

TRANSITION

SPRING 2010

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TRANSITION's editor, Ted Dyck has been developing writer's groups in southern Saskatchewan . . . read the report.

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Jean Fahlman reminisces about the Weyburn Hospital as its demolition date arrives.

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This issue's cover artist is also a poet. Read Helen Herr's work, *Eight night poems*.

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Kate Baggot returns to our pages with a wonderful piece of fiction, *Language of fans*.

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Mary has been hospitalized for years. Author Joanne Shannon takes us along as Mary has her first visitor.



CANADIAN
MENTAL HEALTH
ASSOCIATION
(Saskatchewan
Division) Inc.



TRANSITION

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(Saskatchewan Division) Inc.

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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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1. TRANSITION is published twice a year by The Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. Subscription by joining CMHA (SK) at \$15 per year.
2. Send original, unpublished articles, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and visual art that represent current mental health issues and reflect on their impact on individuals.
3. Maximum manuscript lengths: articles – 15 pages; all other prose – 10 pages; poetry – 10 poems or 10 pages, whichever is less; visual art – 10 pieces.
4. Reprints and simultaneous submissions (to several magazines) are not considered.
5. Turnaround time is normally one issue or 6 months: do not send a second submission before the first has been reviewed.
6. Payment is \$25.00 per printed page (\$12.50/half page); \$20.00 per published visual art work; and \$100 for cover art.
7. Electronic submissions are preferred (full contact information). Submit manuscripts in Word or WordPerfect format (12-point Times New Roman, double-spaced, 2 cm margins at sides and 5 cm top and bottom, as e-mail attachment to: contactus@cmhask.com or to the Editor at tdyck@sasktel.net
8. Send hardcopy manuscripts (typed, one-sided, 12-point, double-spaced, 2 cm margins at sides and 5 cm top and bottom), together with self-addressed, stamped return envelopes with sufficient postage, to:

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Bob Duenk (center) of Kelvington, is \$20,000 richer, winning the Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. Cash Calendar Sweetheart Draw on February 14, 2010. Donia Alvarado-Okraimec (right), the Program Director for Yorkton Branch made the trip to present the cheque to Bob and his wife.

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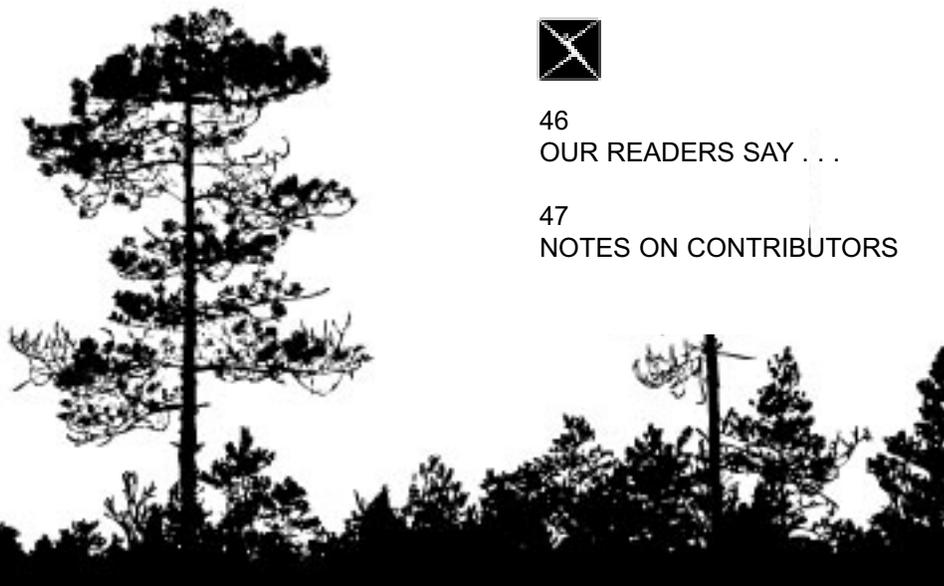
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Writing for your life: a report

1. PRELIMINARIES

Last fall from September 1 through December 31, I had the privilege of directing a pilot project called Writing for Your Life funded by a Saskatchewan Arts Board (SAB) Explorations Grant with the support of Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) (CMHA(SK)). The project grew out of my positive experience during two writer-in-residencies at the Festival of Words (Moose Jaw) facilitating a writing therapy group for clients and supporters of the local CMHA. That experience led me to approach Dave Nelson, E.D., about securing funding for a pilot project on establishing writing therapy groups in other branches of CMHA. Fortunately, the SAB had just initiated the Creative Partnerships Explorations Program, designed "to facilitate cultural development in Saskatchewan communities and enable communities to form a partnership with a Saskatchewan artist in order to collaboratively explore, assess and plan for cultural and creative opportunities." This was exactly what we needed; we made a successful application; and there we were.

The community for the project thus comprised the clients and supporters of three CMHA branches in southern Saskatchewan. This community of people with direct experience of mental illness obviously had particular health and cultural

needs, both of which, we felt, could be addressed through writing therapy groups. The research question therefore was obvious: Do writing therapy groups contribute to their participants' mental health? A related sub-question was equally obvious: Can viable writing therapy groups be established in such a short time?

2. EARLY STAGES

The project needed three CMHA branches that were interested in doing the pilot study. I contacted Swift Current (Ruth Smith, Executive Director), Moose Jaw (Donna Bowyer, Program Director), and Weyburn (Gladys Perepeluk, Program Director) in mid-August, and all agreed to participate. I then met with the directors in each branch early in September to introduce the project, to settle details (itinerary, local facilitators, times and places for meetings), and to conduct a first writing session. Procedures were established to keep all groups informed of the progress of the project: I kept notes of all meetings, wrote them up, vetted them with branches by e-mail, and then compiled monthly reports to be sent to each branch and to the division office, CMHA(SK).

I had already conducted some initial research into the

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Division key player on committee

DAVID NELSON, RPN, RSW
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



The past year has been both busy and exciting, with several projects moving forward in various venues.

Saskatchewan Division has been a key player on the further development of the Saskatchewan Assured Income for the Disabled (SAID), now a reality on a limited basis. The Executive Director of CMHA is on the Program Implementation Advisory Team for SAID, and is Co-Chair of the Assessment Development Committee. This has proven to be an educational experience for all involved, due to the complex nature of designing an assessment tool for all disabilities to determine the impact of disabilities for individuals.

As well, work continues on the Regina Qu'Appelle

Regional Health Authority Mental Health and Addictions Strategy Steering Committee. CMHA Saskatchewan Division is represented on this committee, with research into "best practice" and "evidence-based" models progressing through this year. It is hoped that this work will help trigger a much-needed provincial plan for mental health and addictions.

On a much lighter note, CMHA and other partners are supporting a new group called "Healing Through Humour." This is a consumer-led group, which will do stand-up comedy with the goal of building up self-esteem for members and stigma reduction in the community.

We look forward to a great annual conference entitled "At the Centre of the Circle," in partnership with the Schizophrenia Society of Saskatchewan on June 11, 2010.

In all, this has been a satisfying year and we'll look forward to continuing on in the coming year to move mental health and related issues forward in our province.

Thanks to all our staff, our Board and all the volunteers who make this possible.

. . . participation in the writing group was affirmative for all individuals, as well as for the facilitators and me.

nature and efficacy of writing therapy groups. The single most important resource turned out to be local: *Writing on the Edge* by Jeff Park of the University of Saskatchewan. Additional primary sources included a foundational twenty-five year study of the therapeutic effects of writing by James Pennebaker at the University of Texas (Austin). This research directly influenced the way the writing groups were set up: e.g., each group was encouraged to begin every session with a 3-5-minute *freewriting* session, a mode of therapeutic writing described, studied, and favoured by both Park and Pennebaker. A significant aspect of the project was to find a way to determine answers to the main research question. To this end, an exit questionnaire was developed with the help of the directors and facilitators; the results of this survey have been tabulated and are presented and analyzed in Appendix C.

Ongoing informal meetings and e-mail correspondence with key persons such as branch directors, first, and then group facilitators, later, helped to resolve issues that arose during the setup and operation of the writing groups. An important example was the finding local facilitators. A writing therapy group is a very special kind of writing group: in addition to the usual respect that must be afforded all writers and their works, writing and sharing is voluntary in a therapy group and must remain confidential.; and any development of the craft must be conducted with sensitivity to the feelings and sometimes traumatic experiences of the participants. It therefore turned out to be critically important to have a facilitator not only experienced in running a writing group, but also sensitive to the particular needs of a therapy group. Such facilitators were found for all groups with the cooperative efforts of the directors. In this way, the progress of all groups was cooperatively initiated, conducted, and evaluated in both normative and summative modes.

3. THE GROUPS IN OPERATION

I visited each branch/group monthly to assist them and to monitor their progress in the context of the project. Each visit included meetings with the facilitator and director, and participating in the groups' workshops. These visits, written up by me and vetted by each branch and each facilitator, provided opportunities for analysis of and reflection on the progress of the groups during the project. A brief description of the groups (each having about six participants) and their activities follows:

(a) The Swift Current Branch, through the efforts of a committed staff, quickly found a highly qualified facilitator under whose direction the writing group became independent. The group, with a variable membership of about six participants, may be characterized by two features: it had some staff members among its participants; and its weekly meetings included some instruction in the craft of writing. It met weekly in the CMHA(SC) building.

(b) The Moose Jaw Branch had already met bi-weekly for several years when the project started. A capable facilitator, "trained" by being part of the group, was therefore at hand. This group, calling itself *Moose Jaw Muse*, was distinguished by its maturity (a number of its members are accomplished and published writers) and by the fact that almost every member was capable of being a facilitator. The latter characteristic led naturally to a kind of rotating facilitation and a leadership where individual members "led" parts of the workshops.

(c) The Weyburn Branch needed and got two extra visits because it took some time to find a qualified facilitator. In the meantime, the director incorporated writing into her ongoing weekly therapy group – and with excellent results. When a facilitator was found, a local writer and member of the SWG, the group was ready for her. This group, too, had its distinguishing feature: it was more "oral" than the other groups, including persons who did not write but participated in the discussions of writing shared by others.

In each branch, it was clear that participation in the writing group was affirmative for all individuals, as well as for the facilitators and me.

Near the end of the project, I and two selected participants from the writing groups were interviewed by ACCESS-TV (Regina). This was an opportunity to showcase the collaboration between CMHA(SK) and the SAB, to present the magazine *Transition*, and, most importantly, to publicize the work of the writer-participants, all in the context of the *kinds of writing* being done in Saskatchewan. The two writer participants, Gloria Morin (Moose Jaw) and Barry Styre (Weyburn), gave excellent performances, both in the interview and in reading their work. The video is to be aired in 2010; copies for distribution to the branches, CMHA(SK), and the SAB have been requested.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The value of a project such as this may be measured in many ways: first, given the requirements of the SAB grant, in the exit survey and the analysis of its results (Appendix A); second, in the facilitator's final reports (Appendix B); and thirdly, in the works produced by the writers (Appendix C).

The information gathered from all these sources was more than enough to answer a solid YES to the main research question: Do writing therapy groups contribute to their participants' mental health? It was also found that viable writing groups could be established in a short period of time – provided experienced facilitators and supportive directors could be found (which fortunately was the case for each group /branch).

In sum, the project achieved all its goals, and the outcomes convinced all that it could profitably be extended to more branches in the province.



**APPENDIX A:
EXIT SURVEY**

PLACE: Moose Jaw, Swift Current, Weyburn DATE: Sept.-Dec. 2009

Eighteen participants took the survey. Twelve were in the 20-49 age group; six were over 50. The results marked X, below, are the averages of the scores in each category.

Indicate the growth you experienced as a participant in the Writing Group:

	1 none	2 little	3 some	4 much	5 very much
Understanding yourself	0	0	X	0	0
Understanding others	0	0	X	0	0
Expressing yourself	0	0	0	X	0
Listening to others	0	0	0	X	0
Writing & reading	0	0	X	0	0
Well-being & self-esteem	0	0	X	0	0
New insights & ideas	0	0	0	X	0
Coping & adapting	0	0	X	0	0

ANALYSIS

This survey gives a general idea of how the participants perceived the benefits (or not) of the writing groups. On the whole, one would expect that the ratings of *growth experienced* be somewhere near the middle of the range of responses. *Some growth* (or more), it seems to me, is sufficient to justify claiming that the project answers the research question with an unequivocal YES: *Do writing therapy groups contribute to their participants' mental health?* Small improvements in one's mental health through writing therapy are consistent with the long-term studies of Pennebaker at the University of Texas and Park's experience guiding writing therapy groups in Saskatoon.

The only difference in the category ratings that might be significant is in *Listening to others*. It is often not fully understood how important listening is, generally, as well as specifically in writing therapy. Listening to the other is respecting the other's views no matter how much they might differ from one's own; listening carefully is necessary in order to hear what the writing is actually saying; listening is thus an active engagement with an other's words in order to

offer a supportive and constructive response.

The flip side of *listening to the other* is of course *expressing the self*. That the rating in this category moves slightly past the midpoint (from 3.0 to 3.5) is at the very least interesting, as it supports the theoretical view that writing, for therapy or otherwise, is never done in isolation. There is always a reader / listener, as every writer / speaker knows, and as Jeff Park's study demonstrates. Similar remarks apply to the category *New insights & ideas*.

The survey also gave participants the opportunity to comment on the most / least beneficial aspects of the writing group and to offer suggestions for improvements. Responses were highly varied, as one might expect, ranging from the serious and poetical ("*freewriting* is freeing" is a most beneficial aspect) to the hilarious and practical ("the end of the session" is the least beneficial thing about it). Suggestions for improvement were thoughtful and considered: more revisits of earlier work; include people who don't write but like to speak; invite more people into the group. The crucial role of the facilitators was often and gratefully noted.

"We look forward to continuing to write, as you have opened our eyes to a world where the possibilities are endless."

APPENDIX B: FACILITATORS' REPORTS: A SUMMARY

As was noted earlier, the facilitators were crucial to each group's success. And a good facilitator, it turned out, was someone who knew how to conduct a writing group and was, in addition, sensitive to the particular needs of persons with direct experience of mental illness. In other words, although formal training in therapy would no doubt have enhanced the facilitators' effectiveness, its absence was not a problem. In many ways, this is a heartening if small insight: it speaks to the ability of the participants to deal with ordinary people in a supportive environment, and suggests that integrating persons with direct experience of mental illness into the everyday world can be done if a small number of obvious conditions are met.

1. Moose Jaw Muse: Facilitators Carol Rempel, Gloria Morin, Laurie Rasmussen

Each facilitator and group, perhaps in response to each other, exhibited individual characteristics as they developed. The *Moose Jaw Muse*, for example, was facilitated by Carol Rempel with the assistance of Gloria Morin. Both were experienced members of that writing group who were informally trained in guiding it. Carol was a superb organizer and very sensitive to both individual and group needs. She saw to it that the venue "was non-threatening to ... [all] ... our participants"; she learned quickly that "consistent communication" was "essential" to keeping attendance up, to "strengthening our mutual commitment to one another," and that the group was not "just a group of writers," but "a life-line that we take turns holding for one another." Carol noted that the *freewriting* exercise at the beginning of each meeting "was received with enthusiasm and provided an [opportunity] for our participants to write and share, even if they hadn't brought anything with them." Under her and Gloria's direction, participants were also given "the opportunity of bringing writing from a muse, something someone else had written."

Regarding her own feelings about the job, Carol wrote: "This was my first experience at co-facilitating this group, and it was a stretching experience. I enjoyed connecting with the participants and appreciated the respect that each person showed for and within the group, but I found the meetings challenging. ... I found it difficult to encourage contributions from everyone ... Over the four months many of the attendees led a particular aspect of the meeting, which improved the group dynamics and took pressure off the co-facilitators. These small doses of shared responsibility were well-received by all." Carol went on to note the importance of the support given by the itinerant writer and by the program director, Donna Bowyer: "The monthly debriefing sessions really do keep us on track. ... I would not have had the confidence to take on the

leadership of this group without their ready support and periodic attendance." She finished her report by saying, "Please pass on our thanks to the SAB for funding this project. I know it was money well-spent in the lives of our participants. The investment we made in writing, the investment you made in providing leadership, and the financial investment SAB made are sure to produce a larger yield together."

2. Swift Current: Facilitator Bill Gibbs

Bill Gibbs, a retired high-school English teacher well-experienced in creative writing, was the facilitator for the Swift Current group. In his report he wrote: "I think that the project has gone fairly well. The support of the Staff at the Drop In Centre has been excellent. They are a great group of people. I really enjoy the writers group. They are an eager bunch who are always willing to give it a try whatever the writing assignment is. It is a work in progress and the group varies in size because of the nature of the group. I guess for me the greatest moment of satisfaction is when I see someone share what they have written and see that confidence grow. They start to grasp the idea that their stories are as relevant as others'. I would like to see more women in the group. I think that may change. My second hope is that they will start keeping writing journals that they can share when we get together. The poetry to date is only guided poetry. Well, I think that sums up what I wanted to say."

Bill's diffident manner belies his very great contribution to the success of this writers group, as several of its participants noted in their exit surveys. Sarah Laybourne, program coordinator with the Swift Current branch, added that: "First, I would like to thank you for bringing this project to our Centre. Over the last four months amazing things have happened at our Centre. We have been able to escape from the everyday to the magical world of writing. We have exercised our brains to think outside the box and create a written work we might not have accessed had we not had this group. Having us find a facilitator for the writing group, other than staff, was an excellent idea. Bill Gibbs ... has been able to expand our minds with different things to write about and different styles of writing. My hope for the group in the future is that it expands to have more clients join in and try their hand at writing as well as that it continues on a weekly basis with Bill as our facilitator. ... We as a staff have been excited to see and hear all the things that have taken place and been shared at our group. We look forward to continuing to write, as you have opened our eyes to a world where the possibilities are endless."

3. Weyburn: Facilitator Anne Lazaruko

The Weyburn CMHA Writing Group began as an adjunct to a weekly therapy session run by director Gladys Perepeluk. Her inspired solution to the initial absence of a facilitator was to extend the group's activities from oral therapy directly into a writing exercise. The participants were therefore "primed" to



write down or expand on what they were already speaking about. When Anne Lazurko, a local CMHA supporter, writer, and member of the SWG, was found to be willing to extend her own repertoire by taking on the facilitation of this group, the circle was completed. Anne's evidently enthusiastic leadership had an immediate and positive effect on the group:

"These voices [below] from the Weyburn CMHA writing group reflect the importance of the group for its participants. The writing from the group is funny or contemplative, long or short, and includes poetry, prose, fiction, and biographical non-fiction. We meet for an hour each week and attendance has been very consistent, and sharing of work and participation in discussion continue to grow every time we meet.

"The group begins by discussing any work they might have had from the previous week's writing exercises. For instance, we did a short session on rhyming poetry – how to accomplish meter and flow and successful rhyming without it sounding contrived – and the next week one of our writers brought a beautiful rhyming poem that largely succeeded. We then do a new writing exercise, hopefully based on an interest expressed by someone in the group, write for five to ten minutes, take a break, and then share the work.

"Whether participants write a few words or a few pages, it is always remarkable how honest and open the writing is, and, very often, how close to the bone the words come without asking for sympathy.

"Every week the group thanks me for being their facilitator. And every week I thank them right back for the wonderful experience and for allowing me into their lives."

The writing group keeps you writing and gets you out of your seclusion and [away] from being closed up in yourself.

It's good to get together and hear different viewpoints. If you're not comfortable to speak aloud about something, you can put it down on paper.

It's definitely therapeutic and gets me out of my head.

Sometimes people get lonely and it helps to have something to look forward to.

4. Conclusions

The eloquence of the facilitators' comments speaks for itself:

- writing groups are fun;
- writing groups are important;
- writing groups help individuals grow.

