gift to retreat from the situation so that I can view it from afar. I’m a pretty visual thinker, so for me, The Gift was something down and to the right of my point of focus, and several meters out of reach. It was like a tall, thick, castle-like wall made of huge, rough, crystal clear, unbreakable blocks reaching higher than I chose

I learned that dissociation is something that everyone uses to respond to everything from boredom to torture, and that the level of the dissociation is what is important.

to look, and extending into the ultimate distance on the right. Tucked safely behind the left edge--within sight, but far from my emotional center--was whatever had currently invoked it to spring into use.

After years of grappling with my past, I felt that I had outgrown The Gift. I remember the night I dreamed that it’s clear, impermeable wall was cracking and clouding. Over several months it crumbled into a pile of huge, misshapen, moss-covered blocks. But it was not gone. The Gift was diminished, but not destroyed, for there were still times when it appeared, holding issues back from me behind its fully-restored form. More and more often, however, it did not come at all. I knew I was getting stronger, and no longer needed it to protect me from the truth of my life.

But The Gift is powerful and adaptive; it has known me better than I knew myself for years, and it exists to protect me. Long after I thought I understood it, I learned of another aspect of its complexity. I became aware that I was slipping into a familiar space that I did not remember. It was soft and white, like fog with bright sun starting to burn it off, and there was pleasant music just on the edge of my hearing. Everything was hazily comfortable and inviting. Pulling back, knowing that I was there just to avoid something that I would eventually have to deal with, was difficult. The tunes floated in my heart and I wanted to listen as I rested in the sunny cloudiness of dissociation.

The Gift does not want to be noticed, either. It gently distracts and pulls me away. It pretends it does not exist while it



WRITING THE LIFE - NON-FICTION

urges me to nap or daydream or switch topics. It wants to protect the vulnerable side of me, and examination reduces its power. Just writing this piece has taken weeks, as I would begin and then realize I was sleeping, doing dishes or playing a game—anything but the writing that I so enjoy. When I approach “dangerous” topics in my writing, The Gift nudges my fingers and thoughts awry so I am practically illiterate, and it is often impossible to read what thoughts leaked their way onto the page. I must immediately fix the errors, or I will forget what I had meant to say. Thus, by resisting exposure to the world, The Gift still tries to protect me from exposing myself.

It is also stronger and wiler than I ever knew. When I first wrote this article I thought I had found all the faces of The Gift. It was wall, a cloud, a distraction. But shortly thereafter I realized that The Gift was still strong and active. It was sudden bouts of sleepiness, focus shifting to something like the shape

of my hand during pain, even argumentativeness. It was all that and, I suspect, more. The Gift is still strong. I may have disarmed some of its tools, but it is still here, striving to fulfill its purpose of protecting me from that which causes me pain.

I know that some find dissociation disquieting. I do not. I think it is a gift of kindness, saving me from the unmanageable. I have changed and grown more powerful and have been able to relax my dependency on it. I did not want to lose it, but I could not be whole if I continued to hide behind its wall or within its softness. Although it still tries--and I can still allow it-- to take over when I undergo negative physical or too-intense emotional situations, its power to shield me has been reduced. Thus, in resisting the pain with my own power, I become stronger and less in need. Yet I will remain always grateful for being given The Gift. It came when I needed it most.



Earth Spirit by Judy Swallow

Portrait of a psychometrician

BY SHIRLEY CALLAGHAN

My education began when I was four years old. I followed my father to school and passed Grade One with all the rest of his class. He was pleased with my success and continued to be proud of me in the years ahead. With my father as teacher in my early grades in a one-room country school, I learned the importance of achievement. With hard work, I excelled every year up to Grade 12 in Summerside High School, winning the Governor General's Medal in Grade 10 and coming third for PEI in The Maritime Board. When I entered Mount Allison University on a Sharp Scholarship, I found that the standards were high and I had to study long hours, but strong affirmation from my sociology and psychology professors led me to consider a career in Social Work. When I was 19, I had completed my third year in an Arts Program, was active in the Choral and Psychology Societies, elected to Women's Council and chosen to represent Mt. A. at a conference on "Technology and Man" in Guelph, Ontario. Everything was in place for an enriching fourth year, but unforeseen life events loomed ahead.

For that summer, hoping to get some experience in my chosen field, I had successfully applied to the Maritime Home for Girls in Truro, NS. I was to live on the third floor of one of the brick buildings in the compound in a room that was dimly lit by a small window with plastic curtains, and furnished with a small cot, worn table, chair and wardrobe. The other counselor in the room across from me was a middle aged woman who was kind but shared no interests with me.

Although the girls were there for delinquency, I had no access to their files and never knew just what they had done. There were rumblings of theft, acting out, sexual promiscuity, and alcohol abuse. I do not recall who gave them therapy, but we counselors supervised them in cleaning, gardening, sewing, studying, and cooking. An inexperienced college girl was no match for these hardened young women, even though I believe I was well liked by most of the 12 in my group. They were not the saddle-shoed girls with pleated skirts and wool sweaters in my school experience.

While I was working at the home, I became overwhelmed with the demands I had put on myself. I was working late into the night on my paper for the conference in Guelph, as well as putting in long hours acting in a local theater group, which increased my drive to achieve as an actress. Sleep was becoming a problem as my mind was overactive, but I did not seek out any medical advice. My judgment in interpersonal relationships was poor, and I trusted everyone indiscriminately. I sought out peace in a little cabin I had discovered in the woods off the grounds hoping to collect myself and prove myself to matron; however, the girls were becoming unmanageable, and I was experiencing delusions of grandeur.

It all came to a climax one day when I returned from the Neptune Theater in Halifax with my acting group and found my building in chaos. An 11 year old resident had broken into

my room, stolen money and jewelry, and had lodged herself in the attic. An 18 year old who was pregnant had gone missing, and the rest of the girls were agitated and uncontrollable. I was too confused to care, let alone intervene. Matron put me on the phone to my parents that afternoon, and the next evening they were there to take me home. My father had stitches in his nose, but I found the accident in which he had broken it funny. He was not amused. I sat in the back seat feeling that I was riding among the stars and being transported to my rightful place, while in front my parents sat in stony silence.

After my father phoned for help, he drove me to Hillsborough Hospital where an Irish psychiatrist admitted me at once. I was content to be in a temporary royal residence and was regal in my bearing. ECT was soon administered and I lay periodically in a bed waiting to be rolled in for treatment. The psychiatrist had told me on admission that I was a very sick girl and now I believed it. When reality began to set in, it was my first step to recovery. Other interventions came into play and I was a model patient. I made a dress in OT, went on outings to town, walked with other patients, and went to group activities while making friends with the residents. A few friends from my home town dropped in to visit. Months passed and my mother brought me changes in clothes and took me home on weekends. My father's spirit was broken, as he could not bear the shame and decline of his promising daughter.

After months of treatment I became resigned that I would remain in hospital for life. However, I began to examine my defeatist attitude as I recovered, and I was discharged with stringent follow up procedures of psychotropic medication and frequent psychotherapy. My psychiatrist was a directive psychotherapist, firm and warm, and I remained in his care until he retired in 1986. One of my colleagues said, "You are the daughter he never had." He would deny this vehemently, but he was a father figure to me. When my husband and I married in 1974, I saw three faces in church: my father's beside me, my psychiatrist's in the pew to my right and my husband's at the front waiting for me. Some of the things I learned in therapy were that I had to face my illness, my anger, and my losses, but that I was capable, likeable, and had more friends than I knew. This went a long way for me. Now, I see my psychiatrist periodically, and we talk; he tells me that he is 86 ½ years old, and I see his small frame and worry about his macular degeneration and his heart and him.

After my discharge in 1963, I took jobs as a filing clerk, auditor, sales clerk, and pharmacy helper. I was accepted as a dental assistant trainee until the dentist realized my dream was to return to Mount Allison. In 1964 an attempt at summer school in Sackville proved too much, but I returned to get my credit in the fall. Taking advance courses in that period was hampered by my poor concentration, and I stayed at home until the next fall semester. After a lighter year of four courses, however, I received my BA in 1966, restoring my belief in myself and my family's pride in me. My father held his head high. A recurrence of my illness set me back but was resolved, and I



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had three job opportunities. At Canada Manpower in Woodstock, NB, I was paid well as a counselor, but was isolated, unhappy and depressed. When I returned to the Island, I chose not to accept a teaching position and applied for a job as a psychometrician at the very institution where I had been a patient. I was surprised but happy to be accepted. In a way, I was home. I began work in July, 1967.

It was not obvious at first whether this job would be long lasting, as my past was well known at the hospital and not every supervisor was comfortable with my history. However, over the years most psychologists were kind and understanding, and they became friends. There were lengths of time when I would be on my own and nervous, even if free from demanding instructors. Two patients were resentful of my change in status, saying, "Look at her!" and "She will be back." I carried on. The first year was quite challenging as I learned to administer intelligence and perceptual tests as well as personality inventories under supervision. It was exciting to assess these areas of functioning. I made a grave error in 1968, however, by taking a spontaneous group tour to Europe. My medication did not hold me, and I tried unsuccessfully to reach a doctor in Rome. The group leader knew I was ill and kept me close at hand, but when I arrived on the Island I needed hospi-



Three eyes are watching me by Lori Glier

talization at once. I had regressed, but remarkably my doctor helped bring me back to health quickly, and I was grateful to be accepted back at work.

Other breaks were rare, as I was under close observation from my psychiatrist who was there beside me daily at the hospital and monitored my medication closely. Work continued to be fascinating. There were no psychologists in the school system at that point, so the staff psychologists and I would go to schools and test whole classes. It provided a whole new clientele and we traveled from one end of the Island to the other. Working with children of varying abilities was a refreshing change. While initially I did only testing, in later years I began interviewing and found that my reports were rounded and helpful. I was instructed by my supervisors, however, to report results, not to interpret the tests. My supervisor also stated that the only referring agents were to be psychiatrists.

After being based at Hillsborough Hospital for 15 years, I was moved to the psychiatric unit of the new Queen Elizabeth Hospital where the acute patients were treated. It was a pleasure to be here, and I assessed the mentally challenged, the gifted, all social strata, and many professions. In 1980 I was privileged to be sent to the Clarke Institute of Psychiatry in Toronto as an unofficial student to study testing for organicity, and here I was exposed to the Luria, a Russian technique. It was nine months to remember. I was fortunate to keep in contact with the psychologist there for months after for guidance in the new tests I had learned at the Institute.

My career as a psychometrician lasted 37 years and for the most part I was the only one on the Island. I continued to learn throughout this time, but never sought more responsibility as I wanted to keep well and not put excessive stress on myself. I think I was wise as I stayed happy, and believe I performed my role very well, satisfying clients and my referring agents.

During the last 25 years I have been under the care of a gifted and dedicated British psychiatrist who came to the Island in 1973. He focused on insight-oriented psychotherapy with me and monitored my medication. Early in his practice he was recognized to be an expert in psychotropic treatment. Over the years he guided and encouraged me in challenging times psychologically, but was also key in my professional contribution at the QEH, seeing that I received help when I needed it and that I was given chances for study on and off Island. He kept me functioning at my peak during this period. I consider him to be not only a devoted psychiatrist but an enduring friend.

When I retired there was a long period of adjustment, and I relied not only on my psychiatrist, but on family and a close friend, a psychologist, who was always there for me. My loyal and caring husband of almost four decades has helped me, laughed with me and believed in me.

After 50 years of coping with a major illness, I have learned that with help one can recover and live a productive life. I am blessed with people who care, and I have hope not only for myself, but for others who travel this difficult road.

Aftermath, with musical accompaniment

BY JAMES DEAGLE

Sometimes I catch myself adrift on the waters of the early years of our friendship, a time of homemade comics drawn in pencil and stapled together with the loving care of nine-year-old hands, of daring espionage missions in the woods behind the high school, and of secret forays into your older brother's record collection when no one else was home.

On that last note, one incident in particular stands out. We were listening to Supertramp's *Crime of the Century* on his turntable, which was on the bottom of three makeshift shelves held up by small L-shaped brackets. The speakers, along with the world's largest jar of pennies, were perched on the middle shelf. Somehow I got the big idea that we should turn the bass up to 10, because full bass made all music sound louder and cooler, which in turn sounded like a good idea to you. So, you turned the knob as far to the right as it would go, whereupon the right bracket of the middle shelf gave out, causing the jar and right speaker to slide and fall onto the deep pile carpeting. By some miracle, the jar as well as the right speaker remained intact, while the left speaker got wedged between the bottom

and middle shelves. Supertramp weren't so lucky.

In a white hot panic we got the shelf, the jar of pennies and the speakers back to our approximation of their previous state, and slid the newly-scratched record into its sleeve and back into the red milk crate as if nothing had happened.

* * *

Almost 20 years later you took your own life without leaving a note.

Your exact reasons will never be known, and I am now almost 13 years into a bottleneck of conflicting emotions just thinking about it. With each passing year, however, I feel just a little more indifferent. My long-term goal is to be completely blasé. I hope you understand.

Why is this coming back to me now, all these years later? It is because I had *Crime of the Century* playing in the car yesterday, and it took me back to your brother's bedroom in 1981, and then through a wormhole to that phone call from Rick in 1999, telling me that you had hung yourself.

My emotional basement has had a minor flood, but now the drain is clear, the water is receding, and life simply goes on. I hope you understand.

Addiction

BY ELAINE MARIE DITNER

All right! I admit it. I am an addict.

Oh, it started out so innocently. I was looking for a little hobby for my 89-year-old mother—something that would be a quieting yet productive pastime to capture her interest and provoke a little creativity in the times she was alone. She took one look at the colourful little beads I had purchased and remarked, “I don't think so.”

What a dilemma! She would have nothing to do with the bags of colourful beads. Should I give them away, allow someone else to play with them, create with them? The question plagued me for several days.

Reluctantly, I opened the bags and spread out the beads. One by one I mixed and matched until I had created key chains. Each had its own charm; each was a unique creation of my imagination.

Soon I tired of key chains and began the adventure of making little bracelets. Each had its own charm; each was a unique creation of my imagination.

Each foray into the bead store yielded two or three new

packages of more exciting beads—round beads, silver filigree beads, tiny black mother of pearl beads, glass cylinder beads. Well, you get the picture.

I bought small plastic compartmentalized boxes to hold the various categories of beads. The variety of beads began to overwhelm me. I dreamed of beads and new combinations and I had now branched out into necklaces. Each had its own charm; each was a unique creation of my imagination.

One day, as I looked at the splendour of the fruit of my hobby, I realized that I had joined the ranks of the addicted. No longer could I pass a store that sold beads without entering “just to see.” It was time to evaluate what was happening to me.

As I took stock of this compulsion, I began to see the benefits of this hobby. I saw that, as I spent time quietly creating, I was becoming quieter, more peaceful inside. I was aware of an interior joy in allowing myself the space and time to honour the creative process that was unfolding in me. I came to the conclusion that the benefits far outweighed the disadvantages of seeking out pretty new beads whenever I got a chance.

I love the bead and the bead loves me!



Victory in defeat

BY ASPEN GAINER

I have a secret: I'm disabled. I don't have a sticker, and no doctor has ever confirmed it. You can't tell by looking at me—at least, not most days—but my disability is there where you can't see it and where I have desperately hidden it for as long as I can remember.

The Canadian Oxford Dictionary defines disability in the following way:

disability 1a. a physical or mental injury, disease, etc. **b.** the condition of having such a handicap. **2** a lack of some asset, quality, or attribute, that prevents one's doing something. **3** incapacity created or recognized by the law.

disable 1 render unable to function. **2** deprive of an ability.

disabled 1 having reduced physical or mental abilities, esp. through injury or disease. **2** for the use of people with physical disabilities (*disabled parking space*). **3** made incapable of action or use.

