



Winnipeg Senior Citizens
Writers Workshop

2002-2003

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As I See It

By Margaret Cracknell

Life has its seasons. Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter. My age places me in Winter but Autumn means trees shedding, and I still have a lot of shedding to do.

I don't need to accumulate any more stuff in my life. Nevertheless I am flooded with flyers and "amazing, not to be missed, once in a lifetime" offers to improve my life. They will make me slimmer, bigger, valued for my good taste, sleep more comfortably in an adjustable bed, sleep more peacefully because I know I have provided for my loved ones, dazzle my friends with my tasteful collection of collector plates or my exciting new recipes!

All these wonderful solutions to my self doubt about my life are dropped in my mailbox seven days a week. Flyers offering amazing bargains on five-piece bedroom suites, computer training that will change my life, even letters from politicians devoted to improving my welfare. All promises, promises.

The absurdity of some of these promises I find fascinating. Is it really possible to become an architect by a correspondence course or a heavy duty mechanic on an oil rig? Then there are the ads that make you bigger and better literally, or rather I should say "in the flesh"? Increase your breast size naturally. I quote:

"An independant double blind clinical study" whatever that means, "states that breast

volume, bustline, breast width, breast circumference and breast length were all significantly increased!" It's the "breast length" that sparked my interest and made me write this article. Length is the last thing a woman wants in a bust line. That, unfortunately, comes with age.

Then there are the appeals to save the whales, fight pollution and soil erosion, stop the destruction of the wilderness, stop the polar ice caps from melting and so it goes on. One half of junk mail is promising me the world and the other half is telling me all is lost if I don't save the world, and it all adds up to pounds and pounds of paper. This chunk of unasked for paper is put to some use. It provides employment for the copy writers, the artists and the photographers that the advertisers employ and the printers, distributors and the person that delivers it to my mailbox, and I always put it in the recycling bin. It's not wasted. It is regurgitated into paper towels and cornflakes boxes, so I'm helping the planet. How many pounds of this re-cycled paper does it take to add up to a tree? Wouldn't it make more sense just to let the tree remain where it is in the forest? It provides shelter for the birds, animals, insects and shade for plants, purifies the air and its strong roots would prevent soil erosion.

It's worth thinking about!

Sound

By Eileen Krahn

If daybreak had a sound it would be crisp and fresh—
with a thankful coda to refresh our memory.
It would ripple and roll over silent streets
in a melodic wave.

If twilight had a sound it would be soft and low—
shimmering like rosy pink light at day's end.
It would wash the world in a restful glow
full of promise.

Cars I Have Known and Loved

By Anne Yanchyshyn

It was the beginning of my lifelong love affair with cars.

Back in 1948 we bought our first car from our neighbor at Lyleton, MB. It was a ten-year-old 1938 Ford sedan. My husband, Walter, had had some driving experience, but neither of us had a licence. He applied for one at nearby Melita, where he was asked to go for a spin and do some parallel parking. He passed the test. The fee was \$2.00.

After I'd practised driving a bit I, too, applied, this time at Pierson, MB. No one asked me any questions except, "Have you had a driver's licence before? No?...Sign here. That'll be \$1.00, please."

Walter almost choked in his silence. But once out of earshot he spoke his mind freely. "How come they charged you only a dollar? I just about told them you don't even know how to back up a car." He hadn't forgotten how I'd got hung up on a telephone pole—it had appeared out of nowhere, it seemed, between my front fender and bumper when I'd cut my wheels before backing out of our yard. I'd not wanted to go straight back for fear I'd smash into our neighbor's house across the street. For its braking system was unreliable.

I remember how terrified I was whenever we drove down the slope somewhere on the approaches to Brandon. Walter would say, "See? This thing will just coast because there's no brakes." We traded it in as soon as we could afford payments on a new one.

Interestingly enough, when I was photocopying a picture of that old Ford the other day, the fellow behind me said he'd had a car like that in the 30's. "There was only one thing wrong with them," he said. "They had very poor brakes." Amen.

The late 1950's brought what we considered the best-looking, most beloved vehicle of all time, a Plymouth Belvedere two-door hardtop. I fell in love with it as soon as I saw it. Its body was a winter white with an old gold top and trim on its sides in the form of an arrow extending up into its stylish fins. Yes, fins. And it was dressed up

in white-walled tires. To me it had the appearance of a classy airplane on a runway. One summer, on a trip to the Black Hills in S. Dakota, our two preteen boys named our car the White Wolf out of admiration for its looks and performance. We could have lived with that car forever. But after taking a sabbatical leave from teaching to complete the requirements for my B.A. in 1967-68, I got a raise in salary that made me think I could buy myself my very own car. It would be my Centennial treat to myself.

"I love the Ford Mustang the best," I told the family, "but there's not enough headroom in the back seat. Guess I'll settle for a Plymouth Barracuda—it's a two-door fastback."

Our boys were ecstatic. "Settle for a Barracuda??" they teased. "Poor Mom...!"

I won't forget the first day I parked it at work and waited it out quietly in the staff room. I was feeling quite self-conscious about it when a fellow teacher burst in through the door and shouted, "Who's the swinger with that yellow car in our lot?" I couldn't have felt "more prouder."

The car with its wide black sports stripes on bright yellow was a hit at home, too. Our sons were coming of age now and, after enrolling in Driver Training, they drove it just as proudly as I did. Except that before too many years it started giving me problems—it would stall right in the middle of St. Mary's Road during morning traffic as I was heading for work. After a good year of putting up with this, I toyed with the idea of trading it in.

Walter to the rescue. Having noticed what a stir the car caused whenever he drove it to Red River College to get its stalling problems fixed, he made me an offer I couldn't refuse. "You go ahead and get yourself a new car," he advised. "My car needs replacing anyway. I'll give you \$5,000 for your Barracuda—there's nothing much wrong with it."

The year was 1974. The energy crunch was on. "All I need is a covered bicycle to get me to work and carry my groceries," I announced. And feeling very patriotic, I made a deal on a four-door four-cylinder Toyota Corolla with standard

transmission—my first exposure to a Japanese vehicle.

I drove this Toyota for twelve years, until one day when I lifted the front floor mat I noticed there were holes in the floor—I could see the cement driveway underneath. During the private sale to a young couple I pointed out the rusted floor for their protection—although "safeying" a car had not been legislated yet.

Retired now, I said the next vehicle would probably be my last car—therefore I would splurge a bit. "You should treat yourself to a Mercedes," son Gord advised.

"I've already seen what I consider a Mercedes," I replied. "The '86 Honda Accord EXi with the retractable headlight covers and sunroof. But it's \$2,000 more than the LX sedan." Still, I proceeded to buy it. What a shock it was to see the agreed-upon price inflated by yet another \$1,032! "Sales taxes," the dealer explained. Ah, yes—taxes.

It was truly a luxury car. When anyone asked whether I used the sunroof much, I'd tell them, yes, especially in winter. Noticing their nervous laughs, I'd explain how wonderful it was to be inside a warm car on a cold winter's day and look up at the sky, the tall buildings, the trees as I sat at red light or elsewhere. In summer I'd draw the blind when the sun bore down too harshly, but the fresh breeze was most enjoyable on a hazy day or out on the open road.

If the Belvedere had been the love of my life when I was younger, it was this Honda that became my "best friend" as I grew older. It performed effortlessly. We made many miles in it—and it fit under our carport just so. I had no desire to part with it, even though it was already eleven years old in 1997 when my husband died.

"Sell the Honda and his Taurus and get yourself one brand new car," my boys advised.

It wasn't easy, but I bade both cars good-bye and with input from son Barry I chose a '98 Subaru Legacy. For one thing, it was the same size as the Honda, so it would be easy to move into and out of the carport. Its strongest assets were its all-wheel drive and antilock braking system. I wanted not so much a looker as a rugged mate that would get me through the snowdrifts in our winding driveway and carry me safely on slippery

streets. But for one case of "bumping into" a former student one recent blustery day, my Subaru has served me well. I love its keyless entry and command start, and I especially appreciated the higher seats for easier access when my legs were temporarily immobilized after the surgeries in 1999.

But now that time has passed and I've reached my stride again, I realize I don't have to own a workhorse. I could have a car to appeal to my feminine side, for I can opt to stay home in severe weather. The real truth is that I still yearn for that Acura I almost bought before I finally agreed to the Subaru. It was the same size but came with heated leather seats and a sunroof, in a beautiful color to die for—a soft smoky rose-taupe metallic. My five-year warranty having expired in February/03, perhaps I'll start watching for that kind of car again—they've discontinued the color for now. Come on, Honda, put a little more pizzazz into your Acura colors the next time around. And work to perfect the hybrid cars, for Kyoto's sake. I'm extremely interested.

Thoughts on Life and Love and Leaving

By Angie Percy

It was the summer of 2000. My dad lay on a stretcher in Emergency. He was having recurring episodes of pulmonary distress. Beside him lay a bag with his toiletries--he always went to the hospital prepared!

I could see an envelope in the bag and asked him from whom he had received a letter. He replied, "What letter?" pleading ignorance. Then he motioned me closer and said, "I have something to tell you."

I don't know why I was so taken aback by the tale he told, for his life was full of incredible experiences. Here was one more to add to his life story.

In 1932, while on a brief visit to Germany from New York City where he was living, Dad met a girl—"a wonderful girl." During recent years, in his loneliness, he had been wondering about that girl. He placed an ad in a newspaper in the city where she had lived in Germany all those many years ago. It read, in large print:

Where Is That Lovely Girl from Yesteryear?

Below that he wrote about the wonderful days they had spent dancing together, and how sorry he was that he never told her he had a return ticket to New York, and that he left her with no good-bye.

Sitting at a table in Dresden, Germany, in May of 2000, the sister of that wonderful girl phoned her sister: Gertrude, this is your Heinz! Gertrude responded to the newspaper, the newspaper forwarded her reply to my father. So *seventy years* after their parting, Dad received the longed-for letter from his first love. The statistical odds of this happening boggle my mind!

Their correspondence became his *raison d'être*. It was primarily done by mail, as he was quite deaf and had difficulty hearing on the phone. He began insisting on going to Germany to see his Gertrude. At 89 years of age he was beginning a physical decline, and traveling overseas did not seem feasible.

In the late fall, Gertrude wrote that she had booked a four-day trip to Toronto, and expected to meet Dad there for New Year's. She was 83, widowed, lonely, limped along with a cane, and had never left the former East Germany. She had no concept of how far

away "America" was, nor that Toronto and Winnipeg were not neighboring suburbs.

I gave it some thought, but it became clear to me when I overheard my husband, Bill, say to my son, "When I am 89 and a former girlfriend writes to say she is traveling half way around the world to see me, make sure you take me!" So off to Toronto we went. Dad donned his finest and looked quite smashing—silver hair, bright red sweater, blue blazer, and very excited.

The meeting caused a flurry in the hotel as the tour guides who escorted this German group knew the story of the impending reunion.

When they arrived, there was no doubt which one was Gertrude. She was the only elderly woman in a group of young adventurers.

Dad walked right up, said, "Do you remember me?" and asked for a kiss. It was one of those memorable moments in time.

They spent four wonderful days together; they never left the hotel and chatted endlessly. The second morning Dad announced they would not be getting married. Dad did not want to live in Germany and Gertrude did not want to live in Canada.

After a couple of days it became apparent they were not eating much. They did not know how to navigate that huge hotel, and especially could not manage the cafeteria—what with getting a tray and having canes, and just not knowing their way around. She could not speak English and he could not hear, so asking for help was of no use! We had wanted to leave them to their visit and not interfere, but they needed help, so for the last two days we took them their meals.

So *the meeting* happened and then good-byes were said—but they were only temporary. Dad began to plan his life again as if he were 29 years old.

The letters kept coming. Dad kept mentioning that he wanted to go to Germany the summer of 2001 when the weather was warm. But physically, he could not do it. Then Gertrude decided she would come to Canada, but even Dad recognized he could hardly look after himself, never mind entertain company,

so he kept telling her now was not a good time.

The morning of August 3rd I received a phone call from Gertrude's son saying he was sorry but Gertrude was already in the air and would be landing in Winnipeg at 10:00 p.m. that evening! There was no holding her back; she had made all the arrangements herself.

Oh dear! The Percys would all be out of town, and there would be no one to meet her. It caused quite a conundrum!

In the end, we took Dad with us to the airport when we went to catch our plane for Vancouver at 5:00 p.m. We sat him in a wheelchair, and there he waited for Gertrude, who was arriving at 10:00!

That worked out okay, and the saga continued. When we returned from Vancouver and began to see more of Gertrude, it became apparent she had some dementia. There were many crises: she lost her passport, she lost her return ticket, she lost her teeth, Dad lost his wallet, they wanted to get married—tomorrow. These calls usually came late at night and required a quick trip to Renfrew Street to quell the flames—for the moment at least.

Dad kept getting weaker and weaker. He and Gertrude spent their days taking a cab to Polo Park shopping mall, getting some groceries and having coffee in the food court.

Gertrude was to return home at the end of October, but they wanted us to extend her ticket, which we did.

Toward Christmas, Dad was really failing, but he would not give in. It became increasingly difficult for him to get up and function. He could not come over for Christmas dinner, so we arranged to take dinner to their place.

When we arrived, Dad was up and dressed and angry. He had mustered up all his strength to get ready, then he and Gertrude had taken a taxi to Polo Park because he wanted a haircut! They didn't remember it was Christmas Day, and Dad was furious that all the stores were closed.

That was the beginning of the end. After that we made sure someone went over daily to check on things. It was not looking good, but that German will of steel prevailed, and Dad remained in his own home.

The home-care nurse who came to check on medications began to talk to Dad about dying. "That's a fine howdy-do," he told us.

"She says I am dying!" That was not on his agenda.

The day after New Year's, Bill suggested Dad go to the hospital. Absolutely not.

The next day Bill came home and said, "There is a God: Dad says he needs to go to the hospital."

On January 4th Dad was admitted to Palliative Care and arrangements were made to send Gertrude home. I could not manage her and Dad as well.

Gertrude, still in denial, told Dad she would be back when he was stronger.

Watching Dad die was a life lesson. He gathered us four Percys around his bed and held court! He had something to say to each of us. He hoped the kids would find a good life partner, and he told Bill and me to be good to each other. He said he had had a good life, but when you get *here* it is never enough.

He showed some naivete: he kept asking when "it" would happen, as if we knew the hour.

He gave me his watch and said, "Don't let this go in the fire." And, "Is it open today?" meaning the crematorium.

I spent 17 days with him and was kept quite busy tending to his culinary desires. He wanted all his favorite foods: German sausage and German chocolate, beer and wine. He seemed to have a ferocious appetite for a dying man. He had no pain, this man who had not been sick a day in 90 years. He did a lot of reminiscing and told tales from his childhood.

He certainly made it as easy on us as he could. He kept his humor to the very end, telling jokes as he always had at the dinner table, but also reminiscing about his sad childhood. The last story he told me was one I had never heard before.

When he was 12 years old his class was going on a field trip which cost 10 marks. His father told him to go ask his friend's father for the money because "they have more than we have." Dad spoke of the humiliation

he felt, and the emotion was visible, even after all those years. He had never forgotten.

On Monday, the 21st, for the first time Dad did not eat. Bill and I were both sitting by his bed. At 7:25 I heard him take a loud breath. It was his last. He taught us how easy it was to die.

So an interesting and extraordinary life came to an end. Dad always found a way. He found a way to feed us during those bleak post-war years in Communist Germany (sometimes through black market ways); he found a way to get us out, each carrying one suitcase, leaving all other possessions behind, and he found a way to some happiness in his last lonely year. A resourceful man who never gave up.

Interesting how the loss and void come and go. Last fall we were in Ottawa, watching the final changing of the guard for the season. Tears rolled down my cheeks as I was so proud to be a Canadian, and my dad's life came to mind—his life and all the sacrifices he made to get his family to this land of freedom.

This surely is his greatest legacy.

A Thunderstorm

By Anna McDonald

Strobe lights flash across the dark night sky
Forked bolts streak down to earth from the heavens above
Drum rolls of thunder follow with deafening sound
Silence for a moment
The sequence repeats itself
Now comes the hail, the rain, the strong winds
We have ourselves a severe summer thunderstorm.

On An Airplane

By Anna McDonald

The plane was due to leave Winnipeg at 11:00 a.m. but Winnipeg was hit with one of its heavy snow storms that morning. Taxis were at a premium. Fortunately a taxi was available in our area, but it took one hour instead of the usual 25 minute ride to get to the airport. Then we were told that the plane would be late in leaving. The runways had to be cleared, the plane de-iced.

A few minutes after 2:00 p.m. the plane lifted off and we were on our way to Calgary.

Into the aisle stepped the stewardess to give us the mandatory spiel in case of an emergency. She explained how the oxygen masks would fall down in front of you and how you were to attach them to your face. It seemed I only heard her first few words and then continued on with my own thoughts. The atmosphere in the airplane was quiet. Many of the passengers like myself were tired from the early rising and the frustrations and anxieties caused by storm related delays. Many of us were soon relaxed and nodding off for a much needed nap.

My sister, for whom I was an escort, was seated beside me. She however couldn't relax as easily as I did. The next thing I knew I was poked in my side by sister. The stewardess was in front of me telling me to grasp the mask that was dangling on front of my face. She was trying to place the mask over my face. In desperation, though yet half asleep, I finally, with the stewardess's help had the mask on. Then I hear her say, "I must get mine on too." In this unexpected emergency she had forgotten one of her own rules: your own mask must be put on first, then help others.

How thankful everyone was when the plane regained its proper air pressure. What caused the failure? We were never told. One suggestion was that in Winnipeg all the ice had not been cleared from the wings. The plane soon arrived safely at Calgary airport.

Now, when on an airplane, I listen carefully to instructions "in case of emergency" by the stewardess. Will I remember them? I don't know. I tend to fall asleep easily on a plane.

My Garden

By Lois Francis

Riots of red and bursts of blue
against ubiquitous yellow
coreopsis
enclosing the rust-brick path
of paving stones encased
in grass
which leads to the
sun-drenched fountain
spewing silvery droplets
sparkling into the pond below.

Wrinkling reflections
on the rippling water
cast back pictures of blue sky
wispy white clouds
and towering evergreens.
The heart bursts
with vision.

Alternation of Generations

By *Harold Richman*

Everyone knows that a caterpillar and a butterfly are part of the same life cycle but very few people know that there are some plants that go through a similar life cycle.

You probably think that these plants would be found in some remote tropical jungle but they are actually found right here in Winnipeg—probably in your own garden.

The plant I am referring to is the fern. If you look under each frond you will notice a series of small brown spots arranged in neat rows. I remember when I first noticed these spots, many years ago, I thought that the plant must have been infected by some fungus. When I started to study biology I found that these spots are called sori and that they produce the spores.

Spores are somewhat similar to pollen grains in that they are both very small and the nucleus contains only one set of chromosomes. All other cells in the fern contain two sets of chromosomes.

The main difference between pollen and spores is that the pollen must find an egg cell to fertilize. The spore, however, when it is released by the sporangia, has to locate a suitable environment where the spore itself germinates and produces a tiny plant called a prothallus. This plant is only 1/4" wide and is heart shaped. The underside of the plant produces roots and the upper surface contains chlorophyll which is used by the plant to manufacture its own food supply.

When this plant was first discovered it was thought to be a new specie and was actually given a name. It was only some time later that scientists discovered that it was part of the life cycle of the fern.

The prothallus, when it becomes large enough, produces two new structures. One is called an archegonium which contains an egg cell and the other structure is called an antheridium which produces spermatozoa. From the name you would assume that they are similar to sperm found in the animal kingdom. In fact, the spermatozoa are exactly the same as sperm. They have a tail which they use to swim toward the egg cell. When I first learned that a plant could produce a free swimming sperm I was flabbergasted. I had

always thought of plants as almost inanimate objects and here was a free swimming organism. If you want evidence that plants and animals evolved from the same ancestral organism, this would be a convincing fact.

Since the spermatozoa has to swim toward the egg cell it requires a film of water. The prothallus therefore has to be located in a damp shady environment in order for the spermatozoa to have a film of water in which to swim.