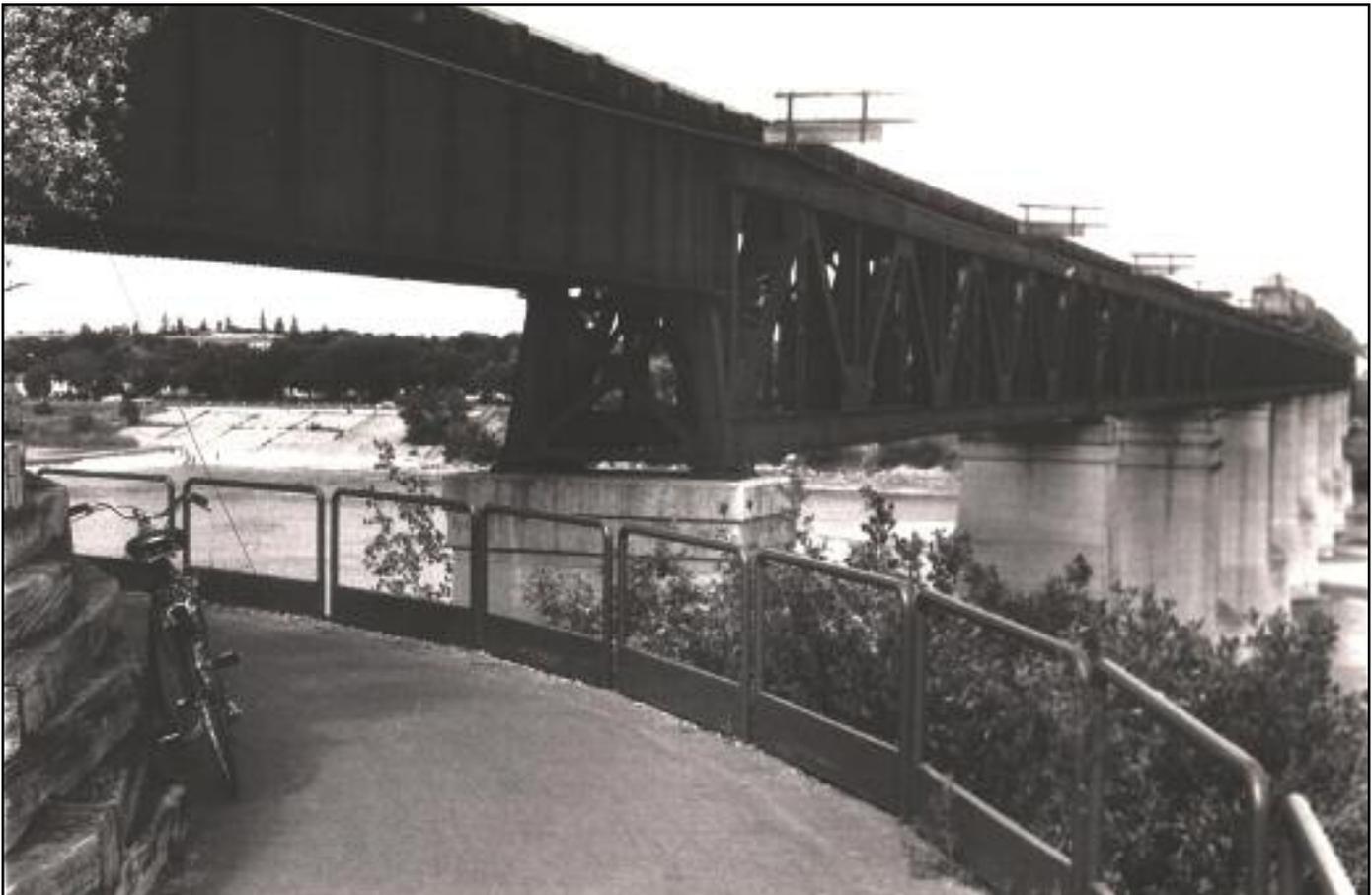


PHOTO BY JAMES SKELTON

**APPENDIX C:
WRITINGS BY GROUP**

MOOSE JAW MUSE:

DARRELL DOWNTON

Closet CPAC Lovers and Other Things

It was very hard for me to pull myself away from watching prime time politics with Peter Van Dusen two weeks ago. But it was comforting to know that I was not the only one. The real reason the others couldn't make it was that they had to CPAC. This fact comforts me in my election addiction and CPAC love to know that I am not the only one. I managed with great will power to get away for a weekend deprived of CPAC watching. I went to my nephew's place in Regina, who refused to let me watch CPAC even though I begged him to. He would rather watch NHL hockey than CPAC, which is very hard to believe. I was getting the shakes as my body was in withdrawal. I managed to go to the Rider game with my nephew, a rather unimportant game for the first place something they haven't done in 33 years. I looked at the Jumbotron to see if they would put CPAC on there and to my shock they didn't. Instead meaningless football stuff and replays. When Calgary had the football there was so much noise I could hardly hear myself think. I was thinking it must be hard for Calgary to call plays. I tried to quiet them down, but it was to no use. They gave me a strange look. This caused me to go into further withdrawal and my shakes were more noticeable. Lat in the game they handed the ball to a big heavy guy and he broke through for a big gain and the crowd went wild. They gave him the ball again and the referee put his hands up and then all I could hear was the crowd saying, "We're Number One!" and for some strange reason my nephew wanted to give me a high five. When we were leaving the game, other complete strangers were giving me high fives. I tried again in vain to get the people to quiet down but they kept shouting. "We're Number One!" In my head I kept thinking, "CPAC is Number One." I started shouting, "CPAC is Number One!" and people were giving me a strange look and my nephew got me out of there quick. So now to the commercial sponsored by: *CPAC Lovers Canada*:

Ode to Bishop III

It's my football and I will throw it to the Ti-Cats if I want to, throw it to the Ti-Cats if I want to, throw it to the Ti-Cats if I want to.

Lasagna Man

A rant, a chant, for Durant
I'm hungry, Lasagna Man.
To Timothy Eaton's I ran.
Lasagna Man, gotta have it, so I pant.
Touchdown, to Getzlaf, a slant!

GLORIA MORIN

Divine wind I

No one knew of me before
I crept up on that distant shore
Yes . . . fight me though I will prevail
One man fought . . . but miserably failed
Bestowed upon me . . . a supernatural power
Sound of my name . . . making everyone cower
The number four and the number nine
These are my numbers . . . by design
Some may welcome me
Others may not
One thing is certain
I will never be caught

Divine wind II

Nothing fresh . . . nothing . . .
cuts through this stagnant air
Image after image
Seen . . . Do I even care?
That stench . . . that . . .
gag-reflex kind of smell . . .
Change . . . slight change
is wrought . . . after more meditative thought
Something pure . . . something . . .
Moves . . . it is . . . what I choose
Sweet . . . a sweet
smelling aroma . . . in the nostrils of . . .

Logically

Socially	severed
Emotions	erased
Oxygen	out

Outwardly
i pay them
lip service.
Inwardly
i know
i've already flat lined.

so . . .
let it be finished
Logically

*(Inspired by an article I read, featuring
David Foster Wallace)*



LAURIE RASMUSSEN

Misunderstood

It's subtly devastating to be
not unappreciated, just misappreciated;
not unknown, just misknown;
not unrecognized, just misrecognized

for failure to simply describe
sound of red, taste of quiet,
feel of fragrance, color of cheers,
or for simply saying

nothing at all.

So when I stumble to sum up
in a few moments
an off-hand response
to your deep-layered question,

forgive my aloof and clumsy
candor—I only know what I had
longed to say long after you've
walked out the door.

Interlude

outside
minus degrees freeze
wind chills bones
legs lynch limp
walk stun stiff

pause
mid-morning melt
heavy hands thaw
snow memory wakes
lungs, touch, taste

for just a moment
in the middle of winter

CAROL REMPEL

Two limericks

Moose Jaw Muse

If you are in need of a muse
This invite you should not refuse:
Come hang out with us
We'll share and discuss,
shed light and affirm and amuse.

Vacation

When you and I go on vacation
Regardless of place or duration
If I am with you
I cherish the view
And my heart is filled with elation.

ADAM STAITE

Hi

What a word to say doesn't even care for or about the situation
of me. Hello who really cares, feels like shit but still lies about
it. Drained but still pushing forth, what a waste of time! Time's
not even real yet a concern of everyone yet not for someone
like me.

Got nothing going with no finish close by, extinction of self
comes once in a lifetime for no matter what runs out your mak-
ing it to death ever loathing your life. Saving some or thou-
sands even millions. I sense it's only logical to let life feel life
then strip them and leave them for dead.

Writing

So this is it, my song that's singing is that of black, so to sink
and lose what's worth fighting seems right when picking one's
self up is what's been the fight to look forward to.

Losing yourself and them who saved you sure doesn't help
in gaining any relief. I'm so heavy drag on the sick and scrape
on the pay.

What the fuck do I get for being out sick? Discrimination lack
of social respect, where's the reason to make it when the world
is wack. Going scarcely outside some with any chance to come
back!

Thought starts these days with what I know now can't stay to
go on each day. A couple more down and that will be my day
to go on forth and end what had been started so long ago.

SWIFT CURRENT BRANCH:

ANONYMOUS (1)

My chap

There is this chap of mine who means a really great deal to me,
who makes me reminisce about the extremity of things such as
being from the wide open spaces, and the clutter of things, fish
and chips to sourdough, the chill of winter to the gentle
breezes, the casualness of life to the staidness of life, from the
aurora borealis to the grey in the sky, from wearing furs to
wearing lighter textures, from feeling a sense of distance to a
sense of being right in it.

These are the things that describe the colourfulness of life
when it comes to my chap.

Rats

Swift Current has had a real problem with the issue of rats, it
seems, since early spring of 2009. Now, unfortunately, it has

Deep in thought I decided there was going to be a revolution within myself. A Mattilution, as it would be called. Change was in the air.

brought some pretty negative media attention to the city, all over Saskatchewan and even Canada. It is really too bad the city had virtually ignored and had pretended the problem had never existed for the longest period of time until probably around the end of the summer.

The city may have dealt with the issue of rats a lot more effectively as of very recently, but it's really too bad it took so much of a public uproar just to get attention to the issue, when, it seemed like the city just wanted to protect its reputation as much as possible.

ANONYMOUS (2)

Tractor

Team with my father
Raised on the farm
Accepting the work
Canada
Time well spent
On time
Race around the field

Christmas

The sights of Christmas are very *nice*:
You can see the *mice* in the old chop bin,
You can see the Christmas *trees*,
As you *breeze* by with the skidoo.
You can see the *snow*
and watch it *blow*.
You can see the *cattle*,
as they *rattle* their coats.

ANONYMOUS (3)

Happiness is

Happiness is friendship
Happiness is going on vacation
Happiness is love
Happiness is listening to music
Happiness is seeing the ocean
Happiness is getting something new

Words

A clear
conscience is a
soft pillow.

A monkey
never thinks
her baby
Is ugly.

Maelstrom
is a confusing word that describes
maelstrom

Aloof
likes to stand alone
sometimes shy
aloof.

Backgammon
a game kids play
challenge each other
backgammon.

Writing
I love to write, why I love to write.
I love to write because it makes me feel good.
Writing is nice.
Writing is words to express yourself.
Writing is fun.

MATT DRUMMOND

Are you part of the Mattilution yet?

It seems so long in a young mind such as mine. It's only been a few years though.

I was part of a writers group offered by the local branch of the CMHA. The topic suggested for this exercise was Revolutions.

At the time I was curious about what my future would hold, so I made a statement in group that day. Deep in thought I decided there was going to be a revolution within myself. A Mattilution, as it would be called. Change was in the air.

As many who knew me then would tell you, I was quite withdrawn and shy. In fact I was terrified of those around me.

The Mattilution meant I would do a complete 360 degree change in life. I started to talk more with those at the CMHA's drop in centre who would later become the first of many new friends to come. The drop in centre was fast becoming my comfort zone.

Eventually, with great difficulty, I would greet at least one passerby a day. One led to two and it snowballed from there.

While living in the approved home in which I still reside, I decided 25 would be the year, the age of progress. With help I started a job at the local bingo hall's concession. As I worked only part time, friends and family alike encouraged me to apply at the casino opening here in Swift Current. I didn't think I had a chance in, well, anywhere, definitely not the casino.

That was December 2008. It's December 2009 and as I



write this I've worked for the casino for a year now and held steady employment for a year and a half. I have become sort of a social butterfly as of late.

So far so good, Matty.

Now I have a question for you out there: Are you part of the Mattilution yet? You should be.

WILLIAM GIBBS

Harvest dinner with Elvy

we sit in the shade of the combine
gearing down
slurping
pasty
chunky chicken soup
cooked on the manifold

listening
to the trill of crickets
crawling out of the cracks
of the crumbling clay
joining the feast

for a brief time
we are free

from the rumbling of motors, screech of pulleys
the clamour of the pickup

the chaff whirlwinds
the dust that hangs over the combine
a worrisome storm cloud

heat from the combine tire
penetrates my back
and makes me drowsy

Elvy is working on the ache in his sweet tooth

my thoughts turn to a pair of hawks
one on a power pole and patient
I try to ignore the other
overhead gliding in dizzying circles
crying and impatient with hunger

Doug Drummond

When I pull up
I suspect I will see
those rounded shoulders
draped over that cantankerous Johnson boat motor
whole the red and white at the ready

dangles hypnotically in the breeze.
fine tuning with a keen ear
the grand march of pistons
listening for that bad note
something out of step

like a tormented conductor
your screwdriver rewrites the music
makes minor adjustments
you listen and lean
into the cyclical rhythm
listening for that perfect harmony

not altogether satisfied
tipping back
the old black ball cap
you say "Tea would be good
right about now"

From your easy chair
eyes earnest and bright
a mischievous grin
with anticipation of a good story
you say "Well, how was the trip?"

"Were you listening to Gzowski?"

"Have you read this?"
political
historical
comical

Made me aware of the value
of simple things
like rhubarb a pocket knife

And there are moments
of comfortable silence
only the crackling of the propane
light filling the room

I'm thinking of blue berry hill
and getting the conversation around to pie
a good hunting story

perhaps you visualized
the first party pass by the point
and the familiar sharp tugs of success or perhaps
you were thinking about that one bad note
and maybe rewriting the music
one more time

SARAH LAYBOURNE

Four times five

CMHA
Hot Coffee
Programs, Activities, Work
Good Meal
Friends

Counting points
Arranging suits
Remembering rules
Developing a plan
Shuffling & Dealing

Sunshine
Bright Warm
Calm Beautiful Day
Cloud Cover
Rain

Step
Left Right
Walking Down Road
Stumble Trip
Fall

Happiness

Happiness is
catching the smile and
eye of a new friend.

Happiness is being
asked out
on a first date.

Happiness is
the intensity
of a first kiss

Happiness is feeling
excited to see
the one you love.

Happiness is
opening the box
to your engagement ring.

Happiness is saying
yes
to his proposal

Happiness is
finding the perfect
dress.

Happiness is booking
the hall
for the date you want.

Happiness is
receiving the yes replies
in the mail.

Happiness is getting
your hair and nails done
on the big day.

Happiness is
seeing the church
when you drive down the road.

Happiness is hearing
the music before you begin
your trip down the aisle.

Happiness is
seeing the excitement
on the groom's face.

Happiness is feeling
the warmth of the smiles from the guests
all of whom you know and love.

Happiness is
exchanging vows
with your soul mate.

Happiness is being
pronounced husband and wife
by the minister

Happiness is
the first
married kiss.

Happiness is gazing
into each others eyes
during the first dance.

Happiness is
celebrating with
family and friends

Happiness is spending
your life
together.

Happiness is
falling in
love.



DAVID MEISTER

MAELSTROM

Maelstrom is the name of an Air Force Base close to Great Falls Montana with nuclear warheads. And so it is also what can cause a maelstrom.

SAYINGS

A rumour goes in one ear and comes out of many mouths, and gossip is an adder that has a deadly bite. Gossip and rumour ruin many lives.

Deal with the faults of others as gently as your own, for others will judge you as you judge them, and all have faults that their friends must accept, and all need friends.

MELODY RADICKI

Christmas

I love the sounds of Christmas especially all the caroling of children and sleigh bells jingling.

I love the taste of Christmas cookies and turkey with dressing. I also love the smell of a real Christmas tree.

The sights of Christmas are so beautiful. I love to see the Christmas trees all lit up. The street lights are so pretty this time of year because of the snow glistening.

Christmas feels so warm and fuzzy Being with family and friends.

Untitled

Snow, Snow go away come back again in twenty more days.

I think the snow is pretty but I don't like the cold or ice.

Rats, Rats dirty rotten rats.

Smoking, Smoking makes me feel like choking from a chimney or around a relaxing campfire.

Fall, Fall why are you hiding your face from us. Cold and flues are as bad as putting up with huge rats. I like watching the smoke I am running out of ideas. So why don't we all go to Tim Horton's for a cup or hot chocolate. This will warm us from the cold from the inside out or maybe we should try some yummy French onion soup.

WEYBURN BRANCH:

BERYL

Friends

It's good to have friends. These people stand by you when you're down. These friends phone you also and want your opinion. In the seventeen years I've seen a lot of people at their worst, and others, at their best. Don't single out your friends, because a friend is true and honest to the very end.

BRAD JOHNSON

Medication and me

I sleep in again.
A lackluster day.
A lackluster stay.
My dreams are strange.
Did the medication make it so?
I feel the sudden onset of depression,
knowing that it will be just another empty day.
My thoughts begin to stray . . .
I think back to all the life I've lived,
and the hopelessness begins to settle in,
as I think I'll never live that way again.
Day by day, I feel numb,
and the oppressiveness of the medication
makes me think that those happy days will never
come again.

The voices may be gone, and with them the paranoia,
but then again so is my personality,
and my lust for life.

Years go by and the only thing that keeps me going
is the thought that maybe the next day will be different,
but it never is.

Continued

I think it must be me,
there must be something wrong with me that makes
me feel this way.
I've been at the bottom for far too long,
and finally work up the courage to ask for a change
in medication, thinking that it's the only
thing in my power to change.
My doctor denies my request,
but I keep at it, since it is my only
chance to bring back those better days.
Finally, after months of conflict, I get switched
to a medication that I think
might be good.
Slowly . . .
my thoughts begin to return,
the feelings of purpose come back,
my interest begins to pique in areas that I haven't felt
in years.
I not only have hope for tomorrow,
but there's hope in what I'm doing today.
This medication brings back my interest today
and there's hope from day to day.
It's no longer a struggle to live,
but a pleasure.
Who would have thought?
I know now that medication is not always
a burden, it can be a gift!
Who would have thought, not me.
But now I feel.
Now I see.

BARRY STYRE

The Anesthetist (or bedtime for Beelzebub)

A stranger in a strange land revisited
the blue darkness . . . on a wild night
with a curved sky and a black cloud
brought on by the specter of death
who made a beautiful departure
riding in the rain, as the bicycle
re-invented itself . . . with obligations and submissions.
I was making it up as I went along.

Wherever you go, there you are,
the reason we're here is because we're not all there.

P.S. I'm as ready as I'm ever going to be
This poem brought to you by the thought patrol . . .
Luckily cooler heads prevailed.
Anyway it was a nice problem to have.
I'll keep on keeping on.

Down the old western hat

Thunderheads and hockey sleds
bridges and larks, culture and parks.

Office departments and train time apartments,
stones to choose and platform shoes.

Basement flooding in the Spring,
mobile homes and lots of things.

A second wind blew love within.

Oktoberfests and nature rests.

Medicine man in silver paint,
Hydrants, tires and granite gates.

War stars and airbrushed cars,
cart-pulling bulls, and whiskey pulls.

Sunny Albertus had art in the park,
old time gas lights, lit court and spark.

Red-gold horizons and lead crystal bisons,
Blazing saddles and river boat paddles.

All in the old western Hat.

Limited

Echo . . .
Reverb . . .
Tremolo . . .
Vibrato . . .
Fuzz box . . .
Wa-wa pedal . . .

Incorporate this
syndicated amalgamate,
unlimited inexcitability,

in direct proportion
matching calamity
with serenity.

The only calamity I had
was caused by the ghosts
in my head.

He (me) took the path and found pathos.

He (me) took a bath and found bathos.
though he wasn't a sentimental guy.

And the eternal question is this
Are we having fun yet?



LIVING THE LIFE



Entity

I met a metaphysical alchemist
and there was a tangent explosion!

Back when time stood still.

It was enough to make Ichabod Crane
shrivel in his grave,
but I'll spare you the theatrics.

From tangent to tunnel vision,
I've been laughed at and spit on.

Like George Jones said, "It just doesn't
get any better than this."

From sodium pentothal to
nitrous oxide: a parallel world,
some comic book.

Men like us try so hard
not to be like our fathers that
we ended up just like them; much to
our chagrin!

Roll my sins ahead
until Sunday
if you please.

APPENDIX D: FINANCIAL REPORT SEPTEMBER 1 TO DECEMBER 31 2009

Revenue:

In-kind contributions	
1. Workshop venues [CMHA]	\$ 600
2. Office space & materials [CMHA]	600
3. Communications [CMHA]	500

Other sources

1. CMHA(SK)	464
2. SAB	7,000

Total Income \$ 9,164

Expenses:

In-kind expenses	
1. Program support & materials	1,200
2. Communications costs	500
Communication	283
Artist's consultation fee	4,500
Travel & accommodation	2,680

Total Expenditures \$ 9,164



PHOTO COURTESY OF ACHTIN



Phone calls in the night

BY PATRICIA CALDER

The phone rings in the dark. I grab the receiver to stop the urgency of the bell, the loud intrusion into sleep. I know I must answer even though no one will speak. “Hello.” I can hear breathing across the miles. “It’s okay. I’m here.” I prop myself half upright against the pillow. “You’re doing the right thing. Call me any time.” I don’t turn on the light, preferring to remain half asleep, if that’s possible. I have to work tomorrow and maybe some sleep can still be salvaged after the phone call. I want to cradle the caller in my arms, stroking hair, soothing all the mistakes away. All I can do from a distance is listen. Somehow in the darkness I hope to touch this person and keep her alive for one more day.

This is not the first phone call. There has been a series. The first came one afternoon. “Your father hit me.” No other information. Not believing that my dignified, accomplished father could act abusively, I called him at the office. “Leave it with me,” was all he said. No news for days. On Saturday morning I packed the car and drove five hours.

When I arrived in Montreal, Mom was wearing her long blue housecoat in the middle of the afternoon. Her hair was rumpled, her fingernails jagged, the polish peeling. “Would you like some hot milk?” she asked.

An odd suggestion, I thought. “No thanks.”

“I think I’ll have some. I need something.”

When the milk heated up, filling the air with the aroma of rye, I looked into the pan. The milk was brownish, as if tea had been added, but it wasn’t tea. So, she’s reached that stage, I thought. I battled the panic that threatened to erupt in me like a scream.