By those definitions, which are consistent with online definitions I found, I am disabled. I lack some asset, quality, or attribute that prevents my doing something. I am rendered unable to function every year. I am deprived of the ability to live and function normally. I have reduced mental abilities through "disease." I am made incapable of action or use. So which disability do I have? I'm not sure yet. I am in the process of pinpointing it. It's mental and so far, it looks a lot like depression.

Oh, well, depression. That's a familiar word; everyone is a little depressed. I should just suck it up; get over it. "Pull your head out of your ass," as a friend kindly told me once. I've heard it all and told many of those same things to myself. I have spent ten years or more hating myself because I don't live like others. I can't function like most of the people that surround me. I feel like a lesser human being than everyone else and it makes me feel guilty and worthless, among other things. I am sorry I am a screwed-up and inconvenient burden that you have to deal with; the moodiness and irrational outbursts and general lack of proper humanness. I would give anything to change.

I have spent approximately ten years searching for an answer to the question of what is "wrong" with me. It's not normal to spend six months of the year crying—and I don't mean just a few trickling tears; I mean sobs of desperate heartbreak. It's not normal to stay inside the house for a week at a time because I can't deal with the outside world. It's not normal to be able to rank my levels of exhaustion from 'mildly comatose' to 'completely vegetative.' This is what I've learned; I'm not normal.

I rarely talk about how debilitating my 'sadness' is to anyone, even those closest to me. My secrecy isn't really intentional anymore; it just feels too heavy to place that burden on the shoulders of someone I love. And yes, I have been on the verge of suicide before, according to definitions I've read. But I've never actually *wanted* to kill myself; it's just something

I've used to make me feel better...I could end it all if I really wanted. So I've never considered myself truly in need of 'help.' But a few months ago, something changed my mind.

Last November, I woke up on Thursday the 10th to start work on a project as part of my current degree program. I'd left it too long; there were some technical aspects I didn't understand and there was no way I could figure those out and then do the project in eight hours. I was in three classes—just enough to classify as full-time but not enough to overwhelm me, I thought. But my usual yearly depression hit a lot harder than I expected. I had struggled with debilitating exhaustion, moodiness and lack of motivation. I didn't have the energy to care if I passed my courses.

My lack of investment scared me—it was my last semester of classes before the work placement I am currently in. I had to get six more credits before I could actually start the work placement which is the last piece of my degree. If I wanted to graduate in August 2012 like I planned, I *had* to pass at least two of my three classes. But I was having a hard time caring about basics like eating, showering and even leaving my bed. Homework was a completely different planet.

In the midst of my panic, I remembered that November 10th was the last day to drop a course without academic penalty. A saving grace; but if I dropped the course, I'd become a part-time student. I was afraid they might revoke my student loan and I knew part-time student benefits didn't include the free school counsellor I had been seeing for help. In the end I



Art by James Skelton

*The edge of my depression never wears off.
The pain is always a crushing shock.
The intensity is always breathtaking.*

decided to drop the course so that I wouldn't fail it. It was a hard decision but I didn't want a fail on my transcript.

Maybe it was the stress, but that morning triggered an extremely deep depression, the worst I have had in more than five years. It was abrupt: one minute I was relieved and the next minute I was sobbing hysterically. I could barely drag myself to bed, where I remained for more than eight hours, alone. My roommate and my boyfriend were both out of town and I'm grateful for that. I wouldn't want anyone to see me like that.

I fell into an almost infantile state—I would cry and moan for an hour or so until I was thirsty or hungry, at which point I stumble out of bed and downstairs to the kitchen. I'd get water and some crackers and drag myself back to bed. The unconscious trip I make ten times a day without thought became a marathon; each muscle burned and wobbled with every stair.

The whole time, part of my brain remained distanced like a critical observer able to think and measure what I felt; but most of me was consumed by the deep, soul-crushing pain in my chest. I have nothing to compare my depressive pain to. I've never felt anything else like it. A hard break-up comes close, but that pain just makes me want to work it away and the edge wears off in a few weeks or a month. The edge of my depression never wears off. The pain is always a crushing shock. The intensity is always breathtaking.

As I lay in bed, sobbing, I started thinking of ways to make the pain go away. I fell into a pattern that often helps—I spin through my mental contacts list, searching for someone I could talk to. Generally I never call but I often imagine our conversation and it helps me feel better. The few times I actually call, I rarely talk about my emotional state. I just say I am a little sad or melancholy or lonely. It's usually enough to hear about a friend's day and talk about something normal. I feel better and can bring myself out of the black hole. But that day I didn't want to talk to anyone.

It's hard to explain why I don't like to talk when I'm depressed. Mostly it's an attempt to shield others. I truly believe it's unfair to talk to someone about depression unless they are trained to deal with it. I don't want to put that kind of pressure on the people I love, and I know it's a burden. When someone is depressed, it's natural to try to cheer them up and when you can't, you feel confused, sad and angry.

Anyways, I knew I needed trained help and a friend might just unknowingly make me feel worse (guilt into self-hatred and downwards from there). I was pretty scared because I felt myself slipping beyond my own control, but one thing reassured me: I didn't have the energy to lift my head, let alone hurt myself.

I wanted to call someone, maybe 911 or the Distress Line, but I wanted to know what I was getting into first. I dragged myself to my computer and sat there, sobbing, while I looked for help. Nothing. I even searched the term "suicide" and found very little useful information. What I wanted was a step-by-step explanation of what would happen when I called the

Distress Line or 911. Like: 1. Place the call. 2. Talk to a professional. 3a. Feel better; or 3b. Still feel bad. 4. Ask for help. 5. A knock at the door. 6. Off you go to the psych ward at U of A, where you stay for the night on suicide watch.

The only picture I had of what might happen came from Hollywood. If I called someone, would they trace my call and send a cop car over to arrest me and force me into a psych ward? Or would they just feed me useless banalities that would alienate me even more and push me closer to the edge? I had no idea and I still don't know because I couldn't find a single page on the internet that explains what happens in Alberta when you are suicidal and reach out for help.

I did find a letter on an Australian website to people who are suicidal. It was a little cheesy, but overall it was pretty ok. There was one line, however, that really stuck with me: "Suicide happens when a person's emotional pain overwhelms the resources they have to deal with emotional pain." Bingo. Exactly what I was experiencing. My emotional pain was so deep that I didn't know how to make it go away. Sometimes I go for a walk or do yoga—the exercise helps—but I could barely get out of bed, so exercise was out and I couldn't think of anything else. Depression actually shuts down your ability to think. I couldn't call anyone because I forbid myself to burden them, (even though I know they would want me to call). I had no resources left, but I had to end the pain in my chest. I couldn't deal with it anymore.

After that line, this letter said one more thing—*sleep on it*. If you are thinking of killing yourself, just sleep on it. Wait one more day. Deal with it for one more day and maybe it will be better tomorrow.

I was afraid. I was alone. Thankfully at that point, sleeping on it was actually something I thought *could* do. I tossed and turned, trying to sleep even though it was the middle of the day, but I couldn't stop crying and that scared me even more. Finally, desperate, I just started thinking "breathe in, breathe out," and then I remembered how important breath is.

There is research that shows controlled breathing actually changes brainwaves to alpha waves. We emit these alpha waves when we are in a trance state, like hypnosis. Alpha waves are responsible for the euphoria we feel after yoga, meditation, sleeping, and other relaxation activities.

So I started breathing through my sobs—it was harder than you might think. But as I breathed, I stopped sobbing and was eventually able to sleep.

I woke up three hours later and things started to get better. I even called a friend and joined her for a glass of wine, and everything seemed almost normal, aside from the fact that four hours earlier I'd been in crisis. But that's the way it goes for me. Sometimes I feel like I am hanging in the balance between life and death, and one tiny little thing will push me down forever, then a few hours later my mood seems to stabilize.

The next day, November 11th, I really started to think about what I went through. Oddly enough, I've never really questioned my depression. I pretty much just accepted it as my



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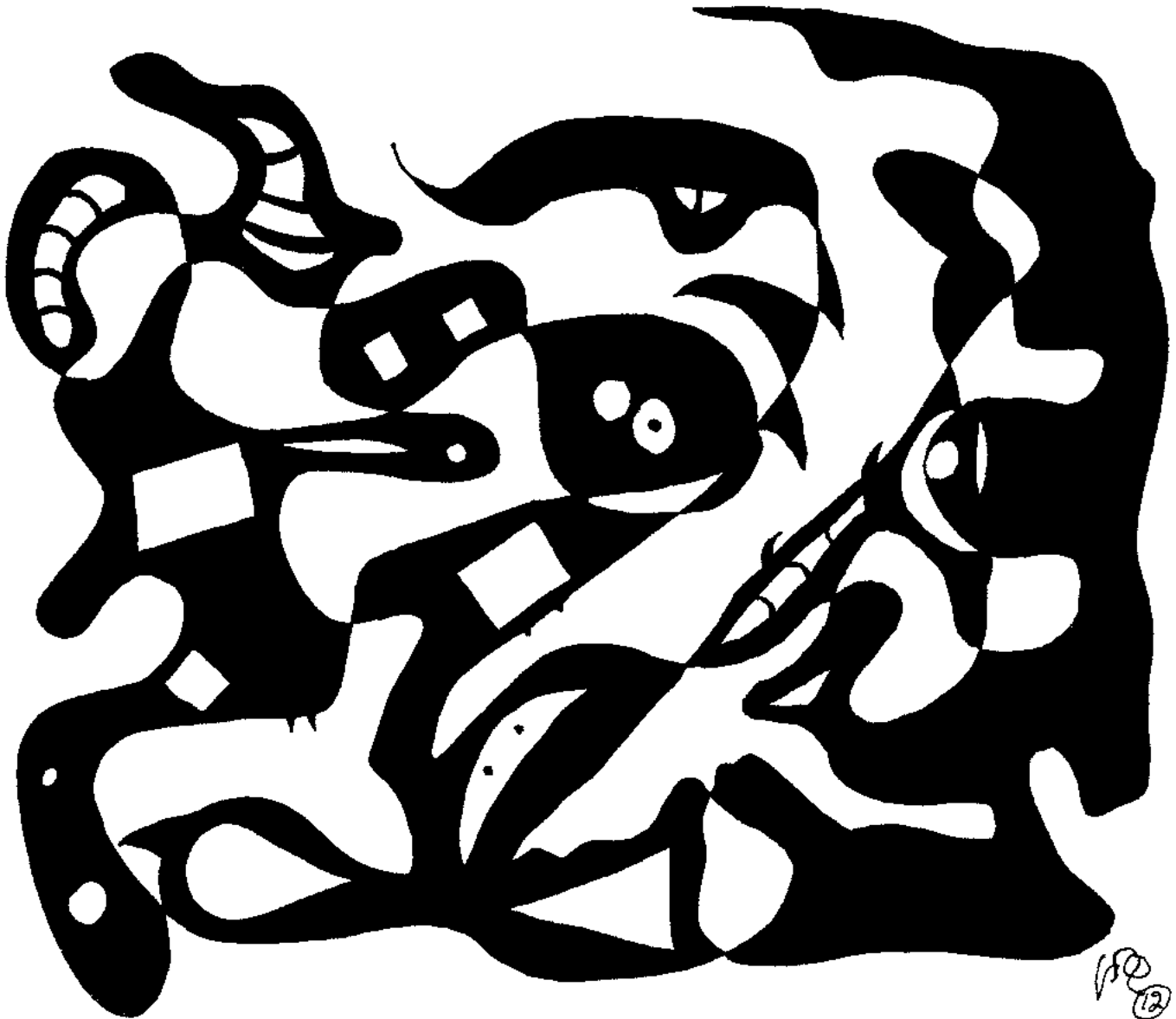
norm and refused to label it 'depression.' I never wanted to be a victim, but by not accepting depression, I also prevented myself from getting help.

Every year around September I get nervous because I know what's coming. In October, I get way more irritable and generally shuttle back and forth between rage and sorrow. In November I get really low. After that, things kind of fuzz together into a haze of emotional darkness. My emotions turn into a wave that crests at numbness and bottoms out with extreme agony. This has been the pattern of my life for more than a decade. The first time I really became aware of it was in

1999 and the only difference from year to year is how low my lows are and how much of an edge the pain has. It's always there, though.

Depression, suicide and mental illness in general still have heavy stigmas attached to them. People are either considered weak because they can't just think themselves happy or they are 'crazy' people better left alone. I can't really imagine what most of you readers are thinking right now. If nothing else, I imagine you are wondering: "why don't you get some help?"

That's a hard question for me to answer, one loaded with anger and accusation. It's not my fault my brain doesn't pro-



Flying an eye kite by Henry Peters

People are either considered weak because they can't just think themselves happy or they are 'crazy' people better left alone.

duce the right amount of chemicals. I don't do drugs or drink heavily, and neither do my parents. I've done my best over the past decade to better myself and fix my problems. I take five or 10 vitamin supplements a day, go to yoga once a week and exercise as much as I can. I see a counsellor and dig into my emotions. And yet I still have to fight this demon every goddamn day.

November 10 woke me up. For 10 years I have quietly been dealing with this disability on my own. I have been my own doctor and searched for my own answers, proud of my autonomy; only to wish in that life-or-death moment that I could give up control to someone else, and what a relief that would be.

That's what really changed my mind; my willingness to give up control of my life to someone else. I work really hard to be independent and I cherish the right to make my own decisions. But I let my depression take that autonomy from me, so in an effort to regain control, I need to face the last frontier in this battle: anti-depressants.

I am afraid of anti-depressants—deathly afraid of them. I've really only heard bad things about them; I guess people don't really tell stories when life is going right because that's boring. I'm afraid I will be one of those people you see in movies in a hospital gown, crazed and screaming and frothing at the mouth as four people hold me down and force me to take drugs that will turn me into a drooling zombie. Because that's what happens when you are mentally ill and have to take drugs for it. Right?

I have noticed lately that the stigmas attached to mental illness have slowly been lifting. Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, His Honour, Col. (Ret'd) the Honourable Donald Ethell, is an advocate for mental illness, especially PTSD. I saw an interview he did and he talked about his own experience with mental illness as a war veteran with PTSD. He defined PTSD as a mental injury, the same as a physical injury except that no one sees the scars. It's like losing a limb—both injuries have to be actively managed for the rest of your life if you want any sort of normalcy.

That interview allowed me to change the way I think about PTSD and mental illness in general. I would never blame someone for not running if she didn't have a leg; I wouldn't insult her because she couldn't live the same way I live with two legs. Why, then, do I blame and berate myself for my injury? I need to accept my injury and find the correct way to manage it instead of comparing myself to other people and hating myself because I don't measure up.

Research and science about the brain are both extensive and limited. There is a lot of research out there, but the amount we know about this amazing organ is tiny compared to what we don't know. At this stage of science, many mental 'disorders' or 'illnesses' remain a mystery, even though there are drugs that relieve symptoms.

In PTSD, for instance, one theory is that emotional trauma actually changes the physiology of the brain. There is a lot of

dissent in the medical community about what actually happens, but most theories centre on the idea that emotional trauma changes either chemistry or physiology of the brain.

For instance, it's possible that PTSD affects the chemistry of something called the hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis. These glands produce more fight-or-flight chemicals like norepinephrine and less relaxation chemicals like cortisol, creating a state of prolonged hyper-vigilance and possibly accounting for the common symptoms of PTSD like easy loss of temper, flashbacks and inability to sleep.

Another possibility is that emotional trauma like PTSD affects the physiology of the brain, specifically the prefrontal cortex, the hippocampus and the amygdala. The exact explanation is fairly technical, but from what I understand, emotional trauma changes the physiology, which then changes the way you store memories and feel emotions, especially fear.

I'm not a scientist so my understanding is pretty limited. I don't know for sure if my hypothalamus or hippocampus functions differently than anyone's. I've never had any tests done, if there are even tests that can be done. But it makes a lot of sense. My family had a difficult start and I know it was rough on my parents, so it makes sense that it would be rough on a little girl.