How does the spermatozoa know in which direction to swim? Nature has devised a very simple and ingenious method. The egg cell produces calcium ions which diffuse through the water. The maximum concentration will be near the egg cell and will diminish moving away from the egg cell. The spermatozoa knows that it has to swim up the calcium gradient in order to locate the egg.

When the spermatozoa reaches the egg the two nuclei fuse to form a cell with two sets of chromosomes. This cell is called the zygote which divides to produce the fern. As mentioned previously, all the cells in the fern contain two sets of chromosomes.

Scientists call this life cycle "Alternation of Generations." The generation that has two sets of chromosomes is called the sporophyte generation and produces the spores. The generation that has one set of chromosomes is called the gametophyte generation and produces the gametes.

All plants have this life cycle but modern plants have simplified the cycle so that in flowering plants the only part remaining of the gametophyte generation is the pollen grain and the egg cell.

Other species that follow a similar life cycle are the various types of moss. However in the case of moss, the plant that you see is the gametophyte plant (the cells contain only one set of chromosomes). If you look closely at a rock covered with moss, you will notice projections that extend above the moss. These are antheridia and archegonia as we find in

the life cycle of the fern. The antheridia produce swimming sperm that swim to the archegonium where the egg cell is located. When the egg is fertilized it grows into a capsule which will produce the spores.

Since the swimming sperm require a film of water, moss is usually located in damp shaded areas. That is why the moss grows on the north side of the tree. Any moss that grows toward the south side would be too dry to reproduce.

Eaton's

By Nettie Stadnyk

On the TV news, February 2003, I watched the last Eaton escalator crumble, reduced to a pile of rubble. A few weeks later, there was no hide nor hair left of the historical building. With nostalgia, I could write volumes re: Eaton experiences.

Vividly, I recall, at age six, my first trip to Winnipeg, and my visit to Eaton's in 1926 from a back woodsy unheard-of tiny village of Tolstoi, four miles from the U.S.A. border. On a farm, I grew up with an OUTHOUSE, a one-holer. A crescent moon hole was sawed out at the very top of the door to provide some light. Instead of a lock on the outside of the door, there was a piece of board 5½" x 1½" that rotated on a screw to an upright position when the outhouse was occupied, and to a horizontal position when unoccupied, to secure the door from being swung open by the wind. A hasp on the inside kept the door closed when one was on the hole, sitting and thinking.

The highlights of the trip were the escalator ride and the washroom visit. While Dad and Mom were shopping in Eaton's

basement, my older sister and I, with uncontrolled excitement, rode the escalator Down and Up. After three times, the novelty wore off for my sister who sat down against a wall and read "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Not me. I continued Up and Down, Up and Down. After seven times, I lost count.

Excitement always triggers my plumbing control. Hence a trip to the washroom. Seeing and using a toilet that used water and flushed, for the first time, was intriguing. At this time, we had no electricity, no phones, no tractors and only one or two Ford Model T's. I found the flushing fascinating. After countless unnecessary successive flushes and immeasurable gallons of water wasted, I was bribed by Mother with, "Come, I'll buy you candy." Only that pried me from the plumbing apparatus.

Later, while I sucked at the candy and followed my parents shopping, I simply couldn't convince Mother with my, "I gotta tinkle, I gotta tinkle, bad," to return to the washroom. How sad!

The Pull of the Hills

By Eileen Krahn

Puerto Vallarta is nice, well it's kind of exotic, actually it's a tourist trap with great weather in February. But it's not my favorite spot.

B.C.'s sunshine coast is also nice—I mean beautiful and majestic. Actually the Pacific Ocean and Rocky Mountains are pretty impressive. But it's not my favorite spot.

Lake Superior is nice too—actually it's superb as is all of Northern Ontario. The Canadian Shield—a very apt description of the rugged terrain surrounding one of the world's largest fresh water lakes. But it's not my favorite spot.

Churchill, Manitoba is unique—remote, original—a kind of frontier. The North is overwhelming in its vastness—you need a lifetime to appreciate its offerings. But it's not my favorite spot.

The place I like to visit as often as I can is situated right here in southern Manitoba. It's the Pembina Hills and the spot I particularly like is Brown's Post Office. I don't think it's on the map. It might have been at one time but the Browns are long gone as is the church, schoolhouse and dance barn. All that's left is a long, deep valley

with a weathered plank bridge spanning the Pembina River at its base. I'm sure there are moose, deer, fox, coyote, rabbits, badgers and all sorts of furry creatures living in the shelter of its thick green woods. The trees are varied—fir, oak, maple, ash, poplar—and saskatoon bushes are everywhere. I have watched muskrats swimming silently in the peaceful river, barely rippling the dark water as they glide into the tall reeds. Many a jack fish has been nabbed here as "the bridge" is a well-known fishing spot in the area.

I love the approach to the valley. It's not like driving through the Rockies, but it's the sudden surprise that delights me every time. The gravel road with barely a dip in it seems to go on forever. Farmyards break the monotony of endless grain fields and you don't encounter many vehicles, but just when you think it will never change, it does. Instantly. A huge, green escarpment spreads out before your eyes in all its natural splendor. Where did it come from? The road becomes steep, winding, switching back and forth until you reach the floor of the Pembina Valley and the quiet little river that's responsible for all this beauty!

It is nature at its best.

Waiting

By Mary-Alice Green

Plywood shields her glass panes
 Her gates and doors locked tight
 Grass, knee-high, surrounds her
 Warm sea breezes bring near-silence:
 The bell rung long ago
 today's ghostly sheets
 the neighbor longing for a kindly word.

Fear

By U. (Rick) Woelcke

"Our papers...oh, God...the papers...left in the house!"

Still breathless from our escape, my mother was near panic. In these times of Soviet occupation, papers meant your life—nothing less.

They had to be retrieved.

We cowered hidden and shivering in the high grass, protected by a moonless night.

"I'll fetch them...stay here!"

I tried to sound reassuring.

Every inch of this neighborhood was familiar to me and, as quietly as possible, crouching low, I worked my way back to the house, its familiar silhouette now dark and foreboding.

The old withered willow by the creek had grown tentacles, swaying grotesquely in the breeze.

My heart raced and its pounding seemed to penetrate the dark silence.

We had heard the soldiers leave, but where to...?

There! I froze. "Damn you, cat!"

Closer and closer I inched my way to the open back door of the house, our escape route from those leering, threatening pilferers. I strained my eyes, but all I could make out was a gaping, black hole; the windows' eyeless sockets.

"God, oh God, please help!"

Slowly, so slowly I straightened and stood up.

No flashlights, no shots.

I was inside the door now—numb with fear—the hallway's blackness ahead of me, the stairs to the second floor, our sleeping quarters, barely visible.

One deep breath, and I shouted.

The sound of my voice reverberated in my head as I dropped to the floor.

Nothing—not a sound. Alone in darkness with my fear.

I jumped up—flew up the stairs—grabbed mother's purse with the papers—half jumped, half fell downstairs—leaped outside and tore back through shrubs and bushes to the hiding place, where I collapsed beside my mother, sobbing uncontrollably.

Lead Soldiers

By Lois Francis

A visit to the former Moroccan home of American billionaire, Malcolm Forbes, reminded me of an incident from my early childhood which I had totally forgotten. Now open to the public as the Forbes Museum in Tangier, the house exhibits 115,000 models of lead soldiers.

At each showcase I saw hundreds of lead soldiers arrayed for battle in a series of elaborate displays depicting the major battles of history, from Waterloo to Dien Bien Phu. Entire armies challenge their foes in the showcased presentations accurate in recreating the topography, equipment and uniforms, complete with lighting and sound effects.

It was years since I had seen lead soldiers and—I know it was a stretch—I couldn't help thinking about my older brothers and their lead soldiers, set out in battle formation on the sunroom floor at home. They were outfitted in red coats and high hats, with drummer and foot soldiers following officers on brown horses—all but the leader in a blue-sashed coat, mounted on a white horse.

How romantic it all was, I thought with envy, much more exciting than baby dolls. I preferred to sit and watch my brothers at their play than change a dolly's diaper one more time.

Perhaps my brothers found me in the way, or perhaps as an eager five-year-old, I presented a perfect gofer for generals in the heat of battle. In any case, I was dispatched to the kitchen to fetch cookies for the commanders. Hating to miss a moment of the proceedings, I dashed to the kitchen, pushed

a chair up to the counter and stole two cookies from the jar. Grasping them in one hand, I dashed back to the sunroom—the other hand in front of me to push open the French door, which I had left ajar. Or had I?

The crash of splintering glass and my own involuntary cry brought footsteps running from the living room.

"Oh Oh!" I thought, looking at the glass fragments, the broken door and the stains of blood on the carpet, as I heard my father approaching. "Now I'm in trouble."

My brothers ran to open the door, but by now my father had arrived.

He didn't look at the glass, he didn't look at the door, he didn't look at the carpet. He took my hand and examined the cuts, particularly the wound on my wrist, where most of the blood was coming from. Taking a fresh white handkerchief from his pocket, he staunched the flow and led me gently to the bathroom where my mother took over, cleaning my wounds and preparing a dressing.

All the time I was marveling at how worried my father looked and how totally he ignored my misbehavior, the broken window and the stained carpet.

The next day, a new window had replaced the broken one, and the French door was good as new. The glass fragments were gone and the carpet was clean.

No mention was made of the broken door ever again.

I found it ironic that fifty years later, in one man's temple to the glory of war, I should remember another man's example of peace and love.

Photo Identity Crisis

By *Mary Green*

After the horror and tragedy of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, (now usually referred to as 9/11), there was a period of time when many of us wondered if air travel would ever be safe again. My own thinking was guided by media reports and news features telling of extra security measures being implemented to ensure my safety, if I chose to fly. For me the choice would have been either to fly or stay close to home. And I wasn't ready for the latter alternative. So, early in 2002 when I decided to visit my daughter on Vancouver Island, I made my usual travel arrangements.

I found out that WestJet had a flight going into Comox, conveniently close to where my daughter lived. When I called the airline to book a seat, their agent informed me I'd have to show some form of photo identification (ID) when I checked in for my flight. "Anything with your picture on it", he said, "Your driver's license will do."

"My driver's license? But I don't drive."

A few anxious seconds, which seemed like hours, followed. I wondered what I should do now. Then I remembered the senior's photo ID I had obtained from Winnipeg Transit when I turned 65. I'd been so pleased with myself that day when I went to their Osborne Street office where they took my picture and made up the laminated card with my name under the photo to identify me as a senior citizen now eligible to ride Winnipeg city buses at a reduced rate. I'd never gone anywhere without that precious document. Yet not even once in seven years had a driver asked me to produce it whenever I stood poised to drop my senior's ticket into the fare box.

With more hope than confidence I asked the WestJet agent if this card would suit the purpose. "Yes," came the reassuring response, "that will be okay." On the morning of my flight the airport agent only gave my photo ID a brief glance before issuing my boarding pass. Before tagging my suitcase she asked if I'd left it anywhere unattended. I hadn't. With that off my hands I proceeded to the security check-in area.

I had packed my crochet hook, tweezers and anything else with the hint of a point, in

my big suitcase. My purse and carry-on case went through the X-ray tunnel with a swish. Everything went so smoothly I was almost disappointed. Those media reports had given me reason to believe there would be some drama involved here.

After a pleasant 10 days spent amidst the early spring greenery and blossoms of Vancouver Island, and a few precious days with my daughter and son-in-law, I was back at the airport in Comox, now reporting to the WestJet agent for my boarding pass on the flight that would take me eastward to Calgary and connections to Winnipeg. After presenting the necessary documents, I showed my ID. This agent scrutinized my face, then the one on the card. Then she turned the card over and read what was written on the back, and looked at me again. After what seemed like forever, I decided that perhaps some explanation was in order. "It's the card I need when I ride the bus in Winnipeg," I offered, with all deference due the situation. Still frowning, she returned my card and got on with the business of processing me through.

With baggage checked and boarding pass in hand, but feeling utterly unsettled, I lugged myself and my carry-on case to the security check-out area. My purse and case swished through the X-ray tunnel into the hands of a stout woman, formidable and intimidating in the grey masculine garb of a security person. She carried my possessions to a side table, beckoning me to follow. With deft fingers, protected by surgical gloves, she moved the contents of my purse this way and that, examining everything inside. After returning this to me, she unzipped my carry-on case and began going through it.

At this point a nervous involuntary giggle escaped my throat. I was about to explain about there being a bag of unlaundered underclothing inside, because the night before, after I'd locked my big suitcase I'd found this bag under a jacket...She silenced me with a gesture and a look that said, "Watch it, lady." This drama, more than I ever want to live through again during a security check, finally ended and I was free to settle down to wait for the boarding call.

Now, less than a year later, I was planning another trip to B.C. This time I'd be travelling with my sister Verna. We were

bound for Kamloops, there to meet sister Sandra who'd drive out from Maple Ridge and, with us, attend a regional music and poetry festival scheduled to begin on March 6th. It was something we had planned carefully. We looked forward to our time together.

Early in January, Verna and I met at my apartment to make our travel arrangements. We called Air Canada who were having a seat sale at the time. Once again came the question of my photo ID. I knew that as of January 1, 2003, airport security had become even more strict than it had been the previous year. What kind of photo ID did they want now. "Oh, anything with your picture on it. Like your driver's license." Once again I explained that I didn't drive a car, but had this card obtained through Winnipeg Transit. She hesitated. Another eternity of waiting for an answer. And again another explanation from me, of how the card was used. "Well," a pause and then, "I guess it should be okay."

In spite of the Comox experience and news of stricter security, I had still planned on using the Transit ID card. Now I wasn't sure, and decided to make a few inquiries. I first called the Winnipeg International Airport and asked to be connected with someone in Security. Turned out to be the wrong department. The man didn't know if the one I wanted even existed. "Look," I said, "all I want to know is what kind of a Photo ID is acceptable for security purposes." "Ask your travel agent," he said. I didn't bother to tell him that I hadn't booked with a travel agent. I called the RCMP office and explained my predicament to them. They told me that my best bet would be either a passport or the identification card one could obtain from the Manitoba Liquor Control Commission.

My sister Verna, at that time a few months short of being a Senior Citizen, was planning to use the Liquor Commission card. She learned that in order to get this, she'd need not only her birth certificate, but papers—in her case a marriage certificate—to show why her name had been changed. She's been divorced for years now and has moved several times and lost track of where she'd put her marriage certificate. But after an anxious and frantic search through drawers and locker boxes, she finally decided to look in her safety deposit box. And there it was.

By this time I too had begun to think of getting the Liquor Commission ID. But I had no idea where my marriage certificate might be. My husband always liked to handle the really important things. I suppose that when he re-enlisted in the Air Force, which was about two years after we'd been married, he must have needed to send in the marriage certificate in order to verify that he had a "dependant" wife. It's possible that this document now moulders with his files, somewhere at the Department of National Defence. Certainly out of my reach.

I had other documents that would verify I had been married. One of them, a very official legal separation agreement. None of these would meet the Liquor Commission's requirements. It was now two weeks before our travel date. No time to initiate a search for the marriage certificate. Too late to apply for a passport.

I examined the Winnipeg Transit Senior's ID, now eight years old. I still had patches of brown in my hair back then, and had worn it in a different style. And there'd been a lot less jowl under my chin that day. Then I remembered that, however hesitantly it might have been delivered by the Air Canada agent, the answer as to whether I could use this card as my ID, had been an affirmative one.

So once again I went to the Transit Office on Osborne St., this time to get my photo ID updated. Turned out to be a flattering likeness, and only cost three dollars. Nothing to do now but to wait and see if it was accepted. Speaking to Verna one day we compared notes on our preparations for the trip. I said, "Well, Verna, I'm ready to go now. That's if they let me on the plane. Who knows? Maybe you'll be going to Kamloops by yourself."

She laughed, and didn't sound too convincing when she told me, "Don't worry so much, Mary. I'm sure you'll be okay."

On the day of our flight, I was surprised at how smoothly everything went when I

reported to the agent. No problems at the security checkout. I had expected hesitations, searches, complications. And it was the same on our return flight. This trip we had to show our photo ID again when we boarded our connecting flights. My Winnipeg Transit Senior's ID card was accepted each time without a question.

So hurray for our bus service for transporting me on the ground these many years. Who'd ever think they would one day play a role in getting me airborne. And finally, I now know that the question of one's photo ID is something to be taken seriously. It's how I show the airline that I pose no threat to the passengers who must travel with me. Next time I plan a trip, I'll budget time and money to get myself a passport. I've decided that in these times, it's the only way to go.

Blue Leather

By Lois Francis

Blue leather button
 rolling on my palm
 rolling me back to younger days
 and the blue woolen coat I hated
 —old-fashioned even then
 with its red piping
 and long red sash with hanging fringes.

Hand-me down, poor person's coat, I knew
 disregarding assurances
 that it was much nicer
 than the standard issue
 everyone else was wearing;
 it had style.

I know it had style, I know it now
 but I didn't know it then,
 and that's when it counted.
 fashion-unconscious, conforming brat,
 disdaining phony blue buttons
 and the mythical blue animal they came from.

Have I changed in sixty years?
 Have I broken free? or must I still conform?
 Alas! alas!
 I'm not blue leather yet.

Farm Boys, 1940

By Ruth Martinussen

Red-faced and sweating,
the boys pitched hay all afternoon;
day-dreaming of grenades and bayonets,
while the bees buzzed 'round.
As they stabbed their forks into the mounds of hay
and heaved them onto the rack,
mice scurried for safety, the dogs after them.
They hated the smell of the dusty sweet clover,
the itchy chaff inside their damp shirts.
They thought of the soldiers in smart uniforms.
At last the haystack was finished;
a thatched fortress
perfectly built
against the elements.
They raced the horses home with the empty hayrack;
unhitched, watered, turned the old nags loose.
Then down to the river, a cool plunge
into the pool under the bridge
frolicking like otters,
testing their mettle, daring each other.
When the evening chores were done—
the gathering on the porch;
talk of war,
the call to arms;
watching the gophers play tag in the pasture;
a deer licking at the salt block;
the old owl hooting in the far spruce trees,
and frogs croaking in the swamp;
the boys tossing their jack-knives in simulated battle.
When the season's work was done,
the boys enlisted—
trading pitchfork for gun.

The Semi-Secret Garden

By Jack Francis

Anyone who has seen the famous painting of Marc Chagel's garden, rampant with foliage and bloom, has already seen the semi-secret garden in a corner by our back fence. So secluded by vines and shrubs and tall perennials is it in mid-summer, that you wouldn't know it was there unless you happened to be strolling the lawn and came across a brief flagstone path leading nowhere, apparently.

Actually, it leads to a vine-smothered arbor. By pushing aside some of the hanging growth, you can step through it into a sheltered suntrap where summer temperatures are always warmer than in the rest of the yard. Here, a pea pebble path is the only non-planted area and even it gets full of chinese lanterns, dutch clover and dwarf grass if not weeded regularly. Growing around and in raised boxes and tubs are red monarda, lemon yellow heliopsis, short and tall, deep yellow marigolds, red and pink geraniums, blue and purple petunias, gazanias of colors impossible to describe, and white daisies.

Cohabiting with the flowers are green beans, a proud beefsteak tomato plant and a modest cherry tomato bush. Holding hands with all of them in a friendship chain is a rogue cantaloupe vine, which we believe sprouted from a seed in the homemade loam we spread from the nearby compost bin.

The plantings are surrounded along the fence by a siberian elm hedge and on the arbor side by mock orange and red osier dogwood shrubs, along with castor bean, maltese cross, monk's hood and other tall bloomers sneaking in from the main lawn border. A large part of the screen is provided by a huge virginia creeper curtain which covers two ten-foot high oak stumps and hangs between them. Shoots from the vines work their way through the shrubs, beds and path and climb the fence when nobody is watching.

It's a small area, just 15 by 15 feet, but there seems to be enough chlorophyl to green up the arid Sahara and enough petals to fill all the orders at Grass, the perfume centre for the world. Hyperbole isn't enough, sitting in the midst of it, soaking up sun and scent and sight, knowing I am in a special place.

Unexpected

By Shirley Nordal

February thaw
The sun becomes warmer,
The air becomes softer.
he streets become greasy.

One moment my life is normal,
The next it is a nightmare.
My child struck down
Walking home from school.