Later in the afternoon Mom went to bed with an upset stomach and stayed there for the rest of the weekend. Dad tended to her needs. I could hear her groans through the closed door. Dad searched the house systematically, emptying bottles down the drain as he found them. Most of the weekend was spent keeping busy, acting normal, the real questions and answers interspersing the conversation like bits of code.

Of course I thought of Alcoholics Anonymous. Weeks later two young people were sent to Mom’s door. She invited them in and sat through their spiel, her hands clasped in her lap to control their shaking. When the boy asked to use the phone she showed him to the desk.

Afterwards she discovered that not only had he made long distance calls, but the girl had stolen the stash of money-saved-by-not-smoking from the cigar box on the mantle. So much for AA.

Until now my family had mostly good experiences of AA. This one was an aberration. Mom’s oldest brother, Jake, was a famous speaker at AA conferences. The only way to rise to that level was through the bottle and out again. He spawned five children in Saskatchewan before moving to New York City. Saskatoon built a rehab centre in his wake.

When Mom’s son, my brother, Mike, was in his drinking phase he landed on the lawn of the Calder Centre for rehabilitation. Later he told me, “I said to myself, ‘I can either go in

and ask for help, or die; it’s my choice.’”

After university Mike was pretty much lost to our family for four years. Occasionally there would be a phone call from out west somewhere. Once a month a letter came for my parents, but Mike would have moved on. He came home occasionally looking thin, haggard, and suffering from the shakes.

One year during Christmas holidays I grew desperate to see him, to find out what was really going on, so I traced him to an address in a town south of Winnipeg, and arrived unannounced for a visit. His skin was grey. He lived with a small woman, a dealer, who had mousy, stringy hair. He told me about a few bad trips on acid, as if that were conversation. Part way through the evening he said to his woman, “Go down to the Queen’s Hotel, would ya, and buy us a six pack.”

Mike wasn’t eating meat in those days. It appeared he wasn’t eating much of anything.

“You know, I don’t even have a refrigerator,” he told me. “I can keep milk, yogurt, and juice cold enough on the cellar steps. Add a few bran muffins, bananas, and nuts, and presto--survival.”

“Are you writing anything these days?” I asked. He had won a couple of literary prizes in university.

“Um. Poetry. Bad poetry.” He swiped his sleeve across his nose.

The only place to sit was the mattress on the floor covered with a couple of dirty sleeping bags. He and the woman shared a joint about three in the morning; then the three of us slept.

I caught the train the next day and returned to work confused, feeling I had been to another country, unfamiliar territory, for the holidays. Nobody asked and I didn’t tell. I cocooned this information in a secret place in my mind.

Meanwhile, in New York City, Uncle Jake fell off the wagon rather spectacularly. He lost his wife, five children, job, and home. He landed in Toronto. His youngest brother, Philip, a hard drinking, three-pack-a-day journalist, bought him some suits and introduced him around city hall where he was hired to write speeches for politicians. Jake had the gift of entertaining with witty remarks and half truths.

In his prime their father, my grandfather, had been not only the Anglican minister who could draw a crowd with his sermons, but also the local Member of Provincial Parliament, so acting out, in typical preacher’s-kid style, was his sons’ favourite pastime. Led by Jake, they once rounded up all the neighbours’ cats and dogs, painted stripes on their backs, made some lemonade and invited the parish to come to the circus.

Mom grew up with four brothers, all brilliant, all stars in the local high school. Jake was captain of the football team; Jack was valedictorian; Gerald was tennis champion; Philip was editor of the school newspaper; all were popular with the girls. There wasn’t anything at which they didn’t excel, including pranks and practical jokes. Jake led a band called The Gravediggers that played on the radio every Friday afternoon.

All four brothers graduated with honours. Mom graduated with only respectable marks. My grandfather said to her,



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“What are you going to do with yourself until some boy marries you, eh? Why don’t you look after the house and make the meals for us, there’s a good girl.”

At eighteen, she ran away from home, hitch-hiked with a trucker, to a Catholic hospital in order to train as a nurse. One evening near the end of the War, Sister Margaret took her aside and said very quietly, “Your brother, Jack, has been shot down over the North Sea. I’m so sorry, my dear.”

Jack’s last letter arrived a few weeks later. “If anything should happen,” he wrote, “I want you to think of me as walking over the hill towards you, because that is what I would want to be doing.”

Another evening Sister Margaret said, “There’s been an accident in a shooting gallery in Montreal. Your brother, Gerald, has been killed. I’m so sorry.”

The story was whispered at the funeral that Grandfather’s last words to Gerald had been, “If you’re drinking, don’t come home for Christmas.”

Grandfather died some years later of a heart attack. While helping to clear out the house, Mom was surprised to discover dozens of empty vodka bottles in the basement.

While I was dating in high school, I came home every Saturday night to find Mom watching the late movie, smoking a cigarette, sipping a night cap, and playing solitaire. If I did not come into the house from the red Chevy soon enough, Mom would pry open the Venetian blinds with her fingers and peer between the slats as a signal.

I knew about people falling off the wagon, so I was disap-

pointed, but not surprised when Mom started drinking again. Dad’s career had climbed steadily up the corporate ladder. Every promotion meant moving to a new city. Mom was forced to uproot herself six times and start the social networking all over again. Corporate wives were an essential part of the formula for successful husbands.

One time she announced that she would like to go back to nursing. Dad said, “The wives of men in my position don’t work.” Nevertheless, Mom accepted the only position available at the hospital, the night shift, but she made sure dinner was on the table at six as usual. It wasn’t long before she quit.

When Dad was transferred back to head office in Montreal Mom encountered for the first time her own artistic side. She started taking lessons in a particular style of rug-hooking that involved the traditional craft of the Quebecois. She dyed cast off wool clothing in boiling kettles of onion skins, bloodroot, black walnut bark, and goldenrod. She designed her own scenes of Canadian history: one, a maple sugar bush with little pails hung on trees, horses with real leather reins cut from an old jacket, a sugar shack pushing smoke into a cobalt sky, men in crimson jackets against white snow; another of an east coast fishing village, boats and seagulls carved in three dimensions against Atlantic blue waves, lobster traps piled high on the wharf; another of a bearded sea captain grasping his wheel in the teeth of a storm, his eyes and fingers telling the tension with no fear. These treasures were recognized by everyone as works of art. Dad was as proud as he could be when Mom’s picture and her unique talent were featured in the newspaper.

After so many moves, my mother tired of explaining herself to yet another set of curious faces. She wondered how many children should she say she had, two or three? How many times could she tell that her second child, Jimmie, had died a youngster, suddenly and mysteriously, the incident splashed over the front page of the local newspaper? How many brothers did she have, four? Jack died a hero in WWII, but Gerald had died in mysterious circumstances in a shooting gallery, and Jake died alone of a heart attack after a long battle with alcoholism, and Philip died of lung cancer. How could my mother tell any of this to new friends, the corporate kind? How could she even have real friends?

When did the drinking escalate, I wondered. When did Mom’s sadness threaten to drown her? When did the “little drink before dinner” become the “little drink with lunch” and finally after breakfast? Did Mom see herself as just a piece of flotsam in the sea of other people’s lives? Occasionally when the cupboard was dry, she would call a taxi to drive her to the liquor store. Afterwards the driver always said the same thing: “Straight home again, missus?” and did not attempt to hide the sneer in the rear view mirror.

My mother’s history fills my mind like a map whenever the phone rings in the night and I listen to her breathing in Montreal, five hundred miles away, battling her demons. The umbilical cord flows backwards now.



ART BY JAMES SKELTON

Historic walls come tumbling down

BY JEAN FAHLMAN

When the relentless hammer swings the brick walls of what was once the largest building in Saskatchewan will come tumbling down, but the memories will persist along with the enigma of what took place inside those walls. I did not believe it would ever happen.

Weyburn Mental Hospital, 500,000 square feet of building along with the adjoining power house, is under demolition. It will require a large landfill to accommodate the scrap garbage from this mammoth historic building.

The serious demolition work began in March, 2009. Some of the historical articles will be preserved, including the front entrance and salvage bricks. The demolition costs will exceed four million, paid for by the provincial government who had turned the building over to the City of Weyburn. When efforts made by the city to sell, or utilize, the building failed the decision was made to demolish it.

Weyburn Mental Hospital was built in 1921 with great fanfare and provincial bragging rights. In 1947 the name was changed to Saskatchewan hospital, and another name change came in 1971 when the facility became Souris Valley Extended Care Hospital. The changes rolled on and the building was vacated in 2005 when residents were moved to Tagagwa View, the new care facility. Windows of the once-proud abandoned building were boarded up and the formerly well-tended grounds grew up to weeds.

The building is now cordoned off for safety reasons.

Architects, construction and deconstruction firms, contractors and salvagers, have combined their knowledge to "decommission" the former hospital which once was the cutting edge of treatment for the mentally ill.

"Decommissioning" seems a fancy word for demolishing. The plans to demolish the building, which once drew visitors to stare in awe at its size and beauty, sound cold and efficient.

Those cognizant of "heritage property preservation" are documenting with photos, but it comes down to the hard facts of knocking down the historical building which employed thousands of staff and cared for thousands of patients, with little attention paid to the emotional ties those people have to the building.

I was one of the people employed there in 1949-1950. At age 18, fresh from the country, I entered a world of strong odors, constant disruption and commotion, the disorientating size of the structure. I was thoroughly unnerved. The wafting smell of urine, patients defecating on the floor, airless day rooms, disinfectant and cleaning products, was beyond my understanding.

There was the sweaty smell of fear clinging to anxious patients, and probably to me, in the unfamiliar frightening surroundings. The ring of keys on my belt was unsettling because we never locked a door during my entire growing-up years, so trying with shaking hands to get the key into the lock, while

patients pushed to get out past me, was a daily challenge. Finding the right ward and the right key for each door was also a trial. The lack of privacy and loss of dignity I witnessed all around me must have over-whelmed the patients as much as it did me those first days on the job. When my shift ended I didn't feel like leaving the safety of the nurses' dorm but I slowly adapted to the unfamiliar world outside my safe familiar country background. It was painful rite of passage.

I was horrified at seeing so much sadness and anxiety in patients but my compassion and admiration for them grew daily. The hospital was over-crowded and dehumanizing but it was also a place where exciting developments and experimentation with treatments took place. Mental illness carried a stigma and a mystery, and efforts were being made to unravel some of the mystery, better understand mental illness, and improve the conditions of care.

The children's ward was the most haunting to me, and the memory of carrying an enamel bowl of pungent cod liver oil and attempting to make each child swallow a daily spoonful is still vivid. More often than not the nurses ended up with rank yellow stains on our white aprons due to the patients' understandable resistance.

On night shift I moved cautiously down those long shadowy halls, my nurse's shoes silent on the grey marble floor. By day the hallway was filled with incessant noise, the cries of demented, monologues and rants of the tormented. It was not a happy place but a place of sorrow. Thankfully the care of mental illnesses has changed dramatically so today a psychiatric nurse-in-training would never encounter the circumstances which existed decades ago.

Patients stood out as individuals and some names, faces and characteristics remain fresh in memory. The thirteen months I worked there before leaving to be married is stamped indelibly in my memory, so memories must be even stronger to those people who worked their entire career in the hospital. The sadness I feel knowing this once spectacular useful building is being demolished in the summer of 2009 must be even keener to people whose total work lives evolved within the mental health hospital.

The minds of former patients must also be permanently marked by their time in the hospital. They may have harrowing memories of shock treatment, of the cold bath treatment, being herded together like cattle into the shower stalls and to the dining rooms. I hope the former patients also have good memories of the serene flower beds and shady paths they walked with staff, of the dances and movies in the hall, of doing crafts for occupational and recreational therapy, of going to the fair and rodeo accompanied by staff. I pray they have memories of staff who tried, under difficult circumstances, to give them humanized care and respect.

The mystery which clings to mental illness is also attached to the immense brick building which housed patients who suffered. Visitors would drive slowly around the 215 acre hospital



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grounds to admire flower gardens, immaculate hedges and pruned trees, passing patients who slouched along, shoulders hunched and eyes averted. Faces peered from behind the barred basement windows and sometimes a frantic plea “Let me out!” could be heard. When the cars drove away down the impressive long tree-lined lane the occupants left behind the sadness of mental illness and gratefully returned to their own lives.

The hospital associated with mental illness was a major employer. The medical research carried on within the walls vastly improved mental health treatments and care, and changed the way mental health and illness is regarded by the outside world.

The appearance of the gigantic hospital building changed over the years. The once-impressive copper dome was removed; the wide golden (brass) staircase leading from the first floor to the second floor, where so many graduating classes paraded down, was taken out. The ivy which had added beauty to the face of the terra cotta brick walls seemed to slow-

ly die off. The nearby nurses’ residence became the mental health center when the big building became a special care facility.

Parts of the building used for extended care were well maintained while other parts were neglected and water damage was evident. Vandals added insult to neglect of the once-proud building after it was vacated. Still, a historical building with such potential would never be demolished in Europe and it would be valued and utilized in Third World countries where people live in cardboard huts.

Wrecking crews can knock down the sturdy walls, uproot the foundation and smash the marble floors, but they can never -- never -- wipe out the role the building played in the evolution of mental health care and understanding. They will never erase the powerful memories and emotional attachment people feel to the building which is so much a part of Weyburn’s history. The evocative stories will live on.

It is difficult to envision Weyburn without the gigantic brick hospital building at the end of our lane.



The Weyburn Mental Hospital, the largest building in Saskatchewan at the time, opened in 1921 crowned by a beautiful copper dome. The dome was removed in 1958 to make room for an additional wing. The hospital was demolished in 2009.



Looking towards the light

BY DEE CEE FLYNN

Surrounded by darkness and unable to decipher my own thoughts I am only dimly aware of what is going on around me. This is yet another day from hell. Days like this are happening more and more frequently. My mind is racing without the ability to slow down, to rest, or to make any clear decisions on my own well-being. I am feeling so confused, scared and most importantly at the moment, out of control.

I have depression. I have had it for most of my life. Trying to remember back to where or when it all began is so difficult. It feels as if it has been there, just there under the surface waiting to catch me up in its ever deceiving web for my entire life. Perhaps I have had it my entire life and it has just been manifesting in other ways, thereby being given another name such as teenage angst, rebellion, moping about over this or that.

All I really know is that living with depression is one of the hardest things I have ever and will ever have to do. My family is extremely supportive if not just a little afraid. My Mom is especially on top of things when I am at my worst. My sister also tries her hardest to not only understand but try to talk with me and work through why I am feeling this particular way any given day.

I have three other coping mechanisms as well. I journal like a mad woman as a form of therapy. I can't slow my mind or thoughts down so I have chosen instead to dash them into a journal as a way of at least handling them even if just temporarily. Is this effective for everyone with depression? I don't know for sure. I do know that my whole life it has been rather effective for me.

I use exercise also as a means of controlling my moods from spiralling downwards and out of control. To that end I am beginning to be in quite good shape. My good friend **Brenna would say, "That is finding the positive out of the negative." This is extremely helpful and sage advice. **Brenna is one very special friend in my circle of support. This by the way is an absolute must when dealing with depression. Having a circle of support made up of friends, family, therapist, psychiatrist, whoever is needed to fill whatever void you have at the time of yet another depressive state.

Another coping mechanism that I have used over the years is sleep. When I can tell that a huge change in mood is coming, or then I begin to act out I will sometimes take myself off to bed. At least there I can't hurt myself or anyone else if my anger surfaces while I am experiencing that black hole that I think of as my worst depressive times. At those times I just want to crawl under a rock and hide until I can feel good again.

These feelings I have come to understand are all signs and symptoms of depression. There are so many forms of depression I can't even count. Some are just more pronounced or more likely to surface than others. Manic moods, Bipolar disorder, post-partum depression are just a few that are relatively common.

Depression can be so mild it may be labelled as anxiety or nervousness. Whatever name it has been given or whichever type of depression any one person can suffer from they all have one very similar thing in common. They all require attention, recognition, treatment and recovery. Hopefully in fact, the person suffering from depression will take it in exactly those stages.

One of the first things that I had the most trouble with was admitting that I had a problem beyond just needing time and space to get through some rough mood swings. I never once thought it was a bigger problem until it began to control every aspect of my life. It is one of the worst feelings in the world to know that you are slowly losing control and everyone around you is being affected by it, not just you.

If only I knew then what I know now about depression I would have gotten help a hell of a lot sooner. My first uncontrollable symptoms began to happen when I was in my teens. I am now 36 years old and my coping mechanisms of journal writing, exercise and sleeping through my mood swings have continued to work for me to a point. Most recently though I had a talk with my good friend **Brenna and she told me that if my coping mechanisms were no longer working for me it was time to look for new methods to cope with my depression.

Even as I write this I am realizing that it isn't that my coping methods have failed me, it is just that I am requiring to update them as I get older and begin to have additional health concerns that are making my depression worse than ever at times. My friend is right. I have since talked with a doctor about a medication that can hopefully help stabilize my moods, about a referral to a therapist so that I can talk through what I am going through and learn different ways to understand and cope, taking into account those additional health concerns as well.

I felt ashamed at first. Approaching my doctor and saying help me please I have depression. I felt defective, like I wasn't experiencing something quite normal. Well, to my surprise he took the time to explain the statistics on depression. Needless to say the statistics are quite alarming. It is amazing to me to think that so very many people of both genders and of a wide age range are also struggling with depression.

I have felt so isolated and alone for so long and here my doctor sits telling me that almost every other person I speak to or have dealings with is more than likely experiencing their own bout of depression, their own battle with the very same day to day struggle that depression brings. In a small way I suddenly didn't feel quite so alone.

My circle of support is fantastic, don't get me wrong. However, unless someone has experienced depression first hand it is so very hard for them to understand what a person with depression goes through. They can imagine of course, but to truly know what it is like at your deepest and darkest times only someone that has been there, done that can truly understand.

That doesn't mean the person without depression can't



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help. They can, just in other ways than understanding what you are going through. Just being there for you when you need them or giving you space when you need it is as helpful.

One thing I find that is also very helpful is my religious beliefs. I understand not all people are religious however I find turning to God really helps me. I sometimes say a prayer and just ask God for help or guidance through a particularly bad depressive state, or I will even take it a step further and ask God to take on the depression and I give it up to Him. The instant I have done so makes me feel lighter and brighter. I no longer feel like I have to shoulder all the hurt, pain, anger and anguish I experience with depression alone or at all. God can and will always be strong when I am not.

Lately I have gotten back to my artistry as well. Besides writing I spend as much time as I can working in my art studio at home. It is a corner of my basement suite that I have designated as my art studio. I have a drawing board there and bins and bins of supplies for all sorts of art projects I have on the go. I let my creativity loose when I am beginning to experience a bout of depression and at times this works as a form of therapy, art therapy, to relieve and release all the tension that builds up within me before it ends up boiling over.

Again, these coping mechanisms that I find work quite well for me and my type of depression is exactly that. This is a

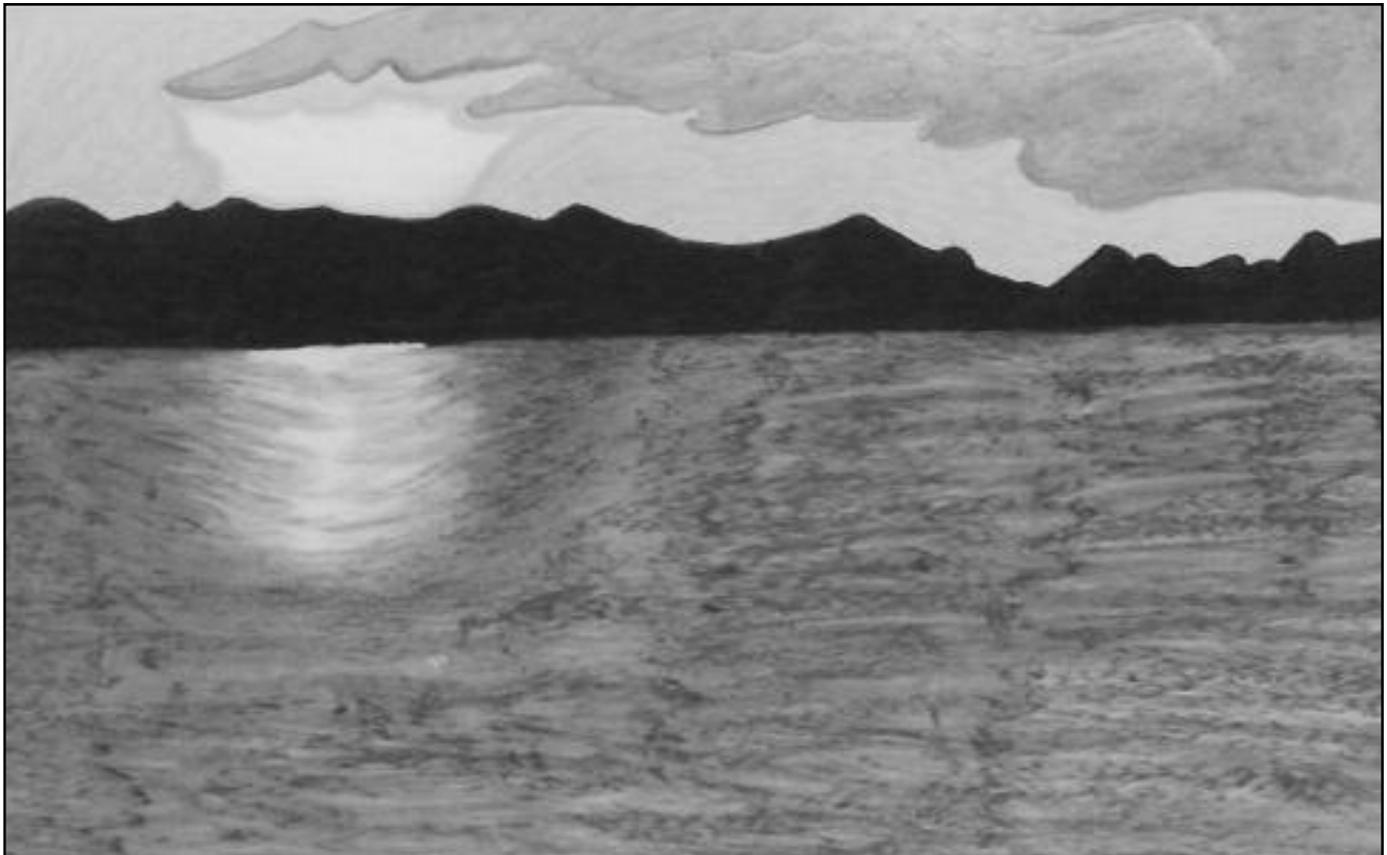
formula of sorts that works for me, with the added benefit just recently of mood stabilizer medication and a therapist. I know that I am doing everything right in my case to help myself and my depression by recognizing when I need help, asking for help without feeling ashamed and making sure that when I am at my lowest with my depression that my circle of support of family and friends is very close by.