Another thing I read is that some types of anti-depressants can actually help improve depression. I asked my doctor about this and she explained it to me by saying some of them retrain your brain to produce the correct amount of chemicals, and in a small number of cases, some people no longer have to use anti-depressants. She warned me that most times this isn't the case, and what I read suggests that recovery is more likely with recent trauma—the sooner you treat the injury, the better it heals. But I still hope I might be one of those few.

If I had emotional trauma in my childhood intense enough to alter my brain, then by now it's probably too late to permanently heal, which also means, as hard as it is to admit, that I will probably need anti-depressants or other artificial mood stabilizers for the rest of my life. I hate that thought. I'm scared of side effects of prolonged drug use, and I'm scared my brain will accommodate to the chemicals and the anti-depressants won't work anymore. But I am tired of living a life heavy with disability. If I was functioning at my optimum for 12 months per year instead of six or less, what could I have achieved by now? Six months wasted for 10 years—that means I am five years behind where I could be, which sounds about right to me.

Anti-depressants offer me something that has dramatically dwindled in the past ten years: hope. Yes, I am afraid of them. I am afraid to admit I can't fix my problem on my own. I am afraid of being dependant on something that isn't in my locus of control.

But more than all of that, I am afraid that if I don't try everything, I will inevitably succumb to that one final defeat I struggle and scramble to prevent. Instead, I choose to face my fear and use my defeat as a stepping stone to hopeful victory.



Rags to riches

BY BEV LUNDAHL

“Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?” Gary, with Bible sturdily in hand and in a mighty voice, asks the question with a flourish. Acting the part of the courtroom clerk in *The Trial of Louis Riel* playing for its 44th consecutive year in Regina, Gary is living out a dream that has become a reality.

After a 2010 summer performance, Gary eagerly explained: “I got time off work to perform for the schools with the cast. At Back to Batoche Days, we performed in front of a large audience. We performed in Humboldt, right in the courthouse, at Indian Head, Moose Jaw, and Duck Lake. This year, 2010, is the 125th anniversary of the Riel Rebellion of 1885 and the Year of the Métis. Our 125th Anniversary Tour might even take us to the Peace Gardens in Manitoba, Winnipeg, and even to Ottawa.”

It was a big year for Gary, too, whose perseverance and determination has helped him wade through the extreme hardships of homelessness and unemployment. “I took the C-train everyday through the no-fare zone when I was living in Calgary -- from the men’s shelter to the bus depot where I kept my stuff in a locker,” he told me. “Every day I reported to the labor ready office where I could find work for a day. Then I’d go back to the bus depot and smoke a cigar and read the Calgary Herald.” Lured by the attractions of life in Calgary, Gary had left his home in Ontario to move West. His recurring bouts of severe depression and anxiety made it difficult to find full-time employment. Day to day life was grueling, full of precarious uncertainty.

“What made you decide to come to Regina?” I asked.

Holding up a pretend newspaper and with glowing eyes he exclaimed, “I saw a great big ad in the Calgary Herald.” Excitedly motioning with his hand, he added, “It was two full pages. Saskatchewan was the place to be. Things were moving there. It said ‘Come to Saskatchewan.’” This was August, 2006. Saskatchewan’s successful ‘Come home to Saskatchewan’ ad campaign in Alberta was in full swing that year.

With a ticket financed by his mother who back home in Ontario was attempting to help her son, as she was able, Gary was soon rolling down number one highway on the Greyhound. His Mom’s advice was to go to Vancouver, but he, now a westerner, knew where the action was and was east-bound for Regina. He found emergency shelter there, and he gives Rescue Mission credit for getting him on his feet. He eventually, however, made his home at Waterston House, a Salvation Army facility that has suites for Regina’s homeless, and he found full-time employment at SARCAN, a recycling center that employs people with physical and mental health challenges.

SARCAN’s web-site states, “Our Vision – Persons with Disabilities Enjoying Full Citizenship.” Gary, instead of travelling across Calgary to the bus depot every evening after his

day job to get his belongings, was now able to cycle across Regina after work to rehearse or act in *The Trial of Louis Riel*. He is enjoying full citizenship through meaningful paid employment and finding expression through the arts.

Gary’s quality of life has been made possible, in part, by the vision and new thinking of a businessman who in 1988, 22 years ago, brought his entrepreneurial expertise to the attention of the government of the day. J. Wayne Zimmer, who grew up near Wadena (Kuroki) in a family whose father’s business enterprises were to leave an indelible mark on him, was singled out at a board meeting of SARC (Saskatchewan Association of Rehabilitation Centers). The Minister of Social Services wanted to speak to him. Wayne, an economic development consultant with a degree in Commerce, had fresh ideas for a department that was traditionally dominated by social workers and psychologists.

Wayne explained how he had discovered in countries he had visited, Sweden, Holland, Germany, the United Kingdom, and USA, advanced ways of employing people with mental health challenges. Meaningful employment with a paycheck at the end of the day was what was happening there. IKEA in Sweden was employing these people to manufacture their products. “Machinery can have safeguards incorporated,” he said. “The worker can put a board on the belt where it is fed into the machine and cut. When it comes out, he or she can remove it. Machinery does not have to be dangerous when built



Art by James Skelton

with these workers in mind.” This idea was incorporated into the crushing, baling, and loading equipment at the SARCAN warehouse where Gary works. Until then, these people in Saskatchewan had welfare checks supplemented by training allowances earned at sheltered workshops.

Timing is everything. Wayne said recycling of plastic bottles and cans was becoming a big issue in the province back in 1988, and his ideas were fitting into that scene nicely. A large donation of money and equipment by philanthropist, Joe Lotzkar and family of Pacific Metals, got SARCAN up and running, and government legislation enabled the process to continue. A deposit and handling fee paid by the consumer to the distributor was then turned over to the government. This money was used for the recycling operation at SARCAN Centers across Saskatchewan. The social, economic and environmental benefits were enormous. People like Gary are keeping our ditches clean and our landfills manageable. Electronic items and other containers now pass through SARCAN to destinations that turn them into re-usable products.

When I asked Gary if he would mind if I shared his story with others, he said with a big grin, “You mean my rags to rich-

es story?”

“Yes, that’s it,” I said.

A safe affordable home and a job are indeed ‘riches’. By acting in this drama, Gary is contributing to the education of the children in our schools, other Canadians, and an international audience. Spectators from Wales, France and the US were in the audience the evening I attended the play. Louis Riel was another person who struggled to maintain his identity in Canada, and Gary is keeping this history alive. SARCAN’s vision of “enjoying full citizenship” is a reality for this employee.

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My religious pursuit

BY JOYCE MERINO

I was baptized as an infant into the Greek Orthodox faith during the late 40s in Alberta. Yet my first dim memories of religion are of visiting Catholic churches with my parents and relatives. I recall much ritual eyeing singing, and being frightened by yelling from the pulpit.

When I was seven, I went to Sunday school in the same old country school where I attended Grade One during the week. That non-denominational class was sponsored by the Canadian Sunday School Mission in The Prairies during the 50s. I coloured my pictures and received my first Gideon’s *New Testament*. I recited John 3:16. What it meant, I didn’t know, and I don’t recall being told its meaning. When I was nine years old, I began to read my little Bible, enjoying The Book of Proverbs particularly, because I liked their wisdom and rules for living. I read the Gospels, too. I didn’t understand them, though I found them comforting, especially at times of great anxiety - like the evenings I performed in Christmas concerts.

When our family moved to Bruderheim near Grandpa’s farm, we attended the Greek Orthodox Church regularly -- once a month when the circuit priest came to our ‘parish.’ Though grey and weather-beaten on the exterior, the building was splendid inside: Brightly coloured icons lined the walls,

stained-glass windows pictured vividly the apostles and the Holy Family, and the domed ceiling was painted blue with yellow stars. The icons, windows, and altar decorations glowed with painted gold trim. Before the altar stood three daisies with portraits of saints.

One ritual of the mass involved the congregation lining up before the priest and kissing his ring as well as those three portraits. Before and after each kiss, we made the sign of the cross. The priests and his assistants were resplendent in white and yellow silk vestments, and the priest was crowned with a tall golden head-covering. Men and women were segregated to opposite sides of the church. Except for occasional kneeling, prostration, and sitting for the sermon, we stood throughout the three-hour mass. The smell of incense was heady. There was much ceremony directed toward honouring a book, the priest, and many icons. Mass was conducted in ‘Church Slavonic’ or Ukrainian, which I didn’t understand. To my immature mind, all of this was absolutely arcane.

I continued to read the *New Testament*, which was a new copy I received at school in Grade Six. The small volume contained an index of “What to Read When you Feel” I read Psalms a great deal for I felt very grateful most of the time. I prayed the “Our Father” prayer every night -- in Ukrainian - having no idea what I said. “And please give me a white pony,” I added in English.



WRITING THE LIFE - NON-FICTION

When I was 15 years old, while studying comparative religions in social studies, I received a revelation. Everyone believes as wholeheartedly in their religion as we Christians believe in our faith. It's the same creator everyone worships, I realized, and all faiths have good to offer humanity. Even communism, with its pooling of money, goods and services for the benefit of all, was valid. I concluded that we Christians need to be more tolerant than we are, instead of thinking that believers of other religions are wrong. I looked forward to being grown-up, free to pursue my faith as I believed it, instead of blindly following my family tradition.

After I graduated, I began my quest for 'church.' I bought my own *Holy Bible* and read the *Old Testament*, I went to various churches in Edmonton, where I was employed. Those were happy, intimate churches in contrast to the formal, ritualistic churches of my childhood. Interestingly, I an Eastern Orthodox Christian, worked in the university library with a Jewish lady and a Moslem man. Until then, I had mistakenly believed that the Jews were another Christian sect; about Moslems, I know nothing.

Before long, I discussed religious philosophy with my Moslem boss. As I listened to him speak more and more about his faith, I found myself drawn to it, particularly to the many rules. I was seeking rules for living and a community that sincerely obeyed their creator. So Islam, which means submission to the will of God, appealed to me. As that serious young adult, I saw no evidence of such submission in the Western world, or even in the churches I visited. I only saw materialism, sinful fashions, and hedonistic entertainment.

Soon I began to attend the Mosque in Edmonton. It was a big red brick structure with an oriental dome above the door. Inside, we removed our shoes and sat on the oriental carpet, the women separated from the men (by draperies), similar to the practice in the church of my youth. The prayers and service were held in Arabic but I was not perturbed, as I was accustomed to religious services in a language that I didn't understand. Praying was like that in my past church too, I rationalized, because it included kneeling, and bending forward so that the forehead touched the floor.

I bought a copy of Dawood's *Translation of the Glorious Koran*, which I read from cover to cover. Its words were beau-

tiful to me. From additional reading, I learned that Islam was a historical religious progression from Judaism and Christianity and that their prophets were the same as those I read about in my *Holy Bible*. The three faiths are so interrelated, that *The Glorious Koran* itself states that Moslems can inter-marry with 'people of the book' (Jews or Christians).

I embraced Islam in a small ceremony with the Iman, a pious, humble man, and his assistant, a taxi driver. I avowed: "There is only one God and Mohammed was his last prophet." I wrote and signed a testimonial explaining that Islam was not

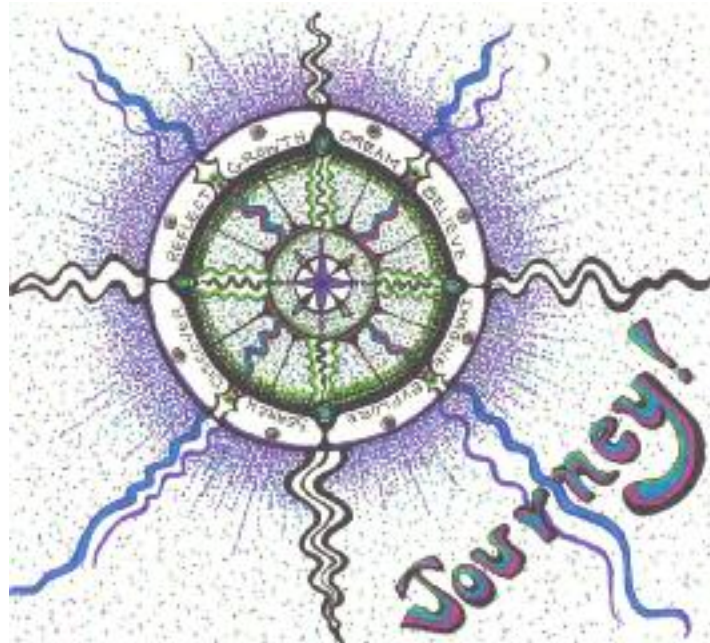
spread by the sword, but by persuasion and sharing of the words of Allah, as exemplified by the recitations of the Prophet Mohammed.

I proceeded to live my Moslem life -- I was submissive to Allah, and I married a Moslem man, to whom I was submissive. I already knew this wifely responsibility from reading Proverbs. As a new convert, I obeyed dietary laws, in particular, abstaining from eating pork, no easy task in a Canadian city. Shellfish, alcohol and drugs were also prohibited by *The Koran*. I adopted the modest Moslem style of dress - being covered from elbows to ankles. I did not have to don the veil, though I would have been happy to do so.

Islam has five Pillars of Faith. The first is the declaration of faith in one God and Mohammed as his last prophet. The second is praying five times a day facing the direction of Mecca, the birthplace of Mohammed. The third is the giving of alms to the poor, and the fourth is fasting during the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. The fifth pillar of faith is a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in a Believer's lifetime. Moslems believe that Jesus was not the son of God, but a human prophet.

I felt disappointed that we didn't attend the mosque or pray: I followed my husband's lead, sadly realizing that he was not as devout as I had thought. Also, praying involved a series of ablutions, and in the hectic pace of my domesticity, I did not have time to wash my head, face and arms five times a day. I fasted during the month of Ramadan: I ate no food, nor drank water between sunrise and sunset. Pilgrimage to Mecca was impossible to undertake due to costs of travel.

As a Moslem wife, I was allowed only the company of women and could not appear in public unless accompanied by



Inner Journey by Judy Swallow

They gave me a copy of their Holy Scriptures, introducing me to the concept of Jesus, the Son of God, dying on the cross as a ransom for all humankind.

my spouse or by male relations or female friends. I was not allowed to make any decisions, and at home or on special occasions, I was discouraged from expressing opinions of my own. I was punished with slaps for doing so and for disobeying my spouse. (Being completely submissive was easier to promise than to do.) However, I was permitted to work out of the home to earn money.

Later, when my spouse and I argued about my wanting some independence, he divorced me in the manner of Moslems according to *The Glorious Koran*, saying, "I divorce you" three times. In Islamic law, this is a male privilege only. Contrarily, we co-habited after this 'divorce' for approximately eight months, and then we agreed to a separation and subsequent divorce according to Canadian laws. Our differences were definitely irreconcilable.

Though I wanted to remain a Moslem, it was difficult for me to do so in a Canadian city without contact with other Moslems. I began to eat pork and drink alcohol. Soon Jehovah's Witnesses visited me, and I enjoyed my studies with them. They gave me a copy of their *Holy Scriptures*, introducing me to the concept of Jesus, the Son of God, dying on the cross as a ransom for all humankind. This concept seemed interesting, but I struggled with it and the Moslem belief that Jesus was only human.

When I moved to Vancouver, I took my Koran and my *Holy Scriptures* with me. Again I visited with the Jehovah's Witnesses, and I attended their Kingdom Hall. At the same time, I befriended Marlene, who was involved in "The Local Church" in "The Lord's Recovery." I went to Saturday evening 'Love Feasts' at the Local Church, finding them to be joyful occasions. We brought pot-luck dishes and shared the food. Then we sang hymns to the tunes of upbeat, popular songs like "Yellow Submarine." Church members shared testimonials. I did not share because I was still a Moslem. However, I attended Local Church Sunday morning services, learning much about the *New Testament* books. There were no rituals, but there was much reading of the Word loudly in unison. As Marlene said, "The service sometimes resembled football rallies."