Multiple injuries,
Broken bones,
Massive head trauma,
Possible brain damage.

We survive
We pick up the pieces
but things are changed
Our lives are different.

Life is fragile,
Life is sacred,
We live each day more fully,
After that day in February.

Blue Jeans

By Nettie Stadnyk

"Mom, I'm wearing my new jeans to school tomorrow," I announced, with some apprehension.

"No, you're not," Mom responded, authoritatively.

"Yes, I am. You told me that Mr. Unrau, the principal, said at the staff meeting not to send kids wearing jeans, home. Besides, Mrs. Brown, the substitute, is wearing jeans, and so are all the girls in my class. I bought them with my own money, and if Dale can wear..."

Mom interrupted, "You are NOT wearing jeans. Period. I teach in that school. What will the staff think? You're not wearing them...not today, not tomorrow, NOT ever. That's final! Now finish your French homework, set the table, and we'll have supper."

I was seething with anger, and not in French either, but I knew better than to flap my tongue because, at this point, Mom would signal "Time Out" (making a "T" with her hands) and that would mean "Go to your room and stay there till I tell you to come out."

I recall when, much younger, I was sent to my room on a "Time Out." Mother went for groceries and forgot about me, and if it wasn't for Dad...but that's another story.

Now, my room was picture-less, radio-less and TV-less, and computer-less. Nothing. Bare furniture, and wall paper with large black fuzzy squares and circles which I myself selected when I became a teenager. Mom didn't like it. I guess I was rebelling, and that's why I chose it. Now, at 16, the black squares and circles seemed to jump out formidably at me, especially when I was under stress.

Meanwhile, "back at the ranch"...Next morning I woke up all HEP. I was going to wear jeans to school. For weeks, I'd been looking forward to this. Now, I'd be like my best friends, Dale and Maureen. I'd go with the flow. It was most important for me to fit in with my peers. I opened my closet door. No jeans! Frantically, I shouted, "Mom, Mom, where are my jeans?"

Very calmly, Mom replied, "I hid them." With a crescendo tone and increasing speed with each successive word, she proceeded, "And you won't find them. Don't start looking for them. MY DAUGHTER is not wearing jeans to school. No matter what the other kids are doing. If they jumped into the lake, would

you follow them like a sheep?" And on and on and on, ad infinitum. It was phenomenal the mega number of words Mom could expound all in one breath.

When she stopped to suck in a breath for a split second, I butted in with, "But Mom I bought them with my own..."

Mom vehemently erupted, "No ands, no ifs, no buts, NO JEANS!" She glared at me and almost poked my nose with her threatening forefinger vibrating up and down with deliberate precision. "I repeat, NO JEANS! That's final! Now get dressed for school."

I knew very well the meaning and repercussions of "That's Final." In anger, as I bit my lip to cut off the explosion of harsh and disrespectful words for which I would later be sorry, I turned and marched into my room.

GLOOM!

I kicked the bed post, twice. The agony of my sore toe somewhat detracted from my boiling anger. I sat on the bed in utter frustration. With great determination, I vowed I would save my weekly allowance for another pair. However with my mere pittance of 50 cent weekly allowance it would take me months to get enough money. My contemporaries were getting \$1.00 and \$1.50 allowances. No one got a \$5.00 allowance in the sixties.

Dad appeared on the scene. He said nothing, nothing at all. He sat down and put his arm around me. I bit my tongue to stop from crying. I had been brainwashed that crying was a wimp weakness. Gently Dad began brushing his hand over my back and arm.

Silence.

"Dad, I bought..."

Dad interrupted: "Sh, sh, sh." Lightly he placed his forefinger on my lips and continued to stroke my back.

Silence.

A few minutes passed. My intense frustration began to lift, but never completely disappeared.

Dad broke the silence with, "Now get dressed and we'll have breakfast together."

Walking to the kitchen, I heard the door close. Mom was leaving for the same school where I attended. In fact I was in her English class one and a half years ago.

After school, I came home before Mom did. She had Detention Duty. I searched for

the jeans "with a fine tooth comb", every inch of the house, including the Rec room. Nothing!

I searched again and again. With each search, my anger and frustration waned. I knew Mom hadn't destroyed the jeans. She was too frugal for that. With time I gave up the search, reluctantly.

Seven months later I did get a pair of jeans, but somehow the bubble of compulsion and desire to wear them to school had burst. I never did wear jeans to school.

Three years later, while Mom was working in the garden at the cottage, I came out to talk to her. She was wearing my jeans. I recognised them. Instantly I saw RED. "Mom, those are my jeans!"

"If I'm wearing them, they must be mine," Mom responded meekly. "Case closed."

I detected the start of a sly grin on Mother's face.

"But, Mom, I can tell they are mine. They have"... Mom interrupted, "So!" With this, she got up and walked to the garage.

I turned and walked back into the cottage, slammed the door so hard that all the windows rattled.

Thirty-one years later, when we were reminiscing about my teenage episodes, I asked abruptly, "Mom, where did you hide my jeans?"

Caught unawares, she blurted out, "Above the rafters in the garage."

And even to this day, 34 years later, I have to force a chuckle when we refer to the jeans episode, and not without a tinge of anger and frustration.

Tore my pants
Tortured ants
Pinched May's ass
Disturbed the class
Teacher at school
Lost her cool
Not challenged enough
So in trouble and stuff
Energy, too much
Vim, vigour and such
Not an excuse I say
Sorry for bad day
Been naughty and bored
Forgive me my lord
Amen

Prayer

By Nettie Stadnyk

Dear Lord
Hear me pray
Been naughty today
Little sister, I hit
On brother, I spit
Glass of milk
Dropped and split
Made Mom so mad
Swore at Dad
Kicked the cat
Called Jill, "Fat"

My Elixir of Youth — Solving Sleep Apnea

By Anne Yanchyshyn

"Did my snoring keep you awake, Lorraine?" I asked.

"It wasn't your snoring so much as your gaps in breathing," she replied after our first night of sleep on a recent trip to Europe. "There were times when I'd wonder if you were ever going to breathe again. It was scary." And for good measure she added, "You'd better get it checked out as soon as you get home. Promise!"

My family doctor sent me to the St. Boniface Sleep Disorder Clinic where I spent one night all wired up, an attendant hovering faithfully beside a monitoring machine. After one hour of sleep he readjusted the controls and I went back to sleep. Dismissal occurred at dawn.

The following week the site coordinator at St. B. explained Obstructive Sleep Apnea to me. It is a condition in which a person

stops breathing numerous times during the night, fragmenting the sleep and causing lowered blood oxygen levels. I had been observed to have snored moderately loudly and developed severe obstructive apnea which varied up to 20 seconds' duration 70 times during that hour.

A nasal CPAP* machine, which dispersed air under controlled pressure during the test, resulted in the resolution of my problem. I rented one for several months before one became available at the Health Sciences Centre for my use.

The nose mask, with its flexible hose, is now my constant companion whenever I go to sleep. Holes where the two parts are joined allow the air I breathe out to escape. Another cousin tells me I no longer snore.

My sleep is far more refreshing now. The sight I present is not a pretty one, but CPAP is my Elixir of Youth—it has re-energized me.

*(CPAP — Continuous Positive Airway Pressure)

Basement Prison

By Alex Domokos

Basement prison. Interrogation
at a secret-police station.
No protection, no mercy there.
The walls are padded everywhere.
No day, nor night, the only light
is a light-bulb. There is no right.
The jailer's command is the law.
On the concrete floor the rotten straw
is my bed. But on that floor
despite the chain and locked door,
my dreams are peaceful. The presence
is washed away by innocence.

No Thank You, It's Christmas

By U. (Rick) Woelcke

December 2000.

It was our first major outing since my wife had been discharged from St. Boniface Hospital after removal of a kidney.

The whole family was invited to our daughter's house in St. Vital for a pre-Christmas get-together. After weeks of convalescence, we were eagerly looking forward to this meeting of the "Clan."

So far, winter had been basically uneventful, but a few inches of snow and selective snow removal by the City had resulted in a number of deep icy ruts on several major thoroughfares.

Having passed St. Vital Shopping Centre, we were heading south on St. Mary's Road, which was one of those rutty streets. I didn't really give it much thought. As Winnipeggers, we are seasoned winter drivers and quite accustomed to such conditions! Aren't we??

With our thoughts and conversation revolving around the forthcoming evening, I decided to switch lanes in order to turn left on Britannica. My speed was within the law-abiding range, i.e. about 50 to 60km/hr. As it turned out, road conditions don't give two hoots whether you are law-abiding or not.

As I attempted to move from the outside to the inside lane, my front wheels decided to stay in those ruts, which displeased my rear-wheels considerably. They protested by swinging outward, taking the whole rear-end with them. This manoeuver forced the front wheels out of the rut, and before we knew it, we were shooting across the inside (left turn) lane, across the center strip, two northbound traffic lanes, jumped the curb, headed straight for a telephone pole, missed it by inches, turned right just in time, missed a hedge, made a further right turn and ended up high and dry on top of a snow bank watching the northbound St. Mary's traffic rush by.

And that's what we did! We sat there! Stunned! Silent! Not comprehending what had just happened.

My wife was as white as the snow we sat on, and the color of my face must have matched the green parka I wore. For the longest time I refused to believe that this was us.

Eventually, I had no choice but to acknowledge the obvious fact. "Guess what? It's you after all! Get out. Do something."

I must have sounded most reassuring when I asked my wife with a shaky voice if she was all right. She nodded.

As I opened my door I realized that, while we had not been airborne, we were not exactly earthbound either. Somewhere in between, the belly of the car rested rather comfortably on that snowbank while the front wheels enjoyed a certain degree of independence—from solid ground, that is. I made my way to the trunk, which was only slightly elevated, and managed to retrieve my vinyl shovel. Yes, you read correctly: vinyl. After a rather frustrating attempt at shoveling, I informed my still dazed spouse, that I would be heading across the street to find a telephone to inform our children. Then I would call CAA to get us mobile again. As I stumbled through deep snow onto the sidewalk, I noticed that we had parked ourselves at the corner of St. Mary's and Greenwood.

Meanwhile, out of nowhere, two men appeared. Father and son as it turned out, shovels in their hands, asked what had happened and if we were all right. I had barely finished explaining our situation, when they started shoveling...with REAL shovels! Not vinyl!

I honestly didn't think that their labor of love would free our car from its lofty height, and I hot-tailed it across the street to make my calls.

I have forgotten exactly where I found that telephone, but it was a small eatery and the people there were exceedingly friendly when they heard of our plight and handed me the phone. My hands were still a bit unsteady as I dialed our daughter's number. The children assured us that someone would come to take "Mom to Barbara's place while I would wait for help. So far so good.

Now that call to CAA.

My CAA member handbook states that Emergency Road Service help is just a phone call away.

That night, 5000 members must have been in my situation, all making the one phone call at the same time.

At least the piped-in music tried to evoke a certain Christmas mood for all those stranded travelers somewhere in wintery Manitoba, and a sultry voice reassured me time and again how important my call was to CAA.

I don't know how long I must have waited on that line until, in disgust and thoroughly frustrated, I gave up, not knowing what to do next.

As I stepped outside and looked across the street, I didn't trust my eyes. Our car was almost level with the ground, and not only two, but three good Samaritans were shoveling around that stranded Honda as if their lives depended on it. As I crossed the street, I noticed that the third volunteer was a woman.

Just then the father got into my car, started it, and ever so slowly drove forward across the sidewalk and onto St. Mary's where he parked it with emergency flashers turned on.

I think my jaw must have dropped a couple of inches and, just as I started to talk to our helpers, a van with our sons drove up to rescue their mother from the previously stranded Honda.

After we reassured them that everything was now fine, I turned again to our rescuers and realized that the woman had disappeared. We think her car must have been parked on Greenwood since we heard a motor start.

Father and son stayed at least long enough for me to express our heartfelt thanks. I offered to pay for their truly hard work, and even my insistence was countered by a simple, "No, thank you, it's Christmas."

We never did find out who the mystery woman was.

A letter to the editor of the Free Press thanking our helpers unfortunately did not make it into the paper.

It was some time later that we realized how close we had come to being in a very serious accident. A few angels must have worked overtime in order to allow our car to jump three lanes of pre-Christmas traffic unscathed, miss a telephone post and a hedge by inches, keep the car without a scratch, and then send us three unselfish helpers.

In the aftermath of this "experience", we have developed a healthy respect for icy ruts. We now carry a real shovel in our trunk, and we invested in a cell-phone for emergency purposes. The latter may or may not be helpful, depending on just how important our call might be to any potential rescuers out there.

Haiku

By Anne Yanchyshyn

wood and glass washboard
trophy of a bygone day
ouch my aching back

The Bonfire

By *Nora Johnson*

The Indian village sat on a bank rising high from the wide waters of the Mackenzie River in the North West Territories.

Anne was a caregiver from the city, wondering how she could express her wish to provide a rare treat for the school children. She decided on a bonfire outing. She gathered a group of children on a ledge near the top of the riverbank where there was shelter from the wind and room to sit around the fire in comfort.

Anne had the children gather wood and she soon had a good fire going. They sat around it and played games such as Who Has The Rock, where a rock was secretly passed from person to person.

The children had read about cities in school books and were eager to know more about them. As Betty Ann put it, "Tell us about the city. Nothing exciting ever happens here."

Since Anne had a rather opposite view, she quickly said, "What about the wolf I heard about that chased a moose into the village?"

"Oh, yeah, I remember that," said ten-year-old Walter. "It was a big wolf and a big moose. My dad shot the moose and we had some good meat to eat. The wolf ran away."

Then Walter noticed there was fish netting anchored below them at the river's edge. "Look," he yelled, "there's a big fish in the net. Should we take it?"

Mary Jane, one of the teenagers, said that the net belonged to the Moses family. But Walter said he would reset the netting to catch another. He scrambled down the bank and returned with the fish which he suggested they cook and eat.

As this was a rare special occasion, there was agreement all around, so Anne set the fish on rocks in the fire embers to cook while they sang and played some more games.

It was the weekend with no school next day and everyone was enjoying the evening outing. In early summer dusk comes late in the north so they could see a ways up and down the river.

Suddenly Beatrice shouted: "Look across the river. There is a moose coming this way!"

They watched the moose swim strongly across the wide river, heading for the shore not far from the bonfire site.

"Oh, look. There are some men coming in a canoe," Walter cried out excitedly. "They are going to shoot it!"

The moose was almost at the shore when the first bullet hit it. It reached the shoreline and then fell.

Anne and the children didn't wait to see the rest of the killing. They put out the fire, took the fish and went home.

The bonfire, the games, the fish, the stories, the wolf and the moose, the canoe and the moose, did make it a special occasion. Life wasn't so dull after all, far from the city.

Warm memories of the north

When I Was Seventeen

By Ruth Martinussen

I had been in Winnipeg for three months, in residence at the Normal School in Tuxedo, but the city environment seemed to be doing little for my self-confidence.

That bleak day in late November of 1951, I managed to make my way to the General Hospital where my grandmother had been brought—a sure sign that something must be seriously wrong with her.

"It's bad. It's very bad," my grandmother said in a quiet desperate voice. "Ruth, you must go down and find a phone; get a message to your Uncle Ernie. I need him to come right away. You can call the Hunts across the road and they'll go over and tell him."

I felt such anguish at seeing my grandmother, usually so strong, so full of delights, now a frightened old woman. And then there was the prospect of having to make that long-distance call. I had rarely used a phone; we still didn't have one at home out there in the Swan River Valley at least three hundred miles away.

I tried to reassure Grandma, although I doubt that there was much comfort in my shaky words. I was seventeen, in the city for the first time, and still homesick for the simpler familial life on the farm.

From Grandma's bedside on the fourth floor, I found my way down to the main corridor, thinking, "What to do?" I had never ever before made a long-distance phone call.

As I stood there in my hesitation, I felt a man's hand on my shoulder and a familiar voice saying, "Ruth, is that really you?"

It was Uncle Ernie, and right behind him was Uncle Oscar.

"We thought we'd better make a trip down here to see how things are with your grandmother. Isn't this lucky? Now you can show us to her room."

Before—After

By Nettie Stadnyk

9:00 a.M. Wind chill -44c degrees
Beastly blustery
Cold fingers, cold toes
Frostbitten cheeks, dripping nose
Miserable, depressed.

Enter Pollock's School of Beauty
Reflection in mirror
Mousey, drab hair
Messy, grungy, greasy
Itchy, imaginary "varmints"
Creepy crawlers.
Quarter inch grey outlines scalp
Demerits thought of suicide
Sad!

11:00 A.M. industry
Color, shampoo, massage.
Styled, dry, comb out.
Load is lifted.
Light headed, spirit lifted.
Same mirror
Miraculous reflection.
Wrinkles, melted. Grey, gone.
Lustrous hair-do.
A new me!
"I feel GREAT!"
Happy!

At the Marigold

By Mary Green

Grace before Chinese
dinner with my family
When Mary and her husband visited
from Campbell River
In two thousand and two

Listen children Yes
I can afford it I really can
Don't worry about the cost
Of spring rolls or mooshie
for appetizers Enjoy Enjoy
Let the entrees enter and then
have some lychees cool and round
If that be your desire

See? Air flows into
my lungs I breath
In and out In and out
My pulse is strong today
Which means my heart is beating

If my body works only this hard
until next Friday
There'll be more pension money
in my bank account

Thank you God
for children and their spouses
And for Grandkids too
Thank you for the breathing
in and out
And pulse and pensions
And thank You for the food. Amen.

Lake Louise

By U. (Rick) Woelcke

No, I don't mean the actual lake and beautifully coiffured lawns and flowerbeds of spring and summer. As a skier I am in love with the white-capped mountains surrounding the lake like a massive protective fortress.

I marvel at nature's tremendous power which created these colossal giants out of molten lava, heaved and pushed them into the sky and gave them their present intimidating and yet awe-inspiring form.

After I slide off the ski-lift which has carried me to Eagle Ridge of Mount Whitehorn, 8,300 ft. above sea-level, I pause to take in the surrounding white glaring world of towering mountain peaks and sparingly distributed evergreens which are increasing in numbers to eventually form a dense forest as the eye moves downward to Lake Louise.

Every time I take one of the several lifts to another slip-sliding adventure, I am afforded a slightly different view of that magnificent vista.

Lately, I have become quite content with easy, manageable runs and have discovered a new-found awareness of the absolutely breathtaking beauty of the mountains.

Some of my more cynical friends would call my newfound admiration for "nature in white" nothing but pretence.

You see, while all those young hot-doggers and ski bunnies are "schussing" past me, completely unaware that they are passing a paradigm of wisdom and life experience, I want them also to be unaware of the fact that I am at the end of my stamina. With my heart in my throat, perspiration slowly oozing its way through several garment layers, I lean on my ski-poles looking oh so purposefully across rock and snow, completely absorbed in my dialogue with nature.

Well, my cynical friends, there may be something to your scepticism, but the fact is I DO enjoy my frequent stops, and I can't get enough of that magnificent panorama.

The German poet, Gottfried Keller, wrote: "Drink, oh eyes, as long as possible from the golden abundance of this world."

*Trink, oh Augen, was die Wimper haelt,
von dem goldenen Ueberfluss der Welt.*

As evening approaches, and the shadows grow longer, the mountainous world surrounding us takes on an almost ominous

air. Heading home in our shuttle-bus, I'm glad to be with friends.

As I look outside and scan the wild ragged and darkening sides of the various mountains, I always experience a strange feeling of melancholy and loneliness. I can't explain why, but I imagine myself lost in that dark, inhospitable world, empty of people, cold and foreboding.

It is a relief to turn away from the window and make light conversation. Still, that unexplainable feeling of sadness lingers on until it's time to disembark and plan for another exhilarating day on the hill.

Listening to a Tape Recording

By Murdina Brownlee

Through memories of her past
She filters
The phantom noises
Wafting through the air.
But wait! All sounds
Are not quite clear.
Emotions generate
White noise, cancelling out
The undesired waves.
She can only hear
What her heart craves.