It is important to realize or research what works best for you and the type of depression that you are experiencing. Just remember, the old adage is accurate when stated time and time again, "Admitting you have a problem is half the battle."

The following is an example of some of the art therapy I have done in order to cope with my depression. Enjoy it as I have myself. I have entitled it, 'Looking Towards the Light – One. It is done as oil pastel on Bristol board.

I am currently writing a paranormal mystery novel, a children's book including my own illustrations and a comic strip. Dreams can come true and absolutely anything is possible if you just try for it.

***The name Brenna mentioned here in my article is changed from my actual friend's name. She is truly one of the biggest supports in my circle of support. My many thanks go to her for always being there for me.*



BY DEE CEE FLYNN

Falling off the edge of the floor

BY CAROLE GLASSER LANGILLE

When I was seventeen, I went to university full of plans. I was certain I would have great adventures. And things went well. I had close friends, a boyfriend, my grades were good. It was just that suddenly, without warning, as my freshman year was ending, I stopped feeling confident. The very things I thought would protect me, the boyfriend, good grades, could not keep at bay a terrible, unnamable anxiety. By some mysterious psychic exchange, my sense of well-being was displaced by dread. Why did I feel as if everything were falling apart?

As long as I was at university I could hold things together, though just barely. But when I went home, panic overtook me. In May, my mother brought me to see a psychiatrist in Manhattan. Doctor Avery was a tall man in his forties, balding, with the tawny pink complexion of a redhead. He stood over six feet, a large man, though not fat. He had a kind smile and a quiet voice.

“You’re having a nervous breakdown,” he said. I was surprised and relieved. I took the medication that Dr. Avery prescribed and my appetite returned and I was able to sleep. I could read books again and go to movies. I believed I was recovering. But as September drew near and it was apparent that I was still too nervous to return to school, my agitation came back with full force. If I wasn’t going to university, what in the world was I going to do? I was certain there was only one narrow path I was supposed to travel and going off that path was unthinkable. I was eighteen years old and deeply ashamed, overtaken by something I didn’t understand. Not only had I failed in the adult world, I had regressed to being a nervous, jumpy child, afraid to go out, afraid to stay alone.

Toward the end of August I drove up with my parents to our cottage upstate, a place I’d spent my childhood summers. My mother urged me to visit a girl down the road who had been away at college and was taking a semester off. I don’t know how my mother persuaded me to visit. I didn’t know this girl well. Besides, I was on a high dosage of medication and reduced to a zombie-like state, barely able to collect my thoughts. But I did walk slowly down the road and knocked on the girl’s door. Her parents greeted me warmly and invited me in. The family was sitting around the table eating. They pulled up a chair for me.

How was I, they wanted to know, what was new? I tried to verbalize an answer but I was far way, down a long tunnel and everything I heard was muffled and everything I said felt like it had to travel through layers of gauze. It was the middle of summer, but I felt as if I were lost in a blizzard. The family glanced at each other, then at me. Resisting the desire to bolt, I stayed for as long as I could bear, then said I had to go home.

“What’s wrong with her?” I heard the girl’s mother ask as I slipped out the front door.

“What was wrong with me? I loathed myself for being so stupid, so incoherent, so abnormal. I didn’t think I had any con-

trol over anxiety, or even that it was possible to grapple with what was happening, the way you’d struggle against a current hauling you out to sea, the way you’d battle a bad dream till you wrenched yourself out of sleep. I thought that I was helpless, and I let the undertow pull me down. Shortly after my visit to the girl, I was hospitalized.

I wondered if there was something wrong with my genetic makeup. Maybe I was predestined to go through life a mental wreck. I don’t remember what was finally prescribed – Haldon, or Stellazine, or some other – but eventually the doctors hit upon a combination of drugs that allowed me to calm down. I was released from the hospital and told I would have to be on medication for the rest of my life. Dr. Avery agreed.

“The fall will always be a bad time for you,” he told me. Apparently certain people were destined to have a difficult time with specific seasons. Doctors didn’t know why. “But with proper medication you will be able to manage your disorder.”

I believed everything doctors said. Apparently they knew, with certainty, what to me was beyond comprehension. I was warned never to smoke marijuana again. The dreadful specter of nervous illness hung over me. At that time I was willing to take any medication doctors prescribed, but would that be enough to protect me?

The anti-anxiety medication I was given when I left the hospital made me hungry. I craved sugary things to sweeten the bad taste of these days, though nothing could completely fill my hunger.

Every day I stopped at a coffee shop for apple pie topped with ice-cream. The waiter took my order and smiled kindly. Did he notice I was gaining weight? I had always been skinny and was certainly oblivious to my changing appearance until, months later, I could no longer zip my pants. My stomach bulged beneath my newly purchased loose shifts. A girdle was something I never imagined I was meant to wear, it belonged to my mother’s generation, but now I wore one underneath my dresses. I felt like a huge, lumbering giant. I had failed at so many things.

Dr. Avery listened as I told him how lazy I was and self-centered, how dependent on my parents. We talked about ways I could be more autonomous.

One day I arrived at my session when he was behind schedule. The last client had run overtime and Dr. Avery hadn’t had a chance to get lunch. I would have to wait until he went down the block to get a sandwich, he explained. But first he had to write up his notes.

“Shall I get you the sandwich?” I asked tentatively.

“Why yes,” he smiled. “That would be nice.” He wanted roast beef on rye with mayonnaise. I walked to the sandwich shop two blocks from his office. When I returned, he ate during our session.

“You’ve said that you’re lazy and selfish and I believed you,” Dr. Avery said.

He was quiet for a moment. Then he said, “But I see I was



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wrong.” He smiled gently. “I don’t think you are as you describe yourself.”

I wanted to know more about this man who disagreed with my evaluation. Was he married? Did he have children? He answered any question I asked. In fact, he’d been married five times! He had five children. I wondered why he’d divorced so often.

“Are your children pretty?” I asked one day.

“You want to know if I’m a good father,” Dr. Avery said. “Yes, they are pretty.”

I went to Dr. Avery once-a-week for a fifty-minute session. My parents had an insurance plan, but their portion of the cost must have been substantial. Though my father made mild complaints from time to time about the expense, I knew if I needed to see Dr. Avery in order to stay out of the hospital, my father would pay the fee.

After seeing the psychiatrist for several months, I began to attend classes at Hunter College. I got a third floor walk-up studio apartment for which my parents paid the rent. I was doing what I never thought I would be able to do: live on my own, cook, shop, write checks. My life wasn’t going quite the way I’d wanted but I saw I could still have a life, and possibly a future, where I could realize some of what I’d hoped for.

One day, when I was feeling better than I had in a while, I came to my session wearing mascara and eye-liner. “You’re wearing makeup,” Dr. Avery said. “It looks very nice.” He smiled. I was excruciatingly embarrassed and rolled my eyes. “How dare he notice,” I thought to myself, blushing.

I started walking every day, and after a while I didn’t feel the need to take a taxi back from my sessions, as I used to. Some days I walked to school and back, crossing the park on the same road the bus took. I liked watching people jog by or ride their bikes. Observing the way the sky changed in the early morning and late afternoon gave me pleasure. Gradually, spending more and more time walking, I lost the weight I’d put on. One day, when I took the train to visit my parents in Riverdale, my father picked me up at the station.

“I didn’t recognize you at first,” he said, although it had only been a few months since we’d last seen each other. “I thought to myself, who is this attractive young woman with a nice figure? I thought you had lost your figure for good.” Slender, large, slender again, my body seemed to be as changeable as my state of mind. In fact,

I was surprised that my father had been aware of how large I had become. My surroundings had been blurred and out of focus for so long, I assumed that I was as indistinct to the world as the world was to me.

Often I showed Dr. Avery poems I wrote and we talked about the images and line breaks. My parents would have been surprised if they’d known that a sizeable amount of these costly therapy sessions consisted of literary criticism. Other sessions, I’d talk to him about dreams.

“It sounds, from this dream, that you want to sleep with a woman,” Dr. Avery said. I was surprised by his analysis. And

shocked. “I could never do that,” I said.

“Why not?” he asked. He let me know that things were not as rigid as I’d thought, that the road was not as narrow.

During one session he said he thought I might publish a book one day. A book? It was as if he were saying, “You have a future; there’s light ahead for you. Never again relinquish your faith in that light.” Sessions with Dr. Avery helped me to believe that, although things might appear bleak again, they would never look quite as hopeless as they had once looked.

I thought I’d done my time in a psychiatric hospital and would never have to endure that experience again. But I was wrong.

Does every family have its dark and unresolved aspects? The deaf and blind woman Laura Bridgman, who lived in the nineteenth century, described heaven as “a good place [where] God knew that I would not fall off the edge of the floor.” But when I started falling off the floor’s edge, when the foundation corroded and I didn’t know how to save myself, I had no idea that I too had been blind for so long to what was in front of me, and deaf to inner warnings.

After I completed my junior year at Hunter College, I went



SNOW ANGEL

Was she relieved that I was handling this well, or did she want more of a reaction from me?

to an arts camp for July and August to teach weaving and to escape the heat of a Manhattan summer. Near the end of the summer I was called to the phone by one of the counselors. Standing in the phone booth by the tennis court, the phone in my hand, I heard Phillip's voice on the other end, a man my sister Barbara had been dating for the previous five years. He was a doctor in his mid thirties, smart, efficient, handsome. Barbara, who had been working in publishing, was now a freelance editor. They had broken up and gotten back together several times.

"Barbara is in the hospital," Phillip said. "She took an overdose of pills last night." My heart exploded. What exactly was he telling me?

"But she'll be all right?" I said, insisting he tell me the answer I wanted to hear.

"We all hope she'll be all right," he said. "We all love her." This was not good enough.

"What is her condition?" I asked.

"She's in a coma," he said. Surely he must have gotten the information wrong.

He was a doctor, he must make sure she get out of the coma. When I hung up the phone I went to see the camp director immediately and told him I had to leave the next morning. He hesitantly suggested I might want to wait a few days and see how my sister was doing before I rushed off. No, I had no doubt that I had to get back to New York as soon as possible. My sister might die? I could not even entertain that possibility.

When my sister Diana heard Barbara was in a coma, she came to the hospital immediately and spent the night in Barbara's room. "I talked to Barbara all night, telling her I loved her, begging her to remain with us," Diana said. "Didn't Mom and Dad know that someone in a coma can feel the presence of people around them?"

My parents had not come to the hospital that night. "I was dying when I heard," my father said. "But I knew there was nothing I could do at that point." He and my mother went to bed and came to see Barbara the next morning.

By the time I got to the hospital Barbara's stomach had been pumped and she was out of danger. Diana told me the details. Phillip had not been expected to return home until late at night but by some fluke he came back at midday. He found Barbara unconscious in his bed. She'd swallowed a bottle worth of sleeping pills. He would say later he had a feeling something was not right with her, which was why he came home. These were the facts. But they were like letters of an alphabet I didn't know, randomly chosen and put together into words that made no sense. I listened as if it were a story about a character in a book or movie. This had nothing to do with my sister, my family. Besides, Barbara was okay. I couldn't begin to ask myself why she had done this. Perhaps later I'd think about these things. Now, Dr. Avery's voice floated up, reassuring me, "Your sister may be in the psychiatric ward, but you are not your sister."

As I saw her lying in the hospital bed, neither of us could

have articulated the role she played in the family and the burdens she carried. She was the buffer between my parents and Diana and me. Neither of us could yet understand what that effort had cost her. Even as she was lying in a hospital bed, recovering from an overdose, she wanted to be the one who appeared in control. "You seem okay," she said, looking at me curiously, as I stood by her bed. Was she relieved that I was handling this well, or did she want more of a reaction from me?

Eight years older than I, Barbara was a surrogate mother when I was growing up; she paid attention to my stories, exclaimed over poems I wrote. She listened to my dreams.

Friends who have seen pictures of my sister from that time remark how beautiful and exotic she looked, slender and tall, with thick dark hair. But in her dark large eyes were both confusion and distance. Her laugh was loud and forced and I did not always know what she was laughing at, especially when she hooted at my father's jokes when they weren't funny. She praised him repeatedly so Diana and I didn't have to. The clothes she wore, which she designed herself, were either years behind or ahead of the current trend; she was never in fashion. She was a mixture of originality and eccentricity and one had the feeling that, though she was remarkably independent, at her core she was deeply hurt and lonely. She looked older than her twenty-nine years.

When I had been hospitalized, she hadn't come to visit. Later she said she'd felt so bad for me that she hadn't had the strength to see me; we were so close, so entangled in each other's psyches. But as much as I loved her, I resented her too. She wasn't my mother after all, why was she always telling me what I should eat, what I should wear or which friends of mine she liked and didn't like? Home during Christmas break, during my first year of university, when I visited her in her apartment, I said, "Why am I spending so much time here? I want to see my friends."

"How do you think that makes me feel?" Barbara asked. But I didn't care.

Visiting her at the hospital, what I felt was relief. Barbara was recovering. She'd be out soon. And then the awful truth hit me: she'd almost died. It was as if we were holding on to the same cloth, my sister and I, she at one end, I at the other. When Barbara collapsed, I felt the pull. I either had to stand my ground and let the thin material shred to pieces, or, fearful of any tear, fall too. I only knew I had to keep holding the same remnant she held. To let go was unthinkable. A month later I was back in the hospital.

The second hospital stay is a blur. As before, I had stopped eating, was unable to sleep. The symptoms of anxiety I'd had during my initial breakdown returned. But Dr. Avery was no longer living in New York and this time I had the misfortune to have one psychiatrist after another who didn't know what to do with me.

Several times a week I had sessions in the hospital with a bubbly young social worker who usually ended up talking about herself. Her chats about her "normal life," with her par-



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ents, her husband, her child, seemed like bulletins from another planet.

When I was released, after six weeks, with a new set of medications, I was told this was the cure and that I must take these pills for life. Again, I believed what I was told. But I was more fearful than ever that I might have another collapse. Hadn't I faithfully taken the original medication? That had not prevented me from being hospitalized a second time.

Now my parents had two daughters to worry about. Looking back, I see how worn they were by this stress. But my parents were good at keeping anything objectionable at a distance. Their priority was to get through each day. When I was released from the hospital, they picked me up and drove me to my apartment. They helped me clean up the mess my latest roommate had left. What could they do but silently observe as I made my first tentative embarkation back into my life?

"A lively understandable spirit/Once entertained you./ It will come again. Be still./ Wait." the poet Roethke wrote. My spirit did return to me, although my recovery was a slow, painful process. It would be years before I realized that I had more control over my life than I thought I had, and that I did not have to be a slave to pills, that in fact I would be fine without any medication.

If Dr. Avery had still been practicing in New York, perhaps he would have responded differently to my symptoms; he was already familiar with the dynamics in my family.

He might have been able to understand my anxieties in the

wake of Barbara's collapse. But Doctor Avery was no longer my doctor. Two years earlier, when I was completing my freshman year at Hunter College, he told me he was planning to move back to England, that our sessions would be ending on the last Tuesday of the month. I was surprised to hear this. Yet I was no longer dependent on him. I felt I could get by on my own. Nonetheless, I was sad. And curious too. And for reasons I couldn't understand, I was concerned for him. Why was he moving? I asked. He said he wanted to return to the place where he was born. Why now? I wondered, but he didn't explain further. When he left, I was not yet twenty-one years old. I was filled with my own unrealized plans. I didn't linger too long on his.

To our last session I brought a print I'd made in graphics class. I had etched a metal plate in which a large amorphous shape was held in place by horizontal strips of metal, strips like stairs on an ascending ladder. "I usually don't accept gifts," Dr. Avery said, "but I will accept this one. What you are saying here is that what has been out of control is no longer running wild but is contained by these horizontal bars, these steps that are leading you someplace." I was elated by Dr. Avery's response. I believed he liked me, that he approved of what I was doing; in turn I felt great tenderness for him.

Sitting in his office during our last sessions, I thought, "If I ever get a book published, I'll dedicate it to him." I made this vow silently to myself and because I did I felt a connection to Dr. Avery that I believed would not be broken by geographical distance. Even if we did not speak for years, I was secure that the bond between us, forged by his help and my gratitude, was indissoluble. I was not sad on our last day, but secretly excited about our eventual reunion.

From time to time I would think about Dr. Avery and the things he had said. When I first became his patient, it was as if I were looking at the world through a lens covered with Vaseline. He opened my eyes to so many things I hadn't noticed.

More than twenty years later, when my second book of poetry was accepted for publication, I decided to dedicate it to him. Attempting to locate his address, what I tracked down were Dr. Avery's birth and death dates. Dr. Charles William Avery, born December 11, 1928, died December 12, 1974.

He had just turned forty-six when he died, just a few years younger than I was when I started writing this. He died of leukemia shortly after he moved back to England. Although he never told his clients about his illness – or perhaps he told some of them, but not me – he had moved back to the place of his birth to die. At our last meeting, I was not aware that he too was at the edge, looking into the distance.

I was certain that one day, when I dedicated a book to him, he would understand how much his help had meant. I wanted to bring him pleasure. After my book came out, dedicated to him, I felt disappointed that he would never get to read it. Perhaps he too wants me to know how he feels because now, as I write this, I see his face clearly. He looks at me with such compassion as he smiles. Once more he reaches out to me.



EGGS IN ONE BASKET

BY JAMES SKELTON

Land of dreams

BY KAY PARLEY

The subconscious mind is not a dark place; it is flooded with light. Occasionally, if we are lucky, the fates punch a hole in the dark curtain that separates us from that underworld and the light beams through. If we are quick about picking up our cues, those bright rays from the depths give us enough light to get ourselves oriented, even to find hidden paths. The guiding light takes many forms: hunches, new associations, still small voices . . . I like the dreams. There is so much body to a dream, so much to actually see and grasp.

They can be exhausting, those dreams that come from beyond the curtain. Some have left me feeling as if I have just returned from a very distant and very alien place. It always takes a few minutes to re-discover myself, to recognize my bed and even to re-connect with the fact that this is the earth and I live here. They don't come often, the splendid dreams that rip out of the depths of the mind. I have thousands of unremarkable dreams between each of the milestone dreams, but when they come they cut keenly, they weigh in heavily, and they are never forgotten.

The first I remember occurred when I was 16. No doubt there had been a few tears in the dark curtain before that, but it was a time of particular tension, that year when I was 16. It began to look as if every country bordering Germany could expect invasion and all attempts to negotiate peace with Hitler had failed.

I dreamed I was looking down on a map of Europe but it wasn't a paper map, it was the actual earth. Where Germany would be, a giant dragon coiled, flicking its tongue across the border of France. As I looked, a figure clad in white leaped down in front of the dragon. He carried a sword in his right hand but it was his left hand, raised palm forward like an officer directing traffic, which gave the impression of irresistible force. He landed in front of the dragon shouting, "Far enough!" I woke instantly, but it took me a long time to regain any sense of reality. Had I just seen St. George?

When I told my mother about the dream she said, "It's just a dream," but she mentioned it again later that day when news came over the radio that Winston Churchill had just become Prime Minister of England. St. George leaped in front of the dragon shouting, "Far enough!" Britain was going to go to war.

That dream raised some questions. It was so vivid and so revealing it left me wondering a bit about heredity. A century earlier, another British hero leaped down on the map of Europe shouting, "Far enough!" That time the invader was Napoleon and the man who stopped him was the Duke of Wellington, my great great great grandfather. (My maternal grandmother's ancestry was never talked about, being, as the Victorians put it delicately, 'On the wrong side of the sheets,' but nevertheless it was true.) Anyone who was thinking would have recognized what was coming in 1939, but I began to wonder if the fact that I carried a few genes from the man who licked Napoleon sensitized me enough to recognize that the tensions in Europe

were about to come into focus in attack mode. The dream was so extreme I never really got over it.