Meanwhile, I still visited the Kingdom Hall of the Jehovah's Witnesses. In the spring of 1974 I decided to convert to their faith for I enjoyed their teachings and their emphasis on study and research. Unexpectedly, on the evening prior to my conversion, Marlene invited me to a dinner with her friends, and they spoke to me of their 'happiness in The Lord.' I felt an overwhelming desire to know that happiness, too. So, that evening I opened my heart and mind to Him. After attending Local Church meetings instead of the studies at the Kingdom Hall, I studied the writings of Watchman Nee and experienced a healing of a minor ailment. I re-read the *New Testament* several times. When I participated in a study about a thousand demons entering the bodies of a herd of pigs and causing them to stampede off a cliff, I left the Local Church. That religion was too farfetched for me -- and I never learned what the "Lord's Recovery" was.

So, I became a sceptic. In the late 70s I discovered *La*

Danse Oriental (belly dance), which felt spiritual to me. When I danced I was in a trance; I felt exhilarated; I was obsessed. For years I lived to dance, rehearsing constantly and performing as an enthusiastic amateur.

Later, during a three-month stay with family in Edmonton, I went to the Unitarian Church for the first time. Upon entering it and seeing the banners of major world faiths on the walls, I knew in my heart that this was where I belonged. Those symbols of Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, Judaism, and other religions affirmed to me that there are many paths to universal love.

Unitarians do not profess to have found the Truth; we are still searching for it. We avoid dogma, appreciating wisdom from all scriptures and philosophies. During services we sing hymns as well as listen to classical music. Unitarians are humanistic: we actively seek justice regarding environmental, racial, gender and human rights issues. We believe in voicing our opinions strongly and freely. Once a minister said, "There are as many opinions as there are Unitarians."

Back home in Vancouver, I joined the Unitarian Church at a small gathering in the Fireside Room where volunteers welcomed us new members with a luncheon. The minister introduced himself and we talked about the ideas that drew me towards Unitarianism. Though he was friendly, he also was so knowledgeable and scholarly that I felt like I was talking to God. I became a better person by growing and learning in the church when I participated in activities such as meditation, future studies, singles discussions and political workshops.

Later, during studies at community college, I met Bonnie, who practiced Science of the Mind. We exchanged ideas, and I sometimes attended services with her. That philosophy is based upon the concept of our thoughts shaping our minds, and subsequently shaping what we are. Although these concepts seemed reasonable, and though I used Science of Mind meditations, I didn't find them helpful to me.

Then I read a number of profound books that further influenced my spirituality. The first was a book by Merlin Stone, *When God was a Woman*. In it she wrote of the idea that the Gods of Judaism, Christianity and Islam were creations of patriarchal societies. This concept was a new one to me, and it made clear to me that I hadn't found Christianity and Islam fulfilling because I felt oppressed by their patriarchal attitudes. In contrast, the matriarchal Goddess religions were fair in treatment of both genders, and professed a 'wholistic' inclusive approach to societal relationships.

However, the ideas that shaped my spirituality from early childhood didn't entirely leave me. So, I read the scriptures of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, as scholars published their translations and interpretations. I also read *The Other Bible* (edited by William Barnstone), which contained gospels, *The Apocrypha*, *Pseudepigrapha*, and Gnostic writings that were not included in the canon of my *Holy Bible*.

Now, as I approach my senior years, I continue to be a Unitarian, and find that Nature gives me the most spiritual fulfillment of all, as I walk the paths among the evergreen trees along the river.



Two sides of the world

BY ALLAN NOULLET

To start off, there is a world and there isn't a world. This is a story about one individual and how he sees the world. What got me to write this story is what led me to the present time and place – my yearly trip to Victoria to visit relatives.

When I was young and after I turned 18 I was on my own to survive in the world. I was admitted to Saskatchewan Hospital around this time. After treatment, I was placed in group homes, where I still am today. Now, every year I go to Victoria for a holiday. Life is better than it was.

I always get nervous when my trip to Victoria approaches. Are my bags packed right? Will I get through baggage check OK? Will I be able to phone my sister when I get there? I hope I don't get lost.

It seems like a visit to another planet, and I'm stuck on the bus for hours at a time. The closer I get, the happier I'll be. There are all those strange people at the bus stop. Each time it's different people, people on the move.

The bus seems so quiet as we travel in the night, just the odd overhead light on, the noisy engine and the air-conditioning running. I've been through this before. It's wanting to sleep, but I can't, I have to fight it, I feel alone. I've spent many a long night, not even on a bus, and how slow the hours go by. It's like putting up with something that isn't there, but is there. You've got to say, *This is real, put up with it*. Imagine how many people are in this predicament. The waiting game. All of us go through the waiting game. Finally I get to my destination, and happiness at last. Relaxation comes around. All went well!

When it comes to family in Victoria, I'm so far from home. Everything in my past goes into my mind and is stored there. I adjust to everything else mentally, whether it's a new house my nephew bought, or my sister's new car. But the power to talk and be sociable like ordinary, everyday people is what's missing from my life. It's not easy to be like everyone else.

I guess when you're young, you don't realize when you're sick, and nothing is ever said. You have to come to your own terms. With treatment, sometimes it's better, to be better than you were.

I'm 55 years old, and it's confusing; there's a lot going on. I read books, magazines, and newspapers. I hear all the violence in town and stay away from it. I've done bad things that play on my conscience. The old world that used to be 35 years ago is now in the back of my mind. It's probably this old world that made me what I am today. I search for answers and cures, and I've said the myself a thousand times, I don't know. I may never know.

I do know that it's a multicultural world these days., and there's getting to be more foreign people in Canada. Even the Native people probably wonder why all these people are here. Probably to escape all the bad times that are happening in these war-torn countries. A lot of people just live everyday, normal; lives, and just learn these things from T.V. or the newspapers.

But it seems there is a lot of history and fighting between nations or governments that causes people to think about their situations and either join the fight or move over to Canada or the USA.

Only over here the fighting is more about domestic problems, over drug gangs, riots, clashes with the police. Mainly it involves people who try to make money illegally. It's worse in the USA. But this has been going on for thousands of years. It's just a more modern way of doing it. Even T.V. movies are made about killing and robbing done in a super-sophisticated way. It shows people how more advanced technology is used these days to rip people off.

Me, I'm just an ordinary guy who was once a bad guy, who is trying to make good by fixing my mistakes. The funny thing is that my parents were alcoholics till the day they died. It makes me wonder why I am sickly. Parents don't always talk to their kids. But when I was small, I could sense they were drinking, and something wasn't right. Even my doctor or my psychiatrist never mentions whether I was born a little on the sick side. He just prescribes medicine, and I take it from there. If you're sick from birth, and when your teenage years come along, you do drugs and bad things, all these things wind up on your sick list. It's harder to realize it as you grow up, but you have to bear with it the best you can. Just like governments, the doctors do all the talking, and after all the fighting has stopped. Everybody has to take it from there.

I found a home after being admitted to the Saskatchewan Hospital 30 years ago. It's been quite a 30-year run, with ups and downs, dealing with patients, doctors, nurses, and different people in the street that I've come in contact with over the years. It's like I filled that big empty space in my head. Everything is stored by my mind's capacity. I feel more human now. I feel like I can look inside myself and understand where I came from.



Street by Elizabeth Glixman

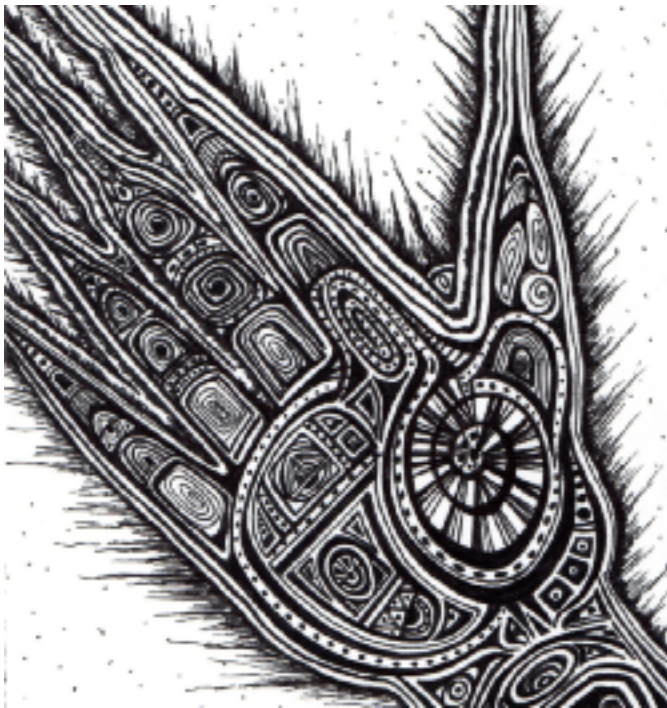
I went home today

BY KAY PARLEY

It will take courage to visit the old place, but it is something I have to do. Many people feel warm and sentimental about seeing an old home, and I wish I could be one of them. It's been over 40 years since I saw it, much longer than that since I lived here. Farm homes are being torn down fast these days. I have a feeling next year may be too late. I have to see it today.

My mascot doll George is with me. He's a cute Native doll with a thick head of hair and a delightful smile. Funny my companion today should be a doll. I was a great doll lover as a child. It seems right that I should bring a doll to "27."

The Moffat roads look different now. I used to recognize every bluff by its shape and know the more interesting trees. Even the creek has changed. Someone dammed it and stopped the flow. I'm nervous. I've never felt nervous about visiting "Hayfield," the old stone house Grandpa built. Hayfield was so full of happy memories, so secure. I've spent hours feeling sorry that it is no longer in the family, but I've never felt afraid to go and see it. It's "27" that scares me. I used to visit here after it was rented to Wesleys and I don't remember that it bothered me. I liked the Wesleys. Besides, I didn't know in those days that so much had been repressed. I didn't know a cauldron of disappointment was seething away in my unconscious. But I've suffered enough breakdowns now, gained enough insight to know that what happened at "27" damaged me too much. Many children suffer much more and much worse, and I hope I've learned to empathize with them, but my



Willing by Judy Swallow

own loss was too much for me. Maybe I'm overly sensitive, or maybe it's just that my life had been too perfect. There I was, an only child with caring parents, doting grandparents, a wonderful aunt and uncle and a half section of land in a great community. Sure, there were mosquitoes in summer and too much cold in winter, but the warmth of belonging made up for all that. I hadn't expected anything to spoil my Eden. I wasn't prepared.

I'm close now. I can see the stucco gate posts Dad made and they still appear to be in fair shape. I'll pass them and take the next road in. I can see the house, a low bungalow with screened verandah along the front, nestled 100 yards north of the road. The houseyard bluffs are still there. Thank goodness the owners haven't taken those out. I hate to see fields stripped of trees the way they do it now.

"I don't know if they live here," I tell George. "So many farmers have moved to town. If anyone's here, I'm going to ask them if I can see inside. I need to. I want to see my home one more time."

I know I've never really faced the memories. Coming home from Grandma's to find my Daddy gone and he hadn't even said goodbye, Mother telling me he'd gone to hospital and wouldn't be coming back. No, he wasn't going to die, but he would be staying in hospital. Maybe from now on. I was young to understand "mentally ill" and I had no way of knowing, then, that my Dad had gone out of my life for 18 years. I didn't know it would mean leaving the farm and everything I loved. I didn't know I would never have another home until I bought a house for my retirement. All I knew was that my Daddy was gone.

That night I couldn't sleep for weeping. When Mother fretted because I was "keening" and tried to comfort me, I sobbed, "I didn't think my Daddy would *leave* me!"

At the time of my first breakdown, my psychiatrist explained that. He said I felt abandoned and could never trust a man after that. I knew they would leave me. Well, surely I've come to grips with it now.

"Can I do this?" I ask George, but I don't wait for the doll to answer. I just ease up on the brake and edge forward. As I come closer to the house, I can see at once that no one is living there. It's shabby, though the lattice work Ernest Nelson made for the vernadah is still intact. It's such a pretty bungalow, unpretentious but beautifully proportioned. Dad had a good eye for building. I can see a man working in the field at a distance, but if the house is abandoned I'm sure he wouldn't mind if I take a peek. As soon as I reach the back door, I know there is no chance anyone is in residence. The door stands open, forlorn.

I get out of the car. A deep breath now. *You're going home.* Remember the good times. Remember the day they papered the kitchen. Mum's Welsh rarebit. Laughter. Loud games of Pit at the dining room table. Dad's fiddle. The piano in the corner and Aunty Ev playing songs for me. Remember, Kay. Remember the good times . . .



I manage to enter the porch okay. The linoleum is worn through. By the time I've taken two steps into the kitchen I've lost it. It's like a sudden cold shower, the shock. The wallpaper! It's the same wallpaper they put on that day -- that day I scalded my foot and everyone fussed. Japanese pagodas in blue. The *same* paper! It's never been changed. The furniture should be the same too, but of course there is no furniture. My head hurts. The pantry shelves are empty. The wee front bedroom that was my room wants to reach out and hold me, but it's so shabby and lonely. I can feel my heart clench. I peek in at Mum and Dad's room and the loneliness becomes unbearable. Memories of the furniture Mother enamelled come back vividly. She used orange for the kitchen and apple green for the bedroom. The phone should be on the kitchen wall. It isn't but it should be there. I used to have to stand on my little red chair to be tall enough to talk on the phone.

I stagger on to the dining room. I see it so clearly in memory: Mum's fumed oak dining set and the china cabinet, her sewing machine by the west window, the big chair upholstered in brown leather where Dad used to sit. I can hear his fiddle ripping out *Old Zip Coon* and Mother playing the piano. I hear laughter. I see the framed print of Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" on the wall. I remember dressing behind the heater on cold mornings. Tears are flowing so freely I can hardly see but I must visit the spare bedroom. That's the room where I did the jigsaw puzzle of the little girl and the collie, the room where Mum kept her wedding dress and the long hair she had cut off in 1921. I still use the beautiful crocheted dresser set Mum made for this room.

A piercing scream comes out of somewhere and I realize

it has come from me. It's a terrible scream, an other-worldly scream. I don't care if the man in the field hears it. I just scream and sob and sob and scream. Boards are missing from the north wall and outdoor light is filling the room. This is it. This is truly the end.

I find anger now, determination. Frantically I begin to pace off the rooms. I want to remember the size. Maybe I can re-build my home some day. I help myself to a few samples of tattered wallpaper. I open the door to the verandah and step into my old playroom one more time. I see the place where the little chickens hatched in the spring. Then I open the trapdoor to see if the cellar is still there. Of course it is. When they raze the house, as they are sure to do soon, they will fill in the cellar and there will be nothing left to show anyone lived here. Dad buried something in the corner stone. I think it was a coin. They were all so full of certainty in the 20s, so full of hope. That was the world they offered me, a world of certainty and hope.

Still weeping, I find my way back to my car and get in. George seems to look up to me in sympathy and I grab him and soak his thick wig with my tears. It seems appropriate. Dolls were my comfort when it happened, so it may be right that a doll should be the only comfort I have now. For a moment I wonder *why*. Why no one gets close to me. Is it because I can't trust? Because "I didn't think my Daddy would *leave* me." People don't stay.

Well, I've found it again. I've faced it now. My psychiatrist would have been proud of me if I had been able to do that in 1950. I'd like to be able to tell him. I'd like to be able to say, "Dr. Selinger, I went home today."

Like that arm full of lilacs

BY DOT SETTEE

My personal hero is my daughter, Fawn. She is wise for her 29 years of life. When I am with her I always feel safe. When I need a question answered, I go to her and she always has the answer that makes perfect sense. When things need to be done, there she is, right in the middle. All goes well when Fawn is around.