The Long Way Home

By *Nora Johnson*

Rolling down the highway, sailing right along, like the song says, we were on our way home from a U.S. vacation. Traveling north along the Pacific Coast, our next major stop was to be Portland, Oregon. But I was driving and feeling tired, so opted to overnight at the next rest area. My husband, our 11-year-old son and I slept in our station wagon.

In the morning I woke very early and thought, "This will work out great. I'll go to the restroom then continue on our way and when the others wake up, we'll be in Portland."

On the highway, the fuel gauge told me it was time for a refill, so I gassed up at the next exit. I've always had a poor sense of direction, so on the road again I carefully observed all road signs. To my dismay it was soon obvious that we were traveling south.

"Okay," I said to myself, "they are still asleep so no one knows my mistake. I'll take the next exit and head north." About this time my son woke up and said, "Hi, Mom, where's Dad?"

"Under the blankets with you," I said.

"No, he isn't," came the reply.

"Oh, oh! I've left him behind. He must have gone to the restroom when I did."

"He is going to be mad," our son predicted.

We were still traveling south and by the road signs I knew we were approaching the rest area where we had spent the night. We saw him across the divided highway, standing in his robe, talking with a patrol officer. When he saw us a big relieved smile crossed his face, and ours, too. And he wasn't mad. We happily continued on our way.

But our misadventures were not over. When we arrived in Vancouver, our son was tired of the car trip and we agreed he could seek his own adventure by traveling the rest of the way home by train. We boarded the train with him to see him settled.

Our son was getting edgy, urging us to get off the train. I thought he was just afraid of looking over-protected, but as the train lurched, we realized we had stayed too long. We dashed for the exit—closed—then to the other end of the car—too late. The train was moving.

We stayed on board until New Westminster, where we quickly found a bus to

take us back to the Vancouver train station and our station wagon.

The rest of the trip was uneventful.

The Sadness

By *Shirley Nordal*

My mind pushes down
All my painful feelings
Down where light is absent
Where I hide parts of myself

As I descend
I feel the grief
From all my losses
From childhood
From last week
I feel my heart break

Breaking open
I discover the pain of living
Of illness, and of dying
I sit with the pain of the unknown
And discover under the pain is the love
The love allows me to accept things
I cannot change, which changes everything

No Explanation

By Murdina Brownlee

Delia was trying her best. She had been shocked when dear Anthony had felt "the call" to switch from their comfortable life in a lovely old rectory in a pleasant little village to minister to the needs of those homesteading in the wilds of Canada. Despite her misgivings, ever dutiful, like the Biblical Ruth, she had followed her mate.

The manse on the frontier was unlike any place she had ever lived. It was a small, one-storey clapboard building, grimly unattractive. When she had sent to her parents a photo of Anthony and herself standing in front of it her father had promptly written back stating that, while the photo was a pleasant likeness of them both why had they had it taken in front of the chicken coop? She did not explain.

Nor did she tell them how belittled she felt by some of the parishioners who kept a gimlet eye on the welfare of items they had donated to the manse. For instance, the parlour carpet. True, at one time it had been a beautiful Persian rug but now it was sorely worn. There was even a mended spot that she managed to keep hidden with her sewing basket. Mrs. Daley, who had donated it, paid a call every time she came to town and never failed to find fault. Last time she had inferred that Delia should feel honoured to have it in her home.

In fact Delia felt so squelched that when a day or so later she received the C.P.R. questionnaire, sent to all homesteaders, she had perhaps been a little too frank. To the query, "How do you find the winter weather?" she bluntly wrote, "The cold of winter is not as difficult to bear as the cold of charity."

And now, several months later, Delia was dithering. Dear Anthony had paid a call to the Daleys and found they lived in distressing circumstances.

"How she does enjoy visiting you when she comes to town. She asked me to tell you that our comfortable parlour reminds her of

her family home and she is so grateful we are caring for the carpet that came from a bedroom there. It is much too big for her own abode."

Delia was worried. How could she tell Anthony about what she had written? After some thought, she decided not to explain.

The Seven

By Anne Yanchyshyn

What price, what sacrifice
In Reagan's quote from John Magee
*(They) have slipped the surly bonds of earth
...and touched the face of God*
Challenger '86 and the seven

Two thousand three
The Columbia seven
On the cusp of slipping back to earth
Denied a heroes' welcome

We must believe
A force divine
Floated their souls back into space
To live forever in God's grace

Dichotomy
Do we now mourn
Do we rejoice
They lived to fly
Courageously they flew on high
Through death to the highest glory
Immortality

Memories of Motherhood

By Sandra Bater

I remember making flannelette diapers,
Yards and yards of pure white downy fabric,
Cut and hemmed,
Washed and dried,
Lovingly folded in the drawer,
In anticipation of a baby.

I remember using flannelette diapers,
Soft, warm rectangles,
One end folded into the middle,
Snuggly pinned at each side,
Tightly encircling our son's tiny body.

I remember hanging flannelette diapers on the clothesline,
Crisp, bright March morning,
The clothesline full of clean diapers,
Flapping in the wind like signal flags
Announcing our newborn baby.

I remember countless soiled flannelette diapers,
Cold and soggy,
Packed in the diaper pail,
Pickling in a fetid brine,
Emitting pungent ammonia laden fumes,
Needing to be washed.

I remember recycling flannelette diapers,
Grey and harsh,
Threadbare and stained,
Stuffed in a bag,
Ready for cleaning windows.

Sam

By Margaret Cracknell

Sam died at the age of ninety-two. He emigrated from England as a young man and found work in Brandon. Wages were low and money was always short. He shared a room with five other men.

There were only three beds in the room, but that didn't present a problem. Three of them worked the night shift. They came home and slipped into the still warm beds the day workers had just vacated.

When I got to know Sam Smith he was in his eighties. Our church asked for volunteers to visit the elderly in the parish. My youngest child, Elizabeth, was two years old. We visited him every two weeks. In the summer we went down the back lanes admiring the gardens. In the winter I took the shortest route possible, pulling her packed and blanketed on a sleigh.

Sam lived in a tiny house. There was a sideboard with a black marble clock that made a sound (it ticked, to my daughter's delight), a table and four chairs, an armchair

(that was Sam's chair), a broken-down sofa and, on a bamboo table standing in the window, was a galvanised pail holding the largest Christmas cactus imaginable.

Every week he talked about the cactus, the black marble clock, and how far up the Red River had come in the 1950 Winnipeg flood.

Sam was a bachelor, but had a housekeeper, an unmarried woman with a bit of a disability. She always served Peek Frean cookies and cherry Koolaide. Nothing changed from week to week. The layer of dust over everything, including the tablecloth, had a three dimensional quality to it. It was so thick and permanent.

One day I found Sam up a ladder fixing the T.V. aerial on the roof. He must have been close to ninety at the time.

From his small house, which once was surrounded by fields, he had kept six cows and had a milk route. I treasure the large cow bell from one of his cows which he gave me. He had made it himself.

Santa Cruz Evening

By Margaret Cracknell

A colony of sea-lions barking below the pier.
A flight of pelicans sweeping and dipping over the water.
Families gathering their children and heading for home.
White sails, against the red sky, returning to the dock.
The overhead chairs in the closed fairway sway lazily in the evening air.
The cars pull out and the parking lot empties.
It will soon be dark. Only the sea-lions remain.
The beautiful copper-coloured sea-lions lying on their sides,
Their eyes closed and their tails folded up, as if in prayer.

Plant Movements

By *Harold Richman*

Plants are usually thought of as inanimate objects. You find them where you left them except that they may have grown imperceptibly. But plants actually do move according to particular stimuli.

Most plants move according to the location of the sun. The most familiar plant that follows the sun is the sunflower. When I drive down the highway in the summer I am always in awe of a complete field of sunflowers all facing the same way. One night as I was lying in bed thinking about the sunflowers, it suddenly occurred to me that they would all be facing west when the sun set, but in the morning the sun would rise in the east. Do they do a quick take as the comedians do or is there some other mechanism to turn the sunflowers to the east? I discussed this with Professor Pip at the University of Winnipeg. "The sunflowers keep on turning during the night and in this way they are facing east when the sun rises," she explained.

This summer I intend to check this out with the sunflowers I plant in my garden. In particular I would like to know if the sunflower continues turning clockwise or does it retrace its motion and turn counter-clockwise. I would like the members of the Manitoba Naturalist Society to help me out in this research project. If you are growing sunflowers in your garden, I would like you to check this out and advise me by e-mail (hrichman@jrwire.com). The best time to check the sunflower would be about 2 A.M. If the sunflower is turning clockwise it should be facing north and if the sunflower is turning counter-clockwise, it should be facing south. The results will be tabulated and reported in the Manitoba Naturalist Bulletin.

The reason why sunflowers face the sun is not completely understood but it is possible that the sunflower is more visible to the pollinating insects when it is brightly lit by the sun. The temperature of the sunflower will be a few degrees higher which will cause the developing embryo to mature more quickly. Most plants will lean towards the light. This exposes more of the chlorophyll to the sun.

When you plant a seed the root always grows down and the shoot grows up. How can the plant determine which is up and which is down? We can keep our balance our balance because of the labyrinth in our ear which can

sense gravity and keep us vertical. Plants do not have ears (except for corn) but they have developed their own mechanism to detect gravity. In the root cells there are tiny grains of starch which settle at the bottom of the cells in the growing tip. The roots know to grow in this direction. The shoots on the other hand know to grow in the opposite direction.

Dandelions and thistles have developed an ability to pull themselves down into the ground by pulling on their roots. If a seed germinates on the surface of the soil, it will develop a root system and, once established, it will pull itself down into the ground for a more desirable location. If you cut off the leaves of a dandelion it will pull itself down into the ground and then develop a new set of leaves. That is why it is so difficult to get rid of dandelions.

A desert plant called *Astragalus* has the ability to move horizontally. This enables the plant to find a more suitable location. Of course it moves very slowly, so you would not see it moving, but after some time you might notice that it is in a new location. The plant moves by pulling on the roots on one side.

There are many plants that respond to touch. I had heard of the sensitivity plant but had never seen one until about five years ago. We were in Puerto Rico for a winter holiday. A friend pointed out a sensitivity plant growing in a ditch. The leaves are very small, somewhat similar to those of the honeysuckle bush. When I touched it the whole plant drooped very noticeably. It took less than a second. How did the plant send the message to all parts of the plant so quickly? Plants do not have a nervous system so they use chemical signals. Even though we have a nervous system we also use chemical signals which cause us to react very quickly. Adrenaline is such a chemical.

What advantage does the sensitivity plant have by being able to wilt suddenly. It has been suggested that the sudden movement of the plant would startle a herbivore who was beginning to eat the plant. Of course there is no way of knowing for sure what led to this odd evolutionary behaviour.

Portulaca is a popular plant for flower beds. I have planted them for many years but never realised that they take an active part in assuring that they are cross pollinated. When an insect lands on the flower and touches one

of the stamens the rest of the stamens lean over and deposit some of their pollen on the insect. This movement has to be quite rapid as the insect is not likely to stay very long.

A somewhat similar movement occurs in the sundew but with a more sinister purpose. The sundew has what looks like a star burst of stalks. Each stalk has a small shiny drop of a sticky mucilage at the end. To a passing insect it looks like a drop of nectar. When the insect lands on the sundew it becomes stuck to one or two drops of mucilage. However as soon as the insect struggles to escape, the rest of the tentacles bend over making that impossible.

If there were an Olympics for speed in the plant kingdom the gold medal would go to the Venus Fly Trap. As you know this is a carnivorous plant. The plant has a trap at the end of each leaf which looks like an open clam shell. The inside is brightly coloured and shiny, which is what attracts insects. On each half of the clam shell are three trigger hairs. When an insect lands and touches the trigger hair the clam shell snaps shut. This action takes only 1/5 of a second. To insure that the trigger hair has not been touched by a rain drop or a piece of debris the trap will not snap shut unless two hairs are touched within seconds, or the same hair twice. The trigger hair sends an electrical signal to the cells that make up the hinge. The signal is sent along special tubes that act like nerves. The cells at the hinge are full of sap, but when the signal is received these cells collapse causing the trap to snap shut. In fact the trap is closed with enough pressure to crush the insect. The plant then exudes an enzyme to digest the insect. Even though the Venus Fly Trap has chlorophyll, it is found in locations that are short of nitrogen so the trapped insects supply this missing nutrient.

I had always assumed that the native habitat of this plant was some tropical jungle, but it is actually found in the USA in North Carolina, and in Canada in British Columbia.

Recently we saw "Little Shop of Horrors" at MTC and the movie with Robin Williams called "Jumanji", both of which have man-eating plants as main characters. Even though I know that it is science fiction, I think I will be a little more aware of what is behind me when I am out in my garden. You never can tell!

Haiku

By Anna McDonald

Caw! Caw! Noisy crows
Awaken those who dare sleep in
On a summer's morn.

Soul Thoughts

By Angie Percy

The question is, what feeds my soul?
 Abundant is the list,
 The sunrise, a full moon,
 The scent of lilacs in the mist.

The lake in summer, serene and calm,
 The heavy rolling surf of sea,
 Both soothe my spirits like a balm,
 Fulfilled, content I seem to be.

The wagging tail of man's best friend,
 A phone call from the kids.
 Some moments shared with husband Bill,
 All these still make my heart grow still.

Now add to these some music,
 Some songs of yesteryear,
 Some days I find myself engulfed
 With thoughts—"it gets no better dear."

Life wouldn't be complete without
 Good friends to share some laughter,
 When days are sad, and life's not fair,
 These same old friends are always there.

Let's mention now the great escape,
 A fire crackling in the grate
 All curled up in a cozy nook,
 Worlds away, with favorite book.

Yes, my soul is overflowing,
 Many blessings fill my life,
 My prayer would be for all mankind,
 Contentment such as mine to find.

on dylan thomas
his own songs of innocence and experience

By anne yanchyshyn

i've just reread *fern hill*
 evoking memories of childhood
 how straight *my* talk how disciplined correct
 how nothing
he paints in curves with words
 creates new phrases feelings understanding
 as in
once below a time happy as the heart was long
in the sun born over and over i ran my heedless ways
and nothing i cared in the lamb white days
in the sun that is young once only
 innocence
 again in *a child's christmas in wales*
 repetitions *cats more cats and snow*
 the all-encompassing possibilities in snow
 as seen enjoyed and felt by children
the gong was bombilating a new word coined
when we rode the daft and happy hills bareback
(snow) came shawling out of the ground and swam and drifted
out of arms and hands and bodies of the trees
 the sound and sight and touch and mood and movement well [personified
 advice to aged father *do not go gently into that good night*
and death shall have no dominion
 a lifetime caught in many-splendored words
 his craft abstruse speaks of the total spectrum
wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land
 old age experience
me

Are We Alone?

By *Harold Richman*

Until about 450 years ago the question "Are we alone?" never occurred to anyone. The earth was considered to be the centre of the universe (the geocentric model) and the sun, the moon and the stars revolved about the earth. It was at that time (1543) that the Polish astronomer, Copernicus, published his book, *On the Revolution of Celestial Bodies*, outlining his theory of a heliocentric solar system where the sun was at the centre, not the earth. He realized that his theory would be vehemently opposed by the church and therefore delayed publication until he was on his deathbed.

About 60 years later, in 1609, Galileo built his first telescope and studied the planets and the moon. He was able to prove that Copernicus was correct. Nevertheless, the Vatican forced him to recant his ideas and he was condemned to spend the rest of his life in his house under armed guard. It is only recently, about 300 years later, in 1992 that the Vatican finally exonerated Galileo.

When Copernicus proposed his theory of a heliocentric solar system, scientists and ordinary citizens started to consider the possibility of life being present on other planets in our solar system. Gradually, as more scientific knowledge was accumulated, it became obvious that the inner planets Mercury and Venus were too hot to support life as known on earth. The outer planets beyond Mars were found to be composed of gas and therefore could not support terrestrial life. The only planet left was Mars and many scientists and astronomers thought they could detect evidence of life on the planet. It is only within the last decade, when scientific probes were landed on Mars, that it was finally proven that no life form was present.

The search for extra-terrestrial life has now shifted to other solar systems in our own galaxy, The Milky Way, and in the other galaxies found throughout the universe. The closest star in our own galaxy is Alpha Centauri and is located approximately 4.3 light years from earth. If we attempted to send a scientific probe traveling at 100,000 miles per hour it would still take 29,000 years to make the trip. It is therefore impractical to search for life in other solar systems in this manner. The only possibility of finding life is to study radio signals which are constantly being

received by radio telescopes. The data received has to be analyzed by powerful computers to find any indication that the signals were actually sent by some form of intelligent Life.

Carl Sagan, the astronomer, popularized astronomy with his television program called *Cosmos*. He promulgated the idea that there were billions and billions of galaxies containing billions and billions of stars. He also proposed that many of these stars must have planets in orbit similar to our own solar system. Since there were probably billions and billions of planets he suggested that there would likely be some that were similar to our own earth and therefore could support life. He proposed that we search for intelligent life by analyzing radio signals received from outer space.

Carl Sagan was one of the founding members of an organization called SETI which is an acronym for Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence. The world's largest radio telescope is being used in the search. It is located in Puerto Rico near the town of Arecibo. For about ten years we owned a timeshare unit in Puerto Rico; during one of our visits we drove to Arecibo to see the telescope. It was built in a natural limestone sinkhole and is approximately 1,000 feet in diameter. The telescope is a parabolic dish similar to a satellite dish. The receiver is suspended at the focal point from a number of cables. Even though this telescope cannot be rotated to aim at a particular spot in the sky, it does cover a considerable area because of the rotation of the earth and the movement of the earth about the sun. The Arecibo Telescope was the first telescope used to broadcast messages to areas of our Galaxy that might contain intelligent extra-terrestrial life. Perhaps there is someone out there also looking for intelligent life on another planet.

In the last few years a very interesting phenomenon has been taking place. With the widespread use of the Internet, SETI has enlisted the help of interested individuals in the search for extra-terrestrial intelligence. There are now over three million volunteers. If you have a computer and are connected to

the Internet, you can sign up and become a part of this worldwide community that is assisting SETI. You can log on to their web page www.planetary.org. Once you enroll, they will send you a packet of information to be analyzed by your computer when it is not being used. They also send you the program which is used to do the analysis. When the packet of information has been analyzed it is automatically sent back to SETI over the Internet. It is therefore possible that you yourself may be the one to discover intelligent life in another part of our universe.

Eden

(on the return of Elizabeth Smart after her abduction from her bedroom nine months earlier)

By Anne Yanchyshyn

Back in the cradle of loving arms and Home,
What loyalties fight for control of her tender soul?
Innocence instantly recognized,
She crushes her baby brother to her breast.

Did her abductor woo her with another kind of love,
Devotion to a god his crazéd mind invented?

Oh, for the wisdom of Solomon
And patience, forgiveness, guidance
for her parents' love
To cast out the lingering demons,
Inspire renewed faith
And restore her fractured heart.

Parents—stand-ins for the God we know;
Home—a glimpse of Eden.

Rejection

By Lois Francis

Because life has been long, the losses have been many;
Loved ones, certainties and dreams
Lost in the muck and turmoil of a blind, indifferent world
Scrambling to control, and keep the humble mean.

I look on aspirations long-since trammelled
In the world of who you know
I contemplate that grief with jaundiced eye
And know that it was this that made me so.

Without the world's disdain, and scoffing disregard,
For what I sought—pathetic blind ambition—
I might hang there yet on the meat hook of my pride
Allowing sweet success to drown my mission.

And yet and yet, I wonder, would I trade
This enforced wisdom for the glory path of fame?
We scorn the sour grapes, the fox and I,
But crave a secret taste of what we overcame.

A Pecker Adventure

By Nettie Stadnyk

"Lord snapping R Souls!" Ted vehemently exclaimed as he entered the cottage at Sandy Hook. I followed at his heels with "Holy Sugar!...Termites!" Chips: large, medium, small and teeny, like sawdust. Splinters. Some as large as my thumb covered the outdoor carpeted floor. Counters, room divider, fridge, stove and all kitchen appliances were covered. Chips, chips, chips and more chips. Everywhere! Not a square inch was uncovered. Uncanny! Shocking!

We looked up and saw that all the frames of the four skylight windows were whittled into chips.