The war had scarcely begun when it offered another impossible dream, probably what people mean when they speak of an "out-of-body experience." I had gone to bed wearing a pair of flowered cotton pyjamas I'd made for myself, the first major piece of sewing I'd accomplished, and there I was in cold water with waves billowing around me. I knew I was weightless, just standing in the ocean in my flowered pyjamas. It was night, but I saw people hanging on to what looked like an overturned lifeboat. I could see one man clearly. He had thin hair and large blue eyes. I screamed at him, "Hang on! Don't let go!"

I actually felt myself return to my bed, cold and terrified. My first thought was a selfish one: was this a warning that I was going to be in a shipwreck? Next day, radio news informed us the *Athenia* had gone down off the coast of Ireland. There were lives lost but also some survivors. Was that what I had seen in my dream? And why?

Eight years later I went to Toronto to enroll in Lorne Greene's Academy of Radio Arts. As the staff entered the classroom to be introduced to us on day one, my attention was caught by a broad-shouldered man wearing a brown suit. I was seeing him from behind, because the staff came in from the rear of the classroom, but I could see that he had thin, reddish hair and a dynamic walk. Even before I saw his face, my mind was screaming, "Hang on! Don't let go!"

The man was introduced to us as Andrew Alan, head of the drama department at CBC and our production teacher. I soon learned that he had been on the *Athenia*. His father drowned that night, but Andrew Alan was saved. A few months later, he talked to me about the *Athenia* and the kind of thoughts that go through the mind at a time like that. He said he saw a girl calling to him to hang on, and she looked like me. That is the kind of split in the dark curtain I wouldn't even try to explain.

Not long after graduating from the radio academy, I suffered a manic-depressive breakdown and endured ten months of psychiatric treatment at home in Saskatchewan. My last month as a patient was spent at a stenographic job downtown, but I was still "living in" at the hospital to make my transition into the outside world a little easier. It was Sunday afternoon, the last day of my last weekend in hospital. It was a beautiful day in May and several patients had gone home on weekend leave. Some patients were playing cards in the dayroom and another woman was knitting. The radio was on, as always, and nurses were coming and going, but the ward was fairly quiet. I was accustomed to my job by then and I knew where I would be living when I moved out, but nevertheless I was apprehensive and feeling exhausted, so I lay down on the couch and fell asleep.

My mind offered the most beautiful dream I remember experiencing. I saw a perfect golden rose, a circle of soft yellow petals that were unearthly in their perfection. As I looked, the center folded away and gave access to a kind of passage. I couldn't tell whether it was a hall or a lane because it was so



WRITING THE LIFE – NON-FICTION

flooded with light I couldn't see detail. It wasn't bright light; it was pearly light that one could look at forever without eye-strain. It was probably the kind of light that has led some people to believe they've had a glimpse of paradise.

I woke easily from that dream, as if it had happened close to wakefulness, and I saw in it hope and fulfillment for my future. I was dying to tell the nurses about it, but I didn't trust them that far. If they concluded it was a manifestation of mania, I might end up staying there! The next few years were filled with uncertainty and struggle, but they were also filled with friendships and achievements. When I felt like giving up, I had only to remind myself of the promise of the golden rose. I never went back to mental hospital. The golden rose was my mandala.

There were other important dreams over the next two decades, one or two memorable enough to rate with the exceptional dreams from beyond the curtain.

I badly needed hope and courage when I was going through one of my periodic depressions, and the next dream gave me hope. It also gave me determination to meet challenges and to never give up. Many a time I have turned to the memory of this dream to renew my strength. It was every bit as important as the golden rose. In the dream, I was climbing a steep, rocky hill, through tangles of prickly bushes and past dark places where fearsome dangers might be hiding, but I was determined to get to the top. When I reached what I thought was the last slope, a heavy mist descended and I could no longer see where I was going. I was about to give up, but a hand came out of the mist and I knew it would take my hand and help me up that final slope. Of all the dreams to escape my unconscious, the dream of the misty hill is the one I revisit most frequently. It always renews my hope.

My years between the ages of 33 and 43 were studded with meaningful dreams, and one is worth mentioning. It occurred when I was conflicted. I was nursing on the psychiatric ward of a city hospital and was growing unhappy there. Several of the staff I enjoyed working with had resigned and the mood of the place had changed. I knew I wanted badly to quit and go about fulfilling an old dream. I wanted to write a book about the community my grandparents had helped to pioneer, but it seemed foolhardy to quit a paying job and go spend my savings.

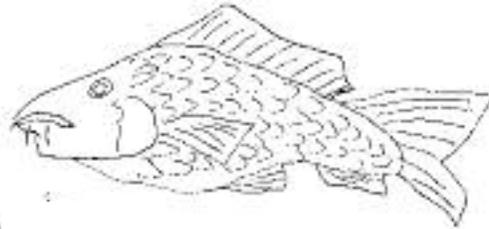
As I wrestled with the conflict, I had a revealing dream. I was alone in a room and realized someone was opening the door. Terrified, I ran to the door and pushed against it with all my weight, but whoever was on the other side was every bit as strong as I was and the door gave. To my surprise, I walked in, and the one who entered said bluntly, "The artists wants in."

That did it. I quit nursing and went to Scotland to begin research for that community history. Some dreams cannot be

denied.

I want to relate one more dream, because it illustrates how helpful dreams can be when it come to achieving insight. I had never had much money and there was no family money behind me, but I spent every cent I had furthering my education. When I was 45 I had managed a total of 12 years of school (on top of my grade 12) and I realized it was time to settle down. I had a good job teaching social sciences at a technical institute but something in me was not satisfied. Most recently, I'd achieved a BA with honors in sociology and a BEd, but no Masters, and I felt incomplete, but I was too old to risk going broke one more time. I began to experience an annoying recurring dream. I was always climbing a stair against the wall in a big empty building like a warehouse, and as I reached a platform representing the second floor, the steps began to break. There was no way of going back down, but there was no way of going higher, either. The steps leading up had collapsed.

I had the dream often enough to be tired of it when I found myself teaching recurring dreams to a psychology class and decided on the spur of the moment to relate my dream. As I told the story I stopped abruptly and said, "I know what it means!" I can hardly believe I hadn't seen it before, but I hadn't. From then on, I accepted the fact that I was lucky to have an honours BA and would never have a masters. I never had the dream again, and I hope my class got the message -- that a recurring dream means you have a problem you really need to solve.



ART BY JAMES SKELTON

During the years when I was teaching social sciences, one student told me she didn't want to think about dreams because her church taught they were in Satan's realm. I felt so sorry for her. It isn't surprising that some people want to avoid the thought of dreams. They can be so confusing, so filled with unrelated images and events that they are very disturbing. The mixed-up dreams are usually at their worst when we need most to solve them. They come when we need insight or direction.

The great analyst, Dr. Carl Jung, made dreams the cornerstone of his work. He talked of the "individuation process" by which individuals seek to know more and more about their true selves. Hidden in the depths of the mind are the deadwood we need to banish and also those marvelous lighted trails that provide us with direction and give us courage to fulfill our destinies. We can't really uncover our true selves without interpreting the vivid dreams. They've come through the rips in the dark curtain to offer us insight.

If our dreams are giving the impression that the depths of the mind are a place to fear, perhaps what they are really saying is, "Face this. You need to straighten up. Take a good look." As Dr. C.G. Jung put it so well in *Symbols of Transformation*, ". . . when people let their unconscious speak it always blurts out the most intimate things, then even the smallest detail often has meaning."

Wanting to grow up dead

BY KATHERINE TAPLEY-MILTON

“Why is light given to those in misery, and life to the bitter of soul, to those who long for death that does not come, who search for it more than for hidden treasure . . .”
(Job 3:20-21 NIV)

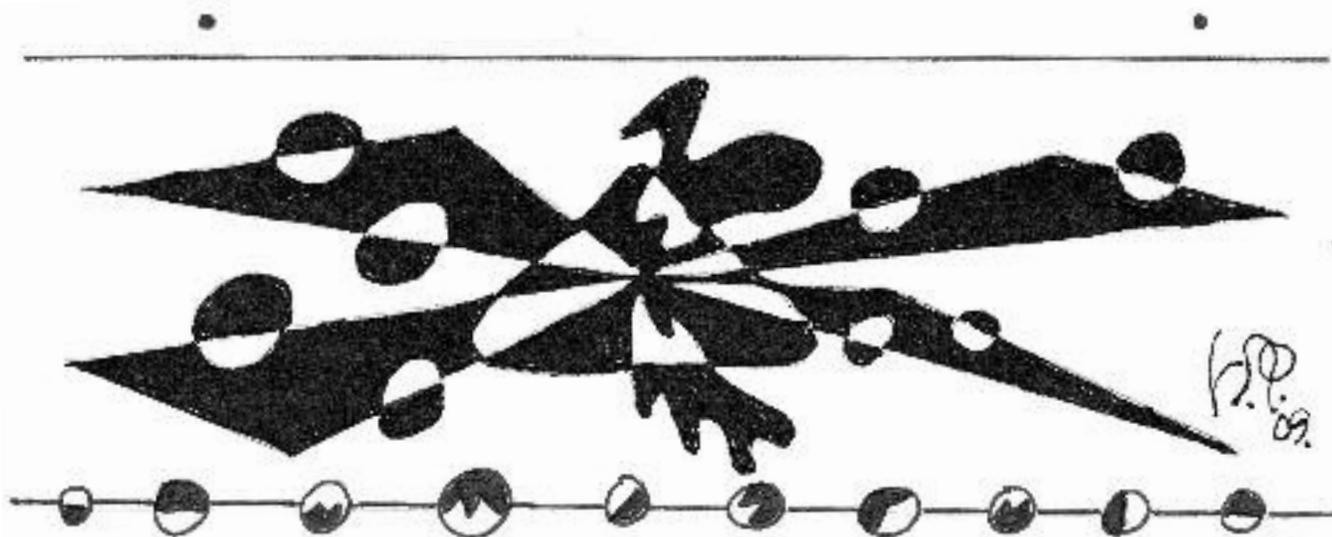
When I was a child I was frequently referred to as an “after-thought” and mistaken for my sister. I didn't look like her, but people didn't seem to realize that I was born eleven years after she was. My two older brothers, were much older still and they were off and married by the time I was six years old.

I'd say that my mental illness started when I was about fourteen. Practically, everyone who I went to high school with said I was either crazy or on street drugs. I hid under tables, laughed uncontrollably, had periods of deep depression, and jumped out of my skin when anyone came up behind me. In grade eight I had been on the Student Council and had a few friends, but by grade nine, I constantly thought of suicide, became morose and depressed. Other kids wanted to be doctors or lawyers, but all I wanted was to grow up dead. Paranoia stalked me constantly. I had a feeling of being pursued by an invisible enemy. Going around corners, up stairs, or venturing into a darkened room heightened these feelings. Then came the hallucinations and voices and I was plunged into a private hell that nobody understood. I tried to read psychology books to figure out what was happening to me and I dabbled in a new religion every week. But, I concluded that life was meaningless and as the existentialists like Jean Paul Sarte and Albert Camu would say, “absurd” or a “bad joke.” The more I read the more confused I got. As I listened to my favorite record, Simon and Garfunkel's “Sounds of Silence” my mind was drugged into a deep depression by the words, “. . . I am a rock, I am an island . . . hiding in my room, safe within my womb, I touch no one

and no one touches me . . .” I felt like a modern day leper, the mental illness putting me beyond the pale of civilization. My depression led me to take 300 pills out of the medicine cabinet and I swallowed them all burning my esophagus in the process. I took the overdose at 9 p.m. and by 1 a.m. I told my parents what I had done, because I wanted to ride my horse again and it made me sad that no one would be there to ride her. My parents were disbelieving that I swallowed so many pills, but they took salt and water and poured it down my throat to make me vomit. It was the same thing that they did to the dog when it swallowed rat poison. I was never seen by a doctor or taken to a hospital. My hands got black and puffed up and I sweated profusely. But I lived on. Other suicide attempts followed. One day I stole a pistol from my father's gun room and sat on a stump in the woods for three hours, trying to get the nerve up to pull the trigger. Another time I had swallowed a bunch of aspirins and then tried to drink powdered mustard and water to purge my body. While other teenagers were thinking of going to the prom, I was plotting my demise.

Epilogue

Today, after years of therapy and a lot of educating myself on bipolar illness I am married, work as a writer, and enjoy gardening, crafts, and cooking. However, I still struggle with relentless voices that command me to cut myself or to take an overdose. The only break that I've ever had from the voices was last year when I was a research subject at Yale University in New Haven, Connecticut. Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) “vacuumed” the voice out of my head and the results lasted for two months. Unfortunately, the voices came back. I see great potential in TMS and hope to get back to Yale when a hospital bed becomes available. Meanwhile my mind is full of scorpions and life is difficult.



TELEMORPHIC OUTREACH BY HENRY PETERS



Eight night poems

BY HELEN HERR

1.

deep weathered words
engrave sorrow into wood
red ink drops on white paper

orange fades into blue iris
sunset the day with wanting

fearful thoughts
leave dreams colorless

2.

worry-songs moan
pictures fall from walls
leave only shadows

evening campfire
rain stamps out flames
dampens memories

silent wails locked
in hidden boxes
unclaimed

fuzzy dog the only one
who knows

3.

who raped my laughter?
assailant walks free
broken ladder rots
beneath her window

drapes flap in the wind
silver-thin moon shines
through blinds

carves gullies and crannies
on my face
age ages age

4.

day of birth
blue eyes stare
see everything bright
porcelain doll bright

ohhhh that moment
when world is pastel
touched by lotioned hands
pink-wrapped next
to mother's breast

lost

5.

open eyes see
sharp corners side-step
scissors glass shatters
on kitchen floor

blood paints toenails
socks cover scars hides
youth's pain

daylight strolls
in brown leather birkenstocks
limps at dusk
crawls at night

6.

peddle bicycle fast
faster than runners can run

race to the end of days
past daydreams
flee nightmares run

run in circles
howl at the moon
in the black of night

rage in your mind
until drugs sleep
your days away

7.

why so downcast oh my soul?
Israelite slaves in foreign land refused to sing
my psalm same house same town same, same

months ago I quit watering plants
bought an artificial fern
my tears are stones in a dry creek bed

some say - poor husband, I feel so sorry for him
why doesn't she just get over it?

believe me, that's what I want -- to find my old self
how do I begin a new life in this strange land
when I don't remember where I began?

8.

airplane black box
tells everything
holds secrets
families mourn deaths
at graveside

depression
grieves forever
there is no burial

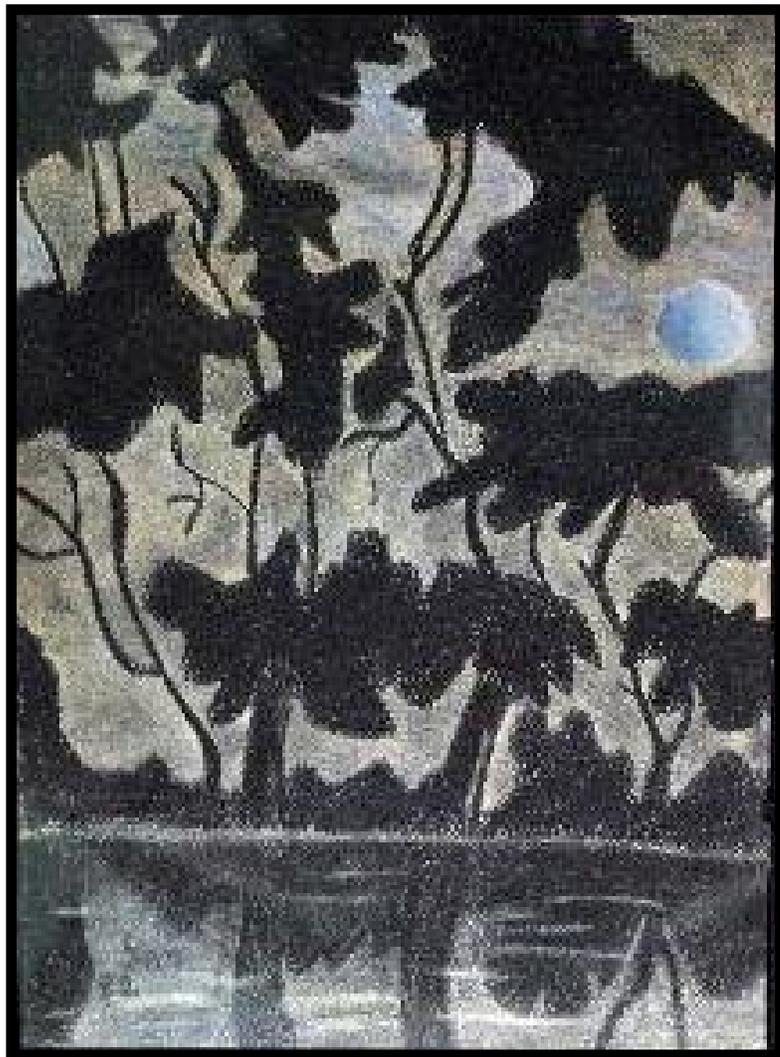
Evolution

BY PAMELA LEVAC

You have borne me.
I am from you, not of you.
You raised me – not nurtured.
Submitting me to your nature.

Evolutionary frame-shift
Assisted by knowledge and a
Desire to overcome your fears.

I have borne her.
She is from me, not of me.
I raised her – and nurtured.
She is free from your nature.



ART BY RACHEL BARKAIE

Tree

BY PAMELA LEVAC

Today I became a tree.

My legs grew down into the soft, dark soil, roots extending from my toes.

Here, a rock to curl around. There, a wet spot to remember for dry times. Solid ground. Melting into the earth.

I am rooted.

My body became the trunk. Stiff. But not unbending.

I covered myself with bark, like the wrinkled face of an old woman who lived her life in the sun.

My arms reached upwards to be the branches. Fingertips touched the sky: the blue, the grey, the sun, the rain.

Past snowstorms, towards the clouds. A rest stop for weary wings. Cradling someone else's babies.

In the spring, I burst with life. Clouds of pollen, flowers, leaves.

Summertime comes and I am green and growing, shading some, feeding others.

In the fall, my beauty shifts. Fruits, nuts and seeds ripen and are stored away for the winter.

Some drop to my feet, perhaps to begin a life of their own.

The cold winds and rain strip me of my last coverings, and I stand, once again, naked, to sleep.



Conflagration

BY SHARON MACFARLANE

Tonight I cannot sleep.
Pain rages through my body
like a prairie fire in dry grass,
devouring everything in its path.

Painkillers are merely a handful of raindrops
on the flames.

Clicks of the clock
mark the passing of each minute
in the black night.
I can only grit my teeth,
wait for the fire to burn itself out.

Revisionist Histories

BY SHARON MACFARLANE

In the local history book
the stories are riddled with deaths
cancer, ALS, Huntington's Chorea
runaway horses fiery car crashes land mines
a fifty-year-old woman
baking bread and canning peaches
whose heart just stopped
one hot September morning.

There are no illegitimate children
no ex-spouses
sisters in jail drug-addicted brothers abusive fathers
all are banished to some distant galaxy.

But small town memories are generations long
we all read
between the lines.

Discard

BY SHARON MACFARLANE

I exit at King Street station
assaulted
By rain that stings like hypodermic needles
a downpour so heavy streetlights dim.
Head down I hurry,
My careful hairdo melts around my ears.

I step around a bundle a homeless man
who huddles in the middle of the street.
Why would he choose such an exposed spot?
Why not a doorway or under an awning.

In my friend's apartment
I'm soon dry and warm.
After dinner I take a cab home,
throw away my new suede shoes.
They're ruined.



PHOTO BY PETROV STANISLAV EDUARDOVICH

The Two Sisters

BY ART MILLER

Rose
age seventy-nine
has cancer.
Two months
to live.
Loves life,
good game of cards
and a hot cup of tea.
Everyday
she's caretaker
for her MS son, catering
to his every need.

Her body is shot,
but her mind is not.

Sally
age ninety-two
has Alzheimer's.
Strong, healthy heart –
could live to be one hundred.
Seldom talks.
Seldom walks.
Spoon fed.
Lifeless lump in bed.
Everyday
caregivers cater
to her every need.

Her mind is shot,
but her body is not.

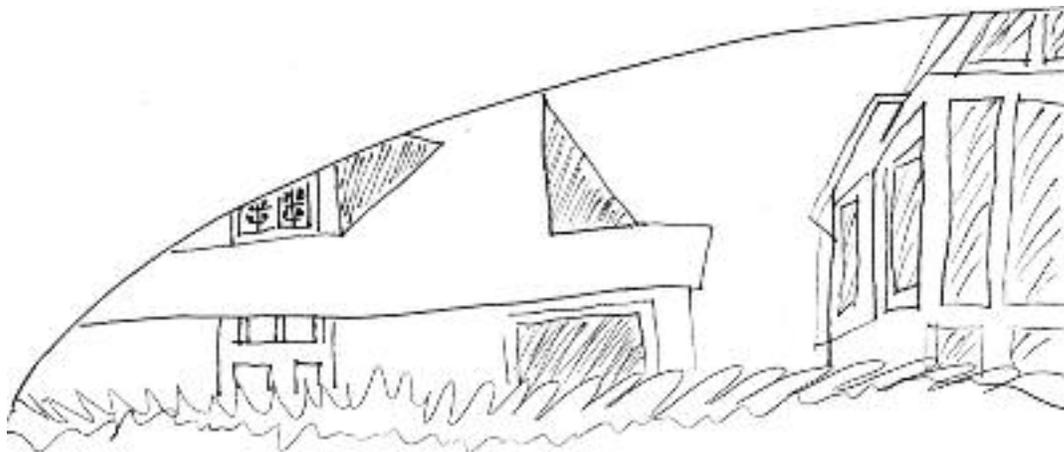
Oh, for an operation
that could fuse the two
to make each one complete.