She was an amazing child. When she was between the age of two and three years old, she learned how to recite the alphabet and how to print her letters. Even at that young age she could spell a few words, including the word MOM. She was looking at her paper upside down and on her own she pronounced it WOW. A brilliant child she was, for sure.

Since she was five years old, I get a bouquet of lilacs every spring, from Fawn. She knows they are my favorite

flowers. They always made our home smell of that sweet aroma. A very thoughtful child she was, for sure.

I remember the time came for her Dad's birthday. We went shopping for his special day. Fawn went straight to the Barbie aisle and found what she was looking for, a Ken doll, so Daddy could play Barbies with her. A loving child she was, for sure.

When Fawn was in her sixth year of life we were living on a farm near Meath Park. We had an old boarder named Ed. One day we were clearing the yard of rocks. Ed tried to pick up a rock which was too heavy for him. Fawn picked it up with no trouble at all and threw it to one side. Ed was angry at having been upstaged by a young girl. A powerful child she was, for sure.

All these things, Fawn was and still is - thoughtful, brilliant, loving and powerful. Like that armful of lilacs she gives me, I love her a whole big bunch.

SIMPLE STEPS TO . . .

A tortured existence

BY BARB WAGNER

Have you ever noticed how many books there are out there about depression? There are all kinds, but they are all about how NOT to be depressed. I have never seen a book on how to BE depressed, so I thought I should write one. After all, being depressed is not something just anyone can do; it requires certain thought processes, ideas and such. It takes a lot of years to get good at it, too, but having a reference work available would seriously cut the time it takes to be proficient at depression. Anyone can be depressed, but I find it works better if you are female with some weight and financial problems. Those of you who are rich and thin may also turn to this book for help, but will have to adapt certain portions to fit your own lifestyle.

I'm not sure where to start; there really is no logical step-by-step formula to becoming and staying depressed. It is more a combination of things, each one of which is as important as the next. So bear with me as I attempt to make this as simple for you as I can.

So when should you begin to exhibit signs of depression? I don't think people fully understand how to misunderstand you until high school. Kids at a younger age can be cruel, which helps you on your way, but teenagers are a whole other story. About now you should begin to believe anything negative that is said about you. Take it to heart. These are important people, these teenage friends of yours, how could they possibly be wrong about you? All those thin girls and the boys who look at them are crucial to your self-image. If you were wanted by those boys and girls, life would be perfect. Now is the ideal time to start a lifelong weight obsession.



Art by James Skelton

PATIENCE IS A VIRTUE – NOT!!

All good things do not come to those who wait, and don't let anyone tell you different. Waiting for anything is just unacceptable. Baby steps are for babies (hence the name). Things must happen quickly and exactly the way you expect them to. You should be able to walk into any office and see the person you want immediately, none of this appointment foolishness. If I wanted my hair cut two weeks from Thursday, I would have called two weeks from Thursday. When dieting, if you don't lose at least 27 pounds within a week of starting, give up. You should be able to do anything perfectly immediately, regardless of whether or not you've done it before.

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF, SWEAT ALL STUFF

Details are there for a reason and you must pay attention to each and every one of them. Make up a few new ones if you need to but make sure you don't make any decision without a little agony. Never trust your first instinct about anything; it will always be wrong. When someone asks you directions, give them and then agonize for awhile that you gave them the wrong ones. Even if it's directions to your own house, you must never be too relaxed or confident in yourself. Every (and I do mean every) decision you make requires much thought and as much (if not more) agony. There are many possible outcomes to each decision; you must consider all the negative ones thoroughly. No positive results are possible with any decision you make, so there is no need to consider those. When ordering at a restaurant, as soon as the waitress walks away with your order, start wishing you had ordered something else. What your dining partner has ordered will always be better than what you did. You know you didn't want that anyway, why did you order it? Because you are a loser. And in decision making as in everything else, whenever possible, your decision must be based solely on what other people will think of you. Don't ever make a decision based on what's right for yourself at the time. Other people will have an opinion of your decision and it's up to you to figure out what that is and decide accordingly.

THE FIRST, BEST, OR ONLY

There is no point in doing anything unless you can be the first, the best, or the only one to do it. This way, you will be special and people will notice you and think you are wonderful. Who wants to be the second person to climb Mt Everest, bet you don't even know his name, do you?

I saw on a t-shirt somewhere that second place is first loser ... couldn't be truer. "It's only a game" only applies if you're winning; otherwise, it's stupid and you might as well not even play.

Being the only one to do something puts you in a class by yourself. If it's a job, make sure no one else knows what you do, thus you will be indispensable. People will have to turn to you for advice or directions on how to do things.

OTHER PEOPLE'S OPINION

The opinions of other people, be they people you know now, someone you met years ago, people whom you may only speak to once in your life, or people whom you never have and never will meet, should be the guiding force in everything you do. People must always regard you in the most positive way possible, thus everything you do in your life, every action you take, and every decision you make must take all these people's opinions into consideration. I cannot stress this enough: do



nothing without first considering what other people will think of you. Here is a fact that people without depression rarely know about you: you have the power to know exactly what people are thinking about you at all times. Whatever you think they are thinking about you is exactly right. So if you have a feeling that wearing a certain pair of pants to work will cause someone to think that they make you look fat, that is right and you mustn't wear those pants. Doesn't matter if they are your favorite pants, as long as someone doesn't like how you look in them you might as well give them to charity. Basically, do nothing unless it will make you look good in the eyes of the world, regardless of how it makes you feel.

INNOCENT UNTIL PROVEN GUILTY

Everything bad that happens in the world has to be caused by someone. You and you alone are responsible for anything that goes wrong in other people's lives that you know. Probably some you don't know, too. You will make bad decisions in your life and take many actions that cause unfortunate consequences. It is important that you never forget these things. Anything good that you may accomplish can be forgotten, but you really need to keep the bad stuff close at hand for those times when things seem to be going well. Think back on your life quite often and beat yourself up for those bad or stupid mistakes you've made. Crying over spilt milk can be so rewarding.

However ...

There are certain situations that are NOT your fault. If other people knew how to do things properly all the time, your life would be perfect. For instance; if your husband didn't make you mad, you wouldn't have had to eat seven doughnuts; if your boss treated you better you wouldn't have had to eat seven doughnuts; if the supermarket wasn't out of the ingredients you needed for your salad, well...you get the idea. The subtle art of knowing what is your fault and what should be blamed on others takes some time to perfect but with perseverance you'll get there.

COMPLIMENTS

You will occasionally receive a pat on the back or a compliment. You must never accept these things as fact. You should find reasons to dispute them. Nothing you do is really all that good anyway, people are just saying stuff to make you feel good, don't let them fool you. You know inside that you didn't do anything special. When someone says something nice about you, think of five or ten things wrong to offset it. Don't be getting carried away thinking positively about yourself.

CATASTROPHIZE

Isn't that a cool word? I learned it at my doctor's office. Basically it means that anything can result in death. You know, if you forget to pay your phone bill on time, the phone compa-

ny puts your picture on all its trucks as a criminal, all your friends find out, they all hate you, your husband loses his job, your house is taken away from you, you starve to death under a bridge, and you die. This type of chain of events will be a result of pretty much anything you may or may not do.

GAMBLING

If and when you do gamble, keep in mind that if the outcome is not positive, it's totally your fault. There is no such thing as luck where you are concerned. If your slot machine doesn't pay, it just means you are a loser. If you had picked a different machine, you would have won. If you sat at a different seat at the card table, you would have won. At Bingo, if the right ball doesn't come out of the machine, it's because you are a loser. If you had picked different cards you would have won. On the off chance that you do actually win, whatever you do don't quit. You are a winner, why quit playing now? Play until you lose most or all of what you've won, then you will get to feel guilty about not quitting while you were ahead. Even if you do manage to somehow make a profit, you could have made more if you were a better person, remember that.

HABITS

People say if you are trying to break a habit, you should replace that behavior with something else. That is true. If you are trying to quit smoking...eat. Trying to diet? Gambling makes you forget about food.

ASK ME TO DO STUFF

When someone asks you to do something, you must always say yes. Even if you really don't want to do it, you must say yes because the person will hate you if you say no. And you mustn't let anything cause someone to be unhappy with you. Regardless of how busy you are or how impossible the task is, refuse no one, ever. On the other hand, if you need help with something, only as an absolute last resort do you ask someone. No matter what you ask of them, they will think badly of you. In most cases it's just as well to do stuff yourself or not do it at all rather than ask for help.

MEN

Oh my God, what a profound affect these creatures can and will have on you. From the first crush you have on through to the one you finally decide to spend your life with, much of who you are can be attributed to them. If you are really lucky, when you find that first crush he will like you too. But it will not be cool to show the world that he likes you, so you will only be together when no one's watching. This can be a real ego booster.

GROUP ACTIVITIES

You will be asked to join in group activities all your life. These activities, while they may be fun, will just end up showing you how you don't fit in, so try to refuse if you can. You will be the worst player, the last one picked, the first one out, etc. No one really wants you there anyhow; they just asked to be polite. However, if they don't invite you to join in you can take this personally and assume it's because they don't like you.

OBSESSION

Some guy made a bunch of money with a perfume with that name, so it must be a good thing, right? Of course it is. You can be obsessed about just anything.

THE TRUTH BEHIND SOME CLICHES

1. IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

Quit. Yep, quit. If it doesn't work perfectly the first time, there is no point in wasting time trying to do it again.

2. NOBODY'S PERFECT

This might be true, but you should be perfect. Anything else is unacceptable. Everything you do needs to be flawless. Even if you are new at something, you should be able to do it perfectly the first time. You've seen what's-his-name golf on TV, no reason you can't do that just as well.

3. BEAUTY IS ONLY SKIN DEEP

Duh. Who cares about what you can't see?

4. IT'S ONLY A GAME

You know who says that? People who WIN say that to people who LOSE so that they don't feel like the losers they are.

5. IT'S ONLY MONEY

See above.

CONTROL

Control Top Panty Hose, Control were the good guys in the show Get Smart, remote control ... all truly wonderful things. Therefore, control over every part of your life must also be good. The most challenging thing to control is other people. But you should be able to do that without a problem. It's your way or no way, regardless of the situation. Other people must conform to you, not the reverse.

THAT LITTLE VOICE ... OR TWO

You have that little inner voice like most people do, but you are also blessed with a BIG inner voice which you should pay attention to at all times. Conversations inside go something like this: Little voice – "Why don't we go for a nice walk?"

BIG voice – "Leave me alone, I'm watching TV."

Little voice – "You don't really need that fourth chocolate bar."

BIG voice – "Yeah? Try and stop me."

Little voice – "Try not to be concerned with the opinions of others."

BIG voice – "And whose opinion should I be concerned with – yours?? Please."

OTHER PEOPLE'S SUCCESS

When people around you succeed, it highlights your failures. Don't be happy for them, be jealous. Realize that if you weren't such a loser, you would have had success first.

CAREER CHOICE

Due to the importance of other people's opinions, you should look for a career which involves your trying to please many people. Look for a career in the service industry. Don't sit in an office by yourself, where's the challenge in that? Manage or own a small business that depends on repeat customers. Be sure you have a few who are never satisfied. Then focus on these people. Disregard the ones who like you and the job you do for them; strive to please those who can't be pleased. Be sure to remind yourself often that if you were a better person, these people would be happy. Sales is also an ideal area to explore. Just remember that if people don't buy what you are selling it is because they don't like you. It has nothing to do with the fact that what you are selling might not be of interest to them, it's you.

CONFRONTATION

Confrontation is something to be avoided at all costs. Do not, under any circumstances go into a confrontation voluntarily. If something or someone is bothering you, hold it in. Let it fester inside you for years if you have to, but avoid taking the direct approach to resolve the situation. Facing someone about a problem will never end positively, keep it to yourself.

CYNICISM

Inside a car there is a windshield to see what's ahead of you and a very small rearview mirror to see what's behind. In your mind these two things need to be reversed. It's very important to have a large panoramic view of all the things you've done wrong in the past and a small view of what may or may not happen in the future.

CLOSURE

You will have jobs, love affairs, and friendships in your life that will end. Don't waste time ending these things with a goodbye or a written resignation. Walk away without a word. That way you will have the luxury of years of nagging "what ifs."



CHOICES

Each day you will be faced with a myriad of choices, both easy and difficult. Pick the easy ones. They will ultimately make you feel bad. For instance, it is hard to avoid that extra helping of dessert and ultimately feel good about your choice, so take the dessert. Don't force yourself to exercise; the easy choice is to do nothing and feel lazy. Get it?

UNFINISHED THINGS

You are a person with many talents. Start lots of projects, hobbies, home renovations, etc. Don't finish anything. Get halfway through a task, get bored or frustrated, and leave it. But make sure you leave it where you can see it and feel guilty about it daily.

THERAPY

Some will tell you therapy is an important thing to consider when exhibiting signs of depression. Yeah, they're wrong. Therapists will listen to you and not judge you. They will attempt to help you change your thought processes to a positive, self-affirming style. Who needs that?

ALCOHOL

Alcohol is a depressant, a fact that should help you realize its importance in your life. You can say all those things you should say, impress all those people you should impress. Anything you do can be done better with booze.



*Climb by
Henry Peters*

COMPARISON

Compare yourself often to people who are better off than you. If you weren't such a loser you would have all those things, you'd be thin and rich. The fact that you don't have a cabin at the lake like everybody else just goes to show what a failure you are. Never mind comparing yourself with those who are less fortunate, which would make you appreciate your life. This is not your goal.

FRIENDS

The people close to you expect things from you. They expect you to be at your best at all times. You should laugh and talk and listen and be funny no matter how you are actually feeling.

So when you can't be these things, you need to feel bad. Your actions affect those around you, don't forget it. Those days when you are feeling depressed and not quite like yourself, they won't understand. They will want to know what's wrong with you. But you won't be able to tell them because you can't put into words how you are feeling. So you say nothing and then they think you are just a bitch. Double bad feelings. It's wonderful.

FAMILY

You should expect your family to know what you need when you're depressed. They should know when you want to be touched and when not. When you want to be talked to or consoled and when you just want to be left alone. You won't be able to tell them any of this, but they should know anyhow.

DARKNESS

You know how when you're in the light you can't see into the dark? That's how it is for you people without depression. You know there are friends of yours, maybe even family in there, but you can't see them. So here you are, standing in the light. You know there's a dark place called Depression in the distance but you can't see into it. You have seen some friends, maybe even family, go there. Some come back; some don't. What is so special about that place? What makes them stay there? Are you missing out on something? You'd like to see what goes on for yourself, but as hard as you try you just can't see how to get there. Actually, it's easier than you think if you have a map.

FINALLY

There are many different paths to a tortured existence, some are short and straight, others take longer and require a few more steps. In order for you to really appreciate the trip, I have given you a fairly scenic route. It doesn't really matter in which order you take your steps, just make sure you don't leave any out.



Bones

BY LINDSEY BELLOSA

Look at my bones. You recognize me.
This is what your soul looks like
at three in the morning, picked over
by crows of your thoughts.

Stripped down to the bones of my soul,
worried like a child's threadbare blanket.
You can't see any comfort.

It's almost beautiful, isn't it?
Your eyes grope at the sight
but you know when you see me:
it's only a matter of time.

This is what your soul looks like
in the barest hours of the morning
when you can't disguise yourself.

You hate me for embracing it,
for making it so plain.
You hate to be reminded of death.

But I have accepted things.
I've found the secret.
If you want to know, still your heart
that beats like a wild bird.
Swallow the bile that chokes
on words like "waste."

The secret: you can burrow deep
into the vortex of your mind,
ignore what your body is harboring.
You can fill yourself up every day with time.
Start again in the morning
if you can stomach it,
if you can sleep through the night.