Woodpecker! Must have been a woodpecker that made this mess. Ted opened all the drapes on the windows. Nowhere else was the wood chewed up, except for the skylight window frames. All other windows had been covered by the drapes.

After some scrutiny, we found the screen of the fireplace on the floor. Mr. Pecker, like Santa Claus, must have dropped down the chimney. In the bathroom we found a small hole pecked out in the screen which provided Mr. Pecker his freedom.

Since the cottage was sold recently and the possession date was within a week, Ted could lose no time in doing the repairs. He drove to Gimli to get the lumber. I stayed behind to clean up.

Nigh impossible! The vacuum cleaner just didn't have the power to pick up the motley sized chips, magnetized by the outdoor carpeting. I tried sweeping, to no avail. The broom just flipped the chips backwards. And so, on my hands and knees, I hand-picked each large chip. I tried scraping the smaller chips with a spatula, a hoe, and even a snow shovel. Hopeless! I finally took a damp cloth and with great difficulty and hardship rolled the small chips onto a dustpan. Sad!

Three hours, a ton of spent elbow grease, two pints of dehydration through perspiration, and sheer exhaustion later, I completed the odious chore.

I barely survived. The woodpecker naturally survived, but not without a struggle.

Sounds of Water

By Nettie Stadnyk

Softly, silently slowly
Like pussy paws padding
Fog envelopes everything
Renders one sightless.

Sh, sh, sh, shooshing spraying
Hair stiffens. Insects and aphids die.

S, s, s, spluttering and spouting
Steam from a kettle
Time for a spot of tea.

Sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkling
Clothes to iron out the wrinkles.

Tinkle, tinkle, tinkling
On the floor a tiny tot on pottie
Seus' "Cat in the Hat," decor

Drip, drip, dripping,
Leaking faucet disturbs sleepers
Frustrates housewives and pleasures plumbers

Pitter patter, pitter patter
Raindrops fall on sidewalk
Spitter splatter on the window pane
As they squiggle down in miniature rivulets.

Swishing, swooshing, splashing,
Tiny boots in water puddles.

Bubbling, babbling, gurgling,
Water tattooing over stones in a brook

Storming, raging, ranting
Grumbling, groaning, rumbling
Thunderstorm, cloudburst, a downpour

Thunderous, roaring Spectacular,
Overwhelming! Niagara Falls.

Escalating sounds of water in motion
Fascinating, awe inspiring, gratifying my soul.

Which Ending Do You Prefer?

By Jack Francis

Jordan wanted to punch the smirking face. Instead he handed over his lunch money and headed for the water fountain where he filled his stomach with water. It was a light lunch, but it would have to do.

Jordan was smaller than average for a 12-year-old, and had been bullied several times in the two months since he had started junior high school. His parents had noticed his reluctance to go to school, unusual for their son who was a good student and had always enjoyed his first six grades. But they had been unable to pry out of him the reason for his changed attitude in grade seven at the new school.

He had handled many situations fairly well without getting roughed up too badly, though always with a strong feeling of humiliation. And when he had refused to give up his lunch money to the grade nine bully, Bram Grafton, or Big Bam as he was known, he took a beating.

That time, his parents went to see the principal and, assuming Jordan had squealed on him, Big Bam gave the smaller boy another beating. From that time on, Jordan thought of little else but some way to get even, some way to feel better about himself, some way to stop the almost daily humiliation.

The day Big Bam took away Jordan's leather jacket and Adidas and he had to walk home on a cold fall day with no jacket and no shoes, was the day Jordan snapped.

The next day Big Bam pushed his way through a hall full of students in the locker area until he came to Jordan, who was putting books away. The books were knocked to the floor and Jordan was shoved against the locker. No one offered any help, as Big Bam gave his trademark smirk and held his hand out for the lunch money. But, to his surprise and chagrin, the smaller boy smirked back. Big Bam poked him in the stomach with his extended hand. Jordan buckled with the pain for a moment, then stood up straight.

(Which ending do you like best?)

Ending No. 1: "Okay, Big Stupid Bam," snarled Jordan, "I've got what you want right here," and he spun around and reached into

the locker. He turned back and there was a pistol in his hand. He pointed it directly at Big Bam's face and said, with an unnatural calm, "You won't bother me again."

A gunshot rang out and Big Bam fell back, spurting blood from a hole in his face where his nose used to be. Gasps and screams filled the hall, followed by an eerie silence as Jordan placed the gun in his locker, closed the door and clicked the padlock. Then, with a wisp of a smile radiating relief, utter release, he walked slowly down the hall and out the door.

Ending No. 2: "Okay, Big Stupid Bam," snarled Jordan, "I've got what you need in my locker here. He spun around and took something off the top shelf, then turned back with a pistol in his hand and pointed it at Big Bam's face. The bully backed up and began stuttering a plea for mercy. "Wait up; hold it; don't shoot! Okay, okay. Keep your lunch money." He backed up some more and Jordan advanced, holding the gun straight out in front of him.

Big Bam's legs began to buckle and he slipped to his knees. He was sobbing now and begging the smaller boy not to shoot him. "I'll never bother you again!"

Jordan squeezed the trigger, and a spurt of water splashed on Big Bam's face. "A, a, a water pistol," he sputtered. Jordan put the water pistol back in his locker, closed the door and went for lunch amidst a hall full of laughter, cheers and applause.

Fall Crocuses

By Anna McDonald

Late Fall

Ugly brown bulbs
Planted in the black earth

Early Spring

Tall narrow leaves spring out of the ground
until

Mid July

These leaves just fade and die
leaving no sign of life
until

Early September

A little white stalk appears
on which blooms the fall crocus

For the next few weeks

The ground is aglow
with pale mauve yellow-centered flowers

Who planted within these ugly bulbs

the life that created this great miracle?

Grey Hair

By Anna McDonald

Was that a grey hair? She looked a little closer at her reflection in the mirror. Definitely. There it was. That tell-tale sign: she was growing old.

Her husband Dan's hair was grey already. But then, they say men look more distinguished with grey hair. Why not women? Oh, no! In the mentality of today, women are to remain youthful-looking forever.

She carefully examined her dark brown hair every morning. How many new grey hairs had developed overnight? What was the solution to this problem? Should she follow the TV commercials and just "wash away that grey?" Was it that simple?

To the supermarket she went. Up and down every aisle she examined every bottle describing what to do to get rid of that grey menace. Finally, after deciding what was the best product, she bought the magic potion. Following instructions carefully, she was pleased beyond all her expectations. Those few grey hairs had vanished.

However, nature had other ideas. The grey hairs just kept sprouting at a rate she couldn't keep up with. It was a constant battle to try to keep those beautiful tresses shiny and free of the grey.

In desperation she decided the next time it was time for another wash away job; she would go into dying her hair. And while at it, why not change the color altogether? That was it. She would have a complete make-over. An appointment was made, not with her regular hairdresser but with a well-known hair stylist downtown.

When the day of the appointment came, she took one last look in the mirror. Should she really go through with this radical decision? Why not? It was her hair. Then there had been just too many snide comments about her aging from her spouse. Maybe he was getting tired of her? Yes, yes. This was the thing to do.

"I want a new look," she told the beautician. "I think I want to be a blonde. And please restyle my hair. Blondes have more fun they say, and I sure could use a little more of that in my life right now."

In silence she watched the fingers color her hair. Snip, snip. A new hair style was

being created for this new woman. As she sat there she thought that maybe she should change her name to go with the new look. That's silly. At my age! One change at a time is enough.

Try as she might, she couldn't imagine what Dan's reaction would be to this new look. She soon found out. As she walked into the room Dan said not a word. His mouth just opened wide without any sound coming out.

"Well, how do you like the new me? Looking years younger, don't you think?"

Still no words. Just a continued stare of amazement. Not until after dessert, and he was sitting in his easy chair, did he make the comment, "It's going to take some time for me to get to know this new woman. If you like yourself that way, that's fine with me. Only next time you decide to do something that drastic, give me fair warning."

For a few months she was a blonde. Did she have more fun? That was not exactly what took place. Instead, she noticed that the grey still came growing in. In desperation over the next eight months she became a red-head, a black beauty, and even had one of those streaked creations done. It was just becoming too much of a strain on her, trying to cover up the grey.

It was time again for her to sit herself down in front of her mirror and have a conversation with herself.

"Whom are you kidding? You are not getting younger. Everyone grows older. With all these chemical treatments on my hair, sometimes my hair actually feels like straw. I must say all these treatments have been a strain on my pocket book. And what wasted time getting those treatments. It is time that I grew up. I am a grandmother. And that's

that. I will spend the money and time used on my hair with my grandchildren. I will let nature take its course and look as a grandmother should—grey haired!"

And she did.

Winnipeg March for Peace Feb. 15, 2003

By Sandra Bater

People gathering,
Streaming from buses,
Unloading from cars,
Cruising on bicycles.
Filling the plaza.

Dogs on leashes,
Babies on backs,
Young and old,
Bundled against the bitter cold,
Mill around and about City Hall.

Above the crowds,
An array of protest banners broadcasts our common message -
War on Poverty not Iraq
Drop Bush not Bombs
Give Peace a Chance
No Killing for Oil
In a child's hands,
An ominous cardboard sign—
War Kills Children

Suddenly, a loud drum beat resounds in the frigid air,
The March begins.
Thousands of peace marchers
Move into the street.
A multicolored river of protesters,
In solidarity with people around the world,
Flows down Main Street.
The boisterous throng dances to the drum,
Clangs noisemakers, sings, waves,
And shouts in one accord:
Peace! Now!

Revenge

By *Alex Domokos*

(Translated and edited by Rita Y. Toews)

Loud voices in the atrium drew Pontifex Lepidus Pulcher from a light sleep.

"You can't go in!"

"Let me pass! I come with an urgent message from the Aelius household."

Mention of one of the wealthiest families in Rome had its desired effect. The porter opened the door and Lepidus reached for a tunic and drew it on as the young messenger entered his cubacula. Lepidus knew the Aelius family well. He had served with Quirinus Aelius Lucius as consul ten years earlier and they had become friends. But wealth had not brought happiness to that Patrician family. Lucius had lost his wife and brother-in-law, Cornelius Rufus, to a spring fever. A year later Lucius' sister, Marcella, died suddenly. More than one gossiping tongue spoke of murder.

The messenger's voice broke as he reported the news. "Domine, our master, Aelius Lucius is dead!"

The High Priest's blood ran cold. "Speak child! Give me the details!"

"He was reading in the garden after dinner. When I came to refill his flask, I found him dead."

"I trust nobody has disturbed the scene?"

"Mistress Octavia, his daughter, had just returned from visiting the Vestal House. She ordered the terrace closed. She is heart-broken, Domine."

* * *

At the arrival of the Pontifex, the young Vestal fell into his arms, sobbing. "The gods are cruel, Pontifex Lepidus! They take delight in punishing this family."

Lepidus echoed the thought in his mind while he examined the scene. He found his friend's body on a couch in the garden. Lucius seemed to be at rest, his head on his right arm. A scroll was on the ground but a pitcher and a silver cup were close at hand. Spurred by a sudden impulse Lepidus retrieved the cup and hid it in the folds of his tunic.

"He seems to have gone quite peacefully, child. Do you have someone to help you with the funeral?"

Octavia nodded, eyes downcast. "My cousin, Claudius Quintus. I'm sure he will tend to the arrangements."

The eighteen-year-old Vestal's regained serenity pleased Lepidus. Her composure reflected the disciplined upbringing of the Vestals.

"Ask Cornelius Quintus to allow you to retreat to the Vestal compound after the funeral. The abbess Faustina is a kind woman. She will take care of you."

* * *

Three months after the funeral of the ex-consul, Lucius, the rumors of poison died down only to be replaced by a scandal concerning a Vestal Virgin.

The College of Vestals was the most sacred institution in Rome. According to Roman tradition, the prosperity of the state depended on the chaste life of the Vestals. An impeccable lifestyle assured divine benevolence for Rome and her territories, whereas a sin by a Vestal was considered a collective sin of Rome, evoking the wrath of Jupiter.

Other than being chaste, a Vestal's sole duty was to keep the sacred fire, the symbol of Roman invincibility, burning. Negligence of duty by a Vestal endangered the entire Empire so punishment was swift and cruel—she was entombed and allowed to starve to death.

Pontifex Lepidus received the news of the fallen Vestal from Abbess Faustina. A sick feeling settled in the pit of his stomach as he recalled the composed maiden who was the daughter of his friend Lucius.

"This is hard to believe, Maxima Faustina. It's been only a few months since her father's funeral and yet you tell me she has breached her vow."

"I'm as astonished as you are, Pontifex, but facts are facts. She was found at night in the company of a young man. She was examined and found no longer to be a virgin. Although I dislike the task, I must accuse her."

Lepidus sighed since he was the supreme authority in religious matters. "Of course, Faustina. I'll arrange for the trial to be held at the Temple of Jupiter. The people of Rome have a right to witness Roman justice."

* * *

Outraged Romans and curious gawkers packed the central colonnade of the Temple of Jupiter. Capital trials were as popular as gladiator games, and with good reason. Although the weapons were words, the result was just as deadly.

When Lepidus arrived flanked by eight jurors, the murmur of the crowd halted. He nodded briefly to Aelius Cornelius Quintus who, as the representative of the accused's family, sat in the front row. Members of the College of Vestals filled the rest of the front row seats. Octavia and her lover, guarded by the Lictors, shared the dock. Lepidus immediately recognized Octavia's partner. He was the messenger who came with the report of Lucius' death. For his friend's sake, Lepidus was determined to do everything in his power to save Octavia's life but, as presiding judge, he must hear the charge through. He called upon Maxima Faustina for the opening statement. If Faustina pitied the young Vestal she gave no indication to the jury. She presented the facts.

"Aelia Lucia Octavia came to the College of Vestals five years ago. Her attitude has not always reflected Vestal dignity, but we overlooked it as a fault of her youth. However, on the sixth day of the month Julius, she was found at midnight in the company of the young man, Paulus Cornelius Adrianus." An accusing finger was directed at the man at Octavia's side. "The examination of Octavia proved she was no longer a virgin!"

A wave of indignation flowed through the hall. Ignoring the sound of outrage, Faustina continued, "It is my duty, as Maxima of the Vestals, to demand the customary sentence for such a crime—death by starvation!"

Lepidus watched Octavia as the charges were laid against her. Although tense, she showed little fear. The girl and her lover made a handsome couple, Octavia's rosy complexion in stark contrast to the young man's olive face.

It's almost as though they have a secret, pondered the High Priest. *I wonder what it is?*

Outrage in the hall grew as Maxima Faustina concluded her speech. Shouts rang out, "Death!" "Execute her!" "Traitor!"

The Pontifex's mallet finally restored order. "Silence! The accused Aelia Lucia Octavia has a right to answer the charges."

The expected denial did not come from the girl who still wore the vestal garment with

dignity. "Domine Pontifex, the facts presented by Maxima Faustina are basically correct," she stated.

The buzz of anger became a crescendo, "Shame!"

"There is one mistaken point. The person found in my cubicle is a woman. Her name is Paulina Cornelia Adriana."

The hall erupted in cacophony. Octavia's companion removed her headgear and let her long hair loose. Stunned, Lepidus jumped to his feet. "Silence! Octavia, explain this charade!"

"Paulina came to our family as an infant. When my aunt married into the Cornelian family, she took Paulina with her but forced her to dress as a boy."

"And the reason for that masquerade?"

"Domina Marcella's husband had a perverse desire for young girls. My aunt wanted Paulina protected."

But why was a patrician lady concerned with a slave girl? The question crossed Lepidus' mind while Paulina took up the story.

"Octavia wished to be freed from Vestal bondage so we started the scandal. Because physical sets is impossible between us, she has to be released from the order of the Vestals."

"Clever, but not clever enough. Octavia has to prove she was no virgin before she entered the order. I can exonerate her only then. I demand your answer, Octavia!"

"My father forced me into the College when I was twelve. The prestige of a Vestal in our family was his ambition. Old Vestal Euphemia accepted my explanation of an accidental damage to my hymen. I could not confess that I was raped by my own cousin, Quintus!"

Aelius Cornelius Quintus leaped to his feet. "It's a lie! I demand to be heard!"

Before he could be heard, Octavia demanded, "Maxima Faustina, who warned you of my meeting with Paulina?"

"I received a note. There was no signature, just three letters—A.C.Q."

"Aelius Cornelius Quintus! It's obvious!" Octavia stated triumphantly.

"It's an obvious fraud!!" Quintus shouted. "Why would I give away my identity? The truth is, before she entered the order she offered her body to me. Begged me to sample the sweet taste of carnal love. I couldn't resist. That lost virginity was her assurance to get out of the order, and when she got everyone else

out of her way, to inherit the family fortune. Now she is after my blood, too. Octavia is a cold-blooded murderess!"

Paulina silenced Quintus' diatribe with a key sentence. "It was only you whom I told about our meeting, Quintus!"

"And tell me, Quintus, why should I seek your destruction?" Octavia asked.

"Because I know you poisoned your own father!"

With the new charge the audience erupted into noisy dispute. One of the jurors addressed Quintus directly, "Young man, substantiate your charge!"

"As I oversaw the preparation of Aelius Lucius' corpse, I noticed the faint odor of bitter almonds on his lips, a sure sign of poisoning. Stupidly, I mentioned my suspicion to Octavia. My manipulative cousin wants to quit the College and have me condemned as a rapist. Two birds with one stone! She would then control both of our families' wealth."

The court was deadlocked. Accusations were heard, motives were explained, but there was no irrefutable proof as to guilt or innocence. At the day's end Lepidus Pulcher rose and addressed the court and the people.

"Citizens, we are at an impasse. Many charges and counter-charges have been heard. Tomorrow we let the gods dispense justice. The silver cup out of which Aelius Lucius drank for the last time is in my possession. The three persons involved must drink from it! Jupiter shall strike and the guilty one will die in disgrace. The court is adjourned until tomorrow."

The next morning the temple hall was full to overflowing. All of Rome was there to witness the outcome of the trial that was to be decided by the gods. The arrival of Pontifex Lepidus silenced the mob. Flanked by jurors and Lictors, in his ceremonial toga, he was an impressive figure. He signaled the Lictors to bring forward the accused. To his and everyone else's surprise only Quintus and Paulina entered the hall. The visibly shaken Vestal, Maxima Faustina, addressed the Pontifex.

"Domine, during the night a new tragedy occurred. Aelia Lucia Octavia committed suicide. We found her body on the floor of her cubicle, a dagger in her breast."

A roar swelled through the courtroom. Lepidus called for order. He scrutinized the two accused. Quintus squirmed like a cornered

beast, but the girl, Paulina, was calm and composed.

"Maxima Faustina," demanded the Pontifex, "describe the scene in detail." Faustina nodded. "Octavia was lying on her back in a pool of blood. The dagger protruded from her chest."

"Was the wound at the midsection of the rib cage?" This surprising question came from Paulina.

"Why, Yes, but does it matter?" asked Faustina.

"Such a wound must penetrate the bone. It requires a great force. It is unlikely that Octavia could inflict that wound to herself. She was murdered!" While Paulina spoke her gaze was fixed upon Quintus.

"Is this a new accusation? This girl is insane! I protest!" Quintus shouted.

"I did not accuse you of Octavia's murder. Why are you protesting so vehemently, Cornelius Quintus? But Octavia's death leaves you as sole inheritor of two enormous fortunes."

Lepidus had had enough. He silenced the mob. "We have heard enough of these unsubstantiated accusations tossed back and forth. Both accused are innocent until proven guilty. Human investigation has come to a deadlock. Now I am calling upon the divine power of Jupiter to settle the matter. I order Paulina Cornelia Adriana to drink from the silver cup found near the corpse of Aelius Lucius. If she remains alive, Aelius Cornelius Lucius has to drink from the same vessel. There is a brownish residue at the bottom of the cup. If that is poison, Jupiter will have spoken. Any objection?"

Paulina stood silent, but Quintus objected. "As a Roman citizen, I protest. I should not be subjected to such an ordeal."

"If you refuse, the court will take it as an admission to the killing of a Vestal!"

The ensuing silence was broken by Paulina. "I am also a Roman citizen." The new revelation sent a stir through the gathered mass of Romans.

"Explain to the court!"