HEADLINE POETRY

Life just got a little simpler

BY HENRY PETERS

Be all that you can be, where the lowest price is the law, guns don't kill people, give it all you got, heart of the city, it does a body good, now only, don't miss, call today, free offer, you're under no obligation, 100% money-back guarantee, 24-hour blowout clearance sale, everything must go, no salesperson will visit you, callers never have to reveal their identity, operator is standing by, send your rush order now, home is where the heart is, father knows best, just like your mama used to make it, free trial offer, limited edition, limited time offer, all the latest styles, an eye for an eye, pedal to the metal, mona lisa, in god we trust, double your pleasure, ride hard / die free, proud to be a sponsor, brought to you by, quality time, sparkling clean, on the spot, lemon fresh, ask for it by name, back by popular demand, charge it, learn a living, don't pay a cent, today's lucky number is . . . 24-7, don't go away, more for less, today is the first day of the rest of your life, win a free trip, why pay more, don't miss out on this amazing opportunity, new offer, keep fit and have fun, know how to see, their only mistake was being poor, a question can suggest its own answer, don't delay another second, keep on moving (don't stop), treat yourself today, be a donor, zero times ground zero, get the sleep you've always dreamed about, your call really is important, keep me informed, call now before it's too late, be a day person . . . are you being paid to shop?



GLIMPSE OF A DREAM HOME BY JAMES SKELTON



Out-patient ironies

BY PAUL THORNTON

all that's left to do
tonight
is to postpone
the satisfaction
i didn't get today
until tomorrow

and so on and so on

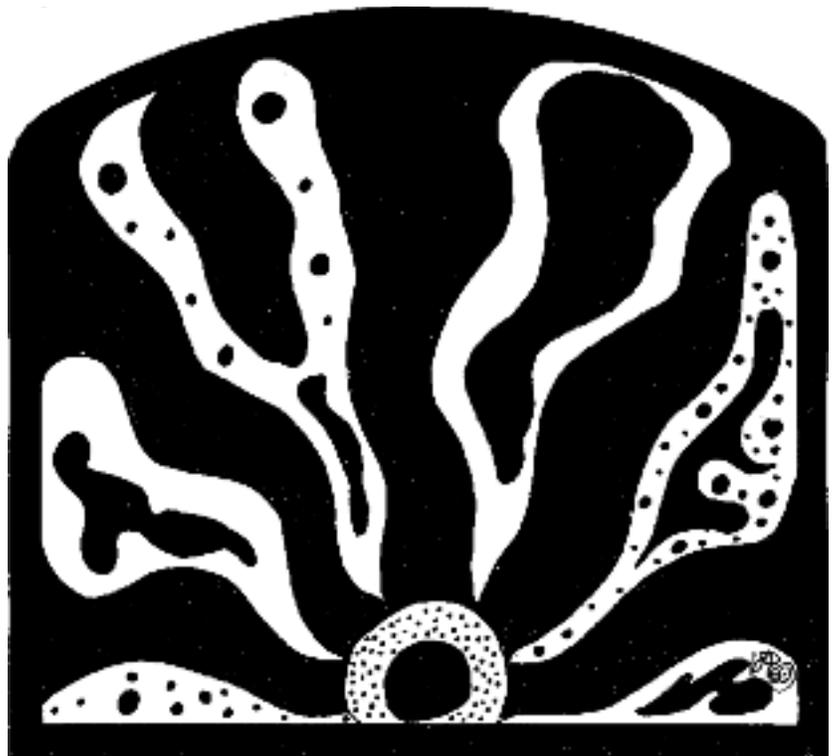
until the whole frustration
backs up
into another nervous
breakdown

but with out-patient
therapy
i'm aware of all this

so i can have the same
torture
thinned out but longer



WINDOWS 1 BY HENRY PETERS



WINDOWS 2 BY HENRY PETERS



Language of fans

BY KATE BAGGOT

Alena had two portraits of Queen Victoria and a front parlour. The parlour was filled with ornaments: with figurines of cherubs, of bankrupt dandies, of shy children. There were scrimshaw pieces, water colours and landscape oils mounted in gilt frames. Fruit bowls and silver services were filled with arrangements of dried violets and roses so old that their petals smelled only of dust.

The room looked like the walls were about to cave in under the weight of so many possessions. It was a relief on the eyes to look at the black velvet curtain that could be drawn to cut the room in half. The front half of the room was for men and smoking. The back half—when the curtain was drawn—could not be seen from the street and was for women and talking.

Once, before I was born, before even my father was born, my great grandmother's parlour had often been filled with guests too.

Alena's piano had stood in the back half of the room and I believe that when she sang it did not matter that the gentlemen were separated from the ladies by a curtain or that there was no view into the room from the street. When she began to sing I imagine that the men emptied their pipes and opened the windows to wave the smoke out with copies of the evening paper.

Even in the worst cold of winter people in the street used to stop ice still to listen to what floated out the window. If the strangers in the street had been soldiers in the First World War, or if they took the evening paper, they could put a face to the voice.

In the newspaper illustration she appeared a giantess towering above the soldiers about to sail from lake to river, to Montreal, to the Atlantic, to Europe, toward adventure or death. Her evening fan of black ostrich feathers was fuller and wider than the others I have seen. It was specially made for her. Her neck was bare and arched back to bear the force it took to throw high notes from her throat with lungs that were so strong they could snap the bones in her corset. From the sheer mechanics of it all, Alena had more to hide with her fan than other women.

This was the display that also rewarded guests for coming to dine in the middle-class town house that stood behind the apothecary. Above the piano, Queen Victoria, the portrait of the widow, held up her head that carried the veil and crown with her strong arm under her chin. She looked capable and weary. History is very short.

On the day I was born Alena donated her bicycle to the Salvation Army Thrift store out of a sense of propriety. She was seventy-seven and believed that a great-grandmother shouldn't be seen riding a bicycle in the streets.

It was Alena who taught me the language of fans. A fan was the all-knowing eye that fluttered over the innocent young

woman. It was the veil that could conceal any girl from the full view of men who knew what women did not. The fan extended the fingers of delicate hands, also hidden, under elbow-length evening gloves. Not disguise, not camouflage, a fan was the cultivated contradiction of decorative hiding and obvious silence. A preface to a face.

She demonstrated all this for me as she stood behind her husband's apothecary counter. When the fan was closed she held it under her chin, lips pursed with disapproval and her eyebrows drawn close together with thought—the symbols of impending feminine doom. Romantic interest was a gesture illustrated by an open fan, eyes emphasized by covering the lips and jaw, a slight crinkle in her cheeks betrayed a shy and silent smile hidden beneath the ostrich feathers. These were the muscular representations of emotion.

During these lessons all I could appreciate was a self-generated breeze. Afterward I began to believe that I was the last living woman fluent in the language of fans. I tried to come up with some notation system of fan choreography. I wanted to standardize symbols to trace onto the pages of the sheet music Alena left me in her will, so that others might one day know just how she performed the hymns and anthems of her era. That was a project I abandoned. I learned that the language of fans was more than could be noted. A fan extended the ritual of lovers' gazes from moments into hours, from hours to days. At its essence is the performance acted out every time a woman reaches up, puts her arms around a man's neck and breaks the lock her eyes had put onto his eyes to glance down on the floor. At that moment, she articulates with one brief glance back into his eyes: "That is all I will do. Now be a man and let me go on dreaming."

To keep her voice warm in a house empty of daily conversation, Alena used to do vocal slides, a flow of unbroken notes through an octave. When the door was opened to occasional visits from guilt-ridden relatives all they received was a nod in greeting. Her warm up accompanied the removal of overcoats and shoes. Only when the warm-up was complete could the performance begin.

The audience, the visitors, sat while my great-grandmother stood in a soldier's posture in front of the silver elephant. As a child my father christened the elephant Albert. To keep the game going we used to rub his trunk and say hello when ever we went to visit. Albert the elephant stood on the floor. He was dressed with a jewelled caravan to carry the rajah upon his back. He was five feet high and almost as wide. The portrait of Queen Victoria, the widow, was hung above. I could never play Cowboys and Indians with my brothers because of that combination. Just when my imagination was ready to storm headlong into the thundering dust-clouds of a stampede of wild horses or buffalo, I would be interrupted by an image of Queen Victoria riding her sedate elephant across the prairie.

Alena did not ride the bus until I taught her how to buy tickets, ask for a transfer and pull the chord to ring the bell.



After she gave her bike to charity, Alena took to walking everywhere. She could walk from her home downtown to her husband's grave at the cemetery. She used to amaze people with her old-age athleticism.

Then, when Alena was eighty-nine, she slipped on the ice and broke her leg. She continued to walk on that broken leg until spring. She didn't even limp.

Shortly after Christmas that winter, my father left for Rome. He had a contract that gave him three months work. It wasn't unusual for him to leave for months at a time. We weren't unloving children and I'm sure we missed Dad while he was gone, but reunions and departures were so routine that we didn't expect our father to show any grief upon leaving or celebration upon his return. We didn't even expect presents. Nevertheless, when my father came home from Italy at the end of March, my mother packed all five of us into the station wagon to go and meet his plane.

We saw Dad as soon as he cleared customs and dragged himself into the baggage claim area. We were still standing behind the glass doors that separated the baggage carousels from the arrivals lounge when he saw us. Thomas started waving and shouting "Daddy we're over here," and Dad dropped his shoulder bags and started to cry.

We knew the Italian influence on my father's new regard for family life had truly taken hold on the way home. He pulled into the parking lot of a toy store in what—the last time we had driven through—had been a farm on the edge of the suburbs. This was not any toy store. It was a huge American toy supermall. As far as the eyes could see were the towering shelves stocked with all the movie and cartoon merchandise that Madison Avenue had ever conceived of. My father looked down fondly over his five dumb-struck children and said:

"Everyone can choose their favourite."

It must have been a profitable trip because my father put no limits upon us. My sister and brothers went wild. Sarah and Alexander led the charge into the aisles leaving a trail of boxes streaked with drool and fingerprints in their wake. Hugh, who was eleven, and Thomas, who was five, didn't behave much better. It was the most embarrassing spectacle of my life.

My mother tried to make it easier for me, encouraging me to indulge my father's whim.

"And now, Miranda, what would you like to have?" She asked in her softest fairy tale and lullaby voice.

The truth is that I had looked at all those rows of Barbie Dolls, stuffed animals, electronic games and building sets, and I hadn't wanted anything. I told my parents that there was nothing I wanted and my father looked like his heart would break.

"Our oldest one is all grown up," he said to Mum.

"You're not going to cry again, are you?" I asked my father.

We came home with our returned father, a new dump truck, a bulldozer, a red Corvette and a speed boat. We found Alena waiting in one of the wicker chairs on our porch. We never knew when Alena would come to visit and we never

knew how long she had been waiting while we were gone. I'm sure all Alena wanted was to see her grandson home safe after yet another journey. Instead, she became the centre in a frenzy of transportation toy demonstrations. Thomas tried to include Alena in the game and drove his new dump truck over her shoe and up her skirted leg. Grandmama's face was immediately drained of all colour. Even her lips became as white as snow.

Then she screamed out in pain.

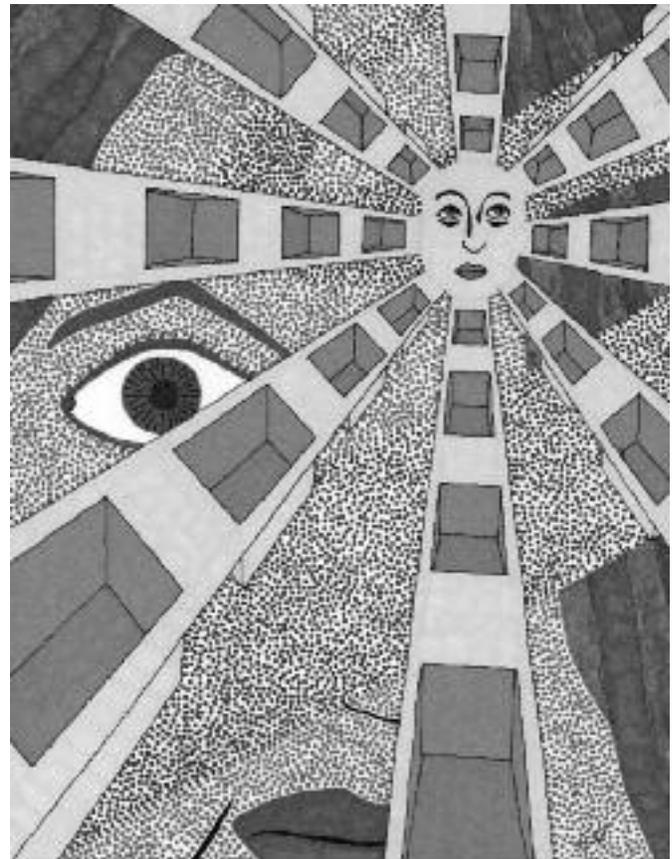
Dad bounded forward and folded Alena's long skirt up over her knee. Her calf was purple, swollen like a tree stump, and the skin looked like it was about to burst.

"Oh my God," Mum said.

Dad went inside for the afghan we kept folded over the back of the couch, wrapped his grandmother up in it and carried her to the car like a baby. I had never thought of Alena as small and frail before. I had never thought of my father as massive and strong before.

All of us were quiet while Dad pulled the car out of the drive to take Alena to the hospital, but after they rounded the corner Sarah and Alexander just couldn't stand the tension any longer. Their speech echoed motors revving and tires screeching once more.

"Be quiet," Mum shouted at them. "For all you kids know your grandmama is having her leg sawed off right this minute."



AWAKENING BY STEVEN TOMLINS

I had never thought of Alena as small and frail before. I had never thought of my father as massive and strong before.

Sarah and Alexander were quiet and still for five seconds. “Will the doctors and nurses put it in a box for her to take home?” Alexander asked.

Alena’s leg was not amputated. The bone had to be surgically set after she had been given two days of intravenous-drip antibiotics to kill infection. Dad wouldn’t let the doctors admit Alena to the hospital for her recovery. He said that elderly patients lying in hospital beds never fail to catch pneumonia and die. So, Hugh moved in with Thomas and Alexander, Sarah and I moved into Hugh’s room and Alena came home to us in her fresh white cast with a blue rubber heel.

After spending three days with her leg propped up on a stack of pillows, the plaster was pronounced dry and Alena was permitted to put the rubber heel of the walking cast down on the floor. We all gathered in “the girls’ room” to watch Alena try out her plaster leg and we cheered her on like parent’s encouraging their baby to take its first steps.

That night Sarah and Alexander sneaked into Alena’s room with their set of felt tip markers. They decorated the entire surface of Alena’s cast with a tangled arrangement of incredible vines and violets, thorns and thistles, of roses and long pampas grasses.

When Alena came down to breakfast wearing her Technicolor plaster, Dad reached across the table, grabbed Sarah’s ear with one hand and Alexander’s with the other, but he had to let go because Alena was beaming. The cast was a beautiful sight.

“Oh, thank you my dear ones,” she said. “Thank-you. I think I will go home today.”

My father devised a schedule. He would check in with Alena every morning, my mother and Thomas would check in with her on their way home from the kindergarten at lunch time. On Sundays she would come to us for dinner. The afternoons and Saturdays were divided up among Hugh, Sarah, Alexander and me.

We were outraged.

“We are too young to take on this kind of responsibility,” said Hugh.

“That may be true,” Dad replied, “But I have to work with the kids I’ve got. I can’t just pick up the phone and order in a bunch of offspring who are a few years older and more practical to have around.”

“But what are we supposed to do with her?” I asked.

“Take her to the movies, stay at home and make tea. Sit with her.”

The first Saturday with Alena was my turn. It was raining so we couldn’t go out and risk Alena’s cast from dissolving into a puddle. Alena and I sat in the parlour saying nothing to each other for what seemed like hours. Finally—

“I have some treasures I could show you,” she said and hobbled out of the parlour on her blue heel.

I’m sure I tried to convince myself that it was not wrong to go through Alena’s things. Alexander and Sarah had always run through that house pulling things off of shelves and slam-



BIOMORPHIC SHUFFLE BY HENRY PETERS

ming closet doors as if they lived there. No one ever seemed to mind them doing it.

There was a drawer in the sideboard that was full of pills. There were hundreds of packets of laxatives, stomach powders, aspirins and cough drops. Not one package could have come from a time before 1965.

I could swallow one of these or all of these, I remember thinking. I could get sick and I could even die. It wouldn’t even be my fault because I am just a little girl.

I also remember thinking that it would really punish them. That my parents would be really sorry for sending me off to act like a grown up if I got sick. With that thought I knew that I was not just a little girl.

Just then, I heard the step-thump of Alena’s rubber heel and I slammed the drawer closed with such a bang that the glass in the picture frames rattled and the mirror hanging by the door fell off the wall and smashed to bits.

“My goodness Miranda,” Alena said calmly. “That was loud enough to wake the dead.” And then she fluttered the feathers in the great fan she was carrying.

I had never seen such a wonderful gesture before.



Kenny

BY LIN JOHNS

The door was open just a crack. The hallway was dark, but I could see enough and knew enough to know the door to Mr. Donovan's apartment was tightly shut. I listened carefully. Nothing just old Mrs. Crenshaw's T.V. blaring as usual. I slipped out into the hallway. It smelled of boiled cabbage and dirty gym socks. Eric, my soccer teammate, had dared me to do this. It was always the same. 'You're such a loser Kenny' he jeered. 'If your Mom had half a brain she'd be a half-wit. If you want to hang with us you do this.' Eric had challenged me.

My right soccer shoe rubbed my heel leaving my skin raw. Gram had got the cleats at the used sports equipment swap. They weren't new like Eric's and the rest of the guys, so they'd hassled and ribbed me about it all through soccer practice. 'Boy I'd rather wear ballet slippers than wear those. What'd your Mom say about them Kenny? Oh ya sorry, your Moms a nutcase and you've got an old granny to bring you to soccer.'

I dragged my thoughts back to the task at hand. Not seeing or hearing anything, I crept down to Mr. Donovan's apartment door. My heart felt like it was split in two parts. One part pounded against my ribs while the other stuck hard in my throat. I hoped if I did this, I would be accepted into Eric's gang. I rubbed my sweaty palm on my faded blue jeans then turned the doorknob. I wasn't surprised to find it locked. No one left their doors unlocked. Well, except Mrs. Crenshaw, but then everyone knew she slept with her dead husband's World War II army revolver under her pillow. And she was crazy. The same as my Mom, Eric often taunted me.

I slipped out Eric's penknife and jimmied the lock just like Eric had shown me. I turned the knob and the door creaked open. Checking both ways in the hall, I realized there was no turning back. I slipped into the room. It was blanketed in darkness, but I'd been in Mr. Donovan's apartment many times so I could make out some of the objects. The coffee table was to the left. The oak wall cabinet to the right. Nearby, on the desk I picked up a photo of a young woman. I'd never noticed it before. Her glossy black hair was piled high in a mass of tiny curls. Her skin was rosy and clear, but it was her eyes that were so incredible. Amazingly, they looked just like I remembered my Mom's to be. I'd faced startled eyes very much like these on the day they took Mom away to the special hospital. Gram once told me Mom was just like her eyes- not the common ordinary brown, but the unique colour of sugar and cinnamon crystals spread onto warm buttered toast.

A floorboard squeaked. Alarmed, I wondered how much time had gone by. Mr. Donovan would be back from the laundry room any minute. I replaced the photo and reached for the drawer where Mr. Donovan always kept his wallet. My hand touched the cool wood. The little hairs on the back of my neck stood up.

"Are you sure you want to do this, Kenny?" a voice, soothing as cough syrup spoke out.

Jolted, I stepped back nearly toppling over the floor lamp. I blinked, straining to see in the inky blackness, and could just make out a figure sitting in the faded brocade armchair where Mr. Donovan always sat. At first I thought it was Mr. Donovan, but no it couldn't be. The figure was slighter, the voice softer.

"Is this what Mr. Donovan deserves?" Hearing the accusation took my breath away, worse that a kick to the gut. I shivered. My mouth felt like it was stuffed with a tennis ball. The silence lengthened.

"Was this your idea, Kenny?" As my eyes grew accustomed to the darkness, I could see the outline of a woman. The blister on my heel throbbled. As if reading my mind, the woman said softly, "Do you like your new soccer shoes?" She spoke confidently, just as if we were best buds having a regular familiar conversation.

"They're okay," I managed to mumble around the tennis ball.

"But they're not like your friends," she suggested. I relaxed almost forgetting what I'd been going to do just minutes before.

"No, Eric has Bravo soccer cleats. They're so cool. These are alright. All Gram can afford, but they rub on my heels and it's hard to play soccer when your feet hurt." The tennis ball had dissolved and I felt as if I was having a great talk with someone I had known forever. Where had I met her before?