But if you can't anymore,
if truth presses on you like darkness:
if the crows come and strip you like carrion,
then you can know.

You can sustain yourself
with everything except truth.
You can make poetry out of bones.

Poison Ivy

BY LINDSEY BELLOSA

I've broken out in hives.
"You love it," you say,
"It gives you an excuse
to hate yourself."

The evil is manifesting.
Beauty is skin deep.
I have scratched off beauty
deeper than skin.
I am only claw marks now:
purple and pimpling like
the back of a demon.

I claw until you can
see under my skin.
I claw until you see purple,
like rage.

I will get to the heart of this.
I will peel off the layers
and get to the core. I think
you suspect it too

as the papery lightness
of skin slides away. Evil gleams
like the sheen of an onion exposed.
Raw, stinking.

"People who are evil
don't worry about being evil."
You take my hand away.
"Stop tearing at yourself."

But my hands keep moving.
They are determined
to strip off my skin,
that I become a new color.

They are determined
that you should see me
and draw in your breath,
to behold my ghastly heart.



Red

BY LINDSEY BELLOSA

Red. The old red scrawl is back, etched plainly. A love note from my body. A woman's final say that no man with all their noise and strength can have. Here's the quiet heartbeat I thought may have stopped forever, the heart that needs soft things. Now I am soft like a summer peach, when for so long I have been brittle like ice. Beautiful ice: so poignant it may crack at any moment, has finally cracked. Succumbed to the heat of this heart: red and throbbing like a robin's throat, full of worms for her nest. Finally: I am what I am. Finally, I am here fully present.

I wanted it this time.

The last time it came back, it was my body's desperation. My body: only rough clay after all, never quite what I wanted it to be. It was a mess, it was hard to accept. It was standing over a sink with a box of granola. It was my mouth, moving without my consent saying *Please, please*. It was like a curtain being pulled back:

It was a stage being revealed: stripped of its set. It was an actor, taking off the makeup worn to play a villain. The villain may have been odious. The villain may have been a killer, but the actor is no one. The actor is a pale thing: a blank page. A mouth waiting to be filled. And there were no lines anymore. All crossed out with this, red ink. There was only the world: vast, gaping.

I knelt on the ground with the underwear in my hand. I tried to will it into my fist. Unwelcome news: a pink slip, an eviction notice. A failing grade at the top of a thesis paper.

My mother found me there, clutching it. She gasped in relief. At last, it was over. We could all return to our lives. But we didn't, not all of us. Slowly I willed mine away. Slowly I whittled it down, quietly, it slipped off before I knew what I was killing. The blood that I throttled away, blood that would only dry up. Blood that could grow hearts. Blood was the power I traded: my deal with the devil, the deal I didn't know if I could undo.

But I did.

Now, finally, it's back. Finally now, I am ripening. I am ready like a peach to be picked. I am ready like a bird for a nest. I am red like a mouth that is open. Red like what a widow wears after a long mourning for a husband she never loved. It turns out love is red. It turns out love is messy. It turns out I am hungry for more: the shock of the morning sun, the blood that will be on the birthing bed. The first red tulip, scabbling up after a long winter.

Crazy Little Girl

BY SUSAN BUCHANAN

slip slap sneaker-ed feet
soft sound in my ears mesmerizes.
slip slap
drag my sneakers.
crazy girl crazy girl
crazy little girl.

make them stop, mommy.

just an over-active mind.
mind you be good.
good girls don't have voices in their ears.

imps in my ears whisper.
little voices jim jam jammer
yim yam yammer
hammers in my head.
shame shame what have i done?
shim sham shame.
hands clapped tight over my ears
i'm in trouble.
voices in my head hiss
crazygirl crazygirl crazygirl
crazygirrrllllll.

you did it you did it
didit didit didit.
slip slap slam hand on cheek
smick smack smacky.

swish swash water on dock
lulls me lures me down a crazy path
where crazy women wail at the wall.
tilted tiaras bright lipstick gash
pull their hair out
slash their cheeks
blood boils along the seams
they scream into a cold silence.
even the wild imps have vanished.

i join the women in
their desperate dance. [stanza break]
they fling thin bodies at the gate
twine arms in the rails twist hair round the locks.
[stanza break]

i am a crazy teenager.

voices voices follow me
tease me taunt trick me.
always the same the shame.
you did it you did it you didit didit didit.

smash crash glass on floor
my father throws everything.
ketchup pools like blood
mustard a vile stain.
a scary kind of craziness
screams screams screams at me
my fault



Red leaf by Elizabeth Glixman



My own song

BY VERYL COGHILL

One day to hang out, becomes months to hang on to your rhythm, I get god damn poems, your shirt hangs in my closet soft and gray the shirt I wore when I lost my coat twelve hours drunk, you rescued me, had wonderful sex I don't remember,

that day I quit drinking.

When sober I sing my past of an unfaithful wife in long, long notes, you tell me I am not most people, I still protect him you say, a discord, most people would first tell

what he did wrong.

Today at the retreat I walk a five mile hike with Rose, tell her all this takes from me who I am, we cut across to the Munster Bar toilets, smoke filled, beer bottles on tables, pool balls fall into pockets, juke box Steve Earle raspy and thick tells me *I came home with a brand new plan* copper head road, I jog back to the abbey, my rhythm and sweat soaks the front of my shirt, my own song.

Telling Mother

BY VERYL COGHILL

I was born thinking about why I had come out so fast. How warm I had been. How cold it is now. Why I couldn't wait another ten hours, so I would be born on mothers day in mid morning. The thunder storm could have stopped and my dad would have made it home in time with my siblings, to see me just after the blood was washed from my eight pound body.

But I was born that night, only the two of us to hold each other. The dark clouds outside pounding rain on glass. I know I held you with my eyes. Told you I would be one of those kids who never knew when to stop. Never had enough of anything, would need to carry black. Born on that night, full of everything but light.

Nights would always hold me, keep me company with my thoughts. My thoughts fall out onto walls, doors, the mirror. My thoughts fill every space, crack and corner of my room. Hours old I told you it would be painful for us both. Sorry I couldn't have waited for the morning to be a person bright as butter, full of sunshine.

Pinched

BY VERYL COGHILL

I've placed the necklace back in its wooden jewel case with the padded leather cushion where the chain hooks in at the corners and the box springs open and closed, pinches my fingers, just like my heart, pinched,

No break lines this time, he didn't even look into my eyes to say good bye, I never expected this white gold heart, or this pinch, in the end, I celebrate another beginning,

Sometimes my bruised heart needs heat, ice and massage, I do that for myself, I unbutton my blouse and there is my heart, he got that close, pinched like a snake bite or a purple Herman from the boys at school.



I'm bipolar by Lori Glier

Angelic

BY SALVATORE DIFALCO

Or not, depends on how you look at her.
In the mirror she resembles her mother
Before her face fell, but in direct light
She looks like her younger brother,
The one who decided to fly one night
And discovered he could not in mid-flight.
Not just a question of taking another
Plunge, of repainting the wings white
Or distancing yourself from the right
Or wrong decision: it doesn't matter.
And if you jump and do not bother
With the parachute, no one will cry
More hotly than I, or cry harder.

Creator

BY RACHEL FISHER

Please Creator, take away my pain
I've been hurting for too long.
Get it out and release it
It sometimes drives me insane.

I've been told what to do
It's not that easy:
I've cried, grieved and screamed
To myself and others to be true.

To make my journey from head to heart
The toughest I'll ever do
To forgive and love myself
For mistakes I've made – that's where I'll start.

To let the tears flow
Yes, I'll get a headache
But it's worth it I'm healing
For I continue to grow.

Tomorrow's another day
I'll make the best of it.
To have a good attitude
Give thanks to my Creator and pray.

Dialectics of grey

BY SALVATORE DIFALCO

Lost doves landed at noon on the onyx square
Behind the marble fountain, and then snow.
A prehistoric black telephone with a dial
Rang inside the fluorescent white kitchen.

One imagined nothing more depressing than
An episode of Casper the Friendly Ghost . . .
Even Edgar Allan Poe, consumed by ravens,
Couldn't grow a proper, manly beard,

Like Blackbeard or Lenin or one of those
Puck hogs during the playoffs—playoffs?—
When snow cakes like icing sugar
And dessert is unbaked Alaska.



Peter's surf portrait by Henry Peters



SUNPUPS

BY LEONARD FORD

It's the last image of the sundog event.

A cold wind blows across the surface of the street.
It swirls around and makes different patterns
and drifts in spots on your patio and your deck.

It gives off the cold sensation of a sunpup.

On the city sidewalk it makes different drifts
of crispy, fresh snow, and drifts along the top
of the fence and around vehicles and buildings
and on the vehicles where they're parked.

You see double images, two on each side
of the sun, first the bigger sundogs, and then
the smaller sunpuppies, one beside each dog.

The sundog and sunpuppy experience is
a theory to express, and the feeling of being out
in it is a convenience, a good experience
to explain, a nice experience to explore.

Makes you feel glorious when you're out in it.



Art by Elizabeth Glixman

Suitcase Solution

BY KEITH FOSTER

The worst thing about going on vacation
is trying to get all my clothes
in one suitcase.

I have to sit on it to close it,
but there's still something
hanging out the side.

No problem.
I just take a pair of scissors
and carefully snip off anything
that sticks out.

There. Now I'm ready.

Picking saskatoons

BY gillian harding-russell

We drive off the black satin of new-tarred highway
onto dirt road past shimmering brim of beach, and

though the season is right, saskatoon bushes stand
back undistinguished among caragana

sporting pea-green pods of inedible fruit. A wizened dug
and spots of rained fruit higher up, culprit black fungus

after weeks of rain travelling up forks of branches
in pointed blight. A butterfly, orange and black Monarch

or its look-a-like cousin-species flaps by in lazy, warm
un-sunny air, when I spot a bush down the incline dripping

grape-like clusters of lush fruit. Why this bush beside
an abandoned woodshed of weathered silver flourishes

(broken window crossed by the inquiring thread of
a spider) in a rarefied air that emits, what? the seeping grave

of an ancient biffy, and the one on the sun-sweet
blown hill withers, why one branch is loaded

with fruit, and another from the same tree barren,
one berry ripens while the one beside it waits

for another day, a mystery I need not bother
with now. My bowl at last filling....

Excelsior

BY gillian harding-russell

Kubla Khan, inspired by his grandfather's thundering path across the plains as much as by his father's failure to follow in Genghis' footsteps. Alexander, a boy driven by his horseman father's example, and by his crazed mother's incinerating hatred

for Philip's one-eyed loves. Caesar with epilepsy aspired to heights where he could dizzily lead, a fall before an army on the battlefield, only a short distance farther than on marble tiles outside

his own vestibule. And a great scientist's brain is pickled in a jar in a famous city and pondered over like a sleeping god's brain: but sorry folks, there's nothing much there to be deduced: a smaller, more compact version of our own sausaged and lumpen shape, like

half a heart and entrails entangled for our diminished purposes, and so how many great ones have plodded impaired through our civilized labyrinths with minotaurs to overcome inside themselves only to peak much later following the clear sky in a parabola of their own way of seeing?

Take this youth with his smiling ways and far-apart, stellate eyes, elfin the way they span outward to draw you right in, and he can sing *Sweet Caroline* like Neil Diamond and *Pretty Woman* so you'd mistake him standing at the microphone for Roy Orbison,

so perfect is his pitch. In the mellow lights and with a ruby glass of wine in my hand, he's a small genius in his parrot way, dark sunglasses and swaying in our gas-lit midst – could be Elvis now resurrected in Crave Kitchen

and Wine Bar, and then the M. C. – a tall woman and a singer herself with music and kindness in her heart tells us how Colby here has struggled but can perform with joy: so what is

this changeling illness? I have to look it up and find those afflicted lacking chromosomes along the 7th gene; they preternaturally good at music and memory: so Colby here may channel riffs in that big wide head of his, those pale locks floating as Kubla Khan's

within a pleasure dome as in Coleridge's opium dream (if not history), and I wonder what I might lack that makes words swarm inside my wayward brain like fish, coloured and striated, phosphorescent and of as many shapes and sizes (while numbers' straighter lists and

arrangements fall into disrepair) and whether there might be something wrong in me that I prefer to write a poem about life rather than to live my own imperfect version.



Midnight cruise
by Henry Peters



Pay attention, the sky is passing

BY gillian harding-russell

you by. Like a fish delivered out of the unremembered
belly of the whale, your life is caught on

the hook of living. Rejoice! No time to bemoan
the pain of hooks, the accidental squeeze

of gills, pinions held cruelly back, unable to fly off
let alone breathe in the face of trauma. No time

to lament the privilege of being held thus up
by the impression of an eye socket that views

you sprawled against sea or field or cement, your own
blind recognition of the ineffable. No time

to lament the sun's shining blind spot
on your vision. No time, no time, now the clouds

have covered the sun you were complaining
about a moment ago have disappeared, never

to resemble the exact same formation on grey
matter, arrangement of whale or dragon

orange tinged and mercurial, fished out of
the leaden sea of your consciousness.

No time, no time, your cells oxidizing within
the frequency of light rays, your life's thread unraveling

at the speed of planetary travel, your right hand raised
like a drowning man's to stop the back-rush of earth's

counter-clockwise rotation. No time to mourn the moon's
patched face of clouds snagged inside the wind's knots, stars

shut out by the sky's black, come sun or winds or storm. The sun
has gone. The moon and stars are gone. The sky is passing

you by. Is it all part of a dream? Pay attention...before
you wake up to...(!)

When I taste the dusty berries

BY gillian harding-russell

from the roadside tree, you say, "Don't,"
and want to bring them home to wash

and cook in a saucepan over the red element
so their sweetness spreads through

the house and rises to a second story
in an ambrosia that will transcend

into another dimension. Then pour
the steaming cauldron with mauving froth

in jars so jewel-like behind glass with
their purple fruit and store them in

Aladdin's cave of association along

the basement wall beside two hammers

and a screwdriver, jar by jar to be retrieved
for breakfast, after the long dark sleeps of night

during the cold white months. Or no, you say,
Let's fashion a pie (You are enthusiastic

today!) with fine trellis work of cuisine art
so the berries might be remembered for

the greater glory all this preparation
takes. Still, I say, snatching the last

of the berries back from the top of
the basket, Keep a few in their rawness

for the gods and first-bitten inspiration
of original memory.

Jail

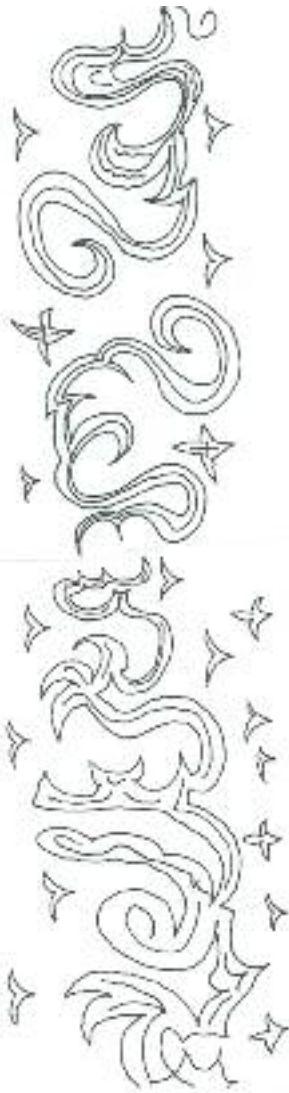
BY COLE HANSEN

The way you feel is like a karaoke frag. The blind ambition of a half-starved wolf. The trees are blank, they stare back in time - the rope that hangs from one tree is a former inmate. Blood all over. Fist of fury. One lone tree/ one lone wolf. Cowboy boots stamp a dead man's beat. It's time. Jail is over for the wolf, but goes on forever for the tree

Back to square 1

BY COLE HANSEN

Hanging out on the dirty street corner. Trees banging in the wind. Lone mutt howls in lonely pain. The grime on the tip of my shoes is a pattern of my history. Bark said the mutt. To the toilet said the cashier at 7-11. Back to square 1 I said, the Walmart greeter.