"On her death bed my mistress, Marcella, acknowledged me as her natural child. My father was a captive Gallic chieftain. Instead of being killed by strangulation he was sent as a gladiator to fight in the Coliseum. He was a gallant man and became Marcella's secret lover. When she became pregnant, her

husband, Quintus' father, Cornelius Rufus, had him executed. My mother outfoxed her husband and smuggled me to her brother's household where I lived in disguise. But on her death bed, bothered by conscience, she acknowledged me as her daughter and heir to share equally in the family's wealth with Quintus, my half-brother. Domina Marcella's scroll of her last will, sealed by her signet ring, was deposited in the Temple of Saturn. Hereby, I submit the intact scroll for examination."

The scroll proving Paulina's statement went from juror to juror. Quintus was speechless.

Pontifex Lepidus Pulcher watched the girl as the scroll moved from hand to hand. A sly look of triumph showed in her eyes. He still saw no way out of the deadlock.

"Enough! You must drink from that vessel! Who will be first?"

Paulina came forward, grasped the cup in her left hand and drank without hesitation. Tension became so high that no sound was uttered; the mob waited for the collapse of the girl. Nothing happened. Encouraged, Quintus stepped forward. With a brave gesture he grasped the cup and drank deeply.

Lepidus saw it then, realizing what had happened, but he could not intervene. Quintus grabbed at his throat and with a strangled groan he collapsed.

Lepidus rose to address the silent audience. "The gods have spoken. No man can appeal the decision."

* * *

The next day Abbess Maxima Faustina visited Pontifex Lepidus' home. She was disturbed by the outcome of the trial and wanted to reopen the case.

"No, Faustina. She was very clever. She used her information to incriminate the two spoiled brats who tried to outwit each other. That's not a crime."

"And the death of Quintus?"

"Octavia smeared the poison on the rim of the right side of the cup. The cup had a handle, and right-handed people usually drink from the right side, while left-handed people drink from the left side. Paulina was right-handed, yet she drank from the left side of the cup."

"It's so unjust! A slave girl is now the richest woman in Rome!"

"Dear Faustina, justice is not necessarily just."

Yarrow

By Mary Green

I find yarrow growing in a flower bed
Behind the seniors' block
Where I am ensconced
My grandmother had it
In her garden on the farm
I said To the yardman
She was a Doukhobor
And I always wished that she'd planted
Proper petunias in colorful beds
Like the English ladies in town did
Never could see any reason
For the mousy yarrow

Must have been for medicinal purposes
I concluded To heal
Or ward off evil spirits
Her being a peasant
Transplanted from ancient Russia's soil
Yes She had reasons of her own
For growing it.

Yes
My inner voice now speaking
Connections made and
Balm of understanding
 granted

The Body Knows

By U. (Rick) Woelcke

Actors we are,
Life is the stage.
We try to hide
The signs of age.
And through our mask
A cold wind blows.
The clock winds down
The body knows.

That cheerful smile!
He does so well!
His suits are cut
by Antoinette.
Hiding the sickness
which grows and grows.
And through his smile
his body knows.

Cool in dark shades
handsome and tall,
Drawing it in
Exhaling all.
Man of today,
above earth's woes
Life will be short.
His body knows.

The body knows!
So let it be.
Today is mine.
I live. I'm free!
Who knows what comes?
The reaper's knock?
"So sorry, Sir.
Just wound my clock."

Inheritance

By Margaret Cracknell

He reached out his hand to get the pills. He never reached them. A blade severed his hand with such force that the blade of the axe was embedded in the oak table top.

The old man had been restless all day. The wind howled around the house. Rain lashed the casements. All day he had had an uncomfortable feeling that he was being watched. Repeatedly he had gone to the window to peer through the pelting rain, but there was no one there. Only the wind-tossed trees.

He had asked Jacob, his servant, to stay with him that night.

"I am sick. I am sick and I need you," he had pleaded, but Jacob knew the old man well. He was a miserly bastard. Friendless and alone, he had scorned all contact with his family, fearing they were after his money. His servant had served him well this many a year, but Jacob had a wife waiting for him, a bright fire and supper warming beside it; he

wasn't going to stay in that forbidding place after dark. Let the master do for himself.

When the old man had been young, he had courted the daughter of a local landowner. Her father was wealthy and it would be a good match for him, but his older brother had won the heart of the young woman. His brother would inherit the estate when their father died and have a rich wife as well. It was unjust. It was never proved how the girth on his brother's saddle broke one day when he was out hunting. A sad day indeed. The heir dead and a broken-hearted bride left to mourn the young man's passing. He had tried to marry her but she would have nothing to do with him.

That was a long time ago.

Jacob found him in the morning slumped in his chair beside the cold ashes of a dead fire.

If the old man had kept in touch with his sister, he might have known she had a grandson as avaricious as himself.

The Net

By Sandra Bater

A brutal northeast wind had churned the huge shallow lake into a frenzy of white-capped waves during the night. Throughout

the morning, they continued to pound the banks and reshape the beaches of Sandy Bay. It was a bitter cold April day and the shore was deserted. Although there was no sign of ice near the shore, further out there were still

ice floes. Most cottagers had not opened up their cabins for the season and the permanent residents, mostly retirees, were inside or in town on a day like this.

The man watched the lake from his cabin all afternoon. He had spent the summers at Sandy Bay for over forty years and knew the nature of the lake. He surmised that by dusk the wind would die down and by nightfall the lake would be calm enough for him to bring in his fishing net. He had no qualms about using a net even though he knew it was illegal. After all, he was a long-term resident and taxpayer. Many people set out nets in Sandy Bay. There were lots of fish out there. Besides, he needed a large quantity of fish for his family and friends. He had to go to work tomorrow and counted on bringing in a big load tonight. He thought about how impressed his coworkers would be when he brought in fresh pickerel. If he didn't get the net in tonight, he risked losing it to Natural Resources. The chances of being caught were slim but he was aware that he could lose more than his net if he were caught. They could confiscate his boat and possibly his truck.

Just after midnight he put on his heavy parka, went down to the shore and dragged his aluminum boat down to the edge of the water. A light breeze rippled the surface of the lake. The sky was overcast. He loaded his containers, the oars, a flashlight. He didn't bother with the motor and gas tank. No need for a life jacket either. He was a strong

swimmer. He was going out only 200 feet, just past the second sand bar, where the water was about 20 feet deep.

He rowed effortlessly out to his nets. He enjoyed the physical exertion and the exhilaration of the adventure. Being on the lake alone in pitch darkness did not disturb him. He had done this many times. He had no fear of the lake. He rowed the boat alongside the string of white plastic floats.

He stood up in the boat, leaned over the side and grabbed hold of the net. He sensed that the net was unusually heavy. He smiled to himself as he imagined the great catch. He leaned even further in order to pull the cumbersome net over the side of the boat. Without warning, the boat flipped, he lurched forward, and fell into the water on top of the net. The lake seemed to swallow him and for a moment he was under water. Instinctively, he held his breath and his head broke the surface of the water. He steadied himself with his arms and searched for his boat. It was already drifting towards the shore, but still close enough for him to reach. He stayed calm. He only had to swim a few feet, pull himself onto the upturned boat and he would drift into shore. He tried to kick his feet but could barely move them. He thrashed with his arms and tried again to move his feet. Then he faced the reality of his situation. His feet were caught in his net. Already the weight of the soaked parka was pulling him under the water. He clawed at the zipper but the icy water impaired his coordination and he was unable to grasp the zipper pull. He screamed frantically for help as he slipped under the water.

At dawn, a Natural Resources officer discovered the net laden with fish and the man's body.

Listen

By Anne Yanchyshyn

Eerie silence uneasy calm

Oh to sit on the patio steps and witness the forces of nature gathering

To hear Thor's angry remonstrations to humans and beasts alike as
 slowly the sound and sight and smell and taste and feel of wind
 in swirls of dust
 ruffle the feathers of a wayward crow that staggers across the road

To see billowing clouds unfurl as rams and ewes and their lambs
 dance to calypso beats
 presaging the hail about to pummel the ground with a vengeance and
 the deluge of rain that is sure to follow
 the scurrying golfer a-swim in his canvas shoes and
 the burrowed gophers poking out noses drenched and gasping for air

To smell the ozone as the thunder claps and rain releases the earthy odor
 of air and grass and soil
 aromas imprinted in a childhood romped in tandem with nature

To feel once more the sun on face and wind in hair

To dream and drift on the sunbeams
 to the multicolored birds etched in canopied trees of the jungle
 the distant thunder melding with their squawks and squeals
 as if hungry lions and hogs below
 smell them and salivate

To hear the phone in the distance and no one answering
 a jarring intrusion into the splendors tumbling around in the mind

Listen to the quiet

Close at hand
 a feeding dish is brushed off a high chair as Baby gurgles in play
 music gentle as harps plucked by angel wings
 A return to reality

When the world's too much on the outside with its stormy roils and trials
 feel the warmth and promise and sacred peace
 in the heartbeat of a child

What If Winston Churchill Had Been Forced to Retire at 65

By *Harold Richman*

King George VI summons Winston Churchill to Buckingham Palace.

"Winston, it is very good to see you. Recently I received a wonderful picture of you sent to me by the Prime Minister of one of our former colonies. This picture was very unusual because you did not have your usual cigar."

"Yes, I remember it very well. Franklin and I had arranged to have a meeting in Quebec City to discuss the progress of the war. Prime Minister Mackenzie King said he would like to have his favorite photographer take my picture to commemorate the event. I told him that I would be extremely busy but I would spare him 10 minutes. During a break in the meetings I went into the room that they had set up and the photographer, I think his name was Yousuf, asked me to stand by the panel wall. I was smoking my cigar while he adjusted the lights and the camera. Suddenly, he came up behind me and removed the cigar from my mouth. I said, 'What happened to my damn cigar?' It was then that he snapped the picture."

"That's very interesting, Winston. Please tell me how things are going with the war effort."

"Well, Your Majesty, Ike and I have been very busy planning a landing on the shores of Normandy to open the second front that Joe has been asking us to do for the past several years. The plans are almost complete and we are trying to determine the correct date for D-Day."

"Winston, as the commander of all the British forces, my generals often refer to D-Day, but I have always been too embarrassed to ask what it means. Since we are just the two of us here perhaps you can explain it to me."

"When a military operation is being planned it requires a great deal of coordination between the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. Each unit has to make its own preparations. Equipment and men have to be assembled at particular locations and special training is also usually required. The actual date upon which this operation will be launched is not known at the time of the planning. So this unknown day is called D-

Day. All the planning can then be scheduled from this date. For instance the aircraft would start bombing the potential target two days before D-Day which we would then call D minus two. Reinforcements would be scheduled to arrive three days after the original attack. This date would be D plus three. When the plan is complete it is sent to all the commanders who have to study it and start making preparations. Once the actual date is picked it just has to be sent to each commander who makes the necessary calculations so he knows exactly when his part of the operation is to be carried out."

"Why did they call it D-Day and not some other letter of the alphabet such as K-day or F-day?"

"Well, we don't know exactly how D was picked but some people think the D stood for departure day."

"That's very interesting, Winston. But actually I called you in on a very serious matter. Last year parliament passed a bill that stipulated that everyone must retire upon reaching his 65th birthday. I have signed the bill making it the law of the land. Since today's your 65th birthday, I called you in to make you aware of this new regulation."

"But Your Majesty, we are at a very critical stage of the planning for the landing in Normandy. Who could possibly take my place at this juncture?"

"Well, since Neville is not yet 65 he could possibly fill in at this time. He has told me many times that he is ready to serve the country and has his umbrella at the ready."

"As you know, Your Majesty, I spent my entire life in the service of my beloved country, starting with the Boer War in South Africa. What could I possibly do with my time?"

"Well, I understand that you have become an excellent stonemason as a hobby, and that you are building a fence around Blenheim Palace, your ancestral home. I understand that it is quite a large estate and

therefore the fence will probably take you many years to complete. I also understand that you are a painter. When the fence is completed you can proceed to paint it."

"But, Your Majesty, I am not that kind of painter!"

"Whatever! As you know our British subjects are all law-abiding citizens and we must set an example for the rest of the world. Congratulations on your retirement! And good day, Winston."

The Road of Life

By U. (Rick) Woelcke

The road of life lies hidden from view
For new and untouched souls.
The twisting turns, the hills and valleys
The lonely paths, the jagged holes.

Bridges to cross, forks in the road;
Will they find a guiding hand?
Will they surge forward with confidence,
Or stumble fearful across the land?

Is it fate that throws the dice?
Is it luck, reincarnation?
We are born: you here—I there,
Could it be predestination?

Many a learned man has wrestled,
But no answer seems to fit.
The road is waiting to be traveled.
Let's trust in God and go for it!

Needlework

By Gisela H.L. Roger

Her old body ached all over. Her heart pounded like fists on a drum. Her sight blurred. She tasted fog. Irene had miscalculated her strength, extended her daily walk too far and, on her way home, almost collapsed. With great relief she finally reached the park bench only to find a man stretched out, sleeping, his face covered by a newspaper. She carefully pushed his legs aside a little just to sit down for a second. At her touch the sleeping man bounced up like a jack-in-the-box and looked at her with a stare that took her speech away. She felt humiliated but nevertheless looked straight into his face, into his round dark-brown eyes, hoping to block the magic that came from his stare—a magic she was afraid of because it was unknown to her.

It was also unknown to her to run from the police, to rummage in garbage cans, to ask for a meal or shelter at the Salvation Army, and she couldn't possibly comprehend having no future, that all there is is the present, the *now*. In short, she had never lived on the periphery, that is the material periphery of society as he did.

For a time, she didn't have the strength to break his stare. Then she looked down into her lap. Holding on with both hands to the bench, she said softly, more to herself than to him, "It's O.K. I am O.K." The man adjusted his shapeless baseball cap and put his tanned right hand on top of her clenched left hand.

"Want a sip? Gives you back your colour and strength, young lady," and with his free hand offered her a two-thirds empty whiskey mickey stored in his pocket and warmed by his body. She managed a tragic smile and softly pushed it back to him.

"No, thank you, I am fine." And with her remaining strength she slowly got up, balanced herself, smoothed the wrinkles in her skirt and left, slightly limping, without a word or glance at the startled man on the park bench.

That was the beginning of a rare love story, if you want to call it such, because love is a very delicate matter and different for every person on earth.

In summer Irene's hair was as silver as a picture frame surrounding her face. In winter it was a soft grey that could pass as the latest

fashion, although that was the last thing on her mind. She didn't have the high forehead her father and two brothers had, and how she minded that! But what can you do? You are made as the maker has made you and you make the best of it. Later, when she had children of her own, she was able to acknowledge and accept the characteristics that belonged to her family: a stubby nose, a round face, blond hair and distinct cheekbones. She also had inherited her mother's unlimited optimism which was reflected in her darting blue eyes, often blinking with humor.

As immigrants from Europe almost half a century ago, they had a rough start. Her mother's optimism was indispensable. They had brought two oversized trunks filled with such common necessities as blankets and pots and pans. And between plates and bed sheets, woolen socks and sweaters, were carefully packed photos (singled out and removed from albums to keep shipping weight to affordable limits). There were eight sets of silver cutlery (a wedding gift), a white table cloth (hand-embroidered), a pair of scissors from her paternal grandfather, and other items you might call worthless. Yet they were lifelines to those who had to slip into a new identity, still unknown even to them.

"You can't burn all the bridges to your past," Irene's mother had said when they set out for a new country. Behind their backs she had secretly stuffed these things deep down in the trunk. Her father's persistence was another essential, a very valuable "piece of luggage." Irene had inherited both, the optimism and the persistence.

Today she sat at the kitchen table hugging her steaming coffee mug with both hands, fingertips over fingertips, daydreaming. Loneliness originating from dependence can eat a person up. She had married early, far too young; she knows that now, when it is too late. She realized it when she had become a widow several years earlier. She had never learned to stand on her own feet, to make her personal decisions, to live her own life, even to drive a car. So it was no wonder that this invisible animal called "loneliness" had gnawed at both her optimism and her health.

But today was different. She smiled. "First," she thought, "I will offer him the bathroom and the shower, tell him to shampoo

his hair, brush his teeth—hold it! Before that, I will have to buy a decent shirt, maybe at Zeller's. He shouldn't be intimidated with an expensive one. No. a checkered shirt would do. And blue jeans. While he is showering, I will set the table, two settings, opposite each other And I will enjoy his appetite, yes, he will have an enormous appetite, I know, because he hasn't had a thing to eat for days. I will have just baked bread. Bread and sweet butter. Or better still, fresh cinnamon buns curled in on themselves, thick buttered and sugared, dark brown, all fresh from the oven. Would he drink coffee? Tea? 'Doesn't matter,' he would say. 'It doesn't matter...'" She paused. "Everything matters,": she said to herself, lost in contemplation connecting two alien thoughts. It was her age that mattered to her, not coffee or tea. The bright smile vanished from her face.

She never offered him her shower, of course, and never baked bread or cinnamon buns for him. It was weeks later, when the warming September sun changed course with light autumn chills during the night, that she would give him her correct name. Until then she called herself Rosa, although not for reasons of precaution, more to be a good sport.

He, on the other hand, observed every movement, every word of hers and, being streetwise, mistrusted her naivete. "God," he almost prayed, if he ever had learned to pray, "let me be good. Let me not take advantage of her. God, let me be good, even if it is this one time only."

Volcanoes are known for their hidden power, their sudden outburst of devastating fire, hot lava with its immense speed and the rocky substance afterwards that does not allow anything to grow. Love could be like that. Life could be like that. But it doesn't have to be.

After she had regained her strength, Irene took up her daily walks again and it became her routine to pass by the park bench hoping to see *him* again, *him* sleeping, outstretched *him*. All she wanted was to look at the slender hand with that soft touch. This time, she was sure, she would remove the newspaper from his face, careful not to scare him again, to see his face to *give* him a fact actually; a gentle face—that's what she imagined—tanned by weather, sun and grime. But what then? She shrugged.

Several days passed before her searching look, eyes squinted for better vision, spotted him. Not on the park bench but nearby on the grass. Not sleeping, but sitting up, legs crossed, his sad face whiskey-flushed. She placed herself in front of him, looking down, right at his face, and struggled to find that something she was searching for, but it was not there. He was taken aback by her directness, got up, took her elbow and led her to the same park bench where they had met, *their* park bench as it became, and sat down next to her.

"Do you have anyone?" she asked, after they had sat silently for a long time.

"What do you mean? Yes I have lots of enemies and lots of time. All the time. That's all."

She repeated, "Lots of time? Lots of enemies?" changing his sentences into her questions. "I, well, I have no friends and no time," she said hesitantly. That was all they spoke for the moment, each in forlorn thought.

"What would we be without memories? What would become of us without pictures rising up before us?" Irene resumed.

Not expecting an answer from him she continued vehemently as if she had to make a point. She felt happy, less lonely talking about her past. She was a good story-teller and each time they met she remembered another episode of her life, sharing it with a man she hardly knew and of whom she thought she had a claim of ownership just because he was listening.

Well, it made it difficult enough that she was, what? *Respectable*, yes, that came to mind—that she was a respectable woman, and aging on top of it. But that he, on the other hand, was always escaping into some kind of nothingness made it next to impossible. What is that "IT"? Communication? Understanding? A Kindred soul? Love? Who knows!

"Dammit," he said as he grinned and left.

Next day it rained. No meeting at the park bench. The day after, Irene was there. He spotted her on the bench and sat down. She was concentrating on a needlework of flowers of some sort, maybe tulips, bright yellow and red. More an eyesore than anything else, and of a rather unrefined kind because of her poor eyesight. Once when her children were small, cross-stitching was her hobby. She hadn't done it for quite a while, had not felt like it

recently, but why shouldn't she pick up such a pleasant pastime activity again?

"Why do you have no time when you have no friends?" he asked abruptly.

"Because," she said lowering her voice, "because that comes with aging, you know. When you get older, time speeds away. To hold on to time is like catching running water with your bare hands. Same with friends."

He had never heard anything like this. He had no feeling for time, his life was passing slowly, almost dragging, filled with worries, hardship, and pure boredom. *Time* for him had lost its substance.