Once again, as if reading my mind, she said: "Don't worry you're welcome and safe here." She was right. I did feel safe, but how could that be? Here I was trying to rob an old man who had always welcomed me into his apartment. The two of us spent hours talking about soccer.

"You miss your Mom don't you, Kenny?" The tennis ball popped back into my mouth this time pushing on my throat causing me to gasp. As usual, at the mention of Mom I closed down my mind.

"Would you want your Mom to see you now? Do you really want to be friends with someone who jeers and taunts you about having a Mom who is as he says, 'a real Looney Tune'?" I could feel my mind flip around like a fish. I felt the tears pressing hotly at my eyes, but still I held my feelings in. Surely, I could hear footsteps in the hall.

I felt sick and wanted to run away. Run away from this strange woman who knew far too much. I turned to leave, but the blister on my heel chose that moment to throb. I didn't think I could take one step forward never mind trying to run. The blood in my veins had turned to lead. Panicky thoughts danced in my brain and the anger must have seeped onto my face.

"She's not dead you know," I blurted out.

"But sometimes you wish she was." It wasn't a question. It was a statement. No one talked about my Mom. Not even Gram.

"She loves you," she said.

"Well if she really did she wouldn't do all the crazy things she does."

'It's really hard on me and if your mom were sick I wouldn't make fun of her. Please don't make fun of mine.'

"Kenny, remember your mom has a mental illness that makes her do odd things. Many people, especially kids like Eric, don't understand that mental illness is really an illness, not just her acting crazy."

"It hurts me, what Eric says." I acknowledged.

"I know. Children can be cruel to each other. You need to tell them that your mom has an illness that makes her do these things. She's taking medication and trying to get better. Tell them: 'It's really hard on me and if your mom were sick I wouldn't make fun of her. Please don't make fun of mine.'"

"And if that doesn't work?"

"I'd tell him to Buzz Off!"

I felt little pricks of pleasure pierce the darkness like tiny pinpoints of light through a blanket.

"Now Kenny, would you do me a favour?"

"Ya sure."

"Tell Michael – Mr. Donovan that Rose still loves him."

"Sure."

"And tell him he did the right thing. Do you understand?" I didn't really, but I felt it was the least I could do.

"It's time to go Kenny. Mr. Donovan is coming upstairs."

I listened intently, but could hear nothing. I slipped away and went to the door. I looked back into the room. It must be darker than I thought for I could no longer make out the woman's form sitting in the faded brocade armchair. My feet carried me out the door, into the hall and I was just about to step into my own apartment when I heard Mr. Donovan's laboured breathing as he climbed the stairs.

Once again in my own apartment, I found Gram reaching into an old butter box.

"Ah I'm glad you're back, Kenny. I found this box of old photographs. You might be interested in some of them."

"Hey, Gram was Mr. Donovan ever married?"

"Why yes he was."

"What happened to his wife?"

"Whoa Kenny. What's brought this on? Well, let's see," Gram reflected.

"Soon after their marriage, she got sick, had to stay in a special hospital and then unfortunately died. In fact, just by coincidence I found a photo of his late wife in this old box and took it over to him this morning. She was a real beauty. She died soon after I moved into this building before you came to live with me." I thought about this for a minute. "When you say sick you mean sick in the head don't you?"

"Yes."

I felt emotion swelling in me like a balloon.

"Gram, later could you... would you tell me about Mom?"

"Of course I will. You know already you have your mom's eyes."

A calmness overtook me. Plenty of time later to talk and learn. I made for the door.

"And where are you off to now?" Gram asked.

"To see Mr. Donovan. I've got a message for him." I gave my surprised Gram a kiss on the cheek and headed for the door.

"And Gram, thanks for taking me to soccer practice. We've got a game on Thursday. Maybe I'll ask Mr. Donovan to come too."

"Kenny."

"Yes Gram?"

"Remember – feeling pain is part of growing up. It's how we learn."

I screwed up my face.

"Ask Mr. Donovan, Kenny. He'll explain."

And I knew he would.



LEARNING TO FLY BY HENRY PETERS



Freedom's wings

BY CHUCK LOVATT

Freedom is infinity of choice.

I mention this because, now Jennifer has decided to end things with me, new possibilities stretch out to beyond the far distant horizon.

Way c-o-o-o-o-l!

She said, "It's not you, it's me."

"That sounds cliché," I tell her.

She replies, "You're right, it's not me, it's you."

"What?"

She said, "Well, for one thing, you're too argumentative."

"Me? *Argumentative*?"

"There you go again," she sighs.

"What?"

"Arguing."

"No I'm not."

"Yes you are."

"Fine, have it your way."

"It's not my way. It's just how it is."

"Fine."

"I hate when you do that."

"Do what?"

"When you say '*fine*' like that."

"I'm just agreeing." I point out – childish, I suppose.

"That's bullshit and you know it." She doesn't seem geared up for a fight. She sounds tired, but she keeps doggedly on. "You're being passive-aggressive. You'll never let anyone tell you anything."

"Whatever," I reply in my most agreeable tone, which, when you get right down to it, isn't all that agreeable.

But really, who can blame me? All this talk about leaving is getting me down. Worse than that, this is her apartment, so if anyone's going to leave, it's going to have to be me... and it's *raining* outside – one of those miserably cold, drizzling days that never seem to end. What kind of a person would kick someone out into something like that?

There was no denying this was the Mother of all Bummers, and must be dealt with accordingly.

"Okay, so I'm argumentative," I acknowledge the possibility while making a beeline to my stash. I don't know about you, but when I'm faced with the Mother of all Bummers, the only sure answer is the Mother of all Spliffs. "So okay, I can accept that maybe I might have to work on a few things. I'm cool with that – so unbelievably cool I don't think you understand how cool that *is*. I'm willing to work on myself. Like, I'm willing to expand my personality, to become a better person and all that stuff. So how cool is that?"

I think it is pretty cool.

"It's too late."

"Waddaya mean '*too late*'?" I ask, snipping a bud into tiny green flakes. I should probably be paying more attention to her, but a well constructed joint requires some serious attention in

its own right. "I'm here. You're here. So let's talk. I mean, we can *talk*, can't we? We're two intelligent beings, aren't we? So how come we can't put our heads together and have a meeting of the minds? I mean, like, *c'mon* already!"

I cut up the bud and regard the little pile of shavings with a critical eye before deciding the Mother of all Spliffs requires further grandeur. I reach into the bag for another bud, and find there is only one left. This is indeed a bummer. I am going to have to give my guy a call. In the meantime, I recognize there are some serious issues needing resolution. I am okay with that. I mean, my mind is open and everything. I begin to cut up the second bud into tiny little snips.

There is some hesitation at Jennifer's end - *serious* hesitation.

"I didn't want to get drawn into this," she said.

Man, she sounds tired.

"Drawn into what?" I ask, snipping carefully.

"Into *this*," she said with a note of despair, "Into another argument! I just wanted to tell you we're through, that's all. I can't take another argument. It's all we do, and I just can't take it anymore."

Man, she's really in a bad place, all right. She sounds so forlorn I think of putting my arms around her, you know, to comfort her, but my hands are presently occupied.

"Hey, I don't want to argue, either," snip, snip. "Don't think it's *me* who wants to argue." Snip, snip, snip, "I just want us to talk, I mean *really* talk. We can do that, can't we?"

"Well..."

"Sure we can. We are two very intelligent individuals, aren't we? There isn't anything we can't solve if we work at it, is there? Relationships take work, don't they? I remember hearing that somewhere."

"I said that last night."

"Oh yeah? Well, that was good. I'll admit it. That *really* was a good one, babe, you know... *deep*. No spoken words were ever more true. You laid it down and I picked it up like.... Like it was e.s.p. or something. It just goes to show I'm tuned in, doesn't it?"

I scrape the clippings together and take out two papers – licking the glue on one before fastening it to the other. La Bomba, baby.

"You believe what you like," she said, "but the fact is you don't listen. You always want for us to talk, but you never listen."

"Sure I do." Rolling a double-paper spliff requires a great deal of concentration. Too much pressure and the seam will split. Not enough and you'll be left with something that looks baggy, and totally unprofessional. Maybe that sort of thing doesn't matter to some people, but it does to me. I mean, no question, you gotta take pride in your work.

"Oh have it your way," she shrugs irritably, "it doesn't matter anymore."

Just a second. Just... one... more... second... almost there. I bring Gargantu-Joint to my mouth and lick the glued

*And suddenly, like a miracle it happens;
I am a balloon, bobbing gently in the
warm summer air.*

edge, smoothing it down. I regard the finished product with immense satisfaction. Few things are so rewarding.

“Aw c’mon, babe. Don’t say that. It *has* to matter. I mean, look at all the time we’ve spent together. Doesn’t that count for anything?”

“You only moved in two weeks ago.”

“Whoa! *Really?*” I light the joint, inhaling deeply, being careful to keep air flowing on the outside as well as inside to make the coal burn brighter. I suck the smoke down into my lungs and keep it there. Then I hold the reefer out for her.

She hesitates, regarding my creation almost as though she doesn’t trust it. My thoughts are that this is very strange. There are few things in this world I trust more than the weed. The weed is my friend. He will never let me down. He will always listen with respect. He will never bust my balls when things get weird.

In the end, she accepts it. She takes a short, girly drag and hands it back. It is a ceremony, like smoking a peace pipe.

I let the smoke out of my lungs. It billows and clouds between us. I hack and cough and cough and hack. My guy sells me some really primo shit. He is a good guy. In fact, he is one of the most truly superlative guys on the face of the planet.

“So, two weeks,” I manage before I am spluttering and coughing again. “I mean, I guess I realized that, it’s just we seemed to... you know... fit so well it feels longer.”

I take another long and lovely pull on Mr. Super-Spliff. I must have been tense, because already I can feel myself relaxing. It is no good feeling overly stressed in this day and age. I have heard somewhere that heart disease is the number one killer in the nation.

“You had nowhere else to go,” she said, once more accepting the joint, “so I took you in. I felt sorry for you.”

I kind of remember that. Tracey had just kicked me out. That had been after two whole months together – which was something of a record. I mean, we could have been in *love*, or something. That almost made it *tragic*, didn’t it?

“You were all alone, like a lost puppy, so I took you in.”

“Hey yeah, thanks.” I am beginning to feel very fine. There is too much reality in the world. I, for one, will have none of it. “That was really good of you – really *humane*. You could have left me standing out in the rain, but you took me in. I owe you, *big* time.”

“I felt sorry for you,” she repeated, “you know, after what happened to your brother and all. Even though it’s been over a year, you seemed to be having trouble dealing with it. I thought I could help. But I was wrong.”

Fu-u-u-u-ck! Low blow, or *what!* Why’d she have to go and bring Eddie into all this?

I suck in another massive toke. Getting over this bummer is going to require some very real dedication on my part. Throwing my dead brother’s memory in my face – you know, just out of the blue like that – was serious shit, indeed. I mean, what was *that* all about?

I continue toking on the spliff. There is nothing I feel like

saying so I just keep on pulling, watching with an appreciative eye while the coal burns brighter and brighter.

I guess she caught my vibe because after a while she said, “I’m sorry, I shouldn’t have mentioned that.”

Man, that coal was bright. Already it has burned down half the length of the joint, which is really something when you consider how moist I keep the weed. It’s probably not a good idea to be wasting it like this, but I can’t seem to be able to bring myself to stop. I just keep pulling and pulling until I’m full of the smoke, like... like a hot air *balloon*, or something.

Then I think, ‘Hey, wouldn’t that be far out – to be a hot air balloon?’

And suddenly, like a miracle it happens; I *am* a balloon, bobbing gently in the warm summer air. I am one of dozens of brilliant colours on a huge green field of blossoming ganja. All of us are tugging on ropes binding us to the earth, each of us eager to take to the friendly skies. I can feel the sun on my face, and feel the heat inside that insists on propelling me upwards. We all want that – to break free – to escape. I mean, who *wouldn’t* want that? I trust that heat like I trust the weed. We are one... we are brothers.

“Know what?” I said, “You’re right. We’ve given it our best shot, but I can see it’s a no-go. I’ll just get my stuff and leave, okay? No hard feelings?”

“I’m sorry,” she repeats, but she is right about this also. It is too late.

I go through her drawers, shoving my stuff into two garbage bags. I’m not sure, but maybe in my haste, I shove a pair of her panties in there as well. The bags are the same ones I’d used when moving in, can you believe that? There must have been some sort of inner voice at work when I’d unpacked to make me toss them in the closet instead of throwing them out like a normal person.

I accept the gift of a third bag to pull over my guitar – it’s still raining – and I’m ready. I’ve become something of a legend over how quickly I can be gone from a former place of residence.

Eyes brimming, she waits for me at the door.

“I wish...” her voice trembles. Apparently, she is expecting one of those teary goodbyes.

“It’s okay,” I put the bags down and give her a feather-lite embrace. “Everything’ll turn out so amazingly alright you won’t even believe it, just wait and see.”

She starts to snuffle. That’s my cue. I pick up my bags and leave.

Freedom is infinity of choice.

As I set off down the street, the misty rain plastering hair to skull, my mind is a split screen. One half is Eddie, high on Crystal Meth, thinking he can fly off a cliff (bad choices, Eddie). The other half is a severing of bonds and a cascade of every colour in the rainbow rushing joyfully towards the sun – towards heaven itself, if we can get there.

My brother was free – none freer.

I hope that – somewhere out there – he still is.



A visitor for Mary

BY JOANNE SHANNON

Mary can hear the steady drip of the tap, a gurgle and a flush and then the slow shuffle of slippers across the floor. Elsie has forgotten to wash her hands after using the toilet. It is still early morning. There is no matron, no nurse, and no orderly to remind her.

Mary lies in her bed, not moving. The sheets underneath her feel crisp and cool against her skin. The top sheet is drawn securely over and tucked in around her. Her arms lie motionless beside her body. She closes her eyes and waits. Her breath eases in and out in slow, shallow whispers. She is afraid of inhaling the air and then once it is in, she is afraid to let it go again. She tries to find ways, during these quiet moments, to learn how to not have to breathe, to not have to use the toilet, to not need food or drink, to not hear, see or feel.

Occasionally, at these times, she can escape her body. She can rise and float in the air, near the ceiling. From there, she can see the eight beds, four on each side of the room. She can see herself lying in her own bed, her hair a tangle of grey and blond, spread out over the pillow. She can see the windows, four of them, lining the walls. In the early morning, they are covered with the same pale green material as the bed sheets. But even without her body, she can not pass through the metal mesh and the glass behind the curtains. She is afraid to go outside.

She thinks her fear of going to unknown places is one of the reasons that she continues to live. She is afraid to leave on that great journey to Heaven or Hell. When she listens to Father William on Sundays, when she can't block out the words he is speaking, she can almost hear the angels blowing great blasts on their trumpets, calling her. She is afraid if she listens the angels will crowd around her in a blinding light, trying to smother her with the beating of their gigantic wings. Heaven, she thinks, will be like being wrapped in a straight jacket forever. Hell, she believes will be no better. Though dark and cavernous like her room in the early dawn, Father William has told them that Hell is not cool and quiet. The devil will rip her apart with his horns. She feels that the devil has caught her once before, so long ago that it rests in her memories like a child's nightmare. He has ripped apart her insides in a wash of red blood and pain. If she contemplates this, her thoughts weave around inside her, tangling and pulling into knots until her guts and her brain are both all wound up and she wants to scream. When she slowly and carefully untangles the knots, she thinks that maybe she has died and is living in Heaven and Hell combined. If that is true, then everything here would make sense after all.

She can hear footsteps echoing down the hall, the clang of metal as the keys hit the bars, the click as the lock turns. Footsteps come close, near her bed. She does not move, does not open her eyes, does not breathe. The curtains on the window are pulled back with a scrape and a rattle of hooks on metal. Then the footsteps move on, to the next window, then the third, and the fourth. Finally they move on down the hall.

Mary lets out her breath slowly, but she inhales too fast. She almost chokes on the air. When she allows herself to open her eyes again, the room is bathed in pale morning light. It is now safe for her to get up.

Mary knows the names of all of the women on the ward, but they do not talk to one another. They can sense things, as much as they have to know about each other, just by a movement, by a cough, by knowing the routines each one will follow. The other women are all waiting for Mary to get up to use the toilet. Her bed is closest. It is her turn. She pulls back the sheet and gets up. She does not put on her slippers. She likes to feel the cool, smooth floor beneath her feet. She likes to be able to move across the room without making a sound. She pees. Then, she washes her hands with soap. This, she does as loudly as she can. She wonders if Elsie will now remember that she has forgotten. This is how they communicate with each other— by little signals. It is all they need.

When she is finished, Mary goes to stand by the window near her bed. She thinks of this window as hers and becomes quite upset when anyone else dares to stand and look through it. The window overlooks the garden and the parking lot in front of the building. She can see the doctors and nurses coming in for the day. They walk with quick, sure steps. They are not afraid of falling through great cracks that might suddenly open up in front of them as the ground shifts and changes.



ONE LINE - WOLF BY DI DECAIRE

Today it is Saturday. She can tell because on Saturdays, friends and relatives come to meet with the doctors to discuss their loved ones.

They are not afraid that flowers might leap up to explode in great flashes of color before their eyes. They are not afraid that birds will fly down from the sky to dash their wings against their hair and pluck out their brains with their beaks. They are not afraid that the sun will melt their skin. Her view from the window is far enough away to be safe. It is like looking down at herself when she is floating on the ceiling, only when she looks outside the window, she is not there.

Today it is Saturday. She can tell because on Saturdays, friends and relatives come to meet with the doctors to discuss their loved ones. They also visit with the patients in the common rooms or go with them for walks in the gardens. Sometimes Mary sees the visitors take their family members home for the weekend, returning them on Sunday evenings. Mary has no family. The institute has been her home for over thirty years. In all that time, she has never had a visitor.

Mary stays in her room as much as possible on Saturdays to avoid meeting the strangers that linger in the hallways and the common room. She does not like the strangers looking at her. She does not like looking at the strangers, not when they are that close. It is alright from her window, when they are far away.

Mary watches as a young woman steps out of her car, closes the door and locks it. Mary can tell by the way she walks,

slowly and hesitatingly, that she has not been here before. She looks around at everything – at the flowers, at the signs on the grass, at the windows, at the stones along the path. She calls out to the gardener. He points to the entrance around the side, where the doctors' offices are. Mary can see, as the woman moves along the way, that she is careful not to step upon the cracks in the sidewalk. Mary watches her until her disappears around the corner and out of sight.

Doctor Anders speeds through the front gate to park her small, bright yellow car in her own spot. She jumps out. She does not lock her door. She moves quickly down the path, waving to the gardener as she passes. She is late.

Doctor Anders is the one who has moved Mary to the ward where she is now living. Mary is grateful to her for that. She is much happier in this ward than she had been in the other place. There, all night, the women had been moaning or moving about. There was no order there. She hadn't been able to sleep well. They had to give her pills. It is quieter here, safer.

Mary meets with Doctor Anders once a week in her office. Mary stands quietly in the doorway, watching as the doctor shuffles papers on her desk. The papers rustle and flutter like angel wings, but for some reason, she is not afraid. Finally, Doctor Anders will notice her and look up and smile.

"How are you today Mary?" She always asks.

"F – ine," Mary replies, jumping off the "F" sound and sliding down the "ine" like it was a gentle slope of cool snow, to land in a fluffy soft heap at the bottom. That is how it is with Doctor Anders.

"Would you like to come in?"

"F – ine," she says, waiting a moment to flip over the "F" and stop at the end on the "ine" before she enters to sit on the smooth leather chair and run her fingers over the shiny bumps.

"Fine" is the only word Mary ever uses. It seems to work with everything people say to her. But she has learned not to talk to just anyone. That word is only for special people. She uses it with the Matron who runs the water for her bath and combs her hair each morning.

"How does the water feel?" says.

"Fineee." With the Matron, the word sings and slips and tumbles to land on a feather pillow – like doing summersaults on your bed.

Some people she does not talk to at all. It isn't safe. She can't talk to the man who mops the floors in their room. One day, he was mopping near her bed as she was watching out the window. He was pushing the mop closer and closer. He said, "Can you move please?" He said "please" so she thought he must be a nice man, even if his movements were too hard, too fast; even though he left too much water and soap on the floor.

Before she even thought about it, she let the word slip out. "Fine..." It was like tripping and falling roughly on a hard surface. Her "Fine" fell out onto the cold, wet floor in front of her. The man took the mop and washed over it. She could see the dirty wet stings tangling it. He threw the "Fine" into the bucket. It was caught in the mop. It could not escape. He savagely



WOLF BY DI DECAIRE



beat it up and down, knocking it about inside the pail. It was drowning. Then he pulled it out and twisted it, choking it. Mary watched in horror. He threw it back onto the floor with a slap, pushing it around. She could see it being smeared across the floor. She could hear it screaming. She tried her best then to save it from the man, to take it back. But they grabbed her and took her away. She was screaming and crying too when they gave her a needle and put her to sleep. She is more careful after that to talk only to people she trusts and likes.

The Matron has now come. Mary can hear her clothing, crisp and fresh and rustling as she walks. Mary turns from the window as she approaches. The Matron is smiling.

“Hello Mary. We must make you look extra nice today. You have a visitor!”

“Fine,” Mary says, but today the “Fine” tumbles out slowly onto the bed and hides itself under the pillow instead of rolling happily across it. She is not so sure that she wants to have a visitor.