Art by James Skelton

Disjointed PTSD

BY R.M. JACOBS

P lease allow me to
t ouch you
s ense you
d estroying yourself is not the answer
p ain does not become you
t ension so high we could both fly
s oaring into never did it happen land
d enying the reality
p romises that can never be kept because our words are
t ransparent lies seeping out of the cracks in our foundation our
s ouls lost in
d espair and gritty sand from the land of the sun
p assions now lying corpses
t raveled into our living room
s eparating you and me
d elivering evil into our bed because you lost the ability to dream
p urge the past, it can not be undone, it is between us kissing our lips
t ransform your soul into accepting what comes to you now
s eek out the refuge I offer, allow me to take your hand and
d irect you out of the dark, and into the colours of today
p assions can be re-born
t hreads of reality from today and yesterday woven into
s heets and blankets that cocoon us, invite us to
d ance for dance we must to find our way

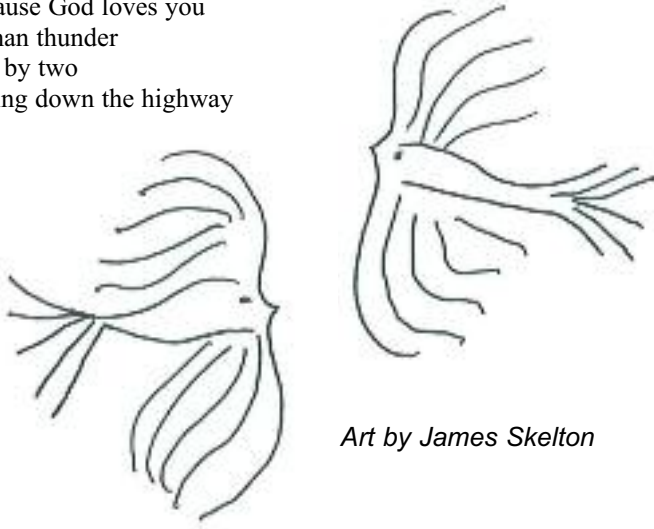


Two by two

BY HOLLY KNIFE

two by two
two by two
rolling down the highway
like thunder, human thunder

rolling down the highway
praying you stay
out of trouble
because God loves you
human thunder
two by two
rolling down the highway



Art by James Skelton

Social situations

BY PATRICIA KUZAK

social situations silence me
and so do people
with their accounts
of trips to Europe and Hawaii
my clothes aren't right
they're far too serious
as is everything
that comes out of my mouth
I clamp it shut in horror
I've said it wrong again
smiling grimly
squirring
and excusing myself for a cigarette
I escape to safety in some lobby
I like it there
In my forgiving company

Love is like a highway

BY HOLLY KNIFE

Love is like a highway,
you got to go to the end
and back again, through
the winding roads. Like
love can be, at times

and love can leave your
heart like a broken highway
-bumps and bruises
and taking its toll.

Love is like a highway,
you got to go to the end
and back again.

The way I like it

BY PATRICIA KUZAK

beer fuzzy with cigarette smoke curling
around me like a blessing of sweet grass
I sit here alone
the way I like it
safe
decadent
and self-indulgent
lost in thoughts of black holes
and little universes
while the dishes in the sink
get crustier
and my husband scowls at me
in disapproval

When I'm released

BY PATRICIA KUZAK

I count the ceiling tiles
selecting one to press against
when I'm released
like a rubber band snapped
my body left behind
in rumpled sheets
I watch the doctor
put her ear
to my breathless mouth
and peer into the sockets
where my eyes lie empty
I'm waving frantically
to get her attention
but she walks away
leaving me suspended
I hover over my familiar body
reluctant to abandon it
while she glides along polished halls
putting her name on the charts
of all the dead
with her indelible ink
but where is mine?

My realm of dreams

BY GLADYS MACDONALD

I watch the other children as they go about their play,
Dreaming of places far and near.
I hear their childish laughter ringing clear
And long to join them in their winsome way.

They chase the impish squirrels and friendly birds,
Capture snakes and frogs beside the pond,
Or sail their boats into the great beyond.
I watch with envy -- void of words.

And, when they ride their swings up to the skies,
It stirs in me a rhapsody in song,
Teasing my soul to sing along,
Oblivious of the tears that blur my eyes.

Carefree they dance about the meadow green.
Nonchalant, gracefully they flit
Beckoning the little creatures to sit.
I watch with wonder at the touching scene.

When August days are warmed with the sun
The youngsters scamper to the pool
And splash and keep themselves cool.
I dream that I am joining in their fun.

Then Daddy lifts me from my wheelchair throne --
Shoulder high! I shout and sing!
"This is my castle! I'm the King!"
My realm is filled with dreams that are my own.



*Back to the earth -
nightmares
by Judy Swallow*



The public, private process of dying

BY DAYNA LIZ MAZZUCA

A silent line of family members
form outside the room
on the fifth floor of the hospital
in Saskatoon, St. Paul's on 20th Street
where they've taken her mother
for care, for her health, health-care
the public domain

Her mother who loves privacy
as much as anyone suddenly doesn't
want to be alone for another minute
when someone in a white coat from the public
domain she doesn't know might come in
to tell her
no one can care for her failing health now

In fact that is exactly what's happened
to her mother and the row of family
who know and love her
and of course, who can blame them, don't
want to let her go.

The order is signed, the DNR code for
let her die
when her breathing stops, let her die
do not resuscitate her mother who bravely
signed the order with her own 59-year-old
hand, the left one. She was, is, left-handed
for anyone who cares to know

Each step of the long, public, private process
is watched by each member of family
who feels the one who is dying
carries the whole DNA of the growing family tree
code for her mother being the heart
and soul of those who know her
her public
and private self who is dying

Things what weigh

BY DAYNA LIZ MAZZUCA

The scale next to the fridge
is good enough to tell the truth
so why don't I thank
the flat machine measuring
gains and losses
with appalling regularity

like when I cut back the calls
to my brother
and shoot up another 10 pounds
or receive strokes
from my hubby
and drop five or 7

numbers in a circle
starting every day at zero
and winding up
wherever my gut
leads

ILL

BY IAN MCINTYRE

How can one stoop so low
When you think you know,
Sassy minds think alike

Drape a blanket over a birdcage
Waiting, waiting for a time like mine
Clever men pull the ropes that give flow
Ill is a word not used enough
I reach for those who seek better health
I believe good will stick like glue

Hang me by my thoughts
Once on drugs I'm a growing elm
Just like the woods I feel close to home

I am better now, so much undone
crank the clock to adjust the time
Make it worth more than what is seen
Seeing is beyond believing....

If you only knew now

BY BRONWEN MCRAE

After baby number one
in 1965,
you have a few teary eyed mornings
which lead to
not getting dressed most days till 2,
your sleeveless shift
tossed over a dusty rocking chair. You wonder
if these feelings will go and you will return.

After baby number two
in 1966,
you have fantasies
of pulling to the roadside,
putting the baby on the shoulder
the roads,
not yours. You settle
for leaving it
in the laundry basket
next to the machine,
toss a stale cookie
at the toddler watching *Edge of Night*
crawl back into bed.
Still manage to present yourself
and meatloaf at suppertime.

After baby number three
in 1967,
strawberries

dipped in Tang
as an entree
could be an option.

And then one day
you drag yourself
to the grocery store
with babies one, two and three,
fill your cart with TV dinners
and *Pop Tarts*,

in the laundry aisle
some soap powder
a bottle of bleach
which you look at
momentarily
before unscrewing the top
raising the contents
to your lips
and swallowing.

An old man buying shoelaces
finds your limp body
on the floor of aisle nine,
the puddle of bleach
bleeding the colour
from the ends
of your hair.



Art by James Skelton

Colorado Girl

BY MARK A. MURPHY

A girl is dying at my breast,
she falls into my arms with her arms and hands
and feet all lacerated,
the blood runs freely from her wounds.
She loves the bare walls of my humble room,
she wears a crown of ivy
and sings her sad songs that only I may hear.
She says she is the victim of torture,
that she has waited a lifetime
to fall into my arms with no head to live another day.

Her breasts press through
the outline of a white blouse,
she dresses all in white,
her lips part as if in pain, she sings in barely a whisper.

Innocence

BY MARK A. MURPHY

In my youth I wanted to love, to be something more
than the self without a mate, for what is freedom
in the bestial night without a mate in the cave
of your own undoing? What is freedom without
the body of your woman to hold? What is freedom
without the carnal and lascivious workings of the flesh?
Indeed, what is self without flesh, without form?
So many questions without flesh where the vultures
miss another free meal. So many questions
where the self warns not the snake of consequences.
So where are we, my friends? In the context of loving
snakes and vultures will do their bit unknowingly.
Youth and old age both negate the self, the rest
as they say hardly matters a heartbeat.



burning bridges.

BY JANNA PAYNE

she stacked her failed relationships into poems
a line about her ‘broken heart, working vagina’
an ode to her boss taking a dump on her self-esteem and
a long-winded monologue about losing her virginity

she didn’t make a living, but made a killing off her past affairs
broke even—thirty bucks for the virginity piece and thirty bucks for the plan B
even steven
blew a few more men, blew through a few more jobs
then, realizing she had long favoured self-expression over self-control,
she set out to temper herself

choosing self-control over self-expression.

BY JANNA PAYNE

she decided she oughta try her hand at diplomacy
she hated every diplomatic person she had ever met, but gave it a christ like whirl
had it been an issue of otherness she would have been lessening the ‘us/them’ divide
since it hinged on her personality, it took a lot more leg work

she traded in her voice for a professional identity
(which sounded better on a résumé than in poetry)
listened, learned, observed
chose self-control over self-expression
didn’t make waves, didn’t move forward, didn’t budge at all

low and behold— she lost every ounce of her personality
she hated and hardly recognized herself
she decided something had to give (and it couldn’t be her peace of mind)
so, in hopes of finding her voice, she picked up her pen and jotted forward

finding her voice.

BY JANNA PAYNE

she wrote a poem about finding her true voice
the editor—he loved it
totally fucking loved it
loved it so much he used it to find his voice
kept her name and a few one-liners, but started ghostwriting

assuming there was agency to be had (and that he may as well have it),
she started cheering him on—“love your voice! sounds like you!”
he took the bait, she took the money
and off she went to get her revenge
recklessly and thoughtfully writing her fragmented self together

Full spectrum lamp

BY KY PERRAUN

Today I've been blessed with some insight
into the chaos that is my mind.
Should I bow to the poet I'm reading,
to the phalanx of prescriptions standing sentry
on the mahogany bureau, to the season, ripening
green, the anniversary of my overdose and subsequent
discovery of Marianne Moore, or to my lover,
who held my large, awkward feet in his hands
and kneaded me to sleep?

What I do know is this – the demons of despair
and delusion are locked securely in their cells,
and though they claw through the bars, they are
presently separate from me.

Today I am more than my disease. I am lover,
daughter, aunt, poet. Even the dishes seem manageable,
though they teeter in towers, testament to a weekend
of chopping and baking.

Such days are rare enough to honour, sadly, and, truth
be told, come less and less often, are hard-won, brim
with undone duty and the task of planning
only such momentary lucidity allows.

I hereby give you power over my life
when the demons escape, and I leave you everything
I have been left, no payment for the times you've stood
watch over my fallen form.

O, my love, I should like to share this good day with you,
to atone for the med-induced comas and paranoid babble,
the picking up of the pieces I left behind as I ran from myself.

I have created a space for your music and muscle, a small, dim
room with a full-spectrum lamp, and a history we share.
[stanza break]

I'd like you to remember me like this
when I am in Bedlam, where I shall no doubt die,
immobile and drooling in a chemical straitjacket,
you spooning mush into my slackened jaw, as I know
you will – you are solid, the rock my waves disperse upon,
the foundation of my shaky monuments.

O, my love, it could be my last good day
and I don't want to spend it alone.

SU SAM SEE COMING HOME

BY TRACI RIDER

He sets out the game board,
Another parking lot, another town, another time.
Fate hunkers behind the wheel,
Sends the children lugging heavy bags over icy pavement,
While I try to imagine and immortalize their beauty,
Instead of my own loneliness.
They've been to Daddy's church.

Come home... Pale as snow.
My superhuman power is not to feel.
Nightmares smack walls,
Frantic Butterflies.
Is it there? Inside of everybody?
This self which comes out when in captivity?
You have become the closest approximation
to yourself which could tolerate living there.
We cry and hold each other.

Nobody really believes I won't leave again.
Sorry is just a word.
Bundled up, we walk to feed the ducks.
The water narrows finally to sheeted ice.
We carry with us the old bread.
They tell me how he has changed the rules to win.
As rock he grinds paper,
He is Volcano.
In his house, they mustn't say my name.

Swing toy trucks,
Here hit these, I throw pillows,
Punch until I am weak.
Cry until I am happy.
I hear them playing in the bath.
Rock. Paper. Scissors.
Mommy, which are you?
Water, I answer,
Water



WRITING THE LIFE – POETRY

My lady in heaven

BY ROLLI

My lady in heaven
hallowed be
and lighter than
when your circle was the sun

A chill - or when
a quick depression
sinks the room
a sexton going
smoke
or a pill-bottle falls unaccountably
lady, I fold my hands
remembering

But only then

The clock runs down
the sun
and white-robed chemists running
home
rub eyes
and sigh for my lady in heaven



There is so much of emotion

BY ROLLI

There is so much of emotion

my poet's emotion

It is so marrow grown
as the swollen brain

If feeling is green
my feeling is green
and contained
as the rain-
ing terrarium

If feeling is rich
my feeling is rich
as tongues
of the rotund
ocean

As chasm as ocean

so much

of emotion



Third persons

BY ROLLI

When sadness had us
when it finished with us
and there was nothing but something
of us
our widow skin

when it unclasped us sadness
collapse as a wasp's fall
was silent as nightfall

when it quit us hiss
of a tongued machine the steaming
word birds became
of gray escaping

when it left us we remained

When grief leaves we remain

Bereaved of leaves
the tree remains a tree

It feels
more easily its skin
the teething wind
it's mothering

When grief leaves we remain
and altering we

are not reborn
or curtained
but third persons

learning speech again
to work the limbs
to sing

Felicity is pain
We'll sing again

Throats are thickening
We'll sing again

Words are jars of rain



Third persons by Rolli

Grief is meat

BY ROLLI

Grief is meat
is gravy
for the brain to stew in

Less its fattening we'd be
as much calcium as them
who we abandoned
by living

Grief
is meat of Lent
the empty man
the vegetarian

the pig
on a spit

Too rich for pity it





Perhaps there will not be

BY ROLLI

in the end any singing and
it will be
as deep cathedrals in
the deep of evening

In Transition

BY JENNIFER SIZELAND

Temporarily. You linger
Like the scent, of you before.

Pained. And painlessly
You step away
From your capsule.

Opened.
To float, expand,
Wither, shrink
Until you dissipate.

Vacantly.
Take your place
Abandon your purpose
To watch time in motion.

Nothingness is everything
As the merry dance,
Continues with wisps
Of you as you were
Once.

Schizophrenia: The more we know

BY RACHEL BARKAIE

Sadowsky, Jill. *David's Story*. Israel: Cyclamens and Swords Publishing, 2011. CD – PDF format. 120 pp.

David's Story is a sensitive first-person account by a loving mother and wife about the sad, difficult case of her son who fell ill with schizophrenia in the middle of his young life. The story tells of the daily struggles, the unpredictable difficulties, and the alternating senses of helplessness and hope that toss the whole family about. Having to deal with the sickness influenced all their lives – not only the son's life, but also the lives of the whole household.