Who can say when action changes into fate and fate into action? The consequences are what count. The September sun still had warming power but it gave way to fall with coloured leaves and earthy fragrance. Sitting now on a park bench required more than just a jacket or a shawl, but Irene, wearing an extra layer of clothing, had come even when the sky was overcast. There were days when he did not come at all, days tyrannized by endless questions. Was he sick? Did he leave town? Was there some trouble she didn't know about? Maybe he got drunk again. Or, maybe he had stolen something: a roll, an apple, a pack of cigarettes? No, he wouldn't do that, no. But where was he, for God's sake? Why wasn't he here?

Next day, and days later, Irene would see him in the distance, sauntering as if he owned the entire world, displaying his watchful grin.

"Henry is late again, isn't he?" he would say.

It was one of his irritating habits to give himself names, to talk about himself as if he were a different person. Usually he called himself Henry, sometimes Paul, depending on what mood he was in. Irene had given up making sense out of this nonsense. But it gave her the idea to call herself Rosa. She had no special liking for the name, or a dislike for her given name, Irene. No, she thought it was an entertaining game in which she should participate. Besides, she felt like a different person now, so a new name was quite in order, wasn't it?

Indian summer gave the illusion that winter would never arrive. Everyone cherished that illusion as children do when they cover their eyes with their hands and believe that when they can't see, they can't be seen. Rose/Irene's needlework was nearing

completion. She would embroider one flower with a stem and a leaf at each visit to the park bench. Later, she would put it under glass, would frame it, she had decided.

"I have done a lot of talking up to now. That's not usually my way," she said, dropping her needlework onto her lap and looking at him. "I told you all about my parents, my childhood, my life, and I don't even know your real name."

"Is that bad?" he asked, grinning. By now she had memorized his tanned face with wrinkles, lines and all, the distinct earlobes, his curly black hair, his long pointy nose and fine eyebrows, even a few pimples on his neck which she found disgusting. But she cherished the details, and if she had been a painter she could have painted a portrait without looking at him.

"I'll tell you," he started. "I had a wonderful childhood. My parents were well off. We lived in a mansion, had servants who looked after everything. I played in our park that had a bird bath and very old trees. When I was ten or so," he said with a twinkle in his eye, "I ran away and I forgot the way back home. I never found my parents nor our home again. How do you like that? Is that enough of a life story?"

"That isn't fair at all!" protested Rosa/Irene, her blue eyes flashing in anger. She stuffed her needlework, with the flower she had just begun, into her bag, got up and left. He felt sorry, but not for long. What could he do? He wanted to appear as she wished to see him, that was all. When he realised that she was hurt, helplessness washed over him like a gush of cold water. He shrugged his shoulders, pulled out the half-filled mickey of whiskey and emptied it with one gulp. It was impossible for him not to do so.

The next two sunny days Henry/Paul went to the park bench. Rosa/Irene was not there. He pictured her at her home stitching flowers, leaves and stems, flowers, leaves and stems. Or baking bread. Or making noodle soup from scratch. He missed her, but that was not the issue. He couldn't allow this to happen. He simply couldn't afford it. Cold weather was soon to set in and he had to prepare himself for winter. That was no easy task.

Day three went by. Day four. The fifth day began with a light constant drizzle, creating a delicate curtain between Here and

There. Hard times ahead. He knew that just like birds do; come fall, they have the instinctive urge to fly south for survival. Out of sentimentality, he wanted to see the park bench again, one last time.

He found Rosa/Irene all bundled up in her winter coat, scarf and toque, pacing to and fro in front of the bench. When she saw him coming, she stood still, looked at him with a mixture of sadness and happiness.

"So you came. I knew it," she said. "You've got a new parka and toque. It will be cold soon," she said, not mentioning that the colour was faded and the cloth, threadbare.

"It's new only for me. Somebody else carried it on his shoulders before me. That's my life," he said.

They paused, not looking at each other, staring at the ground.

"Come with me," she said. My name is not Rosa. My name is Irene. You don't need to know more. Come along."

He followed her, hesitating at first, staying behind, but then walking by her side. They made an uneven pair, she in her dragging, shuffling way and he with his cautious steps, hips bobbing.

"I don't have any other names that I give myself. You wouldn't understand that," he said.

"Why not?" she asked, embarrassed, while heading to the apartment block where she had lived for eighteen years.

He remained in the doorway, ready to turn and run. But she gently pulled him into her hallway and said, "Wait a minute."

The trunk from her parents was still there. Had been there for eighteen years, and before that, in the house she and her husband, Bill, had owned. She tried to lift the wooden lid but it was heavy. She looked at him. Without a word he offered his help. The trunk was filled with things no one had use for any more: out grown baby clothes, a candle holder that needed fixing, a small camp stove, things you would call rummage because the passing of time is inconsiderate.

From the bottom of the trunk, from under all these forgotten things, she pulled out the hand-embroidered tablecloth, two of the eight sets of silverware, and the scissors from her grandfather. She gave them to him.

"Here, you should have these. You know all the stories about them, you faithful listener." She laughed and her eyes twinkled

with happiness. "They could be a start for a new life with a real name."

"I'm glad you laugh," he said, looking at her. "I hate wailing women." He stood there, his long arms dangling as though they belonged to a jumping-jack. He was irritated, he was lost. His round brown eyes widened. Irene mistook it as a sign of surprise and appreciation, but it was nothing but fright. Pure, naked fright.

"Here, take these," she urged him. Instead of taking the items presented like an offering, he gently took her face between his dusty hand, looked in her eyes and gave her a kiss on her forehead and said, "Irene!" Then he took the tablecloth, the silver, even the scissors, wrapped them into a handy parcel, stuffed it under his arm and, in the blink of an eye, was gone.

She stood still and felt his gentle kiss, saw his brown eyes, saw his face, and smelt the faint trace of whiskey that he always carried. She rushed to the kitchen window to spot him, maybe to call him. To call him—what? My Lover, just for one kiss on the forehead? "Don't be silly!" she said to herself. To call him back? To talk to him? To feel his slender hand, his kiss again? "What a cruel game," she thought, and wept. She hadn't wept for a long time. "She was too old for weeping," she thought, but she was wrong. Her thoughts went in circles and found no way out.

For several minutes she stood still. Then she went back to the hallway, slowly closed her apartment door, shook her head in wonder, hurt and disbelief. All at once. Her eighty-year-old body ached all over. A headache, as never before, set in. "Time is too fast for me," she said, and went to bed.

How long did she stay in her apartment? She couldn't remember. At least several days. For many long hours she sat at her kitchen window, hugging her steaming coffee mug with both hands, fingertips over fingertips, looking down at the street, daydreaming, eyes squinting, searching for a human outline. Eventually she took up her daily walks again, although she chose a different route, streets and back lanes close to her apartment. She knew that what she had lost she would never find again.

* * *

Henry/Paul was a good runner. He ran fast and as agile as a weasel, down the stairs from Irene's apartment, into the street, around

the corner, along quiet back lanes, now and then adjusting the parcel under his arm, cursing the bulky, warm parka. Nobody should see him in this excited state. He slowed down, walked leisurely as if on an errand, and then stopped and wiped the sweat from his forehead. At the pawn shop he was a steady, welcome customer. Cash was on his mind and nothing else. Far more cash than would buy only one bottle of whiskey. Cash for a good decent meal, cash for a one-way bus fare out West.

* * *

Irene put her unfinished work under glass, framed it with an unpainted wooden frame and looked at it daily. She died a few months later. The local paper said that she had died of a heart attack during her sleep after a fulfilling life, and that she was loved and respected by everyone who met her. Her children were comforted by the happy expression on their mother's face, a smile Irene had kept even beyond life.

"She must just have had a happy dream when her heart gave out," her children said. "Mother was such a happy dreamer and such an optimist! God bless her!"

Nevertheless, it was a small, almost unnoticed surprise to them to find a cross-stitch

work, a bit crude, on the wall over the breakfast table: yellow and red tulips, with one blossom only half done. No leaf, no stem. They had never seen it before in their mother's apartment. When looking after her estate and sorting her belongings, they thought of the framed stitch work as useless and added it to the pile of things to be dis- carded.

Where Am I?

By Shirley Nordal

Where am I
When the dishes are stacked high in the sink
And the phone keeps ringing
And everyone is asking
What's for dinner?

Where am I
When my daughter needs a ride
And my mom needs a back rub
And the school needs a volunteer
To help in the classroom.

Where am I
When everyone has finally gone to bed
And the quietness comes creeping in
And I slide into my comfy chair
And pull out my pen and paper.

I know where I am
When I finally have time for myself,
When my mind allows the words to come
Then I forget where I am
But I know who I am.

Bird Lake Watercolor

By Jack Francis

Bird Lake is a bit of painter's heaven, quietly nesting in Nopoming Provincial Park, happily resting on the edge of the Canadian Shield, where westing Manitoba backtracks to Ontario, there Nature offers the water and the color.

The Waiting Room

By Margaret Cracknell

The waiting room was full. It was always full. Mr. Harris glared at the receptionist as if she were responsible for the hold up.

"If he gets up once more and comes and asks how much longer he has to wait, I'll scream," Jenny said to the doctor's nurse. "Can't you hurry Dr. Young up? That blonde has been in there twenty minutes and she only came in to get her form signed for being off work. Hurry him up, or would that be asking too much of him?"

"Watch what you are saying. The doctor's not like that. His father's a minister!" the nurse replied.

"His father could be an archbishop, for all I care, but it doesn't help when I've got a waiting room full of people glaring at me. Mrs. Wilson, please, don't let your son do that!"

The boy was filling his water pistol from the fish tank that Dr. Young had installed after reading in *The Lancet* that fish had a soothing effect on patients if they had to be kept waiting.

"Oh, for God's sake," Mr. Harris said, "you should..." but at that moment the door to the doctor's room opened and the blonde came out.

"Thank you, Doctor," she said, "I won't forget what you told me to do," and she turned and gave him a little wave.

Mr. Harris immediately made for the doctor's room.

"Not you, Mr. Harris. Sit down! Mr. Atwood, this way please."

"I'm c-c-coming," Mr. Atwood said. He had a deplorable stutter. "P-p-please tell the n-n-nurse I don't want her to come in with m-m-me."

"Poor old soul," Mrs. Parks said. "It's his kidneys, you know. Trouble with his waterworks. He's embarrassed."

"That's it!" Mr. Harris said, "It will take him half an hour just to say hullo." He flounced out of the office, slamming the door behind him.

Everyone felt better after he left. Mrs. Wilson's small boy hosed down the dusty rubber tree plant in the corner with his water pistol. Two teenagers had their heads in copies of *"The Rolling Stones."* A pregnant girl and her boyfriend held hands and giggled and whispered to each other and Mrs. Parks got out her knitting. She was working on a sock. She enjoyed an afternoon out, even if it was only in the doctor's office. It beat the T.V. any day!

The Violin Pioneer

By Murdina Brownlee

Before I begin my story please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Francesca and I am a violin. I was fortunate enough to have been crafted by one of the finest violin makers of the day. Considering this, it was not surprising that I should find myself in one of the best of London shops. That was in the Year of our Lord, 1872.

Perhaps now I should tell you about Bertie and how I came to belong to him. Yes, that is a good idea for otherwise, you might not believe what I am about to tell you.

You have no idea of what it is like to be sitting in a display case waiting to be bought. Just waiting, waiting, waiting. It seemed I would never get a chance to begin my new life, an interesting one, I hoped. Finally, one day a lady came into the shop, looking, she said, for a violin for her nine-year-old son. First she tried me out and then she tried four more before trying me again. "Ah, yes," she said, handing me to the salesman, "this is the very one for Bertie. It has such a lovely tone."

Did Bertie want a violin? Well, he wasn't quite sure. He took lessons though and dutifully practised every day. At first, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards he sawed the bow. I screeched, whined and moaned. With time he improved so I began to sing in tune. Later, he became quite good but preferred playing only for his own pleasure. To tell the truth, I quite enjoyed those times together, too.

So, in 1882, when Bertie decided to try his luck in the Canadian west, he packed me along with his belongings. I remained snug and safe in my comfortable case while we sailed across the ocean and travelled by train across the land with the wheels saying clickety, click every inch of the way.

Then we continued our trip by an open wagon pulled by horses. It was a really bumpy way to travel. We were not alone. We had joined a group of three families, each with their own wagon loaded with their belongings. The older children did a lot of walking. By nightfall, when the campsite had been set up and supper was over, everyone sat would sit around the fire and chat before going to bed. One night a lady asked if anyone had a violin because she was lonesome for the sound of

music. To my surprise Bertie said it would take him only a minute to fetch me. He played the songs they asked for and everyone joined in. It was a lot of fun and that was how I spent my first evening by campfire. Bertie was too tired to put me back in his trunk. I spent the night snugly warm in my case in the back of Bertie's wagon.

Late the next afternoon we came to the ford of a badly swollen river. It was too late in the day to cross over so we had another evening of campfire singing. And I had a chance to see how fast the water was flowing. I was worried about what we would have to do in the morning.

"Well," said a man early next day, "the sooner we get going, the sooner we'll get across."

As we were fording the river, there were a few violent jarring moments and suddenly my case and I were flying through the air. There was a great bumping splash, then a swift, smooth feeling. We were floating away and leaving Bertie behind, but he was too busy to notice. The wagon was just about to tip over, the horses were straining mightily towards the shore, and every man was roaring at once. The sound of their voices grew fainter and fainter until we were floating along in a silence broken only by the rush of the water and the songs of birds.

The sun was shining and it was snug and cosy inside my case. I must have fallen asleep for I suddenly heard voices. Children's voices.

"Look, Sadie," I heard a boy say, "there's something caught in that branch."

Suddenly my case and I were no longer in the water. There was a click as the clasp opened and I found myself looking at a boy a little older than Bertie had been when his mother had found me in the London music shop. He wasn't dressed like Bertie had been. He didn't even have shoes on. I didn't know what to think of him, but he seemed overjoyed to see me. He flapped the lid down and started running, crying out to his sister, "A fiddle! I've found a fiddle!"

We must have reached their home for I could hear a door slam behind us and then my case and I were placed on a table. "Look, Mother, I've found a fiddle, just like the one Mr. Jennings has. Do you think he will show me how to play it?"

A very weary-looking young woman was looking at me as her son explained how he had found me in the river.' "We'll have to see, Donald." She picked me up gently and looked me over. "When your father goes for supplies he will have to see if anyone has made enquiries about a lost violin. If nobody has, then you may keep it and we'll see if Mr. Jennings will teach you."

As she put me back in my case, I had a glance around the room. Their home was like nothing I had ever seen before. It was made of logs with a bare, rough wooden floor. Just one room! Bertie could never live in a place like this! There were no lovely paintings, no knick knacks, no beautiful vases with fresh flowers sharing their delicate perfume with everyone in the room. I was hoping desperately that Bertie would find me!

Well, he didn't! I was most upset. However, after a few weeks, Donald, his father and I went off to see their neighbor. Mr. Jennings had a home just like the Martin's, only he had one picture on the wall, a hunting scene. Then he picked me up.

"A truly beautiful instrument," he told them after playing a short piece with me. I

liked him. He agreed to teach young Donald, and at that first lesson we all found out that my new owner had perfect pitch.

Donald had to help his father with the farm work, but no matter how tired he was, he always practised every day. The whole family seemed to like listening to us and I began to enjoy myself as I became more comfortable with my surroundings.

A few years later when Donald had learned to play very well, we were asked to play for a community dance. By that time the Martins had a large home and I had become used to Donald playing for small friendly gatherings. But a dance in a hall?

I was excited and Donald was nervous. The hall was crowded and we played everything from reels to waltzes. Everyone had a wonderful time.

It wasn't long before Donald and I were playing at every dance and concert in the district. We had fun. It was a pleasure to see the joy we gave to others.

To tell the truth, music is meant to be shared, and I was happy to know that I could.

Haiku

By Anna McDonald

By sun, moon and stars
From time unending, we set
The world's seasons.

Madeline's Decision

By Anna McDonald

As Madeline sat at the kitchen table that early spring morning, she buried her head in her arms and cried. She had had such a bad night. Even the Tylenol 3 pills couldn't erase the pain.

What was she to do? The doctor had suggested that she sell her home and move into a seniors' apartment. That was easy for him to say. It would be a complete uprooting of her life. And what to do with her extra furniture? And how she would miss the garden, her salvation in the summer months.

Widower Hunter down the street was certainly making a nuisance of himself lately. First it was, "Can I get you your groceries?" Then, "Your garage needs fixing. May I do it for you?" And yesterday he presented her with an invitation to see the opera with him. Opera? If he only knew how she detested operatic music.

"Give me good Ole Country Music," Madeline thought. "How Bill and I loved to listen to that music!"

And here it is, five years later and I still feel the loss of a great partner. And my doctor recommends giving up this home! What conflict I will face in making that decision! I already hear my three children's advice: 1) Sell your house and come live with me. 2) Sell your house and move into an apartment near me. I can run errands for you. 3) Sell your house and take a trip around the world.

If only, if only my children knew the secret that I am keeping from them. I have not only osteoporosis, but also chronic leukaemia.

Yes, I know what I will do. My decision will be to keep my secret. I will keep putting on a smile and hide the continual pain. But I will accept Mr. Hunter's offer to be my handyman. I will hire Molly-Maid on a regular basis. Order in meals more often.

And at the end of each day, I will pour myself a glass of sherry, put on those old country music records, and, yes, I will cry a little, I will sigh a little, and know life will go on no matter what.

The Answer

By Shirley Nordal

I lay on my back, muscles knotted and tight
 It is late and my mind circles, not landing anywhere
 And the night is long with no one to speak to
 And I am so alone
 Alone in my pain and my fear
 Fearing the unknown
 I am exhausted and can no longer resist
 Pain is not the enemy but the messenger
 That breaks open my heart
 I sink deeper and deeper into mind
 Until I enter the spaciousness of my heart
 Where all thought stops
 Where love is born
 Where all is one and one is all
 And we are exactly where we must be
 We are part of the mystery of life

Red Lifeline

By Lois Francis

"I mustn't stop! I mustn't stop!" Dorothy told herself, hands numb with her vice-like grip on the steering wheel.

Nothing was visible—not road, not ditch, not buildings nor fields—nothing except two faint red beacons scarcely discernible through the white air.

They were on a mission, in a way, taking their mother for one last visit with her son and his family while she was still able to travel. Dorothy and her sister, Gladys, had felt the pressure of time as their mother's health continued to deteriorate, so they chose Eastertime as a good occasion to celebrate together and allow mother and son to say their last farewells.

The day was bright when they left Winnipeg for Regina, 350 miles of easy, level Trans-Canada highway, and they had no premonition of the storm ahead.

Gladys drove the first half of the journey and Dorothy took over just past Moosemin, and that's when the late-March blizzard struck, gusting around them with blinding ferocity, so road and signs and ditches disappeared. Total white-out.

Dorothy clutched the wheel, unable to stop for fear of being hit from behind, unable to pull onto the shoulder of the road since she had no idea where the shoulder might be, and neither would the traffic behind. So she glommed onto the red beacons ahead, keeping pace with them at sixty miles an hour. She dared not slow and lose them.

The lights were the tail signals of a semi-trailer truck; her knight of the road, her guide perched high above the driving snow could see what she could only imagine.

The right front tire clipped the edge of the pavement, and dropped down frightening inches, caught in a slot and slithering along until she managed to correct enough to regain the pavement.

"Maybe you should slow down a bit," Gladys said through clenched and nervous teeth from the back seat, not wanting to startle their mother who sat silent in the passenger seat up front.

Instead, Dorothy sped up, desperately trying to catch again the protective wake of the

semi. She knew positively that their lives were in her hands, and her only hope was the truck.

Faster and faster she drove, pressing the gas pedal almost to the floor, feeling lost in a vacuum, waiting, any second, for the crunch of metal as she left the road. "Let him be there!" she prayed silently. "Let him be on this road."

With a gasp of relief, she came upon the red lights suddenly—too close, but there! She braked gently and fell to a safe distance, keeping the lights ever in her sight.

When the lights of Regina hove into view, Dorothy knew, with a sense of triumph, they had made it.

"You did it!" Gladys said, pressing her shoulders from behind. Beside her, their mother said, "Are we there yet?"