The Matron takes extra time and care with Mary. After her bath, she French-braids her hair. She dresses her in a skirt and blouse instead of the usual hospital smock. She takes out some make-up and laughs as she dabs it onto her cheeks. “You look so nice,” she says.

Mary simply sits quietly in her chair. She is afraid to say “Fine” in case it doesn’t come out right. She tries to let her mind float free, to let herself sail up to the ceiling to see how she looks. But it does not work. She finally decides it is simply best not to think or do anything.

“Come,” the Matron says finally. “You are ready. We will walk to Doctor Ander’s office.”

Mary feels a little better now that she knows where she is going, knows that she isn’t going outside. The way to the office is familiar. The Matron grasps her arm firmly as they walk down the hall. Mary is careful to watch the floor as she walks, to avoid seeing any stranger who might also be walking there. They get to the elevator and ride down. There is only the two of them so Mary relaxes and enjoys the ride. The elevator feels like one of the good “Fines” with a gentle bump and a whoosh.

Doctor Anders is waiting for them when they arrive. There are no papers on her desk.

“Mary, you look lovely,” she says.

Mary is startled, not by what Doctor Anders says, but because of a word that has jumped into her own throat and would come out, all on its own except that the “th” gets stuck. She says nothing.

Doctor Anders starts to talk to her quickly then, about things she knows she has heard somewhere before, but everything comes out in such a jumble that she becomes confused and can’t follow what she is saying at all. Finally Doctor Anders stops and looks at her. She is waiting, Mary decides, for her to answer.

“Fine”, she says with a flip and a roll, landing softly and silently like a leaf. She doesn’t know what to expect.

The Matron opens the door then and ushers a young woman inside. Mary expects a stranger and is about to look away, but it seems as though she knows this woman from somewhere, that she recognizes her. It takes a moment to realize that it is the same young woman she watched that morning from her window; the one who was afraid to step on the cracks.

The woman moves slowly towards her, sits beside her chair and runs her fingers over the shiny bumps.

Mary looks into her eyes; two clear pools of watery blue. Her eyes are kind. The woman speaks to her softly. “How are you Mama?”

“F –ine.” Leaping off the “F” is like leaping off a cliff and the “ine” is a forever of falling through the pool of blue and into the black. But this time, Mary doesn’t land. Mary finds that she is flying through the dark. She feels the wind rushing past her as she swoops and dives and tumbles. Mary can’t see herself, so she cannot know that for the first time in thirty years, she is smiling.



THERMOMETER BY STEVEN TOMLINS

When are you coming back

BY RITA TOWNSEND

“**Y**ou've just been staying over there by yourself too much, and it's made you gripey,” my mother says to me on Friday evening, when I've been there a few hours, am tired and cranky from the three-hour drive, trying to make dinner.

“Staying over where?” I say, knowing she doesn't know what she's talking about.

She isn't sure for a minute. “Well, you've been living over there in a place by yourself for a long time, haven't you?”

“Yes.”

“Well, that's made you gripey.”

This abrupt, unexplainable appearance of the Mom of ten years ago leaves me speechless. She gives me a glare that says: Got you! Got you once again. I may be old and senile, but if I can't still find a soft spot in you, little girl, I will let them take me off to the home. And I'm not ever going to let that happen.

It's nine o'clock and she creeps once again from the bedroom. “I thought you were going to bed,” I say.

“Well, I don't have to go to bed if I don't want to. You're both up in here. Why don't you go to bed yourself.” And she weaves off down the hall with determination, the knotted haunches working beneath the thin flannel pajamas. Do they feel betrayed and exposed now, having suddenly emerged from the soft layers which padded and protected them all these years?

In the living room, my dad sits leaned back in his chair, his long-boned body in worn tan khakis, feet in soiled white work socks crossed at the ankle on his stool. He heaves a long sigh and shaking his head, glances at me, then turns his eyes back to the television, the side of his face crumpled against the fist jutting up from his resting elbow.

There is an emptiness in my Dad now— a depletion you can see and feel. He keeps trying to give up the cigarettes he's used since he was 11, to save what's left of his quadruple-by-passed heart and to satisfy our fear-driven urgings. But I see that his heart is compromised by something far more perilous now, against which there is no defense. His Beloved abandons him, vacantly ruthless, a thousand times a day. He learns to cook and do laundry in the raucous shadow of her hovering and complaint.

And when he has to, he goes through the swinging screen door onto the patio. He reaches into the pocket of a faded denim jacket hanging from a nail on the back wall among brooms and mops, and pulls from it a half-smoked cigarette, flattened and black at the end. He lights it in his cupped hands as if he stands in a strong wind, though there is no breeze even. He inhales deeply, eyes closed, and exhales in a hushing of gratitude, and guilt. After peering down into his vegetable garden as he takes another quick drag or two, he bends to stomp the cigarette out again on the concrete floor and returns it to the jacket pocket before heading down to start water in his okra.

* * *

I hate it when she apologizes. That's the worst. The remorse of the recalcitrant four-year-old, for effect only: “I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. Are you mad?” Who could make such a brew, such an unruly concoction of helplessness and defiance?

“It's all right, go to bed,” I say. Please. Don't make me meet those demanding, bewildered eyes, those murky flames behind a smoked and greasy glass, the fuel almost gone. Benediction you want, but I can't give it, won't, not tonight. Please go to bed. I know it's not your fault, I know you can't help it, but you must please, please stop it and go to bed.

Her hand is on my hand; I try to ignore her. I am on the phone, but she doesn't care.

“I'm sorry.”

“It's all right.”

“I was bad.”

Don't make me kiss you.

You could sing songs with her, I tell myself, comb her hair, make her laugh, look at pictures. One day when she is dead, you'll wish even for this decrepit form on which to hang your love—a face to touch, a smile to get, comfort to give.

You'll be sorry.

After lunch on Saturday afternoon I try to nap on the couch, but I drift in and out of a leaden doze as she sits in the chair beside me and in a slow, murmuring whisper sounds out word after word of the six-month-old letter from her sister-in-law, page after page, over and over. I sit up and move my head to the other end of the couch, eyes still closed.

She asks if she is keeping me awake.

I say yes.

“I will stop, I'm stopping now. I'm sorry.”

Then I hear her picking up my earrings and glasses from the table, moving them one by one, replacing them, picking them up again.

Silence.

The ruffle of pages, slow whispered murmuring.

She smells a little I think. I can't identify it; slightly sweet, but fetid. Maybe it's just the onions or my own contraction, the knot in my gut, my sweat. Everything in her room used to smell like her— her dresser drawers, her jewelry, her bed, her clothes. A powdery sweetness, light, soft. At night she smelled of cold cream, her face faintly greasy, soft, somehow mysterious as she kissed me goodnight. She always complained of how easily she got her clothes dirty, grumbled at my Dad for not wanting to clean up or for wearing old stuff, holey with cigarette burns. She'd choose his clothes whenever they were gone anywhere, carefully laying them out on the bed.

What is it in the brain that distinguishes dirty from clean? Where is the place that insisted on clean sheets every Saturday, thorough vacuuming, dusting with furniture polish, spotless bathrooms? Could it be a substance which gets used up? Because that is gone for her now. I go through her closet and



pull out item after item, unbelievably filthy.

If I do not watch her, she replaces them as quickly as I pull them out. She is furious.

My dad tells me she'd become convinced it was my niece Carrie who was coming, instead of me. We've all become interchangeable family parts— sister, mother, daughter, granddaughter. We've become to her like she is to us: our mom, but not our real mom. My sister and I walk the bike path on Sunday morning. I try to breathe the ever-present heaviness in my chest away as Betty tells me this story. She says that when she was here to stay with her last Sunday so Dad could go to church, my mother asked, "Where are the rest of them?"

"It's just me." Betty had answered.

"Hmmpf, well I thought Betty was coming"

"I'm Betty," my sister said gently, trying to look into my mother's eyes.

There was no way to avoid the blow that was delivered with what seemed, surely mistakenly, some satisfaction. A pause, a defiant cock of the head, eyes averted: "Well, I know your name is Betty, but you're not my Betty. My Betty's name is Betty Ann."

"Yes, I'm Betty Ann," my sister coaxed her. "See, here in the hall," and she guided Mom there, "here's my picture. That's me. Betty Ann."

A slow, pitying shake of the head; you poor orphan. In everything else she may be completely irrational and illogical.



ART BY JAMES SKELTON

In this, she becomes logic incarnate. You cannot trap her, and nothing will convince her that she is wrong. "Didn't you think it was strange that you didn't live with us when you were little?"

Suddenly my sister is uncertain: "I did live with you." Didn't I? Mom?

Mom?

She has forgotten us in a backward chronology, the last being the first to go. I remind Betty of the day I realized she didn't recognize our youngest brother, Gene. He had been down for a short visit and left right after I arrived. Once he'd driven away and we'd come back into the house my mom said, "That Gene sure is a nice guy, isn't he?"

"Yeah, he is," I'd said, eyeing her uncertainly.

"You know, he comes by every once in a while and stays and visits, and is just as nice as can be. I sure do like him."

"Mm-hm, me too." I'd said, feeling like we had finally entered the landscape of my recurrent childhood dream in which I held my mother's hand and wherever we tried to step, a hole opened in the earth.

I wondered if my brother knew.

Betty and I try to make dinner, but she will not leave the kitchen. She cannot cook any longer, cannot remember any order to ingredients, cannot follow a recipe.

But there are certain memories stored not in the brain, but in the body I think. In the hands mostly. I watch her peel an onion, scrape carrots, wring out the dishrag and wipe the counter. Something in me believes that even in death, these things could not be taken from her. Remembering to bathe, the difference between mother and husband, her age, the death of her parents, the faces of her children, these are gone. But the feel of an onion in the hand, the grip of the knife, how to place it, the sense of responsibility to put Sunday dinner on the table, the possibility of company, the need to feed, to have enough, to fill glasses, to cut bread; these things refuse to leave her.

She is standing in the driveway as I put my stuff in the car: "I wish you could just stay. Why don't you wait 'til in the morning to go."

"No, I can't. I have to go to work."

"You do? Well, where is it now that you're going, that you stay? Oh, I know, it's up there... Over there...."

"Santa Cruz."

"Yeah, Santa Cruz. Well, when are you coming back?"

"I don't know— in a few weeks."

"A few weeks! That's too long."

I look into my dad's tired eyes and hug him tightly. As he lets go he tells me, "Just come back anytime you can."

"I will," I say, then turn to my mom, embrace her and kiss her scored cheek before crawling into the driver seat.

Through my open window she says "I wish you could just stay. Why don't you wait 'til in the morning to go?"

"No, I can't."



When "The world becomes a map of the world"

BY TED DYCK

Wallace, David Foster. *Oblivion: Stories*. Little, Brown and Company, 2004. 330 pp.

Every once in a while a good work of fiction about depression gets into print: I mean "good- as-in-fiction" and "good-as-in-study-of-depression." It's unfortunate that these two usually exclude each other, so a work like *Oblivion* seems all the better for being the rarer.

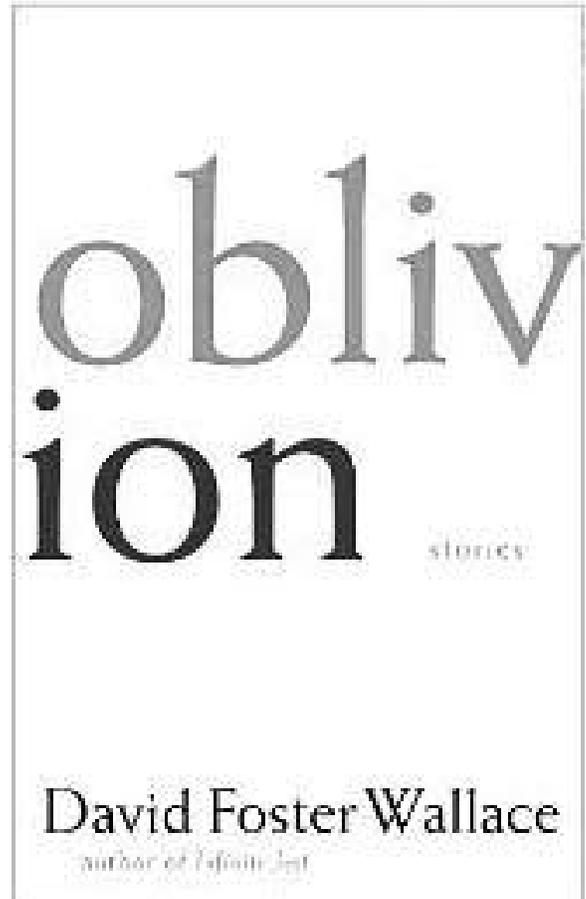
In a much earlier work (*Infinite Jest* 1996), Wallace showed himself a master at representing the experience of depression as it was lived by the book's central character. Not content with that, Wallace included also a poetical-clinical description of the experience:

It is a level of psychic pain wholly incompatible with human life ... a sense of radical and thorough-going evil ... a sense of poisoning that pervades the self It is a nausea of the cells and soul It billows on and coagulates around and wraps [the self] in Its black [en]folds and envelopes [the self] into itself Its emotional character ... is indescribable except as a sort of double bind It is also lonely on a level that cannot be conveyed Everything is part of the problem and there is no solution. (Infinite Jest 693-696)

What is already clear here – that a kind of circularity of depression is its most pernicious and deadly characteristic – becomes a major motif in all the stories in *Oblivion*, and a deliberate theme in several.

"Good old neon (141 ff.) is a first-person narrator's solipsistic account of a deepening depression that leads ultimately to his suicide. The narrator's problem, he feels, is that "My whole life I've been a fraud" (141). So pervasive is his sense of fraudulence that it seems to him to extend even to the account of depression that he is giving us. Only one thing prevents us, the readers, from falling into the narrator's trap: the narrator, who identifies himself as "David Wallace," reveals that he is already dead, and so his account is presumably more "objective," coming from "the other side." Of course this raises another problem, a technical problem, but at least it breaks the reader out of the narrator's vicious circle.

The narrator describes his state as a "fraudulence paradox": "[T]he more time and effort you put into trying to appear impressive and attractive to other people, the less impressive or attractive you felt inside – you were a fraud" (147). This paradox has haunted the narrator for his whole life – from his pretending to be a "goody boy" as a child – to his eventual discovery in an undergraduate logic course of the paradox itself – to his withdrawing from a meditation class in which he made himself excel – to his use of the paradox to persuade his analyst that he (the narrator) is the most intelligent patient that he (the analyst) has ever had – and on and on. Even worse, the



narrator discovers a "higher-order paradox" (147): knowing that one is involved in the circularity of the fraudulence paradox does not help one to break free. And there it is: "The map of the world [has become] the world" (*Infinite Jest* 693).

Oblivion contains eight stories, each of them uniquely itself, each amplifying the collection's theme. The first, "Mr. Squishy" (3 ff.), un-layers the fragile self of an adman as he slowly becomes the very thing, a concoction called Mr. Squishy, he is doing market research on. "The Suffering Channel" (238 ff.) concerns a helpless mute who creates fine works of art from his excrement using a physically impossible method. In the title story, a narrator heart-breakingly describes his and his wife's solution to a so-called "snoring problem" which he claims his wife has "dreamt." These stories, altogether, reveal a totally original style: long, classical periods; densely packed with astonishing detail and wide-ranging reference; yet as close to writing degree zero as any post-modernist could wish. The right style, come to think of it, for the awful (aweful) content of "Oblivion": David Foster Wallace himself committed suicide in a deep depression on September 12 2008.



Our readers say . . .

Susan from Saskatoon:

Thanks for forwarding this link. I read and looked at a number of the pieces with interest, including your editorial on stigma and review of Jeff Park's book. Rolli's "Club of One" has a dark humour to it that I appreciated and I liked what Victor Enns is doing with form in his poem. I'm going to forward the link to my friend who has bipolar disorder and is a fine, fine writer. Will encourage her to send you something.

Rachel from Moose Jaw:

Thanks for sharing this beautiful Fall issue. Really neat works of art.

Rafe from Singapore:

like the Stigma theme
running through
and your solution
for removal
impressed
with ROLLI's poems

Dolores from Regina:

I've just been reading some more out of TRANSITION while I soaked in the tub. Man oh man, some great stuff. THE FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION holds true for any oppressed group that suffers from discrimination. As I read, I thought of elderly people, especially women for whom the age marker means a stigma and an invitation to rob, scorn, and demean.

Martin from Marburg:

Sitting here at the Graz airport and skimming Transition on my tiny screen. Fascinating stuff. I read your intro and saw that there is a piece by Victor Enns, which I'm sure to print out and read.

Byrna from Regina:

I still prefer to hold a book or magazine in my hands [regarding our online version]! Just got the hard cover. Another great issue! Good to see Victor's poem too. Luv the new format.



NURSE BY STEVEN TOMLINS

Notes on contributors

AUTHORS

BAGGOTT, Kate

Well-published writer in several genres from Ste. Catherines, ON. Previously published in TRANSITION Spring 2008. See <http://www.katebaggott.com>.

CALDER, Patricia

Retired English teacher writing and publishing madly out of Coburn ON. Hobbies include reading, photographing, gardening, birding, walking, yoga-ing, and politic-ing.

FAHLMAN, Jean

Well-established Weyburn SK writer and former employee at Weyburn Mental Hospital about which she writes.

FLYNN, Dee Cee

Pseudonymous Saskatoon writer and artist.

HERR, Helen

Retired church minister writing and painting in Watrous SK. "Eight night poems" written one night enduring the pain of others.

JOHNS, Lin

Lives and writes in Calgary AB. Work has appeared nationally and internationally in print and online publications.

LANGILLE, Carol

Memoirist and teacher (Humber School for Writing, Dalhousie University). Recently published short story collection, *When I Always Wanted Something*. Advocate of anti-stigmatization of mental illness.

LEVAC, Pamela

Writes out of Prince Albert SK.

LOVATT, Chuck

Former PTSD sufferer from Carroll MB. "How difficult it is for a person who has this disorder to function in society."

MacFARLANE, Sharon

Prize-winning, well-established Beechy SK author of poems, short stories, non-fiction. Editor and CBC broadcaster.

MILLER, Art

Writes out of St. John's NL.

PARLEY, Kay

Saskatoon SK writer and mental health activist. Frequent contributor to TRANSITION. Author of *Lady with a Lantern* (reviewed in TRANSITION Fall 2008).

PETERS, Henry

Winnipeg MB artist, writer, and editor. Artwork regularly featured in TRANSITION for many years.

SHANNON, Joanne

Regina SK writer. "It doesn't hurt sometimes to look back to see how far we've come."

TAPLEY-MILTON, Katherine

Sackville NB. mental health consumer for forty years, writer for thirty. Author of *Mind Full of Scorpions*.

THORNTON, Paul

Ottawa-born native, educated chiefly in libraries at University of Toronto and St. Patrick's College (Ottawa). Showing his true colours as a nature boy type poet very keen on birds.

TOWNSEND, Rita

Fresno CA writer of poetry and short stories. Co-author of anthology *Bitter Fruit: Women's Experiences of Unplanned Pregnancy, Abortion, and Adoption* (Hunter House). Currently completing a memoir.

COVER

HERR, Helen

Moose Jaw artist and poet.

ARTWORK

BARKAIE, Rachel

Moose Jaw artist and poet. Was the cover artist Spring 2009.

DECAIRE Di

Saskatoon SK artist attending the University of Saskatchewan.

PETERS, Henry

Winnipeg MB artist who has been contributing to TRANSITION since 1989.

SKELTON, James

Writer, artist and photographer from Saskatoon SK. Artwork prominently featured in previous TRANSITIONS.

TOMLINS, Steven

Artist working out of New Lowell ON.



JUGGLE SPONTANEITY BY HENRY PETERS

Former CMHA Executive Director dies in Ottawa

HYLTON, John Passed away unexpectedly but peacefully on Tuesday April 20, 2010 at home at the age of 59 years. Loving and dearly loved life partner of Catharine Robertson, cherished by his daughters Sara and Annie and stepchildren Mark and Grace. John will be dearly missed also by his father



JOHN HYLTON

David, his sister Patricia (John), his brother David (Maya), his niece Emmanuelle, his nephews Ryan and Evan. Predeceased by his mother Kathleen.

John was an international expert on healthcare leadership. After completing terms as CEO of provincial, national and international organizations based in Canada, he embarked on an international consulting career, and is known to governments, health delivery organizations and professional associations throughout Canada, USA, Europe, Australia, China and the Middle East.

He was the Executive Director of the Canadian Mental Health Association (Saskatchewan Division) Inc. from 1988 to 2001. During his tenure the organization was transformed into a highly visible, financially stable and well respected provincial organization. Financial stability and diversification of services were achieved through the development of public awareness and fundraising initiatives. Innovative new programs were developed in suicide prevention, problem gambling, rehabilitation, self-help, employment training, and other areas. The agency was honoured with numerous awards for service excellence, collaboration, consumer involvement and community participation.

John held three university degrees including a doctorate from Berkeley. He authored more than 300 publications including 10 books. He held fellowships from the Muttart Foundation, the Canadian College of Health Service Executives, and the American College of Healthcare Executives.

A service to celebrate his life was held at the Central Chapel of Hulse, Playfair & McGarry in Ottawa on Tuesday April 27.

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