The memoir is written in a clear and conversational language which draws the reader deep into the chilling and totally revealing story. We read about a combination of the family struggle with the mental health system, their feelings of helplessness as immigrants to a new and young country, as well as their growing despair about their son's struggles, his suffering and failing health, and ultimately his death. It seems that the only ray of light is the parents' love to the son, and **the siblings' love to their** suffering brother, their support and the naive hope that, maybe, finally, there will be an improvement.

In the first chapters of the book, the author describes the difficulties of a young couple's immigration during the 60s to the very young country of Israel, a fascinating description of their day to day struggles, totally different from those they left behind in South Africa. Israel was a new country without many resources that was in the process of retrieving Jews from the Diaspora (after World War II) to save them from extermination. In this situation of “no other options,” thousands of Jews, new immigrants, came from many different countries, needing housing and work in a country that had just gained independence and was itself fighting for existence amongst surrounding hostile countries. This period is described so well that I could go back in time and watch my own life there, through the written words, which brought out much longing for our lives then, and much admiration for the state this country has reached today.

The major part of the book is a kind of guide for those who know nothing about schizophrenia, its nature, shape, characteristics, and the difficulties in every step of its progress. I learned that persons afflicted with this disease may hear hidden voices, think that someone is following them or wants to kill them. Over time, they may become violent; their physical and emotional reactions become unpredictable. Their speech becomes venomous, threatening, and they are pulled into themselves more and more. When the patient takes medication

and the disease is somewhat under control, the patient is aware of his illness and does everything to get better and get out of the situation they are in. But, many times, the disease begins to control the patient and causes him to refuse his medication or miss his appointments with the psychiatrist. Sometimes the medications don't help, or worsen the situation, followed by patient's being committed to a psychiatric hospital – not always a good thing.

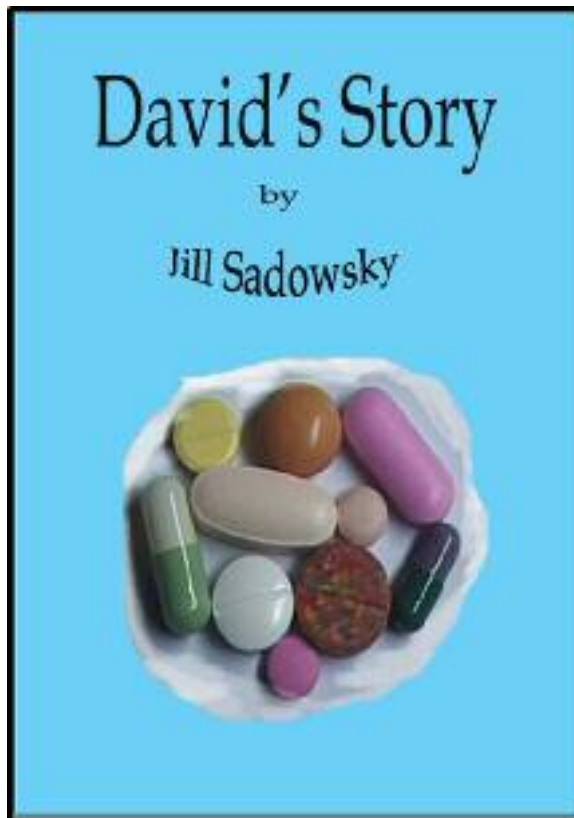
In my opinion, this book gives an exceptional glimpse into a frightening and threatening entanglement called schizophrenia. The book had to be written for several reasons: first, for the author to calm herself; secondly, for the author to recall good memories of family life and personal life with her husband. Of course, there were painful memories, that came up, turning points in her life that had been pushed back into the corners of her mind.

Writing was good therapy for the author, but the book is also a rare

and personal manuscript, revealing many “black holes” in our knowledge of the disease and helping us understand more and, of course, know more. We also experience a lot of frustration with the mental health system, and, without giving explicit directions, this book gives tools to other parents on how to deal with the disease, what to have checked, and what to do.

Reading the book, I recognized all of the Israeli place-names in Hebrew, and idiomatic Israeli and Jewish sentences and words. Some of the nuances will be lost on readers who are not Israeli and/or Jewish, and those not living in Israel. For example, Neft (heating oil), Cipa (Yarmulka), Moshav (Settlement), and Bima (pulpit in a Synagogue), Aliya (immigration), etc. Such parentheses with the briefest explanation might have been included.

I read the book with fascination and I cried.





The pronouns of mental health

BY TED DYCK

Pennebaker, James. *The Secret Life of Pronouns: What our Words Say about Us*. New York, Bloomsbury, 2011. 353 pp. Hardcover. \$35.

James Pennebaker makes a very large claim in *The Secret Life of Pronouns*: a writer's use of pronouns reveals her/his personality type, gender bias, leadership qualities, capacity for love, and – most important for purposes of this review – mental health (x).

The claim rests on research¹ Pennebaker and his associates have done using a computer program they developed called LIWC. "Luke," as it's pronounced, counts and classifies word usage according to some 80 "dictionaries" which link words to psychological states, cognitive processes, mental health, and so on. The program can be adjusted to tabulate a writer's use of function words (articles, auxiliaries, prepositions, pronouns, etc. 22). When these tabulations of function words are correlated with the larger dictionaries above, the role of, especially, the pronouns emerges.

Nobody will be surprised that writing reveals the writer; the surprise is that the use of *pronouns* reveals almost as much about the writer as her/his use of all other words. In part, this may reflect the fact that function words, which constitute only 0.04% of the typical adult vocabulary, account for over 55% of adult word usage, and personal pronouns are the most important function words (27). For example, *I* is the most frequently used word in almost every language. But who could have predicted that the person who uses *I* to the exclusion of *we* is perceived as humbler and more personable? Doesn't *I* signify the self-centred, egotistical, even narcissistic personality? Isn't *we* more inclusive than the exclusionary *I*? But, no – *I* turns out to be the sign of the folksy, every-day, approachable, ordinary you and me (28).

Chapter 1, "Discovering the secret life of the most forgettable words" (1-17), begins with Pennebaker's explaining how he came to the study of pronouns – he was searching for answers to the question, "Why does writing improve mental health?", that it does so having been answered by his and others' research. The major explanation – that writing was, in

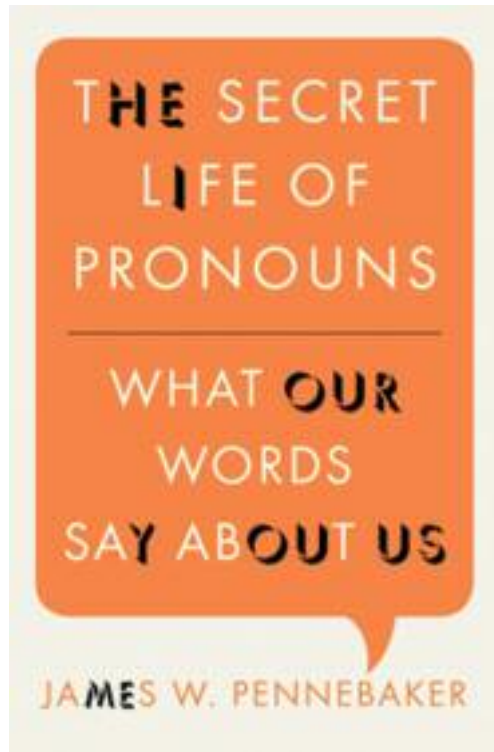
effect, a form of the talking cure so beloved of psychoanalysis – overlooked what people actually said and how they said it in the writing that helped them. To study the *what* and the *how* required the computer-based analysis, and thus LIWC was born. With the help of LIWC, the analysis quickly identified three characteristics of so-called "healthy writing": the expression of increasingly *positive* emotions; the *construction* of a coherent story; and *changes* in narrative perspective (10-13). All three characteristics, it turned out, could be statistically

predicted by the writer's use of pronouns. The more people *changed* their use of personal pronouns in writing that satisfied the three characteristics noted, the healthier they became (12).

Of course this finding doesn't quite answer Pennebaker's and our question: do the changes in writing *effect* changes in mental health – or merely *reflect* them? *Before* does not imply *because*, and here Pennebaker is very careful, as he should be. "Word use generally reflects psychological state rather than influences or causes it"; yet "the findings point to ways we can now use word analyses to change people's thinking" (14). In brief, and with reference to the characteristics of healthy writing, we can encourage the writer to view themselves more objectively (and therefore positively as well as negatively), to construct ever "better" (more meaningful) stories, and to try writing using different perspectives (pro-

nouns). Such encouragements are or should be part and parcel of the writing for therapy workshop, which, is the standard writing workshop *plus*. Pennebaker's final view is that, though writing doesn't cure mental illness, there are nevertheless techniques for enhancing mental health through writing.

I have necessarily omitted many fascinating parts of the book. Chapters 1 and 2 concern writing and mental health, which is my interest here, but the book also details the applications of Pennebaker's research in several other areas, each constituting a chapter – e.g., one chapter deals with personality, another with emotions, and the book concludes with "A handy guide for spotting and interpreting function words in the wild" (291-299). This guide is mostly a fun section of this otherwise serious study – quick: which of the following words are used *more* by truth-tellers than by liars – *but, or, except, without, not, never?*



¹ See <http://homepage.psy.utexas.edu/homepage/faculty/Pennebaker/Reprints/Campbell%26Pennebaker.pdf>, for an article summarizing this research.

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Visual artist from Regina. Second time in TRANSITION.

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BUCHANAN, SUSAN

Writes out of P.E.I. where she lives with her partner, their wonderful daughter, two standard poodles.
Currently working on a poetry manuscript and a novel.

CALLAGHAN, SHIRLEY

Retired psychometrician living in Charlottetown, PEI with her husband, Bernie. Attends Seniors College and belongs to a Writing Group.

COGHILL, VERYL

Writes out of Prince Albert SK, publishes widely in magazines, and is author of *Make me* (Thistledown 2005).

DEAGLE, JAMES

Published in In/Words and Flatlander. Editor-In-Chief of *The Journey: Life & Living with ME and FMS* (National ME/FM Action Network).

DIFALCO, SALVATORE

Lives in Toronto and works as an Italian translator. Latest publication: *The Mountie At Niagara Falls* (Anvil), a collection of short stories.

DITNER, ELAINE MARIE

Retired legal assistant Kitchener ON who has dabbled in crafts for many years. New to TRANSITION.

FISHER, RACHEL

Strong Aboriginal woman who deeply believes that freedom truly comes from within the heart ... Inner Peace.

FORD, LEONARD

Member of Sunshine Club who lives and writes in Yorkton SK. "Sunpups" the sequel to his earlier "Sundog event," also in TRANSITION.

FOSTER, KEITH

Well-known Regina writer of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, and drama.

GAINER, ASPEN

Edmonton AB writer recounts struggles with depression and subsequent decision to take anti-depressants.

HANSEN, COLE

Saskatoon-based writer originally from Shaunavon. Writes about nature and characters he meets. Enjoys travelling, biking, and hiking.

HARDING-RUSSELL, GILLIAN

Regina poet very widely published in magazines, anthologies, and books. Frequent contributor to TRANSITION.

Notes on contributors

JACOBS, R.M.

Writes war poetry out of Ste Anne de Bellevue QC from the perspective of the mother of a son in Afghanistan. New to TRANSITION.

KNIFE, HOLLY

Member of the Prince Albert WFYL Group. Poet, songwriter, beader, and painter. New to TRANSITION.

KUZAK, PATRICIA

Former Driver Education Instructor born and raised in Manitoba, married with four daughters. Loves prairie winters, sparrows, and dark chocolate.

LUNDAHL, BEV

Freelance writer from Regina whose writing is based mostly on genealogical and historical research.

MACDONALD, GLADYS

Long-time writer, educator, and member of Prairie Pens out of Moose Jaw.

MAZZUCA, DAYNA

Freelance writer, student, and new poet out of Saskatchewan now living on Vancouver Island. Homeschools her children, walks in the woods, journals, and reads stacks of books.

MCINTYRE, IAN

Prolific poet AND Member of the Prince Albert WFYL Group. Read with other WFYL writers at CMHA National Conference in Regina October 18 2012.

MCRAE, BRONWEN

Writer from Pike Lake SK who grew up in Moose Jaw. Published in *Spring, Room*, and online at Leaf Press and Blue Skies Poetry. New to TRANSITION.

MERINO, JOYCE

A lifelong student of and seeker of religion writing from Kamloops BC. New to TRANSITION.

MURPHY, MARK A.

UK writer and student of philosophy and poetry. Publications: two chapbooks and a forthcoming collection, *Night-watch Man & Muse* (Salmon Poetry: Eire, 2013). Welcome back to TRANSITION.

NOULLET, ALLAN

Long-time CMHA client and out-patient of Saskatchewan Hospital, North Battleford. First appearance in TRANSITION.

PARLEY, KAY

Former psychiatric patient and nurse, teacher, artist, and writer. Author of *Lady with a Lantern*. Frequent and eloquent contributor to TRANSITION.

PAYNE, JANNA

Storyteller, masters candidate, and activist born in Peterborough ON. Strives to tell her own story while facilitating opportunities for individuals with intellectual disabilities to do the same.



Art by
Elizabeth Glixman

PERRAUN, KY

Alberta poet who suffers from schizophrenia and mood disorder. Published in anthologies, literary journals, and a recent chapbook *Paging Dr. G*.

RIDER, TRACI

Fledgling 28-year-old Calgary, Métis writer, currently serving a federal sentence in Edmonton Institution for Women. True freedom is found in state of mind.

ROLLI

Author of *God's Autbio* (short stories), *Plum Stuff* (poems/drawings), and four forthcoming titles for adults and children.

Visit www.rolliwrites.wordpress.com.

SETTEE, DOT

Grew up in the north, learning the ways of the woods. Active member of the Prince Albert Writing for Your Life Group. Working on writing her life story.

SIZELAND, JENNIFER

UK poet writing from a young age, now works in television. Enjoys travelling and documenting the journey in writing.

WAGNER, BARB

Shaunavon writer and member of Writing for the Health of It (Eastend). Married to her best friend, has two amazing daughters, blessed with wonderfully supportive people in her life. New in TRANSITION.

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SPECIAL BYRNA BARCLAY ISSUE : Byrna is the original editor of **TRANSITION**. Her contribution to and support of the magazine and CMHA(SK) will be commemorated by a special issue in 2013. Please forward artwork, letters, reminiscences, essays, and fiction before **March 30 2013**.

1. **TRANSITION** is published twice a year by The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. Subscription by joining CMHA (SK) at \$15 / year.
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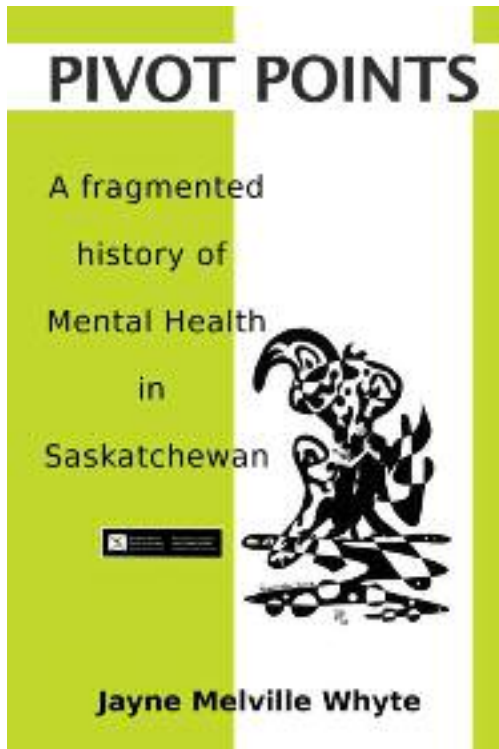
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