Haiku

By Anna McDonald

Cars speed through puddles
 Splashing unsuspecting people
 All dressed in their spring finery.

The Towel

By Margaret Cracknell

Only a torn towel caught in the branches of a tree
Shows where I was born.
This pit of broken bricks and splintered wood,
No different to any other bombsite in the city
Was my home.
Bloody and screaming I came into this world,
A joy to my Father, after five boys,
A burden to my Mother. One more mouth to feed,
One more body to clothe, was all I meant to her.
She fought her demons all her life,
And now she is gone, buried in a pile of debris.
And a torn towel caught in the branches of a tree
Shows where she has been set free.
May she find the peace she never found in life.

The Birthday Party

By Ruth Martinussen

My first friends were Bennie and Beat. Nowadays we would say they were mentally challenged. They were identical twins who were also identically tongue-tied. They spoke their own private language and remained apart from others—except me.

Bernice and Beatrice Larkin were raw-boned and scrappy, unkempt and often downright dirty. They lived in a shack on the road allowance below our farm, but our families did not interact. Dad sneered at Joe Larkin's incompetence, and Mom simply couldn't relate to Lillian Larkin, a loud coarse woman who smoked a corncob pipe. Joe would be lying in bed while Lil and the kids did the chores, such as they were; the pigs foraged about quite freely, and the cow and her calf wandered as they pleased. Rabbits, prairie chickens, even squirrels supplemented their food supply. It was a hand-to-mouth life, lacking in the security and nurture that I took for granted.

My parents had come to this far corner of agricultural Manitoba before I was born. Dad had been manager on a large land-holding in Denmark; Mom had been pastry cook in a well-known Danish hotel. They worked hard and gradually made a go of the farm. Now, my brother Henry was twelve and I was almost eight. We were still poor, but Mom

was a careful housekeeper so we didn't appear to lack for anything. Dad kept his fences and fields in order and raised fine livestock.

Mom would say, "Now Rose, you really shouldn't be spending so much time with those two." But there were no other girls nearby, and besides, it was fun. We explored the swamp, the sloughs, the poplar bluffs. We climbed trees, picked wild flowers, dug seneca roots. Bennie and Beat taught me how to sneak up on a noisy croaking frog pond without disturbing the concert at all. Sometimes we just sat and watched the activity around an ant hill, giving it an occasional poke with a stick to liven things up.

They would bring me little gifts: a rabbit's foot, an empty goose egg, an interesting feather. As often as possible, I would save buns, biscuits, bits of cake and cookies for them—they seemed to be hungry always.

I'm sure it was with some dismay that my parents watched us come romping across the pasture, the three of us, as we came from school—Beat on one side of me, Bennie on the other. They would accompany me as far as our fence—rarely did they venture any farther. The Larkin's knew they were not welcome anywhere in the district.

I spent many hours outdoors with Bennie and Beat; they would chatter away at each other and at me, assuming that I understood their mumbo-jumbo. Gradually I did

understand them, and they understood me. I could tell them apart, although they scarcely seemed to have separate personalities.

I know Mom and Dad feared these two would have a bad influence on me. We spoke Danish at home; I was just now learning English, and what would this tongue-tied nonsense do to my self-expression? What effect would their slovenly ways and all this tom-boyish behavior have on my development into a nice young lady?

We attended the one-room school a mile away, across the pasture behind a poplar bluff. They sat in a double desk in front of me. I was in grade 3, they were still in grade 1 even though they were nearly nine years old. I would finish my work, then scramble over into their desk between them and help them with theirs.

The teacher, Miss Drysdale, was new to our district. She was a woman of mature years, but still lacking in common sense, empathy, and any real talent for teaching. However, she was determined to keep order among us country rubes and, if possible, bring some refinement to our benighted lives. She was only too glad to send me to a corner of the blackboard to drill some basic arithmetic and spelling into Bennie and Beat. And I went over their reading with them every day.

During noon hour one Friday, Annie and Olga Waschuk reported that their cake and cookies were missing from their lunch pails. Miss Drysdale pounced on the most likely suspects, the Larkin twins. They shook their heads and uttered a spate of tongue-tied denials. When these seemed insufficient, Bennie took the teacher's arm and led her to my desk. And in my desk were found two slightly crumbled oatmeal cookies. Bennie and Beat gave me a rueful look, then turned away and left me to my own devices.

"Rose! You stole from Annie's and Olga's lunch pails, and then you would have let your friends take the blame!" Miss Drysdale exclaimed.

I didn't do a thing to help myself. I was simply overwhelmed. I said nothing in my own defense, not a word.

"You go and sit in your desk for now," the teacher ordered. "Then we'll see about this after school."

After four, I got the requisite strapping, five on each hand. And Miss Drysdale gave me a final word of advice as she sent me on

my way, "I know we all like a nice treat once in a while, but we can't always have what we want. You could try asking if you could have a bite or two next time. Now try not to let this happen again."

Sobbing for my wounded pride more than for my stinging hands, I ran out of the school yard to the nearby poplar trees. My brother was waiting by the trail, calmly whittling a new slingshot as I approached.

"Better quit that blubbering and wipe your face or Mom will know you've been in trouble," he said. As we walked home he continued, "But why didn't you say something? You could have told that stupid teacher! You've got to learn to stand up for yourself!"

When we got home Mom took one look at me and asked what had happened. I told all, but she just said, "Well, now you know you just can't trust people like those Larkin's." Later, when he heard the story, Dad said, "Damn squatters! Nothing but trouble!"

I had the weekend to feel sorry for myself and to consider my situation. On Saturday I helped with the cleaning and later on, I went with Henry to find some hazel nuts.

"You still stewing about what happened yesterday?" he said. "Smarten up! Use your head. Find some way to get even. Pay them back."

Sunday morning we went to church, and wouldn't you know it, the minister talked about "turning the other cheek." He said, "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you." Hate! Did Bennie and Beat hate me? Was I supposed to hate them? Were they my enemies now? And what about that teacher? It was all so confusing.

After church we went to our grandparents' place, but there were too many people around. I didn't get a chance to talk to Grandma or Grandpa.

At school on Monday the other kids seemed to have forgotten Friday's incident. At first I kept away from Bennie and Beat, maintaining a studied aloofness. If they wanted help with their reading or arithmetic, they'd have to get it from the teacher or from someone else.

But it was a lonely time for me, and the twins seemed lost—huddled together, staring hopelessly at the book in front of them. They reminded me of a pair of wounded geese the three of us had come across cowering behind

a rock. Soon I took to passing them answers, letting them copy words I had printed out for them.

Yet, things weren't right. I knew I had some unfinished business. I needed to stand up for myself somehow, to get to feel right about myself and get things back to normal. But how to do this?

Well, I learned that if you keep thinking and biding your time, the occasion may present itself to you. And there it was. The next Friday afternoon, the last Friday of the month, was our school's Junior Red Cross meeting. My brother was in charge of the entertainment program, usually a half hour of recitations, songs and skits following the business meeting. And that Friday, I knew, was Bennie and Beat's ninth birthday.

I first approached Mom. We didn't have money for fancy groceries, but Mom could make the most mouth-watering pastries with hardly more than butter, eggs and cream—and those we had aplenty. So I asked, instead of a birthday party for myself in a month's time, could I please have her best cream cake and some brown sugar cookies for school next Friday? And I explained the whole scenario to her. A soft look came over her face as she rubbed her hands on her apron, "We'll see. I'll see what your father says," she said, and sent me to close up the hen house for the night.

Next morning Mom said she'd do as I wished, and Dad had said he'd find time to bring my surprise to the school on Friday afternoon. So on the way to school that morning, I got Henry's skeptical support. "A funny way to get even," he said, shrugging his shoulders. "But, O.K., let's see what happens."

There we were. Three p.m. Friday and our Red Cross meeting was in session. After we had decided what to do with the \$32.16 we had netted from a recent whist drive, Henry announced that instead of the usual program, "Rose has a surprise for us."

Suddenly my idea seemed just too ridiculous. I wanted to drop through the floor. But I managed to say, "It's Beatrice and Bernice's birthday today. Mom has made us a cake and some cookies to celebrate."

Marian Jenkins went to the piano and Fred Stupak, president of our Junior Red Cross, led us as we sang "Happy Birthday" and some other songs while the older girls

helped with the food. There was a big cake slathered with Mom's special icing, lots of brown sugar cookies with raisins in them, and besides, Mom had made a whole basketful of cream puffs.

It turned out to be a splendid party, and Miss Drysdale came over to tell me so and to remark on the excellent baking my mother had contributed. That's when I braced myself and, looking into her eyes, I told her, "Our Mom makes the best cakes and cookies in the whole valley. She used to make pastries for the King and Queen of Denmark. I don't have to steal from other people's lunch pails to get good things to eat."

Miss Drysdale stood there soberly watching the twins scarfing down their cake while eyeing the cream puffs still on their plates. The cookies would keep; they had already stuffed them into their pockets.

So things were right again in my little world. The next week, Bennie and Beat walked their usual homeward route with me, taking me on a side trip to see a really good badger hole. And we climbed 'way up the big spruce tree to try to get to a hawk's nest. On my way down, I scraped my knee and tore my dress.

But before long, my friendship with the Larkin twins came to an end, or rather, faded away. One day the Larkin family went to visit an uncle in Birch River and they just, well, forgot to come back. When their makeshift house mysteriously burned down a few months later, it was as if they had been erased from my life, especially since, in the meantime, a new family had moved into our district, just over the ridge above our farm. Jenny Jersak was my age. She had books—a whole boxful of them. And she was smart. I had to work to keep up to her at school.

I believe childhood friends are important. They help us begin to find who we will be—to see ourselves in society outside the family.

My friendship with Bennie and Beat couldn't, in the long run, have been of much benefit to them. Beat was accidentally killed

at age sixteen. Two years later, I ran into Bennie at the local fair, but she was too drunk to recognize me. Still, I am convinced that my friendship with those two was significant in my preparation for the larger world.

My Life

By Gisela H.L. Roger

The first step
the first word
and all the firsts in life
until that life is lived.

To see
to understand
to condemn and to accept
that changed my life.

Not to understand
not to see
but to feel and to forget
that was me.

Events external
out of reach
make life lost before lived
yet given and gifted
reborn to be loved.

Each day
life changing event
to be and to love
to give and to feel
and not to forget.

Step by step
day by day
event by event
and change after change,
until that life is lived.

What if Galileo Had Been Forced to Retire at 65

By Harold Richman

Galileo is summoned to appear before Pope Urban VIII.

"Come in, Galileo. It has been some time since we talked. If I recall it was three years ago on your 65th birthday. At that time I suggested that you retire. Since you did not take my advice and continued with your

scientific endeavors, it has been brought to my attention that you have contravened the edicts of the Church."

"Your Holiness, I have just continued with my investigation of falling objects, the Principles of Inertia, and my observation of the planets. Where have I displeased Your Holiness?"

"I understand that you have been traveling to your home town of Pisa fairly regularly. They tell me that you've climbed the circular staircase to the top of the tower carrying a bag of rocks and then dropping them over the side. Recently there are reports that the tower has started to lean due to the rocks you have been carrying to the top. Could you explain this odd behavior to me?"

"By dropping rocks of different weights I was able to establish the fact that all objects fall at the same rate regardless of weight."

"Galileo, how could that possibly be correct since everyone knows that a feather will fall more slowly than a rock. This is just another one of your harebrained ideas. Now tell me about the Principles of Inertia that you have been investigating."

"The first principle is that an object that is at rest will remain at rest until a force is applied to it."

"Well, that is perfectly obvious to everybody and doesn't require any scientific investigation. What is the second principle of inertia?"

"I have determined that an object moving at a uniform rate of speed will continue moving at that speed indefinitely unless a force is applied to change the speed."

"This is even more ridiculous than your statement about falling objects. No one has ever seen a ball roll forever or any other object move forever. I also understand you've made some very serious statements about the motion of the earth, the planets and the sun."

"Your Holiness, since my invention of the telescope, I've discovered that the planet Venus goes through phases similar to the moon. From this I have come to the conclusion that Venus is in orbit about the sun and the other planets, including earth, are also in orbit about the sun."

"Galileo, you know that the church has strictly forbidden the teaching of the Copernicus heliocentric system. You have even published a book called *Dialogue* in which you outline your controversial views. You will therefore have to appear before the Roman Inquisition who will determine your punishment."

Galileo was forced to kneel in front of the Inquisition and recant his belief in the Copernican planetary system. On June 22, 1633, Galileo was condemned to spend the rest of his life under house arrest.

"The wheels of justice grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine."

Talk about slow. The Vatican finally pardoned Galileo in 1992, 350 years after his death!

Haiku

By Anna McDonald

The vernal equinox
Melts the dirty winter snow
into unsightly puddles.

Did I Really Call Them Orbs?

By Mary Green

They have arrived
 Travelled in container boxes
 From Okanagan's valley
 B.C. Macs are with us once again

My nose informs me of their presence
 In Manitoba's markets
 And guides me to a mound of orbs
 Glistening red and tones thereof
 Some speckled some too-much green

(Did I really call them orbs?!) Well
 That's the poet in me
 For I am inspired by B.C. Macs

Their aroma sweet and bittersweet
 Like a daughter's marriage
 Infuses me with poignant regret
 of summer's end
 And joyous expectation of apple
 pies and sauces

Moved by the force of my poetic soul
 Beguiled
 I bag a bunch of apples
 A bag too big for one old woman
 To carry on the bus

But I buy them anyway
 And bring them home
 To build my own mound of aromatic fruit
 An altar to the B.C. McIntosh
 In humble kitchen bowl

Haiku

By Mary Green

Summer is over
 Once more aroma of McIntosh apples
 Announces its demise.

In the Dark Night

By Shirley Nordal

A jagged flash of lightning fills the room and the boom that follows shakes my bed. Man, that lightning was close! I can feel the hair standing up on my arms. The flash lights up the yard like a powerful light bulb. The howl that follows from old Jake makes my heart speed up and blood thump in my ears. As the thunder rolls away the silence is thick. Somehow it is too quiet. Where did Jake get to? I worry about him in a storm. I'm sure he is fine but I will feel better if I check things out.

I stand up but I can't see very far in front of me. I flip the light switch. No electricity. A few more steps and I run straight into the rocking chair. Damn chair! Now I'm muttering. I have to find my flashlight. As I lift my foot the cat charges out in front of me. "Percy, it is okay. Really!" He keeps skittering around knocking into things. I'm blinking my eyes but it doesn't help. I move along the wall until I reach the shelf where my flashlight sits and grab it like a lifeline.

I have the flashlight and I throw on a coat. Percy is rubbing against my leg when Jake howls again. I open the door expecting it will be easier to see outside, but it isn't. I flash the light around the yard and focus on Jake's house. He is not there as far as I can see. I look over by the woodpile and see nothing unusual. Another flash lights up the entire yard. The flash is exactly what I need to spot Jake. And yes, there he is under a branch that must have been severed by the storm. I can barely make out his crouched figure under the heavy foliage. My flashlight would never have picked up his presence.

I rush over not knowing what to expect. Jake whines and I reach out for him but the branches are thick. I have to approach him from another direction. I go around toward the trunk of the tree to see if I can lift the broken bough. I call to Jake to let him know where I am and to reassure him. As I lift the branch, he moves toward me. He keeps coming slowly, crawling on his belly. I wonder if his back is hurt but when he reaches me I see that his tail is wagging. That is encouraging. I let the tree down and grab the flashlight. I look him over carefully to see if he is hurt. He seems fine. I stand up and start to walk hoping he will follow and sure enough he is on his

feet. He stays close to my heels as the rain starts to whip around us. When we reach the house Jake barrels past me and flies through the open door. I sigh with relief. He is in for the night.

Meditation

By Margaret Cracknell

It staggers me that He is still there
 When I in fear or want turn back to Him.
 Why does He wait when I ignore Him?
 And yet in time of need I turn to Him
 To beg for this or that.
 How often do I praise Him?
 How often ask His pardon?
 I say "Thanks. It is wonderful
 What You are doing for me. I love it."
 What triviality! I am ashamed,
 But not enough to change my shallow ways.

The Clock

By U. (Rick) Woelcke

We reached our place late afternoon.
The trip had been tiring and long.
A white haired lady, our host,
Offered coffee, hot and strong.

After exchanging friendly words
She withdrew; left us alone.
No doubt we looked exhausted
And tired to the bone.

As I laid back and closed my eyes
Savoring some quiet time,
(Our bags as yet unpacked)
I heard a low and gentle chime.

A clock, no doubt, tracking the hours,
But with a sound of long years past,
Reminding me with such sweet sadness
That nothing here is meant to last.

That sound stirred buried memories
I heard it but a thousand times
In my parents' modest house,
My life directed by its chimes.

Its timeless circle would remind me
When to leave and walk back in,
When to study, sleep and worship,
And for the seasons to begin.

It made me nervous first time dating.
It evoked anticipation
When we expected visitors,
Or a joyful celebration.

It struck the sad and tearful hour,
When I left home for unknown gain
To build a future far away
Not measuring my parents' pain.

Sounds which I thought lost forever
Had found me in this new, vast land.
"Your life is here!" A silent warning.
I reached out and grasped her hand.

Dragon Slayer

By Alex Domokos

I'm carving a block of wood.
I carve St. George, the dragon-slayer.
Chipping away layer by layer
the baswood and the form takes shape
the dragon of my soul escapes.
All bitterness and angry feeling
with chisel-strokes are disappearing.
When the statue has emerged at last
my ugly dragon of the past
has disappeared. Finished my task.

Art Creation

By Alex Domokos

I am part of a dying nation,
a disappearing generation.
My real love is the creation,
that is my fate and destination.
Creation tears my soul apart,
Without the sacrifice, no art!
Inducing soul into the matter,
making it greater, making it better
than wood, paint, or air vibration.
Creator is part of creation.

Recycle

By Anna McDonald

Recycle this, recycle that
A phrase not used
In depression days
When nothing we did waste.

Waste not, want not
Was the slogan of the day.
There was little to waste
But much to want.

Recycle was practised
Practised by all in want.
Use and reuse
Was the phrase we used.

Example supreme of use and reuse
Are the sheets for our beds
Worn in the center
Sheets need replacing.

Rip, rip down the centre
Sew side seams together.
New sheet created
For months of more wear.

Centre of sheet worn out again.
Rip, rip across top and bottom
Sew seams to form pillowcases
(Center made wonderful dust cloths.)

From the toss and turn of tired heads.
Pillowcases wear thin.

Rip, rip these pillowcases
Into dish towels, dish rags
And pads for menstrual use.

Recycling then, oh yes
But no blue box was needed.

Women of the Mall

By Mary Green

I board a bus for Polo Park
 and
 Am lurched backward fanny first
 Into a seat beside an old woman
 — I beg your pardon Please —
 I mean elderly senior lady
 Wearing a navy blue coat

Excuse me I say
 Nearly landed in your lap didn't I
 Stupid driver she growls
 Gaze averted Speaking to the window
 And I not knowing
 Whether she means the bus driver
 Sitting within earshot
 Or the one in the car that veered
 smile
 Shrugging a tolerant Oh well
 and settle in

Where are you going I ask
 To break the awkwardness
 To the mall she says
 Shopping? I ask
 Or meeting a friend for lunch?
 No She says addressing her handbag
 No Just going to the mall
 Have to escape the four walls
 For a while

She was there At the mall
 In her navy blue coat
 Settled broadly on a bench
 Her own as if reserved
 I noticed her as I passed by
 For several weeks
 Or was it months? Lost track of time
 Hurrying My mind on things I had to do

Until the day I pass her bench
 And see another old woman
 — Beg you pardon again
 please —
 I mean elderly senior lady
 Wearing a brown coat
 Now sitting in her place

Butting Out

By Ruth Martinussen

Reeking ashtrays filled his condo, office, car
with acrid fumes.

"Smoking's my *therapy*, he rasped.

It keeps me going. Anyway,

It's better than boozing—isn't it?"

The phone rang. He took another drag.

"What's that you say? A biopsy?"

Then chemotherapy.

And radiotherapy.

Finally, the autopsy.

Cremation was quick. The Minister intoned, "Ashes to ashes—"

Dust to dust.

POSTCARD POETRY